



AROUND *the* FIRE

SPRING 2015

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

GATE OF HOPE

BY JUDY JEFFERY

“Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through Me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.” — John 10:9-10, NLT

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Second grade was interrupted by a short notice move to a new neighborhood. With it came a new school, new faces and a new teacher. If that wasn’t unsettling enough, the Vietnam War had moved in with us. The military draft had my brothers packing for boot camp.

My home environment was typically unstable. This added stress manifested itself in the form of ‘emotional bombs’ from those within our home who were older than me. Often, like a land mine, they were undetectable until the smallest step would set them off. I never knew when these hidden bombs were going to detonate. When they did, instant escape was my single focus. Sometimes, when I couldn’t make the door, I’d run for cover and hide until the episode was over. Unfortunately, escape was rarely possible and... bad things would happen.

When viewed from the outside, my family life appeared healthy. However, the view from the inside was very different. I lived in complete brokenness. My physical and emotional pain beckoned for some kind of comfort.

During that time, there was a house across the street where a woman named Marilyn lived. The gate to her yard was tall, making it impossible to reach over the top to open the latch. Because this yard was kid-friendly, a shoestring was laced through a drilled hole, right at the perfect height. When I pulled the string, the gate would open wide for me.

*Continued on page 2*





Within my tumultuous world, this 'gate' became a threshold of safety where my terrified heart could find the rest it so desperately sought. There was always easy passage—making available to me what I lacked—a very safe place.

In my attempt to avoid the collateral damage of the explosions, Marilyn's house became a place I could take cover. Over time, my perception of this woman was proven correct. She was a nurturer. In this case, she was a *gatekeeper*. With a simple slip through her gate, I entered a protected refuge. Three or four times a week, I would frequent this yard in hopes of something that would make me feel better.

For some reason, unknown even to me, I would ask her for a Band-Aid. Most of the time, there was no visible wound that would warrant one. Eventually, within every visit, she'd hand me a bandage from the tin box that sat on her counter. This compassionate cycle continued over the next four years. Unfortunately, we moved away when I was twelve.

Though our move was only across town, I didn't see Marilyn again until eight years later, on my wedding day. Amongst the wedding gifts my husband and I received, there was one from her. Inside a thin package wrapped in white paper was a pretty linen table cloth. Underneath the cloth was a tin box of Band-Aids. Taped to it was a handwritten message.

Consistent with her deep compassion for me, she simply wrote: "Band-Aids only *cover* our wounds. God bless you, Marilyn."

At this time in my life I was a new Believer. I knew Jesus as my Savior but not yet as my Healer. I knew that I was still seeking 'Band-Aids' for my broken heart. I pondered the words in this note but I just didn't know how to move through my pain.

Many years later, instead of dealing with my pain, I had simply learned how to mask it. No one really knew the depth of sorrow I carried. Because of my lingering fear, I'd kept it skillfully hidden. During this time I was involved in women's ministries genuinely devoted to the spiritual needs of others. However, just like the home I'd grown up in, I looked fine on the outside—but on the inside—I was terribly broken. Even though I led other women to the hope of Christ, I didn't deem Jesus' healing and freedom applicable to my issues. I believed I had no other choice than to be bound by heavy, painful chains.

I lived a functional life, yet not all was well. I'd sought relief for my suffering without success. The process was exhausting. I'd become subject to cyclical bouts of depression. Instead of dealing with the *source* of the depression, I eventually cried out for medication. Over time, the medication I was taking needed more medication to relieve its side effects. Eventually, I was taking a multitude of different prescriptions. I was using Band-Aids to cover my Band-Aids.

