

RESCUE THE EQUINE

AROUND the FIRE

Summer 2019

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

The Liberty Belle

By Sarah Robinett

We have a new horse on the Ranch with a very special birthday. Born on Independence Day, this dazzling silver mare embodies freedom in the sweetest ways. “Liberty Belle” is a Welsh-Arab cross who came to Crystal Peaks with her brother in November. They were donated by an incredibly dear woman of faith. Jesus is already ringing a crystal-clear call to freedom for each child who interacts with this beautiful mare.

The first child to respond was named “Melody.”

Melody was a spunky red-head whose remarkable horse abilities reached far beyond her nine years of age. During our first session together, I discovered we not only shared the joy of loving horses—we also both knew the painful journey of our moms fighting cancer. Even though my mom is a cancer survivor, I haven’t forgotten her horrific journey. I still remember waking at midnight to her animal-like moans or the predawn checks to see if she was still breathing.

God allowed me to remember not to wallow in the past—but give aid in the present—so those like Melody would not walk this dark road alone.

During this somber time with Melody, my heart grieved for my young friend. We didn’t need to exchange many words. Intuitively, we knew she just needed a safe retreat to rest from the pain. It was good to just be together and ride.

Sadly, Melody’s visits became fewer and further apart. Her mother passed away. Communication between us was lost for a time. I prayed fervently that God would draw her to Himself and allow her to experience the freedom of His love.

Finally, we received a call from an incredible foster mom who had taken Melody into her home. At the same time, we had adopted two new horses—a brother-sister pair who had scarcely spent a day of their lives apart. Liberty Belle and her brother were experiencing individual measures of anxiety in their new home. I thought Melody might be just the girl to help show them that they were safe and loved.

Freedom

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After a sweet reunion of hugs upon Melody's arrival, we set out to meet the new horses. On our way, I asked her what had been happening in her life. Melody told me that after her mom died, she and her brothers were placed into foster care.

"We all got put in separate foster homes . . ." she said with the first hint of emotion she'd shown all day. I watched an edge of deep, raw sadness bleed through her stoic countenance.

While we talked, Liberty Belle began responding to her brother's panicked cries of isolation. The beautiful mare raised her head in concern and called back.

Once we were safely in the arena, Melody and I shut the gate and removed Liberty Belle's halter. Immediately, the mare turned and began running, looking for an escape route back to her brother.

While watching Liberty Belle's reaction of separation from her sibling, I glanced at Melody. I suddenly realized that both child and horse was experiencing a strikingly similar situation. It was as if Liberty Belle was personifying Melody's emotionally shattered heart. Both horse and child were in new homes, forced into new lives, with a loss of everything familiar. And both were desperately, fearfully missing their brothers.

As Liberty Belle screamed for her brother, I raised our training flag to get her attention. Then, I explained our teaching plan to Melody.

"Liberty Belle is looking for a place of safety. Right now, she thinks that her safe place is with her brother. She's afraid because she isn't with him. She doesn't yet understand that she is safest with us. She doesn't know how much we love her or the wonderful things in store for her if she would simply trust us. Because we want what's best for her, we're not going to let her stay in this state of anxiety. We're going to encourage her to change her mind. But first, we must gain her attention."

I waved the flag a bit harder and Liberty Belle ran a bit harder. This caused her to glance at me.

"Right now, do you think Liberty Belle feels like we're chasing her?"

Melody nodded, watching the silver mare toss her head in defiance.

"She may feel that way, but the truth is, we want to invite her to join our herd for her safety. She only feels like we're chasing her because she's not truly focused on us. She's not looking to see our invitation to come join us."

I showed Melody how to hold the flag and where to stand. As we worked with Liberty Belle, she began to turn inward to look at us. This lasted only moments before she would wheel and run away again.

God prompted me to ask Melody, "Do you feel like this horse right now? Do you feel like you're trying to find a safe spot away from your brother?"

Melody's eyes widened with realization. Slowly, she nodded. By now she understood the maneuvers and continued to read her horse. She dropped the flag and took a step back. Liberty Belle turned to face us—and took several steps in our direction. We rotated and walked away, horse language for "come join our herd." Liberty Belle began to follow, but it was only a moment before she turned and dashed away.

At this point, I started to feel impatient. By now, all our session horses typically would have decided to come and stand quietly in the center with us. But not Liberty Belle. She was *still* running. Occasionally, she'd come in for a few steps and let us pet her—then she was off again.

