

Mug Cake

Theme: Self-esteem and trusting God to make something good of our lives

Things You'll Need:

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- ⅛ teaspoon baking soda
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 small mixing bowls
- Large microwave-safe mug to bake the cake
- Access to a microwave oven
- Can of ready-made frosting
- *NOTE - If you prefer to eliminate the sugar, substitute 1½ tablespoons plain unsweetened applesauce (and mix it in with the wet ingredients during the activity). If you need to eliminate the dairy, use an additional 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon of water instead of the milk.*

Advance Prep:

Prepare a mug cake of your own when the kids aren't around so you see exactly how to make this.

Here are the basic instructions:

1. Mix flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt in a microwave-safe mug
2. Stir in milk, oil, water, and vanilla extract.
3. Cook in microwave until cake is just done in the middle, about one minute and forty-five seconds.
4. Let rest for a couple minutes.

Running the Activity

Have all the dry ingredients (flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt) stirred together in a small mixing bowl. Have all the wet ingredients (milk, oil, water, and vanilla extract) in a second mixing bowl.

Now get the kids together for the lesson. I have a variety of edible things in these two bowls. Let's say one bowl represents things about you. Your personality, intelligence, and abilities. And the other bowl represents things that happen to you in life. Good things and bad things.

Now, since all of this is edible, I'd like to have one of you take a small teaspoonful from one of the bowls here.

How do you like the taste of it? How often would you like me to serve you something like this?

The fact is, it really doesn't taste very good, right? But let's mix them all together in this mug. And let's put this mug in the microwave. Now, let's watch as we microwave it for a minute and forty-five seconds.

Would anybody like to guess what we're making? Would any of you like a bite of this once it's done baking?

Teaching the Lesson:

The mug cake tastes a whole lot better than some of the ingredients did before we mixed them together and baked them, right? That's the way it is with life too. There are all kinds of aspects of our lives that we may not be all that excited about. We may wish we had more abilities, better looks, more smarts. We love the good things that happen to us in life—but we probably feel that we can live without the bad stuff.

But remember, the cake needs every one of these ingredients—most of which don't taste good by themselves.

Our lives are no different. Our lives are made up of things that "taste" good and things that "taste" bad to us. And just like the cake, we need all those elements in our lives to make us into the person God wants us to be. God uses all those elements—good and bad—and can make something really good out of them.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

What would happen if we had the power to stop any hard or bad thing from happening to us? Is it possible that we would never become all God designed us to be? You can be sure of that.

Summing It Up:

What if, after mixing all the ingredients together in a mug, we never put the mug inside the microwave? What would we get? A mug of goopy stuff, right? The heat—the baking—solidifies the cake batter into something more solid and tasty. And it's the same way with us.

There are times in life when we go through an oven of sorts. We face the heat of some kind of hurt, maybe from a friend or because we don't have one. We face the heat of some kind of change—in ourselves or our family—and we don't like it. We face the heat of a missed opportunity, an embarrassing moment, or messing up in some way. We'd do just about anything to change that, but we can't.

Just like the microwave oven turned the goop into a cake, the hard times in life often produce something unexpected and good in us. Sometimes the heat is needed to solidify us into someone who is so much better—or better off—than we would have been otherwise.

When you feel dissatisfied with your abilities, your intelligence, all the things that make you who you are . . . give it to God. When you feel discouraged about some hard thing you're going through or mistake that you've made . . . give it to God. He produces great things that you'd never expect. Things that you'll really, really like.

I've got a can of frosting here to finish our mug cake off just right. And this is a reminder as well. When we give ourselves to God . . . when we believe he uses the good things that happen and the bad, our abilities and inabilities—he makes something good and solid. And, as a result, our trust in him grows—and that's just like the frosting on the cake. The frosting makes the whole thing so much better—and worth it. And when our trust in God grows, it makes all of life that much better.

We're more free from worry and fear and insecurities—because our trust in him drives those away. In Judges 6, we read about Gideon. He was a nobody in a family of nobodies. Yet God used him to lead a small band of men to overpower a massive enemy army. What a great reminder for us. Trust God to make great things of your life—even when nothing may seem that big or great to you right now.

A bunch of ingredients, none of which tasted good, led to a nice little surprise. They were mixed together and put in the heat—transforming the goopy mess into a great little cake. God does the same things with our lives when we offer ourselves to him in love and obedience.

Shoemaker, Tim. *The Very Best, Hands-On, Kinda Dangerous Family Devotions* (pp. 217-221). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.