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God is in the business of *restoring* what's been broken
and *redeeming* whatever has been lost. The Lord can
reclaim and *repurpose* any life. He makes all things new.
Your life has a story—one that He isn't done writing.

INTRODUCTION

Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.

~ Micah 7:8, NLT

Falling down is inevitable. We're all going to experience falls of one kind or another throughout our lives, starting in our toddler years clear through into old age. The reasons we fall will vary from having a mishap, to poor balance, clumsy episodes, uneven surfaces, feeling dizzy, slippery paths, weak muscles, or impaired vision. In my childhood, and even now as an adult, I've taken numerous falls. Allow me to share, what I'd consider, my top three most impressive falls.

A group of neighbor kids were gathered in a nearby empty corner lot, admiring a blue and white dirt bike that belonged to an older teen boy. At 12 years old, I managed to talk him into letting me sit on it ... with the engine running I might add. In a matter of seconds, it became obvious that I didn't understand how the brake mechanism worked, because the motorbike jerked forward and took off down the field.

INTRODUCTION

All the kids began chasing after me and yelling, “Put on the brakes!” but I froze and had no idea how in the world to stop myself. Glancing up, I realized I was in serious trouble. My off-roading was about to become “on” roading. Straight ahead was a busy two-lane street. I was a goner, or at least I thought so, until the motocross all-of-a-sudden collided with a large pile of dirt directly in my path.

The bike came to an immediate halt, but as the nature of gravitational force would have it, I kept going. My body flipped over the front of the handlebars, throwing me into the air and then landing on top of the mound of dirt with a loud thud. The worst part of the entire debacle wasn’t being physically banged up but having a whole bunch of onlookers be witness to my mortifying accident.

On to the next fall.

While on a youth group ski trip at age 15, a friend talked me into abandoning the bunny hill for the more advanced incline intended for expert skiers ... which I was not. Exiting the chairlift, I noticed a difference with the snow—it was icier at this altitude. Gulp! *Wow, this didn’t look so steep from down below.*

My friend took off with ease, leaving me to fend for myself. Though I wish I could brag about gracefully weaving back and forth down the slope, that was not the case. Instead, my skis were pointed straight down the mountain. Any commonsense knowledge I had about skiing was obliterated from my mind as my acceleration increased with each passing second.

As I neared the base, a crowd of skiers stood in my direct path, and before I knew it, I had slammed into one of them with record breaking speed. Upon impact, we crashed fiercely to the ground. Afterwards, I rose to my feet, stunned but thankful to still be in one piece. Looking in the direction of the innocent bystander, whom I’d barreled into, my heart sank seeing them lying face down in the snow, not moving.

Get up, please get up!

Watching multiple people rushing over to assist, panicked thoughts flooded my mind of spending the rest of my life in jail for involuntary manslaughter. After what felt like an eternity, the skier sat up, and a wave of relief washed over me.

Phew! They're alive!

Later in the day, my youth pastor pulled me aside, then resting his hands on my shoulders said, "Andrea, the accident earlier today didn't involve a random stranger. It was actually Shannon who you struck, and she's been diagnosed with a mild concussion." Out of all the individuals on the mountain, my absolute stupidity had injured a girl from *my own* youth group. What are the odds of that? Driving back down the mountain, with her in the van, was a lesson in humility unlike any other.



Living well doesn't mean never falling. Falling is inevitable.
It's the rising back up after a fall that matters most.

One final "fall" story occurred as an adult while running an annual 10k race. As I passed by the aid station, I reached down and grabbed a cup and proceeded to drink the cool, refreshing water while *still* running.

Somehow, I had it in my mind that this is what hard-core runners do. And maybe that is true, however, I was an amateur runner trying to appear like a rockstar. As the cup came to my mouth and I tilted my head back, I took my eyes off the road for a split second.

Wouldn't you know it, there happened to be raised cracks in the pavement right at that location. Having no forewarning or time to brace myself, I fell fast and with incredible force onto

the hard asphalt beneath my feet. Lying flat on my face in complete shock, another runner came over to lend a helping hand back up. Once standing, they asked if I was OK, and in my still flabbergasted and shaken state, I nodded yes. Hearing this, they set off running again, while I gained my bearings.

