

RESCUE THE EQUINE

AROUND the FIRE

Summer 2024

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

STRENGTHENING REDEMPTION

By Sarah Robinett

In the bright spring sunlight, Redemption, our rescued Paint mare, moved powerfully in a circle around me. As I watched her trot on the end of my lead line, I struggled to comprehend the magnitude of her transformation. I remembered first leading Redemption—a starving, skeletal equine—into the transport of our awaiting horse trailer. At the time of her rescue, the fragile mare was so weak she stumbled trying to lift her emaciated frame only inches off the ground. We were told by our veterinary team to be prepared for the worst. They warned us the mare had a heart murmur and was actively in the process of dying.

Now I watched the same ravaged horse surge forward with glorious strength. The heart that once weakly murmured at the point of death, was pumping, strong and alive. Previously angular bones which held up her hollow frame were now hidden by the ripple of massive muscles beneath her shiny coat.

Redemption was a living miracle.

While the restored mare made laps around me, my memories of her rescue were eclipsed by an odd observation. Typically, when a horse moves in a circle, their body bends in a soft, powerful arc. Redemption, however, carried no bend in her body at all. Although her feet moved willingly, her core remained rigid, unable to maintain the rounded shape of a circle.

As if to compensate, Redemption increased her speed. She rushed around me faster and faster. I was shocked to see how inept she was at balancing her own weight. As she zoomed, her shoulder leaned heavily toward the inside of the circle while her feet rushed toward the outside, slipping out from under her awkwardly tilted body. The topline of her spine—rather than being aligned directly over her feet—was at a 45 degree angle to her racing hoofs.

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"HE MADE MY FEET LIKE THE
FEET OF A DEER AND SET ME
SECURE ON THE HEIGHTS."

PSALM 118:33, ESV

To keep from falling, Redemption strained forward with increased acceleration. Her circle became smaller and smaller, until her large presence loomed so close her shoulder made contact with my extended arm. In equine body language, usually this position was a signal of disrespect and dominance.

However, in this instance I didn't sense disrespect at all . . . but rather a desperate attempt to comply with my requests.

As I directed Redemption to respectfully step laterally away from me and widen her circle, I came to a shocking realization.

The mare—who appeared to be fully restored to vibrant health—was physically unable to make a simple side step.

In her frantic desire to please me, she offered more effort by rushing. It was as if my encouragement for her to slow down increased her anxiety. She could not seem to comprehend I was actually asking her to decrease her speed and rebalance.

My mind tried to make sense of her bizarre lack of balance and emotional response to my requests.

Although Redemption had regained strength to move forward with ease, I could see something vital was missing. When I considered how atrophied her muscles once were, I came to understand on a deeper level, the devastation of extreme starvation. In the prolonged absence of food, the mare had cannibalized her own muscle mass. After months of rescue feeding, Redemption returned to a normal body weight and made a remarkable and visible transformation. However, when I watched her move, I realized her outward appearance concealed an inner healing that still needed to take place.

Redemption's smaller supportive muscle groups were profoundly weak. Unlike the striking larger muscles that rippled under her skin as she moved, these tiny muscles were invisible from the

outside. Their primary role was perhaps seemingly less impressive. They didn't cause bursts of power. These small muscles were present to stabilize her large frame and hold it upright while the other muscles caused movement and momentum.

When functioning properly, the work of these small muscles went mostly unnoticed. Ironically, when they were *not* functioning properly, the results were absolutely noticeable.

Without the stabilization provided by her tiny muscles, when in motion, Redemption's body tipped sideways, stumbled and rushed ahead with anxiety.

Even a simple circle was more than she was ready to do.

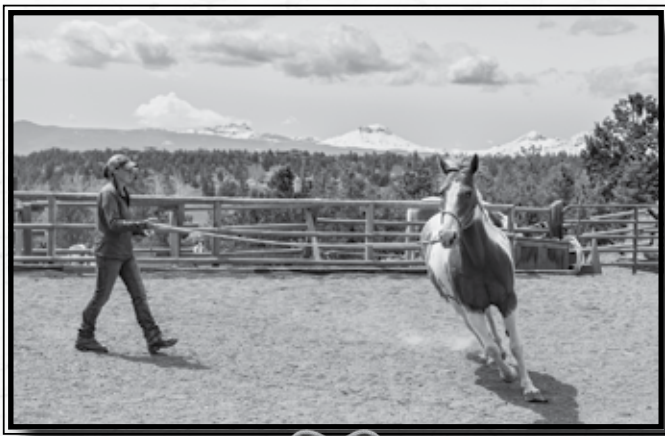
In the weeks that followed, the team and I reworked our training strategy. We needed to treat Redemption not only with the mentality of a horse trainer . . . but also with an awareness of the need to strengthen the tiniest of muscles. We asked for slow, deliberate movements. Part of our routine was to lead her over ground poles, trail obstacles and help her take incremental steps towards building better balance in her body. When we asked

for a circle, we used a much longer rope to encourage her to walk a circle 44 feet in diameter, which put less strain on her growing muscles.

