

## Ask the Animals

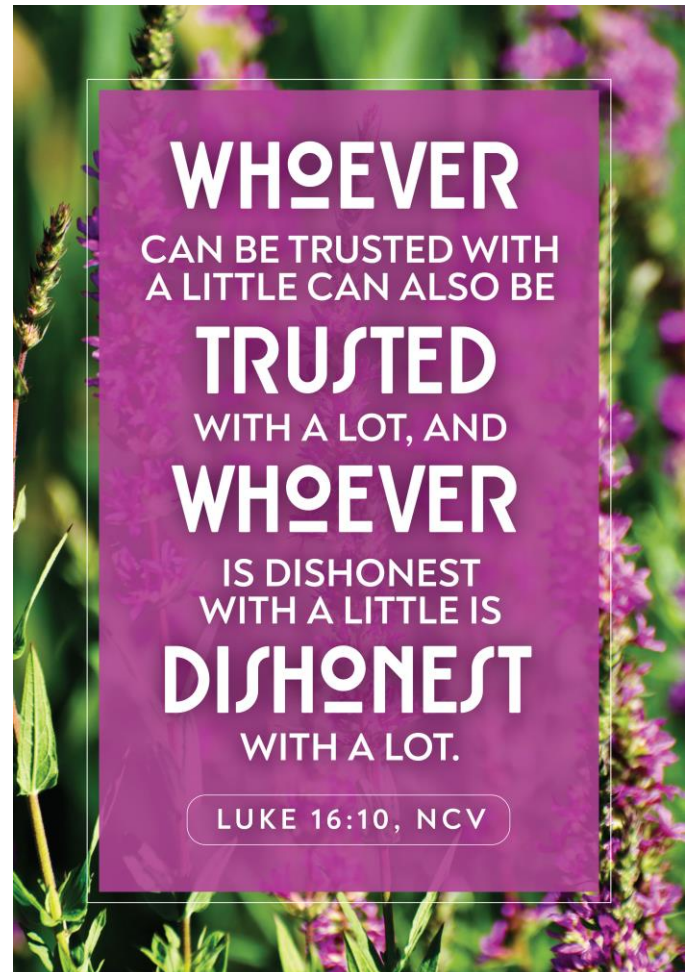
By Jean LaRosa

I've got a special spot where I do my morning devotions. It's a table on the second floor of my house, in front of a window that overlooks my side yard and a patch of woods. Sometimes I see animals or birds out the window while I am reading, praying, or meditating—and sometimes they seem to be looking right back at me, as if they are trying to tell me something. It could be a bird or squirrel on the roof, or one of the neighborhood cats, or occasionally a deer. It has happened frequently enough that I keep an eye out for them now.

One morning recently I was sitting at that table doing some devotional reading, and I came across this passage from Job that made me pause and reflect:

*"But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:7-10 NIV)* Job spoke these words to his three friends after one of them had given Job a self-righteous lecture about his predicament. Job told them that even the animals understand God's sovereignty, that he is in control of everything that happens. And I wondered—what is it that the animals can teach me about my Creator? What might I want to ask the animals if I could?

This summer Cindy Bills guided the women in the Perisseia group through a discussion of two of C.S. Lewis' books which had animals as leading characters: "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe," and "Prince Caspian." I enjoyed reading these books again and was especially



struck by the roles the Talking Beasts played. They seemed to have a better understanding of Aslan (the mighty lion and Christ figure) than the humans did. They followed Aslan with unswerving devotion and faith. The Beasts didn't understand all of Aslan's ways, but they trusted in his character. They knew he was good.

Job suggests that the creatures God made—the birds, the animals, and the fish—have an awareness of God and His sovereignty, just as the Talking Beasts of Narnia did. And although imagination is required, I can imagine that the animals are servants of God and move in accordance with His purposes. Perhaps we can learn something from them.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used birds  
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## "Ask the Animals," continued...

to illustrate God's care and concern for his creation. He tells his followers, *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."* (Matthew 6:26 NIV)

I've often remembered this simple reminder when I stand at the kitchen sink looking out the window at the seemingly carefree birds. Unlike me, the birds don't worry about tomorrow.

I volunteer at an animal shelter. I help clean the cat rooms every Friday and often interact with the same cats from the time they arrive at the shelter until they get adopted. In some cases, that's only a few days, but in other cases it might be quite a while, long enough to develop a relationship. There's a grey cat that I've been taking care of for a few months, and up until my last visit, she wasn't really interested in me. She mostly ignored me when I went about my cleaning duties. I was a predictable presence in her life but not a source of comfort to her. But yesterday when I sat down for a moment, she surprised me by coming up to me, seeking affection. She had finally decided she could trust me. It brought me joy when she decided to approach me. I was curious about what had changed for her. Perhaps she had just observed me long enough to know that I might be safe. Today, I'm thinking about my relationship with God. Like some of the cats I work with, I have trust issues. I sometimes find it hard to trust in God's loving care for me, especially when life is chaotic. But after years of observing Him at work in my life, I know that He is good. And I imagine it brings Him joy when I put my trust in Him.

