

YOUTH SUNDAY

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As some of you may know, I have been, all throughout my life, actively involved in Playhouse in the Park, the local community theater. A common theater exercise that I have learned is called “sculpture gallery.” In this activity, two actors pair up and one attempts to shape the other as if he were clay. The point of this exercise is to show that everyone in a theatrical production has influence and effects the outcome of the show. The same way that the sculptor couldn’t shape two models exactly the same, the director can’t help but put his influence on the actor and the actor on the performance. God can be looked at as the director of our lives. We are shaped by our attitudes, our life experiences, and difficult times. And just like no two sculptures in the exercise will turn out to be exactly same, no one’s life will present the same circumstances or set of events. We, as Christians, must allow God to shape us and strive to become the perfect clay so he can mold us into what he wants us to be.

Clay that is too hard can not be molded. You can try and try to shape it in a certain way but the clay simply breaks and crumbles. This is also the case with people. Tough times or difficult trials have the ability to harden someone. But God wants to mold us in his image and may use trials in our lives to do so. Trials do produce discomfort and it can be easy to not trust God. But we must remember, suffering produces perseverance, molds our character, and will produce hope and strengthen our faith. If we are not willing or able to change, if we are too scared to be molded, if we are too “hard”, we will not become the masterpieces that God wants us to be.

Clay that is too soft can not be molded. This type of clay holds a shape for only a short amount of time, then falls apart and becomes reshaped into something else. People who are too easily swayed or influenced won't hold a shape either. People who always change to fit a certain group or who are constantly comparing themselves to others won't be made into what God wants them to be.

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfections, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

If we are too concerned with others, and if we are too concerned with our own imperfections we will not be strong clay for God to mold. We must learn to embrace our

imperfections and remember that God always has a plan. Christians must maintain their own identity and hold that Christian form strong.

The perfect clay is both hard and soft. Soft enough for the potter to shape it, but not too soft where it falls apart. Hard enough to hold a shape but not completely inflexible. Christians should strive to be the perfect clay. We must allow God to lead and direct our lives but we can't be led astray by every powerful force that comes our way. Being perfect clay doesn't mean that you have to be perfect. You will still have doubts, fears, and questions. No one can argue that mother Theresa was not perfect clay. She was a beacon of hope to world. She was quoted saying this, "Jesus has a very special love for you, but as for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear, the tongue moves in prayer but does not speak, pray for me that I let him have a free hand." Everyone has doubts and will question God, but that does not affect our ability to become the perfect clay.

If we allow God to work in our lives he will shape us into something beautiful, like this. (Balloon) Wow, I made a worm. If we let him, God can take our lives and shape it into whatever he wants it to be. A lot of the time, if we try to do it ourselves, we turn out to be worms, just like the balloon. We need to trust God through every circumstance and let him shape us. Becoming the perfect clay is not easy but with a firm set of morals and beliefs and an open heart, we will become a masterpiece.