



AROUND *the* FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

WINTER 2009

THE SMALLEST SANCTUARY

BY KIM MEEDER

During a routine visit to Bend Equine Medical Center, Dr. Jessie Evans pulled me aside and said, "Come and meet our newest patient." I followed her down the main corridor of the hospital, a hallway so familiar to me that it nearly felt like home. Stopping at a stall on the left, my eyes dropped a second before my mouth did. On the floor, nestled in deep pine shavings, lay a tiny foal. With both front legs splinted and wrapped from hoof to shoulder, the beleaguered little creature looked more like a stiff-legged tin man than an infant horse.

Hearing our soft voices, the chocolate colored colt rolled up to his sternum to greet us. Shavings dotting his coat like confetti. Even though he was besotted with bed-head—or body in his case, I nearly took a step backward when he turned to look at me fully. Instantly, I could feel my throat tighten with emotion. He resembled one of the most beloved horses the ranch has ever had—and lost. He looked like... *Syngin*.

Syngin was a gelding that was adored by every soul who had the privilege of meeting him. He was uniquely intuitive, charming, engaging and made everyone who spent time with him feel like he secretly loved them the most. He was a foundational horse in our riding program. Last summer, complications from a severe colic ended his life. As with any loss, one learns to go on, but the heart is often held in a unique place of mourning.

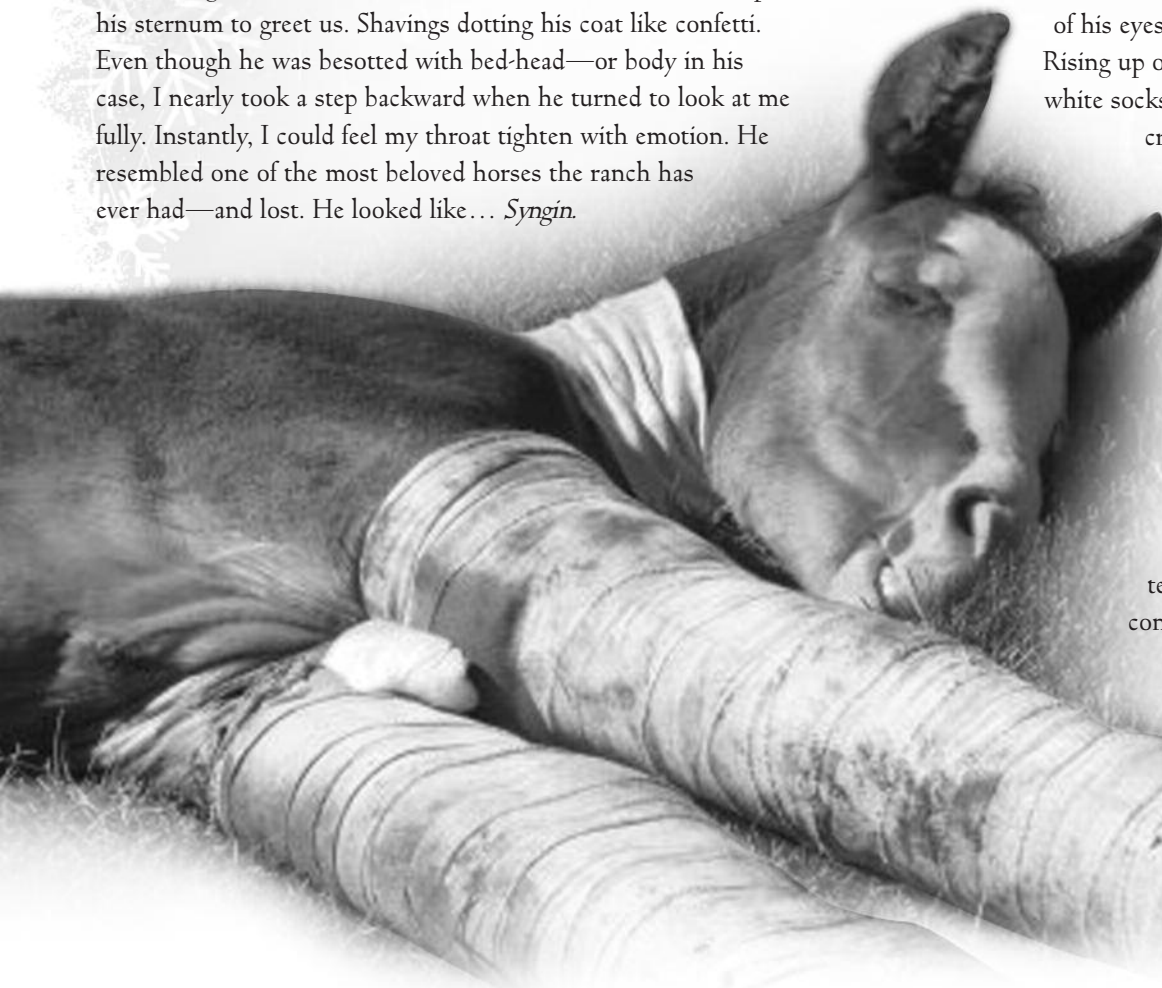
Snapping me out of my unexpected rush of sentiment were two sleepy brown eyes blinking up at me. The blaze that striped

