



A Soft Place to Land

by **Theresa Hennis** and **Molly Rosati**

*This article ran in the March 2017 issue of **The LCF Connection**.*

God uses whatever it takes to draw us nearer to himself, and for Molly Rosati, he used a horse.

Molly had horses from the age of seven to 17. Before she learned about training horses using natural horsemanship techniques, she used the more traditional horsemanship techniques that she was taught.

She says, “I used pain, fear, and intimidation to bully my horse to do what I wanted. A harsher bit in the mouth, a lash of a whip, a punishing attitude—all ways to show the horse who was in control.”

Like a horse comes to understand its leader, so comes our understanding of God from the “leaders” in our lives. Whether from a parent or other authority figure, patterns of trust or distrust are instilled in us from an early age.

“Horses are wired to feel safe in their herd,” Molly says. “The herd has a leader, established by many factors, and leadership fitness is checked on daily. Does my horse think I’m fit to be the leader that day?”

If correct behaviors are established by the leader, the horse will be calm, trust the leader’s requests, follow, and want to be with and do things with the leader.

An unfortunate experience in 2000 with a horse chosen for her family left Molly fearful and unsure of her ability to lead.

“I got Ginger, thinking she’d be a good family horse, but she didn’t see me as a leader,” Molly recalls. “When I used the chain under Ginger’s chin to show her what was what, she reared up, her hooves flying.”

A friend, Tami, shared the method of Parelli Natural Horsemanship with Molly. She worked with Ginger for 20 minutes, and Molly saw an altogether different horse.

Parelli Natural Horsemanship is a frame of reference, a way of thinking about horses, and a training approach using the instincts and neurological wiring of the horse to establish communication and cooperation between man and horse.

Molly went on to buy Whinny, a beautiful bay roan quarter horse, and she took her to a Parelli Natural Horsemanship Clinic. Her initial goal was to learn more about how to work with her horse, and she volunteered to go into the round pen (a 60-foot fenced ring where the horse is free to move with no

halter or rope) with Whinny and follow instructor Jesse Peters’ directions while participants observed. However, the instructor laid aside his initial goal to work on a skill when he observed Whinny was unable to look at Molly, or him, with both eyes.

“Whinny ran along the fence with one eye on him and the other eye looking over the fence, out the door and window, planning and holding on to a way of escape,” Molly says. “She could not give him both eyes (and thus, the rest of herself) and trust him or be with him in total submission and feel at peace with him.”

Jesse worked with Whinny, making it easy for her to come to him, but harder if she only gave him one eye. She had to move faster and run **HARD** if she looked away. “Make the right thing easy” is a training motto.

“Whinny was panting, dripping sweat, and we would think, this is it, she will rest with Jesse now,” Molly says, “but at the last second she would lose her nerve and run out to the rail. Finally, she walked that slow walk to his chest, both of them looking into each others’ eyes. We all were crying.”

Sometimes, we walk a slow walk towards God, unsure if we will find rest. We search for a way out from what we see as the hard work of being in relationship with him.

Like the training motto “Make the right thing easy,” God’s word promises good for us.

Matthew 11:29-30 The Message (MSG): “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

There were more breakthroughs to come for Whinny. She was searching for patterns. “You don’t get through hardship just once,” Molly says. “You keep asking for the connection and trust again and again.”

Whinny thought relief was connected to performing a certain action, but she had to learn that rest and relief were found when Jesse became her full focus.

Jesse put Molly in the ring and told her she had to become a soft place to land. “When he said that, it broke me,” she says. “I realized I hadn’t been safe for Whinny. I had an agenda, always needing her to perform a certain way to meet my expectations.”

Tears come to her eyes as she remembers that moment. “It hit me; I keep one eye on an escape plan. I don’t fully trust God to take care of me.”

With that realization, as she watches Whinny approach her with trust, Molly is inspired to take another step closer to God.

He is her soft place to land.