

A Tale of Two Sisters

Have you ever asked God for something, but He was so long in answering that you decided to help Him out and take matters into your own hands? Did you think maybe He couldn't or wouldn't answer you? And when you did get what you wanted, your way, it didn't seem to work out as you had anticipated? In fact, did you really make a mess of things? But what did you do then? Did you repent, give it to God to straighten out, and wait patiently for Him to do it? Or did you again take matters into your own hands and eventually become bitter at God, your brothers and sisters in Christ, and even at the very thing you wanted?

Once upon a time in the West some time ago, when men still depended on horses, lived a rancher and his two daughters. He loved his two girls dearly as they were the only family left to him after the death of his wife several years earlier. The girls were both in their late childhood years, but not yet young ladies, although the time was not far off. The older was a brunette with dark brown eyes and a lively, vivacious temperament. The younger was a blond with blue eyes and a more subdued nature. But as different as they were in looks and temperament they had one big thing in common. They both loved horses. They each had wanted a horse of their own for as long as they could remember and repeatedly begged their father to give them one. Of course, they could ride the ranch horses and had learned to ride almost when they learned to walk, but that wasn't the same as having their own horses to love, take care of, and ride.

Their father had told them he would give them each a horse when they were old enough, but they constantly asked him anyway, "Daddy, we're old enough now aren't we?"

Eventually the time came when they were old enough and their father, secretly, for he wanted it to be a surprise, picked out two nice, gentle, young horses for them. However, they were still in training so he was waiting for this to be complete before he told his girls and gave them the horses.

Then one day the girls began talking again about their desire for a horse of their own. One of them spoke up, "Daddy hasn't done anything about getting horses for us."

The other replied, "I wonder if he ever will get us horses. He's so busy with the ranch and all."

Then the first one, "By the time daddy gets around to getting us horses, we'll be grown, married with children, and won't even have time to ride them."

The other agreed. "Yea, what are we going to do?"

They sadly shook their heads. Then one of them brightened up and said, "I know! We've been saving money for some time. I bet we have enough saved to buy them ourselves."

"Good idea," said the other. "Tomorrow is the horse auction. Let's go and see what we can find. Forget about daddy doing anything."

And so without checking with their father, the two girls went to the horse auction the next day. The yard was filled with horses and men. The girls felt a little out of place, but summoning their

courage, they went to look at the horses in the pens. They were almost immediately attracted to a small corral on one side that had only two horses in it. But such horses! One was a beautiful deep chestnut with a lighter mane and tail that looked like fire and a white star in the middle of his forehead. The other was a beautiful silver-white gray with silver mane and tail. Both were the same size and just the right size for the girls. They were obviously well bred with a refined head, well muscled body, and slender, but sturdy legs and hooves.

The girls were admiring the horses when a man who had been standing under a tree came over. "You like these horse?" he asked. "They'd be perfect for you girls. I was going to sell them in the auction, but I'm really in a hurry to leave because of other commitments. So I'd be willing to let them go before the sale. That way, I don't have to pay the commission and I'd be able to sell them to you at a lower price."

"How much?" the girls asked.

"Well, they're worth \$100 each. For you, well I was going to ask \$75." But I can see you really want them, how much money do you have?"

The girls had been getting excited, but as they counted their money their faces fell. "We've only got \$100 altogether," they said dejectedly.

"Well now," replied the man. "I wouldn't do this for just anyone, but you two seem like really nice girls and I'd hate to see you sad at missing out on these two fine animals. How about the two for \$100?"

The girls brightened again, but then remembered, "We still have to buy saddles and bridles."

"Let's see, perhaps I could throw in a couple of saddles and bridles, used ones of course. Would that help?"

"Oh yes," replied the girls. "But we must ride them first to make sure they are gentle and well behaved."

"Oh sure." The man replied. "Gentle as kittens. Wouldn't hurt a flea. Here, let me get them saddled." He proceeded to get them ready. All the time the horses stood very still hardly even moving their ears to flick the flies away.

The girls mounted up and rode in a circle. The horses behaved perfectly and did all they asked.

"We'll take them!" they exclaimed. "What are their names?"