his face was so wide that it influenced one of his eyes to be tinged with a rim of blue. Rising up over both hocks were two high white socks. White also appeared on the crest of his rump in a playful

smattering of spots. He was a tiny Appaloosa.

In a voice softened with affection, Dr. Jessie recounted what she knew of her newest patient's story. The investigating Sheriff told her the colt was born only two weeks earlier with badly contracted flexor tendons. This led to a bilateral rupture of his extensor tendons in both front legs. His condition was so severe that he could not stand like a normal foal.

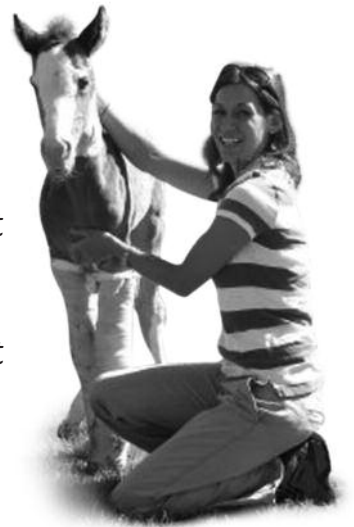
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*So take a new grip with your
tired hands and strengthen your
weak knees. Mark out a straight
path for your feet so that those
who are weak and lame will not
fall but become strong.*

HEBREWS 12:12-13 (NLT)



Instead of placing his weight on the soles of his hooves, he balanced precariously on the front of his fetlocks and knees, in effect, walking on his knuckles. Perhaps thinking that exercise would strengthen and correct his legs, the owners allowed the lame baby to simply hobble after his mother.

Unfortunately, the foal was unable to walk, unable to nurse... unable to thrive. After two weeks of stumbling around on fragile, bleeding legs, the starving foal was too weak to stand. Not willing to watch the failing colt succumb, the neighbors mercifully called the Sheriff's Department to intervene.

Now he was safe. Still weak, still underweight, still dehydrated and still unable to stand, 'Templeton,' as he was named by Dr. Jessie, was going to survive. It was clear how much this vet loved the little horse on the floor in front of us. Because of her medical skill, he was going to recover; he was going to have a second chance to live.

A second chance... something each of us needs. Dr. Jessie's words and love for this small horse grew roots into my heart. Several weeks later, at the end of a long and wonderful day on the ranch, I contemplated the chocolate colored Appaloosa colt who was fast asleep with his head cradled in my lap. Because of the love of

