

MENTOR THE CHILD

AROUND the FIRE

FALL 2014

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

GOD TALKS

BY KIM MEEDER

God is talking all the time. When I doubt that truth, it's usually because I'm not really listening. How the Lord makes His voice known in our lives is as unique and individual as every heart He calls His own. I'm amazed at how Jesus speaks to each of us in ways that we just know it's Him.

I love Wesley.

He's so special. I adore his every detail. He's a small, slender 11-year-old with dark hair. He wears little glasses and has a sweet space between his two front teeth. He's been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Therefore, his social emotionalism remains steady. He's kind, thoughtful, curious and matter of fact. Our conversations are simple and direct. His ASD doesn't allow him to fib or stretch the truth in any way. Because of this unique 'hardwiring', I'm always assured that his word is true.

On this day, Wesley had selected a very special horse, Halo. He'd chosen courage over his fear and decided to ride the kind palomino gelding bareback. I was so proud of my little friend as I helped him tentatively slide forward onto the sweet spot of Halo's golden back.

"He's kinda slippery." Wesley said with no expression. "Will you hold the rope so he won't go too fast?" Seeking to ease his concern with a little distraction, I redirected his focus. "Hey Wesley, do you see that

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GOD TALKS.

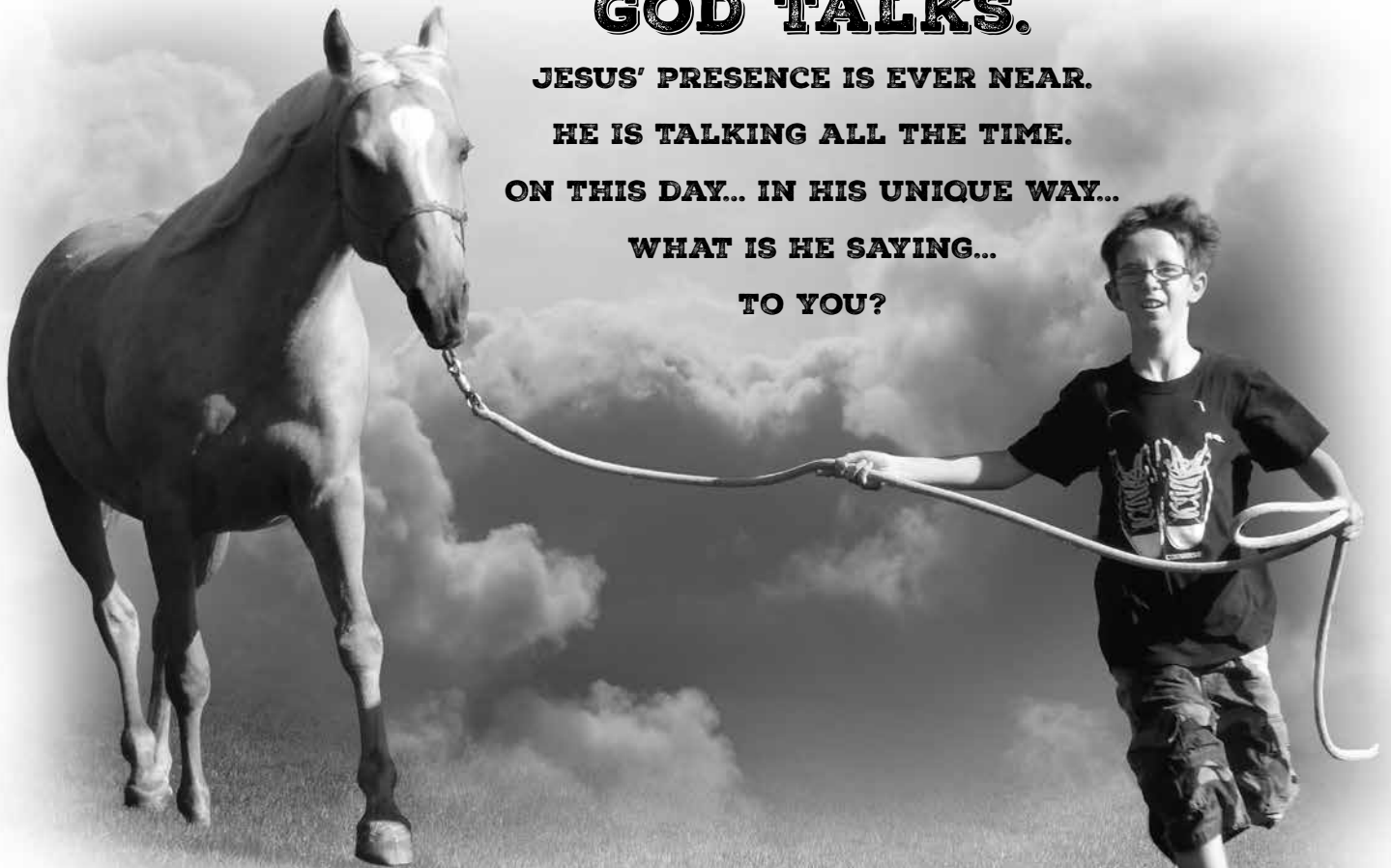
JESUS' PRESENCE IS EVER NEAR.