Our time together was ending and we had to find a good stopping point. Finally, I put the halter back on and we decided to brush her and physically use the rope to ask her to stay by us. Even then she had a hard time standing still.

"Liberty Belle is just not sure she can fully trust us yet," I explained. "And that's okay. We can be patient with her until she's ready. This is a good try for today."

Like a lightning strike, another thought streaked through my heart. "Melody, is that how you feel with God? Like you're not sure you can fully trust Him?"

Without hesitation, her head dropped and she responded, "Yeah." Ignoring my gaze, she kept brushing the mare. I stopped her for a moment. "Melody, you need to hear that that's okay. God loves you and He's patient with you. Just like we waited for Liberty Belle, He will wait for you. He wants you to choose to trust Him."

My words seemed to fly away without noticeable impact, just like the loosened horse hair drifting away in the breeze. In silence, Melody took



the lead rope and guided Liberty Belle back to her corral.

In the following months, Liberty Belle progressed quickly in her training. She willingly followed us all around the paddock. At times, Melody chose to take a break from “training” and ride some of our other horses. Little was said about her trust—her family—or God. At one point she bitterly confessed, “I used to trust God, but I don’t anymore . . . because He *knew* He was going to take my brother away and He didn’t even tell me.”

The following week, Melody opted for a change and selected our huge black Friesian, Eclipse. She wanted to ride in Independence Arena, called such because it was built in 1995 on the fourth of July. It’s also where riders prove they can safely handle their horses and are free to ride off-line. While Melody was brushing Eclipse, I asked her if she felt like she could ever trust God again. She stopped mid-stroke and declared, “But I DO trust God.”

Stunned, I was speechless for a moment. Then I reminded her of our recent conversation and was curious as to what changed. In her signature “change-the-subject” fashion, she let me know it was time to go ride.

As Melody guided Eclipse effortlessly around the arena, our conversation ebbed like a tiny stream. Finally, she spoke enough for me to understand that the night before she had gone to church, when the invitation was given to receive Jesus . . . *she went forward*. *WHAT?* My brain could barely make sense of what she had just said.

Without a trace of emotion, her words didn’t connect in my mind. I awkwardly blurted out, “*Were you serious?*”

She looked at me indignantly, “Yes.” She seemed to notice I was still confused, so she continued, “They told us not to come up if we weren’t serious.”

Amazed, I faltered, “Oh. That’s

great! Actually, that’s just AWESOME. Um . . . How do you feel? What’s different for you now?”

She looked at me like I had two heads. “*NOW. . . I trust God.*”

And just like that, Melody chose freedom in Jesus.

While watching her riding in Independence Arena, I remembered how God placed Liberty Belle as the first distant ringing call of freedom to Melody’s broken heart. It was clear that sound had resounded and grown into an increasing clear chorus of hope. In



Photos by Sarah Robinett

the darkest of trials, she flung her heart into the radiating, brilliant arms of Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ had become her freedom.

At the end of our session, I wanted to remind her that through Jesus, God had given her a new forever home into *His family*. I asked her, “You know we’re now sisters forever, right?”

Melody faced me from atop Eclipse. Like a horse learning to trust, she held my gaze. This was the longest moment she’d ever looked directly at me. Then she questioned, “*Really?*”

“Yes! You’re stuck with me and with everyone who calls Jesus their Lord.”

Her expression turned thoughtful, then she smiled and said, “I remember my mom telling me how she had asked Jesus into her heart too.”

Tears welled up in my eyes. “Melody, do you know that because of Jesus’ love, the two of you can spend forever together? You will see her again.”

Melody’s smile widened beyond anything I’d ever seen before. She nodded her head and looked off into the distance. Wind danced between us and swirled through her hair. Freedom was blooming inside her heart.

Since the unfolding of this story, Melody has continued to grow—and so has Liberty Belle. After months of perseverance, Melody was the first child to ride Liberty Belle at the ranch. She told me she now has a peace she knows that comes only from God.

Melody *trusted* Jesus Christ. Her freedom was as simple—and profound—as that.

And so is OURS.

Like Melody, will you choose to hearken to the “Liberty Belle” Jesus is ringing for YOU? Whatever challenges you may currently be experiencing, He is patiently waiting for you to turn and look to Him—come to Him—and reach for His extended hand of loving hope.

Today, will YOU decide to trust Him with your life? By receiving His Presence—freedom follows.

