

The Fabulous Mr. Freckles!

“Introducing Miss Pixie!” shouted the announcer. Suddenly a white poodle with a big pink bow on her head sped out from behind the curtain and jumped through three twirling hoops!

Jessie stared with wide eyes as an orange cat came running up the ramp, climbed a steep pole, and jumped into a red wagon. “Wow!” she said. “That cat looks a lot like Freckles. I wonder if Freckles can do that.”

“Watch your heads, folks! Look up to catch a glimpse of our hawk, Captain Gusty!” Justin and Jessie ducked their heads as a large brown and white bird swooped right over them and landed on a trainer’s gloved arm. The crowd cheered.

After the animal show was over, Jessie and Justin climbed into the van to head home.

“My favorite animal was the dancing black dog,” Justin’s dad said as they pulled out of the busy parking lot.

“I liked Miss Pixie, the poodle,” Jessie’s mom added.

“What animal did you like, Ellie?” Justin’s mom asked.

“Birdie, big birdie!” Ellie squealed.

“I think she means Captain Gusty,” Justin explained for his little sister.

“I liked the cat that looked like Freckles,” Jessie shared.

Back at home, Jessie grabbed Freckles and carried him to the backyard. She was eager to teach Freckles all those wonderful tricks she saw in the show.

“Okay, Freckles. You sit here, and when I call, you need to come. Ready?” Jessie instructed as she set him down in the grass.

Freckles stretched out. Then he flipped onto his back and closed his eyes.

“Freckles, you’re not supposed to sleep. Get up now.” Jessie tried to get the kitten to sit, but he just flopped back down in the grass.

“Ahh! No, no, no. Come on, Freckles. Errrg! You aren’t very smart, are you?” laughed Jessie.

“What are you doing?” asked Justin as he came through the gate.

“I’m trying to get Freckles to come when I call him. I want him to be the ‘Fabulous Mr. Freckles.’ Right now all he wants to do is sleep.”

“Ha ha! My dad said cats do *what* they want *when* they want. They don’t obey very well.”

“But the cat in the show did all kinds of neat tricks,” said Jessie. “Hmmm. I know! I’ll get some kitty treats. Maybe he’ll like those.” Jessie ran into the house to get the treats. She quickly came back out and sat down near the kitten.

“Here Freckles, come on,” she said as she held out the treats. When Freckles saw the treats in her hand, he jumped up and ran over to Jessie and gobbled down the treats.

Jessie laughed, “There, you see? He is smart.”

“Are you training Freckles?” Jessie’s mom came outside and sat in a chair on the back porch.

“Yeah! He came when I called.”

“Only ‘cause you had treats in your hand,” added Justin.

“Well, yeah. But then he came right away.”

“Yep. That’s usually how you train animals,” agreed Mom.

“How come they won’t just come and do things you want them to do?” asked Jessie. “It sure would be nice if they did.”

“Well, I think that’s because animals are animals. God made them to be different than people,” Mom explained. “They can’t think the same way people do.”

“But what about dogs? They come when you call,” said Justin. “And they can do lots of cool things.”

“Mm hmm. But dogs don’t naturally do those things on their own. Miss Pixie, the poodle, had to be trained to jump through the hoops at the right time.”

“Like I’m training Freckles to come when I call?” asked Jessie.

“Yes, like that. Of course, cats are pretty hard to train. Freckles won’t naturally come just because you call. But he might come if you show him that you have something he wants, like treats or a toy.”

“I get it. A person has to train the animals. So that means the person is smarter, right?” Jessie asked.

“Yes. And that’s my point,” said her mom. “God made all kinds of animals and designed them to do different things.”

“Like kittens, who sleep and run after butterflies!” laughed Jessie as she watched Freckles jump at a butterfly.

“And God made squirrels to climb trees and go back down headfirst like that one,” said Justin, pointing to a big grey squirrel scurrying down the tree.

“That’s right. God created animals to do what they need to do: they play and gather food and build nests and things like that. But God made people in His image.”

“So people are special?” asked Jessie.

“Yes. God made people in a special way. We can know Jesus as our Savior. But it also means we can do many things animals can’t do.”

“Like making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?”

“Or driving a car or painting a picture!”

“Yes. Or thinking and reasoning,” said Jessie’s mom.

“Huh? What does that mean?” asked Jessie.

“We can figure things out. For instance, you were reasoning just now. When Freckles didn’t come like you wanted him to, you figured out how to make him come by offering treats. That’s reasoning—figuring out how to fix a problem.”

“Oh! Hurray for me,” Jessie smiled and clapped her hands. Suddenly, Freckles turned and stared at Jessie. Then to her surprise, he came trotting over to her lap where he snuggled in.

Justin, Jessie, and her mom all looked at Freckles in amazement. “How about that!” Mom laughed. “Maybe Freckles can be fabulous after all.”