

~ Confidence/Faith ~

Major underlying factors:

- 1) Confidence
- 2) Energy

Confidence

Increase in Confidence = Decrease in Self-Preservation (vice versa)

Comfort and Companionship Increase = Confidence Increase (vice versa)

Measures of Confidence level

- 1) Head height (best measure of confidence level)
 - a. High = Bothered/Unconfident
 - b. Low = Relaxed/Confident

Energy

Energy level decreases = Self-Preservation decreases = Increase in Comfort and Companionship = Increase in Confidence (when presented in the correct manner)

The more I work with horses, the more evident the importance of the horse's confidence level becomes to me. I have started lots of horses and have even taken horses through the bridle that did not have a high level of confidence in me. I am not saying that they didn't have any confidence in me. However, there were many times during a ride, or on the ground that these horses' head level would be elevated and bothered. Also, when I would walk out into the pasture to catch the horse, if I could not get the horse cornered where they knew they had no hope of escaping, they would try to run by me. These horses were broke by most people's definition. I could use these horses to brand calves, work cows, and do a reining pattern. However, if someone else was to ride the horse I would have to warn him or her that the horse was a little spooky or touchy, and if you put them in a tight spot, some of them might buck.

These horses were broke, as far as handling goes. However, they did not have a high confidence level. **A horse that is confident in us will not have a high level of self-preservation and will experience comfort and companionship with us.** I have started many horses overlooking this simple concept. I can be on a colt in a few rides and accomplishing a job. If they get tight or bothered I can ride them through it and go on with the job. However, if we overlook the confidence level in order to accomplish a job, often we run the risk of shattering their confidence. The better the cowboy (riding a horse with a shattered confidence, running, bucking) the more they can ride a horse with a low confidence level.

However, we can only shatter that confidence so many times until the horse learns that we are untrustworthy. The cowboy may be able to get along with the horse fine, but if they turn the horse over to someone else, the horse will easily fall apart. The more times we shatter the confidence, the easier it is to shatter it the next time. Just like a young kid losing confidence by getting bucked off, it will take a while to rebuild the kid's confidence back and his confidence can only be shattered so many times. If shattered enough, eventually the kid will want nothing to do with horses. The same is true with a horse.

We can learn a lot from a little kid's horse that enjoys being with the kid. Some of the most amazing things that I have seen performed out of free will by a horse, have been by kids' horses. I have seen kids' horses take care of kids in ways that are truly amazing. They would do things that would be totally uncharacteristic of a horse to ensure the kid's safety. The same horse, when ridden by a big fat man who went to jerking and pulling them around, would buck the rider off. However, the horse would never dream of bucking with the little kid. They would never dream of doing anything to displease the little kid.

What changes these horses? The horse experiences comfort and companionship with the kid, but the man brings out the horse's self-preservation through unwilling submission. Surprisingly enough, we can do quite a bit with a horse using their self-preservation, driving them to do a job. However, it is amazing what a horse will do for you when they enjoy being with you. We can train a horse to do a reining pattern, work a cow, or team rope. However, it is so fun to ride a horse that is not only trained to do a job, but thoroughly enjoys doing the job with us.

Learning the Importance of Confidence

One summer when I was around a freshman in high school, Dad had a pile of outside horses. We would ride colts what seemed like all day, everyday, all summer. One day my dad was gone and it was just me riding the colts. I would get so bored riding the colts that I thought I would spice it up a little bit. At the end of the day I had ridden 12 colts and proudly walked up to my mom and said, "Well, I got every one of them to buck with me." There were a few of them that were a little lazy, so I thought I had really accomplished something. I would catch them, saddle them, and cinch them up as tight as I could. Then I'd jump on them and drive my spurs in the belly and go for a little bronc ride. It did spice the day up a little bit. However, my mom told Dad, and Dad pretty well put a stop to that. He told me if I wanted to try to get them to buck, then he would find some fence for me to build. After that I didn't *try* to get them to buck with me anymore.

