



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

This article might be venting a little, but everyone needs to do that now and then. My word this month is FREE. That's right, the word free, meaning free of charge, without charge, at NO cost, complimentary, or on the house. I can remember when all of the farmers in the neighborhood would help each other out for free. I remember my grandpa taking a broken piece of iron to town because we didn't have a welder. When it was time to pay my grandpa would say, "What do I owe you?" Often the welder would reply, "Don't worry about it. I'll catch you another time." Free. When you saw an ad for a free movie or free ice cream it was free, no strings attached.

This week I had to get a new phone. I was ready for an upgrade that would allow me to get a free phone. However, I can only get the phone if I pay a \$30.00 upgrade fee and sign an additional two year agreement. I happened to have a new phone sitting on my desk from one of my kids that was never used and I learned that I could activate that phone with no fees and no contract extension. Puzzled, I said, "Because I have this phone already, there would be no charge?" His answer was yes. I asked him to send me the new phone that they had advertised for FREE and when I got it in my possession I would call him up and he could activate that phone then for FREE. We went round and round for about 30 minutes until my wife said that I was probably going to make the young man feel bad and that was not my intention. I can't really say the name of my cell provider, so for now let's just call them Ver-not-for-FREE. Point of the matter is, if you have to buy something to get something that is free, IT IS NOT FREE.

I was put on the giving end of free recently as well. I spent countless hours helping a friend decide on and get permission to buy and install a very large marketing tool. I helped him for free but to be honest with you, I was counting on him purchasing the item from me if and when he decided to do so. I worked hours and hours on designs. I quoted so many different models and options over a 3 year period of time, I think the manufacturer was about ready to tell me to take a hike. I went to meetings with the building inspector, the city council, the planning commission, and maybe even more. Three years later, the customer decides to finally make the purchase. Before he does, he tells me this: "I have found something similar online. My daughter is in charge now and money is the bottom line." He told me that if she didn't buy the product from me that he would give me \$500 for all of my trouble. I was hurt. I was disappointed and yes, I was mad. I told him I didn't want his money, what I did was for free. If he had never purchased the product at all, I would have just chalked it up to helping a friend make a decision. When he did decide to buy, though and then dictated his price to me, he took advantage of my free. I could have said sorry and just walked away reevaluating our friendship. Instead, I sold him the product at my cost or in a sense for free.

My wife often tells me I do too much for free. Maybe so, but one thing my farming days taught me was to treat others the way I want to be treated. So, I will keep doing for others for free because that is me and I'm all right with that. Some of you may be able to relate and agree with this article and some of you may disagree. For those of you that disagree maybe this will help...this article that you just read is completely, no strings attached FREE!!!!

Roddy Dull