

## PICKED OFF

*A man who strays from the path of understanding  
comes to rest in the company of the dead.*

Proverbs 21:16

Who wouldn't be embarrassed getting picked off base? In major league baseball pickoffs seldom occur. When they are accomplished, they energize the defensive team. In 1983, the Toronto Blue Jays experienced the effect of pickoffs on the offensive team.

In the top of the tenth inning, Toronto led the Baltimore Orioles 4-3. The Orioles had substituted for all their regular catchers, and so inserted infielder Lenn Sakata behind home plate. With no outs, Bobby Bonnell took a large lead off first base. The outfielder strayed too far, however, and relief pitcher Tippy Martinez hurled the ball to the bag for the first out. Dave Collins walked as the next batter. The speedy Collins anticipated an easy steal off Sakata. But Martinez saw his large lead and picked him off too.



Willie Upshaw was Toronto's next batter. He beat out an infield hit and took his lead off first. Incredibly, the relief pitcher picked off his third consecutive runner of the inning. When the Orioles came to bat in the bottom half of the inning they quickly tied the score. Sakata, the "make-shift" catcher, added the final thorn in Toronto's side by belting a three-run homer for a 7-4 Baltimore victory.

Bonell, Collins and Upshaw were embarrassed walking back from first base. Each strayed too far from the base and suffered the consequences—an out and a lost opportunity for an "insurance run." In the same way, we experience consequences when we stray from what God wants. We may just experience embarrassment or hurt, or consequences much more serious.

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