

Clay In The Potter's Hand
Jeremiah 18:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

JEREMIAH 18:6

“As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many “Jars of Clay” templates as the number of children in your class, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and crayons or markers.

Edible Playdough activity: For every three small portions you wish to make, you will need 1/2 cup of peanut butter, 1/2 cup of dry milk, and 2/3 tablespoon of honey. You will also need a mixing bowl and mixing spoon.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Clay in Motion

To open your class session, play this fun variation of “Red Light/Green Light.” Ask the children to stand at one end of the classroom. You can stand on the opposite end. You will be the potter and the children will be the clay. Introduce the lesson theme, explaining that God is the potter in our lives, and we are the clay. We need to allow Him to mold us and shape us in to the work of art that He desires us to be.

When you shout “Mold!” the children can move towards you. When you say, “Set!” the children should freeze in their spot, like a clay statue when it has dried or set. Keep playing until a child reaches to you. You may want to allow other children to take a turn being the potter.

LESSON TIME!

Do you know what the word “Israel” actually means? It means, “Governed by God.” The Lord wanted Israel--all its millions of people to look to Him for their protection and provision and to worship Him alone. He called Israel “the tribe of His inheritance.” He wanted them to be different—set apart from the whole world in order to show the world that He was the true and living God. God had great plans for them; yet, they kept turning away from Him.

Through the prophets, God warned His people to forsake their sin and return to Him, lest they face judgment. Still, the people continued to be stubborn and resistant. Now, through the prophet Jeremiah, God creates an illustration of a potter with a lump of clay in order to help His people understand the relationship they should have to God and the dysfunction of that relationship when their hearts are hard.

God desires that His will and good intentions be accomplished in our lives. As a loving Potter with skillful hands, he desires to mold and shape us. May we submit fully to Him! **God wants to make our lives a beautiful work of art.**

JEREMIAH 18:1-6

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:

"Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words."

Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel.

And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!

Have you ever seen a potter work with clay on their wheel? He or she is constantly turning the wheel, always having their hands on the clay, molding it, pressing it; using tools to make it into a work of art. Fingers, palms, thumbs all working together; a little pressure here, a little there, pushing, gliding, making a hole, scooping out the excess. Always keeping it a little wet to keep it moldable. The clay does what the potter forms it to do.

Sometimes, a potter starts to make one kind of vase or pot or bowl, but it doesn't work out the way he wants it to. When that happens, often a potter will stop the wheel and squash the would-be pot back into a lump of clay. Then he will start all over again. It is his clay, his work, his imagination and his decision; so he can do whatever he wants to with it!

We read, "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. God is sovereign. Sovereignty just means that He is the king and because He is king He can do anything He would like. God should be able to mold and shape our lives the way that He would like. He should be able to cut away areas of our lives that do not please Him.

Can you imagine the clay hardening up and resisting the potter, even speaking to the potter and telling him that he does not want anything to do with him? Sounds ridiculous! Yet, that is what Israel was doing to God. They were saying, “We don’t want to be your clay; we don’t want you to direct our lives; and we want to do things our way.” When it looks as though the vessel will not become what the potter intends, he is forced to make a choice. Should he continue to try to work with that lump of clay or start all over?

God has every right to work in our life as He wills; but if we turn away from Him and refuse to allow Him to work in our lives, we will only bring heartache and pain to ourselves. Though molding and shaping may be uncomfortable, sometimes very uncomfortable, God loves us deeply and knows what is best for us. To refuse the hand of the potter is to give our lives over to sin—only death and judgment will result. How much better it is to allow Him to mold and shape us into the person He wants us to be.

