

CAT & DOG THEOLOGY

Revised Edition

RETHINKING OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH OUR MASTER

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Cat and Dog Theology, Revised Edition

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Prayer

Cats and Dogs see prayer quite differently too. In fact, Dogs and Cats can pray the exact same prayers but have two distinct meanings. Take, for example, the prayer, “Dear Lord, we just ask You to bless our church.”

Immediately there should be warning flags. Cats are only praying for *their* church and not for the greater kingdom of God, for other churches in their area, or for the world. In many churches, the focus is always (and only) on *their* church. But aside from this, their prayers can be different. Remember outwardly it is difficult to tell who is a Dog and who is a Cat in the church. It is only inwardly that we can see the differences.

Inwardly, this is what a Cat could be praying: “Father, You know we need a new gymnasium for the youth; and, God, our parking is so crammed, we’re losing people (our numbers are going down); and, God, the organ is really getting old (not to mention the carpeting). We just ask You to put it on the hearts of some rich people in our church to give until it hurts so that we’ll receive Your blessings.”

But God could be hearing something far different in the same prayer from a Dog. When a Dog says, “Dear Lord, we just ask You to bless our church,” he could mean something like this: “Lord, give us wisdom in reaching the young people in our area, and give our youth a hunger and vision for taking Your glory overseas; and, Lord, show us which people group You’d like us to adopt; Father, we also pray for a foothold into the inner city—we see so little glory shining in that area; and there are so many international families living here, show us how to reach them for Your glory.”

Cats are basically saying, “Dear Lord, we come boldly before You and ask You to help us build our kingdom.” Cats pray for the things they desire, the things that will make life more comfortable and easy. It sounds like, “Father, please give me . . . , please let me . . . , please bring me”

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Dogs boldly come before God as well, but they say, “Lord, we’re here with great faith because we need things from You to help advance Your kingdom. We want to make You famous. We know You will answer our prayers.”

It sounds like, “Father, let Your glory shine in this sickness. Allow Your glory to shine in how I’m treating my parents, my spouse, my kids. Father, Your glory is not shining in South Africa, in all of North Africa, in India, or in Pakistan; so, Father, raise up laborers to take Your glory to the ends of the earth.”

John Piper has referred to the prayer life of many people (Cats) as a domestic intercom, by which a family can ask for requests from the kitchen. Prayer is much more than asking God to bring us goodies from the kitchen. Yet this is how many Cats use it. Dogs use prayer for God’s sake to advance His kingdom, not theirs.

One church in Colorado lived out Cat Theology by taking money out of the missions fund (God’s kingdom), causing missionaries to not get their support, and putting it toward a new organ (their kingdom). They had prayed so hard for a new organ that they rationalized away the need for missions and focused on themselves. (This church closed its doors a few years later.)

Do Dogs ever pray for blessings? Yes, but it is not their primary focus; it is a secondary focus. And when they pray for themselves, it is usually so that they can have a greater impact in the lives of others. Do Dogs ever pray for nicer cars and bigger homes? Yes, but only when there is a real need for them, not when there is merely a desire for them.

Worship

Worship too is quite different for Cats and Dogs. In Cat Theology, Cats worship Him for what He’s done for them. It sounds like this: “Thank You for all the great things You’ve done for me. You have provided for me; You have protected me; You

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Cats Pray Selfish Prayers



China is an amazing place right now because of what God is doing! Seven thousand people are coming into God's kingdom every day! The gospel is exploding over there. On top of that, the church is being trained!

Groups are quietly going into some of the homes of the Chinese and training leaders in the basics of God's Word. These leaders are from sixteen to thirty years of age. Of these, the best evangelists are single women who walk for days to get to these meetings and then spread the message in cities, fleeing right before the secret police discover what they are doing.

But in this explosion, there has been a price. Men and women have been beaten so severely that their bones have been broken. Pastors have been put in prison for years. Some are missing and assumed to be dead. Others have been openly murdered. It hasn't been easy. God's glory has been revealed at a price.

