

GOD is Compassionate

By Holly Janik



Six years ago, we got a call about a man who was essentially hoarding horses, by not giving them enough food, water, medical care, or shelter. We rescued two three-year-old fillies from his property and **brought them home** with us in hopes that we would be able to train them and use them in the program. They had never been touched by humans before. We gave them new names to represent their new **freedom**: Jubilee and Liberty.

When we started training them, **Jubilee and Liberty were terrified of us**, and there were many new things we needed to introduce to them. They had to learn how to stand still when a person walked up to them, how to follow a person when they were being lead, how to tolerate a halter, saddle, bridle.... Imagine if you were suddenly enrolled in high school as a teenager with no prior schooling. It would be a lot to process!

Understandably, Jubilee and Liberty **made a lot of mistakes** when we started training them. Though they had sweet dispositions and tried so hard, they could not do everything correctly the first time we asked them. **Learning and growing was taking place**, but they didn't always get it right. For instance, one time Liberty kicked Jason when he was just walking up to her. Whoops.

I have spent some time pondering this. When I am the trainer, how should I react to a horse who does not know the right things to do? I could get frustrated and call them "disobedient," or I could take the perspective that they are **trying to figure out how to obey**. Changing my approach has made a significant impact on my ability to earn the trust of these two mares and teach them **many new skills**. Subsequently, over the years, Jubilee and Liberty have progressed in their training enough to be ridden by some of the kids in the Haven Acres mentorship program!

As with many things I've learned at the ranch, this can have a spiritual implication as well. Let's picture **God as the trainer** and us as the horse. Sometimes as we try to obey God, we make mistakes. Other times, we are overtly disobedient to Him. How does God respond to us when we make mistakes, or when we are overtly disobedient? Does He stand over us, ready to swat us with a whip for every wrong thing we do? No! In order to learn, **you have to make mistakes**. Similarly, there is *no way* that Liberty or Jubilee could have just figured everything out right away the first time.

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“The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.” – Exodus 34:6

It is the same in our **walk with Jesus**. If you are a Christian, you are on a journey to know and love God, and you will not do it perfectly. 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say, ‘We have no sin,’ we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (CSB). **Every Christian will sin**, even after being saved by Jesus.

So then how does God view us when we sin? In Exodus 34, God describes Himself to Moses. How did the God of the universe describe Himself? “The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth**, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin.” -Exodus 34:6-7 (CSB)

This amazing refrain is echoed repeatedly in the Bible—*compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love*. In the Psalms it shows up six times. Additionally, this **description of God** is found in the books of Numbers, Nehemiah, Joel, and Jonah.

It is possible that you may have thought of God as a rough cowboy-type horse trainer, the kind of trainer who demands obedience through anger, intimidation, and force. But is that how He describes Himself to us? No. I think if God was a horse trainer, He would be **compassionate and gracious** with His horses while they were learning. He would be slow to anger when they made mistakes. He would be abounding in faithful love even when they deliberately disobeyed. He still *has* instructions, and there *are* still consequences for disobedience, however I believe that God would give instructions in love and when necessary, **correct disobedience** and errors with patience and compassion.

If you have never seen God as He truly is, come before Him as He says He is for the first time. **Sit at His feet, soak in His words, open your heart to Him**. Behold your King, He is *full* of compassion and grace.

“Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.” Isaiah 30:18 (CSB)



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