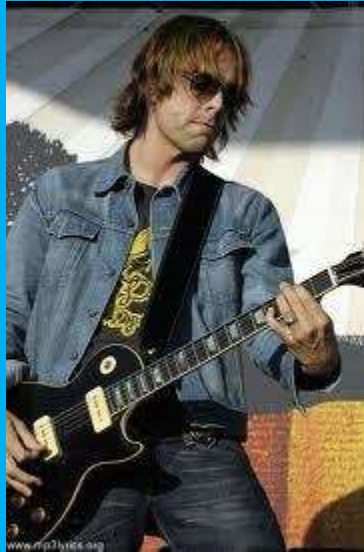


WRECKED INTO A BEAUTIFUL LETDOWN

I was the youth pastor at a **San Diego** church for a few years. One of the youth I had the privilege of encouraging was *Andy Shirley*, who would ask me questions about playing guitar and writing songs. He went off to college and changed his name (as many musicians do these days) to *Andrew*, then to *Drew*. Sean Combs changed his name to *Puff Daddy* and then to P. Diddy. I was glad Andy did not go with Drew Diddy, although I was kind of pulling for *Drew Wah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Drew*. Drew is currently the lead guitarist for the band *Switchfoot*.



Drew Shirley - Guitarist of Switchfoot

The father of the two guys who formed the band is a pastor in **San Diego**. Once at lunch, he asked another friend of mine to tell him about an experience that ended up being extremely disappointing or a huge letdown. Then he asked if any good came out of it or if God was able to use it in ways that were unexpected. After my friend explained how things had resolved in a wonderful way the father replied, "Ah, [what a beautiful letdown!](#)" That is the title of their fourth album.

Let me tell you about a time in my life when I was literally **wrecked**, and God turned it into a *beautiful letdown*. I was driving back from speaking and singing at a camp for inner-city kids from L.A. A car swerved in front of me and to avoid hitting it, I ran off the road and immediately into a tree at about 55 m.p.h. The tree won! The car, which was a Cordia, quickly became an accordion. It took them nearly an hour to get me out of the car. I had a concussion and a couple broken bones to show for my heroic act. I found out later that the paramedics on the scene predicted I had about **48 hours to live**. I was life flighted in a helicopter to the emergency room, intensive care, critical condition, etc. And as it turned out I lived! I know you were probably wondering if I made it or not. I could have been paralyzed or missing a limb, but God miraculously kept me alive and in pretty good shape!

I especially knew God wanted me alive because of what happened two nights earlier at that camp. I was making a phone call around 11 p.m. in what looked to be a dead-end corridor. All the kids were in their tents for the night. I glanced up and saw *a bear walking toward me* down this dead-end corridor! He wasn't a grizzly but he was bigger than me. I figure he must have been a teenager bear (he had his headphones on listening to *Beyoncé*, er, I mean, *Switchfoot*).

I didn't think I would be scared if I ever saw a bear in public because the bears in the zoo always seemed friendly not to mention the bear in the circus wearing his pink ballerina outfit while riding a bicycle. I grew up watching *Yogi the Bear*. Me & Yogi were tight, but as my luck would have it, this bear did not know Yogi! I was desperately praying, "Please God, don't let this bear eat me!" Right at the last minute he turned away from me and started to walk down to where all the kids were and boy was I glad! Well, not that he was going for the kids, but at that point it was every man for himself, if you know what I mean.

Later that night I heard all kinds of strange noises coming from the little petting zoo behind my cabin. We woke up to discover 2 bears had eaten Rosie the pig! I can hear you groaning in sadness but it could have been Rosie-Larry! I'm not sure how many kids would have petted that pig anyway.

Now when you run into a tree at 55 m.p.h. and you have a bear come at you and you live, you have a strong assurance that God wants you alive. Then it dawned on me, "*God wanted me alive before the accident as well.*" I just hadn't really thought about it much. I believe the biggest reason He kept me alive is so I could let people know that Jesus is real, He is the truth and He is my best friend!

A few months after my wreck, I was sharing the story and how God not only had a reason for me to still be alive, but that God had a purpose for every person hearing my voice, even if their car had not been wrecked. A teenager who had *planned to commit suicide* that night talked to me afterward. He realized God did have a purpose for his life so instead of walking out the door to end his life, he walked into a life that will never end with Jesus! God took my wrecked car and turned it into a beautiful letdown!

I think back to whatever little encouragement I could be to Andy-Andrew-Drew, and now see him playing guitar for millions of people! God is using this humble and genuine Christian in mighty ways. We may never know the impact we can have on someone and many times I'm sure we never will this side of Heaven. But I am convinced that when we do take the time to encourage others and help "the least of these," God has promised He will use those efforts to make an eternal difference (I Cor. 15:58). As Switchfoot sings, "You were meant to live for so much more we want more than this world has to offer."

This world and its promises will let you down. But if you look to God, *He can take those letdowns and make them beautiful*. So, when have you had a letdown that God made beautiful?