

# MERRY CHRISTMAS AROUND the FIRE Winter 2017

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

## The Highest Gift of Intentional Invitation

BY KIM MEEDER

The roar from the engine of our Alaskan bush plane overwhelmed our ability to speak. But that didn't stop Troy and I from squeezing each other's hand when we saw something beautiful—which was nearly every second that our eyes were open.

He squeezed my hand and pointed down. I leaned over his lap and looked in the direction he indicated. Below, a herd of caribou trotted across the tundra. Next, I squeezed and pointed at several massive caribou bulls bedded down together by a lake. Troy nearly crushed my hand with excitement when he saw a gigantic brown bear sow with her three cubs in tow.

We'd been gifted a Coho salmon fly fishing adventure in the unspoiled wilds of the Alaskan Aleutian chain. The fishing and guide council had been so stellar that even a beginner such as myself had already caught the outer limits of believability. As if to add a definitive exclamation point to the trip, we were now flying out to a remote river that dramatically empties into the Bering Sea.

Nothing made from the hands of men could be seen in any direction. No roads or villages existed in this wild place.



Photos by Kim Meeder

The nearest town was Cold Bay, 180 miles to our south. Nothing lay in between but tundra and sea. Like the plane we flew within, my heart soared, completely lifted by the absolute power and raw beauty of this place. I could literally see my God's peace, His authority, His enduring love reflected in everything that filled my senses.

Our highly skilled pilot lowered the plane to within feet of a desolate, dark gray beach. I presumed he was scanning it for landing suitability. It was steep and strewn with wooden debris and salmon carcasses. Just as I was silently agreeing that it would be impossible to land here . . . he touched down the uphill wheel and rode it like a kid doing a 200-yard wheelie! As the plane slowed in the loose sand, the rest of the landing gear contacted the beach lurching us all downhill toward the ocean.

Once our plane came to a rest, I ripped off my pilot communication headset and nearly flew out the tiny door. I wanted to laugh. I wanted to scream. I wanted to do cartwheels down a wild beach! I didn't think my heart could hold any more thrill for life . . .

But I was wrong. *Continued on page 2*





*Photos by Kim Meeder*

With all our gear tossed in a heap onto the sand, our intrepid guide, two beloved friends and Troy and I all waved at our pilot as he zoomed out of sight into the vast expanse of the Alaskan sky. The drone of the plane was immediately overwhelmed by the music of the wilderness. Our hearts flooded with the sounds of a wild sea and wind in the grass. Without thought, I joined in creation's song and started to sing worship to the Maker of all.

Soon, our little group had transported our gear the short distance to a powerful waterway called North Creek. We spread out along and within the river. The wild silence was punctuated by our whoops, cheers and laughter as one salmon after another was reeled in and carefully released back into its watery home. Throughout the day, our revelries were slowly replaced by a profound, silent reverence. During our brief lunch break, each expressed a nearly tearful awe of gratefulness. God Himself, was in this place. We could feel His Presence. We could feel His unfathomable love. Before HIM, we were overcome with wordless gratitude.

After lunch, I felt a draw. As familiar as my own heartbeat, a deep beckoning . . . to walk in the wild . . . with my God.

Since the beach was covered with brown bear tracks, our treasured guide, "Popeye," and I scrambled up the highest grassy dune to scout for stragglers. The elevated vantage point allowed us to see about a mile and a half down the beach. Once he felt the way was safe—and I promised to go no farther—he released me to adventure alone.

Setting out over the dark gray sand, my heart filled with the wonder that few, if any human feet had tread this lost stretch of surf. The only way in was by plane, at low tide, with favorable weather and a relatively clear beach.



Drawn into the embrace of the wild, I set out with my arms loose at my sides, palms forward, praises pouring from my lips. Completely removed from the influence and distraction of humanity, my heart swelled into the vacuum, the sacred expanse of His Presence. Tears of wonder, worship and gratitude streamed down my face. I pondered if Heaven itself had touched earth in this beautiful, powerful, holy moment.

