

Farmyard Faith



Kinsey M. Rockett

ISBN 978-1-63961-003-7 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-63961-004-4 (digital)

Copyright © 2021 by Kinsey M. Rockett

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods without the prior written permission of the publisher. For permission requests, solicit the publisher via the address below.

Christian Faith Publishing, Inc.
832 Park Avenue
Meadville, PA 16335
www.christianfaithpublishing.com

Scripture is taken from the New King James Version.
© 1982 by Thomas Nelson.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover artwork by Sandra Mehus.

Printed in the United States of America



Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
—Philippians 4:8

Captivating stories that emphasize biblical truths and help build godly character.

For more titles and resources, visit www.whatsoeverstories.com

*For the Lord Jesus Christ, who is my Creator,
my Redeemer, and my King,
that the circumstances, challenges, and lessons of
life would draw us ever closer to Him.*

Contents

Acknowledgments	11
What I Didn't Know	13
Prologue.....	15
Chapter 1: Nine Pounds of Adventure	19
Chapter 2: Are You My Mother?	25
Chapter 3: Prodigal Goat	31
Chapter 4: To Capture a Cloud	37
Chapter 5: Greener Grass.....	43
Chapter 6: Teddy Mice	53
Chapter 7: All It Takes Is a Spark	57
Chapter 8: Farmyard Fun: Expecting	65
Chapter 9: Noah's Barn.....	69
Chapter 10: One Small Gift.....	75
Chapter 11: He Leadeth Me	83
Chapter 12: Farmyard Fun: Milking Time?.....	93
Chapter 13: My High Horse.....	95
Chapter 14: Feathered Pharisees.....	103
Chapter 15: Follow the Leader.....	109
Chapter 16: Farmyard Fun: Toys for Tots.....	115
Chapter 17: Will You Listen?	119
Chapter 18: One Another	125
Chapter 19: Farmyard Fun: She Wouldn't!.....	133
Chapter 20: His Eye on the Sparrow.....	137
Chapter 21: Who's in Control?	147
Chapter 22: Duck-Duck-Goose.....	153
Chapter 23: Pigpen Pinball.....	157
Chapter 24: Cancel That Prayer!.....	165

Chapter 25: In His Hands	175
Chapter 26: Farmyard Fun: 101 Things Most Farming Books Don't Tell You	183
Epilogue.....	193
Praise Be to God.....	197
Glossary	201

Acknowledgments



First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He led us to move to the country, provided our new home, and made a way for us to get started in our farming adventure. He led us through each step of the process, taught us countless invaluable lessons, and worked more than one miracle along the way. He prompted us to pray, and He answered prayers. He showed us what to do, and He gave us the strength to do it. He provided for us, and He protected us. And every one of our animals, every “character” in these stories, was His own unique and beautiful creation.

Thank you to my aunt Ann, who for many years has suggested that I write down “farm stories” from our experiences. Here they are.

Thank you to each of those who test-read the manuscript and offered their suggestions and encouragement.

Thank you to each of our neighbors, those in our neighborhood and those beyond, who have jumped in to lend us their assistance in numerous situations.

And thank you to Dad, Mom, and Chris, my family. Without you, this life just wouldn’t be complete.



What I Didn't Know



When we came to the farm, I learned a lot,
And it was the funniest thing.
You see, for a while I had no idea
That happy chickens could sing.
I didn't know bee swarms were huge, buzzing clusters
That hung from a branch on a tree.
I didn't know goats could wiggle their ears
And call for their grain so noisily.
I didn't know pigs would enjoy blowing bubbles
When their water was served in a pan,
That they'd sit on their haunches and woof like a dog
And have races around their pen.
I didn't know rabbits could grunt and squeal.
I didn't know goslings could cheep.
I didn't know ducks would keep playing outside
When they really should be asleep.
I didn't know goats would get into such mischief,
And nibble whatever they can,
That they'd chew into pieces, if given the chance,
The electrical cord to the fan.
I didn't know chickens would catch and eat mice.
I didn't know geese couldn't sink,
Or that tiny chicks could make such a great racket
You couldn't hear yourself think.
I didn't know geese would honk and honk
And honk and honk some more.
I didn't know sleepy chickens could yawn,
And I didn't know chickens could snore!¹

¹ Originally written at age thirteen.



I enjoy some snuggle time with three goslings, one of our first additions to the farm. I have always loved animals and was elated at the prospect of raising such a variety.

Prologue



I thought I knew about farming.

You see, I had been learning about it my whole life. Picture books had taught me the basics: chickens lay eggs, cows give milk, sheep make wool, pigs wallow in the mud, and hay is kept in barns, which are rectangular red buildings with white Xs on the doors. Then when we were contemplating the prospect of starting our own farm, we purchased *Barnyard in Your Backyard* by Gail Damerow, which provided me with a wealth of new knowledge as I read. Actually, to be more precise, I skimmed through the more “dry” sections, such as breeds, feed, shelter, and fencing, and focused on the more interesting parts, such as how to milk a goat, how to shear a sheep, how to deliver a calf, how to make cheese, and how to tell if an egg is fresh. As I read, I was aware that there were still some gaps in my knowledge. In addition to the fact that the book hadn’t covered either pigs or horses, I had a vague sense that some aspects of farming would be learned not from a book but from experience.

