

Afraid of God? Lessons from the Cats...

This article was written by Dan Hitz, Executive Director of Reconciliation Ministries, a member ministry of Restored Hope Network. Dan is a sexual abuse survivor and began his own journey out of homosexuality in 1984. He has served as ministry director since 2003. You can find more articles on sexual abuse recovery in the [archives section](#) of our website at www.recmin.org. Special thanks to Dan's daughter for helping with this article and providing the pictures. Oh, and for bringing the cats to our house too!



My daughter had a security job guarding a storage lot for one of the big three automakers. Under the rows and rows of shiny new vehicles protected by a security team and a 7000 volt electric fence, there was an entirely different world. Cats. Yes, cats. Their world was nothing like the protective world of the beautiful cars and trucks. Their world was in the gravel. Instead of the protection of the security team, they were threatened

by coyotes and huge rats. Cat life was very dangerous. The cars were carefully guarded and accounted for. Great care was used to get them to their destination. The cats were a different story. They were on their own. Them against the world. And that world was deadly.

The Lord showed me a lot of lessons from the cats. Lessons that were good, yet unfortunate, examples of how the cats' lives were similar to the life of an abuse survivor.

Enter my animal loving daughter. Somehow those mangy cats stole her heart. I remember the night she brought a bag of cat food to work because she noticed that they were skin and bones. The cats noticed the food. They were desperate. A cat's gotta eat. Initially they didn't want anything to do with the benevolent being that brought them the food. When they noticed her, they would run. She kept reaching out to them. They kept running. After about a week, the fluffy one decided to stop running. It let this benevolent creature touch it. Unlike the coyotes and rats, this being's touch was comforting. It was safe at a distance.

The skinny cat thought differently. Its size suggested that life in the same gravel world was somehow more difficult for it than life for fluffy cat. It needed the food that the benevolent creature provided, but it had zero trust that this creature would be any different than the other creatures that tormented it. At one point my daughter tried to reach out to it. It freaked out and ran away. Unfortunately, while it was running from her it caught one of its paws in a fence and got hurt. In skinny cat's mind, the creature caused the injury. The heart of the benevolent creature had compassion knowing that life would be so much better for skinny cat if he would just stop running and let her help him. There were other cats in the yard, but they stayed even further away than skinny cat.

My daughter kept feeding them – reaching out to them – to gain their trust. After two weeks, they trusted the benevolent creature enough to enter her guard shack. The door closed behind them and they were in her domain. It was different from the gravel. There was heat. It was warm. My daughter kept caring for them, feeding them. Reaching out to them. Fluffy cat dared to let her hold him. Skinny cat kept resisting. I kinda wonder if skinny cat was watching to see if fluffy cat's trust would lead to his demise. Skinny cat learned from sad experience that trust is dangerous.

A new day came along. My daughter heard that management was changing things up at the storage lot. Within a few days they would be taking all the cats to an animal shelter. A kill shelter. The benevolent creature knew that she had to remove the cats from their familiar gravel world and take them to a strange new place, or they would die. Kinda hard to explain that to a cat. In order to take them out of gravel world, she had to place them in a cage. I wonder if they felt betrayed in that cage. After all they trusted her and now they felt trapped. And then she brought them to a strange new world of carpet, colorful walls, lights, and people. It must have been overwhelming. They knew gravel world with the occasional venture into the guard shack. Then the cage. And now this. It must have been sensory overload. Did they exercise a tragic error of judgment when they began to trust the benevolent creature?

There were other cats my daughter was willing to rescue along with them, but they ran. Leaving the familiarity of gravel world with an unfamiliar benevolent creature was too much of a risk for them to take. Their lack of trust would later prove fatal.