This was pretty well my mentality growing up starting colts. I was not too concerned with riding in perfection, but more or less just getting the job done. I got them riding quiet, soft in the mouth, and able to do a job. However, when I left home and had to start colts by myself, where my dad was not around to help me, I noticed that I started getting into a lot more wrecks with my horses. When we would start large bunches of horses at home, Dad would work them on horseback then hold on to them while we got on, then lead us around and turn us loose. We usually did not get into many horrible wrecks that couldn't be salvaged. Dad was always there to head them off. Starting colts growing up was pretty easy. However, when I left home the colts got a little tougher.

I thought either I had been running into a lot tougher horses than Dad ever had, or he was doing something a little different than I was. Well, what I came to realize is that besides doing a much better job of setting a foundation early (giving the nose/eye and breaking the hindquarters), Dad was able to read the horse's confidence level and communicate with the horse much better than I was.

Growing up I would often be working with a horse and be having so much trouble trying to

follow the “correct way” of working with horses. I would be trying to “make the wrong thing difficult and the right thing easy,” looking “for the smallest change and the slightest try” (Ray Hunt). I would be trying so hard to help it make sense to the horse, and the more I worked with the horse, the more bothered they would get. I was always amazed how I could try so hard, for so long and the more I tried the more bothered the horse would get, losing confidence. Then my dad could get on them, and in a few minutes the horse’s head would drop, and they would start doing what I was trying to get them to do and do it riding calmly and relaxed with confidence.

What was it that my dad, my grandpa, and all great horsemen possess that enabled them to control the horse’s confidence level? They follow the basic principles of this book: willing submission, good communication, a solid foundation of maneuvers, and a balanced life to direction ratio. Willing submission – They do not force the horse into unwilling submission, running the risk of the horse rebelling. They wait for it to be the horse’s idea instead of their idea. Good communication – They can communicate with the horse, not only telling the horse what to do, but also feeling where the horse is lost and knowing how to help them understand. Solid foundation of maneuvers – They greatly understand how the head and neck, shoulders and hindquarters work to accomplish a job and know how to control, and move them with feel, timing, and balance. Balanced life to direction ratio – They know the importance of bringing the life to the direction so that the horse does not become resentful to the direction and they do not ride with a high level of life, which they cannot direct in a positive manner.

When trying to work with the colts before my dad would get on them, I would be trying to not force the horse, trying to wait for willing submission. However, as stressed by the theme of this book, it is so important to have a good level of communication. I was trying to do everything right to help my horse. However, my lack of communication was causing the horse to lose confidence in me. The same thing is true with the Lord. We can try to be doing everything right, reading Scripture, and going to church. However, if we have no communication with God, it is hard for Him to direct us and easy to lose faith. If we are not communicating with God and only putting our faith in our religious teacher and religion, we run the risk of being let down.

Faith

The confidence level between our horses and ourselves can be compared with our faith between God and ourselves. In order to build on our faith, we must focus on the same principles that we would with our horse, willing submission (give God our entire life), good communication (listening to the Holy Spirit), a solid foundation of maneuvers (revelations from God), and balance the life to direction ratio (the letter kills, but the Spirit brings life). **“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 KJV).** I would definitely say that without confidence it is impossible for our horse to please us as well. If the horse had no confidence in us, his self-preservation would be in full operation, causing him to fight or run for his life.

In order for us to have faith in God we must believe that He is. If we do not believe in God, then we would obviously not have faith in Him. We would also not have faith in God, if we did

not believe that He was good and wanted the best for us. If we believed that He was bad and out to destroy us, we would be hesitant to come to Him, and we would not be diligently seeking Him to give us a reward. In order for our horses to have confidence in us, they must also believe that we are not out to destroy them, and must believe that we offer them something good. What do we have to offer our horses? We must offer them comfort, and companionship. If we offer them anything else, this will set off their self-preservation and they will try to rebel and save their life.