While we worked toward training our Paint mare's body, I considered what appeared to be more of a heart issue—her struggle with anxious rushing.



Photo Credit: @imemilygreen



Redemption responded to our requests with what seemed to be a deep sense of equine gratitude. Her desire to please seemed to reflect how she understood she had been rescued. She was eager, willing and put great effort into fulfilling our requests. I noticed how her eagerness sometimes slipped into what could become a quick rise in anxiety, as if she were afraid that somehow she could not perform what we asked. Her response when she became unsure was to do everything faster with more effort.

In the process of strengthening Redemption, I began to recognize a similar pattern in my own heart.

Like Redemption, I operated with a deep desire to move forward. I felt deep gratitude for all God had done in my life and understood that He had rescued *me*.

I responded by trying to please God, which was frequently reflected in all the things I hurried to do for Him. Ironically, to truly be obedient, I saw that at times I must slow down, rebalance and refocus. The thought of slowing down often spiked a rise of anxiety inside of me. Instead of softening and bending my will toward God's best plan, there were moments I became rigid and rushed ahead to the next thing on my list. Like Redemption not comprehending my simple request to side step—because to her it felt physically impossible—some of the things God had asked me to do also felt physically impossible.



There were moments when I was speaking to others that I felt the Holy Spirit tap my heart, as if my words were beginning to travel in the wrong direction. Or I experienced “checks” in my spirit—thoughts to possibly slow down and readjust my plan for the day. Sometimes people were highlighted who I felt God wanted me to engage with His kindness.

When I sensed these micro-second promptings, often my first response was to make the excuse that there wasn't time . . . that it wasn't possible to rebalance in the moment. This made me feel anxious, as if I wasn't fully pleasing God. As these sensations in my heart collided, I discovered I also leapt toward rushing forward and doing things faster and faster. And when I rushed, it was evident to all as parts of my life fell clearly out of balance.

In my own heart, like I saw in Redemption—even though both of us loved to move forward—something vital was missing. Similar to the recovering mare, I



realized that my own inner heart muscles—those that were invisible and perhaps unimpressive—needed to be strengthened.

When I opened God's Word, I found several Scriptures that brought clarity to the invisible areas in my heart that clearly needed to grow.

In Galatians, Paul lists the fruit of the Holy Spirit: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (5:22-23, NIV)*

Then, two sentences later, he says: *“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25, NIV)*

I could see how I wanted to run my life as if faster was better . . . when God was simply asking me to take tiny, deliberate steps of obedience.

Like Redemption, I needed to slow down in order to keep in step with Him—moment by moment.

When I felt an elevation of anxious thoughts inside of me, there was a single clear Biblical step to take in response: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”* (Philippians 4:6, NIV)

That was pretty clear. Do not be anxious—instead—pray. Like Redemption, I saw the answer was not to rush forward but instead, take a side step off the circling hamster wheel of anxiety and refocus my heart on God.

And, like the maneuvers Redemption was practicing that required her to pay attention to her posture, this Biblical command also clarified the appropriate heart posture for moving away from anxiety.

As I stepped forward in prayer, I was to do it from a position of *thanksgiving*.

When I considered these verses and compared them to my life, I knew it was going to take some consistent practice to break my habit of rushing forward. I would need to willfully slow down and carefully rebalance myself in prayer, and not just any type of prayer—but thankful prayer. And when I began to practice this new habit, I was surprised by how often I pleaded for forgiveness or help . . . but forgot to say “thank you.”

Incrementally, my heart posture began to change. The more I remembered to express thankfulness to Jesus, the more peace filled my heart. I could feel the tippy areas inside of me begin to straighten with confident assurance.

Still, discipline was required to be persistent in paying attention to catch each tiny lean of my heart that was off course from God’s perfect peace.