Needless to say, once we got started, it didn’t take me too long to figure out just how little I knew. Nonetheless, my limited research did serve a significant purpose, for the prospect of raising farm animals helped reconcile me to the fact that my life was about to dramatically change. We were preparing to move to the country, and I wasn’t very happy about it.

I didn’t have anything against the country. After all, what’s not to love about milking cows, gathering eggs, and playing in the hay in a big red barn? But for as long as I could remember, I had lived in the same house, taken homemade cookies to the same neighbors, attended the same church, and played with the same friends. For as

long as I could remember, my life had been familiar. I liked it, and I didn't want it to change.

It was January 1, 2008, that the Lord laid on my parents' hearts that He wanted our family to move. This was not the first time we had made such a change. A decade previously, God had led my dad, mom, and brother Chris halfway across the country to spend two years in Nebraska, where I was born. But since the age of nine months, I had lived in Kennewick, near south central Washington, and I knew no other home.

In the weeks that followed, the Lord continued to confirm that we were indeed to move, and as we prayed about whether to go west toward Vancouver or east toward Spokane, He gave us a direction: east. In February I found myself tramping through two feet of snow to look at houses in the mountains of rural Eastern Washington. Local folks told us that it was the worst winter the area had encountered in forty years, but I didn't see anything wrong with it. Having come from the desert where more than an inch or two of snow was a treat, I concluded that this mountainous region was a wonderful place to live. Then one day the right house appeared, and on April 2, 2008, we uprooted from our home in Kennewick to settle in the rolling countryside of Chattaroy, twenty-five minutes north of Spokane. I was nine years old.

Although I found it difficult to leave the home and friends that I knew, I almost immediately fell in love with the country. Open fields in which to run and play, wildflowers to pick and identify, insects and frogs to catch, a steep sledding hill, and, best of all, the prospect of starting a farm! I find it humorous now to reflect on our visions of farming. My parents were thinking we would raise a few chickens and, since several of us couldn't drink cow's milk, maybe a dairy goat. I, on the other hand, pictured a classic storybook farm: chickens, cows, pigs, sheep, barn cats, and horses; green fields; a tractor; and a big red barn spilling golden hay from its loft, complete with a weathervane and a round red silo.

I didn't even know what a silo was for.

November 6, 2008, our first chicks arrived—twenty-seven of them. The following year we added honeybees, more chickens, geese,

and goats; planted a garden; purchased a tractor; constructed a barn; and adopted a barn cat. We started a business selling fresh eggs and raw honey. Rabbits came next, then pigs, then ducks. This life was very different from what I had envisioned and came with its unique challenges, but I loved it; and through it all, I was learning and growing. Of course, I learned more about the nuts and bolts of farm life, such as how to catch a bee swarm, how to distract a protective goose, and how to escape when accidentally locked inside a chicken coop. More importantly, however, God used the animals to teach me life lessons and help my character grow.

The last ten years have many memories for my family—some hair-raising, some sad, and some hilarious. What follows is a collection of stories from this decade of life, tales of our family's experiences. They are stories of laughter and adventure; of challenge and triumph; of blood, sweat, and tears; of fun and of faith—all of them true stories, fresh from the farmyard.



Following the successful capture of a swarm, Dad and Chris pose with the brand-new colony. After the first day, beekeeping just got easier.

I

Nine Pounds of Adventure

When it came to starting a farm, I think all four of us, more or less, got more than we had bargained for.

It started out innocently enough. We read books on how to raise various animals, built a chicken coop, and, in November 2008, purchased our first flock of chicks. Over the winter we did more research and made more plans, preparing for the animals that would arrive in 2009. The first of these to be added were three hives of honeybees.

Our move had taken us a few hours further away from nearly everyone we knew. As a way to stay in touch during the first several years, we started a monthly newsletter, written by my brother and me, that shared our country adventures with our friends and extended family. In March 2009, Chris, then twelve, wrote about the preparations for our upcoming apiary. These preparations included reading books, watching a very interesting video series on beekeeping, and assembling supers, frames, and other hive parts. His article concluded, “Our bees will arrive on April 18, and that’s when the action really starts!”

Little did we know...

Dad’s work required him to sometimes travel, and on the day we were scheduled to pick up our bees, Dad had to be away. However, the Pittelkows, friends and fellow farmers who had experience raising bees, had offered to come help us get ours situated in their hives. So on the morning of April 18, Chris and I accompanied Mom to a

local honey farm, from where we would pick up our three packages of adventure.