I'd walked to the near limit of which I'd promised. Still lost in the glory of the scene, movement caught my eye. It was to my left, up the beach toward the grassy dunes. Suddenly, my heart shifted into high alert. In this place devoid of humanity, I realized that I was no longer alone. I stood fast and surveyed the environment. Just below the grass and coastal brush lay a massive tangle of driftwood. I studied it, looking for anything that could be a threat.

Frozen in place, long moments passed. Adrenaline filled my body. I could hear my heartbeat.

Then, from behind a log, the identity of the wild resident was revealed. A red fox appeared. We held each other's gaze; each measuring the intention of the other. Growing up a girl of the wild places, I wanted to engage this beautiful masterpiece. To convey I was no threat, I dropped my eyes and started to move slightly away from the fox. Carefully, I walked up into the grass and sat down, purposefully looking away. To my absolute delight, the fox jumped up on a log, walked its length—toward me—and then stepped down into some shrubbery and curled up. We were only yards apart.

I guessed that it was a lone male. Mesmerized, I admired his every detail. His eyes were brilliant gold, rimmed in coal black with nearly vertical pupils. His intelligent, upright ears

moved to catch any whisper of sound. His top line was coated in bright red and beginning around his black nose, white extended across the lower half of his cheeks, down his chest and covered his belly. Each of his legs were black. His paws seemed large for his size, clearly designed for traversing boggy tundra and snow. His downy tail with a white tip, appeared to be nearly equal to the size of his entire body. When he laid down, he wrapped his tail around himself and nestled his chin into the lavish pillow.

After a brief rest, he trotted down to the beach and consumed a washed-up salmon carcass. I 'casually' pursued him and sat down on the sand not far from where he'd enjoyed his meal. He stared at me for a long moment, seeming to measure my intentions. I purposefully looked away and shifted my weight. While still watching me intently, he laid down on the beach.

What happened next was one of the most endearing wilderness encounters I've ever experienced.

**“OUR  
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*Photo by Kim Meeder*



Satisfied, that I was no threat, the fox relaxed and stretched out his legs. Following his lead, I did the same thing. Yellow eyes searched green eyes. With our inquisitive gazes still locked, the fox playfully tossed his chin up. I did the same thing. Next, he opened his mouth and completely rolled over on his back, white belly toward the sky. Again, I did the exact same thing. My little red friend continued to roll from side to side. He stretched his front paws toward me. He laid flat on his belly with hind legs stretched behind—all the while—watching me. In return, I imitated his every gesture—all the while—watching him. This sweet engagement continued, blurring the confinements of time.

Forged with the same clarity and power as the wild that surrounded us, an ‘invitation’ was being fashioned. Intrigued, the fox rose to his feet and started to carefully circle me. I held fast. As he moved passed my shoulder and beyond my view, I didn’t turn around. In a wilderness demonstration of trust, I allowed—even invited—complete vulnerability. Not wanting to miss a thing, I carefully held up my cell phone so I could see what was transpiring behind me. To my astonished delight, the fox approached to within feet of me. There he stopped, stretched out his neck as far as it would reach and explored smelling my back!

Knowing a flinch would send my new friend into flight, I sat completely motionless. I was nearly holding my breath as I didn’t want the moment to end. On a desolate beach embraced by the Bering Sea, a wild fox was invited to encounter a wild hearted woman.

Once his curiosity was fulfilled, the fox pulled back a few yards and sat down again. Vaguely aware that I was smiling, it appeared that I’d been accepted into his ‘pack.’

Needing to return as I’d promised, I finally had to get up and return to my pack. My red friend didn’t leave or advance, he just watched.

While making my way back to the others, I had time to reflect. “Wow God! I’m astounded at what just happened! Please speak Your truth over this encounter and open my eyes to help me see what You see . . .”

I remain so profoundly grateful that Jesus used parables to show us things we *can* see and understand—to illustrate things we *cannot* yet see and are trying to understand.

