

The Cat Lover's Devotional

M. R. Wells
Connie Fleishauer
Dottie P. Adams



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Foreword

How Cats Help “Purr-fect” Us



Some months ago a friend shared a story about an encounter with a cat that I will never forget. She'd never seen the starving stray before, but she went to get it a bowl of milk. When she returned, the tiny cat was attempting to nurse on itself. God whispered to my friend's heart, “That's what you do when you try to meet your own needs all by yourself instead of coming to Me.”

God intends us to be in relationship. That's where love happens. That's where our character grows. That's the canvas on which He lovingly places each of us to “purr-fect” us into His one-of-a-kind masterpiece for eternity. Part of that canvas involves our kitties—for those of us who love them. God can use them to show us more about ourselves, each other, and Him—if we have eyes to see.

Like us, cats can be capricious. Like us, they can have a strong independent streak. Like us, they need their master...at times more than they know. And just as we long to hold, guide, comfort, and protect our beloved kitties and help them grow and thrive, God longs to do this for us.

Being “purr-fected” in love is a journey. We have shared part of ours on these pages. We have shared how God uses the kitties we know and love to work in us for our good and His glory. We pray He will use their tales and ours to enrich your life too, and help you know Him better.

Meet the Kitties



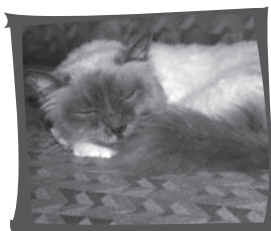
BARNEY WELLS had a deep chocolate coat and beautiful green eyes. Of all my cats, he was the biggest talker. He meowed for his due in life and for release, when it was time.

BO WELLS is a handsome flame point Ragdoll I call my giant plush toy. He loves his food, his water bowl, and rubbing against his mommy's feet. He had to slay some "giants" to join my family, but now he thinks he rules the roost.



GABRIEL WELLS was once and always an alley cat. At nine years of age my black-and-white buddy vanished from my life—but not from my heart.

MISTY WELLS was a beautiful blue point Birman. She was small in stature but had a huge spirit. She demanded respect from the larger cats and much larger humans in her life, even in her twilight years.





MUFFIN WELLS is a gorgeous seal point Ragdoll who looks and acts like a princess with paws. She used to chase the small round shadow of my watch face as if it were real. It wasn't, but my love for her is, and she likes nothing better than to cuddle with her mama.

KITTY FLEISHAUER was a beautiful black cat with white on her tail and paws. She mothered not only her own kittens, but others that came to our farm. She also tried to protect her people, following our family all over our property up to her own personal boundary lines. This kitty truly held each of our hearts.



MIDNIGHT ADAMS can go in one split second from purring in ecstasy to pouncing on the hand that motivated the purrs. When this "black beauty" patrols her domain, she reminds us of a panther on the prowl.

MOOCH ADAMS is a gorgeous gray tabby with white highlights on his paws, face, and chest. He plays with toys more than any other cat we've had and is quite a catcher. He loves hanging out with us and whenever he sees us, he runs to greet us—meowing all the way.



Part I



Nestling in God's Arms



MIDNIGHT



Midnight's Not-So-Rapid Transit

Relationships Take Time

*We always have time enough, if
we will but use it aright.*

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

I love sitting at the dining room table on spring mornings, watching the stark darkness turn into a misty dawn as the birds sing to announce the new day. It's a great time to be alone with the Lord. The house is quiet because I'm the only "early bird" up besides the real ones chirping outside.

As I sat praying one particular morning I heard a loud thump on the window behind me. It was Midnight, asking to come in for breakfast. She always bangs her head against the windowpane to get my attention. Then she rubs her nose against the window frame and meows softly, knowing I will come outside to fetch her. I call this her "rapid transit," even though she could come in much more quickly through the cat door. But it's not the quickness she desires—it's the contact.

As Midnight softly meowed and rubbed that morning I pulled on a jacket and headed outdoors to perform the rite we both love. I cozy up to the air conditioner, which is exactly the height of my shoulders. She steps from the machine to my shoulder as I guide her. She drapes

herself around me with her front paws on my left shoulder, her belly nestling the back of my neck, and her back paws hanging down over my right shoulder. As her face presses against me, she purrs into my left ear. I understand that this is her ride to her food bowl—but it's so much more. Not only do I get a smell of the morning air, I have precious moments of special closeness with my “living fur shawl.” It's a joy to have this relationship with one of God's little four-foots—a joy I treasure!

Like my cat, my youngest grandchild also loves to cuddle. He and his brother and their parents live with us right now. I often spend part of the morning upstairs working on lectures for the Bible study class I teach. Eli and Jayden are awake by the time I come downstairs. Jayden (age two and a half) is content to smile, call to me, and continue his play. But Eli (18 months) wants more. He rushes over to me, crying “Maw-Maw!” Then he tugs at my clothes till I pick him up so he can snuggle. As soon as he's in my arms, he lays his head tightly against me, his ear pressed against my chest. He stays that way for what is a long time for a toddler. It's a joy to have this special time with him, and I treasure it too!

