



**The Ultimate Shaper**  
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October 17, 2021

**The Crossing Church**  
Las Vegas, Nevada

## **OPENING**

This week we are continuing our series called **Running with the Horses**. Sounds like a strange title, doesn't it? But God used this phrase when speaking to the prophet Jeremiah and He is saying it to us today. If we are worn out in the footrace we are running in this world, what makes us think we can be successful in a spiritual race against our enemy, Satan, without a total commitment to Almighty God? He is the ultimate shaper who discusses how God turns those who are marred into obedient servants. Despite our circumstances, God is the potter who is in control of the clay, us, and He is molding us into a unique and majestic vessel, set apart for His glory.

## **SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>**

**Jeremiah 18:1-6** This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.

**Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

**Psalms 139:13-14** For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

**Isaiah 64:8** Yet you Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

## **OBSERVATION**

Jeremiah was preaching to a people who, were running in circles with God. Israel was His chosen people, formed and gifted by God, but they got into a cycle of loving God – sinning – returning to God. Over and over again. They wanted king after king because other countries had them so they were replacements for God. Jeremiah was trying to tell the people that God is enough, but they just weren't listening. They were a people hurtling toward disaster - instead of repenting, they became slaves in Babylon.

**QUESTION: What is the cycle your life has become? Is it causing you to move farther from or closer to God?**

## **APPLICATION**

God is using the metaphor of a potter (God) shaping his clay (us) using a wheel (circumstances) into a usable, productive form - the pot which is both unique and necessary for life. It is the potter's artwork. When we hand God something marred, He turns it into something majestic. But sometimes we don't see it because we aren't

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

positioned to view it. We haven't taken the time to stop and reflect on how he is already moving in our lives. We haven't looked back to see where He has already moved or given Him the time of day to talk to Him about how we want our future to move.

**QUESTION: How much time do you spend each week reflecting on what God has done for you?**

Jeremiah was preaching something he had already lived out. That's how he knew it was true, not only in his life, but the lives of those hearing his message. Despite the changes in circumstances around them, despite the mistakes, despite anything that came up in the Israelites' lives, God never gave up. He continued to work, to mold, to guide that clay. It's a reminder that God will take something already imperfect, already decaying, already ruined, already an ugly clump of clay, and in his hands He will turn it into something unique and special.

Why do we discipline our children? Because we are trying to help form them into adults who respect others, listen and obey. We want them to grow up to be strong and humble followers of Christ, don't we? God wants the same thing of us so He is trying to get our attention and reshape something in us and we push back just like a little child. "No, God, I don't want to do that, I want to do this." Or "Do I really have to listen to that part of Your teaching?" God tries to shape us into His fully developed version of ourselves – the version that lives out the calling and purpose He has planned for our lives! He's been doing it for centuries – hundreds of years ago, He did it with Israel through the words of Jeremiah.

**QUESTION: How do you think children should be disciplined and under what circumstances?**

**QUESTION: How is God disciplining you today? What is your reaction to His training?**

The potter would never leave the clay to form itself. He will reform based on what he sees, what seems best to him, not what seems best to the clay. The pot is shaped by the potter's mind, not the wheel, willpower of the clay. The potter is in control. The whole dialogue in Jeremiah and Isaiah is about God's sovereignty. He has the power, the authority and the control, but all of this ultimately stems from our relationship with Him. We can only be shaped by the shaper. We can only trust that God will shape us through the moment. We can only know the potter and give him permission to shape us. God can work behind the scenes all He wants, but because He is loving, we have free will; so, until we decide to jump into that, the shape of clay, the shape of us, we will always be marred because we humans, left to ourselves, are hopeless. But His Grace makes the difference. Once we reach that point, we can become yielding clay.

**QUESTION: What do you think God is trying to shape you into?**

**QUESTION: Why are you resisting His shaping?**

**QUESTION: Where are you failing to meet His standards?**

**QUESTION: How is the world marring you?**

We know that God is trying to shape us because James, Jesus' brother, told us about it in his Scripture: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials because testing of your faith produces patience."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to list more things that trials and testing will pressure and mold in us. The potter we know because when the clay is being pressed and shaped, it's the potter pressuring and molding it – the potter we know and trust.

**QUESTION: What trials are you experiencing today?**

**QUESTION: How are you reacting to them?**

When we step back and watch God work, we will realize that the shape He is envisioning is the best possible shape for us – where we can live to become the most abundant, the most fruitful, the most impactful people as we work for His kingdom. He is wanting us to lean into the pressure and correction He is trying to place on us, yielding the control over to Him, letting Him shape us in the ways that seem best to Him. We simply have to yield to His desires.

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<sup>2</sup> James 1:2

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for loving us and taking the time to shaping us in Your image. You are the Creator of the universe, Prince of Peace, Lord of Lords, our Savior, the Great I am – yet You see us as majestic. Teach us how to be obedient. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## **QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION: What is the cycle your life has become? Is it causing you to move farther from or closer to God?**

**QUESTION: How much time do you spend each week reflecting on what God has done for you?**

**QUESTION: How do you think children should be disciplined and under what circumstances?**

**QUESTION: How is God disciplining you today? What is your reaction to His training?**

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