The bees were contained in wooden box frames covered with wire mesh. On top of each box was a large round hole through which the bees could be shaken into the hive. Meanwhile, a can of sugar syrup blocked the hole and provided food for the bees during transit. Hanging beside the can was a tiny cage housing the queen. Each package held three pounds of worker bees—about ten thousand—and would become one hive. The packages were lined up in the back of the van. From my spot in the back seat, I could hear a steady hum over the sound of the engine as we drove toward home.

Less than ten minutes later, Mom entered a roundabout. As the vehicle turned, a wooden thump startled us. Chris and I both whipped around in our seats. “Mom,” said Chris in a this-is-serious tone, “we’ve got a *big problem!*”

Two of the packages had fallen on their sides. The first was still intact, and no harm was done there. The other, however, was another story.

A bee package typically has a small piece of wood tacked across its top to secure the syrup can in place. Ours lacked this safeguard, and when the second package fell, the can slid out and landed in the back of the van. This left a gaping hole in the top of the box, enabling the contents to spill into the vehicle.

The bees were loose.

The van suddenly seemed far too small to contain us and our nine pounds of live cargo. I had little fear of the bees when they were safely contained, but bees flying freely around me were another matter. It didn’t make a difference to me that most honeybee varieties are gentle; I just knew that someone was about to get stung.

While my first thought was of what the bees might do, Mom’s first thought was that her ten-year-old daughter might jump out of the vehicle in an attempt to escape. Whether or not I would have I don’t know—I didn’t have time to think that far ahead before Mom pulled over. In hindsight, though, I do remember that I had my seat belt unbuckled before we stopped.

Mom parked on the shoulder and told me to get out on the other side of the van, the side away from traffic. With several curious insects already investigating the airspace near my head, I launched across the back seat and out the other side. I landed on the edge of the pavement with a young wheat field sloping away behind me. There, feeling relatively safe, I started to wonder what we were going to do.

It certainly was a predicament. We were twenty minutes away from home, and nothing short of a wildfire would have convinced me to get back into our four-wheeled beehive. On top of that, we had to find a way to put the open package back together, and we had brought no protective gear—no bee suit, no smoker, not even a veil and gloves. We hadn’t thought we would need them. Our only equipment was a bee brush, and somehow I didn’t think that it would be an adequate defense.

Chris joined me, and we watched while Mom opened the van’s rear hatch. Several bees flew out. More bees explored the interior while numerous others clung to the wire mesh on the outside of the packages. Mom grabbed the wayward syrup can and stuffed it back into its hole, preventing further escape. Then she gingerly picked up the packages one by one and set them on the shoulder of the pavement.

The central figure in a hive is the queen, and the workers will not abandon her. This future hive’s queen was in a tiny cage inside the package. With the packages now on the side of the road, the loose bees outside would be attracted back to their queen. The problem was that the bees inside the van could still smell the place where their queen had been and thus had no reason to leave.

Bee by bee, Mom opened the hatch, brushed out a striped insect or two, and quickly closed the hatch before the worker in question flew back inside. While this was going on, another driver spotted us and pulled over, presumably to assist. Then he saw our cargo. Changing his mind, the driver swiftly pulled back onto the road and just kept on going. We weren’t offended. Maybe he was allergic.

With her last drops of cell phone battery, Mom called Mr. Pittelkow to inform him of the dilemma. Then after the last bees were finally brushed out of the van, we just stood there and waited. Now it was safe to get back inside, but none of us wanted to put the packages back in the car while dozens of bees crawled around on the wrong side of the mesh.

It wasn't long before a state trooper noticed the mother and two children stranded on the side of the road and stopped to ask if we needed help. We thanked him and assured him that friends were on the way. A few minutes later, a van pulled over next to us. The boy in the front seat had a lamb on his lap. Fellow farmers, perhaps? They also wanted to know if we needed assistance—a generous offer when thirty thousand bees were involved—and we likewise thanked them and explained that help was coming.

At last, the Pittelkows arrived, armed with both a full bee suit and a pickup with a canopy. Mr. Pittelkow suited up, put the bees in the bed of the truck, and followed us home. There, he and Chris gave the bees some smoke to calm them and shook them into the hives. It was a job well done—and a memorable debut to the beekeeping adventure.



We thought the packages were secure. They certainly looked and felt as though they were, and for the first portion of the drive, they stayed upright and intact. Then came the roundabout, an unexpected challenge to their security.

Often it is the curves in life that reveal the truth. Your life may seem perfect and all put together, but if your security is in the wrong things, life's sudden curves will reveal that.

What is your foundation? Are you standing on outward appearances, goals, and achievements, or are you standing in the Lord? The world calls you to place your trust in a myriad of things: education, work, looks, popularity, relationships, money, possessions. Jesus calls you to place your trust in Him—His truth, His character, and what

He has done. In Him, and in Him alone, will you be able to stand firm when you find yourself rocked by a roundabout.

Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.
O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my
Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from You." ...
I have set the Lord always before me; because He
is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

—Psalm 16:1–2, 8