



NANAKOROBİ YAOKI



In January of this year, I lost a dear brother to cancer. His name was Steve Manders. Steve was 54 years old when he went to be with the Lord on Jan 16th. If you ever met Steve, he would tell you that he was first a disciple of God, second, he was a husband and father, and third that he was a missionary / coach from Australia who lived in Japan. Steve was an avid reader and loved an ice cold Coke. I met Steve about 7 years ago in an online men's group called Soulcon. There Steve would share about what God was doing in his life, his family (wife and daughter), and who Steve really was. Steve and I became close over this time period, and we would share Marco Polo's weekly. If you don't know, Marco Polo is an app. that you can video chat with someone individually or in a group setting. So I got to see him and his life through these polo's. I found it neat to watch him walk around Japan while telling me about what God was doing and his family. I often asked him, "What does tomorrow look like?" for he was always 13 hours a day ahead of me. The best part was when I asked him to pray for someone that there was prayer going up to the Lord at all times of the day.

The shirt I wear today was made as a tribute to this Samurai. The men's group Soulcon did a 6 week challenge in his honor and the Soulcon Challenge Manders Shirt represents the spirit of the challenge.

- On the front - Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) states "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might"

- On the Sleeve: it is the traditional Kanji (Con Ge) for Samurai, symbolizing discipline, honor, and relentless perseverance (per-se-ver-ance).
- On the back of this shirt is the Japanese proverb Nanakorobi yaoki. Which means “Fall down seven times, get up eight times” It represents resilience, perseverance, and the spirit of never giving up, implying that failures are inevitable, but rising again is what matters. This Kanji (Con Ge) carries the message every man needs to live out.

Nanakorobi yaoki is a reminder that life is not about perfection. It is about getting back up... again and again... and continuing the fight. It represents a commitment to stand back up no matter how many times you fall. That every failure we face is an opportunity to learn and grow stronger. We can't let the enemy keep us down. He will try to trip us up and knock us down and there will be times that he thinks he has defeated us. But when we decide not to give up, when we decide not to stay down, when we decide to get back up fighting he doesn't stand a chance and runs away. Now he won't run far and he will keep coming trying to keep us down.

The Bible is full of men that fell many times and rose up time after time. Here are just a few.

- Moses: Overcame his fears and past to deliver the Israelites. He had several instances of failure or disobedience.
- Jonah: Bounced back after trying to run away from God's calling. Jonah's failures are primarily defined by his disobedience and resentment rather than a specific, countable number of actions.
- David: Despite severe sins of adultery and murder, he was convicted, repented, and was restored to walk with God. While he faced numerous personal and national conflicts, his failures are generally categorized into key spiritual, moral, and leadership lapses, particularly his passivity as a father and his misuse of power.
- Simon Peter: After denying Jesus three times, he was restored and became a foundational leader in the early church. Simon Peter often acted or spoke before thinking.
- Elijah: Following his victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah lost his courage, experienced deep depression, and doubted God after threats from Queen Jezebel, leading him to flee to the wilderness and ask to die. He was cared for by God and went on to continue his ministry, ultimately never dying but being taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

Yes, all these men had times that they fell, got back up and fell again, they all made mistakes but didn't let those mistakes keep them defeated.

Proverbs 24:16 “For a righteous man may fall seven times and raise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.” This scripture also emphasizes perseverance, suggesting that falling is not failure, but staying down is.

So how do we rise up? We rise through God's grace, His strength, learning from our falls, and refusing to stay down, ultimately rising back up stronger, wiser, and better after every setback.

Psalm 37:23-24 - *"The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; though he falls, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand."*

Micah 7:8 "Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light"

In many cases these men had other men in their lives that they could count on.

- Moses had Aaron, Jethro, and his sons Gershom and Eliezer
- Jonah had King of Nineveh, his father Amittai, and Elijah
- David had his Mighty Men
- Simon Peter had his brother Andrew, James and John
- Eliajh had Elisha, Obadiah, Ahad and Ahaziah

They didn't do it on their own. They had men that helped them, guided them, and inspired them to keep going.

So, no matter how many times we fall we need to remember Nanakorobi Yaoki. Lord, when I fall once, I get back up. When I fall 2, I get back up. When I fall 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 times, I get back up and keep fighting.

Why fall 7 times and rise up 8? The math doesn't match. There are many different interpretations of why. If you have time Google it. Here is mine: When you were a baby you learned to crawl before you walked. So when you first started to walk, you fell. So, you rose up before you fell for the first time. You didn't stay there, did you? You had others to pick you up and dust you off. You got back up and keep moving forward to new and better things. It's the same with our spiritual life. Even though we fall, we keep advancing, learning from our past while keeping our eyes on our future.

I told Steve that one day I was going to hug his neck and one day I will. Just won't be on this side of Heaven. Steve was a mentor, friend, and most importantly a brother. He was a Samurai among warriors. His last year on this Earth was hard for him battling cancer which is not easy for anyone. Steve made it look easy. Even though he was down, he kept rising. He kept encouraging others, kept sharing God's word, and kept loving his family and friends. In his last polo to me he said these words "I have been resting up, trying to get enough energy to do things I need to do, work, things, and spending time with family. I want to live life as normal as possible. I'm doing alright considering. I am glad of the check ins, that people around the world were praying and thinking of me. It's encouraging, very encouraging." Steve lived out his favorite Japanese proverb Nanakorobi yaoki.