Days later, some unique truth did come. I shared the wilderness encounter with my dear friend Judy. Her quiet observation landed on my heart with all the subtlety of a lightning strike. Her response was simply, “Wasn’t that fox just like the Holy Spirit?”



Pure clarity poured over the scene. “So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.” Luke 11:13 (NLT). I don’t know how long the fox was present with me in the wilderness, perhaps the entire hike. But, this I *do* know—he didn’t *approach* until he was ‘asked.’ I needed to purposefully offer an invitation, a literal and physical ‘asking’ for him to come. I actually had to *stop* all movement and be *still*. I needed to *wait*, to be *intentional*. Only then did he come.

Our Heavenly Father *wants* to give the Holy Spirit—HIS Spirit—HIS Presence—to *anyone* who ‘asks’ Him. Consider Cornelius in Acts chapter ten. He was a devout man who loved God, gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly. But he was still devoid of God’s Spirit. It wasn’t until he intentionally *stopped*. He purposed to be *still*. He *waited*. When he literally *invited* the Presence of God’s Holy Spirit in—THAT’S when He came.

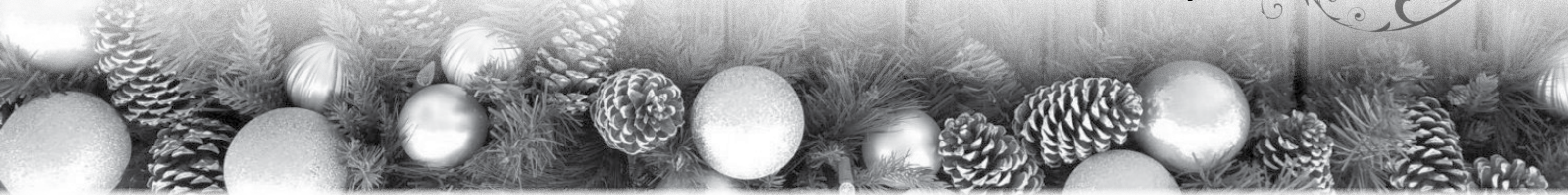
He desired an ‘*intentional invitation*.’ Our God has not changed (Heb. 13:8). The Holy Spirit of our Living God desired an intentional invitation then . . . and He desires the same today . . . with *everyone* who calls Him Lord. “Jesus, thank You for giving clarity through a simple wilderness encounter. Thank You for wanting us to want to ask for more of You.

Lord, this is the season when we celebrate Your arrival into this world and the salvation You bring to all. Savior, may we not be so consumed with the business of fulfilling the small picture . . . that we miss the big picture . . . the ultimate picture of purposefully, quietly positioning our hearts to receive ALL that You desire to pour within us.

May our highest goal become the choice to **stop**, to **wait**, to **BE STILL** and intentionally **invite** YOU, Your HOLY SPIRIT, Your very Presence to come into the home of our hearts.”

Dear Friend, cast within this Christmas season are many invitations, may I encourage you to choose pursuing the greatest invitation . . . the intentional invitation of Jesus’ Presence into your heart.

Merry Christmas Beloved





# *The Spirit Rested on Him*

BY TROY MEEDER

“After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the Heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and *settling on Him*.” Matthew 3:16 (NLT, emphasis added)

Often, I’ve read this section of scripture and sadly skimmed over those last three very important words . . . “*settling on Him*.”

During that time in the Jordan River, what John the Baptist saw was powerful, meaningful and even simple. The Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present and active at once. This created an awesome and intriguing picture.

It’s awesome because the Trinity was experienced together in the realm of men; intriguing because the Spirit ‘rested’ on Jesus. Why? Why did the Spirit choose to *settle* on Jesus? Think about it . . . Jesus IS the Son of God, already a part of the Trinity, perfect in every way. The entire concept of the Trinity remains as one of God’s unexplainable mysteries, so why even write . . . “*settling on Him*?”

