

## The Seals at La Jolla

We recently visited the West Coast and one place my brother-in-law recommended visiting was La Jolla, a beach filled with sun-bathing seals. I anticipated what that would be like, to see seals in their natural surroundings...

The afternoon we arrived in this charming but busy town, we had to park a distance away from the shoreline, leaving us quite a walk to our destination. On our journey I looked out over the beauty of the seashore, all the while keeping an eye out for the seals. Unlike the East Coast, there were curves and coves, as well as large boulders and rocks being splashed and sprayed with waves of salty sea water. The blue sky was gorgeous with its vast array of white fluffy clouds and the sun was warm on my face. Large seagulls and pelicans were flying here and there. The beauty was breathtaking. At one point we asked a lifeguard where we could find the seals. He pointed us in the direction we needed to go, so as we continued on our journey.

I couldn't wait to see these cute blubbery creatures God created. Often I strained searching for them. As I was looking in the distance I thought, "Well maybe that is them, but they aren't moving. I suppose they are just rocks." A little further along I realized that one of the rocks was moving, "That must be them!" I thought with excitement. I went back and forth in my mind wondering if they were rocks or seals. The closer I got I could tell these weren't rocks--they were the seals!

I don't think my hubby was nearly as interested in them as I was, but he enjoyed seeing me delight in these creatures. When we got closer I looked over each one sunbathing. Out of the hundred or so, several caught my attention. One that was close to me--very still and most of its blubbery body covered with sand--never moved. Behind me a teenager said, "I think that one is dead." As I gazed over the others, often their flippers would move rapidly. I chuckled at this, wondering why they might be doing that.

The two that stood out the most were a momma and her pup. They, unlike the others, were in the water, but close to the shoreline. Focusing on the pup for a minute or so I watched him try to struggle to move his body up to rest with the others. After several failed attempts he would return to the water to swim feely with his mother. Many times the momma would lure him back to the beach and try to persuade him to learn the benefit of the struggle--how to rest. At one point upon his return to the water, in her frustration she swiftly dodged in front of him as if to say, "No you don't." But after a minute or so I saw her tenderness--she was carrying him on her back to give him rest. I watched this scene over and over until I eventually lost track of them.

As I journaled the next day I reflected on that delightful sight, seeing each of these things:

- The tenderness of a mom with her pup
- The diligence of her not to give up training
- Her discipline when the pup wanted to give up

I also wondered if she ever thought at any point to just go up to the shore for some rest. But even in that rest she would not really be resting, she would always be aware of what he was doing. That led me to think of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. He is tender toward us, He does not give up on training us, He disciplines us, He never slumbers so He is always aware of what we are doing. Thank you, Lord, for reminding me of this....

I enjoyed the quietness of observing these unique creatures, something I certainly don't encounter every day, yet we encounter uniqueness every day in each individual that God has created. I am not sure if I appreciate people nearly as much as the seals at La Jolla, but I should. Teach me, Lord, to enjoy the uniqueness of each individual I encounter every day.