Paul writes in the book of Hebrews: *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.”* (Hebrews 12:11-13, NIV)

Paul was quoting a passage in Proverbs, which says: *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life . . . Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”* (Proverbs 4:23, 26-27, NIV)

Again, I was reminded to “keep in step with the Spirit.” I began practicing with earnestness to keep every single step aligned with listening to and obeying the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Other Scriptures highlighted “tippy” places in my heart—to count all trials as pure joy . . . to speak the truth in love . . . and to rejoice always. (James 1:2, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Philippians 4:4)

Peter also speaks with a theme of balanced training when he writes:

“A SINGLE IMBALANCED STEP COULD HAVE BEEN A LIFE-ALTERING FALL. AND YET, A SINGLE IN-BALANCED STEP WAS ALL THAT WAS NEEDED TO ADVANCE FORWARD IN POWER.”

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brother affection with love . . . Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” (2 Peter 1:5-7, 10, ESV, emphasis added)

I discovered the list of my small “heart muscles” that needed to be strengthened was long. However, they all fell under the simple and basic directive—again—of keeping “in step with the Spirit.”

During this focused personal season of strengthening my heart in obedience, Kim and I made one of our favorite annual trips far into the wilderness of Eastern Oregon. Over several days, we hiked nearly 20 miles along steep, treacherous terrain. We followed only the twisted narrow trails made by elk, deer and bears up to the highest elevations. One of the days I traversed an expanse of a nearly vertical, exposed rock slide. In that instant, I felt as if time slowed to a halt.

Halfway across the slide, my left foot balanced carefully on a single stone as my right foot reached forward. While midstride, I recognized how the next rock was precariously tilted, ready to fall. In a micro-second redirect, I slowed, balanced my position on one foot, and carefully side-stepped uphill onto a small but secure foothold of basalt.

I was keenly aware that a single imbalanced step might have caused me to stumble and create an avalanche of stone. A single imbalanced step could have been a life-altering fall. And yet, a single *in-balance* step was all that was needed to advance forward in power.