At an international human rights conference, a house-church leader from China gave a rousing appeal to Christians worldwide to pray for the Chinese church. At the time, he was the first Chinese house-church leader to visit Western churches. During his passionate address, he related that he had spent twelve years in prison and that God had miraculously healed his legs, which had been broken in torture.

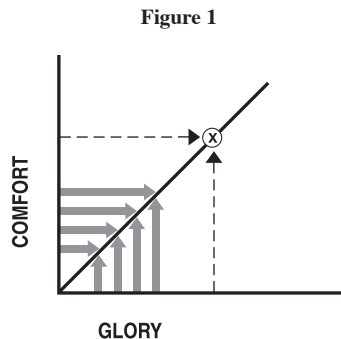
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How did he ask the Western world to pray? Did he ask God to bind the Communist government so that there would be freedom of religion? Did he ask us to pray that the beatings would stop? Did he ask for the fall of the government? No. Contrary to the way Cats tend to think, he said, “Don’t pray for the persecution to stop. Pray that the church will stand strong in the face of persecution.”

Why would he say that? He knows that persecution can help make the church reflect God’s glory in a greater way. This is their goal: to become more like Christ, not to have a safe, soft, comfortable lifestyle.

Cats want to be like Christ too, but they prefer to do it through safe, soft, comfortable means. And because of this, Cats tend to pray selfish prayers. In James 4:2–3, the Scriptures say, “You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

This sums up a Cat’s prayer life. Cats focus on what they can get, using prayer to advance their agenda/kingdom (a safe, soft, comfortable lifestyle) and not to advance His agenda/kingdom (revealing His glory in all areas of life to all peoples of the world). Why is this? While they know God wants to bless them, their mistake comes in misunderstanding what the blessings are. They wrongly assume that the blessings fall solely into the following categories: getting lots of things, eliminating trouble from their lives, and having a safe, soft, comfortable life! (Remember, Cats still want to see God glorified, but it is not their highest priority.)



If we were to graph a Cat's prayer life, it would look something like Figure 1. On the left is comfort. The more the line goes up, the more comfort there is. On the right is God's glory. The more glory God gets, the more the line moves to the right. The line drawn equally between the two shows a relationship that brings equal amounts of God's glory and our comfort. In other words, when we get comfort, we give an equal amount of glory to God. We'll call that the "prayer line."

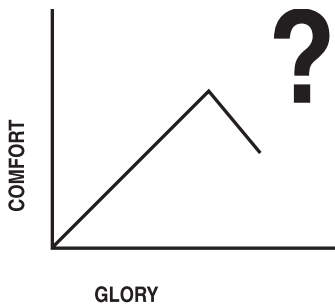
Cats assume that this is the only way God wants to answer their prayers. So their prayer line is linear. And each prayer for God's glory is a prayer that is also for greater comfort and

ease in lives. But could the prayer line ever go down like Figure 2? "No," Cats want to say to themselves. It could never happen that way because they would be getting less comfort, and God would never want that. And they'll quote Scripture to back it up: Jesus died to give us an abundant life (John 10:10). By His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

He died to set us free (John 8:32). Jeremiah tells us that God has a plan to prosper us, not to harm us (Jeremiah 29:11). And Psalm 91 tells us that He will cover us with His wings and protect us. "These verses apply to all people all the time," they say. So, no, the prayer line could never go that way.

"But wait a minute," Dogs say. "God allowed His Son, Jesus, to suffer hardship." "That's the whole point," Cats cry. "He did it to His Son so it wouldn't have to be done to us." We have the

Figure 2



right to expect God's blessings in our lives. We have the right to expect the prayer line to go up and never point down.