HE IS TALKING ALL THE TIME.

ON THIS DAY.. IN HIS UNIQUE WAY..

WHAT IS HE SAYING...

TO YOU?



wooden cross way up there on the hill over the ranch?" Glancing up, his reply was a simple "Uh-huh."

"What does that cross mean to you?" I asked. His mouth pressed into a straight line as he pondered my question. Finally, he answered, "That's where Jesus sat." "Well, sort of. What else do you know about that cross?" I prodded. "That's where our sins were gone. Jesus took them," he replied while reaching down to rub Halo's neck. "You're right little man! I'm so glad you know that! I'm so glad you know who Jesus is and what He's done for you." Without looking at me, Wesley spoke again.

"I've seen Him."

I looked at Wesley. "You have?!" I asked. His nonchalant response was, "Yah. He was in my room." Studying his face, I pressed in, "What was Jesus *doing* in your room?" I watched my young friend wrinkle his nose a bit and then with his matter of fact style he said, "He was sitting on my bed. When I woke up, He was just sitting there watching me."

I could feel my eyebrows bounce up. "WOW! That's amazing! I've never *seen* Jesus sit on my bed! You're so special!" Wesley's head tipped slightly and his gaze wandered away. Silence. Once more, I prodded, "... Well... did He... did He *say* anything?"

"Uh-huh." He nodded. More silence. "Wesley... what did Jesus say to you?"

Wesley looked at me for the first time. True to his unique design, his answer was simple and straightforward, "Jesus was smiling at me... then He said, 'You're gonna bless me A LOT!'" A glimmer of a smile flickered across my young friend's face. Then, he glanced up at the sky, as if looking for Jesus' smile again.

It was a true statement. Wesley not only blesses Jesus 'A LOT,' he's also a blessing to me and everyone else who takes a moment to know him. He's a unique little boy and Jesus spoke to him in an equally unique way, in a way that he would fully understand.

"This is my Son, My Chosen One. (Jesus). *Listen to Him.*" (Luke 9:35 NLT).

God talks. Jesus' presence is ever near. He IS talking all the time. On this day... in His unique way... what is He saying... to you?



Dear Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch,

I had a lesson today and I had the same feeling I have every time I come. When I walk up the ~~gravel~~ gravel drive way I get excited but I also forget. I forget everything that is worrying me or that I am stressed about. I become at peace in my mind. Once I get to the top it is like having a family reunion only I like everybody. There are so many hugs and things said that make you feel so good inside. While doing the chore I feel like I can spill out anything that is troubling me and I love receiving the Godly counsel. After choosing which horse to ride and cleaning them up we start to ride - my favorite part, riding, it just..... makes me feel so free and joyful. I love to canter because it took me so long to finally get it, once I did it felt amazing. The thrill of going fast and the encouragement from my leader, I just love it - who wouldn't? I love being with and working with the horses, being with my leader and being outside in the presence of the Lord. One more thing that meant a lot to me was at the end of my ~~session~~ lesson miss Bekka prayed for me. That felt lovely. Just to have someone pray for you.

