



America's Heartland
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What's a skydiver to do when parachute doesn't deploy

"When you jump out, you pull the big cord," he said. "If that doesn't work, you pull the smaller cord. There will be a pickup truck waiting on the ground to take you back to the airport."

She jumped out and pulled the big cord, but nothing happened. So, she pulled the smaller cord. Still nothing happened.

"That's just great," she complained. "Now, I suppose the truck won't be down there either."

Did you ever have one of those days when things just weren't going well for you?

A lady in the Old Testament named Naomi knew those kinds of days well.

In the Book of Ruth, we learn that Naomi's husband died, which was an especially hard blow back then because, in the misogynistic culture of the day, wives had to depend on their husbands for literally everything. Fortunately, Naomi had two sons to help her. But after some time, both of them died as well.

That left Naomi with two daughters-in-law. One of them left her and went back to her own parents. The other, Ruth, stuck with Naomi. In fact, Ruth not only clung to Naomi but also to the Lord of Heaven, telling Naomi, "Your God will be my God."

They were two women

trying to make their way in a man's world. They survived by Ruth going out into harvested barley fields and picking up scattered grain that had been left behind. She would crush that grain to be baked into loaves for her and Naomi.

Now that would have been a very meager existence, except a wealthy landowner met Ruth while she was rummaging through his harvested fields. In a true rags-to-riches story, that landowner turned out to be close kin to Naomi. He married Ruth, and they lived happily ever after, as did Naomi.

It's hard to image how dark the days were for Na-

mi after she had lost her husband and sons, or how dark they were for Ruth, who had to work from daylight to dark just to put bread on the table.

Things just didn't seem to be going right for either of them, but then God showered them with his amazing grace.

Two women who likely felt like they were crashing, like their parachutes didn't deploy, found that God himself had given them a safe landing.

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Kitchen Diva by Angela Shelf Medearis

I Heart Valentine's Day

Is chocolate a guilty treat or a great-tasting, heart-healthy indulgence? Do you use chocolate to boost your mood, or reserve it for special celebrations? Chocolate has been considered an aphrodisiac food since the time of Aztecs. It's said to contain a substance that inflames desire and makes the beloved one more open to romance.

Whatever your reason for choosing chocolate, emerging research shows there may be some health benefits to consuming certain types of chocolate. This is wonderful news for chocolate lovers and for anyone who enjoys celebrating Valentine's Day!

Unsweetened cocoa and dark chocolate appear to be healthier choices than other kinds of chocolate. Dark chocolate also is a delicious, heart-healthy choice for Valentine's Day. Blood pressure, cardiovascular health and insulin sensitivity have all been shown to improve from the flavonoids in the cocoa bean.

Other research suggests that eating chocolate makes us feel good -- something self-professed chocoholics already know. Chocolate helps reduce stress and has other positive, mood-boosting psychological effects. Chocolate also may be connected to neurotransmitters boosting mood and lowering anxiety. Research is still preliminary, so nutrition experts don't recommend eating chocolate for those health benefits alone, but the research is something chocolate lovers will watch.

So how much dark chocolate or unsweetened cocoa powder is the potential ticket to good health? None of the studies to date have determined the optimal daily serving. Many health experts are comfortable recommending daily dark chocolate in small amounts -- an ounce or two daily -- if it's a food you already enjoy and can afford it in your calorie budget.

Making chocolate milk with unsweetened cocoa powder (containing 82% cocoa) stirred into skim milk and sweetened with stevia -- as opposed to the highly processed and sugar-sweetened version typically found on supermarket shelves -- is a healthy choice. In one study, chocolate-milk drinkers who used the healthy drink recipe showed marked improvement in heart health, including a boost to the "good" HDL cholesterol.

Not all chocolate is created equal: The higher the cocoa content, the greater the health benefits from flavonoids, which help protect against aging and some chronic diseases. Following unsweetened cocoa powder on the list for highest percentage of cocoa is unsweetened baking chocolate and dark chocolate.

Studies suggest that eating dark chocolate with at least 70% cocoa improves cardiovascular health. Semisweet chocolate and milk chocolate are lower in cocoa content.

A final word of caution: check the ingredients label to see where sugar is listed. The further down

the list the better, because that indicates a smaller amount of sugar. Weigh the extra calories in chocolate before you spend them -- and then enjoy every morsel!

My recipe for Dark Chocolate Delights are bonbons that are simple to make and the perfect Valentine's Day gift for the health and happiness of the ones you love. Dates are a sweet and "delightful" ingredient

in these dark chocolate bonbons. Dates are rich in calcium, sulfur, iron, potassium, phosphorous, manganese, copper and magnesium, which are all advantageous for health.