I also treasure the special relationship time I spend with God. Most mornings I go to Him in prayer, even if it's just to ask His blessing on my family. I spend a few moments reading the Bible, even if it's just one verse to connect my mind to Him. I call this “having coffee with Jesus.”

I get my coffee and intentionally ask Jesus to sit with me as if He were here in the flesh. I picture Him sitting right across the table. I talk about the previous day or the day to come. I weep with Him over hardships I'm facing or the suffering of others. I laugh and rejoice with Him over answered prayer. I share my needs and thank Him for being my friend. Sometimes I imagine Him smiling back at me, and other times I believe He brings a verse of Scripture into my mind to correct me or give me hope or courage.

Building close relationships takes time. It must be intentional. It can't only happen when it's convenient. Jesus lived this out when He walked the earth. He called each of His disciples and poured His life into them for three years. And He always took time to pray and be with His Father in heaven.

Midnight intentionally bumps the window to begin our special

time together. I intentionally respond, even if she's interrupting something pressing. When Eli wants to snuggle, I take time to enjoy his toddler love, even if I'm in a hurry. I have coffee with Jesus in the same way. Whether it's convenient or not, I take the necessary time not just to go through my prayers, but to be with my Lord. I believe He delights to hear me purring in His ear as I start the day with Him!



In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly (Psalm 5:3).

Consider This:

Do you set aside time to be with God each day? If so, how does it enhance your relationship? If not, would you be willing to try?

Perry's Good Shepherd

Be a Shepherd for God

*The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.*

HENRY W. BAKER

Perry is a very special kitty, the first to live indoors with my in-laws, Harold and Doris. They got him from relatives who could no longer keep him. He is totally enjoying his new life as he chooses where to sleep and whose lap to jump on for some pampering. This gorgeous fluffy orange cat with bright peridot eyes knows just what he wants and how to get it. He loves Harold and Doris, but like all ornery kids he knows how to work them.

On one particular evening when I'd been visiting with them, Perry decided to be a bit more playful than anyone desired. When we walked out the back door, Perry slipped out behind us and followed. He darted under my car to hide. I saw him first and began to call him, but there was no way he was going to obey me. This was playtime. He raced to the back of the vehicle and sprinted down the long driveway.

Harold and Doris live in the country, but their home is near a

popular road where cars drive fast. Perry could have been in great danger. He would have had little chance of survival on this road in the dark of night. Fortunately, his faithful master took care of him. As I started to go after the truant, Harold stopped me. He said, "Cover me with the flashlight and I'll go get him."

Although Perry was ornery, perhaps this cat had some "horse sense." He got close to the road but turned aside. He darted into the pasture at the east end of the farm. Perry slunk down in the high grass while Harold, age 82, tried to sneak up on the mischievous feline in his stocking feet in the dark. I felt bad that Harold would not let me join him in the pursuit, but this was his cat, his "child," his responsibility. He was Perry's "good shepherd," and he was acting as any good shepherd would. Giving up or giving in was never an option.

Finally, Perry seemed to realize that Harold was in charge (or he chose to let Harold think he was). Perry hunkered down and let his human grab him. I could tell that even though Harold was tired and his stocking feet were muddy, he was pleased to have Perry back safely in his arms.

Harold probably just thought of this as another one of many chases he had with Perry. But to me, it was more. It was a reenactment of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. In Matthew 18:12-14, Jesus talks about the shepherd who left the rest of his flock to search for the one little lost sheep that had wandered off.

Many years ago, I was just such a lost sheep. Just before entering high school, I had been making some very poor choices. I had accepted Jesus as my personal Savior when I was six years old, and I had gone to church all my life. But at this time, I decided to explore my small world in ways I didn't need to. I had chosen to be with some "friends" who weren't true friends, and we had done some things we needed to confess.

My older brother talked to me about what I was doing. He asked if I really wanted to go to high school with that baggage. He stayed with me until I prayed and promised that I would try to obey God and behave like His child. Darrell was my shepherd at that point, and many other times through my teenage years. When I was lost, he went looking for me till he found me. He'd bring me home and nurture me the way a brother or a shepherd would.

The story of the lost sheep had great meaning to me as I was growing up. I loved thinking about the caring shepherd picking up the scared, tired little lamb in his strong arms and carrying it home. I still take comfort in this parable today. It is a way of telling us that we will never be left alone. No matter what our age, if we choose to run off by ourselves, like Perry did that night, our Good Shepherd will always go after us and bring us home in His loving arms, if we allow Him to.



Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Luke 15:4-7).

Consider This:

Have you ever strayed from God? What lured you away? How did your Good Shepherd pursue you? Did you let Him carry you home? If not, would you like to do that right now? Is there someone God might want you to shepherd for Him?