

HOPE FOR THE FAMILY

AROUND *the* FIRE

Spring 2021

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

CRUSHING THE ANXIETY OF CIRCUMSTANCE

By Troy Meeder

The past twelve months have been a unique challenge for each of us.

The way the world community interacts has been altered. Humanity has struggled beneath the weight of a global pandemic. Riots have rendered chaos to become common place. Much of the church has been strong-armed into small gatherings or no gatherings at all. Voices have been silenced. The fist of censorship has crushed contrary points of view.

For some, the questions pondered in the middle of the night could sound like, “Within this struggle, where is God? Does He still care for humanity? Does He still care for me?”

When we consider the life of Christ, Jesus relied on the certainty that His Father was working over—in—and through every challenge He encountered. Jesus prayed, He asked His Father what to do. Next, He listened for His Dad’s response. After receiving the answer, He acted and became an extension of the loving hands and feet of the Father. Even when He was reviled and tortured, “*He left his case in the hands of God.*” (1 Peter 2:23, NLT).

Jesus mirrored how humility precedes obedience. His unconditional trust in the Father remains the deep soil in which our example of humility can take root. The powerful seeds of humility will mature into the fruit of genuine obedience. “*He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” (Philippians 2:8b, NKJV). Jesus did nothing outside His Father’s will. (John 5:19-20).

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The Son knew His Father was still on the throne. He knew His Father was still in control. He knew His Father still loved Him.

Jesus keenly understood His future rested in submission to the Father. As our Savior moved through His life, everything He did was for God's glory.

Jesus lived upon the bedrock knowledge that His Dad was in charge—is in charge—and will always be in charge—no matter what surrounded Him. Because of this truth, He exemplified there was only one place to anchor eternal destiny . . . the Father.

Evil viewed the crucifixion as weakness unto death, but our Lord's perspective was different. The Messiah willingly submitted to Calvary knowing evil would be crushed by the ultimate power and plan of His Father. *"For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God."* (2 Corinthians 13:4, NKJV).

The resurrected Christ now lives to regenerate His life in you.

Major W. Ian Thomas wrote, "If you are not prepared to do as you are told, no matter how weak or foolish it will make you look, then whatever you believe about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is still academic. You have not yet entered into the good of it."

Major Thomas is not writing that we should act foolheartedly, nor move aimlessly through life. His words remind us of the truth . . . *nothing matters apart from the cross of Christ.*

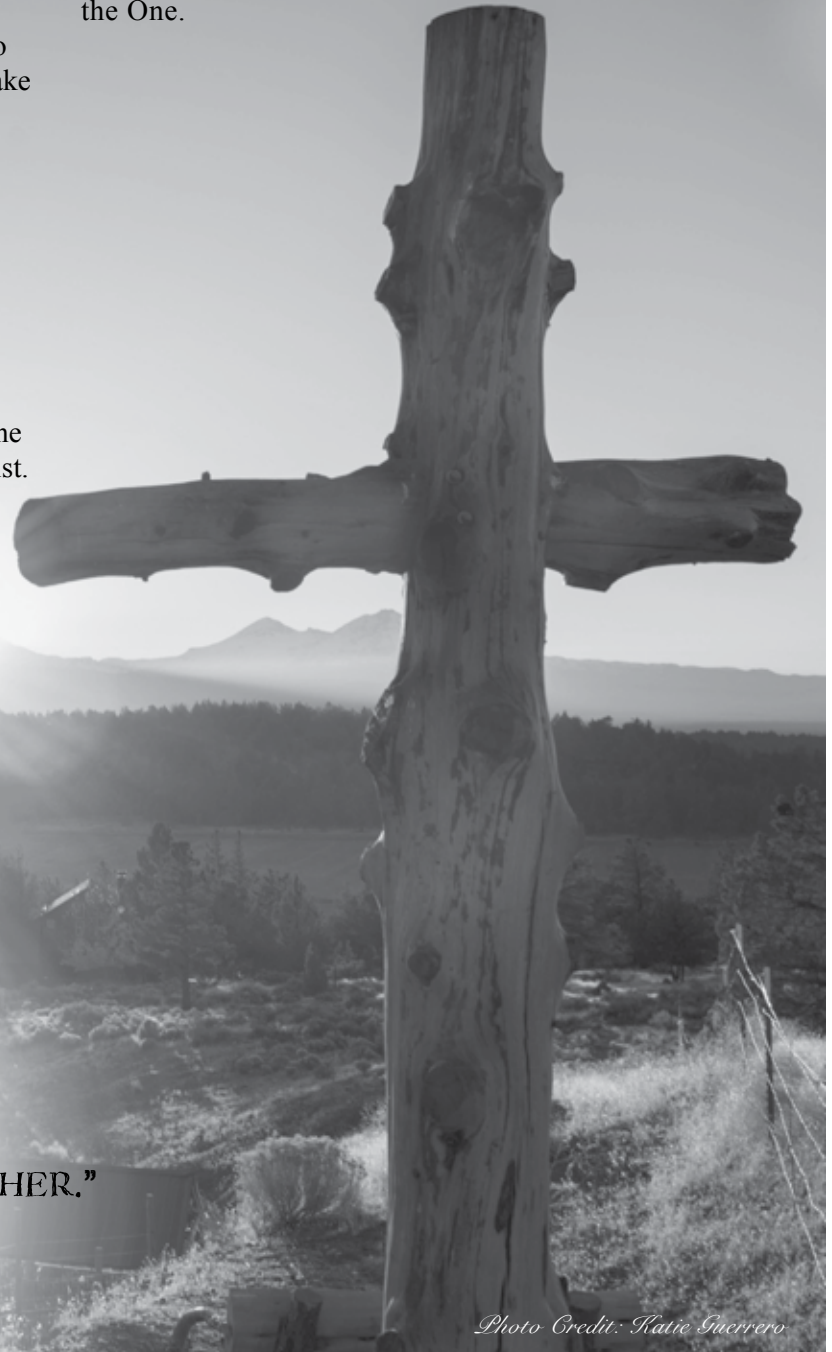
Global pandemics, skewed politics, a slanted media, an uncertain economy, the church gathering or not . . . all challenge our focus. Each adversity becomes irrelevant in the Believer's heart when it is fixed on the calling of Jesus Christ.

