

AROUND the FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

FALL 2010

A Day to Remember

BY TROY MEEDER

It was a day to remember.

Early June... a time in Central Oregon where the rising warmth of spring daily clashes with the cold of a retreating winter. Holding a hot cup of coffee in my hands, I stared, transfixed by the visual display of weather outside my living room window. The heat of the spring sun dared to challenge a cold winter wind blowing from the north. These timeless, opposing forces would make for a chilly day. I stood a few moments longer, trying to imagine all that this afternoon might hold.

Today was the day he would arrive.

For weeks the ranch had been preparing to welcome the man who'd been so instrumental in the early growth of our ministry. Since its inception in 1995, Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch had struggled for years to simply keep the doors open. Common were the days when the need far outweighed the resources. Even so,

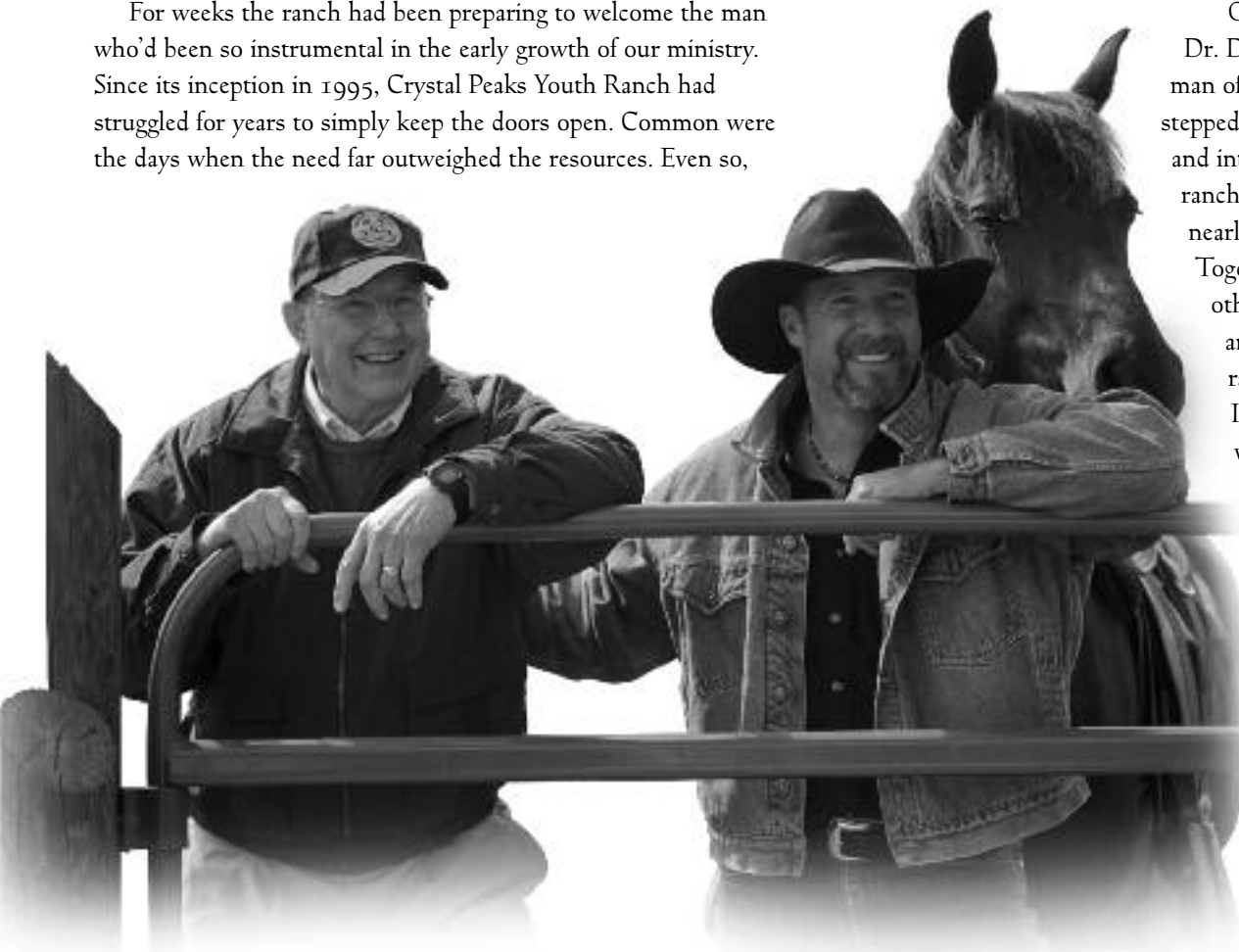
I've seen that God's purpose for our lives will *never* reach beyond His ability to provide for the same. With that truth in mind, we fully trusted that God would supply our needs in His perfect timing. We also understood that within this process, we are to be His 'hands and feet.'

