



All God's Creatures

DAILY DEVOTIONS

for ANIMAL LOVERS

2023



September



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SEPTEMBER 1

Sweet Little Old Man

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

—2 CORINTHIANS 4:16 (NIV)

I USED TO CALL my sister Kristy's Yorkie, whose name is Joey, Little HSD (Highly Sensitive Dog). He barked at everyone who came to the door, had a delicate system that couldn't handle most dog treats, and had such intense separation anxiety that Kristy couldn't even hold her purse without him whimpering. I bonded with Joey through our mutual sensitivity and my love of teaching him simple tricks.

A few months ago, Kristy's family went on a vacation and left Joey with me and my parents for the first time in a year. I noticed that Joey wasn't as responsive as usual. When I held out a treat and said, "Joey, shake," I had to give the command three times.

"I think he's getting deaf," Mom said.

His eyes looked cloudy, too, like he might have cataracts. Whenever Joey came inside after a potty break, he wandered around before finding the stairs and running up.

Kristy's Highly Sensitive Dog was becoming a little old man.

We discovered a benefit in his poor hearing: he wasn't as high-strung. He didn't have as much energy to bounce like a pogo stick when he wanted a treat (for him, that includes bread and Cheerios). As sad as it is to see Joey get old, I am enjoying this calmer version of him. His ears and eyes and possibly his memory might be fading, but inside, he seems a bit more mature and peaceful. Most of the time anyway.

Looking at Joey brings to mind a sobering reality: I will be old someday too. To kids, I am probably old already. So what kind of older person do I want to be? I want to follow examples like Joey and grow into a calmer, even gentler version of the person God created me to be.—Jeanette Hanscome

Walk of Faith: Write a note of encouragement to an older person or couple who inspires you.

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SEPTEMBER 2

Sammy's Tree Frogs

You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.

—PSALM 18:35 (NKJV)

WHEN MY WIFE, Sandra, and I lived in Florida, we became familiar with hurricanes, alligators, and oddly enough, tree frogs. Our long-hair gray cat, Sammy, introduced us to the latter.

We had just been through two hurricanes. We had spent hours in our walk-in closet with our three cats. The cats loved it, Sandra suggested installing a cappuccino machine, and I was the token closet grouch. Thankfully the sandbags along our front door had prevented flooding in our first-floor apartment.

Sleep deprived, we went to bed early. A rhythmic tapping awakened me. I staggered out to the living room. Sammy, on his hind legs, was scratching at the window. Six tree frogs had glued themselves to the window. Sammy was frantic. Desperate for some peace, I put on shoes and my ragged bathrobe (don't judge, it's comfortable), grabbed a plastic fly swatter, and went outside.

The tiny amphibians clung to the window by their toe pads. I could not get myself to swat those cute little guys away. I went inside and moved Sammy to the bedroom. The next night the green window-clingers were back, and so was Sammy. That morning I had read that a spritz of water and vinegar on a frog would break its hold. Armed with my newfound knowledge, I walked outside and began spraying. It worked! The frogs gently slid down and then jumped away. I was happy. Sammy, not so much.

I felt oddly at peace after my de-frogging, and I suddenly realized why. The “what-if” scenarios leading up to the hurricanes—what would happen to us, our cats, our apartment, our car—had left me feeling helpless. In His ingenious way, the Lord allowed me to take charge and feel in control of at least one situation. And no human, animal, or amphibian was hurt! —Terry Clifton

Walk of Faith: Are you overwhelmed by a situation or problem beyond your control? Today, pray and pick one thing, large or small, that you can accomplish or solve, knowing that the Lord has everything else under His control.

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SEPTEMBER 3

The Song of the Whip-poor-will

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies
proclaim the work of his hands.*

—PSALM 19:1 (NIV)

ONE OF MY favorite memories of my Grandpaw Jim is the way he would ask me every spring whether or not the whip-poor-will that lived near my house had arrived for another season. He loved whip-poor-wills and would sometimes stand outside his own house, mimicking their calls in hopes of getting the birds to answer. Sometimes it worked well. Other times it didn't.