We must choose to become passionately detached from the anxiety of circumstance. Instead, we must gaze into the heart of the Father and humbly become HIS plan for all that is happening in our midst.

Will the bedlam going on around us determine our peace? Or will the certainty of His promises BECOME our peace? When the unknown spins our hearts into chaotic folly . . . should we not once again turn our eyes onto the One *who holds all things together?* (Colossians 1:17). It's in Him we find our strength, our existence and our stillness. God's Word reminds us of the truth, *"For when I am weak, then I am strong."* (2 Corinthians 12:10b, NLT).

The infinite power of Calvary is not in submission to the futile turmoil we hear all around us. The blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, still heals and transforms life.

It matters not whether we know His plans for our world . . . all that matters is we know *Him*. For the Believer, life finds its fullness in the humble surrender to the One.



**"HE EXISTED BEFORE
ANYTHING ELSE,
HE HOLDS ALL THINGS TOGETHER."**

COLOSSIANS 1:17

Photo Credit: Katie Guerrero

A Voice in Our Midst

By Aly Hinkle



Photo Credit: Katie Guerrero

It was a normal Monday and Ranch chores awaited. While entering the main paddock to scoop manure with staff and interns, I observed the herd around me. With nothing out of the ordinary, I focused on the task of ridding the paddock of manure piles. As we cleaned the corral, easy conversation flowed between us. Hearts were poured out as we began sharing and inviting Jesus to enter into the day. After a few minutes, I looked up and saw a four-legged white figure walking towards us.

I immediately recognized her as my friend, Liberty Belle. I had been tirelessly working with this small Welsh-Arab mare for nearly a year. Because she was currently on a diet, she had learned to look for me when she heard the paddock gate open. It was clear she was hopeful it would be me coming to bring her a meal. My heart smiled as I thought back to the beginning of the year when she would often walk away from me before our training sessions. Now, she quietly approaches any time she sees me, and this fills my heart with joy.

I reflected on her pursuing me. Although we didn't see each other at first, she must have heard my voice even though she was a distance away. Then, she came to me and stood quietly.

In that moment, Liberty Belle wasn't expecting food or scratches. Nor was she telling me where she wanted to go with her infamous head nods towards grass. She just wanted to be with me because of our friendship and because of her confidence that she is well cared for in my presence.

While resting in the sweetness of the moment, I realized something powerful.

This same 'pursuit' is the Father's desire for all His children. What joy it must bring Him when we recognize His voice and willingly move from where we are to merely be closer to Him and what He's doing. How beautiful it is when we're willing to simply enter into His presence—for Him alone—and not in expectation of anything He can give. *"Pay attention and come to me; listen, so that you will live."* (Isaiah 55:3, CSB).

I wondered as the fullness of this spiritual lesson sank in, wouldn't it be sad if I was specifically calling for her and she ignored me? What if I had something special for her in that moment and she missed out because she wasn't paying attention? Or worse, she just refused to come to me?