Dr. James Dobson has been working hard, for years, to be the 'hands and feet' of Jesus. The reach of his faithfulness has literally gone around the world, helping to support other ministries. In 2004, the result of his efforts first reached Crystal Peaks when a radio interview between Kim and Dr. Dobson first aired.

On June 10, 2010,

Dr. Dobson, a compassionate man of faith—and our friend—stepped out of a small SUV and into the main yard of the ranch. Shirley, his wife of nearly 50 years was at his side. Together, we received each other with welcome smiles and good ol' fashioned ranch hugs. Kim and I warmly greeted the man who's been such a strong shoulder for our ministry these past six years. 'Doc's' hallmark boyish expression beamed throughout our introductions.

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and a smile, I shared words of deep and profound gratitude with Dr. Dobson.

Looking into his compassionate, lined face, my eyes filled with tears as I thanked him for believing in us... for believing in this ranch... and for being the 'hands and feet' of Jesus. I shared how much it meant to me to know someone like him, someone who has chosen

Doc, Shirley and the staff of Family Talk had one clear purpose for their first visit—to capture stories of hope from the *ranch of rescued dreams*. Hugs and handshakes were the currency of the day. Perpetually surrounded in a sea of children, Doc purposefully made his way through the grinning faces who were participating in the day's events.

With the gentleness of a seasoned grandfather, Doc would kneel and embrace every child reaching up to greet him. He asked simple, probing questions, and gave his undivided attention as stories of pain, rescue and hope poured forth. My respect deepened even more as I witnessed first hand Dr. Dobson's sincere passion for the Lord, families and kids.

For me, the day was already ideal. I loved merely watching our friend spend time with the ranch children. I was unaware that in the middle of it all, our amazing God was about to demonstrate His wonderful sense of humor. And, in the process, stretch my faith.

In previous conversations with the Family Talk staff, we extended an offer: "Would anyone like to ride a horse during their visit to the ranch?" I fully expected the younger members to accept our invitation. To my surprise, Doc, at 74 years of age, was the first to say, "You bet!"

With the cold wind blowing through a brilliant blue sky, I watched Dr. Dobson

gently canter around our arena. My friend sat tall in the saddle on my personal horse, a beautiful black Friesian named 'Eclipse.' Riding with natural ease, he looked like an old hand in a John Wayne movie. Each time he passed me, he let out a hearty laugh. This revealed to me there still lived within him a boy who loves horses.

I laughed too; Doc could *ride!*

Soon, the gentle giant of a man trotted up to my side and placed his hand on my shoulder in a gesture of thanks. Cameras clicked and flashed in a vain effort to capture the fullness of the scene. Without many words, two old cowboys and a noble black horse, simply took the time to enjoy each other and the special moment shared between them.

As the sun dipped low in the western sky, a deep chill filled the air. While everyone moved into the barn to warm up and share supper, I watched Doc continue his purposeful ways, faithfully seeking a relationship with my staff. This husband and father, who for 35 years has been an advocate for families all over the world, was now loving *my* family. I was sincerely encouraged and moved beyond the depth of words by this display of great kindness.

When Doc and Shirley finally stepped out into the twilight toward a waiting car, I captured a private moment to thank the man, mentor and leader who has meant so much to me. With a sincere handshake

to stand firm through adversity—even when it's hard—for what they know is right. I expressed my appreciation for the example of his life and for challenging and encouraging men like me.

Holding the hand of my bride, Kim, I watched the Dobson's SUV slowly make its way down our gravel drive. With the sun finishing its lazy descent into the embrace of the Cascade Mountains, I was left to ponder all that had happened throughout the day.