I remember the first night that my daughter brought fluffy cat and skinny cat home. She led my wife and me to our downstairs bathroom where she was keeping them safe from the two dogs and another feral cat we had brought into our home several years ago. I knew the Lord had something to show me, so I just sat in the background of the room and watched my wife and daughter try to interact with the cats. The loss of gravel world and the newness of carpet world seemed to be too much for them. Fluffy cat wouldn't let my daughter pet him anymore. We put two small bowls of milk out for the cats to drink. The fragile trust they had in the benevolent creature way back in gravel world seemed to be gone. Instead of the bright lights, warmth and milk of carpet world, they preferred to hide in the darkness under some shelves in our bathroom. They knew the parameters of gravel world. Carpet world is another story. And now there's three benevolent creatures. Trusting one was hard enough. "Why did she bring other people here to mess with me?"



My wife and daughter didn't want to overwhelm skinny cat and fluffy cat, so they decided to leave them alone for a while. I stayed behind. Hidden in the background. The second the door shut behind them, skinny cat and fluffy cat lunged for the milk. The benevolent creatures may be terrifying, but the truth is the cats needed the care that the benevolent creatures were trying to give them. They drank that milk up pretty fast.

Carpet world was safe, but it was unfamiliar, and trust in the benevolent creature wasn't restored in a day. Even my daughter had to hold fluffy cat in a coat that first day lest she experience the terror of psycho kitty. My wife picked up skinny cat with another coat. Both cats were hissing at us. The benevolent creatures were patient. They just sat there holding and loving the terrified cats. They wanted the best for those cats. The cats just couldn't figure that out.

Gradually, fluffy cat calmed down and let my daughter hold him again without a coat. Skinny cat held onto control. The benevolent creature had to continue using a coat to pick him up, but he was willing to sleep on the bed with her. As long as skinny cat was able to maintain some sense of control, he was okay. He just wasn't fully convinced that the benevolent creature had his best

interests in heart. Finally, as the week wore on and the benevolent creature found an adoption shelter, skinny cat stopped hissing and let my daughter hold him without the coat. Benevolent creatures are patient. They understand. They look beyond the hissing and see the wounded heart that needs love and restoration. That is their goal all along.

Another change. Another ride in a cage. Another loss of familiarity and fear of the new. This time carpet world was exchanged for metal cage world. Other loud, nervous animals. And new benevolent creatures. It turns out that one of the new benevolent creatures at the adoption shelter fell in love with fluffy cat and skinny cat and took them to her home. Cage world started off feeling cold and unloving. It turns out that it was actually a place of great love and compassion where the long-term solution was revealed. The new benevolent creature loved the cats as her own.

Sometimes God keeps things the same. Sometimes he changes things. He doesn't usually ask our permission. Each time it is a new opportunity to learn the difficult task of trusting Him. He's patient. He will wrap His coat around us and lovingly hold us while we hiss at Him. People that have never lived in gravel world won't understand how its residents could have a hard time trusting a benevolent creature. Souls leaving gravel world can understand. Sometimes it was those we trusted – those we thought were benevolent creatures – who played the role of the coyotes and rats. Sometimes we're afraid to leave gravel world. It is terrible. It is painful. But it's all we understand. We don't know how to live in carpet world. It's hard for us to trust that cage world is only temporary and is actually a safe place while we are transitioning into another carpet world.

Brokenness is scary, but sometimes we prefer it to the unknown. The Lord understands this. There are times when He loves us enough to pick us up out of the familiar and carry us to a new place that we can't comprehend. We might want to hide under a dark shelf, but He feeds us and teaches us how to live in a strange new place. Sometimes those He has placed in our lives move on. One familiar source of strength may transition elsewhere and be replaced by a new compassionate face. We have to learn to trust all over again. It is during those times that we have to look beyond the immediate and see Jesus Christ, the true Benevolent Creator, orchestrating our lives. He can preserve our lives in gravel world. And in time, restores our hearts in carpet world. He understands. He knows what it is like to be abused in gravel world. Jesus Christ conquered the sin and death of gravel world, and rose victoriously to deliver us.



***But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.***
Isaiah 53:5 NKJV