So, consider the birds of the air, or the fish in the sea, or the wild creatures you see out your window, or even the dog or cat lounging in your living room. Do they have something to teach you about God? What might you want to ask them if you could?

*"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."* (Psalm 150:4 NIV)

**"Time spent with cats  
is never wasted."**

Sigmund Freud



## Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Elizabeth MacQueen | September 1  |
| Dmitri Morozova    | September 1  |
| Anna Yang          | September 11 |
| Jessie Yang        | September 14 |
| Jean Warner        | September 15 |
| Yuhung He          | September 19 |
| Emily MacQueen     | September 23 |
| Elena Morozova     | September 26 |

## Financial Update

(Through July 31, 2026)

|         | Actual      | Budget    |
|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Income  | \$97,031.64 | \$103,250 |
| Expense | \$127,200   | \$103,250 |

*"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"*

Philippians 4:19

## Perisseia

Our women's growth group will begin a Fall Series on Thursday evening, September 24, 7:00-8:30 pm, in the Chapel House. We will be using C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* to identify Biblical principles of the Lord's sanctifying work in us and then apply those principles to our daily lives of faith. All women are welcome! No commitment or preparation is required. For more information, contact Cindy Bills (cynthialbills@gmail.com).

## Elders' Corner

By Darrell S. Bernheisel

When I was a kid in the 1970s, one of my favorite television shows was *Emergency!*, which ran for six seasons. The series followed a crew of Los Angeles paramedics as they responded to accidents, emergencies, and life-threatening situations. Of course, before the crew could spring into action, someone had to dial 9-1-1. That call set everything in motion, and from there the story would unfold.

Thinking back on that show reminds me what a comfort it is to know that medical help is only a phone call away. That call can summon trained professionals who are experienced, knowledgeable, and ready to respond when people are in a moment of need.

As I've raised children, navigated a career, walked through the illness and eventual death of my mother, grown older, and endured countless sleepless nights worrying about one thing or another, I've discovered just how much I need help myself. The Bible makes it clear that God's help is never far away. Yet the mystery of how that help arrives can be even more remarkable than we imagine.

Consider the reality that there is an unseen spiritual world, and that God sends angels to aid and serve those who belong to Him. In a sense, we have our own literal 9-1-1 reference in the book of Psalms. Psalm 91:11 declares, *"For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."* The entirety of Psalm 91 reminds us of God's promises of protection, comfort, and freedom from fear amid danger and uncertainty.

I must admit that I do not often think about angels as part of God's perfect plan. Perhaps I should be more appreciative of God's creative and loving ways of sustaining us, strengthening us, and intervening on our behalf. Hebrews

1:14 asks, *"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"* This passage highlights the supremacy of Jesus and His use of heavenly beings to accomplish His purposes. Scripture teaches that angels worship Him (Hebrews 1:6), serve as His messengers (Revelation 1:1), and protect His people (Psalm 91:11).

It would be extraordinary if our eyes were opened like those of Elisha's frightened servant. In 2 Kings 6, the servant awoke to find the city surrounded by an enemy army. Filled with fear, he cried out, *"Alas, my master! What shall we do?"* (v. 15).

What follows is one of the great "drop-the-mic" moments in Scripture. Elisha responded, *"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* Then he prayed, *"Lord, please open his eyes that he may see."* The Lord answered that prayer, and suddenly the young man saw the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha (vv. 16-17). What seemed like defeat was a moment of divine protection.

I think there is an important lesson here. We should be careful not to put God in a box or limit how He works. I know I often do. While I used the idea earlier of a 9-1-1 call as a metaphor, perhaps God's help is even closer. Perhaps He is already present when we cannot feel Him. Perhaps He is already at work when we cannot see Him. Perhaps, before I even cry out, *"What shall I do?"* He has already surrounded me with His provision and protection.

If my eyes were opened like the servant's, perhaps I too would see the majesty of God's heavenly host, ready and willing to accomplish His purposes. Until then, I pray that I will trust His Word, rest in His promises, and remember that God is far greater than anything I can comprehend.

