



# The Potter Shapes the Clay

Goal: To imagine ways God is shaping grateful lives.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Jeremiah 18:1-6

Jeremiah must have wondered why God told him to visit the potter's house (18:1, CEB), but he obeyed.

There he saw a common occurrence. The potter was working on his wheel. But the piece he was making was flawed in his hands. So the potter started on another one ("reworked it" in NRSV).

Then the Lord's word came to Jeremiah. Before his eyes, he saw an enacted parable of God's relationship to the covenant people of Israel. God was saying, "Can't I deal with you like this potter, declares the LORD? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, house of Israel!" (v. 6).

Like the potter who has total control over the clay, so God the potter has the power to do whatever God desires with the nation. God is the Lord.

Yet, God is at work. When the clay was flawed, the potter started over with it to make something new. So does God. The flaws—or sins—of Israel and its people do not cause God to reject them. Instead, God continues to redeem the people. This is pure grace. God does as God wills; and God wills to save and redeem. How grateful we are!

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children have experience with imperfection. Each one probably has a story about a time when she dropped a glass and it broke or when he knocked over something on a table and it came crashing down. Children hopefully also have experienced kind help from adults who have reminded them that mistakes happen. We are human, we are not always perfect.

Children also are able to make the connection between imperfect things and imperfect people. This story of God helping Jeremiah see how God does many incredible things with humans, just like a potter working with clay, is a good reminder of how we can recognize God's grace in all we do each day.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

One of the things that God hoped Jeremiah would understand with the vision of the potter and the clay was that God would always love God's people, flaws and all. Just as God wanted Jeremiah to remind God's people of God's love, so are you one of God's messengers with God's children.

Children need help in remembering God's love for everyone, flaws and all. Bring a box of plain adhesive bandages with you and invite each child to take one and think about something God would like them to remember.

*O God, make me, mold me, fill me, and  
use me according to your holy will. Amen.*



## Supplies

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

cloth

candle

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

**Stories, Colors & More**  
(SCM) 7, 26–27, 35,  
37–38, 45–48

**Music & Melodies** (MM)  
2016–2017

story audio (see p. vii)

## Responding

### Praying

SCM 7, 26–27

sticky notes

### Offering

copies of **GN 2** on card  
stock

envelopes or plastic  
sandwich bags

### Bonus Activity

copies of **GN 3**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM 45–46**. Use the visual schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM 47–48** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

If possible, have a potter visit your group today. If desired, ask him or her to read today’s Bible story.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG A B M MS**

Play “Holy, Holy, Holy!”—**MM 21**—as the children arrive.

Welcome each child by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (*name*).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite children to place a cloth, candle, and Bible on the worship table.

Ask a volunteer to open a Bible to the book of Jeremiah and place it on the table.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

If you have invited a potter to join you, let your children observe the potter at work, ask questions, and learn about making pottery.

If you did not invite a potter, show the children **SCM 26–27** and ask: “What do you see in this picture?” Explain to the children that this is a picture of a potter using a potter’s wheel. Describe how a potter creates pottery on the potter’s wheel.

Invite the children to play with the play dough. Encourage them to create small plates, bowls, cups, and other tableware. Notice how the children form the items and praise their creativity. Ask the children whether they have ever made a dish that they use at home. Discuss different things the children create with their hands.

Together, look at the children’s play dough creations and invite them to think of compliments they can give to one another. Then ask each child to put the clay away.

### Singing

Sing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**MM 20, SCM 37**. Sing the song together once. Then invite the boys to sing the “hallelu, hallelujah” parts and the girls to sing “Praise ye the Lord.”

### Praying

Turn on the candle. Ask if the children have any prayer concerns. Invite someone to lead the opening prayer. Encourage the volunteer to include the concerns in the prayer. End the prayer with:

“Loving God, help us to be good listeners as we learn about Jeremiah today. Amen.”



### Preparing to Hear the Story

Ask a volunteer to hold the Bible so the group can see where it is opened. Tell them that the Bible is open to the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. Ask the children what they know about Jeremiah.

Wonder with the children what guidelines God gave the people about how they were to be in relationship with God and with other people. If not mentioned, suggest that God gave the Ten Commandments to guide the people's way of life. However, the people disobeyed God's rules. God sent Jeremiah to warn them that bad things would happen if they didn't obey. Listen to what happened when Jeremiah did what God told him to do.



### Hearing the Story

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Encourage the children to listen as you tell the story from **SCM 7** or invite a volunteer to read it. Use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story livelier. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

If a volunteer is reading the story, distribute pieces of play dough to each child. Have them pretend to make a pot with the clay during the story. Make a "mistake" on yours at the appropriate time in the story. Then reshape the clay. Encourage the children to do the same.

Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

### Reflecting on God's Grace

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Create a simple bowl shape with clay as you comment that Jeremiah was reminding the people that God created them just like a potter creates a bowl. If the potter looks at the bowl and says, "Well, that isn't what I wanted it to look like," the potter starts over.

