



theme: Art & Design #2 – Clay Shouldn't Argue
materials: Bibles, clay or Play-do

welcome

Give everyone play-do or clay, and see who can come up with the most creative design.

interact

Give out these Scripture passages to read:

Genesis 1:2-36; Genesis 2:5-7; Job 10:9; Isaiah 29:15-16; Isaiah 64:8-9; Jeremiah 18:1-10; Romans 9:17-24; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

What is the common theme in all these passages?

What does it say about the relationship between God and humans? How do you feel about the imagery, about being compared to clay that is formed (and can be smashed) by God?

What would you want to say to God in response to this image? Write it down, and share with the group if you like.

read

Read Isaiah 45:1-13.

Who is Cyrus, and why is God going to use him to save Israel?

Does it make sense for God to be using a foreign king to save his own people? And how could he use him, if Cyrus was not even a follower of God?

Why is God referring to Israel as a clay pot and a newborn baby in this passage? What is the point of these images for Israel?

Have you ever acted like that pot that got angry with the potter? Have you ever thought that God had done things wrong? Explain.

Does God really have the right to do whatever He wants with His creation?

As partial answer to the above question, God in this passage (and famously in Job) talks about all the things He created. List all of the creative acts attributed to God in this passage.

Why does God "boast" about these things?

think

How do you suspect you would react if Jesus were to come in the door during cell and show you his wounds?

How do you think your life would be different? Make a conscious effort to live your life that way this week, and share next week at cell how it was different. (Remember, many of the disciples, after seeing the risen Jesus, went on to lead lives that led to their martyrdom!)



live & pray

Read one of the above passages (from the worship section) everyday to remind yourself about your relationship with God. He is the potter, we are the clay. How is He forming and molding you?

useful resources

- Website: <http://www.idolphin.org/clay.html> (traces the use of the potter and clay imagery throughout Scripture.)
- Book: *The Wounded Healer* by Henri Nouwen
- Movie: *Forest Gump* (Great scene where Lt. Dan vents his anger at God)

leader's guide

Cyrus (the Great) was the King of Persia, the nation that would overthrow the Babylonians (the ones who had defeated Israel, taken her land and enslaved many of her citizens). God uses this foreign king to release His people from their Babylonian Captivity. Interestingly, Cyrus was not a follower of God (verse 5 says he did not know God), but was used as an instrument of God to fulfill His plans.

The use of Cyrus, and his description as "anointed one" might have been troubling to the Israelites. Why could God not use one of His own people as a deliverer? He had done it before many times. Why this pagan now? In addition to this, there would still be questions about the Babylonian Captivity itself. Why was this allowed to happen to God's people? God answers these questions by pointing out that Israel is clay, and He is the potter (or they are the child, and He is the parent). He can do what He likes, and the *clay* has no business debating it. And, in the end, His plans are good, He wants to prosper His people. Why should they tell Him that He is getting it all wrong?

The pot/potter imagery comes up all throughout Scripture. It is a very clear image of God having the sovereign authority to do what He likes with His handiwork, and having the knowledge required to set out plans that will work for the good of His people.

God boasts about all He has done as the master artist because His people need to have the right perspective. God made everything, we did not. It is essential to remember that God actually knows what He is doing, and we truly haven't a clue.