Dr. Dobson had come to our ranch... and it was truly a day to remember.



MY FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT SUMMER



DRAWINGS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS KIDS

Hi I'm Haley and
this is my favorite things
to do over the summer.
I always love spending time
with my family and friends.
I enjoy camping and
fishing. I love swimming and
zebras.

ROASTING MARSHMALLOWS WITH MY FAMILY
— HALEY, AGE 11



I Love summer because
of the swimming

Cassidy



Age 9
by Emily

EMILY,
AGE 9



Allison

I like to ride Gideon!

ALLISON,
AGE 11



LONG WAY HOME



BY KATIE JACOBSEN



My pace slowed in the oppressive summer heat as I walked toward the ranch greeting area. The scorching sun beat down, drying out the earth. Thunderheads darkened the sky over the mountains lining the horizon.

Lord, I don't know if I have what it takes for today, I thought, while fighting hard to keep tears from rising. A lump swelled in my throat. Katie, you can do it, I coached myself as the battle raged inside me... God, I need You to do this.

I checked in with Jeff, who was greeting, and he directed me to my first session. A lifetime of shoving down pain had made me a pro, so I quickly changed gears and disengaged from my emotions. By God's grace alone, I was able to give my attention to the child at my side. Even though my mind was refocused, my heart still ached and I was crying within.

The day progressed with the ominous thunderheads still lingering close by. During my last session, I was asked to help with final chores around the ranch.

So I went to work, pulling weeds and removing dead flowers. Alone, my mind began to churn again. Above me, the clouds overwhelmed the sun and offered welcome relief from the heat. A deep sigh heaved from my chest as thoughts of the dream I'd had the night before sent chills through my body. It replayed again in my mind.

In my dream, I was trapped in the bottom of a deep pit. Dirt and debris covered me. It was dark and there was no way out. Looking up, Jesus appeared at the top of the pit. I cried out to Him, "Jesus, please, reach down and pull me out! I can't bear it anymore. If You don't release me from this place... I will die here."

A big raindrop landed on my face, awakening me from my thoughts. I quickened my pace to finish the job before the storm came. As the wind increased, the feelings inside me did as well. My thoughts rushed back to the end of my dream.

I had cried out to the Lord from the deep pit. Jesus moved through the thick

darkness toward me. Drawing nearer, He took my face in His hands and lifted my chin. My eyes met His. The words He spoke surprised my aching heart, "Child... no. Trust that My ways are not your ways. I will not remove you from this place... not just yet."

Fear filled me as He continued, "My heart aches for your pain, but to simply remove you from this place of challenge would hinder you from all that I have. My way, should you choose to trust Me, is harder and will cost you more, but you will reap the greatest harvest through it. Do not be afraid, I will not leave you. Together, we will face everything that has shattered your heart."

Thunder boomed overhead, jerking me back to the present. In haste, I gathered my things and headed back up the hill. Suddenly the clouds broke loose and torrents of rain poured down. Drenched, my clothes weighed as heavy upon my body as my agony weighed upon my heart. The only thing left to do was to keep trudging forward through the rain.

My soul cried out, Jesus, You spoke to me last night. I want to believe what You said, but where are You in this mess? Is there ever going to be an end to my emotional torment? I keep telling You that I'm willing to deal with every wound from my past. So, why can't we just hash it out right now, handle it all at once, tie it up with a pretty bow and be done with it? I want to move on! Jesus, I want my whole heart back.

I didn't want to go home—more time to be alone with my thoughts... and the memories that still haunted me. With no change of clothes, my house was the only option. After a warm shower, I retreated to the sofa with some leftover pasta and my journal. What else was there for me to

do but keep processing? So, I began to write.

“Lord, I’m in pain... I’m a mess... how will You ever be able to use me? You know my heart. I love Crystal Peaks and I love working and giving my time there. My desire is to reach hurting kids and families... because I know hurt too. Lord, you are completely aware of everything that has happened to me. I can’t bear the intense emotions I still feel. They’re constant reminders of all the horrible things that were done to me when I was a little girl. Jesus, I was so young—only four years old. You know how I’ve bottled my pain inside, always hidden away because it’s just too awful to deal with. I’ve built a huge fortress around my heart, trying to protect myself from the depression. It makes me shudder to think of what could’ve happened. Thank You for sparing my life, and for parents who severed the ties with those who abused me.

