

The Potter & The Clay





LIVINGHOPE

baptist church

*Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who according to
His abundant mercy
has begotten us again to a
Living Hope
through the resurrection of
Jesus Christ from the dead.*

1 Peter 1:3

Community Group Purpose Statement

We, as smaller gatherings of one family, will practice with our lives the gospel truths that we confess with our mouths. Together, we will allow our lives to be challenged by the gospel and one another; we will live lives of boldness and purpose. As we walk in the light of the gospel, we will point to the grace of God and its power to set lives free from sin and death. We will continue praying, teaching, making disciples, and bearing one another's burdens. Following the pattern set before us by Jesus, we will bring joy to our family (the church) and glory to his name.

What is a Community Group?

Community groups are small gatherings of people that meet regularly for friendship, accountability, study and prayer, laughter, and occasionally tears. Community groups are an essential expression of the mission of Living Hope Baptist Church. They're a place where we learn more about Jesus and life together. They're the place where we wrestle with the truths of the Bible and encourage one another toward the life that God intends for us.

Each community group is unique, shaped by its neighborhood and the people who attend. However, you can expect a weekly gathering in a residence that involves food, conversation, prayer, discussion for applying the Bible to practical living, and service in the neighborhood. At the heart of each community group is the desire to see an authentic community marked by love for Jesus, one another, and the neighborhood.

Why Should I Join a Community Group?

The God of the Bible is a Trinitarian God who is one and three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. God has made us in his image, which means we are made for community and friendship. And when we are not living in community we suffer because life in a sinful world is too complex and tempting to journey alone. Therefore, community groups are a place where we can live in relationship with one another through the ups and downs of life.

Community Group Study Guide

- S – SUMMARY:** A summary of the lesson's passage.
- O – OBSERVATION:** A list of questions related to the biblical context of that lesson's passage.
- A – APPLICATION:** A list of questions for applying that lesson's passage to one's personal life and experiences.
- P – PRAYER:** A time to spend in communication with God in response to His word and its application to your life.

The Potter & The Clay

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Week 1:

THE SALVATION OF THE POTTER

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Week 1
(selected scriptures)

Summary

One image in the Bible that vividly portrays God and His people comes from the life of a potter and his use of the clay. The making of pottery begins with the potter choosing clay that is suitable. The potter examines the clay and makes his choice based on the good and acceptable qualities of the clay. God, as the Master Potter, also chooses the clay, but He chooses clay that is unsuitable and not based on any acceptable qualities the clay possesses. In week one we will examine this amazing truth of God rescuing clay that is unsuitable and unfit – clay that any other potter would bypass and ignore.

Observation

1. Read Isaiah 64:8 and answer the following questions:

In what two ways is the LORD described?

In what two ways are the people described?

2. Read Isaiah 43:1. What four things has the LORD done for His people?

_____ you.

_____ you.

_____ you.

_____ you.

3. In Isaiah 43:1, how did God sum up His relationship to His people?

You _____.

4. Read Luke 15:1,2. Answer the following questions:

Who were the people drawing near to Jesus?

The Salvation of the Potter

Who were the people who were grumbling?

Why were the religious leaders upset with Jesus?

5. Based on your answers to question 4, why did Jesus proceed to tell the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the two lost sons? In other words, what main point do you think Jesus was trying to convey to these religious complainers?

6. Read the story of the two lost sons in Luke 15:11-32. Write down 5 key things that stand out to you.

7. Read Romans 5:8 & 1 Peter 3:18 In what condition were we when Jesus died for us? Would you say man was suitable clay or unsuitable and unfit clay?

Romans 5:8 _____

1 Peter 3:18 _____

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

8. As you look at the two sons, how does each one represent the way people are today towards Jesus and the Potter's offer of salvation? (Hint: They were both lost and in need of the Potter's redemption to be His possession but how did each display that in different ways?)

Application

1. As you look at your life before God saved you, would you say you can identify more with the younger son who lived wild or the older son who was religious but just as lost? Can you give one example from your life?

2. Does this thought ever enter your mind when you think of those who are in great rebellion and living in wickedness and have no desire for God? – “There’s no way God could ever reach them; they’ll never turn to God, they just don’t care or they are too wicked?”

