

Good Hands Know Fences!

We have arrived! Well one might think so since the rest of the barbed wire has been officially updated to hi-t wire. It has been sometime since our herds have escaped their corral and fences and disappeared into the neighbor's corn field! No one can appreciate better the saying good fences make good neighbors.

It seems here at the Ranch we have always been in the process of building or maintaining fence, because all horses have that evil nature of wanting to push and test every fence that is ever made. Not only is this true in the barn but also among the families. When we understand the right role of a good fence it helps us to keep appreciating one another.

Throughout the Scriptures, God teaches us the value of good fences that are designed both to keep precious things in and predators out. He set for the sea a boundary so that the water would not transgress His command. (Proverbs 8:29) He put a hedge about Job, his house and all that he had. (Job 1:10) He warns us not to move ancient boundaries which our fathers have set. We are not to go into the fields of the fatherless, or to violate the boundaries of the widow, which amounts to trespassing. (Proverbs 22:28, 23:10, 15:25) And He further explains to us that the way of the sluggard is a hedge of thorns and that the sluggard has let his stone fences deteriorate or become broken down. (Proverbs 24:31, 15:19) God Himself has said that He has removed the fence from His beloved who was constantly escaping or violating the boundaries which He had established. (Psalm 80:12)

When our good friend Charley Hendren was here for Horse Lovers 4, he got me thinking about a top hand and fence mending. (A hand is someone that you can trust to do the job on a ranch.) In light of that I thought of how the Apostle Paul was teaching Timothy how to be a good hand by making good fences. I was intrigued by the language that Paul used to teach Timothy to value the things that he had been given. Phrases such as, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. (I Timothy 4:7) Show yourself an example for those who believe. (I Timothy 4:12) Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching (I Timothy 4:15-16) Teach and preach these principles (I Timothy 6:2) Guard what has been entrusted you and avoid worldly and empty chatter. (I Timothy 6:20) Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you. (II Timothy 1:6) I solemnly charge you in the presence of God not to wrangle about words. (II Timothy 2:14) Be diligent to present yourself approved to God. (II Timothy 2:15) Continue in the things which you have learned, become convinced of. (II Timothy 3:14) Preach the word, be ready in season. (II Timothy 4:2) Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (II Timothy 4:5) In addition to building personal fences, Paul teaches Timothy how to relate to elders, young men, women and children. He also defines the responsibilities for leaders in the church, and widows so that these people would understand how to love and protect that which was given to them so that it would not be stolen away. Fences are designed to keep things that are valuable in and predators out. Good fences build security.

As one who deals a lot with horses, I often am brought horses that are insecure, angry or difficult to work with. The primary reason for all of this is a lack of clear and defined fence building. While it takes some skill to build a good fence and earn the right to be heard by the horse, it is the real key to producing power and excellence within the

horse. None could be clearer than a draft/thoroughbred mare that was recently brought to me. Weighing nearly 1500 lbs, she had learned that she could easily walk over you, drop her shoulder, step on your feet and do anything to avoid being loaded in a trailer. I began by teaching her how to move forward, not run over the handler, and not to violate him through attitude and selfishness. As she began to understand these cues and directions, she was leading with gentleness and quietness of spirit, and with proficiency. I then exposed her to the ramp on the trailer, having her cross just the corner of it, she jumped and wanted to walk all over me again. Before long, she began to cross the ramp sideways, stepping up with her front feet and then her back. Finally, she became so confident that she easily placed any foot where I wanted it and quietly let it remain there. Eventually I taught the horse how to back into the trailer, so she not only went in the trailer forward and backwards, but at any given direction and pace. I pointed her towards the trailer and told the horse to walk in, I then backed the horse in and told the owner that when she goes home that she could take her horse that way. She was amazed at the responsiveness of her horse! Not only do good hands make good fences, but good fences make good hands! – Lew Sterrett