



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Back To Living

Monday morning when I opened the garage door I found our new kitty, Jake, dead in the driveway. We've had Jake about three months. He was a special kitty. Black and white. He climbed pine trees to chase squirrels, stood up on his hind legs and swatted at butterflies, bounded into the house every time we opened the door, and was constant companion to our two big dogs.

Sunday evening, when our son parked his car in the garage, he must have run over Jake — who was doubtlessly attempting to do battle with a pair of big, yellow headlights.

His stiff body was on the edge of the concrete apron and our two big dogs, the collie and the pit bull, were lying beside him. Instead of their usual tailwagging, jumping up all over my clothes, and roughhousing with each other, they were in obvious mourning for their little friend.

The dogs stayed with me while I buried him. Nosing his little furry body. Lying beside the grave as I dug the hole. Scratching at the fresh soil as I tamped the earth back into place.

I went back into the house to wash my hands before leaving for town, and the dogs stayed beside the grave, their heads down in the dirt

between their paws — looking sadly at each other.

But that afternoon when I came home the dogs met me in their usual fashion, jumping up all over my clothes, wagging their tails, then chasing each other around the yard in a mock fight, grabbing at each other's legs with their teeth. Their mourning was over. They were back to living.

I thought about that later in the evening as I stood in stark horror and watched the brand new house of my young disciple, Randy Ostrander, go up in flames. For more than a year Jackie and I have helped Randy and Marsha build their new home right across the road from us. During that time they lived with us, bringing their third baby home from the hospital to our house. Every day was spent working on the beautiful two-story cedar house. During that time Randy accepted the call of a small church in Palm Bay and was building it into a strong congregation. We were all so proud that they were going to have their own house — built with the loving hands of the community.

Then at 5 p.m. a neighbor rushed in and shouted, 'Randy's house is on fire.'

There was nothing we could do but

stand helpless and watch it burn. Randy and Marsha were at the beach with the three children. When they got back, two hours later, the fire trucks had gone. There was nothing left but a smoldering pile of charred wood and a score of sooty, tear-stained faces — waiting (and dreading) their return.

We stood out in the street in a small circle, laid hands on the young couple who had lost nearly every material possession, prayed and sang. We offered our homes for them to stay but concluded they needed to be alone with the family in a motel. Surely God was saying something, and sometimes families need to be quiet in order to hear.

There was much to be thankful for. But the loss of everything is devastating. Walking back to our house in the gathering twilight Jackie said, "What will they do?" I noticed the dogs. They were chasing a rabbit in a palmetto thicket. And I thought of something Jesus said. "Why worry about these things. Consider the lilies of the field . . . If God so clothe the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

So it's been a good week. And yesterday someone offered to give us a new kitty.