

News Story Summary

Richard Brower's German shepherd, Dozer, was stolen from his backyard 18 months ago. Brower, along with his friends and neighbors, searched for Dozer for quite some time but did not recover the stolen dog. Brower was heartbroken but never lost hope. After a year and a half he made the difficult decision to get another dog.

Brower calls his search for a new dog the closest thing to a miracle. While using the Internet to locate a new German shepherd, a picture of Dozer popped up. The dog was at an animal shelter. Brower said there was no doubt it was Dozer because of the way the dog cocked his head to one side. Brower's father stopped by the shelter, and Dozer recognized him immediately. When Brower and Dozer were reunited everyone in the house was crying, including Dozer. Brower said Dozer came flying into the house, almost knocking him over, and started wailing.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the sentence "man united with stolen dog during search.")

Focus Attention

As group members arrive, encourage them to share about their pets or a favorite pet. (OPTION: Prior to the study, ask group members to bring photographs of their pets. Be sure to bring a picture of your own pet if you have one. As group members arrive, ask them to prepare to share their photographs.)

Share briefly the story about the German shepherd, Dozer, and his owner. Ask: *In what ways do you share the same type of relationship with your pet? If you were separated from your pet, how would you respond if you were reunited?*

Note that the owner was searching for his missing pet. Comment that God had been seeking His missing people, ready to restore them if they were willing to return to Him. Challenge the group to look for actions taken by the Israelites so that the relationship with God could be restored.

Challenge

Remind group members of the story about Brower and Dozer. Ask: *In what ways does Brower and Dozer's reunion illustrate the reunion between God and the Israelites? How would you describe the experience of being reunited with God? What keeps people from being reunited with Him and how can those roadblocks be addressed?*

Challenge group members to always be mindful of the greatness of God when they become separated from God because of sin. Encourage them to evaluate whether they have any unconfessed sin, and trust that God in His greatness will restore them. Ask them to spend time this week meditating on the Israelites' prayer recorded in Nehemiah 9.

Lead in prayer, praising God for His greatness and because He always forgives us and restores us when we fall short of His glory.