

RESCUE the Equine MENTOR the Child HOPE for the Family EMPOWER the Ministry

The Journey to Freedom

BY KIM MEEDER
WITH BLOG ENTRIES BY CATHY FOYSTON

Throughout my life, I've come to realize this truth: Fear in response to survival will keep you alive—but simply being afraid, will keep you in prison.

Amidst our 2018 Information Clinic, an unusual account was brought to my attention. One of our participants was so ill that she couldn't fly to Crystal Peaks but had to drive—from Canada. Her trip was horrifically extended because she had to stop every 30 minutes to throw up. She had been stricken with vertigo so extreme that she needed a walker to simply stand. Despite this, she knew she had been called by Jesus to sojourn to the ranch and she had determined to not allow severe illness to thwart her journey.

"My trip to Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend, Oregon began on an average, cold winter morning while I was listening to a Focus on the Family radio show. I don't usually listen, because I'm busy at that time of day, but for some reason this day was different and I heard the full radio show and the second part again the next day.

I was absolutely captivated as I heard Kim Meeder speak about how she and her husband Troy provided, at Crystal Peaks, a safe and positive experience for children and families to learn about the saving hope of Jesus Christ with their horses. I thought, WOW, maybe this is something that could happen here at my ranch, Back of Beyond!

I saw, on the Crystal Peaks website, they had a four-day similar ministry training opportunity coming up in May. As a participant, I would learn how they started their ministry and be given the nuts and bolts information that would assist us here at Back of Beyond to run a similar ministry. I would be instructed in how to provide opportunities for individuals to connect with horses as-a-means to experience who God really is.

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My ranch could also provide a place for the hurting to experience the healing hope in Jesus, and to develop a greater understanding of scriptural truths about the Lord as written in the Bible.

Six weeks before we were to go, I came down with a very bad case of the flu, followed by severe vertigo; my doctor said flying was out of the question. The trip to Oregon was off. 'Hear my prayer, Lord; let my cry for help come to you.' (Psalm 102:1, NIV)

However, as I prayed about it and resigned myself to not going, the Lord made a way, just as He parted the Red Sea for the Israelites. '...all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through on the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.' (Exodus 14:21-22, NIV)

Incredibly, my dear friend offered to drive our truck across the country – just over 4,000 kilometers one way! As the departure date approached, I felt a bit healthier and the trip was back on. 'So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.' (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV)

We started our trip in high spirits, but, as the trip progressed, we realized what a long way 4,000 kilometers really is. I became sicker and sicker with each passing kilometer. However, each time we thought about turning back the Lord said: 'Do not fear [anything], for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you; I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand [a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation].' (Isaiah 41:10, AMP)

So, we persevered and kept on going. It got harder and harder as I got sicker and sicker, but the Lord strengthened us each time we despaired of ever getting there. We held on to the words of Jesus: 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' (John 11:4, NKJV)

Unbelievably, six and a half days later, only through the grace of God, we reached Crystal Peaks fifteen minutes before the start of the training."

Her name was Cathy. Indeed, she was very ill. Often, while checking in with her throughout the clinic, I found her either sitting flat on the floor or on the ranch grass. Clinging to the ground seemed to be the only place where her nausea was held at bay. Yet, as intense as her symptoms were, what struck me about Cathy was not the fact that she had to be on the ground, or that her pallor alternated between white and green, what moved me most about her was that she was always smiling. Even between jags of vomiting, she continued to exude a strong spirit of joy. I was fascinated by her tenacious persistence to choose gladness even through her obvious hardships.

Throughout the clinic, my prayer over her swirled, "Jesus, meet her in this place in a way that she knows it's You. Reveal the power of Your love for her."

"Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch is a very Godhonoring, special place, where the power, grace, and faithfulness of the Lord are on full display.

The sessions were great, with lots of practical and relevant information for programs. However, the most important take away was that my life is not about me, that God is calling me to something bigger than myself and I actually can't do anything without the Lord."



