

THANK GOODNESS FOR TEENAGE BOYS

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The other day a friend called and said he needed some help putting up some hay. He was going to start baling at 2 pm the next afternoon. I knew this friend put up both small, square bales for sale, as well as large, round bales for his cattle herd. He needed help with the square bales. I could not be there until after work, but I sent my son, Jed, over to help at 2 pm. As soon as I got off, I quickly changed clothes and headed over. On my drive over, the thought running through my head was that I am too old, fat, and out of shape to pick up square bales for several hours. At best I would throw-up from the heat, at worst I would pass out from heat stroke. But I was going to try and help my friend. When I pulled into the field, I was relieved to see about a half dozen teenage boys actively stacking bales on the trailer. I knew I was not going to have to pick up bales. I said a quick prayer of thanks, and then proceeded to check and see if there was anything I could do to help. It was the best possible scenario. I got credit for being willing to help, but I didn't have to break a sweat.

Usually when you see a group of teenage boys you think they are probably up to some sort of trouble. In this case, however, they were working too hard to cause trouble. In fact, when Jed got home that night, he didn't have enough energy to even try and put me in a headlock or wrestle me to the ground, which is his usual pattern.

This episode made me think back over my earlier years doing this sort of thing. Stacking hay, building fence, mowing grass, tilling the garden, splitting wood. All of those were jobs I didn't particularly enjoy, but I knew they had to get done, so you worked until it was finished. I look back and can say I am thankful for those efforts, because they taught me to push through difficult jobs, get them done, and then enjoy the fact that I accomplished something. The hard work was not going to last forever, so get it done and rest afterwards.

I constantly remind myself in my current job that I should not work on things based on whether they are easy or hard to accomplish. If I did that, I would always put the hard jobs off, and they would never be done. I need to rank jobs on their importance, impact, and priority. When a difficult job is accomplished, I can then take a moment and enjoy a job well-done.

I think this is one of the things that make me appreciate the people that work in agriculture. There are a lot of tasks that aren't particularly fun or easy, but they work on them because they are important.

There really isn't a specific teaching point to my article. I just want to give you a word of encouragement. I'm sure you have a job or two in front of you that is hard, and you may even be dreading it. Get it done, then sit back and enjoy the fact that you accomplished a difficult task. And if you can, find ways to help the next generation learn the same lesson. The lesson everyone needs to learn is not necessarily how to stack bales, but to work hard until the task is done.

And don't worry about Jed. He made a little money, plus he got a hot dog, Gatorade, and an ice cream sandwich.