

# Power over life and death

by Irene Tibbenham

**T**he sight of the light disappearing so suddenly from our Hetty's eyes has haunted me ever since! I have made this trip to the vet too many times to want to remember, perhaps because our cats have all been older rescues.

Now when we have to euthanise a cat that is dying or in pain, I cuddle them close with their paws over my shoulders as life leaves their bodies and they die. I hope the process will be quick and quiet. Quick for the furry patient, as this somehow appears less painful, and quiet for me—reassurance it was painless—though the fact is, we never really know!

Lockdown has added further angst to this distressing process, with many vets not allowing owners to enter the surgery with their pets. In the case of our very dear Devon Rex, Boris, he was scheduled to be “put down” in the vet's car park. We even euthanised our Khaki Campbell duck when the vet found a tumour. This cost more than the duck's purchase price, so my husband wasn't impressed!

Many struggle as I do with the euthanising of a pet; of having power over the life of another living creature. They are part of your family. Whether walking through your legs whilst in the kitchen or making an appearance at a dinner party, they



are always present, always there. Until they're not.

Being with them through death is part of this journey. For some, seeing a pet die brings them closer to the reality that we as human beings will also one day die. We may even have been present with a precious person on their death bed, and perhaps we question what is next. What really happens when we die? In fact, is there even a “next”?

For Christians, the answer is, yes, there is a next, and that next is something we have in our hands. Just as we have the power over the life and death of our animals, we have the power of life and death over ourselves.

Perhaps this sounds too far-fetched, or maybe you would like to know how, or even why. A wise man once wrote: “Those who find me, find life”.<sup>1</sup> So who is this “me”?

This was spoken by Jesus Christ. Becoming a follower of Jesus is how we exercise the power of life and death over ourselves. Many years ago, the Son of God died to save us. Implausible as it may sound, he came back to life that we might have eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, you read that right. Finding Jesus and following him is the path to living, the power over life and death. I don't know the future of our beloved pets when they die, because no-one knows.<sup>3</sup> But I do know that as God loves each of us, he also loves the whole of his creation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 8:35.

<sup>2</sup> John 10:28.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:21.