

The Red Quarters

It was shortly after my vision began coming to fruition when my wife and I made the decision to place a small basket in the Fellowship Hall at church. It contained enough room for some Shiloh Ranch business cards, general information regarding the mission ranch and some dedication cards. We thought this would be a great way to stay a constant reminder to the congregation that we are an ongoing mission entity with needs. Of course we put prayer at the top of that list. We couldn't carry out God's work without it. From the way things were looking and going, there was an awful lot of praying going on, but as we all know, one can never get enough prayer.

A few weeks passed when I noticed that someone had placed some change in the basket. Not just any change. Someone had taken the time to paint some quarters. They were all a uniform color of red. I didn't bother counting them at that point. After all, what could I do with a few "red" quarters? So, I left them there and as the weeks continued to go by, I noticed that there were more of them – quite a few more of them – and they were all painted red. I felt that there had to be some significance here, but I never took the time to figure it out. I never thought to come before the Lord with such a small concern. It never occurred to me to even ask "Lord, someone keeps putting quarters in our basket. Not just any quarters, they're red. What does it mean?"

This went on for roughly three months. I would gingerly peek in the basket hoping to find a note of some kind with some guidance as to what I was supposed to do with the quarters. Surely someone was trying to be coy by painting them before dropping them in. By now there was a noticeable weighty pile of them and I kept telling myself that I would just pick up the basket on my way out the door and carry them home without anyone noticing, but, the task kept slipping my mind.

One day I was on my way into church and just inside the door I was greeted by two bright eyed, and obviously very excited, little girls. I recognized them right away. It was Liza and Randi, and what they had to say brought the months long mystery to a much anticipated close.

"Mr. Graves, Mr. Graves" they called out in unison. "We put some more quarters in your basket! We were hoping there would be enough to buy the horses some treats! All horses need treats!"

I was dumbfounded – it was as if God himself hit me with a sledgehammer. It wasn't some kind of trick – it was the work of His children. Why hadn't I taken a little time to figure that out?

My eyes grew misty as they continued to tell me that the special "red" quarters had been a birthday gift from their grandparents. They couldn't think of anything better that they wanted to do but to make the horses just a little bit happier! And, they were right – all horses need treats!

Finding it especially easy to get caught up in their excitement, I swallowed the lump in my throat, kindly thanked the girls and told them I would be sure to gather up those quarters and make it priority to get those treats. They were even more excited and pleased to hear this and ran back to let Mom and Dad know that the horses would soon have their much needed treats!

What an awesome God we know. Thank you, Lord, for putting a smile in my heart – one that will forever remain there! And forgive me, Father for not seeing how really big the small blessings are.

And, you know, I think Chance, Apache, Brown, Alice and Red knew those treats were special. The treats were small, but they were always excited to receive one!

How many times do we miss the small blessings as we're working on something big to happen? My challenge to everyone is to slow down a little, be watching and waiting for all God's blessings. Wait with anticipation and excitement and see how great all God's blessings are!

1 Samuel 12:16

“Now then, stand still and see the great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes!”

Shiloh Ranch Ministries relies upon public support to help us build God's Kingdom through community outreach such as the equine ministry. In just a little over a year, the outreach has become more than a "horse ministry." We have begun working with families who have come seeking emotional and spiritual support as a result of the children first coming to care for and ride the horses. It never ceases to amaze me the way God works with and through us. It has been suggested that I begin journaling His many blessings here at the ranch – something that I could well do on a daily basis. Folks, I'm here to tell you that God has amazingly huge plans for Shiloh Ranch, and it isn't just going to happen here on the grounds.

He has just recently shown us what a goldmine Board of Directors He hand picked for service that He hasn't even turned loose yet! The Lord is taking us out into our local communities to minister to hurting families. This year is going to be a phenomenal year and if you have any experience working with children or have a background in family ministry, I urge you to contact us for volunteer opportunities. But, even ahead of volunteer opportunities, please include us in your daily prayers. Please pray for God to keep his protective hedge around all those involved in this ministry. We have all experienced the cunning ways of the enemy. Pray that we will all stay focused on the task at hand – reaching out to youth who are in need of something much more fulfilling than what the worldly values has to offer. Please pray for continued monetary support. We know times are not the best right now economically but I thank God everyday, over and over, that you have been faithful in giving to this worthwhile cause! I encourage you to join me in praising His faithfulness. Praise the Lord that we are rapidly growing out of our meeting area on the west side of the tack room, and that He is going to provide us with the additional space that we need here. We don't know how He's going to do it, but His will be done. Praise God that we reached another milestone on December 31. I personally dropped the paperwork in the mail asking our Government to recognize us as a 501(c)3 organization. When our request is granted, there will be an additional praise for our contributors. Contributions given to the Ranch will become tax deductible and will be retroactive to 2008! Pray that God will guide that paperwork through the system post haste and that we will receive our favorable notice in the shortest time possible.

In closing, I thank God for all of you who have recognized that our family couldn't do what we are doing if it weren't for your kindly personal prayers and support. We have personally received gifts of food, emotional and even monetary support. There is no greater love than reaching out to a neighbor, and I, and my family, want you to know that we love you and appreciate your generosity more than you know. God Bless you and all those faithfully helping to make this journey so awesome!

Dear Friend,

I'm asking you to please take a moment and check off as many blocks below as you feel lead. If you able to commit in any way, we will stay faithful with letting you know how things are going at the Ranch. It costs less to keep you up to date through email, so if you can forego the pictures I try to include periodically, please include your email address. I have included a comment area for your use in communicating to us. Please use the area to make any notations you feel will help us to place you or other members of your family, or just to say "Howdy."

Yes, I want to be part of the SHILOH RANCH MINISTRIES Journey!!

_____I commit to praying on a regular basis for Shiloh Ranch!

_____I want to discuss my volunteer opportunities - please contact me through email at _____, or call me at _____.

_____I would like to gift \$_____ on a monthly basis.

_____I would like to gift \$_____ at this time, please keep the newsletters and updates coming!

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Comments: _____

Please return to:

Shiloh Ranch Ministries
2868 N. Solomon Road
Solomon, Kansas 67480

Thank you and God bless you and your family!