



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

Falling. Here is a word that is very seldom associated with a positive thought. Falling in love is the only one that instantly comes to mind. On the farm, there are many reasons to be aware of falling; two examples that are big ones would be falling down a silo chute or hay chute. Out of all of the professions, I think farming can be one of the most dangerous if you fall.

Farmer or not, there are lots of ways to fall in real life. Falling for a scam, for instance, is one way that people fall every day. I hold the world record for stumbling and falling in real life. Making the wrong decisions or saying the wrong things are the forms of falling that I have learned the most from in my life.

I was bought up by one parent, my mother. I can't say enough about this amazingly wonderful person. She married my father twice. Yes, twice. It's good, too or I wouldn't have my favorite and only sister from a second marriage. You know, most people can't say that they have a full blood sister from a second marriage. My father left the second time when I was ten and I never saw him again. My mother filled the shoes of both parents very well, though. She was a school teacher, Sunday school teacher, and raised three kids by herself. She handled it all very well. Her philosophy was to try everything. Not the bad stuff, of course, but experience everything that life has to offer like sports, work, art, and relationships. She encouraged me to seek out my dreams, but learn to be responsible for my choices. I'm sure she knew that I would fall along the way. I think she even wanted me to fall occasionally. The time when we're down has the ability to shape our character and determine the type of people we all will choose to be when we're standing.

My mother passed away at the age of 42 from colon cancer, about one year after my father passed away from alcoholism. In hind sight, even after everything my mother taught me, I am not too sure I have always been such a great parent myself. I didn't want my children to fall. I knew from many of my own personal experiences what the consequences of falling were and I wanted to keep my children from having to go through them. Instead, I chose to preach on my life's experiences and pitfalls, assuming that they would instantly dodge all of the holes in the road by listening to the almighty OZ (me). This experience in parenting can be considered one more fall for me in my book.

Just because I may have the means financially to help more often than my parents did, doesn't mean that I should bail them out every time they have some hardship. It is so hard, though. We all want better for our children than we had for ourselves. We want to protect them forever. It is human nature. Tough love is often good love, though. The

best we can do is to help them start down the right road. Maybe that means a little financial help or just plain good advice first and then let them find the way on their own. If they have listened to you, you could probably send along a few Band-Aids for the trip and let them learn how to use them. If they choose to take a rougher road and use up all of their Band-Aids, they will learn on their own to either like the look of their skinned knees or find a better route.

Falling down and skinning your knees can be as important to a long and happy life as falling in love. Love your children, always. Keep your light on in case they get lost and have to come home. Love them enough to let them fall and when they do, let them learn how to put on their own Band-Aids.

Roddy Dull