So it is with our Father. When we are not seeking Him, we can miss out on moments of pursuing His presence. By missing Him, we also miss out on what He is trying to do in and through us. Our Lord God is moving in mighty ways. He looks for willing hearts to humbly approach Him and position themselves so His miraculous glory can pour through them.

Another parallel from Liberty Belle came when I realized the large number of staff and interns in the paddocks scooping with me. Although there was much commotion with many voices, ranch equipment driving back and forth, gates clamoring open and closed and

other distracting sounds—Liberty Belle was able to pick out my voice from all the other noises and follow the direction it was coming from.

She knows my voice because we've spent a LOT of time together.

In the rising, swirling chaotic voices of our world, above all else, it's vital that we're able to distinguish which Voice is our Father's—focus intently on it—and let all else fade away as we solely pursue Him. Only in this place of pursuit and surrender will we begin to *listen* to the one Voice that really matters.

The ability to distinguish His voice clearly from others only comes from spending time with Him—a LOT of time. As we choose our Father and resist the other noises in our lives, we position Him to become our priority and enable Him to direct us as He wishes.

Liberty Belle's simple actions were a clear reflection of the Lord's desire for a close relationship with His children. Like her, I want the same attitude of, "Lord, I heard You speaking! Here I am! What are we doing today?"

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28, ESV).

May we desire *His Voice* to be the one we are most sensitive to and *His Voice* the one we hear the most clearly.

Never Alone

BY DEIRDRE GOMEZ

“Ele”

She was alone, utterly alone. This is what I witnessed while holding onto the lead rope of a beloved mare named Phoebe. I saw panic, trepidation and the fear of the unknown race through her body.

Phoebe is blind in her left eye and she counted on her best friend, Ele, to help her navigate a partially black world. Ele, the lead mare of the herd, the soulmate who had not left Phoebe’s side for 17 years . . . had suddenly passed away.

C.L.C.’s Freedom, better known as Ele, was the first horse Kim and Troy rescued in 1995. Ele was the equine founder of the riding program, Kim’s personal horse, and a priceless friend and confidant for the last 25 years. On this sunny, beautiful, hot day in July, Ele was undergoing a minor routine medical procedure. What happened next left everyone stunned to their core.

Appearing to have experienced an aneurism—within minutes—Ele was gone. Her death was unexpected and devastating. I watched in horror as the matriarch and leader of our herd . . . fell to the ground . . . and was called Home.

My head swirled with many thoughts, feelings and emotions as staff and volunteers gathered around this precious four-legged warrior. She served the Ranch unselfishly and unceasingly for 25 years. I thought of Kim, who was traveling and not present to say good-bye. The sudden void felt stifling, but my heart turned toward this truth; the Lord called her home, she was no longer suffering but was whole, healthy, and running free.

Ele was not only one of Kim’s best friends . . . but she was also Phoebe’s best friend.

Phoebe came to the Ranch in 2003 as a survivor from the Millican Rescue, the largest horse seizure in Oregon state history. At that time, Kim, Troy and a portion of the Ranch staff were part of a team that worked closely with the Deschutes County Sheriff’s Department to support this massive rescue effort. Of the 132 starving and wounded horses that were seized, 30 were moved into immediate intensive care.

Phoebe, being among this critically starved group, was the worst. On the day of her rescue, a team of veterinarians estimated that she was missing a third of her normal body weight and nearly a foot of height. Few on the rescue team believed she would survive the night.

But she *did* survive.

The fact that she lived was a miracle. Since the day she was introduced into the Ranch herd, Ele drew Phoebe into her loving care and protected her. They became inseparable. Over the years, Phoebe eventually lost half her sight. Faced with this new challenge, Ele faithfully became her blind friend’s eyes. Whenever we moved Ele, we would always have Phoebe in tow. Even when they were apart for short moments, Phoebe would become so fearful and upset that we made it a point to never separate them.

When Ele died, Phoebe was standing nearby.

Ele was lying in the outdoor arena. We took off Phoebe’s halter and let her have private time with Ele—just the two of them. It was peaceful and beautiful to observe Phoebe saying

goodbye to the one soul who had loved and protected her for a lifetime. After she smelled Ele, she laid down and rolled. It was so important for Phoebe to have that time to be with Ele. When it was time to have Ele’s body removed, we had to take Phoebe out of the arena. This is when reality hit; Phoebe came undone.

I will never forget Phoebe’s expression. Her eyes were wide with panic. The one she relied on for the last 17 years was taken from her . . . and now she was alone. She could not be comforted. The only thing we could do was put her in a pasture with horses she knew and trust Jesus to bring healing to her broken heart. In time, she would need to discover a new friend who would help her see. But in that moment, she was inconsolable.