Photo by Lynn Watkins

As is our way, several of our staff chose to fast and pray over the participants before they arrived. Amongst this group arose a common theme, "We can gather together and pray over her." Indeed, we could pray over her. But I believed that the Holy Spirit was giving more time for her to choose what she wanted. By allowing her time to ask for prayer, her heart would reflect the same belief as the woman who pushed through the crowd to touch Jesus (Mark 5:27). Her faith was so aligned with the heart of her Father that she knew if she could just touch the SON, she would be healed.

Cathy's request for prayer did not come until moments before the clinic commissioning on the last day.

In a matter of minutes, Cathy's walker was placed in the back of a Ranger. She, Judy and I all slid in and carefully drove up as close as we could get to the ranch cross. Our prayer started as pure worship of the One who is worthy. During this trio of prayerful worship, the Spirit showed me an image of something that looked like a campfire. Every time a breeze blew across it, a hail of sparks showered through Cathy's heart, each leaving an equal number of trailing scorch marks. I asked my friend about what she thought this 'fire' might represent. Immediately, she started to weep. "I know what that fire is . . . it's fear."

When given the choice of chasing the sparks or going after the fire of her fear, my brave sister walked straight into the inferno. Waging war through prayer, she spoke out every fear producing lie the enemy had used to confine her into a prison of anxiety. Firmly rebuking each with the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus, she stamped out the blaze with her own feet . . . feet that had always been free . . . beautiful feet not created to stand in idle fear but to move forward in bearing the Gospel of Jesus' love.

As Cathy pressed even deeper into the place where the war was being waged in her heart, we all slid out of the ranger and moved to the front where she could easily stand and hold the fence while leaning back on the bumper. In this position, her feet physically stamped in hearty agreement with the trouncing of the enemy's lies within her soul.

In rapid fire, she called out every deception that had stolen from her life and imprisoned her peace. One by one, she made them all bow before the truth of God's Word. Now exposed to the infinite brilliance of His Presence, each one incinerated in the true, Holy fire that is HIM (Heb. 12:29).

His white-hot freedom ignited her soul with equal speed. Her overwhelming gratitude could not be contained in mere words. With her eyes closed and her

face tipped toward the heavens, both of her hands reached skyward. A steady stream of tears kept pace with the steady stream of gratefulness pouring from her lips. The praise and tears kept coming, as if to sluice away the black sludge of oppression that had for so long been her constant companion. Today was eviction day for all that once held her captive in dread. Because of what Jesus has done and made available for all, she emptied her hands and heart of all fear only to take the hand of the One who has conquered all fear. Indeed, it started to rain. Great drops of freedom were pouring over us all.

"All the lies and fears that I have lived in my life were blown up in that moment in an encounter with the Living God. 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.' (Proverbs 3:5, NIV)

I began to learn to lean on and trust in the Lord as the Rock of my Salvation and leave the rest of the details up to Him. I came to recognize the fear and anxiety, which has been a part of my life for so long, has affected my wellbeing, health, and relationships in detrimental ways."



This is when the Lord allowed me to see what He saw.

I looked upon this daughter of the King. She was dancing with eyes closed, hands raised in gratitude before the One who purchased her freedom. And that's when I noticed something beyond beautiful. She had her eyes closed . . . her face was tipped upward . . . she had her hands raised . . . she was dancing. This was the same woman with severe vertigo. This was the same woman for whom the last season of her life was forced to move with a walker and sit on the ground to keep her violent vomiting jags at bay. This was the same woman who moments earlier believed the power of her fear was greater than the power of her God.

This was the same woman. This was my sister in Christ who—right before my eyes—exchanged clinging to the ground to clinging to JESUS. Now, mine were the eyes flooding with gratitude.

