

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Deuteronomy 22:8

How To Fall Gracefully

When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

In reality, the following stunt occurs in an interval of time not much longer than a buck snort. I'm talking about how to fall gracefully from a tree stand. The inexperienced outdoorsman enjoys the event without benefit of proper training in form and style. Because I have some experience in this matter, let me give you a step by step process for a graceful exit from your platform.

1. You're precariously balanced in your stand trying to admire the surroundings far below. All is well. Suddenly, a nail gives way, or the wind blows, or a squirrel violently runs up the backside of the tree. Reflexively, you flinch. Not just any ordinary flinch but a spasmodic convulsion of bootlace loosening, arm flailing, back wrenching gestures. Don't panic. It's just a normal fall. I understand your concern. The first time is always the scariest.

2. The first order of business is to consider what to do with your gun or bow. If you're hunting with a gun, throw it as far as you can but don't throw it toward the squirrel. There's a reason we don't arm them in the woods. If you're using a bow, hold on to it. You might need it in step four. However, remember to fling away the arrow. It's quite okay to toss it toward the squirrel. It's useless to him without the bow. Thankfully, he's not evolved enough to know how to use it as a spear.

3. Now that you've made a decision about what to do with your weapon, you need to concentrate on technique. There are three types of falls that you will be judged on:

- a. The swan dive – Chin up, feet together, legs straight, arms extended. If you're still holding the bow, clench it tightly in your teeth. Push off with your toes using a slight spring with the knees. Bend slightly at the waist as you clear the platform. Scores of 9.5+ are possible on your first attempt.
- b. The two and a half double LaFlouzie – Chin down, feet and legs crossed several times, arms tucked one across your chest and the other around your back. If you're still holding the bow, lob it a few feet ahead of you. Jettison away from the platform like a frightened hare. That will confuse the squirrel. Now, snatch the bow as you gyrate in the air (a clean grab is worth a full 2 points).
- c. Free style – The preferred form. However, scoring is more stringent. You're on your own with this one, bow or no bow. Bear in mind that points are deducted for grimacing.

4. Once in the air, there are several things you can do. You can concentrate on the trivialities of step three. Or, if you're still clinging to the bow, you can rake it against the tree as you descend and hope it will snag a limb (a tree limb, not one of your limbs). Or, you can just go with the flow. I prefer to go with it, mostly because I've learned that resistance is futile. This step, by the way, is the most enjoyable part of the fall. You've forgotten about your clumsy moves on the platform. You couldn't care less where you threw your gun. And, quite honestly, it's a feel good moment. There's something existential about being suspended in mid air twenty feet above the forest floor, if even for a split second. You wish you could hold on to that moment forever.

5. Now the hard part: sticking the landing. If you've chosen to do the swan dive or the two and a half double LaFlouzie, you've realized by now that form ain't gonna help at this point. You'll earn a few participation points but that's about it. You'll quickly go from swans and LaFlouzies to beating the air like a molting goose. It won't help. The air molecules are not dense enough to allow a firm grip. FYI: this part of your fall is called "gravity," a ponderous effect of macro-geodynamic forces that you should have considered in step one. You're at it's mercy and only the angels know how you will end up.

However, if you chose to fall free style, there's hope. Free style fallers are always alert to the effects of gravity. We, uh, I mean they see the ground coming and attempt an impossible series of contortions that will minimize the side-effects of gravity. We, er, I mean they hit the ground with at least one leg, if not two or three. Oh wait, that third leg is the squirrel's. If you're lucky, you've landed on him and he's broken your fall. If you're not so lucky, you'll be triaging injuries (yours, not the squirrel's). That's because there's no reason you should have considered step one without a safety harness.

That's the lesson for outdoorsmen in Deuteronomy 22:8. In this Scripture, a parapet was a rail or barrier that kept people from exiting-stage-left off the roof of a house, a common gathering area in those days. Incidentally, this command was a subtle reminder for the Israelites that they would soon settle down and build permanent homes. Perhaps some of the people heard this command with glad anticipation. God was about to fulfill His promise.

Today, building codes require attention to safety issues. Even when these rules seem extreme, it's the right thing to do. We are obliged to care for the general safety of those who enter, live, or work on our properties.

As Christians, we are commissioned to attend to the spiritual condition of the world. This means putting up parapets to keep people safely within hearing of the Gospel. Those parapets are things like personal testimonies, Christian lifestyles, proclamation of the Word, and helping hands. It's the right thing to do. Some people will hear with glad anticipation and God will fulfill His promise of salvation.

Others will leap over the safety parapets of the Gospel. There's not much we can do if they chose to ignore what will save their lives. I suppose that they will discover their own way of how to fall. But I assure them it won't be with grace.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.
(Proverbs 14:12)

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Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Deuteronomy 22:8

How To Fall Gracefully

HOOK

1. In your view, what is the ideal tree stand height? Explain the advantage(s) of your choice.

2. What safety features do you, or would, look for when purchasing a tree stand? Why these?

3. Your friend has fallen and can't get up. Explain how you would take inventory of his injuries.

LINE

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Today, building codes require attention to safety. Even when these rules seem extreme, it's the right thing to do. We are obliged to care for the safety of those who enter, live, or work on our properties.

As Christians, we are commissioned to attend to the spiritual condition of the world. This means putting up parapets to keep people safely within hearing of the Gospel. Those parapets are things like personal testimonies, Christian lifestyles, proclamation of the Word, and helping hands. It's the right thing to do. Some people will hear with glad anticipation and God will fulfill His promise of salvation.

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Define grace.

How do you practice lifestyle evangelism? What will you do to improve that area of your Christian witness?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: grace safety lifestyle evangelism