God bless you-

Kierra Bonn

May 11, 2014

A Scarred Remnant

BY JOSIE GWIN

Black hair hung over and down the sides of her narrow face. Her brown eyes reflected nothing but anger. The slender girl looked and acted much older than her 14 years. Allison silently sank down on the wooden table bench. Every ounce of her body language screamed in defiance.

Her stepmom, Sarah, sat down near her. She looked across the table at me through tired, desperate eyes. Although not Allison's choice, her stepmom had contacted me about two weeks prior to inquire if her stepdaughter could volunteer weekly for the summer. Sarah and Dave, Allison's dad, thought this might be a way for the Lord to reach their daughter's heart. We agreed to meet at Crystal Peaks to talk through some options.

In the past year, Allison with her older sister Shae, had made many poor choices. Shae's choices had currently led her into a residential treatment center. Allison was following in her sister's footsteps and her negative behavior was escalating.

"I think it would help if she could spend time here doing something that encourages her to focus on anything other than herself. Perhaps being around people who love Jesus will make a difference. At least that's what we are praying for..." Sarah's voice trailed off as she looked away.

Allison sat, arms crossed in rebellion. I noticed that she wore soccer shorts. Her pale legs couldn't hide the razor thin purple lines striping her thighs. The scars bore witness of her internal pain cutting its way into external release. Identical marks could be seen on her forearms as well.

Sarah refocused and spoke again,

"Allison wants nothing more than to go and live with her mom in Las Vegas at the end of the summer. Her dad and I have said that we need to see a change in her choices before we can move forward in that. It's our hope that spending time at the Ranch might help her. We're hoping she could volunteer here twice a week."

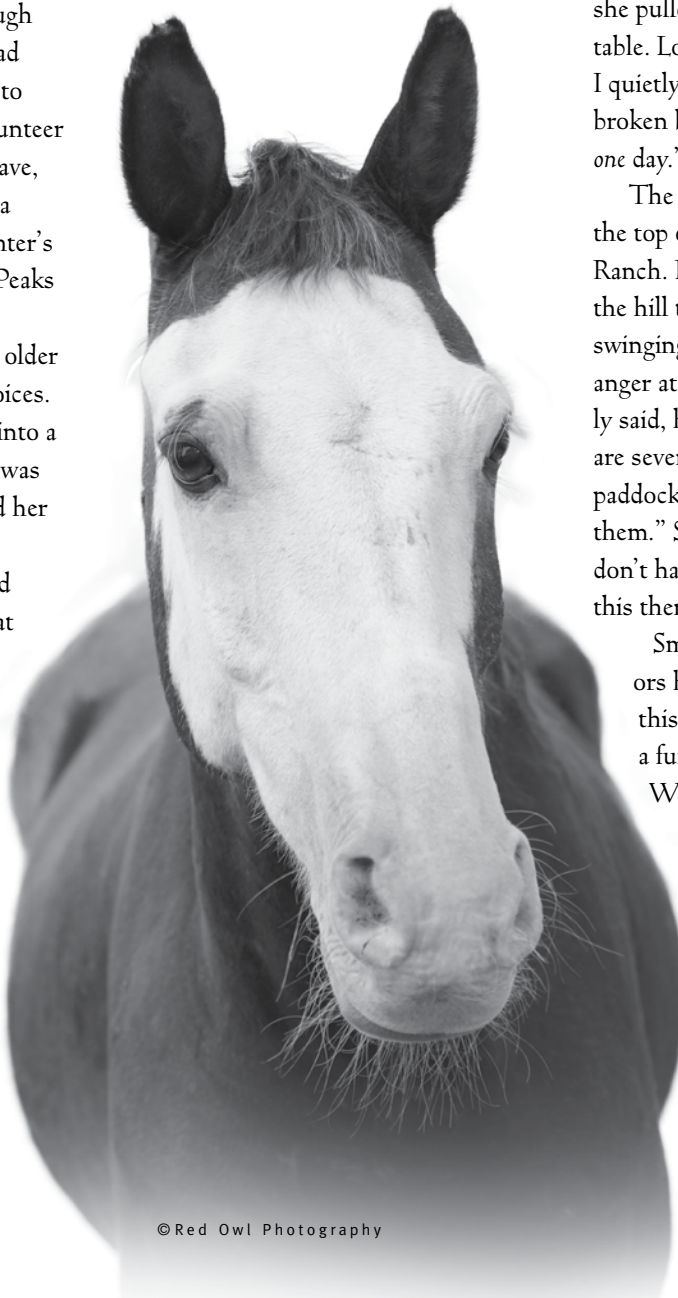
I carefully laid my hand on Allison's arm. She jumped and looked up, flipping her hair out of her eyes with a sharp toss of her head. "We have a rule here." I said. "Each kid that comes must WANT to be here. I can clearly tell that you *DO NOT* want to be here, but if you're willing to try, we can take it one day at a time." Her eyes flashed and eyebrows furrowed as she pulled her arm away and stared at the table. Long moments passed as Sarah and I quietly waited. The silence was finally broken by a muffled reply, "I'll try... for one day."