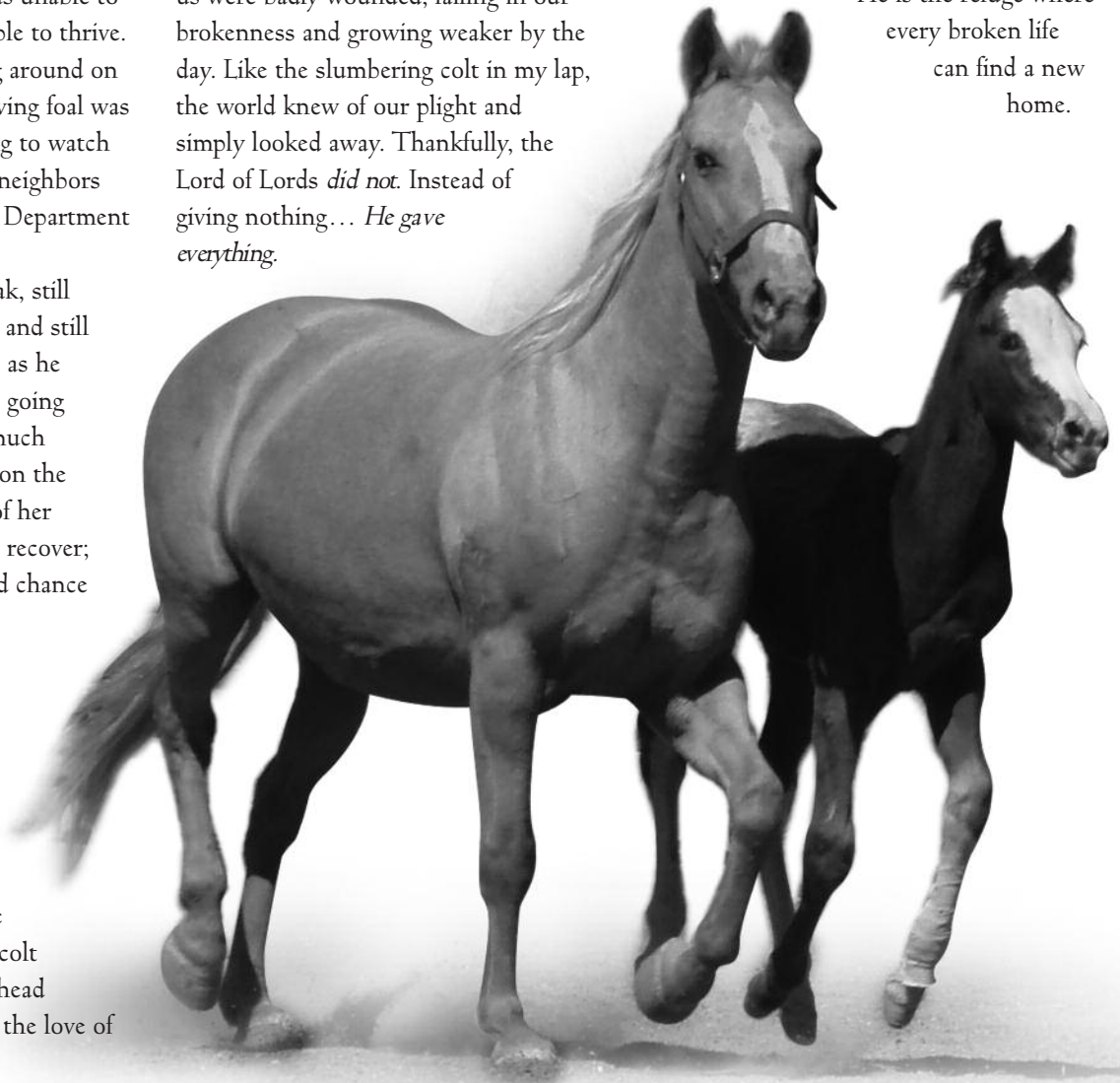
a woman, who just happened to be a vet, this young horse would live; he would have another try at this life.

The ranch was his home now.

Stroking his beautiful neck, I couldn't help but marvel at how much he was like me, my staff and nearly every child who comes to Crystal Peaks. At one time, all of us were badly wounded, failing in our brokenness and growing weaker by the day. Like the slumbering colt in my lap, the world knew of our plight and simply looked away. Thankfully, the Lord of Lords *did not*. Instead of giving nothing... *He gave everything.*