(Check those that apply)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I know God can reach them but my faith is weak
- ☐ I have stopped praying with earnest faith for them
- ☐ I really have lost hope for this person or persons

How does the repentance of the younger son encourage you about those you are burdened about and praying for, who at this time don’t belong to the Potter?

3. Write down 3 things that come to your mind when you think of God choosing you, an unsuitable piece of clay, to belong to Him as His very own.

The Salvation of the Potter

Prayer

As you close your group session tonight or even now as you complete this lesson:

- Give God thanks for forming you into His child – for picking you, a rotten and unacceptable piece of clay to be His very own possession.
- Ask God to increase your burden and hope for the lost whether they are the running wild and lost or the religious and lost
- Pray specifically for that person or persons(s) that you are burdened about, and maybe have given up on.
- Thank God for Jesus and the redemption that is only found in Him.

Notes:

Week 2:

THE SHAPING OF THE POTTER

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Week 2
(selected scriptures)

Summary

When the potter chooses the clay, the work is yet to be done. Before him sits this clump of clay that has no design and no purposeful shape. The potter sees in his mind the design he wishes to build. He removes anything from the clay that will make it harder to work with. He adds water to make it moldable. He sets it on the potter's wheel and as it begins to spin he takes his hands and plunges his wet thumbs into the middle of the unshaped clay. He works his fingers in certain ways to bring the clay to the desired shape that first began in his mind.

In a very similar way, God, having formed us and redeemed us, now sees us as a clump that needs shaped into the design that is in His mind. He removes what should not belong and He thrusts in his loving hands to begin to shape us into the image of His dear Son. This week we examine how God's great desire is to mold His clay to His specific design and the clay's willingness to be molded.

Observation

1. Read Jeremiah 18:1-6 and answer the following questions:

Where did God send Jeremiah and what was he to wait for? (1,2)

What did Jeremiah see going on with the potter? (3,4)

What desire did God the Potter express to Jeremiah about His people, the clay? (5,6)

2. According to the following verses, what does God know that qualifies Him to shape us?

Jeremiah 1:5 _____

The Shaping of the Potter

Psalm 139:1-5 _____

3. Why is God's intimate knowledge of every part of us, inside and out, a must in order to shape us into His desired design?

4. The potter has an important tool that he uses to shape the clay. What is the tool the Master Potter uses to shape us according to the following verses?

Psalm 119:73 _____

Hebrews 4:12 _____

2 Timothy 3:16,17 _____

5. To be usable, clay must go through the fire where heat is applied causing it to no longer turn into mud and crumble when exposed to weather. Our Potter uses a similar method to strengthen us and cause us to be usable as opposed to crumbling. Answer the following questions based on Isaiah 43:1,2

(Isaiah 43:1) – Why can Israel choose to not be afraid?

(Isaiah 43:2) – What things does God use to help shape His people – things that may be difficult, but things that they do not have to fear?

6. What is The Potter's goal for His clay according to the following verses?

Isaiah 43:7 _____

Colossians 1:29 _____

Romans 8:29 _____

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

7. Can you think of a couple examples in Scripture where God shaped His servants and over time they changed more and more for God's glory?

Name: _____

How they were shaped:

Name: _____

How they were shaped:

Application

1. If the Potter uses His Word as the tool to shape His clay, describe a person who rarely reads and applies the tool in his or her life.

2. Can you think of a specific time in your life where God took you through the fire and His presence and His Word helped to shape you more and more into the image of Jesus? Briefly describe this time of being "in the fire" and how it changed you.

3. Can you identify an area in your life that God is shaping right now or you need to allow Him to shape? Is there anything that needs to be cut away, or removed, or molded to be more like Him? Give this some thought and write it in the space below.

It would be easy to pass this question up or just write down a "Sunday

The Shaping of the Potter

School” answer that is very general. But as you think of the potter taking his thumbs and pressing deep into the clay to form a usable vessel, where is it that God is plunging His thumbs into your life? If it is too personal, but yet you realize it and are willing to receive God’s shaping of this area – just write down – “Personal”. But if you are willing to put it on paper, write it down in the space available.

Prayer

It is possible that this study has brought to your mind an area that God the Potter desires to change. This may include confessing sin and repenting and asking God for His help and His grace to receive His molding and shaping. Never neglect prayer when seeking the Potter’s shaping.

