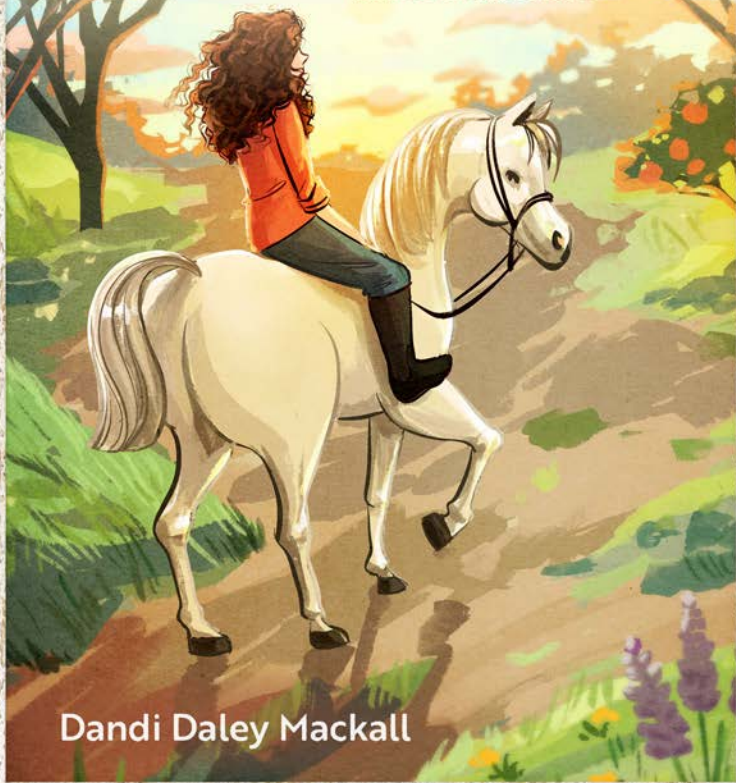


# Winnie the horse gentler

## Devotional

30 New Stories for  
Horse-Loving Readers



Dandi Daley Mackall



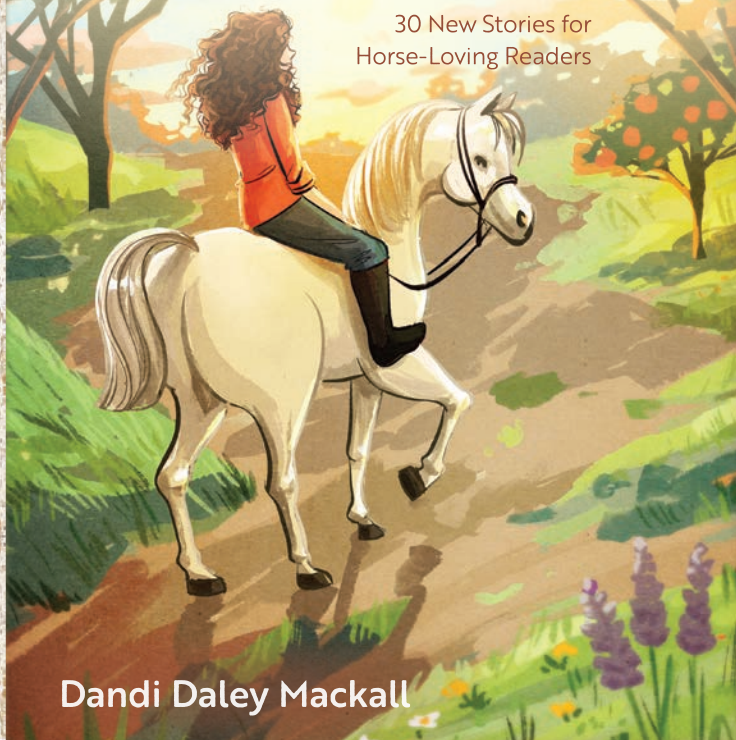
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## Author's Note



It's such an honor to write a book as if I'm Winnie the Horse Gentler working life out with God . . . and horses—the way I guess I've done my whole life. Much like Winnie, I grew up with horses as my best friends. I admit there are many pieces of me and my horses in the Winnie books.

The first book about Winnie the Horse Gentler, *Wild Thing*, released in 2002, followed by seven other Winnie novels. I'm thankful for the great letters and emails Winnie and I have received since then.

Over the years, new generations of readers have befriended Winnie. So I let Winnie make appearances in Starlight Animal Rescue, and I added a new series, Winnie: The Early Years.

