



Dear Potter, I'm Feeling Broken

■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

“But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” -Isaiah 64:8

I confess, I love DIY shows, seeing “trash” turned into “treasure”. I remember a builder purchasing chipped china plates at a garage sale, then breaking each one into multiple pieces. She used those broken pieces to form a coffee table’s beautiful mosaic top.

When we feel broken, we feel less valuable, as if we have lost purpose. Nothing can be further from the truth. God the Potter uses our brokenness to develop a beautiful purpose.

The Master Potter

Potters create fragile vases, ceramic garlic-keepers, and everything in-between. They enjoy the process of imagining and creating. Here is an extremely simplified process: They work a clay lump in their hands until the clay becomes soft and pliable. They use varied techniques to form images only seen in their minds. They “fire” some pots by baking them in special ovens called kilns. The more intense the heat, the more useful the pot becomes.

Our Potter forms each person painstakingly and lovingly. King David said, “You shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother’s womb. ... You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something” (Psalm 139:13, 15; The Message).

The Broken Pots

Our Potter sees our finished version before he forms us. He allows fiery trials and temptations that grow us into mature disciples (James 1:2-4, NLT). Only sometimes, our internal flaws allow external circumstances to break us.

Circumstances: The Apostle Paul describes the process this way: “We are cracked and chipped from our afflictions on all sides, but we are not crushed by them. We are bewildered at times, but we do not give in to despair. We are persecuted, but we have not been abandoned. We have been knocked down, but we are not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, The Voice).

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Flaws: Clay holds air bubbles, which can explode during the firing process. Potters use a sort of kneading process to rid the clay of them.* We hold flaws stemming from our sin nature, such as pride and resentment. The kneading hurts. We try to hide our flaws, and we resist the process to avoid the pain.

Gary and I lived with my grandma due to her growing dementia. As I increasingly struggled with her personality changes, I spent less time sitting with her and more time doing chores and errands. I felt broken and hated myself within a year.

The Beautiful Purpose

The Apostle Paul understood why the world needs our brokenness. He said, "But this beautiful treasure" — God's glory — "is contained in us—cracked pots made of earth and clay—so that the transcendent character of this power will be clearly seen as coming from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7, The Voice).

Wouldn't we see more light inside a once-broken, now-mended pot than one that is rock-solid? Won't the cracked pot allow light to pour out? God's glory shines in direct contrast to our humanity. We become living testimony that "in all things God works for the good...." (Romans 8:28a, NIV), so our brokenness serves others.

Our brokenness serves us, too. God used my brokenness to save me.

I paid a last-second visit to my husband's family church. The pastor began his sermon informing us his normal routine included praying for God's topic six weeks in advance. He stated he "argued with God" that God's sermon wasn't spiritual. He added, "...and God won." God, through that statement and the resulting self-esteem sermon, changed me. After a lifetime in church, I finally understood God's healing love. I began understanding our Potter's careful timing and crafting process.

I have and hear many brokenness stories. Yet only sometimes I understand how God uses it for our good. Sometimes we find it later, when we meet our Potter face-to-face.

Just remember that God is the Master Potter. Remember his continuing work. He pieces us back together and heals. He lovingly places his glory in us, and we shine his light in the darkness. He gives his beautiful purpose to our brokenness.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. ~The Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:6 (NLT) ■

* Potter and pottery information written by George Harris and can be found in much greater depth at <https://www.britannica.com/art/pottery>.

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