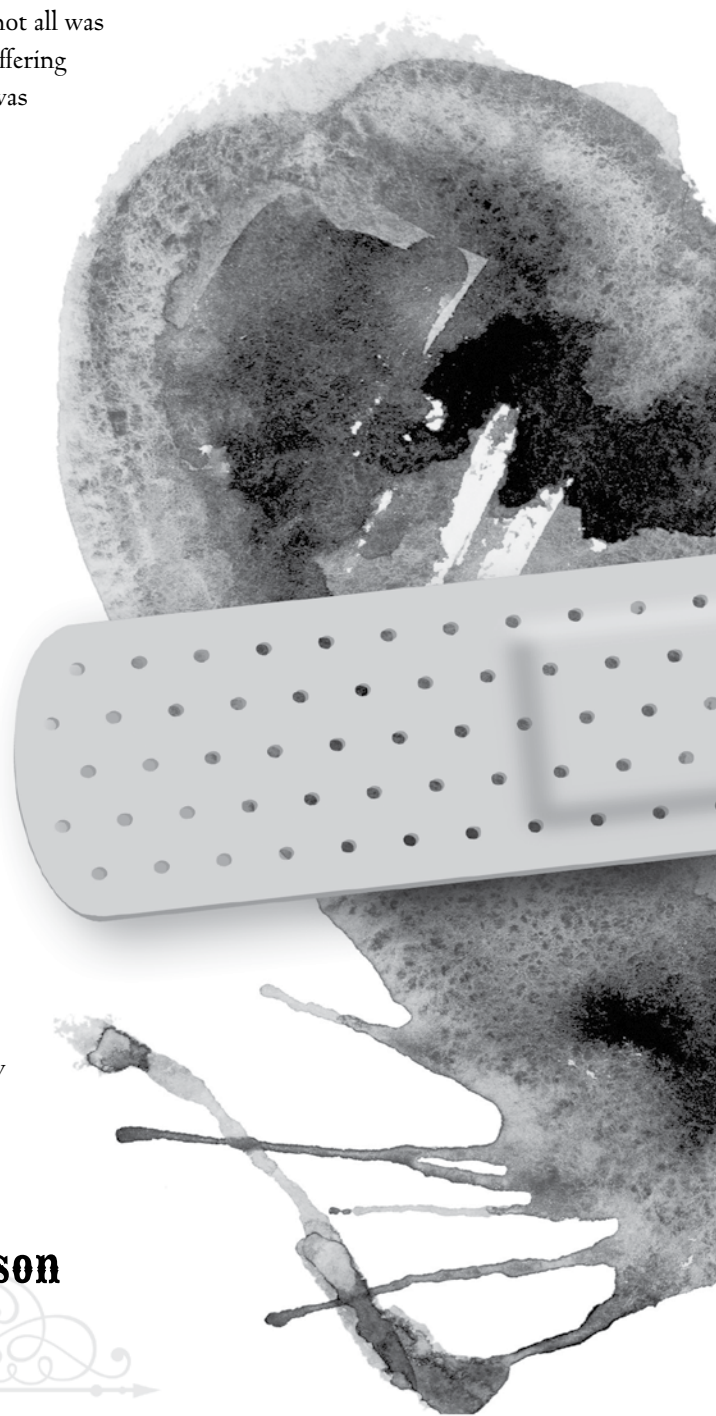
Gratefully, Jesus never leaves us in our devastation... He sent another gatekeeper.

A dear friend of mine invited me to a two-day conference in Redmond, Oregon. The speaker for this event wrote books about horses, kids and hope. Not knowing anything about horses I quickly replied, "No, thank you."

My sweet friend emphatically added, "But she talks about kids and hope too!" I sensed by her tone, how much this meant to her and changed my mind.

On the second day of the conference, I sat in a sanctuary with two hundred other women. God began to speak through an energetic woman with long dark hair. A message of hope went out like a well-aimed arrow. It targeted anyone who would choose to accept it. Through this gatekeeper's unique 'parable-like' delivery of Truth, my heart was pierced. She shared

**God suddenly made it clear to me  
that the only one keeping me in a prison  
of pain... was me!**





## Instead of using Band-Aids to COVER my pain — Jesus wanted to HEAL my pain.

the simple truth that 2000 years ago Jesus Christ broke the chains of suffering. God suddenly made it clear to me that the only one keeping me in a prison of pain... was me!

All those years, I'd stood just outside the gate of genuine hope. My fear, my pride and my pain had prevented me from entering.

I understood the meaning of my neighbor's note shared many years before. Instead of using Band-Aids to COVER my pain—Jesus wanted to HEAL my pain. I suddenly realized that the shackles of my past didn't hold me... I HELD THEM! I had a choice to make: My wounds or Jesus. That day, I gave the pain of my past to Jesus. I made the decision to *release* my past and run through the gate of genuine hope toward His healing. Until that day, I didn't realize that all my life He'd had been holding the gate open... for me.