The moment that followed will remain etched in my heart forever. Quietly, I called to the newly released woman at my side, "Cathy . . . Cathy . . . my friend ..." Clearly, not wanting to break the moment, her posture remained jubilant and uplifted. With her arms still raised in the air, her eyes opened and she glanced at me over the top of her arm. I clarified the scene, "Cathy, you've been dancing in worship with your eyes closed and your arms up for the last 15 minutes . . . without holding on to anything. Friend, Jesus has done more than heal your heart He's healed your body too. It's time to receive this healing—inside and out—from the One who loves you most." Cathy's elbows dropped slightly as realization of all that HE had done found deep soil in her heart. Her momentary expression of puzzling the pieces together was suddenly overwhelmed by a flood of pure joy. Her eyes and smile met in the middle to make one of the greatest expressions of gratitude I've ever seen!

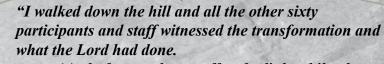
Together, we all made our way up to the cross and fell to our knees to give praise and thanksgiving to the One who gives freedom to anyone who asks.

"I stepped out of my walker and left it behind, climbed the steps to the cross, knelt down, and worshipped the God that has shown me the love of Christ in the Gospel. '... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8, ESV)

After our time of adoration was complete, we all slowly rose to our feet. Looking into her dancing eyes, I said, "And now it's time . . . to give glory to Jesus." Troy had already begun to commission the rest of the assembly below. I offered to give her a ride down the steep hill. She declined in favor of walking with Jesus and strengthening her new stance in Him. So, I tossed her walker in the back of the ranger and drove down and parked behind the gathering below.

As I walked the short distance to rejoin the group, the friend who spent 6 ½ days of her life driving Cathy to the ranch, stood up and stared at me with a questioning expression that clearly read, "Where's my friend?" I smiled and mutely pointed up the gravel road that led to the back of the ranch. She turned to see Cathy—walking unassisted—down from the cross. Cathy's faithful friend screamed and started to run toward her once ailing sister. Together, they met in a tearful, enduring, crumpled embrace.

Photo by Kim Meeder



'And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.' (1 Peter 5:10-11, ESV)

I left the walker at Crystal Peaks. I did not take any more medication. It was hard to stay in the truth at first, but I knew 'the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I (Christ) came that they may have life and have it abundantly.' (John 10:10, ESV)

We left Crystal Peaks for the long road home playing loud worship music and singing praises to the Lord. "Return home and tell [about] all the great things God has done for you." So, the man went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.' (Luke 8:39, AMP)

Our great adventure was over, but what a testimony to the Lord's greatness, mercy, provision, and faithfulness. What an experience in learning that God's leading is sometimes hard and costly, but is always worth it. 'I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.'" (Psalm 146:2, NIV)

Fear is a lie and a thief. It steals the peace of the Redeemed. Outside common sense survival, no fear is from God. First John 4:18 proclaims that "Perfect love casts out all fear." In verse 16, we're directed to the truth that GOD IS LOVE. Our fear and our faith cannot occupy the same place within our hearts. The one we choose to align our actions behind is the one that we truly worship. Beloved, let today be the day that you choose to allow His perfect love to cast out your fear. Let today be the day that you choose to stop clinging to your fear and start clinging to the One who's conquered all fear.

"Lord Jesus, On this day, I get to choose between remaining in my tippy places of anxiety or choose the Rock that is You. I acknowledge that my fear is tissuepaper thin . . . one single courageous act will carry me straight on through.

Lord, this moment feels exactly like running down the tunnel toward the big game . . . but there is a circle of paper between me and the field. I cannot reach the field until I run through the paper. Jesus, I must run through the paper to get into the game, the game that You are coaching. Paper-thin fear separates me from You.

In this moment, I can hear the "great crowd of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1, NIV) cheering me on. I can hear You calling my name and position. I can feel Your love reaching down the tunnel. You beckon me to run—run and break through my fear and burst onto the field and into the position I was created to fulfill, Your perfect plan for me.

Jesus, before You, I name my fears . . . my tippy places . . . and I choose to no longer live clinging to them instead of You.

In this moment, I choose to stop focusing on my fear and to look straight up into Your beautiful face, slap my hand in Yours, and leap deeper into Your presence . . . onto the Rock that is You.