One year, in a hilarious turn of events, my grandfather stepped outside on a warm spring evening and called to the whip-poor-wills, and something else answered—a mockingbird. This mockingbird became the bane of my grandfather's existence as it began to answer each time he tried to find the whip-poor-will. Just imagine his frustration when he realized what was happening!

When we lost my grandfather last year, the family gathered at his home, and I had to smile when I stepped out of my car and heard the song of the whip-poor-will. Knowing it was out of season, I looked up to see a mockingbird perched on a light post. While the scene brought fond memories of my grandfather to mind, it also inspired me with a greater spiritual truth—that the resonance of my own life can create echoes through the world. Those around me will learn the “song” I am singing, and this song will become my legacy, continuing on in the world even after I am gone. The Bible tells us that creation *declares* the glory of God. The question then becomes, What kind of song am I singing? —Ashley Clark

*Walk of Faith: Consider the song your life is proclaiming. When
others pick up the tune, will it sound like the Lord to them?
Will your song be pleasant to the ear?*

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SEPTEMBER 4

Retired Hero Dog

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

—MATTHEW 25:21 (NKJV)

AS I PULLED around the large circular driveway, my friend exited her home with a new friend by her side. A ferocious-looking German shepherd eyed me up and down as I exited my car. I walked timidly toward the house as the dog let out a low growl that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

"Quiet, Thor," my friend said firmly.

At her command, Thor relaxed a bit and panted quietly at her side.

"So this is the rescue dog you mentioned," I said.

"This is Thor. He arrived last week. He's very well trained. Worked in Afghanistan with the military. Now, he can rest from his labor."

Although I trusted my friend, the dog's military background hardly set me at ease. Not usually intimidated by dogs, I have a healthy respect for canines with big teeth who have worked with the police or military.

"How did you come to adopt a military working dog?" I asked.

"We learned from a story in the paper that Thor's trainer had been killed in action. Thor needed a home with no children and with experienced dog owners. That's us. Since I spend most of my day at home writing, I was picked. Quite an honor, really, to host a military hero dog."

Over the course of our business meeting, Thor sat quietly near my friend's feet. I thought how nice it was for the dog to have earned a comfortable retirement. It also made me think about the goal of every Christian—to finish our earthly race well and hear the Savior tell us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."—David L. Winters

Heavenly Father, show me how to please You today. Remind me to respond in love regardless of the situation. Encourage me and strengthen my resolve to serve You with gladness. Amen.

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SEPTEMBER 5

Small Wonders of Majesty

Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

—1 CHRONICLES 29:11 (NIV)

OUR FAMILY WAS sitting on the porch swing enjoying the summer breeze when my husband pointed to something on the swing's chain next to him. We quietly leaned forward to see a large praying mantis clinging to the chain. We watched with bated breath, not wanting to scare it away. We sat and quietly chatted for the next half hour as we watched the insect climb up and down the chain. It seemed unbothered by our presence, and we were grateful to observe its slow, precise moments.

We wouldn't have noticed it had my husband not pointed it out. Too often, we move through life unaware of the beautiful blessings surrounding us each day. The gift of sitting and watching an insect for half an hour is something I do not want to take for granted. Too often, I define myself by my productivity. I start my morning with a checklist and measure my worth by how much I get done by the day's end.

I'm learning to stop my ceaseless striving for productivity and simply enjoy the gifts of this beautiful world when I see them. Each creature displays the majesty of my Creator God. To sit and soak in the simple awe of watching a unique bug like a praying mantis in such proximity is an act of worship. God does not measure me by all the things I get done in a day. Instead, He invites me each day to enjoy Him and the world He has made and to marvel in His greatness, power, glory, majesty, and splendor. I think I'll go out and sit for a while in search of another beautiful bug just to watch.—Amelia Rhodes

Walk of Faith: *Slow down today and observe small details around you. Then take time to tell God how beautiful they are and thank Him for His creativity.*

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heartwarming
animal
devotions.

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