When Life Hands You Bananas . . .

My friend Jonathan Baker handed a banana and a knife to every student in his Bible classes at Puebla Christian School in Puebla, Mexico. He told them to cut up their bananas any way they wanted. Junior high boys pretty much decimated theirs while other students cut their bananas into large pieces.

Then Jonathan passed out cellophane tape and told them to put the bananas back together again. It was, of course, a mess. The students who had made neat cuts with their knives were able to reassemble their bananas, but even with tape it was clear they were in parts. The mashed bananas, needless to say, were hopeless. Even with tape.

Jonathan made the observation that our choices have consequences, and we can't ever go back to the way it was before we made our choices. No amount of tape can possibly make a banana whole again. We can certainly make a mess of our lives when we make bad choices and have to live with the consequences.

We cannot fix our bananas.

We cannot undo the damage we inflict on our bananas.

It's sad.

But then he went into the next room and brought out ice cream, chocolate syrup, nuts, whipped cream, cherries, bowls and spoons. With a smile, Jonathan said, "You can't do anything with cut up, mashed up bananas, but God can! He can make a banana split! He can take broken pieces of our lives, unfixable messes and painful consequences of bad choices, and make something sweet from them. He'll make something unimaginably more wonderful of our broken pieces—IF we'll let

Him."

I love that story. And I love how it hit the students' hearts with hope.

But there is another layer to my enjoyment of this story. Jonathan shared it with me in Puebla, where my husband and I are here for a week to teach some of Probe Ministries' Mind Games material at the school. We also spoke at a weekend conference where I shared "How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change," my story of living with polio my whole life. (I was six months old when I contracted it, just a few months before the vaccine was developed.)

I learned that here in Mexico, as in many countries around the world, Americans are often dismissed as lightweights because surely we don't know anything about suffering. But when my audience could see me limp painfully and slowly to the podium, leaning on my cane, I had instant credibility. I could see it on their faces: *I guess she really does know something about suffering.*

The power of my message, that a good and loving God is in control so we can trust Him, has nothing to do with me and everything to do with God's grace. But first, my audience had to be open to receiving what I had to say. And once again, I saw how polio is God's good gift to me, to open the doors of people's hearts to hear what I have to say, so that it blesses them and honors God.

The banana of my broken body is being used for a spiritual banana split. And that is a sweet, sweet blessing. With a cherry on top!

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