Photo by Kim Meeder

Kindness Becomes a

"A kind answer soothes angry feelings . . ."
Proverbs 15:1a (CEV)



By Judy Jeffery

Bridge

One of my first staff events as an employee of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch was participating in the 2011 Eugene Marathon. Everyone who completed the race purchased their own tickets for a team trip to Hawaii.

A few days after I registered for the marathon, anxiety began to over shadow my excitement. Up until this point in time, I had only been on a plane twice and NEVER across an enormous ocean.

I shared my concern with Kim. She knew I was prone to fear and immediately prayed with me. Out of her deep well of encouragement, Kim passed a baton of hope onto me saying, "Jesus has this and you can trust Him." Then she added, "We'll play a cribbage tournament and you'll be so engaged in playing cards you won't even notice you're flying over water. Don't worry my friend, we'll do this together."

As plans started to solidify, I was informed that Kim and Troy were staying after our staff time to visit other islands for some speaking engagements. In order to make connections concerning this extended time, their flights were booked on another airline. My chest started to tighten with concern. I went outside to pray. "Jesus, Kim isn't going to be on the plane with me. What am I going to do?" The Holy Spirit responded with authority and subtle humor, "Judy, Kim can't save you—only I can save you!"

Truth is truth. If I can trust Jesus for salvation—I can certainly trust Him to take care of every detail of my life. Fear—of any kind—has no authority over a Sovereign God.

That was eight years ago. Now, as Kim and I travel to share the Gospel we have confident assurance that the Holy Spirit personally goes out before us. We trust that He holds all things together and is with us in ways, we know and in ways we might never know.

On a recent trip through the Denver airport, I slung my backpack over one shoulder and joined Kim as we headed toward TSA. We walked a short hallway that poured us out into a sea of humanity. Tributaries of hurried passengers from our right and left flowed into a football field sized series of switchbacks that spanned the width of the terminal. Pressed into the river of no return, my friend and I were forced toward the meandering turns that led to the passenger screening area.

All of a sudden, I felt a hard blow to my back. Shoved off balance, I stumbled hard to stay on my feet.

Behind me I heard a string of harsh words. I turned and saw a young woman dressed in red. Her hair was wound high and tight in a bun. As I was trying to make sense of the moment, her angry words rained down like arrows, "You cut me off and stepped right in front of me! Your backpack rammed into me!" I looked around and no one was responding to her—so I did.

"Are you talking to me? Did I get in your way?" I questioned softly. "Yes!" she spewed angrily. "Your backpack ran right into me!" I quickly replayed the last few moments in my mind. I had seen a woman in red slightly behind me to my left and my friend Kim slightly ahead of me to my right. Sensing it was my turn to step forward, I entered through the opening between the ropes. Apparently, the backpack draped over my shoulder bumped her in the process. Inexplicably, she was furious!

Normally, when crushed within a crowded airport, a bump from a backpack doesn't warrant such a harsh exchange. Suddenly, I had a choice to make. Do I hold on to my selfjustification? Or release my will and follow the Holy Spirit? Turning to Him, I sensed there was something more going on here and this was definitely a teaching moment. In the face of her open hostility, this was an opportunity to respond in Him rather than react in my selfishness.

Purposely, I moved as far left of the passageway as I could. I slowed my pace until we were side by side and placed my hand on her shoulder. "I'm so sorry. I didn't realize my backpack was sticking out that far. My name is Judy. What's your name?"

She responded, "Jackie" in a mixture of confused surprise.

"To be honest Jackie, if it hadn't been my backpack that bumped you, it probably would've been my backside!" Her stressed eyes met mine. Seemingly relieved by the joke, she smiled and added a humorous come back. "Yeah—I DEFINITELY have THAT problem."

I pressed in. "It's an honor to literally run into you today." Her gaze roamed over the sea of souls in front of us and then dropped to the floor. She took a deep breath and confessed, "I usually travel with my aunt. She's an airline employee and always takes care of all our travel. I just follow her to the head of the line and avoid all the chaos. This is my first time flying alone." There it was—the reason for our encounter. Although the lady in red acted out in anger, in reality, she was afraid.

