

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 you are 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.

For “Edible Playdough” activity - 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.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Clay in Motion

To open your class session play this fun variation of “Red Light/Green Light.” Have the children 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. Explain to the class that today we will be learning about a potter and clay. It is an example of how 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 can allow other children to take a turn if you like.

LESSON TIME!

Over the past few weeks we have been learning the story about the nation of Israel through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophets have said many things about God, His promised Messiah (Jesus), and His relationship to His people, Israel. Have you ever learned the meaning of the word “Israel”? It means, “Governed by God.” The Lord wanted Israel – all its millions of people to look to Him for their protection, provision and to worship Him alone. But unfortunately they didn’t always do that.

The Lord called Israel “the tribe of His inheritance.” He wanted them to be different. He had set them apart to show the whole world that He is the true and living God. But they kept turning away from the Lord didn’t they? The Lord spent a lot of time warning His people that there would be consequences if they didn’t look to Him alone. He waited through many generations of kings and priests because He is kind and patient.

Finally His people turned so far away from Him and towards idols that He had to judge them for their sin. So He sent the Assyrians and the Babylonians to take them into captivity. But before that happened He sent many prophets to the people with messages from Him to turn from their sin and back to Him.

Today’s message is another picture of the true and living God. It’s a picture of stubborn hearts and what the Lord has to say about them. It’s a picture of the sadness of the Lord when we do not submit ourselves, His people, be governed by Him. It’s a picture of how that the true and living God wants us to be governed by Him. And how God describes these things to us through the example of a potter and his clay. Let’s find out what God’s Word has to say to us today. **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 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.

Verse 6 is a very well known statement in the Bible about our Lord's sovereignty. Sovereignty just means that He is the king and because He is king He can do anything He would like to. He should be able to mold and shape our lives the way that He would like to. He should be able to cut away areas of our lives that don't please Him.

Could you imagine the clay hardening up and resisting the potter, even speaking to the potter and telling him that he doesn't want anything to do with him? 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 that happens then the potter is forced to make a choice. Should he continue to try to work with that lump of clay or start all over? God was about to send judgment on His people because they refused to obey Him. There is a valuable lesson we can learn.

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 then we will only bring heartache to ourselves. He loves us so much and knows what is best for us. If we give our lives over to sin only death and judgment will come. How much better it is to allow Him to mold and shape us into the person He wants us to be.

The beautiful 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 out of a person who is yielded to Him. Let's allow Him to use our lives and make us into something beautiful. **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 have the treasure of the gospel in us, 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.

In these verses God helps us to understand how He judges nations. God is very longsuffering, patient and kind. Here we are told that 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 then God will not destroy it. God loves us very much and as the Bible says, "Is not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God doesn’t find pleasure in judging people; rather He is pleased when people turn to Him.

We have a great example of this in the Bible. You can read the book of Jonah and read about that there was a very wicked city called Nineveh. God sent a very reluctant prophet by the name of Jonah. Of course you probably know the story how 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.

Then we also see in these verses how that there can be a nation that once served God and then turns from righteousness towards evil. In that case, God’s hand of protection may not last forever. There will come a day of judgment. And so God will judge that nation that turns from Him. An example of that is found in the nation of Israel. In our reading today, this is a warning to God’s people. But 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). After warning after warning judgment finally came and they were taken captive by their enemies. We need to heed the warning in our lives that we cannot play with sin. We need to be serious about serving the Lord. Sin can enslave us and put us into bondage and ultimately lead to God’s judgment. 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 very wonderful. 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.

If you have ever watched a potter you have probably noticed that it seems like He handles the clay kind of roughly. He will bang down the clay and mix it all up with his hands. Sometimes the work that God does in our lives is not easy for us. It might even seem painful, but God is fashioning us and molding us into something beautiful.

The beautiful work of art that He will make us into is the image of His Son, Jesus. We need a lot of molding and work to become more like Jesus. But God works in the eternal so He takes His time, patiently making us more like Jesus. The main thing that we need to do is to let Him do that work. What a wonderful life we will have when we let Him do His work in us. See Ephesians 2:10. **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. You will now be able to make different shapes and molds. Encourage the children to be creative by making a jar or vase or some other creation.

After they have had the opportunity to make some shapes you can have snack time. This should work as a good spread on top of Graham crackers. Oh, by the way, make sure the children have clean hands before this activity or the dough may become “inedible” Playdough. You can use the snack time to make application from the lesson about how it was for them to create a “work of art.” Ask how this is like God working in our lives to make us into the people that He wants us to be. Other clay tips: The

dough will stay very soft and pliable; it will not harden. 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 to realize that they are the clay and that the Lord is the potter. Then pray that they would commit to allow Him 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 to do so.

