

THROWN

A FALL FROM A RUNAWAY HORSE
LEADS TO HEALING OF ANOTHER KIND

By Julie Davenport

Dear Dad,

You have always been an example to me of our Heavenly Father. I want to please Him with my life, and I think I've always wanted to please you with my life, too. I'm thankful to know that you love me just the same when, in my own strength, I can't hang on anymore. Just like the Lord is there when we fall, you were the first one there when I fell.

That's how I started the note that I gave my dad. But I'm jumping ahead.

That note was after the fall.

I had a blessed childhood growing up on a district church campground. My grandparents were Assemblies of God ministers and missionaries, and my parents were also AG ministers. I went to Evangel University and married a minister who had gone to Central Bible College. We served two wonderful churches and had two beautiful daughters.

Then, after 13 years of marriage, life as I knew it ended. We went through a very difficult divorce. Although friends and family and even the Executive Presbytery assured me that there were biblical grounds for my divorce and that I had done all I could, for years

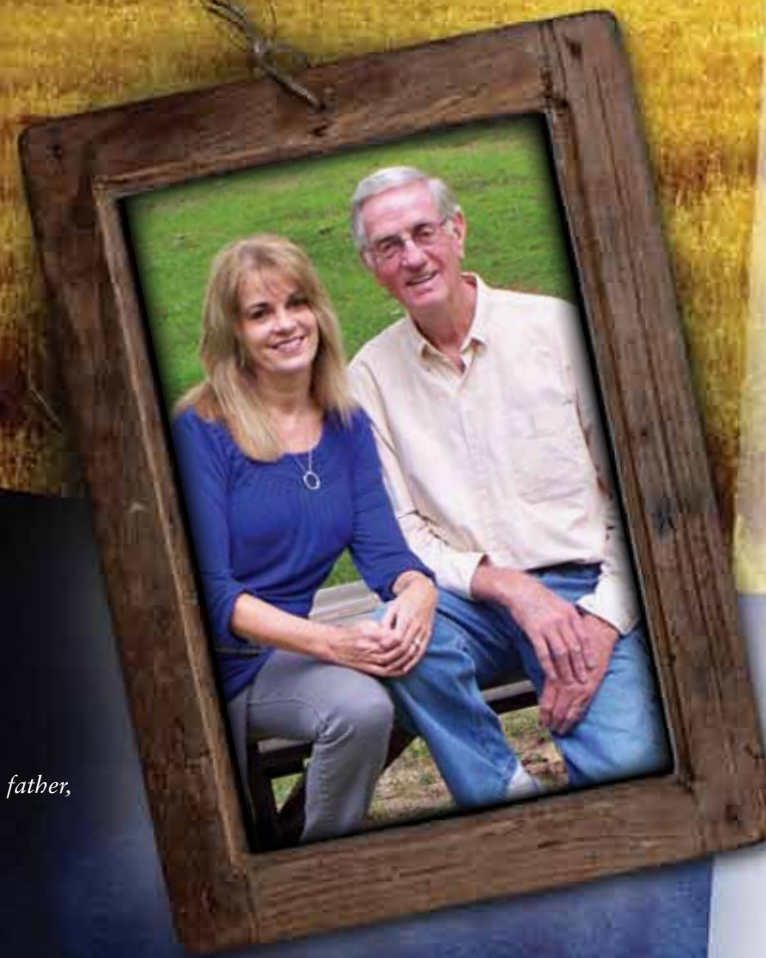
I suffered from a sense of failure and guilt about what I should have done, or could have done, for things to have turned out differently. For several years I suffered not only emotionally, but also physically with headaches and neck pain.

About eight years after the divorce, I was visiting my parents and went to my brother's nearby farm to ride horses. My dad had taught me how to ride when I was a little girl, and it was one of my favorite things to do. Some other friends were also riding, and the horse I got on was not completely broken yet. Dad told me when I got on to be sure and not let the horse run.

We had a long, pleasant ride far back into the fields and woods. On our return to the barn, one of the horses in front of me began running. My horse also began to run. Suddenly I felt like I was in the Kentucky Derby. My horse was going so fast, I could hardly hang on. I yelled to try to get him to stop. I pulled on the reins. I tried just hanging on. I tried everything I had been taught to do.

Finally, I jerked the reins to one side to try to get him to stop. At full speed, my horse sidestepped one way, and I went flying off in the opposite direction. I flew through the air, hit the ground and bounced a couple of times. I couldn't move; I could hardly breathe.

The first person to me was my dad. He had been watching me and saw what happened. After checking me carefully, realizing we were many miles from the nearest town, he picked me up, and we headed for the hospital. Once there I was strapped to a



*Julie Davenport with her father,
Roger Perkin*

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board for several hours before they were able to make sure that nothing was broken.

As I lay in the hospital, and in the days that followed, I cried and tortured myself thinking about what I should have done to keep from falling off the horse.

I should have just hung on tighter. I shouldn't have pulled the reins to the side. I shouldn't have let go. I shouldn't have gotten on the horse in the first place.