Jackie's outburst opened the door for me to follow the Lord where He wanted to go. After a few silent moments I shared, "This is my eighth year of traveling on a regular basis. When I first started, I was SO afraid to fly and have also felt the stress of airport chaos."



"Where's my aunt when I need her?!" She said sarcastically. "I'm going to Florida for her wedding, hence why she's not here with me now."

The line moved ahead and we followed suit. "I believe we bumped into each other today so I can encourage you. There's always an answer to every travel issue that arises. I used to think the anxiety of traveling was right up there with 'death and taxes.' But, it doesn't have to be that way. I've learned to navigate under the radar of fear by trusting Jesus as my constant calm. There's always an answer because He always knows the way. I simply pray and trust HIM to lead the way." Jackie listened closely and nodded in agreement, saying "You're right having faith IS a good thing."

Ahead of us, the last bend in the line was approaching. Nearly walking backward, I faced Jackie and noticed a change in her demeanor. She'd taken her hair down from the tightly wound bun and released long spiraling black curls over her shoulders. She no longer looked angry, instead she looked pretty, relaxed. She wasn't frustrated, she was pleasant. She wasn't fearful, she was at peace.

Knowing our time together was ending, I had one more question to ask her. "It is a good thing to trust in Jesus. Jackie, may I pray with you?"

Her eyes softened and she replied with a quiet, "Yes."

With my arm over her shoulder, I prayed in Jackie's ear. With each step toward the metal detector lines, I thanked Jesus for my new friend and asked for His loving care to fill her life. I prayed over her entire trip that He would personally go out before her in a way she would recognize; in a way that she would sense His presence and peace. I asked that no matter what obstacles might arise—that she'd remember this moment—and simply pray for His help.

With "Amen," we separated.

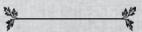
Jackie mouthed a silent "thank you" and stepped into the next line. When she looked back toward me, I blew her a kiss. She smiled in return and winked.

After passing through the scanner, I noticed that Jackie was detained by a TSA officer. He was up to his elbows searching her carry-on bag. Catching my eye, she shrugged her shoulders as if to say, "Oh well."

Jesus prompted me to walk over to her. Crossing the distance, I intentionally placed my hand on her back. Passing the baton of trust to her, I said, "Jesus has this, you can trust Him."

As those words left my mouth, I could still feel the ache where her 'fear' impacted my back. I walked over to rejoin Kim, who was a few steps ahead of me. She had witnessed the whole account unfold. Once side by side she smiled and said, "Wow friend! That encounter was the perfect example of how a kind answer deflects anger. Only Jesus!"

Since that day, I've thought of this encounter many times. The Holy Spirit revealed that when I react to offenses I become nothing more than a road block. But when I choose to follow His lead and respond in kindness, the gesture becomes a bridge that others may find their hope in Him.



"A person's insight gives him patience, and his virtue is to overlook an offense."

Proverbs 29:11 (HCSB)

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

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RETURN TO FOCUS ON THE FAMILY



In August, Kim was invited to return to the Focus on the Family campus in Colorado Springs. Through a packed schedule that included the taping of five broadcasts and multiple meetings; the message of the Gospel, encouragement, hope and redemption were poured out for nearly nine hours.

Among the many highlights was her interview with Jim Daly and John Fuller. During the taping of what will become a two-day broadcast, Kim shared personal accounts of God's untamable presence from her new book "Encountering Our Wild God." Through the combined participation of many, Jesus was mightily glorified.

These two broadcasts are currently scheduled to air November 29th and 30th. Please pray with us that the message of the Gospel will go out in a powerful wave, drawing all listeners into a deeper relationship with Jesus through trusting and following the Holy Spirit.

Thank you Dear Family.

All stories written in "Around the Fire" newsletter are true. Some of the names have been changed to protect individual privacy. "Around the Fire" newsletter stands on the Word of God. All translations of the Holy Bible are used to assure clarity for our readership.

Each author is afforded the right to choose the translation that best suits their submission.