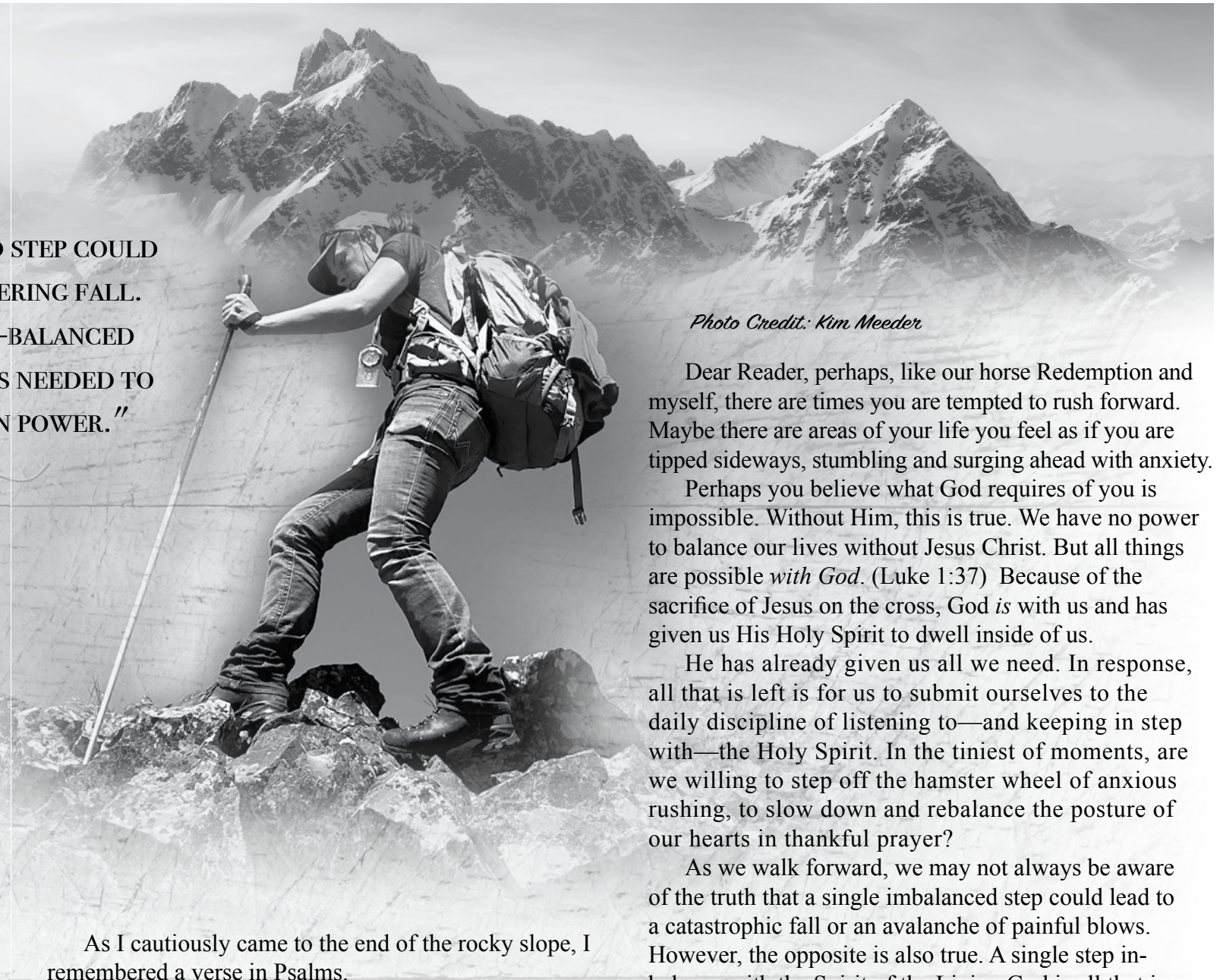


Photo Credit: Kim Meeder

Dear Reader, perhaps, like our horse Redemption and myself, there are times you are tempted to rush forward. Maybe there are areas of your life you feel as if you are tipped sideways, stumbling and surging ahead with anxiety.

Perhaps you believe what God requires of you is impossible. Without Him, this is true. We have no power to balance our lives without Jesus Christ. But all things are possible *with God*. (Luke 1:37) Because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God *is* with us and has given us His Holy Spirit to dwell inside of us.

He has already given us all we need. In response, all that is left is for us to submit ourselves to the daily discipline of listening to—and keeping in step with—the Holy Spirit. In the tiniest of moments, are we willing to step off the hamster wheel of anxious rushing, to slow down and rebalance the posture of our hearts in thankful prayer?

As we walk forward, we may not always be aware of the truth that a single imbalanced step could lead to a catastrophic fall or an avalanche of painful blows. However, the opposite is also true. A single step in-balance with the Spirit of the Living God is all that is needed to advance through treacherous terrain in His peaceful power.

Adventure awaits. The strengthening of His redemption story in your life is worth every tiny, faithful step of obedience.

Father, I pray for the heart of every Reader right now. May You highlight the invisible areas of their heart that are weak—or where they may fear Your displeasure. Show them through Your Word what is the single step You are asking them to take today. Fill them with Your peace and power. May they rely on the gentle guidance of Your Holy Spirit. I pray for them to be completely strengthened in Your miraculous redemption.

As I cautiously came to the end of the rocky slope, I remembered a verse in Psalms.

“He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.” (Psalm 18:33, ESV)

Once safely across the rocks, my thoughts circled back to Redemption. I wasn’t asking her to slow down and perform maneuvers because I wanted perfection or a constant slow gait. I asked her to slow down to strengthen her so that one day she would have the balance needed for the adventure of carrying a rider out on the trail.

And when I felt the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit on my own heart to slow down, I recognized it wasn’t because He wanted me to perform perfectly or to always only be slow. He wanted me to be strong for the adventure of carrying His Presence through the treacherous terrain of this life in His freedom and peace.

Even though the daily discipline of keeping in step with the Spirit was sometimes slow and painful, I knew that God’s heart was for strengthening His story of redemption in my life.

(To see Redemption's recovery journey, please view video of Ruins to Redemption by Sarah Robinett: <https://youtu.be/JD-ZLND6T8I>)

SEEKING THE HEAVENLY FATHER'S LOVE

**“And now these three remain:
faith, hope and love. But the
greatest of these is love.”**

(1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV)

On the first day of the new year, I was doing the mundane task of scooping manure from a horse corral while listening to a podcast. The topic was living in God’s love. Toward the end of the episode, the woman prayed and presented three questions to the Heavenly Father: 1—God, would You show me today how You love me specifically and uniquely? 2—Because You know me and the life that’s before me, what is the purpose You have for me? 3—Jesus, would You reveal the greater purpose You have for me? Please show me how what I’m going through, even when it’s painful, is for my good because of Your love.

One question stood out and it prompted me to boldly ask my Creator if He would reveal His heart for me through it. I began to ask Jesus the first question every morning when I woke up. I’d make my cup of coffee and sit on the floor with my dog and read my Bible. During this time, I would ask, “Lord, open my eyes to see and open my heart to receive glimpses of how You love me. Please show me something today that I will know is Your way of saying, ‘Daughter, I love you and I am with you.’ And, please help me to not miss it.”

Wouldn’t you know . . . *He did just that.*



By Hollee Kaseberg

Recently, His love came through two horses at Crystal Peaks. It would have been easy to miss—but that day He showed me it was Him.