You don't need to know anything about Winnie to read this book, but here's a peek into her world.

Love,  
Dandi

## Who's Who in Winnie's World

**Winnie**—Winifred Willis (Winnie) is in eighth grade. She grew up on a ranch in Wyoming, where her mom taught her how to gentle horses rather than break them. After her mom died, Winnie's dad moved his two daughters all over the US, finally landing in Ashland, Ohio. People bring Winnie their problem horses, and she gentles them with kindness. Winnie is great with horses—not so much with humans, especially certain classmates. But from day to day, she discovers she can apply her horse knowledge to people. School cliques aren't that different from Mustang herds, after all.

**Nickers**—Winnie's white Arabian had earned the name Wild Thing when the Spidells gave up on her and wanted her out of Spidell's Stable-Mart. They had tried to break her with *no* gentleness, just frustrating punishment. Winnie ended up with Wild Thing and helped her become Nickers instead, which is a soft sound from a horse, the sweetest music on earth.

**Lizzy**—Elizabeth Priscilla Willis (Lizzy) is a year younger than her sister, Winnie. She's taller than Winnie, maybe more mature, and has a solid and fun relationship with God. She's not crazy about horses but loves lizards.

**Jack Willis**—Winnie's dad used to be the boss in a Wyoming insurance company. When his wife died, he

quit because he couldn't stay where sad memories lurked. Moving with his daughters from state to state, he worked at odd jobs wherever he could. Knowing Winnie needed horses, he rented the last farmhouse at the edge of Ashland, Ohio, which came with an old barn and an overgrown pasture. Now he pursues his passion of inventing things, like the Backwards Bike.

**Catman**—Calvin Coolidge (Catman) is a throwback to hippies, with expressions like “Far out!” “Groovy,” and “Cool, man.” He could be a cat whisperer because cats follow him everywhere. Catman’s parents are “far out,” entering contests for a living and decorating year-round with lawn ornaments. Catman is probably Winnie’s best friend.

**Barker**—Eddy Barker (Barker) loves dogs and knows all about them, training dogs for his family and friends, as well as training police dogs and service dogs. The Barkers are a wonderful African American family, including Granny B. and Barker’s great granny, “Ma Barker,” who seems out of it until she reveals her wisdom. Each of Barker’s five brothers has his own dog, trained by Eddy.

**M**—Nobody knows what the M stands for, with the possible exception of Catman, M’s best buddy. M doesn’t say much, but he communicates, sometimes by eating sandwiches in the shape of his message. He always wears black . . . until someone comes up with a darker color. Catman and M help Winnie whenever she needs them.

**Hawk**—Victoria Hawkins (Hawk) is a Native American classmate who loves birds, owns an Appaloosa named Towaco, and has to split her time between parents, now that they're divorced. Formerly best friend to Summer Spidell, Hawk began as Winnie's un-friend but has become her best on-and-off female friend.

**Pat**—Pat Haven owns Pat's Pets, the town pet store. She oversees the online Pet Helpline run by Winnie, Catman, Barker, and sometimes Hawk. People (kids too) email with animal problems. Winnie answers horse questions, Catman gets cat problems, Barker takes dog questions, and they call in Hawk for an occasional bird problem.

**Summer and the Spidells**—Summer Spidell comes from money. She only rides horses from her dad's stable, Stable-Mart, so she can win trophies in horse shows. A classmate of Winnie's, Summer is often her enemy, as is Summer's older brother, Robert.

### *Parts of Each Devotion*

Each devotional begins with a verse that expresses the main idea of the story. As Winnie comes to understand the verse (or fails to), she discovers how the Treasure Verse applies to her on a deeper, more personal level.

Here are some other features you'll see regularly in each devotional:

**Winnie's Story**—Winnie the Horse Gentler understands horses better than she understands people—especially classmates—which means Winnie has to untangle human relationships in the same way she listens to and gentles horses. In each story, God helps her in her spiritual journey and understanding.

**Journal Entry**—Within each story, Winnie writes to God, sometimes griping, sometimes thanking, sometimes asking for much-needed help. Journaling to God helps her slow her raging thoughts and emotions so she can be open and honest with Jesus.

**Lassoing the Truth**—This section helps make the connection between Winnie's story and your life. Watching Winnie grow through Scripture in each story can help you in your own faith journey as you apply the truth to your own life.

**Whoa!**—This is your opportunity to journal to God as Winnie does, getting real with Jesus. You can take your time writing how you feel, what's on your mind—anything. Pour out your heart and ask for help, or thank your heavenly Father for caring.

