

Love and Lemon Cake

Steph Penny

My friend recently made me a lemon cake. And I cried.

Usually, the sight of cake does not make me cry (although a delicious slice of cake can certainly move me). But love and acts of kindness from good friends will bring on the tears – especially when such gestures are given unexpectedly.

On this occasion, my friend had made a memorial cake for my recently-departed furbaby. Portia had died at the age of nineteen, having lived with me for seventeen years. My cat had been more than a pet: she was a confidante, comforter, playmate and companion. She helped me survive many painful years of loneliness and sickness, and I often felt God bringing me his peace through her.

She was a literal Godsend.

My friend knew that. She knew how much my furbaby meant to me. She was so saddened to hear of the passing of my beloved Portia that she baked me a lemon cake.

Why a lemon cake? Because Portia is now buried in the backyard under a lemon tree.

I looked at the cake positioned in the centre of the table, little curls of lemon rind perched on the top, and felt the tears well up. ‘Thank you,’ I choked.

But there was more; my friend wasn’t finished yet. She giggled mischievously and handed me a bag full of lemon-themed gifts and goodies, including a folder of lemon-related recipes with contributions from several people at church. When I learned that a group of people had been moved to help memorialise Portia, the tears trickled down my cheeks.

What a sweet way to remember my sweet girl.

We ate cake in weepy contentment that afternoon. (It was a delicious cake too.) It occurred to me that grief is a peculiar beast. It is sometimes subtle, sometimes overwhelming, but I find it is always better when shared. That day, I felt like my friends had come alongside me to share my grief. I felt like they cared, like they really loved me. And I felt like I was truly part of God’s family in a tangible and unmistakable way.

You will be glad to know the lemon tree is currently thriving in its position above Portia, and has already produced fresh lemons. I have both lemons and lemon recipes to keep her memory alive.