



# **Saved by Gracie: How a Rough-And-Tumble Rescue Dog Dragged Me Back to Health, Happiness, and God**

*Jan Dunlap*

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## **Saved by Gracie: How a Rough-And-Tumble Rescue Dog Dragged Me Back to Health, Happiness, and God** Jan Dunlap

There But for the Grace of Dog Go I . . . Author Jan Dunlap was suffering increasingly severe bouts of anxiety after a medical misdiagnosis slapped her in the face with an acute realization of the tenuous nature of human life. A degreed theologian, Jan found her personal faith in God and His promises severely shaken and her enthusiasm for life being replaced by growing fear and debilitating insecurity. Then a rescue-shelter black lab-mix by the name of Gracie came into her life as her daughter's new pet, and Jan determined to do whatever it took to provide both her daughter and the dog with the sense of security she herself no longer felt. She quickly discovered, however, that Gracie had her own agenda, and it was all dog. From chasing squirrels to jumping fences to the occasional roll in dead fish, Gracie taught Jan that life is for living, not dreading. As she began to realize that Gracie was helping her manage her anxiety, Jan also came to a new awareness of how a loving God provides healing through His own works of creation. Part memoir and part medical exploration of the truly healing gifts that God freely offers us through our interaction with animals and nature, *Saved by Gracie* is a story of God's redeeming love revealed at the paws of a dog.

## **Saved by Gracie: How a Rough-And-Tumble Rescue Dog Dragged Me Back to Health, Happiness, and God Details**

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# **From Reader Review Saved by Gracie: How a Rough-And-Tumble Rescue Dog Dragged Me Back to Health, Happiness, and God for online ebook**

## **Sandy says**

I liked this book and the philosophy it conveyed. How happiness can be achieved by slowing down and really studying normal things. Gracie taught the author that it was ok to not rush life and that it was not God's plan for being so busy you can't enjoy life.

And lastly I guess I am prejudiced because I have a rescue dog named Gracie :)

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## **Christina Hamlett says**

Do we rescue dogs or do dogs rescue us? Certainly anyone who has ever brought a dog into their lives – and especially dogs from shelters – can attest to what a difference a cold nose, a warm heart, and boundless enthusiasm can make when you come home after a hard day. In her delightfully engaging new book, “Saved by Gracie,” author Jan Dunlap delivers a message about canine companionship that will resonate with dog lovers of all ages.

Her initial resistance to bring a 70 pound black lab mix into the household made me smile, recalling my husband's somewhat stern declaration, “We can go ahead and get a dog if you really want to but I do NOT want it to change anything about our daily routine or our travels.” The first moment he made eye contact with our beloved Lucy, however, it was pretty clear how fast she sized up which of her new parentals was going to be the easy one. Almost five years later, I'm still trying to figure out how 15 pounds of blond and white cuteness manages to not only hog the entire middle of a queen size bed but also manage to hog the blankets on winter nights.

As Dunlap so aptly illustrates in her anecdotes, dogs understand a lot more about us than we do about them – and possible even about each other. For as many dog training manuals as we go out and buy, it's our four-footed fur persons who generally end up training us to do their bidding and respond to their needs. Bringing home a new dog to a house that hasn't had one before is not unlike bringing home your first baby from the hospital. What's it going to eat? Where's it going to sleep? What are all those funny sounds it's making? Is this normal behavior? How do I keep it from getting bored? You can read up on these things, of course, and see what all of the experts say but the bottom line is that your new dog hasn't read the same books and is pretty much going to do whatever it wants and on its own schedule.

The plus side is that a dog will always make you feel as if you “The Most Interesting Person in the World” even if, by your own definition, you're doing something that's not interesting in the slightest. A dog just wants to be wherever you are because you are his/her pet that needs the sort of 24/7 protection only a dog can deliver. From the time wolves first crept near the campfires of primitive man to receive a piece of food or a scratch behind the ears, they have proven themselves to be fiercely loyal to the core. Even dogs that have been victims of cruelty and abuse never seem to relinquish their belief that human beings are worthy of forgiveness and redemption.