I was scooping manure in the paddock on the main ranch. Bethlehem was the only horse in the corral and she was pacing along the fence-line at the bottom of the hill. The rest of the herd had been turned out for winter on the pastures across the road. But, Bethlehem and her daughter, Nakia, remained in the biggest dry lot pen because both need a special low sugar diet and cannot be on pastures.

It was a farrier day and Nakia had been moved across the road to be trimmed. Although she would be returning soon, her loving mother was not comforted. Bethlehem was separated from her daughter and she was so anxious to be with her that she stood at the fence calling, awaiting her return. She was concerned with nothing else and paced by the fence as close as she could get to the place where she saw her daughter depart.

I stopped and watched her for a moment. Then, I heard the voice of my Father, “Do you see that? This is how I love you too. I long for your return and I constantly remind you of My presence.”

Photo Credit: @imemilygreen

Every single day of 2024, He has not failed to answer my prayer with a “God wink.” These are moments when I sense He is looking at me and saying, “This is for you.”

These moments have come in the form of a watercolor sunset sky, an eagle soaring overhead on a cloudy day or a massive herd of elk in the field where I couldn’t possibly miss them. Others have come as a memory of a dearly loved friend, a song that brings me to tears or driving through pouring rain in a state that has endured a long drought. Jesus has shown me how He loves me through a little cowboy corgi that lies on the bathmat waiting for me to get out of the shower because he can’t stand being left behind, or through the horse that comes to the gate when I hop out of my pickup. More than ever, God is showing me His love in so many simple ways. Day by day, I’m learning to see them and appreciate each one as a gift.

It was a foggy day. I couldn't see much past the fence, let alone the horses across the road by the barn. This made me think of Bethlehem. She couldn't see her daughter—but knew she was near—and she wanted her to know that she was standing right where they parted—waiting for her return.

I wondered how many times my Heavenly Father had awaited my return as I wandered in the fog. And when I couldn't see His presence through it—like this mare—He never moved from where I had left.

I watched a loving mother miss her daughter and friend in a way she couldn't contain—and came to the realization—I am loved in the same way by my Father and Friend.

As Bethlehem longed to be with Nakia, I long to be with Jesus each day. As Bethlehem couldn't contain her love for her best friend, I am also striving to pursue a relationship with Jesus that I simply cannot contain.

I was still working in the paddock when Nakia was led back up the driveway to rejoin her mother. Without missing a beat, Bethlehem walked alongside her daughter, on the other side of the fence, all the way up to the gate.

Step by step the two friends walked together. I smiled to imagine how Jesus walks by our side—in exactly the same way—every moment of every day. As the tiny family was reunited, I watched Bethlehem's demeanor return to her calm, gentle and patient self in the presence of the one she loved. This reminded me of how the fruits of the Spirit are more evident when I am intentionally pursuing and abiding in the presence of my Friend, Jesus.

Beginning with a daily simple prayer and time in His Word, I am getting to know my Lord's heart for me. He has revealed how He loves me through the simplest things—things that I used to overlook.

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalms 139:14, NIV)

Today, I pray that you will understand how you are fearfully and wonderfully made. I encourage you to seek to know and love Jesus—and look for His "God winks" moments—and experience the unique ways that He loves *you*.



Photo Credit: @inemilygreen

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.

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

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CPYR Volunteer Opportunities ...



Photo Credit: @imemilygreen

Would you like to get involved with the Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch ministry? One tangible way is to volunteer. The Ranch volunteer program reflects the very foundation of what we do—it mirrors the love of Christ in action. We are so grateful for the hands and hearts of those who bless us with one of their greatest gifts—*time*.

Volunteering at Crystal Peaks is always about people. Building relationships is central to our mission. In working shoulder-to-shoulder with our volunteers, we seek to know each of those who freely give of themselves through this place. Together, we seek to glorify God in the effort. And sometimes, miracles happen within this beautiful process.

Our volunteers join us in working on a variety of different Ranch endeavors. During the application and orientation process, we do our best to match the interests of our volunteers with the various seasonal tasks we have available. We have projects tailored to everyone: construction work, mechanical repair, painting, staining, office help, gardening, weeding, harvesting, preserving the harvest, assisting with our horse herd, working with wool, feeding, cleaning paddocks and everything in-between. Because we get the tasks done—*together*—we have FUN doing it!

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8, ESV)

If you're interested in learning more about our volunteer program, (local, nonlocal short-term, nonlocal long-term or groups) please contact Ann at: volunteers@cpyr.org. We will welcome you with open arms and a smile.