Dogs know that although a safe, soft, and comfortable life *can* point to God's glory, it is the glory that is the higher priority, not the safe, soft, comfortable life. And suffering can point to that same glory. If suffering is going to result in greater glory, then dogs yield to suffering in their lives so that the glory can shine in a greater way! Let's talk about three commonly misunderstood areas where God's glory can shine brightly: physical ailments, discipline, and suffering or persecution.

Physical Ailments

John describes a scene where the disciples engaged in a theological discussion with Jesus. It says: "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" (John 9:1-2). You see, the disciples had a theological problem. They believed that sin directly causes all the suffering in the world. So how could a man be born blind? Either the man sinned in his mother's womb or his parents sinned.¹²

But Jesus had a different answer because He saw it from a different perspective. He related everything, not to sin, but to His Father's glory. To more fully understand this, remember that God has formed each of us in the womb. (Psalm 139:13-16: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.")

This is the same for the man born blind. God did not say, "Oops!" when he came out blind. No. He created him blind. Why? God wanted His glory to be revealed. Jesus knew this and took it

directly to His Father's glory. He responded in verse 3: "'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life'" (John 9:3). He was born blind for the glory of God!

Just ask yourself the question, Is God capable of healing Joni Eareckson Tada? The answer is obviously yes. But God has been gaining far more glory by leaving her paralyzed since 1967. Her paralysis will be gone when she enters eternity, but more glory is being given to our Father by her current state. Is that fair? Well, let's go back to the basics of this book. Life isn't designed to revolve around us; hence the question, Is that fair to us? isn't a valid question. Life wasn't designed to be fair. Life was designed to be a series of opportunities to point to and reveal God's glory. And Joni's experience radiates our Father's glory tremendously!

Therefore, when we look at ailments, we can ask God for healing, but we must also realize that if the ailment or infirmity will bring God more glory (either in the eyes of others or to prepare us for eternity with Him), God might choose to allow it to stay in our lives. It is the glory we need to focus on, not the ailment. The apostle Paul asked the Lord three times to take away an ailment. And how did the Lord respond? He said: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). God was basically saying, "Paul, I'll get more glory in you and through you, by you keeping this ailment in your life than if I take it away; I'm going to leave it." Yet so many Cats live with ailments and predicaments in defeat, not realizing they were given them to point to God's glory in a greater way, and that glory is being robbed from God!

Discipline

Let's look at the second area in which God's glory is not usually seen, and that is discipline. The Scriptures are very clear that those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines

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(Hebrews 12:5–6).

Now if God lived for us, if His goal were to make our lives safe, soft, and comfortable, then this discipline stuff wouldn't be a part of His packaged plan. But it is a part of it because His goal is not our comfort; His goal for us is to reflect His glory. And there are times when discipline makes that happen. Again, the prayer line on the graph goes down.

Many people know of the picture of Jesus carrying a lamb on His shoulders. But few know the meaning behind it. It is found in the story "The Lamb's Broken Leg" as told by William Branham. This is an old shepherd story that was told in Jerusalem in the Holy Lands of a shepherd carrying a sheep. Another shepherd asked, "Why are you carrying it?"

"It's got a broken leg."

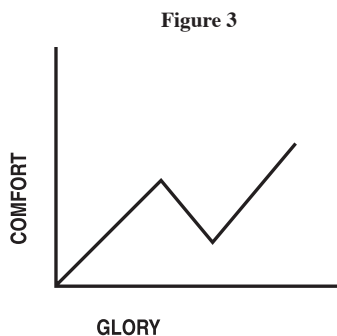
"How did it do that? Fall over a cliff?"

"No, I broke its leg."

The other shepherd said, "Why, you're a cruel shepherd to break that sheep's leg."