**Prayer**—Each devotional includes a prayer you can build on. Talk to God and pray about whatever is on your mind and heart.

**Giddyup!**—This verse activity is an opportunity to act on what you've learned and to remember God's Word forever.

Psalm 119:162 says, "I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure." Long ago, Winnie's mom made her a Treasure Box, filled with Scripture verses written on colored index cards. She told Winnie that the treasures, the verses, would encourage her and remind her of God's love wherever life took her.

You can make your own treasure cards. It's easy! You only need three things:

1. A pack of colored index cards with five colors. (You could also use colored construction paper or sticky notes, or you could use white cards or paper, color coding them with crayons or colored pencils.) Assign one card color for each category based on the emotions they address. For example:

GREEN = HAPPY/JOYFUL

RED = ANGRY

BLUE = SAD

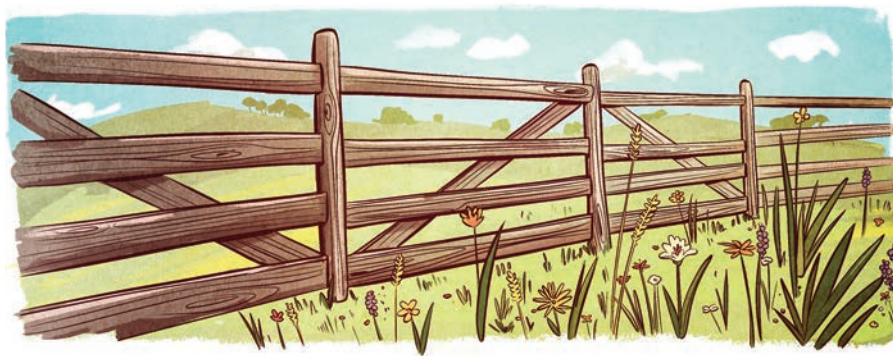
YELLOW = CONFUSED

PURPLE = SCARED/ANXIOUS

2. Something to write with (a pen, pencil, fine marker, etc.).
3. A special place to keep the cards. You could use a

shoebox, gift box, recipe box, or file box. If you're stuck on getting a box, you can punch the top left corner of the cards and add a key ring or tie them together by color.

At the end of each devotion, the Giddyup! section will show you how to make and fill your box of treasures. By the end of the book, you'll have a box full of treasure cards to keep with you wherever you go.





1  
\* \* \*  
Listen!

*[Jesus] added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more."*

*Mark 4:24*

*Here's what's been on my mind:* Mom, as usual. For the multi-millionth time, I thank God for making my mother the best horse gentler in the whole world. I remember how she used praise, patience, kindness, and firmness to gentle even angry stallions. I never saw her punish a horse or break his spirit, like most trainers did. Horses listened to Mom the way she listened to them.

I want to be a great horse gentler like Mom was, but what if I can't be?

I step into a gray morning that fits my mood. I'm grateful people keep bringing me their problem horses. But it's been a while since I've faced off with a Mustang like the one I'm waiting for. The Ohio Horse Rescue called me after Spidell's Stable-Mart refused to take a wild Mustang into their fancy stable.

I hear an angry whinny before I see the truck pull up. A wiry guy hops out of the cab looking as pleased to be here as that Mustang sounds. I jog to meet him. "Hey!"

He flicks his bangs away from his eyes. "Somebody expecting a Mustang?"

"Me. I'm Winnie." I don't add "the Horse Gentler."

"Winnie Willis?" He looks past me, then shrugs. "Sign this." I do, and he wrestles the little Mustang down the ramp. "Sam's all yours." He hands me the rope, and I barely get out of the way before he drives off.

"Welcome . . . Sam?" He's shaggy, with too-wide brown eyes. When I try to scratch his chest, he backs away. "That's okay," I lie. Finding a horse's scratching spot can make gentling easier.

I want to get started, but Sam needs to get used to his new home. I've kept the other horses in the barn, but it's still not easy leading him to the pasture. I breathe in the amazing scent of horse and grass. "Sam, wait till you meet Nickers, the sweetest horse in the world."

When I unhook the Mustang, he tears off galloping like his tail's on fire. I watch the restless Mustang race the fence as if scouting for a way out.

"Groovy little horse."

"Catman!" Calvin "Catman" Coolidge, probably my best friend in the world, could sneak up on a bat. He's a throwback to the hippies—long blond hair, striped bell-bottoms, tie-dyed T-shirt with a peace symbol. Cats swarm around his flip-flops. My little sister, Lizzy, calls him the Pied Piper of Cats.

