

Leilani F., 16, Texas, USA,
and Sierra

A BLIND HORSE AND ME

By David Dickson
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They were going to crash headlong into a fence. And there was nothing Leilani could do about it.

Leilani F., a 16-year-old from Texas, USA, was sitting atop a blind horse. Sierra was an 11-year-old thoroughbred who had no intention of letting herself be guided anymore. The horse had chomped down on the bit and refused to follow any further direction.

“Sierra wasn’t listening and I started panicking,” Leilani said. It was about this time that Leilani started to reconsider her decision to try and help this horse.

A horse lover her entire life, Leilani volunteered with an organization that works with abandoned horses. The organization gave Leilani her pick of any horse in the program to work with. She chose Sierra.

“I knew nobody else would pick her because she’d gone blind,” said Leilani. “I felt sad for her, and I knew she was sweet. I wanted to give Sierra a real chance.”

Of course, it's harder to keep such good feelings intact when you're plowing straight for disaster.

"I'd been working with her and we were doing fine," Leilani explained. "But then she decided to take the bit from me and trot off in a different direction. Nothing I could do would stop her."

Sierra was so wound up that she refused to walk. She insisted on trotting, a much faster stride for a horse. As the fence drew closer and Leilani's panic grew with each step, something

that my Father in Heaven was showing me that I was Sierra. We are all, in one way or another, blind horses."

Dropping the reins also happened to save Leilani and Sierra from their impending crash with the fence. Sierra calmed down in reaction to the dropped reins and released the bit in her mouth. At that point Leilani picked up the reins again and gently steered them both clear of harm.

That day became a turning point. Leilani saw Sierra in a completely new light. From that moment on she

warnings from God, that I must be ready to respond and be willing to trust what He says."

Leilani learned each day how to draw nearer to God and listen more closely for His direction. After all, she had the perfect example right in front of her of what it means to turn your own intentions and plans over to someone who can see better.

Sierra became so good at trusting Leilani that the two of them took first place in two separate contests at a horse show. Sierra has since found a new home where she's really hit her stride. She now trusts so completely



FOLLOWING THE MASTER

"As James 3:3 states, 'Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.' We must be sensitive to our spiritual bits. Even with the slightest tug from the Master, we must be willing to completely alter our course."

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922-2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Obedience through Our Faithfulness," *Ensign*, May 2014, 101.

SOMETIMES SEEING
WITHOUT YOUR EYES
CAN OFFER THE
GREATEST VISION
OF ALL.

happened that turned the whole situation upside down.

A feeling of peace washed over Leilani, and then, "I heard this thought very clear in my mind saying, 'This is you.'"

Leilani was so shocked by the thought that she dropped the reins and literally almost fell out of the saddle.

"In that very moment, I felt in my heart the great love that my Heavenly Father has for me and the sadness He feels when I disobey him. I realized

worked slowly and carefully to build trust with Sierra. And in her own life, Leilani started listening more closely for the voice of the Lord to guide her past her own unseen dangers.

"God taught me little lessons through Sierra every time I rode her," Leilani said. "Sierra can't see hills and divots in the ground, so I have to tell her where they are. With a warning from a source she can trust, Sierra now knows that obstacles are ahead and is prepared so she doesn't trip and fall. I learned that I must listen for

that she can gallop across open fields at full speed—something she never could've done before. "She uses humans as her eyes," said Leilani. "It makes her feel free."

Leilani views keeping the commandments in the same light. "At first they might seem restrictive," Leilani said, "but they keep us free."

Her experiences with Sierra have helped Leilani in many ways. For starters, Leilani knows now that she wants to be a horse trainer in the future. But more importantly, "Because of Sierra, I'm learning more and more about how to hear and trust the voice of the Lord." **NE**