"No, I love it. It was going astray and I couldn't make it obey me. So I broke its leg so it would have to depend on me. I carry it, feed it, and stay close to it. Through this process, it will learn to depend on me, look to me, and stay with me."¹³

God's desire is to see His glory reflected perfectly through us. He sometimes needs to give us less comfort (so the prayer line goes down) in order for us to realize it is about Him. And that frees us to radiate His glory in our lives! What loving parent doesn't discipline their children when they get out of hand? This is



the same as God disciplining a nation when it strays far from Him. All of this happens that we might better reflect His character in our lives and our culture. After that discipline, many times the prayer line goes back up, showing that God will give us more comfort with the greater glory (Figure 3). (But it may not.)

Suffering or Persecution

Let's look at a third way in which many Christians miss God's glory: suffering or persecution. When Jesus taught about being blessed in Matthew 5, He said something that would sound strange if the average person really stopped to think about it. He said:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10–11)

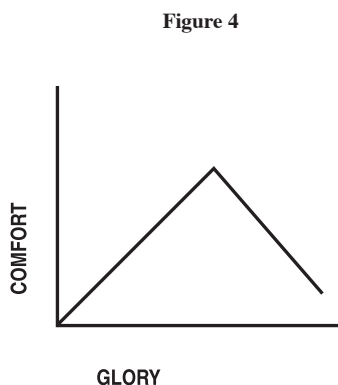
We're blessed when we are persecuted? But persecution doesn't make our lives more comfortable; it doesn't make them easier. That's okay. Jesus is still saying that we are blessed. What this means is that there are some kinds of blessings that God wants to come our way that point the prayer line down. In winner's-circle theology, we view our heritage and how we interpret the Bible only in light of the past forty to sixty years, and, in doing so, we forget the ages past. In a similar way, we forget what God has allowed to happen to believers in previous times.

Remember, God has historically allowed tragic things to happen to His children in order to expand His kingdom and reveal His glory. We strongly suggest that you get a copy of *Foxe's Book of*

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Martyrs and read it. The graphs of the martyrs in that book would look like Figure 4.

Tremendous glory is given to God in times of persecution. God allows the sins of this world to work in such a way as to reveal His glory. Does God want people to be persecuted? Will there be persecution in heaven? To both questions, the answer is no. Could it have been stopped here on earth? Yes. But God knew He'd get more glory by allowing it to happen. God uses both good and evil for His glory.



You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning;
my God *turns my darkness into light*.
(Psalm 18:28, emphasis added)

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were *destined for them*. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that *we would be persecuted*.
(1 Thessalonians 3:2–4, emphasis added)

Remember that this is not restricted to ages past, but it occurs now in other places. (Check out a persecuted Christians' web page, such as EMP.org.) But when Cats see anything happening where their prayer lines would go down (like that of a martyr), they try

to help God see things their way by saying, “Look, Lord, You’d get the same amount of glory if instead of having my prayer line go down and to the right, You had it go up and to the right” (Figure 5).

Little do they realize that what they are really doing is praying selfish prayers. Their graphs look something like Figure 6.

God is getting little to no glory, but they are getting tremendous comfort and security. And the sad thing is they are still saying, “Praise the Lord!” and “Isn’t God great!” But in reality, they’ve lost the Lordship of Christ in their lives because their primary concern is for their safety and comfort. Cats can be “Christian” on the outside (praying, going to church, teaching Sunday school) but be so far from glorifying God.

Dogs don’t live this way. Dogs constantly ask, “What will give God more glory?” and their prayers are geared to maximizing God’s glory in their lives. If it means tough times, Dogs are aware that God often causes them in the lives of His children. But don’t misunderstand us, Dogs aren’t masochistic. They don’t eagerly want to become martyrs, but at the same time, they don’t shy away from it. It’s about God’s glory; it’s not about us.

Figure 5

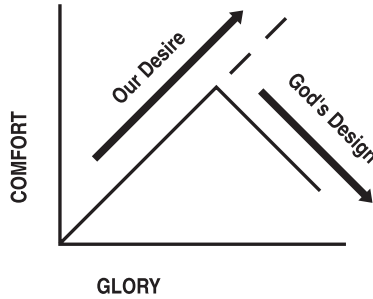


Figure 6