Watching her made me think of the stark contrast of when we lose someone we love and adore—and how we are never alone. We are comforted by this truth, *“I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.”* (Psalm 16:8, NLT).

Photo Credit: Lance Gomez

“Phoebe”

No matter what we encounter on this side of Heaven, we are *never* alone.

In an attempt to find her departed friend, Phoebe whinnied and paced for days. It was so hard to watch this sweet mare struggle without her beloved friend. My heart ached for her loss. But, through prayer all things are possible. *“Jesus looked at them intently and said, ‘Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.’”* (Matthew 19:26, NLT).

Our staff prayed for a new friend to come alongside Phoebe. In a matter of days, our prayers were answered. As only God can arrange, Phoebe not only made one special friend . . . but *three*.

“You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our savior. You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas.” (Psalm 65:5, NLT).

As I reflect back on this traumatic event, I know that Jesus was working through every detail. Rarely do we understand times of great loss, but we can always trust in the One who *does*. *“‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord.”* (Isaiah 55:8, NIV).

His glory shines through every black place, no matter how difficult the situation we face is. His light outshines the darkness every time. *“The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”* (John 1:5, NLT).

Because I watched the love of God pour into a hurting mare’s darkness—when faced with the same—I know I can trust Him to pour into mine.

No matter what we face in this life . . . because of the love of Jesus . . . *we are never alone*.

Finding Joy In Mondays

BY XANDRA BRUCKNER

“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.” (Psalm 96:11-12, NIV).

I don't know about you, but Mondays are my favorite day of the workweek. Before you write me off as crazy, let me explain.

Around five years ago, I was going through a really rough time. I was feeling hopeless and restless and I wondered if there was any purpose to my life. I knew what I did at the Ranch mattered and made an impact on the lives of those I came in contact with, but I felt like I was just getting through each day simply to get through them. I didn't have a hobby or anything that really filled me up and refreshed me, and that was frustrating. I felt like I was wasting the time I had.

Four years ago, the opportunity to take on the role of caring for the gardens at Crystal Peaks opened up for me. I had no previous horticulture experience except for pulling weeds and deadheading flowers, which I didn't mind doing at all. I actually enjoyed weeding; the quiet and mindless tasks of removing invasive plants and dead blooms were both productive and refreshing. It brought me pleasure to bring order to a weedy flowerbed, and by deadheading, I was highlighting the beauty of God's creation. I accepted the new role thinking it would be easy enough to maintain the flowerbeds at the Ranch. But the prospect of growing vegetables was daunting to me. Gratefully, I had time to research over the winter.

