

# AROUND the FIRE

SUMMER 2016

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

Those who know me well are aware of my passion for the outdoors. For the times when I must be inside, I've strategically stationed bird feeders to draw the bustling activity of the wild into my view. Not long ago, I nestled into my office with a hot cup of coffee in hand and an old tattered quilt across my lap. I'd just scattered birdseed across a downy blanket of new fallen snow.

Unable to access their usual fare through the frozen white, the birds showed their pure gratitude by gliding down into the yard in great numbers. Soon, the entire scene was filled with the delightful chatter of happy birds enjoying breakfast.

Suddenly, there was a whirring storm of wings as the panicked flock took flight. A zillion birds darted a zillion different directions as a large Coopers

Hawk swooped through the yard. In the frenzy to escape, a small bird smashed into my office window only inches from my face. The impact knocked the bird unconscious and it fell upside down onto the woodpile below the windowsill.

Looking at it intently, I studied the tiny bird. It was a Junco, known in this region as a snowbird. The slightly muted coloration told me it was a female. She was still on her back when her tiny legs began to move. She appeared to be searching for something to grasp to right herself. Finding nothing but cold, I watched the perfect legs struggle less and less—and then—not at all. She was dying.

"Lord? How can this be right? How can this be Your will? This is a meaningless death . . . why?" I searched.

Then, in the stillness, I heard, "Look at her.

Look AT her!" I did. The beautiful slender legs were slowly sliding apart as she was leaving this life. "She has been knocked out of balance . . . she was not created to live in THIS position . . . set her RIGHT."

The old quilt flew off my lap as I dashed out of my office toward the back door. When I reached the bird, a single thought crossed my mind, "How?" What followed was more image than phrase, but the words I sensed were, "Gentle, gentle, gentle."

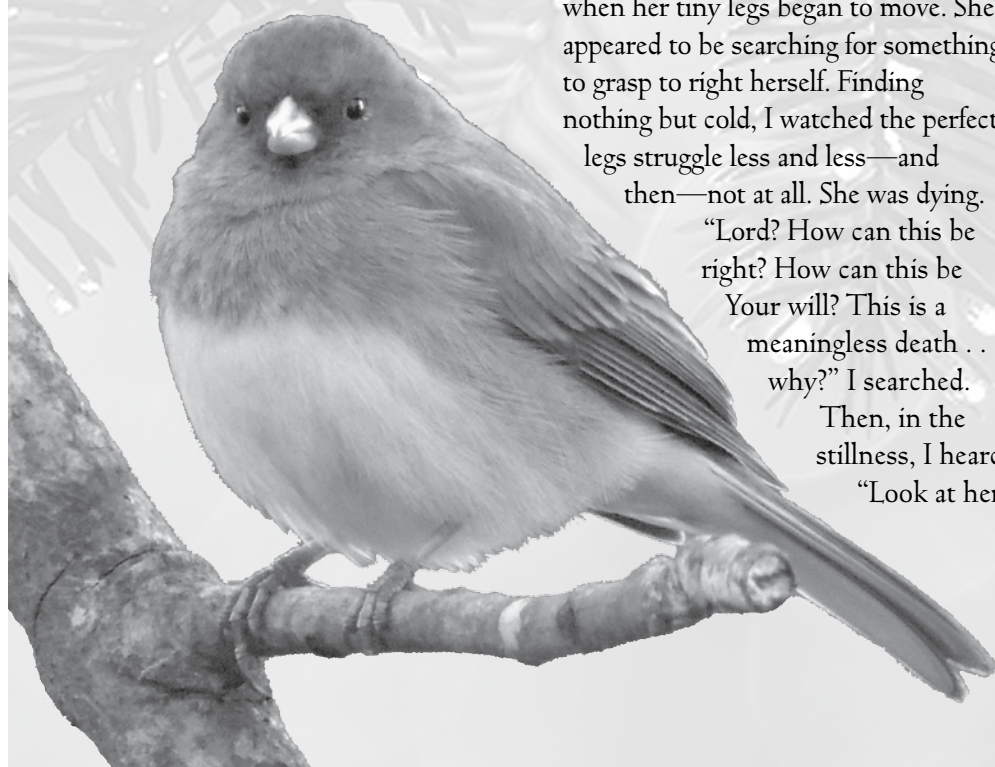
Using two fingers from my left hand and the index finger on my right, I carefully lifted the bird only high enough to rotate her back onto her feet. In doing so, I watched the tiny bird's head slide deeply to the side—her neck was broken—this rescue attempt was futile.


