

On falling

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Twice in the past two years I've taken a hard fall on ice: once at night walking on a dimly-lit sidewalk and another time on black ice in broad daylight. The first time no one was around. The second time I was in a public parking lot. My first act after the fall—before getting up—was to look around to see if anyone had observed my embarrassing fall.

I used to say that if I started slipping on ice I could catch myself in midair and land on my feet. Not so anymore. The falls have not only made me more cautious walking on snow and ice. They've humbled me, too.

The potential of falling is the risk we take in choosing to walk upright rather than ambulate on all fours. It's a choice our ancient, prehistoric ancestors made for us. Yet each toddler has to learn how to move from crawling to walking. When a child doesn't seem to be able to walk on schedule, it becomes a matter for parental anxiety. Once accomplished, it's a source of joy for child and parents alike.

Pride goes before a fall, the Bible says. A fall brings us down to earth. It reminds us of our vulnerability. A fall in the senior years of life reveals to us the fragility of life.

Late in life my parents both fell in their retirement community apartment, under circumstances that are a mystery to me. Neither one could help the other get up, so they both just lay there until someone found them.

Though we stand upright, we can come tumbling down. Usually, we get up again.

A fall can remind us of our final movement toward the ground, our death. From dust we come and to dust again we'll return when our loved ones lay us to rest under the ground. Then we will not rise again. Not until we rise in glory.