



PAW VERBS ~ for Kids ~

30 Heart-warming Stories about Boys, Girls, and Their Pets

JENNIFER MARSHALL BLEAKLEY

A Note from the Author

HI! MY NAME IS JEN, and I like animals—a lot. I like watching animals, playing with them, and learning about them. I think they are funny and cute and interesting. But what I love most about animals is how they help me think about and learn about God.

Did you know that animals can do that?

It's true!

If you slow down, pay attention, and ask God for help—you can learn things about *him* from the animals he created.

One of the most important things I've learned from animals is that I can talk to God as easily as I can talk to an animal.

You see, I was what you would call a shy kid. Talking to people, sometimes even to my friends, felt scary. Talking to teachers and doctors and other grown-ups was especially hard. My hands would get sweaty, and my stomach would hurt. I wanted to talk to people. I wished I could just open my mouth and talk as easily as my friends did, but it was hard, and I often felt lonely.

One day when I was sitting outside, my cat, Sugar, walked over to me and climbed onto my lap. She started purring.

"You make me feel happy and safe, Sugar," I said,



rubbing my hand back and forth on her gray-and-black fur.

I started talking to Sugar while I petted her. I told her about a hard test I had taken at school, about a friend who'd hurt my feelings, and how I wished I could try out for the school play—but that I was too scared. Sugar kept purring. She was so easy to talk to that all the words I had been holding in for a long time came out.

The next day, I went to find Sugar as soon as I got home from school. I told her that I got an okay grade on the test, made up with my friend, and signed up to be in the chorus for the school play—so I could be in the play but didn't have to try out for a speaking part. Sugar listened and purred.

The next Sunday at church, our pastor talked about the ways God cares for us. He read a verse from 1 Peter that says, "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you" (5:7). When he read that verse, I thought about Sugar and how she listened to all my worries and the things I cared about.

Later that day, while Sugar purred on my lap, I started talking to God—telling him how much I wanted to be able to talk to other people, thanking him for bringing Sugar into my life, and asking him to help me not feel so scared all the time.

That day, I realized that God was with me, like Sugar was with me—but that God was even better because he

is *always* with me. Sugar couldn't go to school or to the doctor's office with me, but God could. And he did.

Sugar helped me learn that I can talk to God, and God helped me not feel as scared all the time. Sometimes I still get a little scared when I have to talk to someone new, but now I know I can talk to God about that—and he will help me.

And that's why I wrote this book. I wrote it so I would remember all the things I've learned, and I wrote it so that *you* can learn things from animals too—things about yourself, about other people, and about God.

Each story in this book is based on something that actually happened with a real animal. There is a Paws and Ponder section after each story with questions to answer so you can learn your own lessons from the animals. And there is a Paws and Pray section with a short prayer too.

You can read one story at a time or read lots of stories at once. You can read the book at bedtime or in the morning or in the afternoon. You can read the stories with your family, with a friend, by yourself, or to your pet. However you decide to read this book, I hope you will enjoy the stories and get to know God a little better through them.

Most of all, I hope you will come to know that God made you and loves you, and he thinks that you are very, very special—just the way you are.

And I think you're pretty PAWsome too!

Love, Jen





Little Autumn

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

PROVERBS 3:5-6

IT WAS A PERFECT DAY to be outside. The air was cool, the sun was bright, and autumn leaves fell like giant orange, red, and yellow raindrops.

Lizzie's dad was cleaning out the garage, and she was raking leaves into a pile big enough for them both to jump in. Her dad had just pulled a big box out to the driveway when he bent down to look at something. Lizzie ran over to see what it was.

A baby squirrel!

It was the smallest and cutest little squirrel Lizzie had ever seen. And it was trying to climb up her dad's pant leg!



"Maybe she thinks your leg is a tree trunk," Lizzie giggled.

The little squirrel stopped moving and looked up at Lizzie's dad.

"She must have fallen out of her nest," he said.

"What do we do?" Lizzie asked, bending down to look at the squirrel.

Her dad did a search on his phone.

"It says to leave the little squirrel near the tree where we found her, and the mother squirrel should come back soon to get her baby."


Lizzie and her dad made a temporary nest for the squirrel out of a shallow box, an old towel, and some leaves, and set it under the trees by the driveway. But hours later, the baby squirrel was still there and the air was getting cold. Lizzie's dad called the wildlife rescue phone number. They said to keep the squirrel warm overnight and then drop her off with one of their volunteers in the morning.

Lizzie looked at the little squirrel. She was so cute.

"Why don't we keep her?" Lizzie asked. "She could be our pet! We could name her Autumn since we found her in the fall!"

But her dad shook his head. "She belongs in the wild. She wouldn't be happy as a pet, and we don't know how to take care of her. As hard as it is, we need to do what is best for her—not what feels good for us."





Lizzie knew her dad was right, but she still wished she could keep the baby squirrel. That night, Lizzie peeked into the box. Little Autumn was curled up in a ball, sound asleep.


“You were smart to go to my dad for help. He’s going to make sure you get to climb all the tallest trees and eat all the acorns and nuts you can. But I still wish I could keep you.”

Several months later, Lizzie’s dad got a text from the wildlife rescue volunteer with a picture of a much bigger Autumn being released into a nearby park. Seeing Autumn again—and seeing her so big and healthy looking—made Lizzie happy.

“Thanks for knowing how to take care of Autumn,” she said to her dad, giving him a hug. “She was smart to trust you.”

PAWS AND PONDER

Would you have wanted to keep little Autumn? Why or why not?

Why did Lizzie's dad want to take Autumn to a wildlife rescue volunteer? 

Can you think of a time when doing the right thing was hard?

Proverbs 3:5 tells us to trust God. What do you need to trust God with today?



Paws and Pray

Dear God, please help me to trust you with my whole heart. There is so much I don't understand and so much I don't know. But you know everything—and you know me and love me. Help me to trust you more and more each day.



Amelia's Gift

Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce.

PROVERBS 3:9

AMELIA LOVES BUYING TOYS for her yellow Lab, Ollie. Any time she gets money for her birthday or Christmas, she uses some of it to buy Ollie a stuffed animal or a chew toy.

She likes how Ollie jumps up and down while he waits for his present. She likes how he wags his tail super fast when she hands him his new toy. And she loves all the happy little noises he makes when he plays with it.

But most of all, Amelia likes how Ollie tries to share his new toys with her. After playing with a new toy for a few minutes, Ollie will bring it back to Amelia so they can play catch.

When Amelia gets home from school, Ollie always



runs to her with his newest toy in his mouth so they can play together. And when Amelia snuggles into bed at night, Ollie drops his toy on her bed.

“That toy is for you, Ollie,” Amelia says, handing the toy back to him. “But thank you for sharing it with me.”

A few days before Christmas, Amelia wrapped three toys for Ollie—a hedgehog stuffed animal, a giant tennis ball, and a chew bone. She couldn’t wait to watch Ollie tear into the wrapping paper to get his toys.

But during the Christmas Eve service at church, Amelia listened to people talk about the gift God gave to the world when he sent his son, Jesus. She started to wonder if there was a gift she could give *God*.

Amelia loved giving gifts to Ollie—and her family—but she had never thought about giving a gift to God. And since Christmas is the day we celebrate Jesus’ birthday, it seemed like a good day to give him a gift.

But what could she give Jesus?

What kind of present would he want? She thought about it that night and the next morning. But she still couldn’t think of anything.

As soon as she went downstairs and saw all the presents under the tree, Amelia forgot about her question. She started opening her gifts and helping Ollie open his.

Later that day, after Amelia played fetch with Ollie, she sat down with the new paint set she had gotten





from her parents. She couldn't wait to paint a picture on her new easel.

But what should she paint first?

Suddenly, Amelia knew just what to give Jesus. She would give him the first painting from her new easel.

Amelia painted a picture of a Christmas tree with lots of presents under it. And on the biggest present she wrote,

To Jesus,
Thank you.
Love, Amelia



PAWS AND PONDER

What is a favorite gift you've received? Why was that gift so special?

What are some of the gifts God has given you?

Why is Jesus the greatest gift God has given us?

What kind of gift could you give to Jesus today?



Paws and Pray

Dear God, thank you for all the gifts you have given me. Thank you for the sunshine and the raindrops. Thank you for people who care about me. Thank you for loving me. And thank you for Jesus. Please show me what I can give you today to say thank you for all you have done for me.



A New Friend

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and
the one who gets understanding.

PROVERBS 3:13, ESV

“DEAR GOD, please help me make a new friend this year,” Bethany prayed the night before starting a new school year.

It was a prayer she had prayed almost every night since her best friend, Jessa, started going to a different school. Bethany missed Jessa so much, and she worried she would feel lonely at school without her.

And she did.

She felt lonely without Jessa there to make her laugh.

She felt lonely in the cafeteria without her best friend to talk to.

And she felt lonely in the car line while she waited by herself for her mom.

“What’s wrong?” Bethany’s mom asked when she picked her up from school the first day.

“Nothing,” Bethany answered—but the truth was, everything felt wrong.