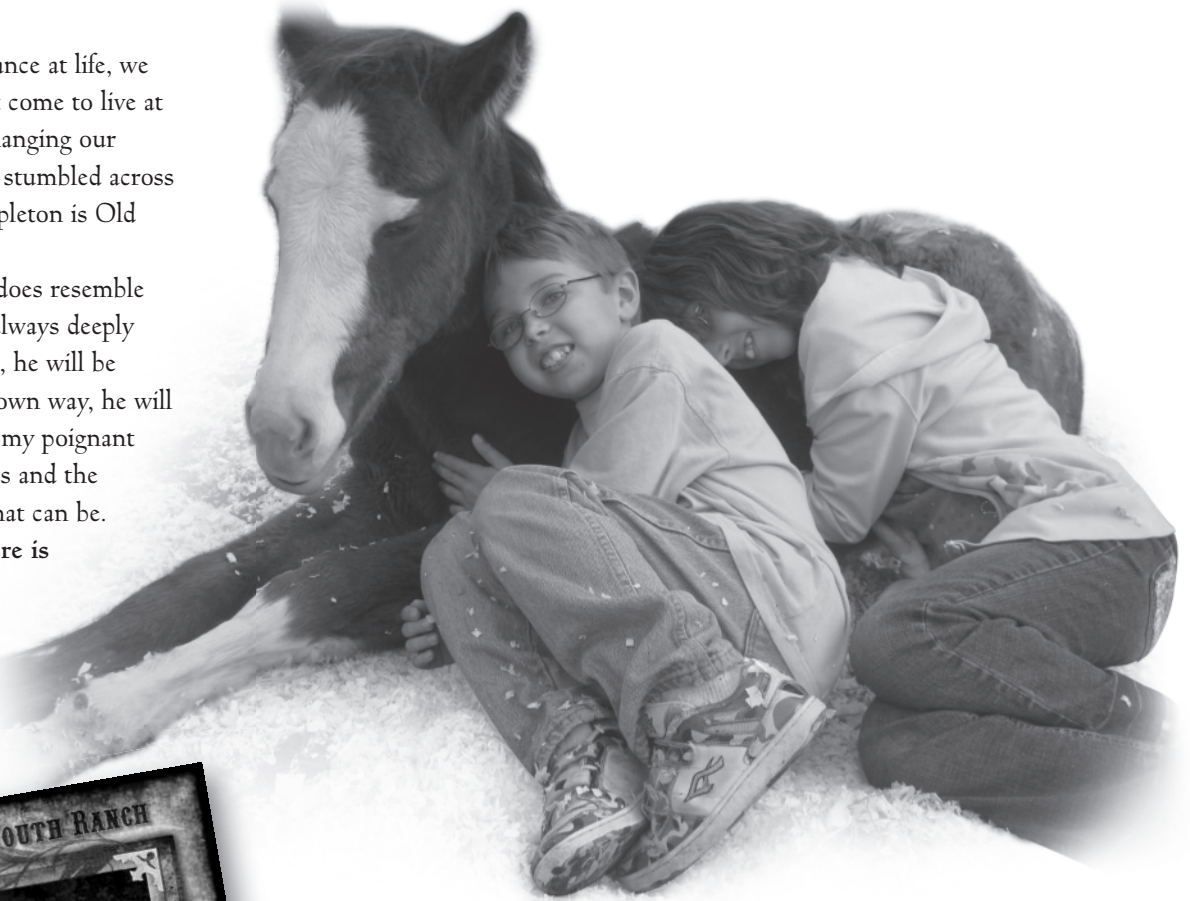
Jesus Christ gave His own life in our place. When He rose again, He became our bridge of hope, a second chance we *all* can choose to receive. He does not look away from our pain. Instead, He comes to us, and extends His hand. He offers His love to bind our wounds, cure our sickness, heal our hearts.

He is the refuge where
every broken life
can find a new
home.



Symbolizing a new chance at life, we rename all the horses that come to live at the ranch. I considered changing our young colt's name, until I stumbled across its original meaning. Templeton is Old English... for *sanctuary*.

It's true; my new colt does resemble another horse that I will always deeply love. Yet, he is not Syngin, he will be unique and special in his own way, he will be Templeton. He will be my poignant reminder of what once was and the beautiful potential of all that can be. He will embody that there is always hope, there is always a sanctuary in our time of need.



JUST IN TIME FOR THE NEW YEAR!

2009 has been an incredible year at Crystal Peaks. We have been blessed beyond words by the kids, families and individuals the Lord has brought into contact with this place. In an effort to keep our hearts close, we are excited to announce that our 2010 calendar is now available. We would like to offer one free copy per household. If you wish to purchase additional calendars, we suggest a \$5.00 donation per calendar.

Please fill out and return this portion of the newsletter and mail it, including any payment to:

Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, 19344 Innes Market Rd., Bend, OR 97701

☐ Please send me one free calendar

☐ Please send me an additional _____ calendars for the cost of \$5.00 each. I have included my check for the amount of \$_____.

Name: _____

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Thank you for continuing to shoulder with us in loving kids, families and horses. We pray the Lord will use this simple calendar to bless you, our extended family, throughout the coming New Year.

GOD WITH US

BY KIM MEEDER

Immanuel is more than a beautiful name; it literally means 'God *with* us.' There are times within each of our lives where we might question this fact because we don't *feel* that it is true, we don't *feel* His presence. Although few have literally seen God or audibly heard His voice, 'with us,' *He is*.

How God reveals Himself is as unique and wondrous as those who choose to call out His beautiful name. God *IS* with us. The more we recognize this certainty, the more clearly our eyes will see the evidence of it. Every day, we are surrounded by miracles, some great, some small. Each has this in common—they reflect God's presence amongst those who call Him their King.

Because I love the outdoors more than the indoors, I prefer to hold as many of my work related meetings outside. One of my favorite venues is to 'walk the block,' a four mile loop that lazily circles the ranch. Much of this meandering road is dirt, twisting through a forgotten stretch of old growth juniper and sage. The earthy fragrance of this simple place—for me—is enough to relax my mind and fill my heart with peace. Both of which are a good thing when making decisions that affect others and counseling the broken.

Not long ago, a dear friend and I struck out on what appeared to others as a routine 'block meeting.' Sadly, I knew that there would be nothing *routine* about it. Striding out as if to outrun the demons that chased her, in moments my friend's strength, resolve and control collapsed beneath the weight of sorrow that she bore. Confusion, frustration, anger and pain all flowed into a confluence of hot tears. The result was pure, unabashed *grief*.

As my friend continued to release her anguish in a torrent of words and tears, I prayed. I felt so ill equipped, so unprepared to speak anything that would matter to such a fractured heart. I asked my Lord for wisdom. I beseeched Him to reveal Himself in such a way that she would *know* that within this darkest hour—even though she felt alone—*she wasn't*.

She continued to speak, I continued to pray and the breeze continued to blow. Without warning, everything began to change. Suddenly, the grassy field to our left bent hard in the wind. Air moved around our ankles as if being sucked into a giant vacuum. Our clothing began to flutter as our hair was whipped forward around our faces. Swirling out of the sky, a whirlwind made landfall not thirty yards to our left.

Dust, grass and debris were immediately pulled up into the growing vortex. All communication that passed between us stopped. Struggling to push our hair back from our faces to see this incredible sight, we watched in amazement as the mini tornado moved directly in front of us. Narrowing to an organized funnel of no more than two feet in diameter, it paused momentarily, as if to gain our full attention.

Nearly having to drop to a knee for balance, I watched in awe as the spinning shaft held its position before us. Rocks, grass, dirt and twigs fused into a dusty column of intense power and beauty. Shielding my eyes with both hands, I watched as the dust devil approached the broken soul at my side. Neither moving

As if His very word wasn't enough, He reveals Himself all around us every day... all we have to do is pull our eyes off our troubles and look—really look—and we will see Him.

The evidence of His presence surrounds us.

right or left, it moved *directly* toward my friend. Spinning with nearly ferocious strength, its narrow width engulfed her entirely. Her hair, which had been tossed in every direction, now pulled straight up within the vertical tunnel. Gripped within its strength, she squealed in surprised laughter.

The whirlwind released her and spun eight feet away into a stand of old juniper. They groaned and snapped, swaying their mighty arms in an ancient dance of praise. The funnel circled back and spun right between us before it ascended into Heaven from which it came.

Left standing were two dirt covered women staring agape into the sky. Small pebbles randomly rained down around us. Swirling within my head were all the times in God's word where He revealed Himself through wind. Finally, I turned toward my friend and declared, "WOW! I think you've just been *hugged* by the King of Kings!"

While wiping the grit off my face, I realized that many might view this event as little more than a fluke, a random chance. Yet, for me, whirlwinds have always had strong significance—a physical symbol that God is near. Because I was praying, asking God to reveal Himself to my friend in a way that she would know He was with her, I didn't believe that this was a coincidental occurrence at all. On the contrary, I knew that the Lord of All chose to show His presence in a package that I would immediately recognize.