The following Monday, I waited at the top of the steep gravel driveway of the Ranch. I've never seen anyone stomp up the hill the way Allison did. Her arms swinging, glare firmly fixed, radiating pure anger at the world. "Welcome!" I cheerfully said, handing her a manure fork. "There are several girls already started down in the paddock. I'd love to take you down to join them." She looked surprised. "You mean I don't have to work with a counselor? Isn't this therapy?"

Smiling I replied. "Well, the counselors here have four legs and some call this poop therapy!" She gave me a funny look and rolled her eyes.

We headed down into the main paddock where I introduced her to the poop scooping crew and left to take care of some other responsibilities.

Throughout the afternoon, I peeked over fences and around corners, checking on Allison. She was stand-off-ish. Although reserved at first, our poop scooping crew worked to engage her in conversation. It wasn't long before the horses



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began their afternoon antics of equine tag. Between Elska and Tomahawk, Jacobi and Duke the entire scooping team was completely entertained. As Allison watched the horses play, I saw her expression soften. Once finished, she hung up her fork and turned to see me standing behind her.

“So, what do you think?” I asked. She glanced around the ranch. Together, leaders and kids were removing tack and putting horses away. When she looked back at me there was no longer anger on her face. She softly said, “I guess I’ll come back on Wednesday.”

From then on, twice a week Allison came and volunteered. After that first day, she worked side by side with me and other volunteers. By the third visit, she started to smile. During her first month, she shared that she hadn’t cut in almost thirty days. Frequently, I’d see her stop scooping in the paddocks to stroke Ele’s soft nose or ruffle Elska’s mane.

One afternoon, as Allison came up the hill, I was waiting for her. She saw the twinkle in my eye and stopped in her tracks and warily asked, “What’s up?” I smiled, “Don’t worry about grabbing the poop fork today. How do you feel about getting out a horse?”

“Like, to ride?” her voice rose in disbelief. I nodded. Her eyes were wide with surprise as she grinned ear to ear. “Who do you think is the right horse for you?” I asked. She thought for a moment, “I really want to get that hurricane horse.” “You mean Remnant?” Emphatically she said, “Yes, that one!”

Once at the hitching rail, we stood grooming on opposite sides of Remnant. Her eyes peeked over as she asked, “Why do I get to ride today?” I replied, “You know honey, sometimes the Lord just likes to remind us that He often gives unexpected gifts. His grace is extravagant and He sees the desires of our hearts.” She nodded solemnly and continued brushing.

We saddled Remnant and led him into Sandy Pants arena. After mounting, she cautiously sat on his back. Her fingers clutched the saddle horn until her knuckles turned white. I led Remnant

forward one step, and then another. Slowly, I watched her expression turn into unabashed wonder. With more steps her fingers relaxed. Soon her smile grew wider.

I shared Remnant’s story, of how he’d stood fast in the storm in the place of safety that the Lord had provided for him. Then, he waited patiently for help to come. I recounted how the storm had left scars on his legs, a permanent reminder of God’s grace and mercy in the midst of pain and chaos. She sat on his back quietly listening, aware that she was softly tracing the scars on her forearm.

Gently, I placed my hand on her knee, “Allison, you can’t have a scar unless the wound has healed. Your scars can be a reminder ‘remnant’ of what the Lord has done. If we choose, these marks can be a life-long reminder of how God saved us within our storms.” She nodded thoughtfully.

