

## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

# Jeremiah Learns From A Potter

THE BIG YEAR SEASON 3 WEEK 1

1

### WHAT YOU NEED

- Any kind of play dough (there is a salt dough recipe at the end of this devotional that you can make to use as part of the activity)
- A small stone or stick (1 per family member)

### LET'S READ THE BIBLE

Take turns reading the following passages:

- Jeremiah 18:1-10
- Jeremiah 19:1-3
- Jeremiah 19:10-11

2

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

King Josiah (the king of Judah) was killed in a battle with the king of Egypt. Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, became the new king, but he only served as king for three months. The king of Egypt took away his crown and placed another son of Josiah on the throne. The Egyptian king changed the new king's name to "Jehoiakim" and then, to make sure that the new king would do as the Egyptian king said, he took Jehoiakim's brother back to Egypt as a captive.

Things were looking worse and worse in Judah, but God continued to send prophets to give the people a chance to repent and turn back to Him. One of these prophets was Jeremiah. God would give messages to Jeremiah and Jeremiah would preach the message to the people. Sometimes the people did not like the messages that Jeremiah preached. He sometimes told them that they were sinful. He warned them that God would destroy their country if they did not stop sinning.

One time God gave Jeremiah a message in a special way. He told Jeremiah to go to the house of a potter. A potter was someone who made pottery. They used clay to make bowls, lamps, plates, and lots of other kinds of dishes.

The potter would take some soft clay and place it on a small round table. The potter would use his feet to make the table spin around and around. He would use his hands to squeeze and shape the clay until it was exactly like he liked it. Then he would put it in a very hot oven called a kiln and bake it until it was hard. After the clay was baked and hard, the potter could not change its shape. But when the clay was soft, the potter could change its shape as much as he wanted.

Jeremiah watched the potter work. The potter spun the wheel and put his hands on the clay. Soon the clay began to take shape and look like a dish. As Jeremiah watched, something happened to the clay. Maybe there was a stone in the clay or some straw. Something was making the potter unhappy. The potter finally gave up and decided to throw the clay away and start over with some more clay.

God told Jeremiah that His message was like the potter's shop. God was like the potter and the people of Judah were like the clay. God wanted to shape His people and make them into a beautiful nation. Instead, the people kept sinning. Their sin was like a stone or straw in the clay. It stopped God from making Judah into something beautiful. God told Jeremiah to tell the people that if they did not stop sinning, then He would just throw them out and let them be destroyed like the potter did with the dirty clay.

3

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Another time God told Jeremiah to go to the potter's shop and buy a clay jar. He told Jeremiah to take the jar and preach to the people. After he preached, he should smash the jar. God's message was to tell the people that if they obeyed Him, then He would protect them. If they did not obey Him, then their country would be destroyed like the jar.

This was a very difficult message that Jeremiah had to give to Judah and the people of Judah probably did not like hearing what Jeremiah had to say. Time and time again, Judah sinned against God by worshipping false gods and sinning in terrible ways, and God had been very patient with them. God gave them plenty of opportunities to repent and turn back to Him. Sometimes the people did listen and repent, but it wouldn't last very long and other times they ignored God's messages and carried on doing whatever they wanted to. But God would not let this go on forever.

God, who is holy and perfect, won't let sin go on forever. Eventually Judah would pay dearly for their ongoing sin. Fortunately, we live in the time after Jesus, God's Son, came to pay and take the punishment for sin. We have all sinned and none of us are perfect but there is good news. We can choose to repent and allow Jesus to take the punishment for our sins. When we do this, our relationship with God is restored and we become part of God's family.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- What was Jeremiah's job?
- What kind of shop did God tell Jeremiah to go to?
- How was the nation of Judah like the potter's clay? (*Judah was full of sin, just like the clay that had something in it*)
- What lesson did the people learn when Jeremiah smashed a clay jar? (*God would destroy them if they did not repent and turn back to Him*)

## LET'S GO A BIT DEEPER

- Sometimes it might feel like we are "arm wrestling" with God about who is in control. We all like being in control and making all our own decisions (even adults). We want to be the potter, but we're not. We're the clay. Tell your family about a time when you were "arm wrestling" to be in control and make your own decisions.
- We all have a stone or stick in our clay – we all have sin in our lives. None of us are perfect. Is it easy to admit that our clay is not perfect? God, the Potter, wants to mould us and change us into something better. Will you allow God to take the stick or stone (the sin) out of the clay (your life) and mould you into something better? How does God do this?
- The Potter takes a long time to mould and form the clay and the process isn't easy. We don't know what shape God will work us into and sometimes it's hard to trust God with our lives when we don't know exactly what the future looks like. Jeremiah told then nation of Judah to yield to the Potter. What does yield mean? (*To give in and allow someone else to take control/make decisions*). Will you yield to God and allow Him to mould and form you into the kind of person He wants you to be? Do you trust God, even when you don't know what the end result looks like?

## LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

Pray together:

- Thank God that He is the Potter who doesn't give up on us.
- Ask Jesus to help you to yield to Him like the clay yields to the Potter.
- Ask Jesus to remove any rocks for sticks from your clay (to remove sin from your life).
- Ask Jesus to help you trust Him as He forms and moulds you into the person that He wants you to be – into something beautiful.

## LET'S HAVE SOME FUN

- Ask each family member to get a small stick or stone. Divide the play dough amongst your family. Remind your family that God is the potter and we are the clay and that God is moulding and forming us into the kind of people He wants us to be.
- Say: "We are all going to make something using our piece of clay. You can decide to make a plate or a bowl or even something completely different. When you are done, put your stick or stone into what you've made. The stick or stone will remind us that we are not perfect, but that if we allow God to change and mould us, He will change us into the kind of person He wants us to be."
- Allow some time for family members to make something with their play dough. If you are using salt play dough, you can leave it out to dry out and harden.

### Salt play dough recipe

*Ingredients:*

1 cup cake flour	¼ cup fine table salt
1 teaspoon cream of tartar	½ tablespoon vegetable oil
½ cup boiling water	Food colouring (optional)

*Instructions:*

1. In a plastic bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and cream of tartar.
2. Make a well in the centre of the bowl and add vegetable oil, boiling water and a few drops of food colouring (optional).
3. Using a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, stir until a dough forms, add a little bit more flour if needed. (It's okay to add in more food colouring at this point if needed).
4. When the dough is cool enough to touch, use your hands to further incorporate the flour and knead until all flour is incorporated and dough is soft and uniform in colour (wear latex gloves if desired).
5. Let playdough cool completely before playing with it.
6. When you are ready to play with the playdough, wash your hands and have fun!
7. Store the playdough in a sandwich bag and place the sandwich bag in an air-tight container. Store at room temperature.
8. To dry out your designs – leave them out to dry at room temperature. Depending on the size of the pieces, it will take 2-7 days to dry completely. Turn the pieces from time to time for faster drying.