Calling my friend by her name, I clarified, "That was INCREDIBLE! Now you *know* that no matter how hard, how dark the road ahead might be, *God IS with*

you. He is not far away. He is *here... now*, and He cares about every detail that you will face. As if His very word wasn't enough, He reveals Himself all around us every day... all we have to do is pull our eyes off our troubles and look—*really look*—and we will see Him. The evidence of His presence surrounds us."

I've come to realize that no one can choose their circumstances... but we *can* choose who we will focus on to lead us through them.

God IS with us. Jesus' last promise on this earth was, "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20)

No matter what you are facing, dear friend, know that you are *not* alone... our Immanuel... our God, King, Lord and Savior... is with us every step of the way.



WHEN THE WELL RUNS DRY

BY TROY MEEDER

Water. It's the single most vital substance on the planet. Without it, everything dies.

For the residents of the high desert communities of Central Oregon, water is a resource we all take seriously. Each year, I embrace the ongoing task of water management here on the ranch. With such tremendous growth over the years, our little three horsepower submersible well pump endlessly grinds away, sending water 700 feet upward towards the surface. For seventeen years, our faithful little well has supplied untold gallons of pure, mountain spring water to thirsty horses, dogs, plants and humans.

This past summer, the pump shut down almost daily. This and other system failures led me to wonder if our well was going dry. In 95 degree heat, summer afternoons with no water proved to be a hardship indeed. Finally, I made the decision to pull the pump. I needed to check our static water level to see if we were—in fact—running the well dry.

For two weeks, I patiently waited for our friends at Thompson Pump to arrive. Each time the system shut off from over-usage, I wondered if the ranch ministry would be at risk due to lack of water. Would we have to downsize? Sell horses? Terminate ministry? Would the ranch begin a slow decay? Would we be forced to let gardens, trees and lawns die?

I prayed, *"Heavenly Father, You have blessed this ministry in every way. You have never forsaken us. This place belongs to You. We will praise and honor You, even if the well runs dry."*

Every well that is drilled in Oregon has a 'well log.' This documentation journals the process of finding water and records depths, casing, rock types and sediment layers. The data collected centers around one very important piece of information: the static water level. This is the depth where water is found. Seventeen years ago, we hit water at 652 feet below the surface. We then dug an additional 50 feet to 702, giving us 50 feet of usable water. For years, we assumed this level had remained somewhat constant.

As the men from Thompson Pump began the slow process of lowering the probe into our open well, I wondered just where they would find water. Would we be fortunate and find our static level only a few feet below the original, or would it be far below, arriving dangerously close to the bottom of the well? Given the numerous reports of dry wells all over the county, I expected the latter.

"This has been a horrible year," one of the workers explained. "Wells are going dry all around you. Each of the several dozen golf courses in Central Oregon uses over a million gallons every day, leaving little for farmers and ranches."

"I wouldn't expect much, sir," another worker added.

As the probe began to descend, the depth was called out, "100 feet... 300 feet... 500 feet." At 624 feet from the surface, the red light on the readout began to signal contact with water. "That *can't* be right," he hollered over the hum of the winch. "Didn't the well log say they hit water at 652? For some crazy reason, we just found water at 624!"

"Pull the probe up and check it out. It has to be malfunctioning," he instructed.

After a quick visual inspection, the probe was making its way down again. A second time, the meter signaled water at 624 feet.

"Mr. Meeder," one of the men called me over, "I can't explain it. Even though wells are drying up all around you, it looks like *your* well has *more* water than when you first dug it!" Gesturing toward the sky, he smiled, "You must have a friend upstairs."

"I do," I responded with a laugh. Glancing toward heaven, I winked and shared a quiet, *"Thank you,"* with my Lord.

"I'm assuming the problem is your old pump," the man at the controls surmised, "Probably seen its last day pumping water."

Three hours later, our shiny new five horsepower pump began sending ice-cold water to every sprinkler and faucet on the ranch.

Still shaking their heads in disbelief, the crew gathered up their gear. With a hearty handshake and many thanks, our friends from Thompson Pump headed down the ranch

driveway.

Sitting on the grassy hill with a mason jar full of water, I smiled. Isn't that just like our Jesus? Wells running dry all around the ranch—and here I sit—cold glass in hand, pumped from a well that has more water in it today than when it was drilled nearly twenty years ago.



