

We all have good days when everything seems to go right and bad days when nothing goes right. Our lives are full of ups and downs, twists and turns. We can feel on top of the world one day and be desperate for hope the next because we've fallen flat on our face.

One year while we were still living in Lake Arrowhead, CA, I went to the seminary in St. Louis for a symposium on Bioethics. It was one of the best and most challenging seminars I've ever attended. The seminary in St. Louis is not very far from the St. Louis Zoo. So I got up in the mornings and ran down around the Zoo and back. Usually no one else was around, except for an occasional runner or walker. One morning there was a car in the parking lot that seemed to be tracking me, driving parallel to me and moving at about the same speed. So I got suspicious and little afraid. Instead of watching where I was running, I kept one eye on the car. So I didn't see uneven joint in the sidewalk, hit it wrong and fell flat on my face. My fingers were bloody, my knee and face were skinned up and I still have a couple of scars on my arm from the fall. The guys in the car ignored me completely. It was embarrassing going back to the campus, sitting in the presentations with band aids on my fingers and a scratched up face.

Sara Tucholsky hit a high and low in a matter of seconds. She played softball for the Western Oregon. Actually she was usually on the bench. But because the regular right fielder had misplayed a ball in the first game of the double header that would decide which team would go onto the playoffs, Sara was in right field. Sara was a senior who had never hit a home run in her whole softball career until she came to bat in the 2nd inning with two runners on base. Sara hit a curve ball over the left field fence and starting running around the basis. Everything was great until Sara missed first base, try to turn around to go back to touch the base and heard something in her knee pop. Sara fell down and had to crawl back to first. Then she asked the umpire what to do. If anyone from her team touched her she would be out. Sara knew that if she tried to stand she would fall again. The umpires huddled while Sara was in pain.

We're all like Sara. We've all fallen, are in pain and don't know what to do. Our fall is not like the one I took in St. Louis or Sara took on the softball field. Our fall is far worse. We all fell into sin. The Apostle Paul tells us, **"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."** (Romans 3:23 NLT) God's Law demands perfection and we are nowhere close to perfection. We stumble and fall far too often. We may look good on the outside, but our sinful hearts are a mess. We are not so good on the inside. Jesus knows that and said, **"For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness."** (Mark 7:21-22 NLT)

The problem is that we are sinful people, selfish, self-centered people living in a world that has been messed up by sin. Instead of looking to God, we look inside ourselves for answers. But can we find the right answers there? My heart, my thoughts, my desires are messed up by sin.

Do we really love God with our whole heart or do we want to be like Adam and Eve and decide for ourselves what is right and what is wrong? Do we think about things that are noble, pure, right and true? Or do we spend our time reading or watching things that undermine our faith, our family, and our relationships. Anger can eat us up on the inside. Greed and pride can drive a wedge between us and the people closest to us. Lust and deceit can destroy a marriage and a family. Our lives are marked by scars from our sins, by times when we have fallen and can't get up on our own. We need help.

God gets that about us. That is why Jesus entered our world. Jesus is God with us to rescue us from our sinful, selfish selves. Jesus is really God, so He can do what we can't do. And He is really a person, so He understands what we are going through. Jesus was left behind by his family when he was only 12 years old. Jesus had a family that didn't always understand him and at times thought he was crazy. Jesus was criticized and condemned by the religious leaders of His day. Some people thought of Jesus like a genie, someone who could give them what they wanted. Even Jesus' closest friends didn't understand when Jesus said He had to suffer, die and rise again.

Jesus felt the same kind of emotions we feel. He got tired and was hungry. He was filled with sorrow and cried at the death of a friend. He needed time alone. He got angry when people did the wrong things. Jesus understands us. The book of Hebrews tells us, **“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin....”** Because Jesus gets us just the way we are, we can turn to Him for help. Hebrews continues, **“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”** (Hebrews 4:15-16 NLT)

That brings us back to Sara sitting on first base. While the Umpires were trying to figure out what to do, Mallory Holtman, the slugging first baseman for the Central Washington, came up to the umpires and asked, “Can I help her around the bases?” One Umpire asked why she would want to do that. Another said “Do it.” So Mallory Holtman and short stop Liz Wallace from Central Washington picked Sara up, carried her around the bases and carried her home.

God offers to do the same for us. Jesus wants to pick us up and carry us home. Jesus tells us, **“There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”** (John 14:2-3 NLT) Let Jesus do this. We can't make it on our own. Jesus has the strength we don't have. He is able and willing to help. Let Jesus do what He came to do. Let Him pick you up and carry you home.