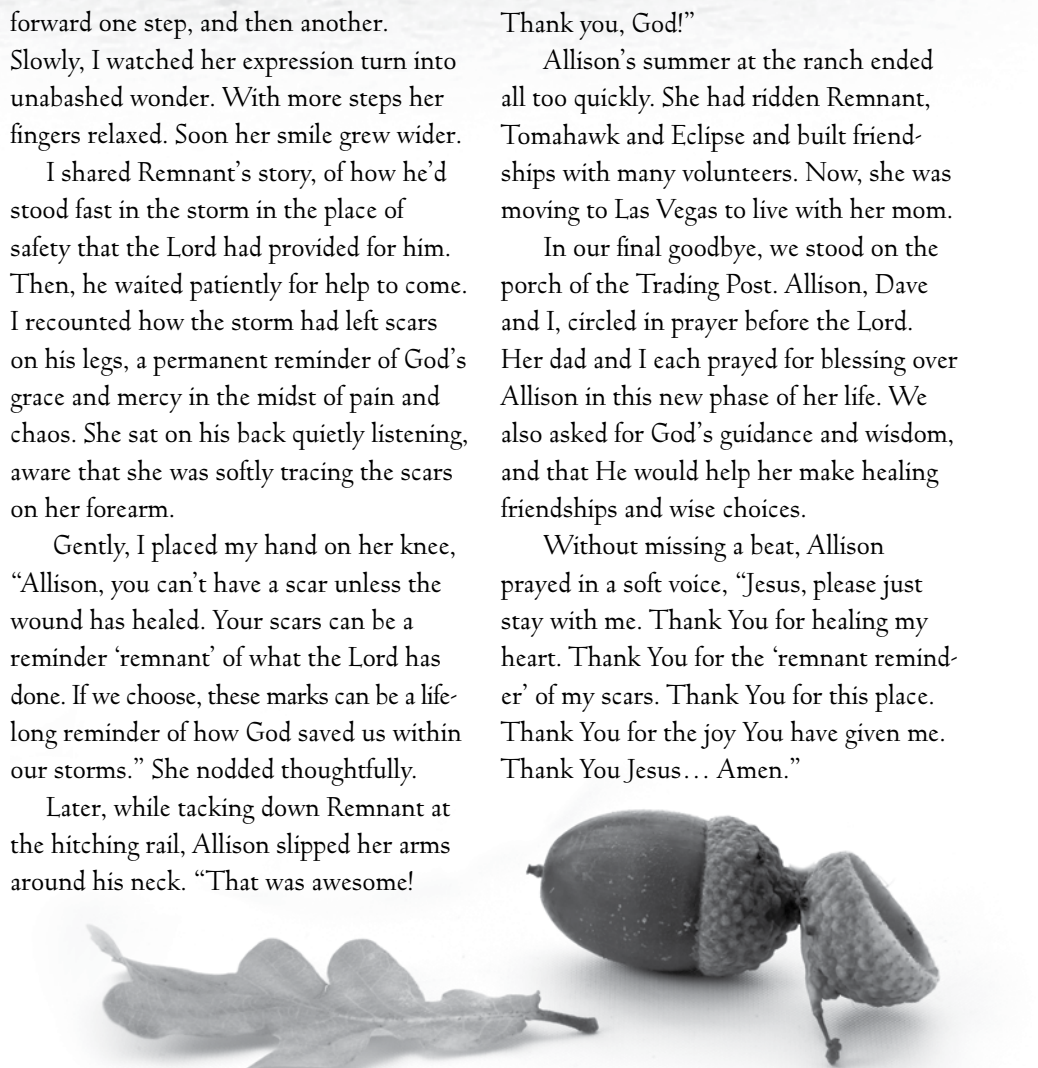
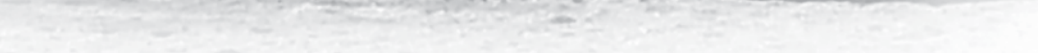
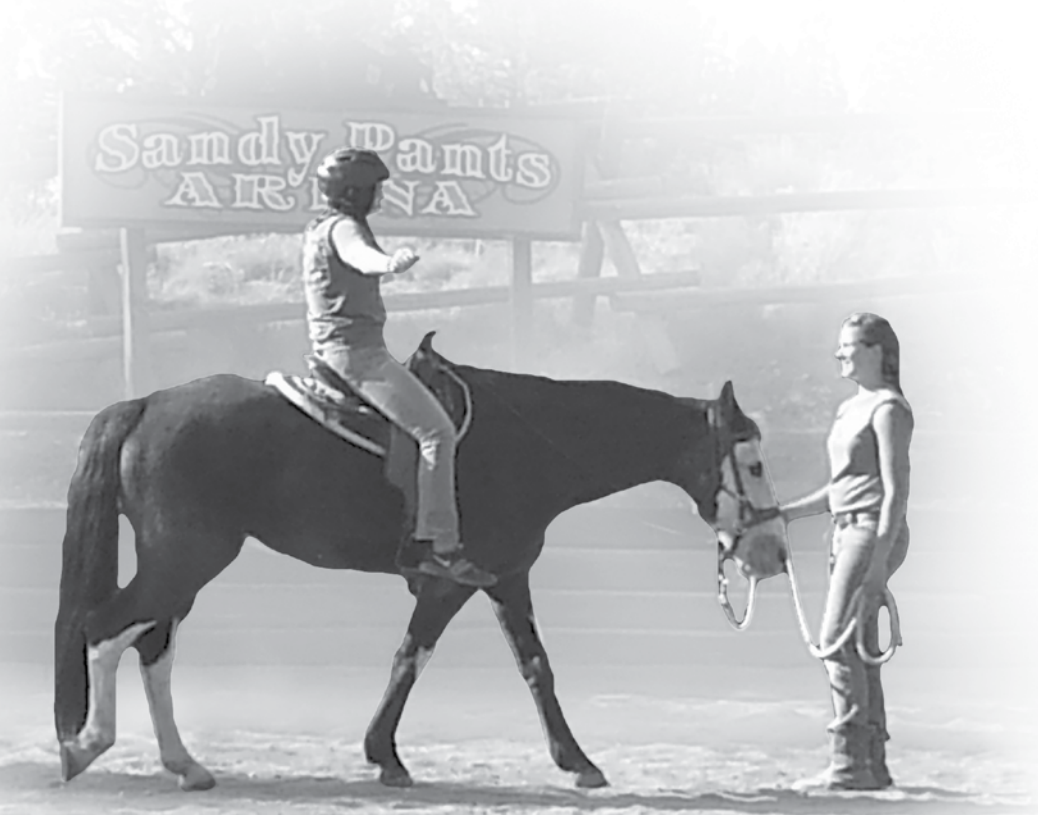
Later, while tacking down Remnant at the hitching rail, Allison slipped her arms around his neck. “That was awesome!

