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Jesus in every bite

I recently met Sandra for dinner and a talk at a local restaurant. We had never met before, but we had a mutual friend whom I have the joy of meeting with on a regular basis. Sandra had experienced a terrible weekend. She had just broken up . . . again . . . with her long-term boyfriend of six years. She had known for a long time that he wasn't "the one" for her, but he was better than no one, or so she had thought . . . until this weekend. Evidently, one thing had led to another and Sandra had finally had it with him. She had told him to "drop dead" and to never call her again, and she was dealing with the fallout of that decision.

Our mutual friend, Kristie, had called me on Sunday to fill me in on the situation. I was sitting in a church service when my phone rang. Yes, I know we're supposed to turn off our cell phones or put them on vibrate when we're in a service. But I've never figured out how to put my phone on vibrate, and I frankly had just forgotten to turn the thing off. So the phone rang, and I cut the call off immediately, telling myself that the disturbance was minimal and only a few people around me had heard the short musical calypso. But seconds later, it started beeping! Ah, the caller had left a message. Quickly digging the phone out of the

too-small compartment on the side of my purse, I looked at the “missed call” list and saw Kristie’s name. Uh-oh. I knew that if Kristie was calling me during a church service, it had to be important.

Whispering to my husband, Don, that I needed to take the phone call, I got up and awkwardly clambered over the others in our row to get to the aisle. Finally making my way out the door, I headed to the ladies’ room to listen to the message. It was about Sandra. “Would you be able to meet with her soon?” Kristie requested urgently. “She’s in a terrible state. She just broke up with her guy of six years.” So there I was, two days later, at a Texas Roadhouse, munching on bits of an onion flower appetizer while listening to Sandra’s story.

Sandra is a successful businesswoman. She has her own business and employs twelve people. She is the boss; she knows what to do and when to do it. She is known for being efficient and effective. She is successful . . . in that part of her life. However, in her personal life Sandra is sad, confused, angry, frustrated, disillusioned, and worst of all, alone. She allowed a guy to walk all over her, take advantage of her, live off of her, and repeatedly cheat on her. That’s why she was sitting across from me sharing salted peanuts and an onion flower—Sandra was asking for help.

Because of the type of mentoring that I believe in, I didn’t give her a list of things to do, which I could have done. I didn’t recommend a book for her to read, though there are plenty. And I didn’t tell her about my experiences of feeling lonely, confused, and devalued. Instead, I listened with intent interest, letting Sandra share whatever she wanted to share, in whatever way she wanted to share. I asked no questions; I simply listened without interrupting her flow of emotional thought.

Sandra spoke nonstop for nearly twenty minutes, sharing bits from the weekend’s conversations with her now ex-boyfriend, some snippets from her childhood, memories of other breakups with this boyfriend, and a few stories about the resentment she felt growing up in Christian schools, before focusing back on what had transpired over the weekend. The entire time she talked I prayed for enlightenment, for understanding, and for direction from the Holy Spirit. “Jesus, who are You being in her



life right now? How may I best partner with who You are in Sandra?”

When Sandra was exhausted from sharing, I thanked her for entrusting me with her pain. Then I asked her a question. “Sandra, do you want a quick fix, or do you desire to be transformed by Jesus?”

For the first time in the conversation, I saw tears quickly well up in her eyes. She said, “Ele, I know a lot about the Bible. I have several Bibles at home all marked up with red, blue, yellow, and green colored pencils. I know the stories of the Bible. I can draw you a timeline of prophecy. But I don’t know how to live life. I have no idea how to apply what the Bible says to my everyday life. How do I be a Christ-follower Monday through Saturday? Part of me wants the quick fix, but I know I need the other.”

My response to her was, “Sandra, congratulations! You have made a wise choice. As much as you are hurting now, there is so much more of you that Jesus desires to embrace. Together we will begin this journey of knowing Jesus, for, you see, it’s not *what* you know, it’s *who* you know. What truly helps and fixes us is not the knowledge that goes in. It’s about who lives life out through you—empowering you, cleansing you, and strengthening you. Jesus desires to be relevant in your life Monday through Saturday as well as Sunday. As you begin to discover who Jesus really is, this area of your life—as well as all areas of your life—will be transformed.”

Sandra was voicing what many followers of Jesus sense, if not say. I hear it often. Let me try to put it into words: It’s like people live their lives in separate sections or pieces, as if life were a bowl of fruit. There’s a family piece, an employment piece, a friendship piece, a Jesus piece, and pieces for each other area of your life. Each of these pieces of life stay separate from one another, just as pieces of fruit in a bowl stay separate from one another. What goes on in the family piece has little or nothing to do with the employment piece, what goes on in the friendship piece is separated from the other pieces, and so on.

So when it comes to matters of faith, people who live their lives in pieces find it easy to keep their faith solely in their Jesus piece. One piece of life has very little to do with the other pieces of life. For example, if

something comes up in the boyfriend piece, that piece of life is neatly removed, put on a plate, and fixed. Then that fixed piece is neatly put back in the bowl among the other pieces of life, with careful attention given to not disturbing any of the other pieces.

However, Jesus doesn't fit in a fruit bowl life very easily. While He lived here on earth, Jesus was the one who helped celebrate weddings, had midnight meetings with those seeking the truth, hung out at the local watering holes to rub shoulders with whoever was there, conversed with "religious" people, and played with kids. He literally permeated every part of a person's being when He was with them. Well, He's the same today. He's more like a cake than a bowl of fruit, so to speak. Let's think about that for a minute.

A cake is made up of flour, sugar, eggs, water, vanilla, baking powder, and various other ingredients. However, in order for the cake to be enjoyed as intended, it needs to be mixed—it requires blending. All the ingredients are still there, but each ingredient is enjoyed and experienced in *every* bite of the cake.

So it is with Jesus. When we spiritually mentor, we enter into a partnership with the Holy Spirit who has the potential to transform all aspects of a person's life. That doesn't mean that we try to fix certain quirks or focus on particular weaknesses or pains. As we partner with the Holy Spirit, we look for opportunities to infuse truth into reality in all dimensions of someone's life.

Using Sandra as an example, her reality is that the long-term relationship with her boyfriend is over. As a result, she is in pain. But that's only part of her reality. She is also a brilliant businesswoman, a loving daughter, a fun sister, a good friend, and a woman with desires, dreams, and ambitions. *All* of Sandra—every part of her—needs to be permeated by the Holy Spirit. Sandra is a woman who desperately needs Jesus in every area of her life. So to focus on just one area would deny the Spirit the opportunity to challenge and transform Sandra into the woman He desires her to be in every area of her life.

Let's get back to the question posed to Sandra. "Do you want a quick fix, or do you want to be transformed by Jesus?" Another way to



Jesus in every bite

put it is, “Do you want to be a bowl of fruit or do you want to be cake? Do you just want one piece of your life that includes Jesus, or do you want Him to invade and pervade all of your life?” One option is neat and tidy—no muss, no fuss. The other is messy, and it requires measuring, sifting, pouring, stirring, and the seemingly unbearable heat of the oven. Sandra’s answer revealed her desire: she wanted Jesus. She chose the untidy and, at times, chaotic and painful invasion of her life by Jesus, who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Sandra represents the kind of woman who responds well to being the mentee of a spiritual mentor. This type of woman hopes that there’s more to being a follower of Jesus than what she is currently experiencing. She desires to be challenged and to be asked penetrating, revealing questions. She hungers for wisdom and inner strength. She wants to “go there” with someone whom she trusts to take her to Jesus. She’s not satisfied with a quick fix, and she’s willing to mix things up as needed. She wants Jesus in every bite of her life.