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FREE RANGE IS BEST

By Bobby Duncan

“Free range denotes a method of farming husbandry where the animals can roam freely outdoors for at least part of the day, rather than being confined in an enclosure for 24 hours each day” (Wikipedia).

Guadalupe Christian Camp is located in the Guadalupe National Park near Carlsbad, New Mexico. It's an area known for rugged mountain scenery and rugged hiking trails. As youth minister and later senior minister at Christian Church of Midland for 21 years, the road from Midland to Guadalupe was a very familiar highway. I still remember stopping off at Sitting Bull Falls each summer with a van full of kids headed to church camp.

Connie and I traveled to Guadalupe Christian Camp with ladies and men for annual retreats, as well. The camp was a 4-5 hour drive from our church in Midland, Tx. The last hour of the drive was open range. This meant that there were almost no fences, only the occasional cattle guard to keep the livestock from using the road to wander onto a neighboring ranch. With little grass to graze in the Southwest desert the cattle walked miles each day in search of food. They learned to adapt to this arid high country. This free-range grazing was a better method than putting out hay to eat. The cattle grew stronger and healthier.

Today I live in a rural setting in Kentucky. One of my closest neighbors has free range chickens. They sell fresh eggs from their numerous breeds of chickens and even have a turkey that shares the worms and bugs in the large grass field where they are daily released from their coop.

Most farmers and ranchers would agree that the healthiest and tastiest food comes from free-range animals. Just as free-range animals prosper better than those raised in confined spaces, people thrive more in places where they share a lot of freedom with other people. It's not good to spend your life alone, cooped up in small spaces. I've logged a lot of hours indoors over the years. After a day spent inside with limited sunlight, working on sermons, returning texts, making phone calls, I'm drained. Sound like you?

I do my best thinking and writing when I periodically step outside for fresh air and sunshine. I frequently head for our Journey Church bench on the sidewalk out in front of our building. I sit there and smile. I greet a nearby shopkeeper. I wave at a total stranger just walking by. There's something about being free to move about outside in the world that is good medicine. Maybe we all put down our smart phones and close our laptops for a few minutes every hour of the day. Just step away from a task for a moment, letting God refresh our souls and renew our spirit. It seems to work for me. People Matter Most. Share life with other people.

P.S. The aroma of a coffee shop and the flow of people coming and going also has a way of rejuvenating me. Maybe it's the caffeine. Or, maybe I'm just like those free-range chickens and cattle having their best ever day.