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the
Lord is, there is freedom.”*

2 Corinthians 3:17

BEAUTIFUL BRAVERY



BY DEIRDRE GOMEZ

Every day I'm learning to tell Jesus, "I love You too. I'm *all* Yours. I can't wait to see what You have for us today."

Every day with Him is such a sweet adventure.

On a recent beautiful afternoon, I was walking and praying with my dear friend, Kim. She proceeded to share how she was just reconnected with a beloved friend named Jude, who was battling stage 4 lung cancer. Kim invited me to pray with her for Jude.

Together we prayed for her friend to know the saving love and redemption of Jesus Christ. We asked our Lord to heal her body, and show us how to help with the rehoming of her horse—a lovely, 21-year-old chestnut and white Tennessee Walker.

Although Crystal Peaks usually does not adopt older horses, we knew this adoption was more about bringing peace to the heart of a dear friend in great need. When we finished praying, Kim looked at me and smiled. Then she asked, "What do you think about personally taking over the care of Jude's horse once she arrives at the Ranch? Your friendship could ease this mare's transition into a new life. You could also smooth her out under saddle and help her get ready for sessions with the kiddos."

I was in awe. Only Jesus could know how much my heart had missed my beloved horse . . . who was also a chestnut. I felt like Isaiah in chapter 6:8 when he said, "Here I am, You can send me." Through tears, I told Kim that I was all in.

I knew that every horse the Ranch redeems is given a new name, often symbolic of their unique journey to this home. Kim asked me to pray about this mare's new name.

But before I could even begin to ask Jesus what she should be called—He told me. In that moment, I heard the name "Esther." She was a Biblical queen, lovely and full of faith. Esther was willing to risk her life—repeatedly—for those she loved and for her people. She lived an amazing life of redemption, triumph, truth, and bravery. My sense was that this horse would become all those attributes for the children the Holy Spirit would soon connect with her.

In that single defining moment . . . she became "Esther."

The following week, Kim returned to Jude's home for another visit. She shared with her ailing friend my desire to personally take over the care of her beloved mare. Through tears, Jude responded, "I want to know this woman. Can you bring her out to meet me?"

A week later, I accompanied Kim and met her dear friend Jude. Within that first meeting, a powerful instant connection was forged with this woman of strong character. Kim and I talked about this special mare and we asked for approval to potentially change her horse's name. Instantly curious, she asked what we had in mind. I told her, "Esther." Jude wanted to know why I chose this unusual name. I explained how the Lord whispered this name into my heart, and what a beautiful and noble name it was. Jude smiled. She was pleased because the woman who originally introduced her to horses was *also* named Esther.

Once again, I was amazed at how Jesus cares about every detail.

Jude asked me if I would be willing to come out to her home and start riding Esther right away. For the second time in this beautiful process, I heard myself say, "I am all in. Let's do this!"

With Jude's invitation firmly placed in my heart, I traveled the forty minutes to her home every other day to ride her sweet mare. With each visit, I learned new things about Jude and her powerful heart. Her fiery green eyes and black curly hair became the beautiful frame for her strong heart. For much of her life, she was a Bering Sea fisherman. She traded in a life of fishing for king crab, to become a counselor in a juvenile justice department. There, she passionately fished for the lives of the broken hearted within her midst. Jude was a wife. She exhibited astounding compassion to take in and love abandoned animals. She was kind, truthful, and brave.

Like Kim—with every visit—I simply loved Jude more.

In this critical season of Jude's life, many people joined Kim and I in praying for her to know the saving love of Jesus. As only God can, He employs all who seek Him and believe in Him, in such beautiful and astounding ways.

Romans 12:4-5 (NLT), proclaims, "*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body, we are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*"

Through the many people who'd been praying for Jude's redemption, each had a specific assignment from the Holy Spirit to reflect Jesus' love.

After only two weeks of spending time with Jude, I woke up one morning to the voice of Jesus. He whispered, "Today is the day my Beloved daughter is going to choose Me. Today, she will ask Me into her heart." I was profoundly moved.

I spent the morning in prayer and fasting. I took a long hike with my pups to one of my favorite places. And then—I felt ready—and made the journey out to Jude's home.

When I entered her bedroom, it was immediately clear that she was enduring a rough day. She was lying in bed, unable to rise. I knelt beside her, gently taking her hand, I asked her if she wanted to ask Jesus into her heart. Tears streamed down her cheeks. She shook her head and said she couldn't. When I gently asked what she meant, she explained how she wanted to honor God and didn't yet believe with ALL her heart. I shared how that was okay. All Jesus asks is that we take the first step toward Him with even a tiny, mustard seed of faith, (Matt. 17:20) and He will help us with the rest. Her expression completely changed from hopelessness . . . to utter joy. Through her tears, she said, "I want to invite Jesus to come into my heart."

In the moments that followed, a new lamb was added into the fold of the King . . . a lamb with black curls and bright green eyes.

I was not able to join Kim the next time she went out to visit Jude. Kim shared a portion of their sweet encounter. Together they sat on Jude's bed visiting. Outside Jude's window was a small tree that once bore many Christmas ornaments. All the decorations had blown away—but one. The solitary ornament left hanging was a white dove. Jude told Kim that she felt it represented the presence of the Holy Spirit in her life. Kim validated her experience and went on to explain that often throughout scripture the Holy Spirit is represented as a dove. Jude was overwhelmed when she realized she couldn't have known that unless the Holy Spirit had revealed it to her. The love of Christ was renewing and transforming her from the inside out.

"*Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.*" (Col 3:10, NLT).

I have had the privilege of spending many days with Jude since. She continues to take each day as it comes. It has been a sweet honor to be a part of her journey and experience the gift of watching her fall in love with Jesus. As she is being filled with His love for her, she is now praying for the salvation of those around her that she loves.

God hears and answers our every prayer. Even though His timing is different than ours—and His ways are different than ours—we can trust Him for every step of the way.

"*My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,' says the Lord. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.'*" (Isaiah 55:8-9, NLT).

As it turns out, Esther is an amazing mare. With every ride, I'm deeply moved by her quiet love and calm.

In this beautiful journey, I've come to realize that not only is Jude's horse like Esther . . . but *Jude is like Esther*.

Day by day, she is becoming more "queenly," lovely and full of faith.

Jude has, and continues to willingly

lay down her life—repeatedly—for those she loves. Like Esther, Jude is also walking out an amazing life of redemption, triumph, truth . . . *and beautiful bravery*.

*"So be strong and courageous,
all you who put
your hope in the Lord!"
(Ps. 31:24, NLT).*



Photo by Kim Meeder

RUN TO JESUS

BY SARAH PEREZ

At twelve years of age, I was given a book titled *Bridge Called Hope* by Kim Meeder. At that time, I didn't realize how significant this book would be or how much it would impact my life. I couldn't have known then how God would use it to restore hope back into my heart.

Now, thirteen years later, my childhood dream has come true. I am currently serving as an Intern at Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, with hopes of opening my own ranch someday.

Within this season, I'm learning that Jesus often uses situations in my life to teach me about His truth. During a recent sunny day, my "teacher" was a horse named Jonah. He is a small but mighty Arabian-Welsh cross. His body is the color of a brilliant copper penny that you'd keep in your pocket and his mane has a golden hue. His eyes are dark and curious, and he moves with an athletic spring in his step.

Jonah and his sister arrived on the Ranch in November and have spent the winter side by side. Now, they are slowly being integrated into the herd of Ranch horses.

Before a new horse is released into the main herd, it's important that they trust their new handlers and feel safe. Jonah's sister accomplished this quickly and had been introduced into the herd earlier. Now, it was Jonah's turn. But, without his sister by his side, he struggled to trust anyone.

I watched as Sarah, our Equine Coordinator, walked out into the pasture with a halter in hand. Her intention was to bring Jonah in for a gentle session of bonding and trust building. As Sarah approached the young gelding, he looked at her with wary eyes of uncertainty and mistrust.

His actions clearly spoke that he didn't want to be with her. He intended to stay where he thought he was safe and in control. Each time Sarah began to move toward Jonah, he immediately moved away from her. As Sarah took a few non-threatening steps toward the young gelding, his immediate response was to bolt to the far end of the pasture. As he ran to get away from her, she stayed calm and persistent—she was never forceful or pushy. Every time he ran, Sarah would wait for him to stop and settle down. Only then would she walk towards him again. Her posture always invited him to come near her. I sat

on the fence and watched, minutes ticked by. Jonah was being stubborn and wanted to stay in control. He wasn't willing to submit or surrender his heart. Thirty minutes passed. While Sarah gently and decisively pursued him, in pure defiance, Jonah would run away. For the next hour, this obstinate dance continued between the two of them. Finally, Jonah yielded and allowed Sarah to get close enough to touch him.

In that moment, he could've easily been haltered, but Sarah knew she hadn't fully captivated Jonah's heart.

