

BY LINDA G. PAULSEN

(Based on a true story)

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord (Colossians 3:20).

Jacob latched the gate on the new fence. “Stay, Annie,” he said. “You get this whole big yard. Have fun!”

Jacob had only been in the house long enough to take three bites out of his sandwich when he heard Annie scratching at the door and barking to get into the house. “How did she get out?” he wondered.

He grabbed Annie by her collar and led her back through the open gate. Maybe he hadn’t latched it right before. He pulled the gate shut and carefully pulled the latch into place. “Stay, Annie,” he said again.

“Woof,” Annie said, watching him. Jacob turned to go back into the house, but he looked over his shoulder just in time to see Annie pushing the latch up with her nose

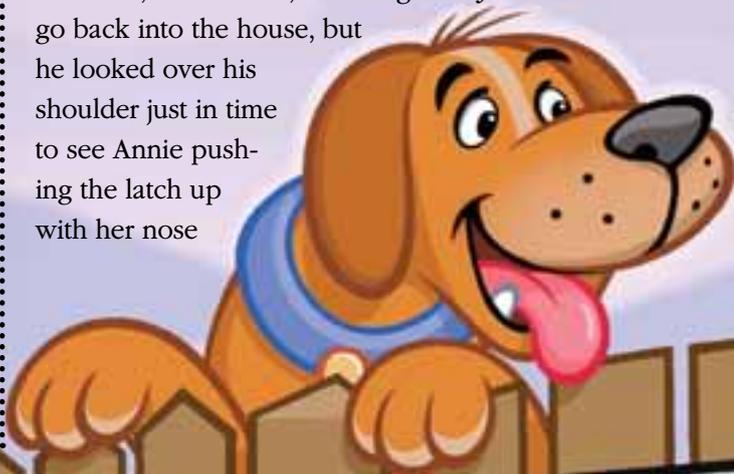
and marching through the gate.

“Annie!” Jacob was partly impressed and partly annoyed. “You have to stay in the back.” He took Annie back through the gate. Maybe the dog didn’t remember all the things Jacob’s family had done to make her happy out here. “See, here is your dog-house,” he said. “And here are some of your favorite toys.” Annie picked up her bone and lay down to chew it. “Your water dish and everything you need are right here. I’ll come play with you after I finish my lunch.” But he hadn’t even gotten to the kitchen before he heard Annie barking at the door again.

That night at dinner, Jacob told the story to his family. “So after I put a big bolt through the hole to keep the latch from lifting, I thought for sure that Annie would stay. But she figured out how to pull the bolt out with her teeth.

Then she opened the latch and out she came.”

“That dog is too smart for her own good,” Dad remarked.





“So what did you do?” Jacob’s brother Tim asked.
“I put a nut on the bolt,” Jacob said smugly. “Now she can’t pull it out. She’s smart but not as smart as I am.”

The doorbell rang. Jacob jumped up to answer it. He was expecting his friend Ryan to come over, but it wasn’t Ryan at the door. It was a man in uniform with Annie.

“Is this your dog?” the animal-control officer asked. Annie wriggled past Jacob into the house.

Jacob nodded.

Jacob’s mom came up behind him. “Uh-oh,” she said. “We thought Annie was locked in the backyard.”

“She was at large,” the officer said.

“At large?” Jacob asked, puzzled.

“That means loose and uncontrolled,” the officer explained. “We’ve talked to your parents about this before. Your dog has to be secured. That’s the law.”

Jacob remembered that his parents had built the fence because Annie had been in trouble before.

She had dashed out of the house when the door had opened and run off down the street.

“She doesn’t mean to be bad,” Jacob said.

“No, but she depends on us who know the rules,” the officer said. “She’s not safe when she’s loose, and neither are the children in the neighborhood. You’ll have to pay the fine.” He handed a ticket to Mom. She wasn’t smiling.

“We’ll figure out how she got out and fix it,” Mom said.

As the officer was leaving, Ryan rode up on his bike. “What’s up?” he asked. “Who got arrested?”

“Ha, ha,” Jacob said. “Actually, Annie did.”

The boys went around to the backyard. Mom and Dad were already there. Dad pointed to an Annie-sized hole under the fence. A pile of dirt on the other side told the story.

Everybody pitched in. Dad and Tim buried big rocks in the most obvious digging spots. Then Jacob and Ryan took logs from the woodpile and laid them along the bottom of the fence where Annie might try to dig. By the time they were finished, it was getting dark.

For two days Annie stayed in the backyard. Jacob



was sure the problem was solved. But on Friday, their neighbor Mr. Kopiak called to say that Annie had climbed the woodpile and leaped into his yard over the fence. “She’s OK,” he said, “but I’m surprised she didn’t break a leg.”

“You need to trust me on this,” Jacob said to Annie as he walked her home. “You just don’t realize what’s out there. You could get hurt! You have to stay, Annie.”



That afternoon, Ryan called to invite Jacob to go swimming. “We can bike over to Pizza Village on the way back,” Ryan said.

It was a fun idea, but Jacob knew it would be hard to get permission. The pool was out of his biking territory. Still, Ryan had never invited him to go for pizza before. Jacob felt it was important to their friendship that he say yes. Surely Mom would understand.

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, Son,” Mom said when he asked her.

“It’s not that far!” Jacob said. He felt angry and frustrated. “Ryan rides his bike all over the place and he’s OK. What could happen?” Jacob was trying not to lose his cool, but he heard his voice getting louder with every syllable. “These rules are stupid!”

Mom looked him right in the eye. “Jacob, you’ll have to trust me. You don’t know what’s out there.”

Jacob felt tingles across the back of his neck. That was the same thing he had said to Annie that very day!

Jacob went to his room to think. He thought about what the animal-control officer had said. He remembered what his dad had said about Annie being so smart. He thought about how much he loved Annie and all the work the family had done to make her safe. He thought about rules, and how much his parents loved him and wanted him to be safe. He thought about the Holy Ghost helping Mom know what to say—the same words he’d told Annie.

After a while, Jacob called Ryan. “I can’t go,” he said. “But if you come over, we can make brownies. Mom says she’ll order pizza to be delivered.”

Ryan happily agreed. ●

“I pray earnestly that the children and youth and their parents will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that it will be a guide and a protection to them.”⁴

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