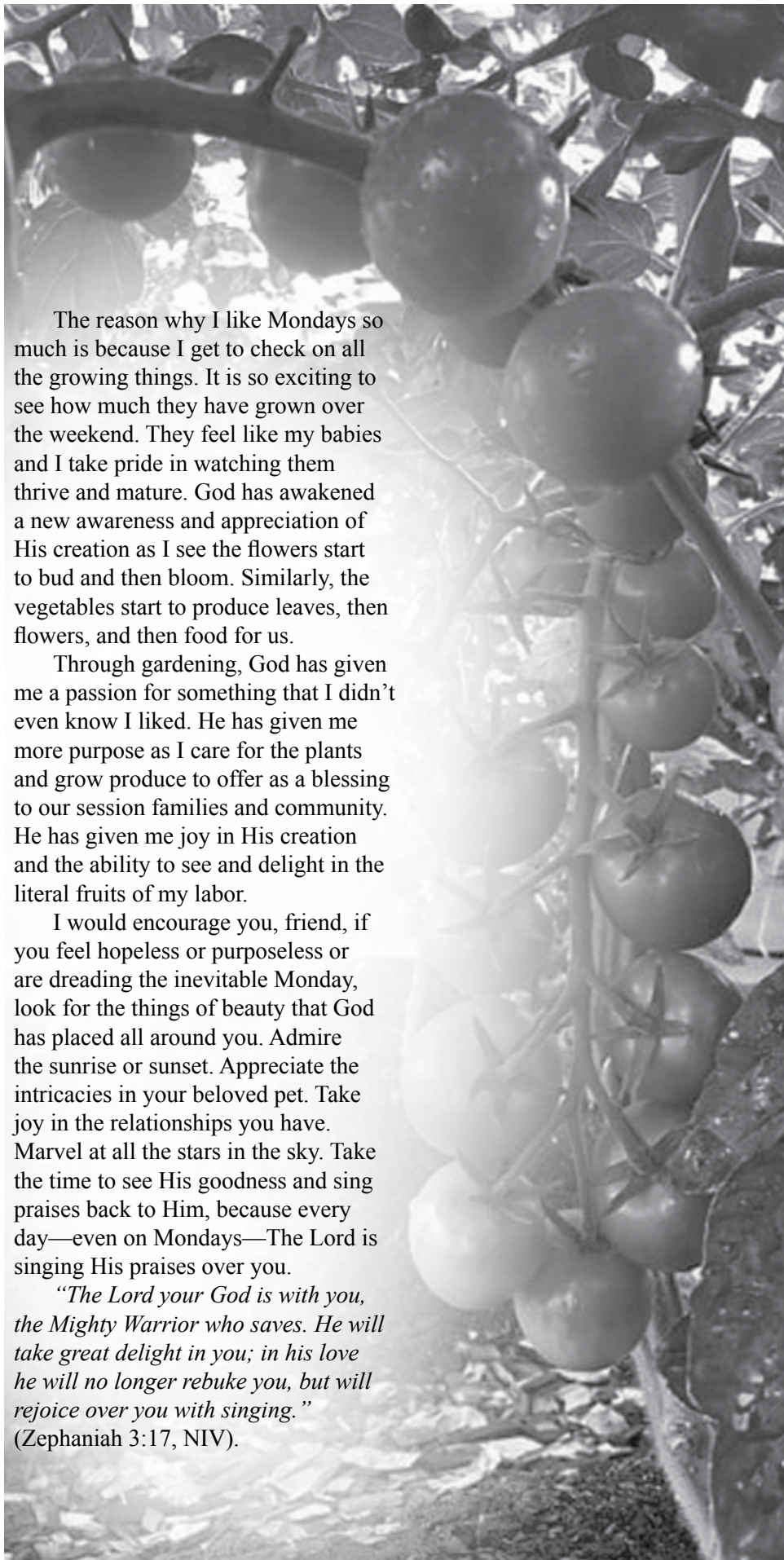
I learned SO much about plants and cultivating vegetables from Kim and Rachel during the first growing season in this new role. I loved to learn as much as possible and to watch the little seedlings grow bigger and bigger. It was fascinating—and still IS fascinating—to see how God made plants to grow, produce flowers, fruits, seeds, and then to repeat the process. His creation truly sings His praises!

I'm amazed at how a single tomato seed can produce a plant with loads of tomatoes and within each fruit there are lots more seeds to make many more plants! A single apple has the ability to make at least five apple trees which then produce countless apples! I think you get the idea.



**“His creation
truly sings
His praises!”**

Photo Credit: Scott Brown



The reason why I like Mondays so much is because I get to check on all the growing things. It is so exciting to see how much they have grown over the weekend. They feel like my babies and I take pride in watching them thrive and mature. God has awakened a new awareness and appreciation of His creation as I see the flowers start to bud and then bloom. Similarly, the vegetables start to produce leaves, then flowers, and then food for us.

Through gardening, God has given me a passion for something that I didn't even know I liked. He has given me more purpose as I care for the plants and grow produce to offer as a blessing to our session families and community. He has given me joy in His creation and the ability to see and delight in the literal fruits of my labor.

I would encourage you, friend, if you feel hopeless or purposeless or are dreading the inevitable Monday, look for the things of beauty that God has placed all around you. Admire the sunrise or sunset. Appreciate the intricacies in your beloved pet. Take joy in the relationships you have. Marvel at all the stars in the sky. Take the time to see His goodness and sing praises back to Him, because every day—even on Mondays—The Lord is singing His praises over you.

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”
(Zephaniah 3:17, NIV).

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

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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.



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CALLING ALL PRAYER WARRIORS . . .

Please join us as we lift up those attending our 2021 IGNITION event on May 19-22. As the Lord calls each soul into ranch ministry, it is our desire to encourage all into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Through the last 25 years of challenges and victories, we have learned to follow and depend on the only One who knows the way.

This four-day event equips participants from across our nation—and beyond—with the tools needed to return home and establish their own ministry. During IGNITION, our greatest prayer for each individual is to encounter the living God in a transformative way. Also, please pray for every person who will share and shoulder with these participants during their ministry journey.

Although our registry for this event is full, if you sense the Holy Spirit directing your heart toward this gathering, please email: similarministries@cpyr.org. By doing so, your name will be added to an auxiliary list. We are prayerful that in the months to come, our state mandated restrictions will change enough so that we will be able to open the event to a few more interested individuals.

Again, thank you dear family for joining us in prayer over this event . . . we so appreciate you.