## Annual Children's Sunday School Picnic at The Taylor's



## 5-Day Club in July



## A Visit to Gospel of Grace Orphanage in Kenya

By Lise Hill



In June, my 17-year-old grandson, Sebastian, and I had the opportunity to visit the Gospel of Grace orphanage in Kisii, Kenya.

It is an orphanage and missionary outreach founded by John and Kristin Jacobsen and Pastor Hassan Marungu.

Over the past three years, Gospel of Grace has grown and now cares for 30 children. Two widows



are also provided with a home and food. Two cement dormitories, two sets of latrines, a kitchen, and a study room have been built. This past

year, a chicken coop was added, and the hens now provide one boiled egg each day for every person at the orphanage.



Gospel of Grace provides a safe and loving home for these children, many of whom previously lived on the streets. Each child is provided with a bed, food, clothing, a school uniform, schoolbooks, and school fees.



Two of the girls, Sheilah and Faith, recently graduated and did very well on their final examinations. They have chosen to remain at Gospel of Grace to help care for the

younger girls and assist with other needs, including sometimes preparing meals for as many as 40 people. They are quite happy to help, serve as wonderful examples for the younger girls, and are paid a small salary.

Please keep the children and the Gospel of Grace mission in your prayers. Ongoing needs include assistance with the children's school fees, clothing and food, and emergency medical needs or hospitalization expenses. Gospel of Grace is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For additional information, please contact Kristin Jacobsen at [kristinarizona@gmail.com](mailto:kristinarizona@gmail.com) or 928-925-9664.

## Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in and among us*



By Cindy Bills

### Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow....

September! Ready or not, here it comes.... For some of us, September is a welcome change; for others of us, the arrival of fall means unwelcome schedules and pressures. Welcome or not, the changing of seasons is a reminder that our lives are punctuated by times of transition.

There is no doubt that we are created in the context of rhythms: In the beginning, God created the light and separated it from the darkness, creating day and night. The seasons reflect the ebb and flow of life on a planet created to teem with life. And when the LORD created man and woman in His image, to exercise sovereignty over His glorious creation, times of work and times of rest certainly came with the territory, eventually becoming the Sabbath. Our brains welcome both the variety and predictability that come with these rhythms.

But with the fall came a broken creation, and while rhythms remain, living as fallen creatures in a fallen world means that the rhythms of our lives are punctuated with transitions that often offer a mix of blessing and challenge. Research has shown that even the happiest of transitions—marriage, a move to a desired new home, starting at the college of choice, a wonderful new job—are associated with significant stress. The fear and shame that Adam and Eve encountered as soon as they took the forbidden fruit has become part of our spiritual DNA. “Am I good enough?” “Do I really belong here?” “Can I make this work?” “What if they don’t like me?”

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## “Further Up and Further In,” continued...

It can be difficult to embrace the opportunities represented by a time of transition when those opportunities are conjoined with unforeseen challenges and pitfalls. But there is value in the humble acknowledgement that we don't have complete control of our situation and circumstances. That humble acknowledgement becomes an earnest invitation from the Lord to seek His face and His presence in our lives.

King David comes to mind as an excellent model for us to consider. Scripture is quite clear that David was a fallen creature, subject to his own dysfunctional strategies for dealing with fear and shame. But he was also a man after God's own heart! After being anointed King of Israel by Samuel, David spends the better part of the next ten years not on the throne but battling Philistines and hiding in the wilderness from King Saul who is determined to murder him. These are the hardest of times, unanticipated transitions and undeserved trials. Many of David's Psalms include the complaints and pleas that David brought before the Lord. But invariably these Psalms of suffering conclude with the acknowledgement of and praise for a good and mighty God.

In the book of I Samuel, we read about David's faithful habit of seeking the Lord before choosing a path or direction. And even when David becomes King of Israel, he continues to seek the LORD before continuing to battle the Philistines. One of my favorite pieces of Israelite history is the account recorded in II Samuel 7:8-29. Nathan the prophet comes to the newly crowned King David with a message from the LORD, proclaiming the LORD's covenant with David and promising David His protection and blessing. This highlights and underscores David's transition from being a fugitive struggling to survive in the wilderness to the King of Israel under the protection of God Almighty. And David's response? He does not walk out the door and stride through

the streets, surveying his realm. Instead, he sits before the LORD, questioning his worth before His Creator and extolling the goodness and greatness of the One who has blessed him so richly.

To be sure, King David lived a long time ago, in a culture quite foreign to us. But the LORD God is eternal, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We would do well to follow David in seeking the Lord at all times and especially in times of transition. May we do so for our good and His glory!

*“Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken; and with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever.” (II Samuel 7:28-29)*

*Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or [cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com) to continue the dialogue...*



**If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:**

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