Squeeze the dough to change the shape. Reshape the dough. Comment that if we fail to obey God, God will reshape us.

Distribute copies of **GN 1** and pencils. Work together to find the words from the list in the puzzle. Use the words to fill in the blanks in the statements at the bottom of the page. After completing the puzzle, have the children write the letters that have not been circled in order to discover Jeremiah's message.

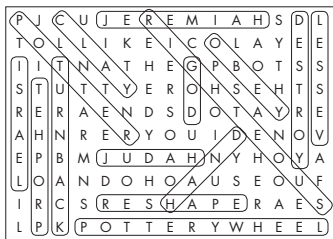
The answers to the puzzles are in the sidebar.

### Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing "Holy, Holy, Holy!"—**MM 21, SCM 38.**

Turn off the candle.

#### Answer to Word Search:



#### Answers to Fill in the Blanks:

Jeremiah, potter, pottery wheel, vessel, hand, destroy, reshape, prophet, Judah, Israel, clay, God, turn back, obey, righteous

#### Jeremiah's message from God:

"Just like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel" (based on Jeremiah 18:6b).



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Encourage all children to do the activity. If they protest about not wanting to undo the person they made, remind them that they can, like God, reshape it.

### Claiming God's Grace

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Offer a single pipe cleaner to each child. Invite the children to shape their pipe cleaners into stick people, encouraging them that there is no wrong way to do this—each may look different and that is OK. As they fashion their stick people, invite them to imagine how God may be shaping their lives. Encourage them to consider and then to speak aloud the ways God could be shaping them. Offer a reminder that God is patient and will not give up on shaping any of us.

Gather in a circle. Invite each child to turn to the person on their right, unravel their stick person, and wrap the pipe cleaner around their neighbor's wrist while saying, "Wear this as a reminder that God is shaping your life."

### Celebrating God's Grace

Children will use play dough to play a game like "Pictionary." Form teams of three to five and give each team a chunk of dough. Invite the youngest child in each group to hold the clay first and come to you to hear what they are to make. Children who are sculpting should not use any words to give clues; they may only fashion the play dough while their teammates guess what the object is. Have the children take turns molding the dough into a variety of items, such as a heart, spoon, flower, shoe, horse, balloon, or an arrow.

After playing, wonder:

- ▼ Was it frustrating to shape the play dough? Why? Why not?
- ▼ When your teammates had trouble guessing what you were making, what did you do?
- ▼ Wonder together how God celebrates shaping our lives.

### Praying God's Grace

Draw attention back to **SCM 26–27**. Re-read God's message at the end of the story on **SCM 7**, emphasizing the words, "When things go wrong I can help you start over."

Remind the children of God's patience. Like the potter, God doesn't throw us out when things go wrong. God continues to shape us into who God created us to be.

Ask the children to think of an action or attitude that they need to change or start over. Invite them to write or draw it on a sticky note. Post the sticky notes on **SCM 26–27**, reminding the children that God continues to shape their lives. Offer a prayer over the ways they have identified that they need help being shaped. End with a litany:

Leader: And God said, "I am like the potter."

Children: We give thanks for God's love.



### Offering God's Grace LG

Give each child a card-stock copy of **GN 2**. Invite them to color the pottery with crayons. Provide scissors and instruct them to first cut out the larger shape, and then cut out each piece so that it becomes a puzzle. Remind the children that even when the pot crumbled and went wrong, God put it back together, reshaping it patiently. Invite them to put their puzzles together, reading the words aloud when they are finished. Give each child an envelope or plastic bag to store their puzzle pieces. Encourage them to take their puzzles home and ask each person in their house to assemble the puzzle while they share the story of Jeremiah and the potter, remembering to include that God is like the potter.

Encourage them to make an offering to God by sharing the good news of grace with others.

### Bonus Activity

Give each child a copy of **GN 3**. In today's story, God told Jeremiah to go to the potter's house. Invite the children to help Jeremiah find his way by completing the maze. Wonder what the potter did with the clay. Find out by circling the letters along the path to the potter. Encourage the children to share the message with family members later in the day.

Answer: He reshaped the clay.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD LG

Invite the children to gather, then lead them in cleaning up the worship space. Sing "God Gives Us a Gift"—**MM 11, SCM 35**—together.

Invite the children to close their eyes and imagine God's hands shaping their lives. Encourage them to share what they see as they imagine. Go to each child, touch his or her shoulder, and say:

“(Name), God says to you, ‘I am like the potter. You are like the clay. I am shaping your life.’”

End by offering a prayer of gratitude for God's patience in shaping us and for God's grace in helping us start over when things go wrong.

Encourage the children to be grateful to God by sharing today's story with others.

Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [gracesightings.org](http://gracesightings.org).



P J C U J E R E M I A H S D L  
 T O L L I K E I C O L A Y E E  
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**Word Bank**

- |          |               |           |         |
|----------|---------------|-----------|---------|
| Clay     | Prophet       | Turn back | Reshape |
| Potter   | Vessel        | God       | Obey    |
| Israel   | Judah         | Righteous | Destroy |
| Jeremiah | Pottery wheel | Hand      |         |

Fill in the blanks:

The name of the prophet in this session: \_\_\_\_\_.

