

# Rescuing the Lost

By Mary J. Ferrill



I've been rescuing animals longer than I can remember. I was only 2 years old when I adopted my first cat. I vaguely recall being in a laundry room in someone else's house with a bunch of kittens running around. I remember picking one up and it scratched me on the nose. My parents told me that they wanted to bring three kittens home (one each for me and my two siblings), but they could only catch two. One of them (Buffy) picked me as his life-long companion for 16 wonderful years, and thus began my love of rescues. The rule at my childhood house was that any animal that showed up in our yard had earned the right to stay. I think this "rule" got around our neighborhood and unwanted animals were conveniently dropped off. My dad also worked on the agricultural campus of the university, so other not-so-common animals tended to appear at our doorstep – quails, ducks, squirrels, and even rats.

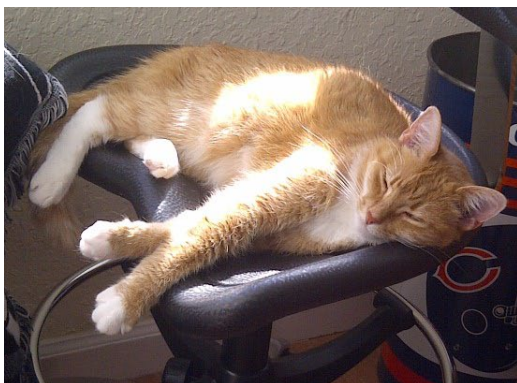
When I moved away, I continued the rescue mission as best I could, even as a poor, struggling student. When I married, it took a little while to convince my husband of the importance of rescuing animals, since at the height of our rescuing we had nine of them (2 dogs and 7 cats). People often ask which one was my favorite. All my "babies" have such unique personalities that it's difficult

to state which one I love the most. Recently, as I was sitting on the couch watching TV, I looked down at Archie, who was sitting on my lap sleeping soundly without a care in the world.

At that point, God brought to mind the passages about how the first will be last and the last will be first (Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30). Suddenly, that biblical message finally came through to me! Let me explain. Archie showed up on my back porch when I lived in North Carolina, back in the fall of 2004. She would come onto the porch, sit on my lap, and purr with content while I sat on the porch. So, I adopted her and brought her in the house with my other two pets. For some reason, once I brought her in the house, she became more aloof to me. In fact, she started to growl at me when I touched her, and she wanted absolutely nothing to do with my husband. This had never happened before with a rescue, so I did my best to be patient and work with her. I wish I could say that I made progress, but she never seemed to feel comfortable with us. It took 7 years before she would let my husband touch her. I know she loves me in her own way, but it has not been an easy journey.



Archie is now 16 years old and she is the cat in the picture sitting on my lap. What does this have to do with the first being last and the last being first? Some of my rescues start off understanding the love I want to give them; they readily reciprocate and continue to grow closer as I show my love to them. But I have felt more joy bringing Archie close to me because it took so much time and trust for her to understand that I love her and want the best for her. It's not that I love her more than the other rescues, but I struggled for so many years trying to reach her and show her how much I love her. I can see God doing the same thing with His children: trying to reach us and help us understand how much He loves all his children. I think this is also demonstrated in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15:1-31). None of my other animals pulled away from me after I adopted them, so I feel as though Archie was also "lost" and I have spent many years "finding" her again.



I have a friend whom I have been witnessing to for over 12 years, but she has yet to accept Christ as her Savior. I would imagine that just as I've been patient with Archie – continuing to reach out to her and hoping she realizes how much I love her – that God is doing the same thing to all His lost people. So just as I continue to patiently work with Archie, I must patiently continue witnessing to my friend with the hope that someday she will sit on God's lap and claim "Abba Father."