It's this honorable nature of the canine species that plausibly supports the underscored message of Dunlap's book that dogs are the emissaries of a higher power and have been sent to be companions whose love is unconditional. Dogs teach us to live in the moment, not stress about the past or the future. On walks, they cause us to slow down, to observe the beauty of our environment, and even to engage in conversation with total strangers we encounter along the path. Because of dogs – who are the best they can be – we are better people for having them in our lives.

As I write this review, Lucy is curled up in my lap, now and again lifting her head to look at the display of words on the screen. She was also in my lap for most of the time I was reading the book, now and again licking my face as if to express her approval of my reading material. If I left her at the keyboard for a moment to go get a cup of tea, I have no doubt she would vigorously add a postscript before I uploaded my comments: “Hi, Ms. Dunlap and Gracie. Your book was very good. Please write another one soon. Woof, Lucy.”

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## **Karen says**

Saved by Gracie

By

Jan Dunlap

### About the Book

There But for the Grace of Dog Go I . . . Author Jan Dunlap was suffering increasingly severe bouts of anxiety after a medical misdiagnosis slapped her in the face with an acute realization of the tenuous nature of human life. A degreed theologian, Jan found her personal faith in God and His promises severely shaken and her enthusiasm for life being replaced by growing fear and debilitating insecurity. Then a rescue-shelter black lab-mix by the name of Gracie came into her life as her daughter's new pet, and Jan determined to do whatever it took to provide both her daughter and the dog with the sense of security she herself no longer felt. She quickly discovered, however, that Gracie had her own agenda, and it was all dog. From chasing squirrels to jumping fences to the occasional roll in dead fish, Gracie taught Jan that life is for living, not dreading. As she began to realize that Gracie was helping her manage her anxiety, Jan also came to a new awareness of how a loving God provides healing through His own works of creation. Part memoir and part medical exploration of the truly healing gifts that God freely offers us through our interaction with animals and nature, *Saved by Gracie* is a story of God's redeeming love revealed at the paws of a dog.

### My Review

I just finished reading this sweet book!!! I read it in 2 days!!!

I wanted to read what GOD has done through a dog in Jan's life!!!

We have 2 dogs and a cat....and my sister Linda has 5 Beagles...all are rescues !!!

We live together with our husbands in the awesome mountains in North Georgia...

I even started a blog name [7dogsandacat.blogspot.com](http://7dogsandacat.blogspot.com)

There was so much I could relate to in this book that I was in awe of GOD our Father!!!

The anxiety, depression and struggles that Jan shares are very personal and true in too many people lives now a days... But by Gracie and GOD all things are possible!!!

On page 66 Jan says..."You had me at woof", which is used at an adoption place....love it!!! Then she says Matthew 6:8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."

How good is our GOD!!! The simplest things that we do not think of we need. And their need of us...HE works it all out...Jan shares physical facts about our interaction with animals and HIS creation that surrounds us.

On page 149 she shares a wonderful Scripture that is very important...

Matthew 6:31~34 " "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

I recommend this book to ALL!!! Get the book and adopt a dog!!!!!!

May God's Grace continue to engulf and use you for His Glory. In Jesus Name Amen.

### About Jan Dunlap

Jan Dunlap is the Minnesota author of the Bob White Birder Murder Mysteries, a laugh-out-loud series following the adventures of high school counselor/expert birder Bob White, who has a bad habit of finding bodies while he birds. Drawing on her own love of birds, her keen ear for dialogue and her interest in environmental concerns, Jan crafts murder mysteries peopled by characters so real, you'll want to invite them to dinner!

Jan's memoir "Saved by Gracie: How a rough-and-tumble rescue dog dragged me back to health, happiness, and God" recounts her reluctant adoption of a dog that quickly (and surprisingly!) helped her overcome a growing anxiety disorder. As a result, Jan speaks frequently at libraries, birding festivals, pet events, and women's groups about her books and the value of the human-nature bond.

A former college professor, Jan is now a multi-tasking full-time author, simultaneously plotting murder and walking Gracie.

