



Family, Friends, Faith, and Farming: the good "F" words. *by Roddy Dull*

I hope I don't scare off my readers with my title choice for this article. I assure you, the other "F" word is not in my vocabulary and you will never see it in this article. Maybe my readers will eventually feel the way I do and will make a conscious effort to avoid the word even in the most trying of times.

I find myself slipping out of what most people would call middle age and moving to the next stage in life, which I am going to call "Young Plus". I find myself sounding like my parents, or even grandparents, talking about those tough years when both ways to school were up hill in the snow. I have said publicly, at least 100 times, "If my three boys would have had to work in the tobacco field for just two or three days, they would have a whole new sense of respect for their dad and life in general." In my second breath I have said, "Boy, I am so worried about my children and grandchildren's future." What are they going to do when dad or "Bumpa," as my grandkids call me, isn't around anymore. There are fewer jobs, more people, and you just can't go out to the barn and get an extra gallon of milk when you need it like the old days. Life changes, your babies grow up, and lessons are learned. Believe it or not, we find our comfort in the "F" words.

For those of you who don't know me, I want you to know this: I love my family more than anything in the world. I have more friends than I could ever count and I would do anything in the world for them. I have a strong faith in God even though, to be honest with you, I don't really understand what He wants me to do sometimes or why things happen certain ways. Things probably would have been differently if I were in charge. And last, but not least, I am a farmer. Not the best one, and currently not an active one, but nevertheless a farmer.

In the continuing months and years, I am going to write about my experiences with the "F" words. I want to share them with all of you. Some of these stories have happy endings and some do not. However, all of them have meaning and lessons to be learned. I would appreciate your input as we move forward and hope that my stories will bring meaning to you, our families and our friends. So, in closing of my first of many articles, I have this advice for you: Tell your family and your friends that you love them the next time you see them. Right out loud! Give thanks for family, faith, friends, and farming to the one you think deserves it. And if you're the type of person who gets down on your knees for the thanksgiving part, grab a big handful of dirt and rub it all over in your hands, let it sift between your fingers and imagine where we would be without that dirt andfarmers.

Thank you for reading,

Roddy Dull