

The Parachute Club

Do miracles still happen?
Ask the man who fell to earth.

by Michael Ramsay



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"Lord, please save me."
I had gone skydiving with my best friend but what had started out as a lark had turned into something deadly. My parachute had failed to deploy and was uselessly streaming behind me. I was hurtling to the ground at terminal velocity, the cars and the power lines and the highway rushing up to meet me. I knew with a certainty I was going to die. With all my senses on overload, I managed to form

that one panic-stricken prayer as I plunged downward.

Summer Fun

After our first year of university, my best friend, Jerry, and I decided to make the summer memorable. We received our scuba-diving certification, went white-water rafting and kayaked in the ocean. Jerry and I

No Parachute

Instruction period over, it was time to get into the Cessna. Jerry and I flipped a coin to see who would jump first. I lost the coin toss, but by the time that we were 850 feet in the air I suddenly realized I was afraid of heights and convinced Jerry to jump first.

Once our plane reached 3,000 feet, it was time to jump. On a

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were determined to have fun "or die trying." That last part was meant in jest as only 20-year-olds can joke about something like that.

The next item on our to-do list was skydiving. *What could possibly go wrong?*

So one summer morning, a half-dozen of us assembled at our local airfield. As none of us had ever parachuted before, we spent the day at the airfield studying topics such as wind trajectories and the speed of acceleration of a free-falling object and what to do if the main parachute failed to deploy. I really didn't pay attention to that part. After all, what were the odds that the main parachute would not automatically deploy?

Cessna, the parachutist has to exit the plane by climbing onto the wing, counting to five and sliding off.

Jerry did so, looked up to see that the parachute had opened properly, and then drifted to the ground on a perfectly windless day.

Emboldened, I did the same: I climbed onto the wing, counted to five, slid off and looked up to see the parachute open—only it hadn't.

Or at least most of it hadn't. My parachute had not deployed correctly and had become what is called a streamer, trailing behind me as I plummeted down.

My panic-seized mind remembered what I'd been told in the instructional session, that in the unlikely event that the main

parachute failed, I was to pull the cord to the emergency parachute.

All the while, the ground was getting closer and closer. That was when I pulled the cord and prayed, "Lord, please save me."

One Piece

I looked up and to my horror realized that the backup parachute had not deployed properly, either. I was still hurtling toward the power lines and the cars on the highway below.

What happened next defies any rational explanation.

As I descended beneath the treeline, a gust of wind on an otherwise windless day lifted my parachute up, where it deployed and gently set me down on the ground without a scratch.

Jerry later told me that he had never been more horrified in his life than when he saw me plummeting, unopened parachute trailing behind. He'd no sooner landed safely than he, the support crew and bystanders rushed to the scene, dreading what they would find.

But to everyone's surprise, I'd

made it to the ground in one piece.

Never Alone

Why am I alive? A gust of wind on an otherwise windless day not only stopped my descent but wafted me high enough for my parachute to deploy and save me.

I can't think of any other way to explain this but as a miracle.

Some people think there are no such things. But as a Salvation Army pastor, I've seen miracles too numerous to mention. I've seen people cured of dreaded diseases, I've witnessed events impossible to explain, I've observed lives transformed and people delivered from the demons that haunted them. I know God is at work all around us.

When God is with you, no matter how hard life gets, you will never be alone. Our God loves each and every one of us. And when we really need it, when we are at the end of our rope and there is nothing we think we can do, we often find God sending us that small gust of wind that places us firmly on the ground of salvation. *ff*



(left) Captain Michael Ramsay is a Salvation Army pastor serving in Toronto