My "But God? This is hopeless" was crushed before I even finished the thought with, "DO IT! . . . Trust Me."

In obedience, I gently propped the tiny bird against a piece of firewood and quietly made my way back into the office. Once the old quilt was replaced on my lap, I rotated my chair back

## Tiny Bird

BY KIM MEEDER



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toward the window and moved up as close as I could get.

“JESUS!” The little snowbird’s head was now atop her shoulders, right where it should be! Captured by this

tiny miracle, I watched, completely transfixed. Held fast within the power of this transformation, it occurred to me that horses are similar in reaction when cast on their back. They’ll try to right themselves for a while, but once they BELIEVE they cannot rise, they stop trying. Left within this upside-down position, death is imminent.

Soon, the snowbird’s beautiful black eyes began to blink . . . her thought process was returning. After several long moments, she shook once and then flew away!

“Wow Lord! SPEAK!”

Through the quiet of dawn, I could hear deep within, “Gentle, gentle, gentle—this is what I am calling you to do for those around you. Help them regain their balance in My love. Some will be rebalanced and will immediately take flight, soaring deeper into My presence. Others, when rebalanced, will choose to return to an upside-down existence of self imposed pain and bitterness. Beloved, yours is to not make such a call for them . . . yours is to listen closely and simply do what I say. To secure those around you with My love . . . this is what I’m calling ALL My people to do.”



Recently, I traveled to visit some dear family friends. They were my childhood neighbors when I still lived with my parents. Abby, a woman of my mother’s age, was a new Believer when she heard the tragic news of how my parents had died—leaving behind three orphaned girls. In her young faith, she did what mattered most—she started to pray for the daughters.

All Abby knew was that the girls had been taken away. She prayed for them for years—decades—never knowing what happened—she just kept praying that somehow, through the pain, they would meet Jesus.

One day, her pest control man knocked on her door. Upon answering, he shared with Abby a book he’d just

read and said, “I know you love kids and horses, so I know you will love this book.” As Abby accepted the gift, she turned the book over and read the back cover. “Hey! I think I KNOW this girl! Is this Kim Caldwell?” He said, “Yes, she moved in with her grandparents who lived just down the road from us. We grew up together and were close childhood friends.” That same day, Abby located the ranch contact information and went to work.

“AGAIN, I HEARD THE  
UNMISTAKABLE VOICE  
OF MY LORD SPEAK,  
‘SET HER RIGHT. HELP  
HER REBALANCE IN MY  
LOVE.’”

I received an email that simply said, “I know you won’t remember me—but—I will never forget you.” I was your neighbor when you lived with your parents . . . and I’ve been praying for you for the last 33 years.” With that single declaration, the electric current of the Holy Spirit arced between our hearts—and they’ve been welded together ever since. She continued, “It doesn’t matter how old you are, every girl needs a mom . . . and if you choose . . . I would like to shoulder with what’s left of your family and become that for you.” And for the last dozen years, she’s been true to every word.

From that moment to this day, I make the trip to visit Abby and her dear husband Sam several times a year. And, as often as they’re able, they make the long journey to the ranch for no other reason than to encourage and support their “extra girl.”

Although my visit with Sam and Abby was brief, it was rich in what’s most important. It was early Sunday morning and while they were getting ready for church, I was gearing up for the five-hour drive home. While





helping to set out the breakfast items, I heard a little voice beckon me. It was Rosie, Abby and Sam's 4 year-old great-granddaughter. Several times a week she spent the night with her beloved Great Grandma and Grandpa.