She welcomes visitors to her website at [www.jandunlap.com](http://www.jandunlap.com)

I received this book from Jan in return of my honest review

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### Maryellen says

Jan Dunlap didn't want a dog. As a matter of fact, she was afraid of dogs. Her sixteen year old daughter and her husband wanted to go to the local shelter to look for a dog and there was no way that Jan was going to let them go without her. She had a plan! She was to be the voice of reason! She was to be the one whose "no vote" would veto their yes votes! Well, what's that they say? "Go ahead and make plans, God could use a good laugh!" God is laughing now because Jan and her family came home with a big black lab mix named Gracie.

After a health scare and a misdiagnosis, Jan, a degreed Theologian, was having a hard time coping. She is a woman of great faith and even those who have great faith can from time to time, lose their way. Leave it to a tomboy of a dog who had a rough start in life to teach Jan about security, faith, loyalty and fried-chicken fairies.

At a mere 155 pages, this book flies by. Ms. Dunlap has an adorable sense of humor (the kiddie pool story had me laughing out loud) and she also infuses some really great canine training advice. The advice that I took most to heart though came from her quotes from the Bible and the notion that we as humans feel much better when we allow ourselves to appreciate the nature that God has given us. Do yourself a favor, read this book~~but do it outside either in a park or in your own back yard or even on your lunch break where you can look up and see the blue sky and the green trees. Better yet, read it at the dog park! Hopefully when we all need a little grace in our lives, we'll find our own Gracie.

☆☆☆☆☆

*I won a copy of this book from a First Reads Giveaway on Goodreads. The opinions above are expressly my own.*

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### **Sarah Joy Freese says**

Cute little book. I loved the way Jan weaves together stories about her dog and her family, incorporated scripture, discussed science, and included information about dog training. She covered all the bases. :)

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### **Jordyn Redwood says**

Sometimes, I really do think that God spelled backward (being dog) was His wink-wink to humanity in naming our furry companions because I've heard more than one human say they understood God better from having a canine companion. They are always present. Always quick to forgive. Ever loving.

Saved by Gracie is a 50/50 mix of an initially reluctant dog owner and how it turned the author's self-focused ruminations about her mortality to a more open, outward adventurer and a lot of scientific evidence on how dogs improve the lives of their human hosts.

The stories are heartwarming and the reserach pretty interesing for me as a medical nerd.

A short enjoyable read for those who don't mind science mixed in with fun dog stories.

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### **Jessica says**

*Saved by Gracie* by Jan Dunlap tells the true-life story of the author's struggle with severe bouts of anxiety after a misdiagnosis causes her to face her own mortality and how a black lab mix helps her overcome her fears. I admit it. I have a soft spot for non-fiction books about animals. Overall, I liked this book. Not only did it delve into the latest research concerning the benefits of human-dog relationships, but it also shared some genuinely funny stories from a reluctant first-time dog owner. It's rather short and usually that doesn't bother me very much, but in this case the book felt incomplete to me. I would have loved to read more about Gracie's adventures (judging by the stories that are presented here, I'm sure she's had plenty!).

NOTE: I received a complimentary copy of this book in return for my honest review.

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## **D.A. Swanson says**

Saved By Gracie, by Jan Dunlap

Jan Dunlap has written a winner in this true story of a rescued dog named Gracie, whose unexpected restorative powers brings physical and mental health to her owner, along with a renewed faith in God. Gracie's love of life forges a human-animal bond with Jan that works miracles, including the defeat of Jan's own life-long fear of dogs and a growing anxiety disorder. Scripture passages help trace the spiritual component of the loving relationship between woman and dog as Jan's life is transformed. If you are a dog lover, or feel separated from God and the wonders of His creation, this well written account is for you!

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## **Jan says**

### **How true!**

As a rescue dog (actually two) companion, I so agree with J. Dunlap. When I walk With my friends, I examine the plants that they explore and while waiting for them to make their discoveries, I have seen beautiful sunrises and sunsets, gorgeous clouds and even rainbows. As the seasons change, the trees on the mountains change from green to gold, orange and red. So much beauty in God's universe and I am thankful I have been given the privilege to marvel at the wonder of it all. And I am so thankful for my furry friends! I love them both and know they both love me. What a blessing!