I now recognize how I had listened to the countless lies of my mortal enemy. By believing these lies, my life was bound by chains of my own making. The shackles that bound me—were NEVER locked. Because of the Truth of God's Word spoken through a faithful gatekeeper, I finally stepped through HIS gate to receive the freedom *that was mine all along*.

"Open for me the gates where the righteous enter, and I will go in and thank the Lord. These gates lead to the presence of the Lord and the Godly enter there. I thank you for answering my prayer and giving me victory!" (Psalm 118:19-21, NLT)

Friend, do you want victory over your pain? Have your wounds overshadowed the Truth of God's Word? Are you standing just outside the gate of HIS hope?

Since God created mankind, His desire—for ALL—is to *choose* to come to Him. Joni Eareckson Tada said, "Sometimes God allows what He hates to accomplish what He loves." God HATES sin—but He LOVES a soul that turns wholeheartedly to Him.

Jesus is our HOPE. He is the only genuine GATE to freedom. If you want to leave your 'Band Aids' behind—step forward through His redemptive work on the cross. He will save you—heal you—and make whole your broken heart.

**Today, Jesus is holding the gate open... for you.**

*(If you would like someone to pray with you—please contact the ranch at 541-330-0123).*





# HOPE

## A CHOICE WORTH MAKING

BY KIM MEEDER

**A**t home and throughout my travels, I have opportunity to speak and pray with individuals who're engaged in mighty struggles. Almost daily, I hear a familiar cry, "My life is hopeless, my situation is hopeless, I'M hopeless. All is lost, there's nothing left of my situation but pain and despair."

The fact is—outside of Jesus Christ—all of these statements about hopelessness—are true. What's equally true is the old "bumper sticker" statement that reads, "No Jesus—NO hope. Know Jesus—KNOW hope."

"For I *KNOW* the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I *WILL* listen. If you look for Me in earnest, you *WILL* find Me when you seek Me. I *WILL* be found by you," says the Lord." (Jer. 29:11-14a, NLT).

This single passage of scripture is nearly the definition of genuine hope. Most Believers know this verse well and quote it often. Yet, fewer live their life in a manner that proves they actually *believe* it.

This made me wonder.

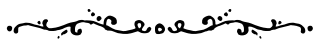
Kim... if you already know the Lord God Almighty has plans for your life and they are GOOD, then why is much of your prayer directed as if to 'remind' Him of that fact? If He's already promised good things to come, why do you constantly ask Him for more? He's God... you're not. He KNOWS the way... you don't. As a matter of fact, He IS the way! (John 14:6). Hmm. So, instead of being a backseat driver and 'reminding' Him of every curve, pothole and wreck ahead—what if you just RESTED in His presence and THANKED HIM for driving you period?

What if I purposed in my heart to spend time in prayer—and not ask Him for ANYTHING? Would it bless God if I set special time aside to come to Him with NO agenda, but simply to *thank* Him, *praise* Him and *worship* Him? What if I come to Him with my ears wide open and *listen* to Him—and then simply follow HIS lead?

I was raised to pray in a more conventional way. The steadfast 'ask that all broken things would be restored' kind of way has been the bulk of my prayer foundations. Although this isn't a wrong way to pray—if it's the *only* way we pray—it's incomplete. Philippians 4:6-7 states, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and *thank Him for all He has done*. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

The thought of intentionally coming before the Lord in prayer—and ONLY worshipping Him—was intriguing to me. "Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God our Maker, for He is our God." (Ps. 95:6-7a, NLT).

Several years ago, in obedience to the Holy Spirit's leading, I added this type of worship to my prayer... and nothing about my life has *ever* been the same.



Even though Troy was on the East Coast, February 5<sup>th</sup> was the evening we chose to introduce this type of prayer/worship to our staff. Anyone who wanted to join in was welcome to meet in the upper room of our barn. During the same time, a

strong storm was blowing in.

While the wind roared outside, the Holy Spirit roared inside. Twice, the whole upper room of the barn shook before the mighty winds that beset it. I couldn't help but wonder if this is what the disciples heard and felt as they waited together for the Holy Spirit to come? (Acts 2) Suddenly, feeling lead to do so, I fervently prayed for the same torrent of the Spirit to come and blow away ANYTHING within us that stood in opposition to Him.