While lying there, I began to realize that I was not just grieving over falling off the horse; I was grieving over my failed marriage. I was playing the same mental game over this accident that I did with my divorce.

I was saying to myself, *I should have just hung on tighter. I should have tried harder. I shouldn't have let go. I should have done something sooner.*

I had worried so much about the harm the divorce had caused, not only to me and to my daughters, but also to my dad and mom and the rest of my family. I had, for years, tortured myself with what I should have done.

A peace began to come over me as I thought back to when I lay on the ground after falling off the horse. I thought about the reaction of my father, who has often been a picture to me of my Heavenly Father. When Dad got to me, he didn't tell me what I should have done. He didn't scold me or tell me that I was a failure at riding horses. He simply picked me up, took me to the hospital, and he and my family cared for me with love in the days that followed.

As my body healed, my spirit began to heal from the love of God and the love of my family. I was not only going through a physical heal-

ing, but an emotional one as well. I realized that I needed to let go of the reins of controlling my life, and let God take charge of not only the good but also the hurts.

The truth was, I had been thrown off the horse, and there was nothing I could do to change that fact. My marriage had ended, and there was nothing I could do to change that either. No "should haves" were going to undo the past.

Although my life was thrown off the course I had planned, God has been so good and faithful to me. I no longer suffer from chronic headaches and neck pain. Although I still struggle emotionally at times, I have a peace deep down that my Heavenly Father loves me in spite of the hurts of my life and that He continues to work all things together for my good.

On this earth there will be run-

away horses. And there will be divorce and all kinds of trials and pain. When those things happen and we fall — whether it is an accident or the result of our own error — we have a Heavenly Father who wants to give us His grace and love and peace if we will just accept it.

It's not what happens when we get thrown, but what happens afterward that counts. We have a Heavenly Father who picks us up and carries us until we can breathe again and can walk on our own. With His help, we get up again. We walk it off. We make new choices. And we heal.

Dad, thanks for always being there when I fall.

Love, Julie e

JULIE DAVENPORT attends Blue Springs (Mo.) Assembly of God.

E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

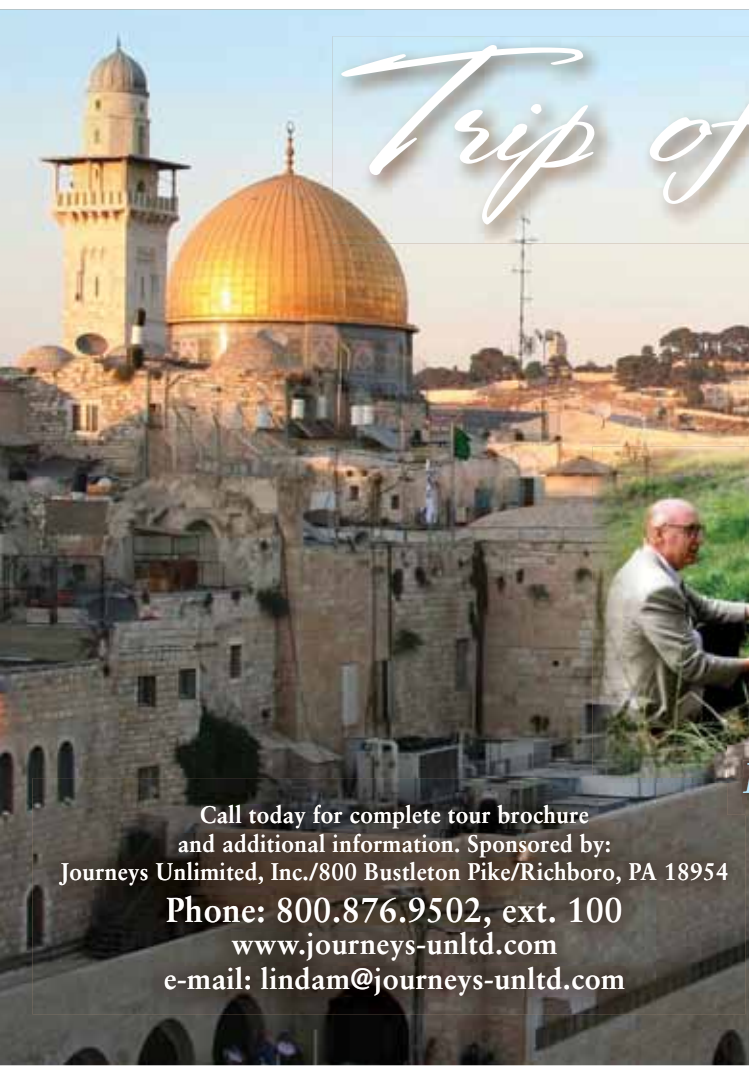
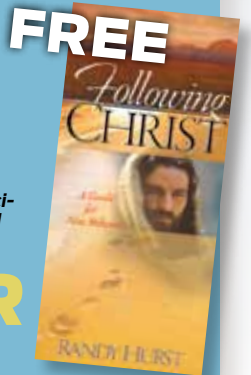
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

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