As this season comes to a close, I am ever aware of the challenges we all face each day. Whether it's dwindling accounts, business assets or the job market, all around us 'wells are going dry.' While I may think I have reached the bottom of my respective well, the fresh water... the provision of grace from the Father... *never* runs dry.

As we place our hope in Him, we can rest in the biblical promise that His faithfulness, His mercy, His *well* always satisfies. No 401K, retirement plan, business, career path or relationship can ever replace the cool, endless refreshment that comes from the spring of life, from Jesus Christ.

For years, Kim and I have reached deep into the embrace of our Lord. There have been many times when we felt like our 'well had gone dry.' Yet, by letting go of our own understanding and trusting in the Lord, we lowered our little bucket down time and time again. Without fail, by pressing deep into Him, we have come up each day with His perfect provision. It hasn't always been what we wanted, but it has *always* been exactly what we *needed*.

God is so faithful and His provision has been so complete. His peace, love, joy and hope have been poured over this ranch in such abundance that our hearts are full. And not only ours, but overflowing far beyond our borders to encourage others in need.

It's true... Immanuel, God IS with us.



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

Please use my donation for:

- ☐ Where it is needed most
- ☐ The Children
- ☐ The Horses
- ☐ Potential Property Expansion
- ☐ Endowment Fund

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You can also make your donation at
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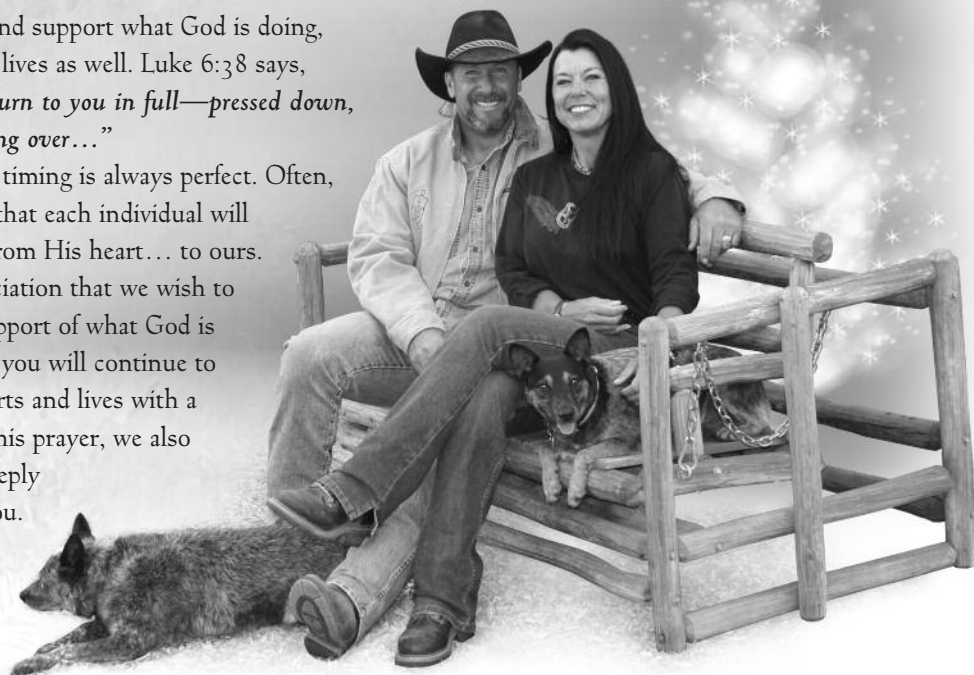
BY KIM MEEDER

It is not a secret that when we shoulder and support what God is doing, something amazing happens within our own lives as well. Luke 6:38 says, *"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over..."*

When pouring back into our lives, God's timing is always perfect. Often, He wraps His gifts to us in unique packages that each individual will recognize. These gifts are delivered directly from His heart... to ours.

Because this is true, it is with deep appreciation that we wish to thank you—our family—for your faithful support of what God is doing here at Crystal Peaks. Our prayer over you will continue to be that the King of Kings will *FILL* your hearts and lives with a *flash flood* of blessing from Heaven. Within this prayer, we also have asked that this tide will fill you more deeply with just how much He loves every one of you.

Merry Christmas, dear Friend. From the staff here at the Ranch, we wish you abundant rest in the greatest gift of all... Immanuel... God with us.



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