The second part of this scripture is something that I have really spent a lot of time observing in my horses lately, “rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” We reward our horses with relief. I will put a horse in a situation where they start to lose confidence, then back off and offer them comfort and relief. It is like my dad says, “It takes pressure for relief to be effective, and relief for pressure to be effective.” If we follow this mentality our horse will start to look for this comfort any time we place them in a situation where they start to lose confidence. However, if we put them in a situation where they are unconfident, and then keep pushing them until they lose confidence, they will find us untrustworthy and will not place any confidence in us.

It is easy to observe your horse’s confidence level, just look at his head. If his head is elevated, he is bothered, unsure, and unconfident. If his head is low, he is relaxed and confident. Our horses must have confidence in us. This confidence starts on the ground and then carries over to their back. The best way I have found to gain this confidence through comfort and companionship while starting colts, is to pet them on their forehead, the space between their eyes and their forelock. Just like us, a horse that is relaxed is easier to teach. A horse that is tight and bothered will not learn as easily. Colts with a high level of self-preservation will have a high head set when we are close to them. However, by petting them on the forehead they start to relax and lower their head. This is a very key concept that I missed with a lot of horses I started in the past. I was able to get them broke, but they did not experience a lot of comfort and companionship with me.

Horses are so funny. They can be so scared and bothered, but if we take our time and slowly get to where we can pet them between their eyes, they will melt and lower their head. I do this a lot when starting a colt that is scared and bothered. When halter breaking a colt, I will take a lot of time breaking their hindquarters and getting them to face me. Once I have decreased the self-preservation level through decreasing the energy level, then I work to pet them between the eyes.

I will then work to their sides and on other areas where they are not as confident. Their head will start to come up and they will start to get a little bothered. I will keep their nose tipped, breaking their hindquarters, and building the foundation. Then I will come back and pet them between the eyes and wait for them to melt. Pretty soon any situation I put them in where they lose confidence, they will be waiting for me to come back and offer them comfort and companionship. As they start to gain confidence in me more, they are not bothered by me moving around to other areas of their body. As the energy level decreases, self-preservation decreases and I am able to gain comfort and companionship with them while building the foundation.

I watch for the same thing when I get on the horse’s back. As his head starts to come up and he starts losing confidence, I rebuild the confidence by tipping his nose and breaking his

hindquarters. I wait for them to put slack in the rein when I put pressure on the rein, and wait for the feet to pivot around the inside front foot, stopping the forward motion. This causes them to become supple through the loin and poll, helping them to relax. It helps them to relax and helps me to gain control by directing their life. Once they are calm and relaxed, then I try to go further. Whenever they start to get scared or bothered, I bring them back and let them regain confidence. If I don't ever shatter their confidence in the first few rides, they learn that I am trustworthy and if they get in a tight spot, they know that I am there to offer them comfort and relief. Then whenever they start to lose confidence, they start looking for me to comfort them, instead of relying on their self-preservation to save them.

God wants so badly to offer the same thing to us. He does not want us scared and confused, relying on our self-preservation to save us. He wants to offer us comfort and companionship, and take away all of our fears and doubts. **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)**. However, much like our horse, it has to start on the ground, carry over to the back, and continue through jobs.

When we accept the Lord into our heart, we will feel comfort and companionship like we have never felt before. Like petting a scared colt on the forehead and having him melt in our hands, we melt in the Lord's hands when we submit our life to Him. The power of the Holy Spirit comes over our body and gives us comfort and companionship, taking away all of our self-preservation. We receive confidence in the Lord and have faith in Him, that He will lead our lives and protect and guide us.

Once a horse does this, we have a strong foundation of trust to work from, but we are a long way from having a broke horse. The same thing is true with us. We have a strong foundation of faith and know that we are going to heaven when we die, but we are a long way from true unity and perfection in Christ. We all seem to forget this. Salvation is only the beginning. However, we need to continually turn to God and let Him take away all of our self-preservation. Just like a colt, that self-preservation is going to keep rising until we have killed off all the doubts and cares that ever arise and they line up perfectly in our will. Our self-preservation (flesh) is going to keep rising until we too, kill it off and come into the fullness of Christ, **“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)**.