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## **Haley Meyers says**

I loved this book! I read it in two nights, it was that good. The book is wonderful how the author takes us on her journey that she had with Gracie at the time! Five stars with no doubt!

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## **Susan says**

An inspirational book for dog lovers!

When Jan Dunlap's teen-aged daughter began to experience bouts of insecurity that reminded her of her own increasing anxieties and depression, she reluctantly agreed to adopt a shelter dog. You see, said daughter had fallen in love with a black Lab mix at shelter dog adoption day.

No matter that Jan didn't like dogs. She was afraid of dogs and certainly had never wanted one of her own.

The resulting pet ownership growth curve resulted in Saved by Gracie.

As this self proclaimed "dog hater" learns how to be a dog owner, she finds that her anxiety issues disappeared in direct relationship to her increasing dog ownership skills. Through her growing relationship with Gracie, Dunlap rediscovered joy in life. And got her life back.

Dunlap's experience made her a believer that animals can be powerful healers. Plus, she discovered what so many of we dog lovers already know: dogs are good for us.

Many are the mimes floating around in cyberspace about rescue dogs with the tag line: who rescued who? Many are the dog lovers, like myself, who knew when we rescued our own shelter dogs, that those dogs were also rescuing ourselves.

Dunlap may have rescued Gracie from the shelter, but Gracie spiritually rescued Dunlap. The result is a joyful book of discovery about the magic and joy of dogs.

Saved by Gracie is an easy, enjoyable read for dog lovers. Plus, if you enjoyed Marley and Me by John Grogan, you'll definitely enjoy Saved by Gracie.

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## **D says**

The author, Jan, a college professor in her 51st year, develops an anxiety disorder of clinical proportions, and reluctantly agrees to allow her late-teen daughter adopt a rescue dog, Gracie.

As she predicts, she becomes the dog's primary caretaker and companion, possibly to some extent because the daughter is college-bound?

Jan has had a life-long fear of dogs, most especially large black dogs -of which Gracie is one.

The first year of Gracie's life with the family does not run smoothly.

But, in the author's own words, ultimately, "a rough and tumble rescue dog dragged me back to health, happiness and God."

There really is not much plot beyond the accounts of Jan and Gracie learning to live their life as a team. I found it entertaining, and believable.

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## **Sean Harding says**

It really felt like Christianity-lite, a story of owner and dog, with Christian verses and ideas thrown in to make it palatable and sellable to that market. If you can take the Bible verses out an the story still stands up, then what does it say about the story?

This one you really could take the verses out, have the same ideas and the same story of owner and dog,. That's fine but that is not what it was represented as being.

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## **angela yargus says**

### **Saved by Gracie**

Jan Dunlap does a superb job of aligning dog ownership with our relationship to our Creator. This is a great story for anyone from teens to senior citizens.

Having had a dog since very early childhood, right up to my being closing in on 80, and having a very senior rescued dog, recently I thought maybe this would be my last dog....but I already have another one in my view that I will take on now so that I can start including another bundle of joy in my life. I don't want to miss a



second without the love of a dog, or for a dog...my present love, Shadow will love the company!

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## **Connie says**

My mother and I love stories about dogs. I was very happy to be able to read an Arc because I thought this might make a good Mother's Day gift for her, and I was not disappointed.

The book tells about a rescue dog, Gracie, that was adopted by the author's family. Jan Dunlap, the author, who is afraid of dogs, went along with it because her sixteen-year-old daughter said that Gracie would be hers, and she would take it with her when she moved out someday. Her husband had many dogs while he was growing up and was excited about getting one.

Jan is left alone with Gracie during the day, something it seems that she had not really given much thought too, and she is forced to take her for walks. Her adventures with the dog are often funny, and she tells about her changes in attitude toward the dog she comes to love and how Gracie also helps her work through her problems with anxiety.

This isn't just a book filled with stories about Gracie, Jan also adds some research about how dogs benefit humans and tells about how the dog brings her into a closer walk with God.

I loved all aspects of the book. There is a lot packed into this it.

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