The answer is simple. The very nature of Jesus—who was fully God and fully man—was compassionate, full of mercy, joyful, patient, and kind. This nature, Jesus’ chosen attitude, fostered an environment of welcome for the Holy Spirit to *rest upon*, an openhearted environment for Him to *abide in*.

For anyone who calls Jesus Lord, it should be our highest desire to cultivate our heart into the fertile soil that attracts and invites the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Consider the Parable of the Sower, “*Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!*” Matthew 13:8 (NLT)

Even Jesus—*God’s Son*—didn’t start the ministry God the Father had for Him UNTIL He was filled with the Spirit. This ‘fertile soil’ act of obedience demonstrated by Jesus is a powerful reminder of the crucial ministry the Holy Spirit desires in each of our lives.

In Ephesians 5:1, we’re encouraged to imitate Jesus in *all* things. In order to do this, we must honestly ask our self . . . is *my* heart fertile ground? Am I fostering within my daily existence a place for the Holy Spirit to *rest*? Or do I allow the cares, concerns and distractions of this life to keep me from experiencing the “peace that passes all understanding.” Philippians 4:7 (NLT)







*“May we each choose to yield our will and follow God the Father through the leadership of the Holy Spirit.”*

Friend, let me be clear . . . I’m not advocating that one must be perfect for the Holy Spirit to *rest* on us. Quite the contrary, it’s the power of the Spirit that changes our life to become more like Jesus.

*“As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.”* 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

Sounds like a paradox. How does a life become fertile ground for the Presence of the Holy Spirit—when—it’s the same Spirit that breathes life into a heart that’s dead?

It’s easy . . . we have a *choice*.

We invite Him. We choose to make Him **FIRST** in life’s everyday situations. Then, our own actions pouring from our heart establish Him as our Lord, the true leader of our life. This chosen environment of trust and submission becomes the fertile soil upon which God’s Spirit will *rest on us*, literally covering and filling us with His power, wisdom, faith, and love.

Throughout this Christmas season, my prayer is that all believers will **choose** the compassionate, moral, merciful,

beautiful gift for the humanity that surrounds us. May we each **choose** to yield our will and follow God the Father through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This is when we will experience Him inhabiting and *settling upon* that choice.

The world around us is collapsing into struggle, confusion and despair. Beloved, recognize that wherever you go, His Holy Spirit **THROUGH YOU** can change the environment. By the power of His Presence resting upon you, purpose to become a thermostat—actively changing the environment with His love—instead of a thermometer that merely reacts to every change.

By submitting to His *settling upon you*, negatively charged environments will be transformed by His joy. Chaos will yield to His peace and frustration will crumble before His greatest gift . . . *love*.

*“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.”* 1 John 4:16 (NLT)

Indeed—like Jesus—may we each choose to bow before the Presence of the Living God and *invite* His Spirit to settle and *rest* upon us all.

*Merry Christmas.*  
*Troy and Kim*

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It's our joy to share with you—our extended Ranch family—the essence of what the Lord has been doing at Crystal Peaks this past year. This poignant calendar captures “God breathed” moments within the lives of our kids, volunteers and staff. Each month features a Ranch photograph paired with children's quotes and encouraging Bible verses.

As our *gift to you*, we'd like to give each household one *free* calendar. We pray the Lord will use it to bless and encourage all who see it.

To order a calendar, please go to our website at [www.cpyr.org](http://www.cpyr.org) and click on “Ranch Life,” on our home page. Or, you can mail in your request to:

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If you wish, additional calendars can be ordered as well. To help offset the cost of any extra calendars, donations are greatly appreciated. Production of each calendar is approximately \$7. These added calendars can also be ordered through our website or mail. All international orders outside the US and Canada will be required to pay a \$5 shipping fee.

We've been so greatly blessed by the kids, families and horses who come to our Ranch. Again, thank you so much for shouldering with us in this ministry of hope.

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.