
Experience the Journey by Chelsea Brogdon

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The Cathedral of St. Philip
Atlanta, Georgia
Youth Sunday

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Imagine you are on a first date. You are nervous, scared, wondering what you are going to talk about for the next two hours. Some people like to beat around the bush, but I have a new philosophy. Society tells us not to talk about ex's, politics, and religion on a first date, but why not? Why waste time? Let's really get to know one another.

Some questions I would openly like to ask are, How do you treat your mother? What does your father look like? Do you always have to be right? Do you have a fear of commitment? Just how many skeletons are in your closet? Can you stop and ask for directions? But we all know, I am describing a fantasy world... a world where we are boldly open and brutally honest.

I guess this means that I would have to reveal who I really am on a first date. It would be easy to sit there and talk about how perfect I am... but we all know, that's not reality. I am many things. I am a daughter, a sister, a friend. I am sometimes overbearing, occasionally jealous. I am a senior at Holy Innocents Episcopal School, an upcoming freshman at Southern Methodist University. I am a crazed perfectionist. I am a Christian and a child of God. I am over-sensitive, extremely vulnerable. I am an aunt, a niece, a cousin. I have one of those crazy, loud families, who are currently taking up the first four rows, Who love each other through thick and thin. I am a believer.

Fantasy world sounds pretty challenging, so let's flash back to reality. On a first date we really talk about the weather, how "Juno" should have won best picture at the Academy Awards, what books we like, what our interests and hobbies are. We stay at the surface. These basic questions soon run out, leaving us with long, awkward, pauses. These curious moments of silence sometimes leave us wondering, why did we agree to this date in the first place?

Jesus walked through reality. Did Jesus wonder why he went through the motions? Why he had to listen to silly questions? Why he had to endure awkward moments of mistrust? How his own people could betray him? Jesus ministered to the needy, healed the wounded, comforted the weak.

But the road to the cross was not pointless. Jesus was not just beating around the bush. He gave us a chance to spend time with him, to get to know him. I know that I would love to know what Jesus' favorite book was, Which sandals did he like the best... Did he like pancakes? The little things are more important than they may seem. The Gospel lesson this morning takes us from the journey to the hour of truth. The mask is gone, the waiting is over, the time of glory has come. No more first dates.

As Jesus prepares to approach the cross, He must have felt weak, scared, vulnerable, But Thank God, Jesus was not alone. He says to his father, "All mine are yours and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them." Jesus came to earth to do

the work of God, just like us. We do serve a purpose, just as awkward moments and silly questions serve their purpose. Speaking here in front of you today, thank God, I am not alone.

Alone, there are many things in this life I could not face. Remember, I am over-sensitive, so words would break me. Opening up would be impossible, for I am extremely vulnerable. Mistakes would overcome me, because I am a crazed perfectionist. But I am one blessed girl, God will not leave me to face perils alone. The Holy Spirit is here to wrap her loving arms around me, comfort me inside, and hold me close.

The music group Secondhand Serenade summarizes this assurance, "Share with me the blankets that you're wrapped in because it's cold outside, it's cold outside. Share with me the secrets that you kept in because it's cold inside, it's cold inside." God keeps Jesus warm during the hour of truth. God also wants to keep me warm, inside and out.

Why did Jesus have to suffer? Why do we have to go through so much pain, endure struggles, have pesky imperfections? Benicio Del Toro of the motion picture "21 Grams" gives us some insight, "Jesus didn't come to free us from our pain, but he came to give us the strength to bear it."

We complain about the daily grind. Whether our obstacle is an addiction, cancer, losing someone we love, not getting into a dream college, going through divorce, or having your heart broken, none of us have suffered the pain that Jesus did. Because of this, God feels our pain and shares our tears. He smiles when we smile, and laughs when we laugh. "All mine are yours, and yours are mine."

God made who I am for a reason. Psalm 62 reminds us, "I made her in such a way that she would need Me. I made her a little more lonesome than she would like to be, Only because I need her to learn to depend on Me. I know her heart. I know if I had not made her like this, she would go her own chose way and forget about Me, her Creator." When I consider my imperfections, I have to remind myself that God picked out my insecurities, my quirks, my strengths. God built me to be the friend, daughter, and sister that I am. I hope to use these gifts and glorify God in all that I do. This morning, Jesus shares this hope. With God's strength, I can do anything too.

So next time you are on a date, don't be afraid to allow the journey to happen. Your first date should be awkward. We need to remember to take the time to cherish the little things, answer silly questions, have faith in one another, yourself, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Know that the moment of truth will come, when God's glory is revealed. Amen.