The colt does not start by obeying commands. The colt starts by feeling comfort and companionship, gaining confidence. We did not start by going to church and following the commandments, we started by turning to God and melting in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks to the Galatians and says, **“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, . . . This only would I learn of you, received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:1-3)**.

We must not lose faith. If we lose our horse's confidence, then self-preservation will take over and we will have a wreck. The same thing is true with us. When we lose our faith, our flesh will take over and we will fall into sin. However, it is just like our horses. When we feel a little uncertain, scared, frustrated, full of doubt, we need to turn back to God and let Him pet us

on the forehead. Let the Holy Spirit come on us and melt away all of our doubts and concerns (flesh). Return to Eden and let the Lord communicate with you. He will speak life to you and take away all death (sin), **“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63 KJV)**. Then just like our horses, once we have regained confidence in the Lord and trust that He has everything under control, then we can go further in trying to accomplish our job.

When our horse loses confidence, if we try to direct them by putting more pressure on them, they will fall apart. The same is true with us. When we lose faith it does no good to fall under the law and try to obey through unwilling submission (flesh). We need to turn to God and let the power of the Holy Spirit wipe away our self-preservation (flesh) and return to the Spirit, operating through the fullness of Christ.

Faith Through Communication

Early on, when I worked with a horse only to make the horse more confused, and they lost confidence, then my dad would get on them and the horse would regain confidence and fall perfectly in line. What enabled my dad to do this was the ability to communicate with the horse. Through opening the lines of communication, my dad was able to take away all confusion and lack of confidence in the horse, and was able to accomplish the job with the horse, perfectly in his will. Our heavenly Father is able to do the same thing. He is able to take away all fears and doubt, and communicate with us, reassuring us, and building our confidence in Him. Then we can fall perfectly into His will and return to doing our job.

I am constantly reminded of the importance of good communication to ensure our horse does not lose confidence, and this has shown true in my walk with the Lord as well. One time I went out of my way to help a person and it came around to bite me in the butt. The person ended up insulting my integrity and calling me a liar. I had put so much into helping these people and it was like they slapped me in the face. I got mad and walked off to pick some pens, so I could be on my way and not have to deal with them any more. I had gotten along great with the lady, but her boyfriend was terribly unreasonable and was being a jerk. As I started to pick the pens, my blood started to boil and I wanted to walk around and punch the guy in the face. However, I had been spending time with the Lord, so I regained my composure and turned to the Lord. As soon as I did, I heard, **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24)**.

As soon as the Lord brought this scripture to my mind, I was like a colt that had been mad, ready to fall apart and had just been petted on the head, taking away all my self-preservation. I lowered my head and melted. I was no longer filled with anger and resentment, but filled with joy and excitement. I made a total 180 from anger to love. I thought, “Oh man, the Lord is using me, how exciting!” I was not working for the man who had been unreasonable; I was working for the Lord. Just like a colt, the Lord was pushing my confidence level until I almost fell apart, and then spoke to me, regaining my confidence. I finished picking the pens and then I heard, **“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39)**. Then I heard, **“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles”**

(Matthew 5:41). I became so excited I could not wait to show this man God's love.

I took the wheelbarrow and went around to the back of the barn and loaded up a bunch of shavings to fill all the pens. I started to cart the wheelbarrow back into the pens and the man stopped me. He said, "Oh, don't worry about that, we'll just let them air out." I told him it was no problem and I sure wouldn't mind doing it. The man's whole demeanor changed and he apologized for being so grouchy. I told him it was no problem and apologized for any miscommunications we might have had. We talked for a while, I asked him about his job and how things were going, and then we left on good terms.

If I had not turned to the Lord to let Him rebuild my confidence (faith) by speaking life into me, killing off all my self-preservation, I never would have had the opportunity to show a grouchy old cowboy-drunk, God's love. How important it is that when we feel ourselves start to lose confidence in a situation, we turn to the Lord and let Him offer us comfort and companionship. Once He has taken away our self-preservation (flesh), then we can regain our confidence, and can fall back into His perfect will and accomplish the job that He has set before us.