

YOUTH SUNDAY

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Some of you may know who I am, some of you may not. I know as a kid I was pretty well known in the church as a crazy little kid who was always hyper and bouncing off the walls. I'd like to say I've matured a bit since then. Or at least just a little.

But as you all may know, our theme for this youth Sunday is how Christ has shaped us. Through Christ there are endless possibilities of what you can be, or what you can become. He can guide you to be exactly what he wants you to be, and can guide you to be an example and leader through him. This is a simple and some what cheesy example, but we can be thought of as the clay of Christ. That even has a nice little ring to it. We are the clay that Christ holds in his hands, and as our life progresses he begins to mold us and shape us into bigger and better things, which can be thought of as being turned into his pots. When I heard our theme was how Christ had shaped us, that is the first thing I pictured... for some reason I just see Jesus up there with a bunch of clay, spinning it and forming it into pots. And just to add another symbolic analogy to all of this, we accurately fit the description of a pot in certain ways. I'm not sure about the rest of you, but I usually find that pots are useful for holding water. Since we are metaphorically pots, then the water going into us can be metaphorically thought of as knowledge. I mean, think about it. Through many, many years, Christ is forming us into pots. We are at first the clay, and once he molds us into his pots he can fill us with water, or his knowledge. And through that, we can use the knowledge that has been put into us and use it as an ingredient to mix into others who are still in the "clay" stage, and are in

the process of being formed into a pot. Because as you may know, clay isn't very easy to work with when it's dry, so putting our water onto it makes it easy to be formed.

So now that I've probably confused most of you with series of silly little metaphors, let me explain this and give examples in real form. Alright, so most of us when we were younger had people who greatly influenced our Christian lives. Those people who were always there to steer you in the right direction, or to take you to church, or to answer any questions you had, or even to put their knowledge into you. In my early Christian life, my big influences were my parents, our former youth leader Danielle Schwettman, our current youth leader Amanda Lough, some of the older members of our youth group while I was one of the younger members, and every adult who has ever stepped up to be a leader in the youth group while I have been participating. These people are all of the pots in my life, who have been pouring their water onto me so that I can be formed from clay into a pot. And now I try to be that pot that pours my water into others, giving them the knowledge I have received and gained over my years. This definitely isn't to say that I have been fully shaped by Christ or fully molded, but I use my knowledge to help others through their walk with Christ. Being one of the few seniors that are in the youth group, I feel I have a sense of leadership, and that at times I need to be the one to step up and be the one to take everyone in the right direction. I mean sure I like to goof off, and have a good time with my friends, but to truly get all of Christ's message he is sending out to you, you have to give him your full attention, which cannot be done while telling a joke to your friend or talking while the youth leader is talking. So I feel it is my place at times to make sure everyone has their full attention.

Through time, I myself have went trough a transformation in my Christian life. When I first joined the youth group, in 6th grade, I would always watch all of the older kids hang out with each other, sit together to chat, or play ping pong together before we started worship, and I would always just be watching them. Believe it or not, I was always the quiet kid who sat in the back, furthest away from everyone, and just watched everything go on. At times I felt I wasn't even part of the group, because I was so left out. But through time this began to change. As the years went on, I changed from sitting in the back and feeling left out to sitting on the couches in the front with the older kids. Before I knew it, I was raising my hand when appropriate and answering questions that were asked. I went from the quiet shy kid in the back, to the loud, outgoing, and sometimes obnoxious guy that I am now. Anyone in the youth group can attest to this and guarantee it is true, but I am nowhere near quiet these days. But I feel that is what Christ has molded me to be. I feel now that I can be that example for the "quiet kids in the back", who I at one point in time resembled. I feel I can pour my knowledge onto them, and help them to hear, speak, and feel the word of God blessing them. Christ has shaped me in a way I never thought was possible. It just goes to show that through Christ, anything is possible.

Now I'm going to read some scripture from the Bible to you. I'll be reading from Acts, chapter 9, verses 1-22.

So basically, this man named Saul, who is later also known as Paul, is travelling to Damascus to arrest any followers who may be there. On his way to Damascus this light from heaven dawns upon him and the Lord asks Saul why he is persecuting him. Saul asks who is speaking to him, and the Lord responds by saying that he is Jesus, the one he is persecuting. He then tells Saul to go into the city to await further instructions. All of a sudden, Saul is blind! His companions then lead him into the city of Damascus, where he stays and remains blind for three days, going without food or water. So God tells this follower named Ananias to go to the house of Judas and ask for Saul of Tarsus, and for him to go lay his hands on Saul so that he can see again. Ananias is hesitant at first because he is afraid of what Saul might do to him for being a believer, but the Lord convinces him by saying "Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to the kings, as well as the people of Israel." This exactly relates to the theme this entire service has revolved around.. How Christ has shaped us. Here, he uses a man who arrests people for believing in Christ, and shapes him into someone who relays the message of Christ! These are two totally contradicting things, and this is an incredibly drastic change. Like I said earlier, through Christ anything is possible. Saul never in his right mind thought that he would change his hatred for people who follow Christ, into someone who preaches the word of the Lord. This sort of power is only possible through the hands of Christ, molding us into his "pots". He uses every single one of us for his purpose, and through him, we can all become something great. So I want you to think all to think to yourselves... How can YOU be that pot that pours your knowledge into others?