Notes:

Week 3:

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE POTTER



Week 3
(selected scriptures)

Summary

A clump of clay can be a very insignificant vessel compared to big world. As clay, it is very easy to become overwhelmed, confused, fearful, and discouraged. With so many people and events and circumstances surrounding us it is easy to think it is all by chance for either good or bad. We have even invented a word we call “luck”, to describe good events that maybe shouldn’t have happened.

One of the greatest truths for the Potter’s clay (you and me) is that the Potter is sovereign. He is in control of it all. There is much of this truth that is beyond our human grasp but not beyond our ability to have faith and believe in God’s total control. One of the greatest truths that the clay can learn is that the Potter is in control of all events including nations, people, the weather, evil, and even suffering. One author said it like this; “God’s providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people.” This lesson will examine the sovereignty of the Potter.

Observation

1. As you read Romans 9:20,21, how would you answer the following question? Who is in control, The Potter or the Clay?

2. According to Isaiah 43:10, what two things are said about God and so called other gods?

(Before God) _____

(After God) _____

3. According to Isaiah 44:24, did God need any help in creating the world?

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

4. Look up the following verses and write down what God is in control of (even if we cannot humanly grasp every detail and explain it)

Lamentations 3:37 _____

James 4:15 _____

Psalms 31:15 _____

Psalms 139:13-16 _____

Job 14:5 _____

Proverbs 19:21 _____

Exodus 4:11 _____

John 9:2,3 _____

Psalms 119:73a _____

Lamentations 3:38 _____

Proverbs 21:30 _____

5. What do we learn from Romans 8:28,29 about the sovereignty and purpose of God for his clay?

Sovereignty (His power and control) (28)

Purpose (29)

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How are the clay described?(28)

Application

1. Read Genesis 45:5 and 50:20. Joseph had a great understanding of the sovereignty of God even after experiencing great trials and hardships. Can you see a place in your life where you need to adjust your perspective to match Joseph's? Take a few moments to examine your life and your responses to life (worry, fear, discouragement, dismay, panic, unsettled, etc..) and write out a brief description of your life and where you struggle and need to embrace God's sovereign control. Even more than Joseph's example we need to look at the example of Jesus. He came and was perfect and suffered greatly but He knew why He came and He knew His Father's sovereign plan.

2. Read 1 Peter 4:19. Answer the following questions:

What does it mean that God is faithful when we suffer?

What are we supposed to do when suffering?

What does the answer to the question above mean to you personally?

The Sovereignty of the Potter

Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving for God's great control in your life is a great way to praise Him. Also, confess any sin of your lack of faith which is displayed by worry and anxiety. Ask God for His great help in trusting His sovereignty. (Always remember that we are to obey His word and believe His control over all things for His glory and our good – even though we should still ask for grace and help in the time of need)

Notes:

Week 4:

SEEKING THE POTTER



Week 4
(selected scriptures)

Summary

When the potter takes his clump of clay and begins to work with it pressing his hands deep into it to mold and shape it, the clay never says a word, never complains, and never cries. However, for human clay, it is a different story. Often when the thumbs are placed deep into our lives we complain, cry, and put up a fight. It is a constant battle for the clay to defeat the desires of sin and self and to seek the Potter with his heart, soul, mind and strength. In this lesson we will examine what it looks like for the clay to seek the Potter.

Observation

1. Read Isaiah 43:7, 21 and answer the following questions:

What were we formed and made for? (7) _____

What were we formed and made for related to others? (21) _____

2. According to Matthew 6:33, what is the clay to be seeking and what is the promise given?

Seeking - _____

Promise - _____

3. As you read 1 John 5:21, what do you see that steps in and tries to take the place of what the clay seeks?

4. Read Habakkuk 2:18-19. What is the writer trying to express about idols?

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

It is probably a rare thing for us today to have an idol statue in the back yard or in a shrine in our living rooms, but can you think of any other idols of the heart that we have that steal away our seeking of the Potter? Remember, an idol is something that takes the place of God and to us it is of great importance and we worship it with our time, money, effort, and care.

What does Isaiah 31 say about those who worship and place their trust and seek anything other than God?

5. What does 1 Peter 4:1-4 tell us about how former friends will react when they see the clay now seeking something entirely different than sin and sensual pleasures?

6. Read Romans 6:19. What is the only connection between what the lost clay and the saved clay have in relation to what they are seeking?

