

Time to saddle up for camp

Dan Nelson - pastor

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Watching a dream come to reality is a wonderful thing. Seeing the fruit on the faces of 25 children makes every effort in planning purposeful. And when you mix some of kids' favorite things to do with eternal lessons of truth, you have the makings of something great. Today our community is a bit better off because of what has been happening this week.

Here is a riddle for you. What do you get when you mix summer camp and saddles, hiking and horseshoes, Bible lessons and bridle training, prayer and paddocks? You get one of the coolest things to come into our valley for a long time: Christian Horse Camp.

When we first started talking and praying about the idea, we didn't know what God would do. One of the members of our church, Melissa, runs a trail riding service called Western Trail Rides. One day she began sharing a prayer request about the idea of hosting a Christian Horse Camp. That prayer was answered quickly as our Lord brought Dory and Ken into our lives. Residents of New York just passing through town on vacation, only God knew that they would eventually make this their second home. Although they have to fly to get here, they spend more Sunday mornings in worship service here than some of our more "local" members. And each trip becomes a mission, whether it involves construction on the chapel project or, most recently, Christian Horse Camp. It just so happens that they already run the very kind of camp on the East Coast that we had been praying about for our valley. A match had been made and it was the birthing of something great.

This past week, children from different parts of our county came together to experience the first Christian Horse Camp and they have been absolutely loving it. It is one of the sights that one should see who need hope for the future or who have never really understood how serving Christ could change every one of our social and societal ills. I don't say this because of the recipients only, and the horses themselves really become secondary to the experience. My real trumpet is to recognize the teenagers who have volunteered to assist and lead. Under training for six months prior, about a half dozen of our youth joined forces with four experienced teens from New York to provide some of the best leadership you would ever hope to see.

Not only is it exciting to see teenagers do big things, consequential things

that make a difference, it is also inspiring to talk to them about why they do what they do. In a world where selfish pursuits and moral confusion abounds, where violence trumps compassion so rampantly, and people are genuinely wondering of the benefits and consequences to various ideologies and world views, I am excited to see the rhetoric stopped and watch Christ live. I was told yesterday about a slogan that used to head concert promotion posters a long time ago. The message made me smile and I think of it now. It read: "Let Jesus open your eyes and shut your mouth!" To me, this is what Christian Horse Camp is all about and I am excited that it has actually come to be.

May our community be richly blessed through this and every other effort that similarly brings hope by shining the light of Jesus.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.

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