I prayed that the presence of the Holy Spirit would come and shake our very foundations. I asked that God would send His mighty breath, blowing away all our human trivia. I pleaded that His Holy fire would burn through all our hearts and purify them for His service. Having finished doing what He asked, I returned to a place of worshipping the One Who's redeemed my soul.

Our time of worship together finished nearly as quickly as it started. Soon, all were heading home to the rest of their lives. A dear friend stayed late. We spoke deep into the night of the things our Amazing Lord is doing. Finally, at midnight, it was time for bed.

By then, the windstorm had reached its full force. For the first time in 24 years of living in my simple home, I felt it shudder and jolt within the gale. I could hear the panes of glass crackling as they bowed and flexed with each howling gust.

At 1:00 am, the power went down. At 3:00 am, I could hear a roof somewhere below being blown off in the torrent. During the night, mighty trees cracked and popped as ancient roots gave way and they crashed to the earth. The house was pummeled by a continuous siege of flying debris.



Yet, through it all, I never felt fear. Instead I laid in my bed in complete awe of the power, might and wonder of the God we serve. Throughout the night I praised Him for answering in such an unmistakable way.

Alone in the darkness, surrounded by the storm, I was profoundly aware of God's... *pleasure*.

Dawn broke to what felt like a whole new world. Indeed, this was an epic storm. In a nearby town, a single gust of wind was clocked at 118 miles per hour. I inspected the ranch under gray skies that were still tossed by the wind. The ranch property lost 7 trees, one of which fell on our Mercantile, completely crushing the awning. Various building materials and debris were scattered everywhere. Outhouses were blown over. One of our metal wheel lines was torn in two and half of it was blown across our hay field. Yet, amongst all the damage, what I was most intrigued by was the fact that of all the roofs on the ranch... the only one to blow off... was the one that covered the *exact area* we had just been praying beneath the night before.

I couldn't help but wonder what the Lord was trying to show me.

It wasn't until the next morning that the answer came. Awakening to absolute calm, I walked out on my deck. The sight that greeted me nearly made my knees give way! It was unmistakable. The Lord had answered.

Arcing before me in living color was a rainbow—but not just *any* rainbow. This blaze of glory streamed out of Heaven—not before or behind—but INTO the gaping hole torn through the barn roof!

What I saw reached far beyond what meager words can describe. The King of All was literally **SHOWING** me His pleasure, His favor, His approval of *anyone* seeking Him in pure-hearted worship.

"But the time is coming and is already here when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for *anyone* who will worship Him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth." (John 4:23-24, NLT).

This beautiful experience reminds me that when it comes to "Hope for the Family," we each have a choice to make. When we choose to focus on our hopelessness—our fear grows and

our trust in Jesus shrinks. From this perspective, we have a tendency to pray only from our position of absolute need—because our focus is on our **NEED** more than our Savior.

Or, we can come to Him within our personal storms and choose to *worship* Him because He is **STILL** God—He has **STILL** redeemed us—He **STILL** loves us. As spoken in Philippians 4:7, no storm of dark circumstances can contain the **PEACE** that comes when we turn to our Lord in pure worship.

*"The Lord's delight is in those who honor Him, those who put their hope in His unfailing love."* (Ps. 147:11, NLT).

The truth is, the more we know Jesus, really **KNOW** Him—what He's done and **WHO** He is—the more our understanding of genuine hope will overshadow and eventually consume **ALL** our fears. And **THAT... is a choice worth making**.

(To more clearly see the rainbow pictures, please go to <http://www.crystalpeakseyouthranch.org/hope-a-choice-worth-making/>).





# SEEDS OF HOPE

BY JOSIE GWIN

**B**rown eyes twinkled behind wire rimmed glasses. Little fingers poked through tattered gloves. I watched the small girl pull tall cherry tomato vines aside to reach for just one more ripe fruit. Young Esther declared, "My momma said to bring lots of tomatoes. She loves tomatoes!"



