

STEADFAST

-Family Farm-

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Holidays: When the Good is Better and the Hard gets Harder - by Deana Bethea

I've been thinking about this phrase over the past couple of weeks. Christmas is dubbed as "the most wonderful time of the year," but those of us who have seen quite a few Christmases know that it doesn't always feel this way. Recently, our Wednesday morning book study group read Tozer's "The Pursuit of God." I was especially moved by his chapter on The Gaze of the Soul in which we are challenged to look out vs. looking in. Looking in allows us to celebrate the happiest of Christmases without regard for those who are hurting. Looking in also allows us to focus on our "have nots" rather than celebrating the blessings we have been given. Looking out, on the other hand requires that we take the focus off of ourselves and gaze at the lives around us. Most importantly, it allows us to set our gaze on our Loving Father God who is with us through all life's seasons.

It was during the local Christmas Parade that I first started thinking of this. When the time finally arrived for our Steadfast float to start moving and join the parade, one of our Apprentices looked at me and suddenly said, "I miss my Momma, Mrs. Deana. I wish she could see me in the parade." I realized that this time of excitement and rejoicing played out differently for him, a young man who's mother has passed and has no earthly father in his life. Interestingly, as the parade rolled on, I noticed a whole handful of people from the crowd calling his name and waving. As he looked out at the crowd around him he was made to feel special; he was noticed and found. He was with family not only on our Steadfast float, but in this small town we call home.

Again, I'm reminded of Tozer who wrote, "When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth." I take pause now to look out and be thankful. I am so very thankful for this work that God has given me at Steadfast. I am also thankful beyond words for all of you who are reading this. Thank you for taking an interest in Steadfast, for investing in the ministry, for loving us and being family.



Grace ~ by Tod Bethea

I have stated in the past what a huge help many of you have been with the work of the ministry and the farm. Between feeding horses, organizing events, helping with sessions, mowing pasture, making hay and building fences (to name a few) you have lifted a great deal of the burden off of Deana and me. I easily realized the physical relief of this, but there was more that I needed to recognize about the emotional side of things. Once again God has used a horse to show me more about myself.

We brought Grace and Mercy to Steadfast about 8 months ago through a local rescue. They were several hundred pounds underweight and it was amazing that they had survived. The two horses had been together nearly their whole lives and it was very easy to see that Grace had become Mercy's protector. Grace did not act out of meanness but from a fight for survival. With diligent and careful feeding the two mares began gaining weight and regaining their health. When they were ready to be introduced to a herd of mares, Grace immediately assumed the role of alpha mare. Her need for perpetual motion and lack of desire to be caught began to have an adverse impact on the herd's behavior. I had made some headway training Grace prior to introduction to the herd, but progress was slow. Not only did the progress come to a screeching halt when she joined the herd, it appeared to be headed in the opposite direction. This led us to move Grace and Mercy in with Obadiah and Luka. Obi is one of our alpha males. He has great confidence in himself and it shows as the other horses just "seem to" follow him. At first Grace did not like this as she felt she must care for herself and Mercy as she always had. She did not trust that she needn't worry about doing everything herself.

Then one day, after her being here 6 months I noticed Grace laying down for the first time. She had finally let go her need for control and just relaxed. It was a beautiful site. Her behavior has since improved because she has been empowered to be her true self, not who she believed she had to be to survive. Grace has found peace and joy in belonging to the herd. That all came from letting go and following a strong leader. (Psalm 46:10). Now I ask myself, "Who is training who?"

Be still and know that I am God. *Ps 46:10* I am comforted by these words, by Grace resting peacefully in the pasture, and by the realization of how great a gift God has given in providing a Steadfast family. He gives me peace. He gives me joy. He has given me a place where I belong and has empowered me to follow His plan.



Ministry Prep Course

Exciting plans are being made to offer a 12-week "Ministry with Horsemanship" course. This course will cover basic natural horsemanship with groundwork and riding, activities involving ministry with horses, and discovering the teachable moments when the relationship with the horse, relationships with others in daily life, and our relationship with the Lord all meet in a common thread of truth. This course will be open to the community but will also target Toccoa Falls College students. We are delighted with the prospect of providing this comprehensive training which will offer the necessary preparation for those who desire to serve in the ministry and feel a need to grow in their horsemanship skills; ministry opportunities for TFC students; and allow Steadfast to continue to build breadth and depth to our ministry.

Celebrations



Steadfast: Year 2 at a Glance

- * 314 one-on-one Journeyman/Apprentice Session Hours
- * 2 Group Encounters where we shared the message of Joy, Peace, Empowerment, and Belonging to 410 Participants
- * Hosted Volunteer Work Teams
- * "Raising Joy" Community Awareness Event
- * Acquisition of our own (very old but functional) Hay Equipment
- * Baled 135 Round Bales/ 550 Square Bales of Steadfast hay for winter feeding
- * Received an invitation from a very generous neighbor to use his barns for hay and equipment storage. Thank you Allen Keller!
- * Initiated an assessment component to our session program
- * Moved closer to breaking ground for raising Joy Arena

Quotables



A note from Ellie Claire:

I love my horse lessons at Steadfast with Miss Taylor. My first horse I ever rode there was Sadie. Miss Taylor showed me how to groom Sadie. We tacked up. And I rode her for the first time. (At this point Ellie Claire continues for quite some time about all the things she has learned at Steadfast! She concludes with this.) I am excited about Raising Joy for Steadfast. Mostley all there horses a rescue horses. I love going to Steadfast to learn more about horses.

My note about Ellie Claire and all the Steadfast kids she represents:

It fills my heart with joy to see the excitement the kids have at coming out to be

Next Steps



Progress toward "Raising Joy" Arena

Ellie Claire's note mentioned her excitement about Raising Joy. This is in reference to our fundraising efforts to build Joy Arena. This covered riding area will provide a safe riding environment where weather will not play such a factor in the scheduling of our sessions. Consistency is tremendously important for these kids and we look forward to building this facility which will greatly assist in this and a multitude of other ways.

Many have asked how the "fundraising" is going for Joy Arena. We are thrilled that approximately half of the funds needed to build Phase 1 have been donated. This will allow

* Expanded our ministry team of horses welcoming a younger generation to ease the load for our sweet aging horses

* Welcomed 6 Boarding Horses and their "People" who are a tremendous help with feeding and farm chores

* Extremely thankful for our Faithful Journeymen and 24 fabulous horses who teach, serve, and represent the overflowing grace of God

Stand firm in the faith.

with the horses. I have seen them arrive after having a hard day at school or at home and leave with a smile on their face. I have seen them beam with pride when they have learned the skills needed and they ride for the first time. The best times for me is watching the cogs turn in their young minds when they make an association between what they have learned with their horse and how it relates to relationships at home or at school or with God. These are the times when I feel God must be smiling.

us to complete the grading, and build an uncovered riding area with safe footing. It is our hope that the remaining funds necessary will come in quickly, allowing us to put a roof on it very soon. We are so very thankful to all who have felt God's leading to support the ministry not only financially, but by volunteering and in prayer. It is incredible to witness the power of our God working through his people.

Rejoice always!

Be Courageous. Be Strong.

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