

Christmas Miracle

by Erika Christensen



Sunday started out pretty normal like most other days, so we decided to take a hike and bring two of our dogs along: Casey, a small cattle dog that looks like a miniature Shepard, and Blake a large black flat-coat Retriever. We drove up to the East Fork trail head and hiked for over an hour. The dogs were running around chasing squirrels and sniffing all the many places where other animals had been. On our way back I put Blake and Casey back on their leashes, since there were some other people on the trails and I didn't want the dogs disturbing them.

After the other hikers were gone Blake's attention was alerted. Probably seeing or hearing a little critter he was interested in. I decided to let him and Casey off leash one last time to check it out. They disappeared for a brief moment before I called for them. Casey came back, but no Blake. I kept calling and then I heard a yip of excitement, followed by another, but then silence. We started to hike around and look for Blake. He always came back within a short amount of time. Suddenly, we realized that four hours had passed and we were running out of daylight, and still no Blake. No recognizable tracks, or any sign of him anywhere, and it was getting darker and colder by the hour. We were very concerned. Blake always comes back when called. Baffled, I knew we had to go and leave Blake behind. Sunday was gone.

Kory created a missing dog poster to get the word out to the community. I said a prayer before bedtime asking God to protect him from other animals and keep him safe, to put a blanket around him and keep him warm. I reminded God he was a Shepherd and he wouldn't abandoned his sheep, nor would he expect me to.

I set out on Monday and hiked from Jemez Falls down to Battleship Rock Campground. I was hoping Blake was finding his own way home. Blake's sense for smell and direction was always so incredible, I was believing God would direct his path. Still, at the end of the day, no Blake. I was getting a bit discouraged and knew time was running out. The mountains were so vast with so many different ways he could have gone. I realized there is only one thing to do. I knew that through my

trust in God there is one thing that really moves His spirit - PRAISE!

I got up Tuesday morning and put on some praise music and started praising God with all my heart, giving Him glory. In the middle of my praise time, I heard a voice in my head say, "You better go look for Blake before it's too late." I replied, "No. Not until I'm ready. My dog will be waiting!" When I finished, I took my other three dogs back to the original spot where Blake vanished. The dogs left their scent all over the mountain to help Blake find his way back. Time was running out! I looked out on top of the mountain and wondered how I would find him, the area was so big. I reminded myself that God is bigger than any mountain. My husband Kory kept checking the East Fork trail, on his way to and from work. He was confident Blake would be waiting there. At the end of Tuesday, again no Blake.

On Wednesday a storm was moving into our area, and I didn't want another day to go by. I knew this was the last opportunity I would have; I wasn't leaving without Blake, even if I had to storm the gates of heaven to get God to move on my behalf. I started out on the trail where Blake disappeared. I was singing a song to myself when a small voice said, "Call out to Blake." It's hard to keep calling out when three days have gone by with no response. I called "Blake? Blake?" like I had hundreds of times before. Then suddenly I heard a little whimper. I was so shocked! I couldn't believe it! I called "Blake?" and another whimper, but this time it was louder. I looked to my right and there was Blake waiting for me. He was WAITING! I ran the short distance and hugged him. I shouted "I knew it! I just knew it! Praise God!" Blake had sustained an injury and stood on three legs. With God's help, Blake worked hard to find his way back to the spot where he was lost so he could be found.