I just had the privilege of spending my session with this sprite of a girl. Glancing down at her, I realized I knew little—but enough—of her heartbreaking story. Esther's mother was raising several children alone because her father was in prison. I could feel the unmistakable blanket of hopelessness and despair weighing down her mother's shoulders. Every word she spoke bore the weight of her circumstances. Adding to their financial strain, the exhausted mother shared how her extended family—with all their challenges and burdens—lived with them in a minuscule house.

In stark contrast, joy radiated from every inch of Esther's slender frame. Hunting through the greenhouse for vegetable treasures she said, "Did you know that God created tasty green things for us to eat so that we could get our vitamins?" I nodded and smiled while



placing another cucumber in her harvest bucket. "Why do you think He did that?" I replied. "Because He LOVES us!" she emphatically returned. Chuckling softly, I marveled at her innocent confidence. I stopped picking and looked directly at her. "Esther, where did you learn so much about God and His love?"

Thoughtfully she replied, "Before my

momma got sad, she used to tell me about Jesus. But now, I learn about Him at the Ranch. I just love being here!" Peering under large leaves, she spied a deep green zucchini ready to be picked. "Ooooh, I tried cooking these once. They're yummy! How do you pick these? The plants are so prickly!" Her words tumbled over each other as she tugged my hand toward the vegetable. I showed her how to carefully twist the zucchini until the stem broke. Victorious, she placed the squash in—what had become—her overflowing bucket.

Gently turning her away from another ripe zucchini, I reminded her, "We have to finish up, my friend. I know your mother's waiting for you." Her response was simple and sweet, "Yeah, and we'd better leave some for other families. They might need some tasty veggies too!"





Grasping the bucket handle with both hands, I watched her tiny shoulders hunch to bear the load. Struggling under the weight, she half-stepped toward the door. I suggested, "Esther, let's put your vegetables in some grocery sacks so they're easier to carry." Together we carefully sorted the heavy cucumbers from fragile tomatoes. Then we topped each bag with handfuls of fresh green beans, quickly munching on the few strays that spilled out. With our task accomplished, we headed out the door hand in hand, down the gravel driveway toward the grassy hill.

The girl's mother sat on a wooden bench under the deep shade of a pine tree. When Esther saw her, she shouted, "Momma, momma! Guess what!? We went GROCERY SHOPPING in the greenhouse!" "You did?" She exclaimed. "Let me see." I watched Esther pour out into her mother's lap bags filled with fresh produce. Instantly her mother was nearly buried under an avalanche of the tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, and green beans that her daughter had just harvested.

Studying her mother's face, I saw for a brief moment the heavy blanket of despair slip aside.

Their animated conversation swirled between them as each vegetable was examined and placed back into the bags. Watching their joy inspired me to turn my heart heavenward in praise to our Creator.

Sometimes hope comes in small packages, as tiny as a seed. God sees us in our times of need. He lovingly tends to us, nurturing us and protecting us, knowing—a harvest WILL come—in His perfect timing. On this day, I was a witness to this miracle. Only weeks before seeds had been planted, they thrived and produced abundantly for this exact moment; the moment a tiny girl and a tired mother needed most... a gift of hope.

**"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever."**

(Philippians 4:19-20, NASB)



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## *Time to* **CELEBRATE!**

### **Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch has a New Inspirational Video.**

Several months ago, we announced that the Ranch was working hard on a new production, something that would encourage every viewer toward the hope of Jesus Christ. It's been our desire to share through video—worldwide—the work the Lord continues to pour through this ranch... and ANY heart that genuinely turns to Him.

After a full year in the making, we're thrilled to announce this ministry tool has been completed!

Throughout the last 20 years of Crystal Peaks journey, the Truth of God's Word has reigned in our mission: we have **no hope** to offer the kids and families who come... other than the one *true hope* found in Christ alone.

Although spoken through the framework of 'life on the ranch,' this project carries an inspiring message of hope and redemption. Please join us in sharing this visual expression of hope with ANYONE who needs encouragement.

To view the new video go to the following link in your web browser:  
<http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org/blog/2015/02/03/time-to-celebrate-new-promo-video-released/>

We ask that you would join us in prayer over this DVD. It's our desire that this project will find its way into every broken heart searching for TRUTH. Thank you so much for shouldering with us by sharing this moving and powerful message of HOPE.



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