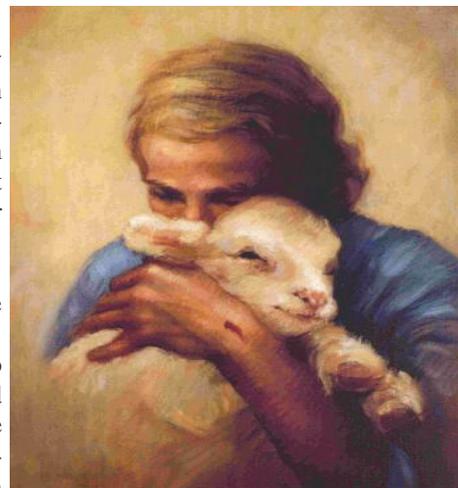


In my life, through various trials, I have learned many things. I have found that through difficult times the Lord often uses others to communicate messages to us. Some messages go ignored, but others shed light on situations that seem bleak and hopeless. Sometimes I look back with wonder and amazement.

Though many a kind human word or action has come to my emotional and spiritual rescue, I have found that some of the most profound messages of all come from those who cannot speak. I'm sure many of you remember the stories of Dr. Doolittle talking to the animals, yet many times the animals silently talk back through their actions and their messages to unnoticed. I began listening to the animals several years ago and have found that people are not the only vehicle the Lord uses to teach us lessons of great worth.

A few years ago, after a chain of stressful and debilitating events, I felt as though I was approaching a complete melt down. I was mentally and physically exhausted, frightened, and spiritual drained.

My feelings ran a gamut of cynical emotions and I hung my head in despair. Suddenly cold wet noses surrounded me. I looked up to find dozens of little eyes peering at me with concern and love. Max, a senior citizen and my dear friend, settled into my lap. As I began to stroke his old and feeble head, my mind journeyed back to the day I found him many years ago. I had seen him around our end of town. He was an unmistakable sight with his scruffy gray and white coat and unusual ears; one pointing straight up, the other out sideways.



One night just hours before a nor'easter was about to roll in, I went out on the porch to be sure the crock pot was working to keep the feral animals drinking water from freezing. There was Max gnawing on canned food I had placed out earlier now frozen. I began to talk to him and he just stared up at me. He looked so tired and forlorn. He wasn't alarmed at my presence and actually seemed grateful for the attention. I picked him up with ease and brought him inside. Upon examining him, I could see that he had a severe ear infection, an upper respiratory infection, and a high fever. He had abscesses on his body from what appeared to be fight wounds and his gums were swollen and bleeding from further infection. Nevertheless, he swirled around my legs purring and content as if he had just entered heaven. I'll never forget watching him and thinking that he must have a constitution and will of iron, but what was even more remarkable was his loving and gentle spirit. It was innocent and unscathed after facing such devastating pain and suffering. He never gave up and I know it was God's love and compassion for him that had led him to my door that stormy night. God knew that his old body could take no more and he also knew that Max would be a great friend and inspiration to me through the years ahead.

Max's story is too common among abandoned and homeless animals, especially through the harsh winter months. These courageous animals have taught me lessons about strength, faith, and determination.

We shouldn't let fatigue, pain, or hopelessness force us to give up our goals. We have all at sometime in our life, wondered why we have been placed in difficult and at times, almost unbearable situations. What we need to remember is that our very weakness allows

***“people are not the only vehicle the Lord uses to teach us lessons of great worth.”***

God to strengthen us moment by moment. We should not allow trouble to diminish our faith and realize that sometimes there is a purpose to our hardships. They cause us to look beyond this brief life; they prove our faith to others; and they give God the opportunity to demonstrate his great power and unconditional love for us. Only he has the ability to sustain us, through our worst trials, by his amazing grace and mercy. We can have confidence in the knowledge that we will never be asked to carry more

than we can bear 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:7-11 “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. God promises to walk with us through our trials and never abandon us. Hebrews 13:5 Jesus said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” When we put our trust in God, he can turn our pain into triumph.

I believe that God has a tremendous amount of love for all of his creations, not even a sparrow is forgotten in his sight. Luke 12:6.

***“Lessons of Great Worth” is a true, factual story depicting the life of the House of Hope residents and their impact on our lives.***

As the Lord uses me to rescue and care for his little ones, I know that he will continue to use them to teach me valuable lessons through my lifetime. Sometimes the smallest voice echoes the greatest wisdom when inspired by the creator. ▲

(This story is dedicated to Lois Martinelli, Rose Schipke, Donald Depot, Ted and Linda Kronenberger, and Marie Cicotti.) Who have been such a great inspiration to me. With **GOD** all things are possible. May God bless you and hold you in his perfect healing care. ◆

**LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND.**