“But Lord... where do I turn now? I’ve never really felt fully rescued—I want my healing to be finished.”

My Bible was sitting on the counter, so I picked it up and opened it. Exodus 13 was where I’d been reading earlier in the day. As I read verses 17 and 18, I stopped...

“When Pharaoh let the people go God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, ‘If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.”

I closed my eyes to dwell on the truth in these verses. It was then that Jesus whispered to me:

“Child, I have never had the shorter path in mind for you; it has always been the long desert road. You have interpreted this as My abandonment of you. What you haven’t understood is how this is actually my protection over you. It is my

love for you that has extended the path toward the healing of your heart. I know your capacity to handle pain. You desire that I toss everything into your lap at once so you can move beyond the nightmare. What you haven’t been able to see is My perspective. Forcing you to deal with everything at once would have destroyed you. You would have run from me, back into deeper captivity. Beloved, it is my tenderness for you that caused Me to descend into that dark pit with you instead of pulling you out into greater destruction.

“When I brought the Israelites out of Egypt, I freed them from their bondage, but they did not trust the way I chose to do this. They saw their enemies chasing them and they instantly doubted Me, believing I had brought them out into the desert to die. Many times your heart has also turned to this conclusion. You saw me free you from the immediate captivity of your abusers, yet you’ve continually refused to trust Me to heal your heart in My way and timing.

“You need to understand that I will always be for you, never against you. Trust your heart to Me. Surrender your life and your pain, and I will heal your wounds.”

With every word of truth my Savior spoke, a brick of sorrow shattered and fell until much of my painful wall within came crashing down. Tears streamed down my face as new realization began to settle in my heart.



Months later, I walked out of the warm ranch office and into the frigid wind. Pulling my hat lower over my ears, I walked toward the greeter station for my final session of the season. I glanced to where the mountains should be, but like my thoughts, they were consumed by clouds. *Another snowstorm, it looks intense. Lord, the hurt is deep today... but I still feel stronger than before.*

“Hey Katie, your girl’s waiting for you in the barn.”

“Thanks Sarah,” I said over my

shoulder. A few snowflakes hit my face and I shivered as the conversation continued in my mind. *Jesus, I used to focus so much on what You could do for me. Thank You for changing my heart. Even though I feel weak today, You know what I need, so I choose to trust You.*

Lord, You realize my pain hasn’t lessened. But daily seeking You and Your perspective is changing my life.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath of cold air as I opened the barn door. *Lord, I’m choosing to traverse this path of healing that you have for me... one day, one step at a time.*

THE ROAD

BY MARSHALL AND KATHERINE TEAGUE



The heavy clouds that hung above my hometown of Lookout Mountain, finally began to wring themselves free of their wet burden. The sun had run its course and was now setting somewhere beyond the veiled western horizon. I'd finished my day's work as a carpenter and was driving an old familiar route to the farm to feed my horses. Rain poured down on the windshield and blurred my view of what lay ahead.

I don't remember what I was thinking during my drive, but I do recall the buzz of my cell phone as a call came through from my friend, Troy Meeder. I'd worked for Troy in the summer of 2007 and we'd stayed in touch ever since. Often, I'd spoke of returning. In fact, when I left Crystal Peaks, I had only one more year of college to finish before I planned on returning to Oregon to work at the ranch.

However, it was now deep into the winter of 2009 and I was still in Tennessee.

I answered the phone and our typical catch-up conversation ensued. It wasn't hard to sense that something else was on Troy's mind. Finally, after a moment's lull in our dialogue, Troy asked me directly, "Well, are you coming to work for the ranch or not, Teague?"

Mist closed in ahead of me as the sound of drumming rain filled the silence in my truck. I had prayed about this very question for three years now and it seemed as though the Lord had shrouded a clear answer from my understanding. My life, instead of winding westward to the ranch after graduation, had remained at home in Tennessee where I had found work as a carpenter. During this time, I dated and married my wife Katherine in the fall of 2008. Still, amongst these changes, the question of moving had always been on both of our minds.