Thank you, God!”

Allison’s summer at the ranch ended all too quickly. She had ridden Remnant, Tomahawk and Eclipse and built friendships with many volunteers. Now, she was moving to Las Vegas to live with her mom.

In our final goodbye, we stood on the porch of the Trading Post. Allison, Dave and I, circled in prayer before the Lord. Her dad and I each prayed for blessing over Allison in this new phase of her life. We also asked for God’s guidance and wisdom, and that He would help her make healing friendships and wise choices.

Without missing a beat, Allison prayed in a soft voice, “Jesus, please just stay with me. Thank You for healing my heart. Thank You for the ‘remnant reminder’ of my scars. Thank You for this place. Thank You for the joy You have given me. Thank You Jesus... Amen.”



THE BEST KING

BY BRAD SHULTZ

Opening Day of the 2014 season encompassed many blessings at Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch. The first gift came when our Monday Men joined efforts with a volunteer group from Oklahoma. They met together that morning to finish several projects in the main yard. It was amazing to see people from all walks of life work side by side toward a common goal. With help from our *behind the scene* warriors, the ranch was ready for the season to begin.

The start of our session program was the second blessing. It was wonderful to see kids and horses in the arena again. Only yesterday the ranch was busy with preparations; today it was filled with the sounds of children laughing and playing. When the kids arrive for a new season, the transformation is beautiful. We're always excited to witness the fulfillment of God's promises and the answer to our prayers.

