

you'll
get
through
this

Down and
Out, but
Never Alone

Introduction

In the first *Rocky* movie, the climax comes near the end of the film when an unknown Italian southpaw gets a chance to box the reigning heavyweight champion. Apollo Creed, the flamboyant titleholder, sees the fight as an exhibition more than a serious boxing match. He plans to dance around the ring, give his opponent a chance to have his moment in the spotlight, entertain the crowds, and then knock out Rocky. The problem is, no one told Rocky Balboa, the “Italian Stallion,” that it was a show. He came to fight.

In the first round, Rocky catches Apollo Creed with the full force of a left uppercut and Apollo hits the mat like a sack of wheat. It is the first time he has ever been knocked down in a fight. When he gets to his feet he begins to beat on Rocky mercilessly, but the challenger simply won’t stay down. He won’t quit.

When the bell sounds for the second round, these two men go to war. They exchange punches over the next twelve rounds and Rocky is on the receiving end of most of them.

By the fourteenth round, Rocky is stumbling around the ring like a drunken man. Then Creed floors him with a fierce right upper-cut that sends him sprawling to the mat. The referee begins the ten-count as Rocky tries to stand. His face is swollen and bloody, his body is beaten, and his energy reserves have been on

empty for at least three rounds. His trainer, Mickey, screams, “Down! Down! Stay down!” He pleads with Rocky to just give in to the inevitable and stay on the mat.

But as the referee gets to “nine,” Rocky staggers to his feet. The crowd chants his name over and over again. Apollo, who has thrown his hands in the air as a declaration of victory, looks over at Rocky in disbelief. The fight continues. Rocky pounds the champ with a shattering punch that cracks his ribs just as the bell sounds to end the fourteenth round.

In Rocky’s corner, the fatigued and relentless boxer’s eye is so puffy that he can’t see. He orders Mickey, “Cut me.” In Apollo’s corner, his trainer tells the champ, “You’re bleeding inside; I’m gonna stop the fight.” The injured champ responds with fierce determination, “You ain’t stopping nothing! You ain’t stopping nothing!” Just before the bell sounds to bring the two boxers back to the center of the ring, Rocky says to his trainer, “You stop this fight, I’ll kill you.” By the end of the fifteenth and final round, both fighters are standing—but barely!

This movie won three Oscars, including best picture of 1976. It was made on a budget of 1.1 million dollars and was filmed in twenty-eight days. But it eventually made over 225 million dollars and inspired six more *Rocky* films.

There is something compelling about a person with an unquenchable spirit. We are drawn to those who won’t give up, won’t give in, and won’t stay down on the mat. In our hearts, all of us wish we had the strength and courage to get back up on our feet when life has knocked us down ... again.

| You'll get through this, what a bold statement! |

You'll Get Through This Study Guide

Talk About It

Give an example of a movie or book character with an unquenchable spirit and shocking resiliency when faced with powerful adversity. Why are people drawn to a character like this?

Video Teaching Notes

As you watch the video teaching segment for session 2 featuring Max Lucado, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Bounce back like Bozo

Joseph, an ancient, biblical Bozo

Joseph's dreams

From the heights to the depths in a matter of hours—have you ever been there?

Going down, down, down

Your destiny—what keeps you on your feet when life tries to knock you down?

What do you have that you can't lose?

| Believe in God's destiny for you. |

4. How did Joseph's family members respond to his dreams?

How do you think you would have responded had you been one of Joseph's older brothers and he told you these dreams?

5. Joseph knew that God had a destiny for his life. He was confident that one day he would have a place of influence and impact—God had shown him this. How does knowing that God has a plan for our lives help us bounce back when times get dark, painful, and just plain hard?

What has God shown you about his plan and destiny for your life that could help you stand strong in difficult times?

Read: Genesis 37:23–28

6. If you were Joseph, what might have been going through your mind as your brothers plotted and then sold you as a slave? What might you have felt as you were walking in a caravan, looking back as your brothers, homeland, and dreams disappeared over the horizon?

Don't get sucked into short-term thinking. Your struggles will not last forever, but you will.

7. Joseph begins Genesis 37 as the favored son, the recipient of dreams predicting his prominence, and a special assignment from his father. By the end of the chapter he has been stripped of his beautiful robe, rejected by his brothers, and sold as a slave. Tell about a time your own life took a radical shift in a short period of time. How was your faith impacted by this sudden and unexpected change of events?

Read: Ephesians 1:3; John 15:13–16; 1 Peter 1:18–20; and
2 Corinthians 5:1

8. When the apostle Paul tells the believers in Ephesus that God has “blessed [them] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (NKJV), what does he mean? Make a list of some spiritual blessings we have through faith in Jesus.

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How could a deep and abiding awareness of these blessings help a Christian stand strong in hard times?

9. Jesus tells his followers that they are his loved and chosen children. How can a firm conviction that we are precious and valued children of God help us through the tough seasons of life?

God chose you. The choice wasn't obligatory, required, compulsory, forced, or compelled. He selected you because he wanted to.

10. How can a firm conviction that heaven is our home and we will spend eternity with our loving heavenly Father help us bounce back and stay on our feet in the challenging times of life?

Closing Prayer

Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:

- Thank God that heaven is your eternal home and destination through faith in Jesus, and pray that this reality will fortify and strengthen you in the hard times of life.
- Thank God that he has a plan and destiny for your life. Pray that it will become clearer with each passing day.
- Lift up friends and family members who are in a time of going down, down, down. If they are Christians, pray that they will remember who they are—chosen and loved children of God.
- Celebrate the reality and hope of heaven. Praise God for opening the way to eternity with him through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Between Sessions

Honor a Bozo in Your Life!

God has placed one or more people in each of our lives who are resilient, long-suffering, and who have bounced back from more tough times than Bozo himself. These people inspire us and give us hope.

In the coming week, write a note to one such person in your life and thank them for demonstrating tenacious faith in hard times. Let them know that you see God alive in their heart and life.

Helping a Friend Who Is Feeling Down, Down, Down

If a member of your small group is experiencing a time when they are feeling down and things seem to be getting worse, contact them this coming week. Ask them three questions:

1. How can I pray for you during this time?
2. How can I serve you in the coming days? (Be sure to follow through.)
3. Do you realize that you are a loved and cherished child of God? (If they have forgotten, take time to remind them.)

Dare to Write It Down

God gave Joseph a vision of what would be. It took decades for the dream to become a reality. But it did!

Likewise, God has given you moments when you have had a picture of how he wants to work in and through your life. Briefly list these moments on a sheet of paper and put it in your Bible. Or type it into a document on your phone and keep it with you wherever you go. When you wonder if you can make it through a challenging time, read this list and remember God's plan for your life.

You are God's child. He saw you, picked you, and placed you.
"You did not choose me. I chose you" (John 15:16 NLT).

Journal

Use the space provided below to write reflections on any of the following topics:

- Write the names of a few people in your life who have exhibited resilient faith. Make a list of ways you have seen them hold the hand of Jesus as they have walked through hard times.
- List some of the dreams God has given you and how you believe he wants to work in and through your life for his glory.

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- Continue adding to your list from question 8 more things that you have, through faith in Jesus, which no one can ever take away.

Recommended Reading

As you reflect on the lessons of this session, read chapter 2 of the book *You'll Get Through This* by Max Lucado. In preparation for session 3, you might want to read chapters 3–4.