

words of comfort for
a pet lover's grieving heart

Thank You for Loving Me

and other things
your pet wants
you to know



Jennifer Marshall Bleakley

thank you for loving me



A Tyndale nonfiction imprint



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From My Heart to Yours

I'm so sorry you picked up this book.

I'm sorry you opened it.

I'm sorry someone had a reason to give this book to you.

I'm sorry that you even know it exists.

I'm especially sorry because I know you wouldn't be reading this if you hadn't lost an animal you loved with all your heart.

And so, before I write anything else, I want to pause and tell you I'm sorry for the pain, emptiness, and heartache you're experiencing—and for the loss you've endured. And I'm so very sorry your heart hurts more than some people will ever understand.

As a former grief counselor, I know about grief on an intellectual level. I know about different theories and practices. When I was counseling, I knew how to run a bereavement group, how to utilize active listening, and when to refer someone for more specialized help.

But it wasn't until I lost my first beloved Golden retriever, Sunny, that I experienced grief on a **heart** level—on a level no book or theory can fully explain or prepare one for.

Then several years later, as I held the paw of our six-year-old Golden, Bailey, and said the most painful goodbye I had ever uttered, I learned how difficult it can be to find the strength to take your next breath after watching your animal take their last.

I know the hollow emptiness and deafening silence an animal's absence creates in a home.

I know the desperate desire to cling to every piece of fur and every physical reminder they left behind—and how lonely it feels to see their favorite napping spot without them sleeping there.

I've also learned how well-meaning people can sometimes add to the pain of grief by not understanding, or by minimizing, the bond we shared with our pet. And while that lack of sensitivity hurts, I've also learned we don't need anyone's validation of our grief in order to grieve and heal.

The fact is, you didn't just lose a pet or an animal—you lost a best friend. A confidant. A companion who daily showed you unconditional love and heart-mending loyalty.

And—in what feels like grief's cruelest twist—you lost the very one you would be depending on right now to help you through this loss.

Grief is difficult enough.

Facing grief without the one you most rely on to help you through hard things is brutal.

The truth is, there is nothing I, or anyone, can say or do right now that will ease your pain. In fact, the only one you likely want to hear from at this moment is your pet—telling you how to survive this loss without them beside you.

This book is my attempt at inviting our pets to share their words and their wisdom with us.

I've never attempted such a weighty and sacred project before. I wrote so many versions of this book with myself as the narrator. But then one morning I woke up thinking about my dog Bailey.

I said aloud, "I wish we could have had more time together." Somewhere deep in my heart I heard, "Thank you for loving me with the time we did have."

And that was all I needed to hear. I hurried to my computer, opened a new document, and started listening to Bailey. I started listening to Sunny, to Chief, to Samson, to Gwen, to Bully, to Teddy, and to Flurry. I started listening to your pet—and to all the animals who loved us so well while they walked beside us on this earth.

I know there is nothing I can write that will make this loss easier for you. But I pray that as you read these pages, you will hear the echo of your pet's voice talking to you, encouraging you, comforting you. I also pray you will see a glimpse of God's great love for you. A love so deep and so powerful that he sent his Son, Jesus, to fully display his love. And a love so faithful and so pure that he sent you a special ambassador to be a living example of that love.

A love that walked on paws, wrapped in fur.

A love that forever changed you.

A love that shines into the darkest grief, illuminating your way through it.

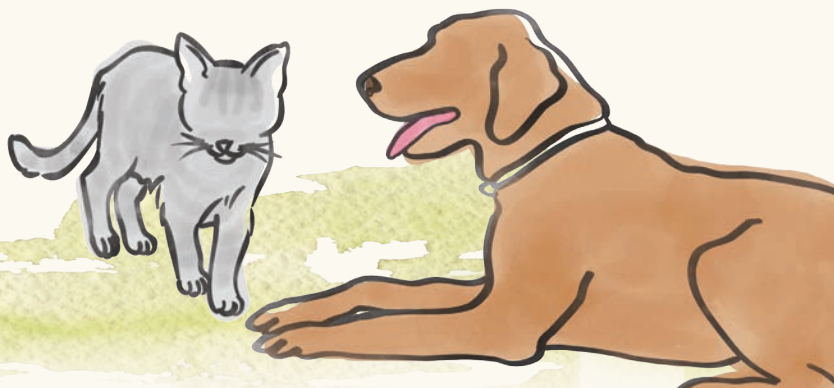
And love that lives on, even now.

As you journey through grief, may you feel held in that love—always.



Thank You for Loving
Me and for Letting Me
Love You.

Keep holding on to our
love; it lives on in you.



The LORD cares deeply
when his loved ones
die.

Psalm 116:15





I felt your love every day.
It was stronger than the wind on my face,
more fragrant than my favorite sniffing spot,
more delicious than the tastiest treat,
and more comforting than my softest bed.





The grief you are
experiencing
is the evidence
of our love.



You made my life so full ...
full of joy.
full of comfort.
full of love.
full of you.

I know everything you did
was out of love for me—
even the hard things.



You loved me.

I loved you.

We were a team—a really good team.

The loss you feel
is a loss worth
grieving.





Your love made everything better.

You made everything better.



I know you keep asking if you did
the right thing.

Please hear me: You did.

You loved me and you helped me.

That was all I needed.

You were all I needed.





All of me loved
all of you.



I loved sitting with you.

I loved playing with you.

I loved doing anything and nothing with you.

I loved us.

I loved our story.





I know I'm not there with you
like I used to be. But our story isn't over.
Our story lives on in you.

I live on in you. ♡

What did you love most about me?

A series of 20 horizontal, wavy lines, resembling a piece of lined paper, intended for writing a response to the question above.