Instead, she chose to keep inviting the untrusting gelding to join her. Her intention was to eliminate his hesitancy by pouring out even more love, thus providing a new place of safety and refuge.

Still blinded by his pride and his need to be in control, Jonah decided that running away was still the better option. He was unable to see the truth. He clearly didn't believe that Sarah's purpose for him was only for his good.

Even though this process drug on and on—I could see that Sarah had no intention of giving up on Jonah. She firmly and gently kept pursuing the colt.

After two grueling hours, Jonah finally lowered his head—took a deep breath—surrendered—and gave his full heart to her. The tiny gelding realized he was in a safe place and he could trust her. Sarah acquired what was most important . . . his heart.

Unconditional love and patience won over uncertainty and defiance.

As I watched this redundant pursuit unfold, I was completely captivated by Sarah's patience—and similarly—dumbfounded by Jonah's stubbornness to keep running to himself for security. Jonah just kept choosing his own way and galloping in circles, not realizing his way was so much harder. Then Jesus whispered to me, "Doesn't this relationship between Jonah and Sarah remind you . . . of our relationship?"

Clarity roared into my heart like a flood! I could see it. God was so right.


In many ways, I'd been just like Jonah. All too often, I'd run from God, blinded by my fear, my brokenness, my pride, my need to think I was in control.

Each time, God relentlessly pursued me.

Reflecting on how my relationship with Jesus paralleled Jonah and Sarah, I could see how He constantly shadowed me. It was His unconditional love and patience that sought to capture my heart. He didn't force me to trust Him, nor did He try to make me love Him. Instead, He patiently went through a



Photos by Lynn Watkins



“HE DIDN’T WANT PART OF MY HEART—
HE WANTED ME TO GIVE
HIM MY WHOLE HEART.”

process of pressure and release. He let me run away each time I chose to trust me more than Him.

Yet, He was always there—waiting—for me to turn and face Him fully. Each time He offered the haven of His loving relationship with me. He chose to wait patiently for me to come to Him. And He met me in my brokenness.

He didn’t want part of my heart—He wanted me to give Him my whole heart. Jesus’ love for me is so great that He chose to lay down His life as a sacrifice for my sin, creating a place for me to rest in His presence. And, just like Jonah, I didn’t trust Him with all my heart. I ran and ran until I finally relinquished and chose to surrender everything to Him.

Like a small copper horse, I too have found love, safety and freedom. Jesus Christ has a plan for me and it’s for my good. I’m so grateful that He tenaciously pursued me—until I ran to the end of myself—and *chose to run to Him*.

Recently, I watched two small children walk up to Jonah’s pasture gate. Instead of running away, he willingly put his head down so both of the kids could reach in and rub his face. I smiled. Jonah’s freedom from mistrust is fading into the past. His future is full of hope.

And so is mine.

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NLT) says, *“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 wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”*

Jonah has willingly chosen “a new home in a new land,” one where love and trust reign. I too, have chosen a “new home in the new land” of Jesus’ beautiful, relentless love. On this day, will you?

Updates from Sarah Robinett, Equine Coordinator:
“Now when I enter the pasture, instead of running away,
Jonah willingly comes toward me, often nickering a playful greeting!”

“To avoid reader confusion, we changed the name of the horse in “Run to Jesus” from Jude to Jonah. We did this because Jude is the real name of the woman featured in “Beautiful Bravery.” It was Jude’s desire to use her true name to honor what Jesus has done, and continues to do in her life.”

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IT'S SUPERNATURAL!

Recently, Kim Meeder was invited to North Carolina to tape a television interview with "Sid Roth, It's Supernatural."

The show was based on events drawn from her newest book, *Encountering Our Wild God*.

The interviews can be accessed through these sites:

- ~ It's Supernatural, at www.sidroth.org, under Archives of Past Shows.
- ~ Kim was a guest on their sister program, the Donna Chavis' television show, "Something More."
(The link to "Something More" is on their television page.)
- ~ In addition, the interview with Sid Roth was nationally broadcast on One Place, www.oneplace.com.
- ~ Kim also recorded a 60-minute internet radio broadcast that can be heard on www.sidroth.org/radio.
(They can be found in their radio internet archives.)

These broadcasts will be translated into Spanish and Russian and will be sent out worldwide with a focus on Israel and the Middle East. Please join us in praying over these interviews that each will go out mightily for God's glory and all who watch and listen, will be strengthened by the TRUTH of God's Word and will know the saving hope of Jesus Christ.

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. Multiple 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.