He nods toward Sam, asking without words why I'm here and Sam's there.

"I'm letting him get used to things, but he needs to get used to me." I shout to the far end of the pasture. "Here, Sam!"

"Is he deaf?" Catman has helped me long enough to know better.

Hiding the leadrope behind me, I keep talking, narrowing the distance between Sam and me. "I just want to groom you, Sam." I pretend I'm trying to catch an invisible horse. I get close, but Sam jerks away. "Catman, let Nickers out." In seconds, my gorgeous white Arabian gallops up to me and slides to a stop. I pretend I'm catching Nickers, then reach over and snap the leadrope onto Sam's halter.

Things get worse inside the round pen. Catman and our buddy M helped me build it, just like Mom's in Wyoming. Sam is not impressed.

"Move out!" I command from the center of the pen.

*No!* Sam says, holding his ground. The point is to get the Mustang to walk or trot around the circle while I hold the long lunge line from the center. I step closer, arms raised. Sam stays put.

Finally, when I flick the line behind him, Sam takes a dozen steps.

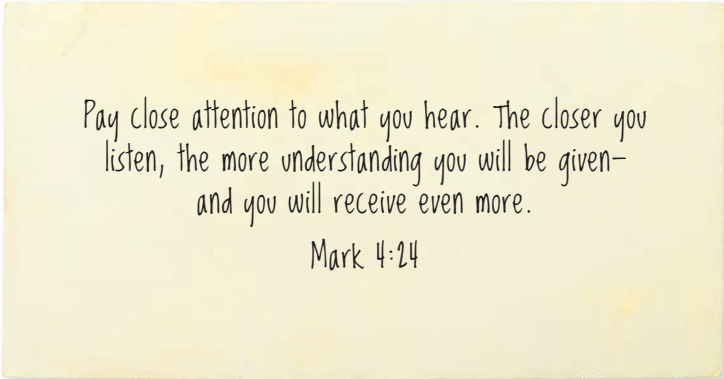
"Far out!" Catman claps without a sound.

I feel like cheering too . . . until Sam stops. Nothing will make him move. Growing more and more frustrated, I shout, "Sam, GO!" Sam doesn't listen or care. I'm out of patience and getting angry. I know when to quit.

When Catman leaves, I groom Sam and turn him out to pasture without a word. Why bother when he wouldn't listen anyway? I watch the little horse slink off, head hung low like he doesn't have a friend in the world . . . or a mother. And I feel awful. Rotten. Sorry.

After supper, I pull out my Treasure Box. Mom gave it to me the day before my birthday, the day of the accident. She'd filled it with colored cards: Green = Happy/Joyful; Red = Angry; Blue = Sad; Yellow = Confused; Purple = Scared/Anxious. Mom wrote Bible verses on each card and said God wrote every word inside the box, and I should always listen to God's Word.

Since I'm confused about what to do with Sam, I pull a yellow card from the box:



Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—  
and you will receive even more.

Mark 4:24

I chew on that verse for a minute. I got frustrated with Sam today for not listening. But I guess I wasn't listening to God.

I pull out my journal and pour out my heart to God.

Dear God,

I guess it's silly to write since you know my thoughts before I do. But it slows me down so I can sort out what I'm struggling to understand. It feels like talking to you, which is what Mom called prayer.

I'm sorry for today. I didn't ask for your help, not even once. You created Sam, and I should have listened for you to guide me.

Please help me listen to you tomorrow. Thanks for always listening to me.

Love, Winnie

To be continued . . .



## Lassoing the Truth

In this story, Winnie wanted Sam the Mustang to listen to her, and her patience grew thin when that didn't happen. Later, Winnie realized that she hadn't been listening to God or asking for God's help with the Mustang. In the same way, it can be easy to forget to ask God for help and direction, especially when something is bothering us. Is something bothering you? Take time to ask God for his wisdom—and really listen for his answer.

Whoa! 

What are some ways you listen to God? (Read Scripture? Talk to a friend? Take a walk and talk honestly with God?) How could you focus more on listening to God? Slow down and journal to your heavenly Father about your desire to listen to him more.

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*Father, thank you for wanting a close relationship with me. I want that too. Please help me listen to you. And thanks for always listening to me.*

*Giddyup!* 

Start your Treasure Box! Make sure you have your cards, pens, and a box to store the finished cards in. (Take a look at pages xiv–xv for full instructions.) Copy today’s verse onto a yellow card.

Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more.

Mark 4:24