The prophet watched one of these at work: \_\_\_\_\_.

The potter uses this item to make pottery: \_\_\_\_\_.

A handmade pot can be called a \_\_\_\_\_.

Handmade pottery is made by \_\_\_\_\_.

When a potter does not like what has been made, the potter can \_\_\_\_\_ it.

To remake a destroyed vessel is to \_\_\_\_\_ it.

Jeremiah was a \_\_\_\_\_.

When Jeremiah saw the potter at work, it made him think of \_\_\_\_\_  
 and \_\_\_\_\_.

Jeremiah saw these two lands as being like \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_'s hands.

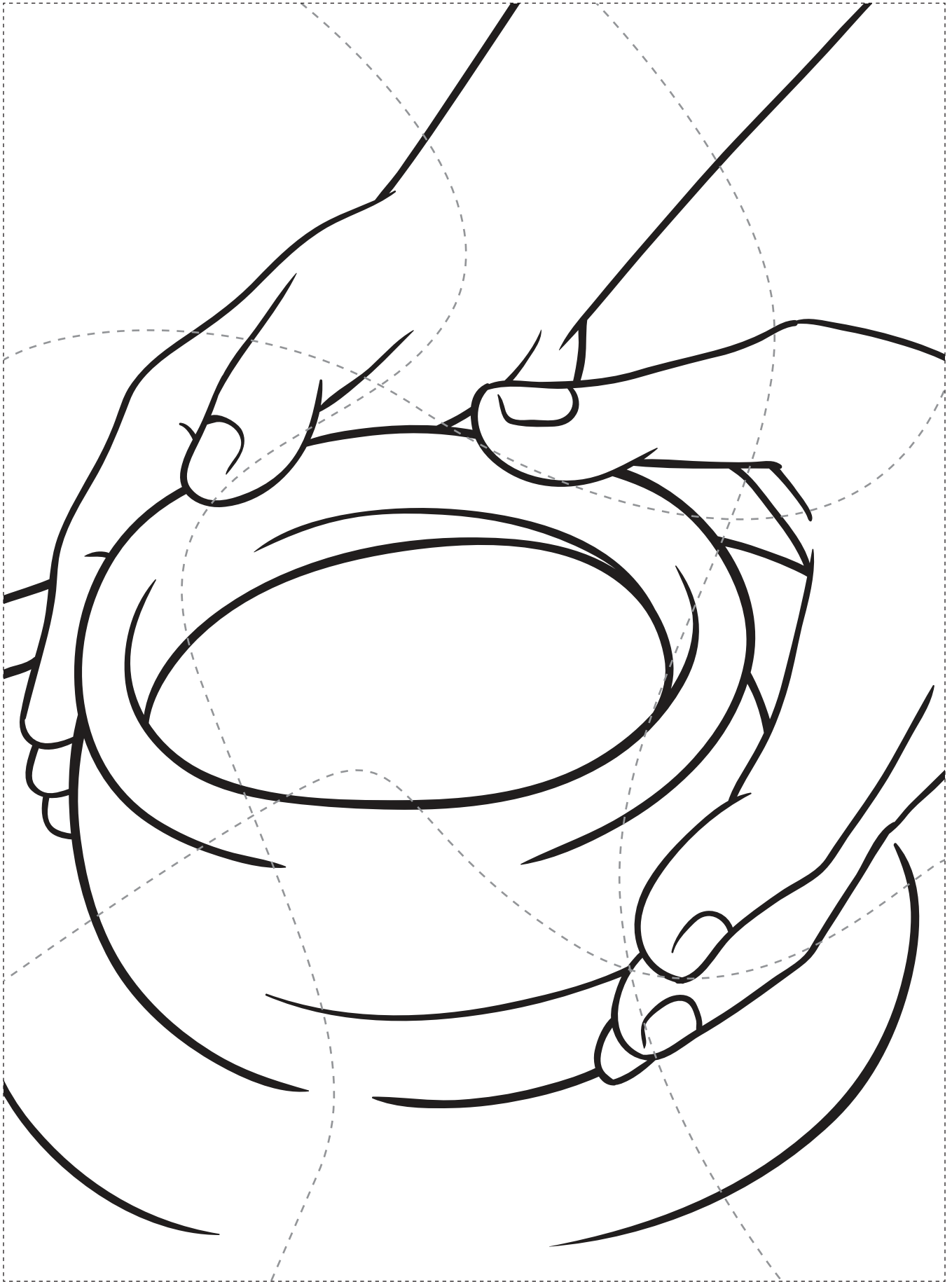
Jeremiah told the people to \_\_\_\_\_ to God, to \_\_\_\_\_ God and  
 live \_\_\_\_\_ lives.

Jeremiah's message from God:

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_.”









Help Jeremiah Find His Way