"The chestnut is 'Starfire'. The gray is 'Moonbeam'. The man replied.

The girls could hardly contain their excitement as they paid the man and proudly rode home on their new horses, exactly what they had wanted. They were so glad they had not waited for their daddy and were so happy at their good fortune in getting these animals at a price they could afford.

Up the lane they trotted. Their father was sitting on the porch as they came up. "Look daddy," they exclaimed. "Look at these wonderful horses we got. Aren't they beautiful?"

Their father had to admit they were beautiful. His daughters really had eyes for a good horse, but there was something about the horses that bothered him. He couldn't put his finger on it exactly, but they just didn't seem to be acting normally. They almost looked a little droopy. But it was a hot day and they had just come from town, so maybe they were just tired. He was glad to see his daughters happy.

"And where did you get these fine animals?" he asked.

"At the auction. We met a nice man who gave us a very special deal on both of them. Both for only \$100." they explained.

Their father smiled and nodded, but inside he was feeling concerned. Something wasn't right, but to the girls he said, "Well, girls take good care of them and have fun."

After supper that night and the girls had gone to bed, their father went down to the bunkhouse and called out his foreman. "I want you to check into the background of those two horses the girls bought today. Find out where they came from and what's happened to them before now. I sense something wrong, but not sure what it is."

"Sure, boss." was his reply.

The next day the girls were with their horses all day, brushing them, riding them, or just talking enthusiastically about them, making plans for all the fun things they were going to do with them.

That evening, again after supper and the girls had gone to bed, the foreman came up to the ranch house and said, "Boss, found out 'bout them two horses. They're half brothers out of the same stallion. Bred by a man over in Centerville. He lost them in a poker game when they were yearlings.

Seems the man who won them and planned to break and sell them was more of a gambler than a horseman. He planned to break them himself and show off what a great horseman he was, but drinking went along with the gambling and he often neglected to feed and properly care for them and even worse, he would often come home drunk and if he had lost at cards, he would take out his anger and frustration on the horses by beating and abusing them. They being well-bred were smart and spirited. One night when he came home drunk and forgot to lock the gate behind him, he came up to the horses and they ran past him and seeing the gate opened slightly pushed through it and made for the hills. They'd been living up there for a couple of years as wild horses. But the range is poor and people said they'd seen them in the winter about half starved. Finally a couple of cowhands managed to catch them in this weakened state. They planned to break and sell them, but the horses were full grown by now and were used to the wild. When the men tried to work with them and brought out a whip they went crazy. They finally did manage to get them saddled and rode a few times, but they couldn't be trusted and would buck when they felt like it or take a nip or kick at you if your back was turned. So they finally gave up on them and sold them to the horse dealer who apparently drugged them and sold them to your girls."

"So that's it. Yes now it makes sense. Well I could take the horses away from them. But they wouldn't understand and would get mad at me instead. The drugs should be wearing off soon. I'll wait for them to come to me for help.

In the morning, the girls had trouble saddling their horses. They wouldn't stand still and kept fidgeting. One even nipped one of the girls as she was tightening the cinch. "What is it with these horses today?" she asked her sister.

"I don't know. They sure are acting strangely."

As they mounted the horses ears were back and they didn't want to walk. After a lot of kicking their sides, the horses started off, but at a trot. They wouldn't slow down or turn. Eventually the girls did manage a ride and did get them back to the barn.

"Maybe they'll be better tomorrow," one of them said.

"I certainly hope so." replied the other.

But the next day was worse. When they asked the horses to canter, they took off running and they could barely get them stopped. It frightened the girls a little, but they tried not to let the horse know it.

The next day was even worse. It took both girls together to get one horse saddled. When they mounted, both horses bucked a little, but not enough to unseat them.

However, the next day they both did get bucked off. They managed to catch the horses, get back on them and ride home.

That night their father asked them, "How are you gals getting along with your new horses?"

"Oh, just fine, Daddy." they replied. They didn't want to admit they were having problems. "They're getting friskier- just the way we like them."

"OK, but just let me know if you have any problems and need my help."

"We sure will, Daddy." they said.