I turned just in time to see her sit on the couch and—as only a child can—grasp a foot in each hand and stretch her legs toward the ceiling. Her long brown hair was tousled around her cherubic face. Set within pink flannel pajamas, she really did look like a little sleepy angel.

With that thought in mind, I turned to her and said, "Wow Rosie, you look so pretty today." In response, she made a funny face and pulled up her pajama shirt to examine it, clearly questioning if this was what made her pretty. Once decided, she declared, "I'm not pretty because I don't have pretty clothes on." I smiled at her, "Honey, it's not what you wear that makes you pretty . . . it's what comes out of your heart." Again, her eyebrows crunched together as she pondered this concept. And again she stated, "But I'm not dressed up . . . so I'm not pretty."

I considered Rosie's life. She was only four years old. She was already being bombarded with the fallacies of worldly 'beauty.' I could see her fragile heart bending under the weight of what this realm accepts—and what it doesn't. Her tender heart was being pushed into the negative wilderness of "you're not good enough." The perception of her worth before Christ was being knocked upside down.

I turned to fully face Rosie. That's when it occurred to me . . . there she was . . . the tiny bird who'd been knocked upside down.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit, I moved over to Rosie's side and sat on the couch with her. "Honey, it's not the outside of a person that makes them beautiful, it's what comes out of their heart—from the inside out—that's what makes someone beautiful. It's when Jesus lives in your heart and

there's so MUCH love inside, that it just pours out! And that love—HIS love—pouring out of your heart is what makes you the most beautiful of all."

Again, I heard the unmistakable voice of my Lord speak, "Set her right. Help her rebalance in My love."

The conversation that followed was one of the purest that I've ever known. When asked to come into our heart, it's JESUS who heals our hurts, lights our darkness, floods us with His redeeming love—and—sets us right. In the tender moments that followed, the 'tiny bird' beside me asked Jesus to come into her 'house', heal her hurting places and fill it with His love.

Just like that . . . a life was rebalanced by the love of Jesus.

It's a fact that every life will at some point be knocked out of balance by the fallacies and hardships of this world. Every life will experience the suffocating

confusion of being cast upside down, locked within a place of worthlessness, grief, bitterness, anger, unforgiveness or fear. In this posture, we're so disoriented that we don't know which way to turn for help. All we really know for sure is . . . if left in this position . . . we will not survive.

All praise to Jesus for crushing our "But God, this is hopeless," moments with His very presence. He continually offers to ANYONE who's seeking to be 'set right' the way to know His redeeming love.

*"We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done."* Rom. 3:22 (NLT).

Friend—you can choose to trust Jesus to remove your sin and set you right. And when you do . . . just like that . . . your life can become rebalanced by His gift of LOVE for you.



Photo: Kim Meeder



# A LESSON LEARNED IN AN ORCHARD

BY GEORGIA LOVELL

Two years have gone by since we planted our orchard of 180 bare root fruit trees on the far side of the West Ranch property. Boy-oh-boy, have I learned a great deal about myself and God's creation within this time. I could list dozens of lessons learned, but for now I'll share one . . . don't ignore gophers!

I love how God uses His creation in such simple ways to show us life lessons. Take the gopher for example, it's small, furry and lives underground. As God intended, it feeds on things beneath our view.

The gophers showed up in the new orchard about a year ago. I ignored them because I didn't want to deal with another problem. Maybe there was some pride involved on my part. Because I didn't know what to do . . . I did nothing at all. Unfortunately, during my self-imposed complacency, those pesky gophers ate 27 trees!

Within God's wonderful grace and timing, He allowed me to experience all the damage that was occurring. Finally, feeling I had no other options, I had to turn to a professional gopher killer. I invited him to come to the ranch and give an estimate of how much it would cost to get rid of them. He took one look at the damage and refused to help!

"Now what do I do?" I pondered.