Bethany went to bed that night feeling mad. She was mad at the kids at school for not trying harder to be her friend, she was mad at Jessa for changing schools, and she was even mad at God for not answering her prayer.

A few days later, Bethany went to her first horse-riding lesson. The lessons were a birthday gift from her mom. She was so excited to meet all the different horses. And while she liked each one she met, her favorite was a dark-brown horse named Petey. He had a white dot on his forehead, little patches of white on his feet, and gentle-looking eyes.

Bethany’s lesson started with learning how to groom Petey. The instructor showed her how to brush his coat and mane, how to clean his hooves, and how to put fly spray on his legs. She didn’t ride him that first day, but she didn’t mind. She just liked getting to spend time with him.

At her next lesson, after another hard week of school without Jessa, Bethany found out that Petey had a sore on his back from a horsefly bite. Bethany’s instructor told her that she could choose a different horse to ride. But Bethany didn’t want a different horse.

“It’s okay,” she said, “Can I just groom Petey again?”

The instructor helped her get the grooming bucket and tie Petey’s lead rope to a hook. Then she went to teach a new student how to groom a horse.

Bethany talked softly to Petey while she brushed him. She told him all about Jessa moving, how lonely she felt, and how hard it was to make new friends.

The next week, Petey’s back was healed, and Bethany was able to ride him. She liked sitting up so high. Petey’s back was strong, and Bethany knew she could trust him to hold her up.

“You might not be able to sit with me in the cafeteria at lunch,” Bethany whispered, leaning down toward Petey’s neck, “but it looks like God *did* answer my prayer for a new friend this year after all. He gave me you.”





PAWS AND PONDER

How did God answer Bethany's prayer for a friend?
Can you think of a time when God answered your prayer in a different way than you thought he would?
How did he answer?



Paws and Pray

Dear God, thank you for hearing me when I talk to you in prayer. You see everything and you know everything. Help me trust you to answer my prayers in the way you know is best.



Snow Bath

The LORD will be at your side and will
keep your foot from being snared.

PROVERBS 3:26, NIV

GRACIE, a four-year-old golden retriever, likes going on trips with her family and exploring new places. She especially likes visiting places where there is snow.

Gracie loves snow! She likes to run in snow and dig in snow—and she really likes to eat snow.

Once when Gracie's family took a trip to the mountains, her human mom took her for a walk in the snow while the rest of their family went skiing.

Crunch, crunch, crunch.

Gracie loved the sound her paws made in the snow. She jumped, she dug, she ran in happy little circles. But all of a sudden, Gracie stopped. Her tail dropped, and her ears stood up.

What was that scary sound?

She ran to her mom's side and whined.

"It's okay, girl. Those are just the snow machines. They make snow," her mom explained.

Gracie didn't like the machines. They were too tall and too loud, and they looked like giant hoses. Gracie didn't like hoses either. They made her think of getting a bath. And she really, really didn't like getting a bath.

Gracie's mom told her that the snow machines were good because they made lots of snow for the skiers and snowboarders. But Gracie thought they were too close to the sidewalks. She was really scared.

"It's okay, Gracie," her mom said, giving her leash a gentle tug. "They won't hurt you."

Gracie trusted her mom, but she was still scared. *What if the big machine turns toward me and the giant hose tries to give me an icy bath?* Gracie's back legs started to shake.

Gracie felt her mom's hand on her back. "Look."

Gracie knew that word meant she should turn to meet her mom's eyes. So she did.

Her mom smiled and said, "Walk."

Gracie took two steps, but she got scared again when she saw the big snow machine.

"Gracie, look," her mom said again.

Gracie scooted closer to her mom. She took a big breath and started walking—fast. She walked so fast



that her mom had to run to keep up. But Gracie made it! The big snow machine didn't give her a bath.

Gracie and her mom walked toward a busy area with lots of skiers, shops, and restaurants. Gracie liked seeing all the people. She liked smelling new smells and getting petted by lots of new friends. But she still didn't like the snow machines.

On the way back to their condo, Gracie kept her eyes on her mom and walked really fast by the big machines.

Every time they walked past the machines during their vacation, Gracie stayed close to her mom. It helped to know that she was there and that she would protect Gracie from the scary snow machines.



PAWS AND PONDER

Why was Gracie scared of the snow machines?

What did her mom tell her to do?

Why did Gracie feel better knowing her mom was beside her?

How does it make you feel to know God is close to you?



Paws and Pray

Dear God, please help me to remember that you are always with me, even when I feel scared. Help me to look to you by reading the Bible, praying, and thinking about you. And please help me talk to others about you, so they will know you are with them too.