Have a happy (and heart-healthy) Valentine's Day!

DARK CHOCOLATE DELIGHTS

- 1 cup peanut butter, smooth or chunky
 - 1 cup chopped pecans, toasted
 - 1 cup stevia powdered sugar (see recipe below)
 - 1 cup dates, chopped (not the prepackaged, chopped type)
 - 1 1/2 tablespoons butter, softened, divided
 - 1 1/2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
 - 1 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
 - 1/2 cup shredded, unsweetened coconut, optional
- To make sugar-free powdered sugar:**
- 1 cup stevia (like Truvia Baking Blend or Whole Earth Baking Blend)
 - 1 teaspoon cornstarch

Combine the stevia and cornstarch in a blender or food processor. Combine the ingredients on high until it creates the look and consistency of traditional powdered sugar. Use in the recipe as directed. Makes 1 cup.

To make the BonBons:

1. Using a large bowl, combine peanut butter, pecans, stevia powdered sugar, dates and 1 tablespoon butter; and mix well. Form mixture into 1-inch balls. Set aside in refrigerator to harden, about 30 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, melt the semisweet chips in a large glass measuring cup or medium bowl in the microwave on medium power (or on defrost setting), about 2 minutes, stirring once after 1 minute, until melted and smooth.

3. Stir in remaining dark chocolate chips and stir constantly until smooth (this cools and tempers the chocolate, setting up crystals so it will harden). Stir in the remaining 1/2 tablespoon butter to bring the chocolate to a glossy finish.

4. Dip each bonbon ball into the melted chocolate mixture and set the bonbons on wax paper or parchment paper. Sprinkle with shredded coconut, if desired. Let stand until chocolate is firm, about 15 minutes. Store tightly covered at room temperature. Makes about 32 bonbons.

Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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Failure Is Not AN Option!

Wednesday, February 10th, 2021 Message
 Bro. Warren Rogers, Retired Baptist Minister

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Isaiah 40:29

Have you ever had your ambitions stopped in their tracks? Welcome to the club. It's called the human race -- where nobody succeeds every time. Lessons learned from failures: that we can't always get what we want -- teaches us character -- perseverance -- that we can endure and survive.

Let's review some Bible characters:

Moses - killed a man. Exodus 2:12, Moses had an anger problem. In Numbers 20:8-11, Got mad and struck the rock instead of speaking to it first as God told him to. Exodus 32:19, Got mad at the people when he brought the first set of the ten commandments down and he broke them into pieces. And after all that the Lord let him lead the children for forty years.

David - 2 Samuel 11 -- David lusted after Bathsheba, and after she had conceived, sent a letter to Joab telling him to put her husband, Uria, on the front line of battle where he would most likely to be killed. And still, after David repented, God called him "a man after mine own heart." Acts 13:22 God used David in a mighty way.

Samson - Judges 16 -- His parents were told to raise him a Nazirite. After he got grown and started lusting after the wild side of life, he forgot his vows - to abstain from strong drink, never cut his hair or beard, and to avoid contact with dead bodies. Delilah was his downfall. In his last act of obedience, he called upon the Lord to give him strength.

We can divide people into two categories: learners and non-learners.

Learners hang in there when the going gets tough. They persist, persevere, never lose heart and never quit. Proverbs 24:16

Matthew 14:22-32 -- we look at Peter's life. Peter was the only disciple to get out of the boat. I've heard a few preachers wear Peter out for when he started to sink he got scared. I ask you, was it more important that some people think he failed or that he got far enough to learn the lesson of faith.

Note Peter got it wrong several times: He said in **Matthew 16:16**, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," but moments' later he took it upon himself to reprove the master in **Verse 22**, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

Matthew 26:35, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Just a few hours later, Peter denied Christ three times. See Luke 22:60-62.

But that was not the end of Peter. Ashamed, discouraged, bail out, run away, quit -- NEVER!

When Peter heard that Jesus was risen (Luke 24:12), he ran to the tomb.

When the disciples were fishing (John 21:7), Peter left the boat and swam to shore to get to Jesus.

Then in the book of Acts, the first two chapters, Peter preached the greatest sermon ever with over three thousand souls saved.

Isaiah 6:8, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Friends, I have failed the Lord several times in my ministry, but I am determined to fight to the end; to never give up. How about you? Has Satan got you beaten down? That's where he wants you. Just ask the Lord to forgive you and go on about the Lord's business.

Failure is not an option!

Until next week, may the Lord bless and keep you is my prayer! I can be reached at 606-481-0444.

Bro. Warren Rogers, Retired Baptist preacher