The following morning it was even worse and each girl was dumped twice. "Sis, this is getting to be not much fun. Maybe we did make a mistake buying these horses. Maybe we should tell Daddy about our problems with them." said the youngest.

"Oh no. They'll get better. We just have to ride them more," said the oldest.

But the next morning as they started out, it was run, buck, run, buck - completely out of control.

When they got out in the far pasture, they really let loose, bucking and rearing. One horse fell backwards and narrowly missed falling on his rider. The other one bucked his rider onto a pile of rocks. Then they stood still, heads in the air, nostrils flaring open, heads turned to the wind, smelling-freedom. Off they ran back to the hills where they had lived free.

The sisters were badly bruised, but had no broken bones. They managed, by helping each other to get back home. They were late for supper. Their dad was waiting for them on the porch. "Girls, why are you so late? What happened? Where are your horses?" he asked as they came limping up to the

porch.

“We've had it with horses! They're nothing but trouble.” said one.

“We hope we never see them again. I ache all over. They dumped us and then headed off to the hills. And I say good riddance said the other.”

“Well, come in.” said their dad. “Have something to eat and soak in the hot tub. Maybe tomorrow you'll feel differently and we can talk about it.”

The girls ate, bathed and quickly went to bed. They were exhausted.

That evening the father again called his foreman up to the house. “First thing in the morning, get a couple of hands and ride up into the hills and find those two horses. They still have their saddles and bridles on, so there's a good chance they're hung up on something and won't be too hard to catch. But when you find them, don't bring them back here. Take them down to the old corral by the south fifty.

“Sure enough, Boss.” he replied.

The next morning the girls moped around, sore and hurting. Their dad said nothing, but eventually the younger came up to him and said, “Daddy, I really liked Starfire, when he was good, that is. Do you think maybe you could find him, bring him home, and make him be good?”

“My child,” her father said. I've been waiting for you to ask. You see, I've found out about his past and I know why he was mean and ran away. You used a whip to try to make him mind didn't you?” The girl slowly nodded.

“Starfire was mistreated, whipped, and beaten when he was young. He has never been treated gently and loved, so he does not trust. He was never taught patiently, so he does not know what it means to obey. I've already sent someone out to catch him and when we do, we will not break him, but teach him with love, gentleness and kindness to trust his rider and not to fear the whip when used only to guide. But you must let me have him and do whatever I need to do to teach him these things. You are not to ride him or even see him until I tell you to. I will bring you to him when he is ready. It may take sometime because he has been badly mistreated. Winning with love takes longer, but in the long run is better.

“OK, Daddy. I promise I will wait.” she said with a smile.

Later that afternoon, she told her sister what her dad said to her. “Daddy said he would get Starfire back for me and make him be good.”

Her older sister laughed, “You are being a fool. No one can change that horse. He's made up his mind that he wants to be free. Dad said it would take a long time didn't he?”

“Well, yes.” her sister responded slowly.

“See, it's no different than it was before. Wait, wait, wait! He'll have you waiting until you're too old to ride. You'll never get Starfire back. You're just wasting your life. But not me! I'm going to sell Moonbeam as soon as Daddy catches him and buy another horse. He'll be a better one. Just you wait

and see.

The next morning the horses were found and brought back to the old corral as the father had planned. The younger sister was excited and wanted to see Starfire, but her father said, "No, you must wait."

The older sister begged her father to sell Moonbeam and give her the money so she could buy another horse. Her father was not well pleased with her decision, but it was her horse bought with her own money. So Moonbeam was sold to a horse trader who sold him to someone who was bucked off, and then sold again. Eventually he ended up in a rodeo string of bucking horses. He was billed as a vicious outlaw "Killer horse" and made a lot of money for the rodeo owner.

Meanwhile, the older sister had gone back to the auction and bought a new horse, coal black this time, pretty, but not as beautiful as Moonbeam. She paraded him up and down the lane in front of her sister who was sitting on the porch. "See how foolish you were to wait. You don't even have a horse. See all the fun I'm having."

"I do too have a horse!" the younger sister replied.

"Then where is he? I don't see him." her sister replied mockingly.

