

The Horse Jumped the Rail

Max Anders – author and creator and general editor of the *Holman Bible Commentary* – in his book entitled *God* recalls an interesting chase scene in the 1940 movie version of *The Mark of Zorro*.



Zorro is fleeing in the dead of night from a band of Spanish army officers. He is dressed in black, and his horse is jet black. Racing at breakneck speed through woods, over creeks, along narrow paths, Zorro is finally cornered on a bridge suspended about 20 feet over a river.

In one of the most remarkable stunts ever seen in a movie, Zorro turns his horse toward the railing on the bridge, which is about 4½ feet high, and spurs him. The horse jumps over the railing, into the river below, with the rider still on him. The horse swims upstream in a hail of bullets, and once again, Zorro makes a cunning escape.

Anders questioned how in the world the stunt rider got that horse to jump over the railing and into the black abyss below. That is one of the most unnatural things a horse would ever do. A horse would be almost as likely to dance a ballet or swim a backstroke as to jump into a black abyss.

The answer comes from those who train horses. The secret is that the rider must never ask the horse to do anything that hurts it. The rider first gets the horse to do little stunts that seem dangerous, but the horse does not get hurt. So the trainer graduates to major stunts.

After years of training, the horse learns to trust the rider because nothing traumatizing has ever happened to him in the past. As a result, he will do almost anything the rider asks of him in the future.

Obviously, the rider in this movie scene had spent a lot of time working with that horse, and a high degree of trust had developed. The horse never hesitated. Over the rail and into the river he went.

That story by Anders is instructive to us as Christians. Two key components of the connection between the horse and the rider are apparent:

1. Obedience
2. Trust

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Obedience to God is the essence of the Christian life. And the more we walk with Christ, the greater the trust that develops.

As we obey Christ in the little things, we learn that we can trust Him completely, and then we can give Him our all.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act (Psalm 37:5 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter