

## North Star

*Jesus said to them, "Come with me!"*

MATTHEW 4:19 CEV



Czar's hooves crunched through the snow, and the sound rippled through the forest. Only a sliver of moon hung in the dark-blue sky. When I exhaled, my breath hung in the air. Frosty air nipped my cheeks so I pulled the wool scarf over my nose. Today the temperature had dipped to 10 degrees below zero, and after sunset it continued to plummet. I felt as large as a snowman all bundled up in my wool Elmer Fudd hat, bulky wool mittens, winter parka, down vest, wool sweater, leather chaps, wool pants, long johns, and Sorel winter boots. But I was toasty warm. The air, crisp and clean. Over the years I'd learned to love riding alone at night. It gave me time to contemplate life. Tonight I had a 14-mile ride that would take four hours. I was heading to Monture Creek Camp to join the crew and guests who had gone out two days before.

I shifted my weight in the saddle and leaned forward to pat my Czar's bay-colored neck. It was so dark I couldn't see my arm or the outline of my horse. Leaning back in the saddle I gazed into the sky

and commented, “God, what a gorgeous night.” One by one the stars appeared. The Big Dipper twinkled into place, and then the Little Dipper. I stared at the North Star while my mind drifted back to an Old West lecture I’d heard. The instructor had told the story of the cattle drives that took place between the 1860s and 1880s.

In the still of the night, his cowboy-sounding drawl drifted through my memory.

In those days 8 to 10 cowboys would ride out of Texas herding 2000 head of wild cows. That’s not near enough guys to handle those wily, snorty critters. Most of those cowboys were 14- to 16-year-old boys, not even men by today’s standards. They braved thousands of miles of wilderness filled with stampedes, flash floods, and Indians to deliver the herds to Montana. On the prairies, lightning struck the tallest thing around—cowboys wearing pistols who rode horses with metal shoes. There weren’t any promises or guarantees. Their directions? Take a good bearing on the North Star the first night. Follow it for four months and you’ll be there.

The North Star glimmered. I wondered, *What if clouds covered the sky the first week and they couldn’t see the North Star? What if they had gone off-course just a couple of degrees those first few days? A thousand miles later they’d be off the map.* I shook my head. “God, I’m so glad You didn’t say, ‘Just ride off into them thar woods, and I’ll be waiting for you—that is if you make it.’”

*Lord, thank You for saying, “Come with me.” I’m thrilled that You’re with me every step of the way. Amen.*