Truth be told, I didn't know the level of injuries to my body or what shape I was in. Taking a quick inventory, I discovered my right knuckles were scraped and bleeding, and my left knee and elbow took the brunt of the fall and throbbed with pain. Was I going to take a seat and cry my eyes out, walk back to the start line, or keep going and finish the race?

After evaluating my options momentarily, I decided to press on and complete what I'd started. This required bucking up and holding my emotions together for the remainder of the race; however, once I crossed the finish line and saw my family waiting there, the tears came flooding out. Even with the delay, I still finished in 1:03:35 with a 10:15 pace. Not too bad!



Falling can be a laughable, embarrassing, or downright painful ordeal. Sometimes though, it isn't a literal fall that trips us up, but the unbearable sorrows and insurmountable sufferings of this life. Rather than busted and bleeding on the outside, we find ourselves broken and bruised on the inside.

During this kind of fall, the devil seems to waste no time kicking us while we're down. We often find ourselves moving from joy to dread, passion to apathy, strength to weakness, courage to fear, purpose to doubt, living victorious to defeat, contentment to dissatisfaction, and hope to despair.

My own journey of undergoing a fall that left me with such internal wounds will unfold on the pages to follow. The details surrounding my personal story of a shattered marriage might be different from yours. But no matter the dark road you've walked,

INTRODUCTION

intertwined throughout this book you'll find practical truths and insights relevant to your unique situation. I have also sought to sprinkle in some humor, as laughter has played a vital role in my recovery process. Laughter is truly medicine for our souls.

It is my greatest desire that you walk away from this book with the needed hope and inspiration to move beyond your own brokenness and toward a renewed mind, recovered life, and restored soul.

What does it mean to *move beyond*? Imagine looking at an object sitting in front of you, then shifting your eyes upward to take in other sights in the distance. There is still an awareness and visibility of the object's presence, but it's not your primary focus, grabbing your attention in an all-consuming, controlling, or captivating manner. You're able to take notice of it, but also appreciate the scenery beyond.

“Moving beyond brokenness” encompasses allowing yourself to wholeheartedly feel the pain, sorrow, and despair before you, while also fixing your gaze beyond to joy and restoration. It's not one *or* the other, but rather one *and* the other. We can look after our emotional wounds brought on by the wretched and grievous happenings we've encountered, while concurrently doing the work to pursue hope and healing.



We all carry around scars, lingering effects, and lasting impacts left behind by hurtful experiences, but we don't have to allow them to define or defeat us.

Anytime you're walking along an unknown path, it's easier to navigate with the help of a guide—someone who is familiar with the terrain you will be trudging through. This isn't to say I'm an

INTRODUCTION

expert on the topic of suffering, as I don't think it's possible for any human to comprehend or explain the mystery of it all in its entirety. Nevertheless, like you, I'm a sojourner passing through this crazy life, and along the way have become well acquainted with an onslaught of raw human emotions on a personal level and in my role as a pastoral counselor.

At the close of each chapter, I will be stepping out of my past places of heartache and into my present role of one who is *a soul made well* to offer a "Soul Refreshment" and "Tools" section. Like a compassionate friend lending a helping hand after a tumble, the biblical application and practical, hands-on tools provided, serve to equip and empower you to rise in pursuit of wholeness and wellness.

You're invited, within the context of these pages, into a safe space where you can let your guard down, breathe, and receive what is needed in this season of your life. At the same time, the information provided doesn't replace professional counseling.

Therapy is individualized, offering specific support as you identify, reflect on, and navigate through losses, adversities, or traumatizing life events. Additionally, sharing one's story and feeling heard, plays an instrumental role in the healing process. This cannot be accomplished through a book.

If you find any content emotionally triggering, please skip that section or take a break from reading. Continuing to read may bring about more harm than good.

No matter the cause or extent of your brokenness, God is in the business of restoring what's been broken and redeeming whatever has been lost. The Lord can reclaim and repurpose any life. He makes all things new. Your life has a story—one that God isn't done writing.

Whatever your reason for picking up this book, I am so glad you're taking steps to become *a soul made well*!

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION