

Griz and Cat

The orange kitten was hungry. The grizzly bear was lonely. The man was apprehensive. Those are the principals in this little story. Now for the background.

The cat weighed no more than 10 pounds when he first slid under the fence into the bear's pen. The man – Dave Siddon, the founder of the refuge, Wildlife Images – was almost in a panic, thinking the hungry grizzly would kill the cat with one swat and eat him for dinner.

The grizzly, whose name was Griz, had come to the Oregon wildlife center in 1990, when he was just a cub. Hit by a train while foraging for food on railroad tracks in Montana, he suffered severe head injuries and was deemed unfit to return to the wild.

The kitten was one of four cats abandoned at the center early in the summer. Volunteers were able to find homes for the rest of the litter, but Cat, as he was now called, somehow eluded them.

Then one day in July, Cat turned up in Griz's pen. Afraid to do anything that might alarm Griz, the man just watched, expecting the worst. As the 650-pound grizzly was eating his midday meal, something extraordinary happened. The bear very gently picked out a chicken wing with his forepaw and dropped it near Cat.

From that moment on, Griz and Cat became something of a slapstick animal act. Cat would lie in ambush, then leap out and swat Griz on his nose. Griz would carry Cat in his mouth. Cat would ride on Griz's back, and sometimes Griz would lick Cat.

Their friendly relationship defies both the patterns of nature as well as their own troubled life histories. Griz never took advantage of Cat's weaknesses, and each animal accommodated the other's needs.

What a lesson Griz and Cat offer. We can help each other break free from the patterns of our pasts that keep us from loving each other.

And for us in particular in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, we can pray for and care for others with the love of Christ and obtain healing by the grace of God – both for them and for ourselves.

--Beecher Hunter