Application

1. If you had to pinpoint just one “idol of the heart” that constantly is a struggle for you preventing you from seeking the Potter as you should, what would that be?

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2. What thoughts come to your mind when you meditate on the word “seek”? What would be some words that would express the opposite of a seeking heart?

Seek

Opposite

3. Can you identify some time stealers that you have allowed to take away your time needed to seek the Potter? Can these things be adjusted or do they need to be eliminated?

Time Stealer

Adjusted / Eliminated

4. In what practical ways can I start in seeking the Potter in a greater way? Be specific and reasonable. For example: Don't say this: “Starting tomorrow I am not going to sleep any more at night, but instead I am going to start memorizing the whole Bible.” Just begin with one – be careful that you don't list so many things that you are defeated before you start. 1 major change in a year's time is better than none at all.

Prayer

Confession of sin as related to your idols may be in order here. Also, be specific and ask God to give you wisdom and open your eyes to those things you need to adjust or eliminate in order that you may seek Him better. In your prayer do not forget that the Potter is your Father and you are seeking the One you love. Do not neglect the relationship you have with him. If you do this it will turn into a job rather than a labor of love for you Savior.

Notes:

Week 5:

THE SEAT OF THE POTTER

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Week 5
(selected scriptures)

Summary

The finished piece of pottery is many times put on a shelf for display in order to be sold. People pass by and view the pottery and make a judgment on it. This week we are going to examine the seat of the Potter, or the judgment of the Potter. The Potter is the only one with the authority to judge because the clay is His possession. The clay is either his possession as being redeemed or his possession as a result of being a part of His creation. We will see that there is a separate judgment for both groups of clay. One results in reward or loss of reward yet saved eternally, while the other results in eternal fire and judgment.

Observation

I. THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT FOR REDEEMED CLAY

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10. According to this verse, what will all believers face in the future?

2. In 2 Corinthians 5:9, what is the aim of the believer before he ever gets to the judgment seat of Christ?

 CHALLENGE QUESTION:

3. In 1 Corinthians 3:12, there are two basic groups given to describe our works and service. What do you think these groups represent?

Group 1 – Gold, silver, precious stones _____

Group 2 – Wood, hay straw _____

4. As you look at 1 Corinthians 3:8, is the inspection by the Potter over His redeemed clay based more on faithful labor or success?

5. Read 1 Cor. 3:13. What is used to test the redeemed clay's works? How is this related to the materials used as already seen in verse 12?

6. What contrast do you see in relation to the rewards in verse 14 & 15 of 1 Cor. 12?

Verse 14 _____

Verse 15 _____

II. THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT FOR UNREDEEMED CLAY

7. Read Revelation 20:11-15.

8. Answer the following questions:

(11) Who is the Judge? _____

(12) Who is at this judgment? _____

(12) What do the books (plural) contain? _____

(12) What book is spoken of separately from the books? _____

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(12) What does God judge? _____

(13) Can any escape this judgment because they have already died?_

(14) What is the result of this judgment? _____

(15) What does the Book of Life contain? _____

Application

1. Have you ever found yourself frustrated because you don't see yourself as being successful in what you are doing for God? How does knowing that God's judgment is based on labor and faithfulness encourage you to keep on serving?

2. In what ways can you be faithful in your service, yet still lose your reward? In other words, what may cause your work to not pass the test of fire?

3. How does knowing you will be in the presence of Jesus,(totally forgiven and redeemed with your eternal salvation secured) face to face hearing His divine assessment of your service here on earth, motivate you to serve in ways that are acceptable to Him?

The Seat of the Potter

4. After studying the Great White Throne judgment where unredeemed sinners are finally and forever sentenced to eternal judgment, write down how this moves you as God's redeemed clay in the following ways:

Towards Jesus who saved you from this:

Towards the lost:

Prayer:

A constant examination of our motives as we serve is a good thing. As you examine your motives, confess any sin where selfishness has entered. Ask God for help to serve with a desire for the glory of God so that your rewards will not be lost and so that you will bring God glory today. Pray also that God will burden your heart for the lost who one day will face Jesus as their Judge at the Great White Throne.

Notes:

Prayer Requests:



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For a digital copy of this booklet, please visit:

<http://www.lhbcevv.org/CommunityGroups/PDFs/PotterAndTheClay.pdf>