The morning was busy but unusually peaceful. The afternoon gave way to the familiar, happy bustle of sessions. Children were scattered all over the ranch riding horses, throwing baseballs, and chasing lizards in the sun.

Toward the end of the day, God provided a third and far greater blessing.

My last session began with a quiet ten year old boy. He had thick glasses and black hair. He was shy and reserved, which made him a little challenging to reach. While we groomed Little Bear, the gelding he'd chosen, I asked him to tell me what he enjoyed most about school. Reading class was his favorite. He shared how he loved consuming tales like *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Since I knew he liked the stories about good kings fighting against evil, I posed a question. "Have you read any stories from the Bible?" He glanced at me over Little Bear's back and replied, "My brother and I got Bibles last

year." Then he confessed, "It's hard to understand, so I don't read it much."

Stepping up to the opportunity, I relayed the account of David and Goliath to my young friend. After the story, I felt God prompting me to tell him about Jesus. Inexplicably, I felt a wave of hesitation. I was actually intimidated to tell this 10 year old boy about Jesus! To gather courage, I took a detour and instead shared the story of Gideon. As he listened, I noticed his earlier shyness start to disappear. He was relaxing in my presence.

Again, I sensed God nudging me to ask if he'd heard about Jesus... this time... I did. After thinking for a moment, he remembered that someone, maybe his brother, had told him about Jesus dying on a cross. I was excited that he'd heard about Jesus. I felt the Lord prompting me to ask if he knew *why* He had been crucified. Thoughtfully, he admitted he didn't know.

Sensing his interest, I started to explain the Gospel. I asked if he'd ever done something that he knew was wrong. He nodded. I told him that when we do things that are wrong we're sinning against God. Through our rebellion, we break our relationship with Him beyond our ability to repair it. I reminded him of the epic stories that he liked so much—pitting good against evil—they were all fiction. But there's a far more powerful story that really happened... the battle of Satan rebelling against God.

This war has been raging throughout human history. None of us are bystanders in this conflict. We each must choose which side we fight for. Every time we consciously choose to do wrong, our rebellion separates us from God. Because we're unable to pay the penalty for our own sin—or any sin—by our wrong choices we move to the evil army, eternally cut off from the good army.

But God, in His great love, provided one

single way for each of us to return to Him.

He sent His only Son Jesus to pay the price for our sins. Jesus did this by dying on a cross—but He didn't stay in the grave. On the third day, He rose to life and DEFEATED death. We don't live in memory of a martyr. Those who choose Him serve a *risen* King. When we put all our trust in the Lord Jesus, He rescues us—saves us—from the evil army and brings us into the very presence of God.

The young man understood and told me that he wanted to believe and trust in Jesus.

Thinking there was no way a boy his age could grasp the concept of the Gospel after fifteen minutes, I assumed he needed to know more. I was just starting to share the concepts of grace and mercy when God tapped me on the shoulder and said, "What are you doing? The Gospel is not that hard to understand. I made it so easy that even a little boy can understand it!"

Suddenly, I remembered what Jesus said to the disciples when they started to push the children away. "...Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for of such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Mark 10:14b-15 ESV)

An eternal choice had been presented. Together we knelt down to sit on the railroad ties and my new friend prayed to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

Faith is the core of Christianity. The boy didn't need to understand the deeper aspects of theology, yet. He simply heard the Good News...it was enough... and he believed.

Enthralled by learning stories about kings, a boy walked up the driveway. The same boy walked back down the driveway having sworn allegiance to:

The KING of kings.

I was just starting to share the concepts of grace and mercy when God tapped me on the shoulder and said, "What are you doing? The Gospel is not that hard to understand. I made it so easy that even a little boy can understand it!"



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

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NEW ARRIVAL at Crystal Peaks!

It's a boy! Please join us in welcoming our newest addition to the herd. On Sunday, September 21st at 5:15pm, a sorrel colored colt was safely delivered. To view the birth, please go to our website. Be watching for our next newsletter for the sweet story of his new name.

Kid quotes about the new foal:

"This is the first time I've ever seen a baby horse with my own eyes!" Trevor.

During his session Jordan inquired, "Has Shamis had her cub yet?"

Wide-eyed, Kelly exclaimed, "Oh my, gosh! What's wrong with his legs... They're so long!"



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