For our honeymoon, Katherine and I chose to visit Oregon. During the last night of our stay, we drove home from dinner with Troy and Kim. While together in the cab of their truck, we prayed about what the Lord held in the future for us. Though God gave no clear answer that night, we flew home with friendships strengthened and the desire to work at Crystal Peaks renewed.

The approaching gate to the farm snapped my thoughts back to Troy, who was still waiting patiently on the phone for my response. I still didn't know how to answer his question. The previous March he'd offered me a position within the ministry. I was delighted by the proposal. Yet, even then I sensed no confirmation from the Lord. This simple idea spawned three years of dawdling around the same question: Was it

God's will for Katherine and I to leave the only home we'd ever known?

"Troy, I still don't know," pausing for a moment, I continued, "We both would like to work at the ranch—I think—and we've been praying about it for the last three years."

"Marshall, what is the Lord saying?" Troy kindly prodded.

"Well... nothing. He says nothing. Or, maybe I'm just not hearing Him."

"Kim and I have been praying about it as well. We would like to hire you. The—"

Suddenly his voice was gone. I looked at my cell. His phone must have lost service. He'd said that he was driving over the McKenzie Pass and having driven that road before, I knew I'd receive no further call from him that night.

I stepped out of the truck and into the rain, opening the gate leading to the barn. When I climbed back into the cab, I just sat and stared down the gravel drive. The engine idled quietly, rain tapped its chorus on the roof, I sat in stillness.

Slowly, a sense came over me; something I hadn't felt in a long time. As the feeling grew within me, one thought pushed itself through my mind: "You have to go . . . if you don't go now . . . you never will."

Still sitting, I looked at the road ahead. The rain slowed and the mist which had obscured my view, gradually began to lift. And though evening lay its darkness around me, I finally knew which road I needed to follow. After three years of uncertainty, the Lord had shown me the way.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.”

PROVERBS 3:5-6



I knew when I married Marshall that a potential move to Oregon to work at Crystal Peaks might be in our future. Deep inside, I had a sense that one day we would live there. After spending our honeymoon in Oregon and getting to know Troy, Kim and the ranch staff, that ember of a feeling grew into flame.

The night Marshall called me and shared how he believed we should make the move; my stomach fluttered with butterflies. Yet, with a growing smile, I let out a little squeal of excitement.

Our desire to work at Crystal Peaks stemmed from the Lord’s leading. I was fully aware that the decision to take this journey would involve a great deal of sacrifice and unknowns. Relocating to Oregon constituted an occasion that would require great trust in God to help us overcome many hurdles.

By moving west, we would leave behind our community of beloved family and friends. All the familiar peace and security we knew on Lookout Mountain would become a treasured memory. We would be exchanging the known—for the unknown. How would this move impact our young marriage? Would God’s long-term vision for us really involve a shift that uproots our entire life?

Throughout the course of my days, I’ve grown the most through the uncertain times—those unexpected opportunities that develop our faith. Without having all the answers, my husband and I trusted God’s nudge within our hearts. In a single leap of faith, we simply said ‘yes’ to our Lord. In a moment, we started down the road toward life in Oregon and our new roles at the ranch.

Through it all, God has been faithful to be our compass as we’ve navigated uncharted terrain. Jesus is the Great Provider, and He has supplied our needs. Our marriage has greatly deepened in the short eight months we’ve lived here. And, after leaving our closely knit community in Tennessee, God blessed us with a new family in Oregon, one that has taken us in and loves us very well. Above all, the Lord has revealed the peace He provides when we choose to trust *His plan*.

On a cold, rainy evening in Tennessee, we chose to trust God’s timing and walk down a road that presented many challenges and changes. Now, nearly a year later, we genuinely feel this is the only path that so precisely complements this season of our lives.

Through this experience Marshall and I have learned that we don’t need the answers to every question... we simply need Him.



Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.

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As Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch grows, we continue to be deeply moved by the outpouring of support from our friends and family around the world. Your love, encouragement and prayer has reached across the miles and supported us well. In an effort to keep you close, we have created this newsletter and our online store – a simple collection of clothing, jewelry and gifts. It's our desire that through these means, the message of hope will be extended through you to others who are beyond our reach.

We're excited to introduce many new items in our store this December. Please visit our website and click on "Merchandise" to find our store and to pre-order a Crystal Peaks 2011 Calendar—our free gift to you.

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