The younger sister felt very badly and started to cry running into the house. "Daddy, Daddy, you do have Starfire don't you? Her father nodded. "But when will he be ready for me to see him? I miss having him so much. Sis is out there on her new horse having so much fun. I have to just sit and wait. It's not fair. Why is it taking so long? Can't I at least just see him?"

"No, not yet, my child. But he is coming along and you must believe me and take my word for now."

The days went on and it was very hard for the younger sister to watch her older sister enjoying her horse while she had none. But one day the new horse began acting up and it wasn't long before he was just as bad and maybe worse than Moonbeam ever was.

About the same time, the father came to his younger daughter with the announcement. "It's time for you to see Starfire. I will explain what I have done with him and what you must do to complete his training."

And so the next day when the older sister took her horse to the auction to trade for a rather course looking bay, her younger sister went with her dad out to the old corral down by the south fifty. There was Starfire. He looked so good. She wanted to run up and hug him, but her father held her back. "You mustn't yet. He's still afraid of you. You must win his trust and confidence with love and patience. I didn't want you to come down here at first because some of the things I had to do to him might have seemed cruel to you and you wouldn't have let me do them. Also, he had bad memories of man and I needed time to build good memories of man. At first we tried the usual things we do with young untrained horses, but Starfire would not respond. He kept running away and would not let me get close to him. Finally we had to rope and throw him. Tying him up so he could not get up and so he would not hurt himself in the attempt. While he was down I petted him and talked kindly to him. As he started to relax I gradually let him up, but if he acted up, I had to throw him again. Finally he would let me come up to him and pet him. I fed him from my hand so if he was hungry he had to come to me to eat. And gradually, he learned to trust me. "See how he comes to me now. Come, Starfire." At the

mention of his name his ears came forward and his head came up. He trotted over to the father gently nuzzling him as if asking for a treat. "He trusts me now, but he is not sure of other people. It is a fragile trust and should I do something to hurt him, he he would run from me and if cornered probably try to bite or kick. Now I want you to spend a lot of time down here. Talk to him, brush him, pet him, feed him. Take him on walks with the lead rope and halter, but don't try to ride him. Most of all just be here with him. I've taken all the other horses away, so he will be lonely. He will look to you for love and companionship, so give it to him and he will bond with you."

So the days continued. The younger sister spending her days with Starfire, still not able to ride him. While her sister was riding her new bay and telling her how she was wasting her life away on that stupid Starfire, who was no good and would never amount to anything.

Finally, the day came. The father said, "You may ride Starfire today. I will work closely and carefully with you for several weeks until I am sure he is well behaved and will carry you, not out of fear and intimidation, but willingly out of love."

Meanwhile the older sister was having trouble again with her bay horse. "Why did I ever like horses?" She said to herself. "They are nothing but trouble and a real pain. Never again. If I want to ride, I'll ride one of the ranch horses. But I'll not have another horse of my own. So she took her horse to the auction and sold it. Every time she had sold her horse back she had gotten back less than what she paid so now she had gotten back very little compared to what she had at the beginning.

She had just gotten back from the auction and was sitting on the front porch, when up the lane came her sister on Starfire. The older sister was amazed. "That can't be Starfire. He's so well-behaved."

"Yes, This is he" her sister replied. "It took awhile, but it's been worth it."

Her sister replied sadly and wistfully, "I should have kept Moonbeam.. He was my first horse and I loved him the best. But now it's too late. His owner I hear is making way to much money from him to ever consider selling him now."

"I'm really sorry, Sis, but Starfire and I have to go now." And with a touch of her heels to his sides, Starfire took off galloping down the lane, the sounds of hoof beats and laughter in the air, golden hair and flaming red mane and tail flying in the wind.

Scripture for discussion:

Genesis 16 & 20 Abraham and Ishmael
James 1:17 every good gift from God
Philippians 4:19 supply all our needs
Romans 8:32 freely give us all things
Romans 5: 3-5 Perseverance, hope, character
Romans 8:28 work together for good
Genesis 50:20 Turned a bad situation to good
Hebrews 6:11-15 Abraham waited and obtained the promise
Hebrews 10:35-39 Need of endurance