

Blackie and Martha

Martha was six years old. Her parents loved Martha very much, and called her their “sunshine girl.” But Martha had one difficulty—she found it hard to listen and obey.

One day, Martha and Mother went for a walk when a cute little puppy came leaping and barking toward her, wanting to play. Martha had so much fun playing with the puppy, but all too soon it was time to go.

“Mother, can’t we take this puppy home with us?” Martha asked as they began walking home.

“I don’t know, dear,” Mother replied. “He must belong to somebody.”



Martha turned to look at the puppy. His big, brown eyes were gentle and full of life. His tail was wagging happily.

"Look!" squealed Martha. "The puppy is following us!"

The little puppy followed them all the way back home.

"The puppy is probably hungry. Can we give him something to eat?" Martha asked.

"All right," said Mother. "But tomorrow we need to find out if he belongs to somebody. We may not be able to keep him."

Mother put some food in a little bowl. Martha took the bowl outside and the little puppy eagerly ate it all.



The next morning, Martha ran outside to see if the puppy was still there. He was! Martha was so excited. The puppy wagged its tail and jumped up and down.

Later that day, Martha and Mother went around the neighborhood and to the local veterinarian and pet shelter, asking if the puppy belonged to anyone, but no one had seen the dog before.

"It looks like the puppy doesn't have a home," Mother said.

"Does that mean we can keep him?"

"Yes, I talked with your father, and he agreed that we could keep him."

Martha was so happy!

"I'm going to call him Blackie," she told Mother and Father.



Every day after Martha finished school, she would play with Blackie. When she went for walks with Mother or Father, the little puppy went with them.

As Blackie grew older, Martha realized that she needed to train him. Often when Martha called Blackie to come, he would scamper away, hoping she would chase him. Or if she told him to sit down, he would jump on her.

"Blackie won't do what I want him to do," Martha complained to her mother.

"Well, we need to find a way to train him if we're going to keep him. We can't let him do whatever he wants, or else no one will want to play with him, or worse, he could get hurt."



“But I don’t know how to teach him.”

“Our neighbor has a dog that is well trained. We can ask him to show you what to do.”

On their way home from visiting their neighbor, Martha ran quite far ahead. Mother called after her, but she didn’t turn back; instead, she went even further. When they arrived home, Father talked to Martha about listening to her mother and obeying what her parents said. But Martha didn’t see why she needed to obey.

Martha and her parents followed the neighbor’s counsel for training Blackie, and soon he would sit when she told him to sit and he wouldn’t jump on her or nip people. But he still had a bad habit of running off wherever he wanted to.



Whenever they took Blackie out for walks, they kept him on a leash. But when they were at home, he'd often run away from the house and garden, and wouldn't come when she called him. Some of the neighbors started to complain that Blackie was getting into their garbage and scaring their pets, so Father said they had to keep Blackie on a leash even in their garden.

Blackie didn't like being tied up at all. One day, Martha felt sorry for Blackie because he was whimpering, and so she disobeyed her father and let him off his leash. Within minutes Blackie had disappeared down the road. Throughout the day, Martha looked outside to see if Blackie had returned, but he hadn't. At bedtime, he still hadn't returned. Martha was very worried.



"Blackie hasn't come home yet. Do you think something has happened to him?" Martha asked.

"I don't know, dear. But we can pray for him," Mother replied.

That night, Martha went to bed very sad.

Early the next morning, Martha got up and went out with Father to see if Blackie had returned. Yes, he had!

"Blackie, you came back!" she shouted. She ran toward him, but something was wrong—he was limping.

"Oh! You've been hurt."

Mother, Father, and Martha took Blackie to the vet.

The news the pet doctor gave was not good. "It seems your dog might have been hit by a car. You can be thankful it seems to have only been a brush with a car and he's alive, but still it will take some time for his leg to heal."



Martha knew it was partly her fault that Blackie had been hurt. If she had listened to Father and kept him tied up, he wouldn't have gotten hurt.

That night, Martha realized how important it was to obey her parents even when it was difficult. Just as Blackie needed to learn how to obey her instructions, she now knew that listening to her parents was a wise thing to do and would help her be safe and happy. Both Blackie and Martha had learned an important lesson that day, and continued to be very good friends.