The great thing is that when we allow God to mold and shape our lives, He will turn us into a wonderful work of art. Like the skilled potter makes a beautiful vase or bowl, so God makes a beautiful life and a useful life out of a person who is yielded to Him. **God wants to make our lives a beautiful work of art.**

Jars of Clay

Use copies of the template to allow the children to make their own work of art. You will need as many “Jars of Clay” templates as the number of children in your class, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and crayons or markers. Give children a template and have them cut out the vase pieces. Next have them glue it onto a piece of construction paper. Next allow them to color their clay jar and draw a room or setting around their vase on the construction paper. Optional: Allow the children to use various craft items to decorate their vases.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about how we possess the treasure of the Gospel inside us, in earthen vessels or jars of clay. Although we are fragile and breakable, God still chooses to use us for His eternal purposes. Despite our weaknesses, He is made strong. What a blessing that God wants to use us! Ask the class to come up with different ways that the Lord can use our lives for His glory.

JEREMIAH 18:7-10

"The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,

"if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

"And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it,

"if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

God is very longsuffering, patient and kind. Even when a nation has done evil for a long time, even after God has spoken against that nation to judge it, if they will turn away from sin and towards God, God will not destroy it. God loves us very much and He "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God does not find pleasure in judging people; rather He is pleased when people turn to Him, and He is free to bless their lives as He desires.

Do you recall the story of Jonah? You may remember that there was a very wicked city called Nineveh. God sent a reluctant prophet by the name of Jonah. Of course, you probably remember that he refused to obey God and was swallowed by a great fish.

Later, he finally went to Nineveh and told them to repent. They repented and God's judgment was held off. When we hear God's Word, there is always opportunity to turn from our sinful ways and turn back to God.

Sadly, there can also be a nation that once served God, and then turns away from God, from righteousness to evil. In such event, God's hand of protection may not last forever. There will come a day of judgment. Judah (the southern kingdom) would have done well to heed God's warning. They had witnessed the judgment of the northern kingdom, Israel. While in Judah (the southern kingdom of God's people) there were a few good kings, there were never any good kings in Israel (the northern kingdom). Following warning after warning, judgment finally came; and their enemies took them captive.

God has warned us of the consequences of sin. It is a dangerous thing to play with. Sin can enslave us, put us into bondage, and ultimately lead to God's judgment. In Galatians 6:7,8 we read, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Let's be the ones who turn to God, not away from God.

God is still the Great Potter, today, and we are His clay. He wants to mold us and shape us into something beautiful. He has a plan for our lives. But as the clay, we need to be willing to let Him make our lives beautiful. If we keep jumping off the table or not allowing Him to shape us, He will not be able to do the work that we so desperately need in our lives.

The beautiful work of art that God has in mind as He shapes our life is the image of His Son, Jesus. We need a lot of molding and work to become more like Jesus! Again, a potter must often handle the clay roughly, banging it around and mixing it up with his hands, in order to create the ultimate design he has planned. So, God's work in our life may not be easy, maybe even painful, but God is patiently making us into something beautiful—the image of His Son. What do we do? We need only let Him do that work.

What a wonderful life we will have when we let Him do His work in us. Ephesians 2:10 states, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Keep your life in the hands of the loving Potter! **God wants to make our lives a beautiful work of art.**

Edible Playdough

In this activity children will have the opportunity to make their own “edible” playdough. For every three small portions that you wish to make you will need 1/2 cup of peanut butter, 1/2 cup of dry milk and 2/3 tablespoon of honey. You will also need a mixing bowl and mixing spoon.

Combine the ingredients into the mixing bowl. Mix them all together with a spoon until well blended. Knead the dough. Give the children an opportunity to wash their hands (this will be their snack, later), and then distribute portions and encourage them to make different shapes and molds—perhaps a jar or vase.

After they have had the opportunity to make some shapes, use the dough for a good spread on Graham crackers. Snack time can be a good application time as you discuss the joy of creating a work of art. What if the clay refused to cooperate? How difficult would your task be if the clay was hard instead of soft and pliable? How patiently and persistently God works in our lives desiring to create

a beautiful “work of art!” Other clay tips: This dough will stay soft and pliable. If some clay is not used or eaten, place in a small Ziploc bag and send home with the children for later.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment: Realizing that they are the clay and the Lord is the Potter, pray they will allow God to mold and shape their lives into a beautiful work of art. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

