

HOSPITALITY IN ADVERSITY?

EXCERPTED FROM DOGMAMA — UNLEASH LOVE

by Kathleen Leigh Lewarchick

“When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.”
(Romans 12:13)

Our miniature dachshund Winnie had terrible bowed legs. One day on a family walk we saw another family on the path coming toward us. Immediately the kids stared at Winnie, pointed at her bowed legs and began to laugh. Perhaps even more surprisingly the parents were snickering and laughing and playing right along with the kids. It became a minor spectacle, and my daughter became angry and hurt by the terrible insults hurled at her dog.

In that moment, I felt a sense of calm, which doesn’t always happen when I’m upset. I scooped up Winnie and walked directly toward the family. As they started to back up, I got down on one knee on the walking path with Winnie in my arm, right in front of the kids at their eye level. My family was behind me unsure of what I might do or say next. But I was on the ground in a submissive posture allowing the height differential to disarm everyone and to speak for itself.

“You know,” I said quietly and kindly to the children, as I stroked Winnie and

smiled at them. “Each and every body is unique and different. Some of us don’t have what others have, but that doesn’t make them any less wonderful. When we realize our differences, we shouldn’t tease or ridicule the person or animal because of how they look. Instead, we should celebrate them and love them for who they are.” The parents lowered their eyes in guilt, and the kids stood there with their mouths open. But before they could leave, I asked a simple question, “Would you like to meet our Winnie and pet her?” The kids turned to their parents for approval, and the adults begrudgingly nodded their heads in agreement and looked away in embarrassment.

In that moment, my daughter, her pride restored, came over. She introduced herself and her dog to the kids, and they all took turns patting the dog and snuggling her in my arms. Winnie’s tail began to wag furiously as if on cue, and her ears went back in appreciation for the touch. The children were laughing now and telling us how much they loved this dog, and what a great pet she must be. The youngest even suggested that their family should get a dog with funny legs, because that made it special and unlike other dogs. I smiled, realizing that leaning into love, especially when it’s the exact opposite of what you want to do, can be both disarming and necessary.

GOD, HELP US TO OFFER HOSPITALITY EVEN IN TIMES OF FRUSTRATION. LET US LOVE OTHERS AS YOU HAVE SO LOVED US.