It's at low moments like this where I often seek the Lord more fervently. In this case, I felt I needed to begin by asking for forgiveness for ignoring the gopher problem in the first place. God's mercy and timing is so perfect. I was at work in our office that day and I remembered something I'd seen online. In moments, I was scanning the internet again for traps. I'd looked into this option earlier but the traps I'd found were not humane and the process for setting them was cumbersome. With this type of trap, there was no guarantee of success so I ignored that solution. Fortunately for me—and the orchard—God gave greater clarity.

For some unknown reason, on this day my search revealed 'cinch' traps again as the number one solution. However, the technique for placing the trap seemed fairly easy and much less cumbersome than everything I'd seen before.

I quickly moved forward with ordering the traps. I've tried them out with much success. Gratefully, what I thought would be difficult has become an easy process!

The truth is, we've all ignored 'little' things that we just didn't want to deal with.

Each of us has experienced that seemingly insignificant sin that doesn't feel noticeable or seen by anyone else—except maybe your closest confidant. In loving kindness, they may mention it once but we choose to ignore the warning.

The problem with ignoring sin . . . is that it NEVER goes away . . . it only becomes bigger and bigger. Eventually, just like a gopher, it creeps up beneath our view and eats away our very foundations. Then, POW! You get called out by God, perhaps through a good

friend or even a stranger. Through the orchard, I've learned that ignoring sin has consequences, sometimes painful ones.



"WHEN I TRUST HIM, HE  
SHOWS ME THE WAY THROUGH  
EVERYTHING."



The 27 trees the gophers killed were still standing. However, once the tree was closely examined it was easy to see they were a bit 'off kilter.' By simply pulling up on the trunk they came right out of the ground with NO roots at all. From the outside, the trees looked okay but like us, the damage caused by sin was just below the surface. And left unchecked . . . death is certain.

Now, our gopher problem is diminishing quickly. I'm excited about this success and the confidence of making a good choice to seek God in everything . . . even gopher problems!

I'm learning it's the same when I ignore God's gentle guidance and choose instead to allow little sins to exist in my heart. By holding them back from Him, they chew away at all that HE is building within. But, when I trust Him, He shows me the way through everything . . . even the 'gophers' of my pride. *"People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy."* Proverbs 28:13 (NLT)

Kim encouraged me to replant one of the destroyed-rootless apple trees. To my amazement, the tree is now thriving again. This regeneration made me realize how this healing is just like us before Jesus. What the world proclaims is impossible to recover from—when asked—Jesus simply heals us from the inside out.

I remain encouraged every time I pass this flourishing tree and see it's silver identification tag flashing in the breeze. The tag reminds me of a truth in my own life . . . this little tree's variety . . . is 'Liberty.'

*"For the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love."* Psalm 145:8 (NLT).



Photos: Katie Jacobsen





# Redefining 'Rescue'

BY JEFF WOODFORD

In September of 2014 one of our mares, Shamis, gave birth to a colt that we named Forrest. The addition of this new foal to our herd was no extravagant or dramatic rescue, but rather a natural, easy transition into a safe and loving environment. However, an event occurred during our initial attempt at weaning him that has convinced me to reconsider my definition of the word 'rescue.'

The process of weaning this colt was pretty simple. We would move Shamis into the 'main herd' and leave Forrest—with his friend Amos—in the small quarantine pen. These corrals shared a fence and we hoped this would ease the transition by allowing Forrest to still be close to his mother, while not allowing him to nurse from her.

We carefully planned 'the separation' during feeding time in hopes that all involved would be too distracted by food to worry about being apart. As we released Shamis into the main herd, she did her job beautifully. Trotting over to the piles of hay spread on the ground, she quietly began munching away with

the rest of the horses. Forrest, on the other hand, was not going to be distracted by boring hay; his mother was leaving him behind and he was stuck behind a fence!

Forrest paced the fence, watching his mother get further away. Once Forrest stopped pacing, I decided the worst was over and let myself relax. Then, in the span of one second, the small colt sized up the height of the rails, leaned back on his haunches and effortlessly jumped over the fence!

Needless to say, those watching were aghast! We couldn't believe he'd even attempted such a hurdle, much less make it with ease. A leap like this is something you'd see in a seasoned jumping horse, not a small colt. Our awe quickly faded as we realized the danger into which Forrest had just leapt.

When horses meet for the first time they immediately begin the process of establishing dominance. This usually involves at least the threat, if not the act of running, biting, rearing, and kicking—sometimes all of those at once. This hierarchy is completely normal,

healthy, and expected. Understanding this, we follow strict guidelines to minimize the threat of injuries. This herd contained several confident and dominant horses. I knew we were about to witness a very interesting, possibly scary, sequence of events.

One of our staff members ran to get a halter so we could catch Forrest. The rest of us had no choice but to watch and see what unfolded. There was no safe way we could fend off 20 horses that—according to their instincts—needed to make sure this new addition recognized his place in the herd's pecking order.

As any mother would, Shamis quickly intervened. She tried to protect Forrest by positioning herself between him and any horse that got too close. By pinning her ears back, she clearly warned all that a bite or well-placed kick would follow. Tensions rose as horses closed in around Shamis and her colt. The small mare realized she couldn't stop them all. At this point, Shamis used a horse's best defense—she circled her son and ran.

Even as she galloped around the paddock with Forrest glued to her side, the other horses closed in. One of the pursuing horses was a gelding named Templeton. He's seven years old, dominant, and part of the herd where Forrest lived the first few months of his life. For some reason, Templeton was the only horse that purposely closed the gap to Shamis and Forrest.

Then . . . it happened.

With a handful of horses on the frightened mare and colt's heels, Templeton charged Shamis and Forrest! But, it was not to correct the colt—surprisingly—it was to help protect them from the pursuing mob!

Around and around the trio galloped. Forrest was securely wedged



Photos: Katie Jacobsen





between Shamis and Templeton; together they protected the colt on all sides from the rest of the herd. Shoulder to shoulder, this pair finally led Forrest safely away from the pursuers. Realizing they couldn't get close to the colt, they finally quieted down and returned to their supper.

As soon as the pursuit ended, we easily caught Forrest. By adding some higher panels, we safely secured him inside the quarantine pen.

Although Forrest's initial arrival to Crystal Peaks was nothing dramatic, he exemplifies a different kind of rescue. Forrest did need rescue that day, and Templeton was the horse for the job.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus which of the commandments was greatest, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV).

It would've been easier for Templeton to ignore his friend in need and continue eating . . . but he didn't.

When God calls us to love our neighbors as our self, it can mean that we need to look up from our own 'pile of hay' to see what is happening around us—yes—even at feeding time.

I was raised in what I would

consider a very healthy, loving and caring family. Yet, there were people in my life that rescued me when I needed help. The reason they stepped in was because they were paying attention and made themselves available. Without them, would my life have fallen apart? No, but they significantly helped to spare me from many 'kicks and bites' and added to the man I am today.

As you read this, I encourage you to hear this as a call to action. If you have an enticing pile of hay that's keeping your head down and focus limited, make a CHOICE to look up and see what's going on around you.

Look for opportunities to step in and make a difference in someone's life—regardless of how 'healthy' their circumstances may appear.

When it comes to making a difference, it often doesn't matter what you say or do. The lasting impact is made simply by trying. My father used many wise quips, one of my favorites is, "People may not always remember what you said or did, but they will always remember how you made them feel."

So today, live out the truth found in Matthew 22 and place another's needs before your own—know that you're positively influencing those around you. Perhaps, in a way unknown to you . . . you just might be redefining THEIR rescue.

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

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# **IT'S TIME FER A HOEDOWN!**

**Round up yer crew and join us for a night of fun  
and fellowship.**

**Saturday, July 30th  
4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

**Wear yer best cowboy, cowgirl, cow-family outfits.  
Prizes will be given fer the best dressed!**

**There will be activities such as lariat throwin', right fun  
games, western dancin', and some ol' fashion burgers.**

**We'll finish the night with a time of worship, followed by a  
message from Co-founder, Troy Meeder.**