



The Potter

**"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 ESV

Producer's Comments & Study Guide

The Potter

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"That I may know Him..."

Philippians 3:10

I thank the Lord that He, the Creator of the universe, was the Potter who took all the broken pieces of my life and molded me into a brand new person. I'll tell you more of my story in the "Producer's Comments" section. But for now, let it suffice to say that the Lord called me out of the miry bog of my life when I was a junior in college majoring in art. He started speaking to me...teaching me about Himself as I worked with the clay in my ceramics class.

Years later, when I got involved in media production, I knew I had to share the lessons He had taught me through the clay. I originally produced *The Potter* as a 3-projector slide show which I hauled around the country... showing it in venues from country churches to national conventions. Later, I transferred it to VHS then DVD for wider distribution. I am now overjoyed to have it on the Web for all to see without cost.

The Potter is an inspirational allegory illustrating our walk with the Lord using the process potters use in working with clay. As you watch the Master Potter take a broken, previously used, discarded piece of dry clay and form it into a usable, beautiful vessel, you'll see the depth of this parable. You may recognize the breaking process, the wedging, the on-the-wheel experiences of your life...the fire, the glaze, the second fire...but "through it all" I pray that you'll see the purposeful, creative hand of the Master Potter. Described as "a sensitive presentation weaving many Biblical truths into one beautiful message," *The Potter* ministers encouragement to Christians, and it is used by the Holy Spirit to bring those who do not know Him to say, "Make me a new creature, Lord!"

Together...

on our way to our Father's house,



Linda

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Producer's Comments

by Linda King

When I was a student at Colorado State University, I was an art education major with a focus on ceramics. I loved working with the clay! Before I say anything more, let me make sure you understand that when I say "throw a pot" it refers to the process of forming a pot on a potter's wheel...not heaving a pot across the room. I have three life quotes from my ceramic instructors. When our pots would crack and we would want to try to fix them, our instructor Clara Hatton would always say, "Once a cracked pot...always a cracked pot!" She would make us start over and not try to repair the cracked pot. My other instructor Bill Alexander would say, "A poor craftsman always blames his tools." I often remember that when I'm ready to blame this or that rather than taking responsibility for my mistakes. He would also say, "It takes two potters to throw a good pot -- one to throw the pot and one to shoot the potter when he's done." Too often, potters keep working on a piece...diddle around with it until the clay loses its elasticity. I started applying that quote to other areas of my life...saying, "It's time to shoot the potter!" So, when I go on and on trying to improve this or that when I'm working on

something...tweak it here...tweak it there, my best friend will often say, "It's time to shoot the potter!" Those are fun lessons from my days in ceramics class.

But I learned much more at CSU, for it was there that my life spiraled down into the muck and mire. Struggling with an all-consuming loneliness, an unsatisfied longing to belong to someone, and the depravity of life that came in trying to fill that emptiness, I determined to take my own life. But Jesus came knocking. He moved Carol (one of the girls on my dorm room floor) to come knocking on my door. When I finally opened the door, she saw my despair and asked me if I had ever asked Jesus to forgive me and to take over my life. The miracle was that I said, "No". I had grown up religiously, intensively involved in many activities in my church, but I never knew that the Lord Jesus wanted to have a personal relationship with me! I never really understood that being a Christian was based on what Jesus had done in giving His life on the cross...not on my pridefully working to be good enough. I had pursued God, but now I realize that He was pursuing me...knocking on the door of my heart as surely as Carol had knocked on the door of my room. Carol said, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 ESV Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for everything bad that I was doing, had ever done, or would ever do! His forgiveness was a free gift I could receive but never earn! That night I turned from my wicked ways, received His forgiveness, and I committed my life to Him. And just as He promises, He filled my emptiness with His presence...His Life! And the adventure began!

The strong awareness of His presence with me and in me replaced the loneliness! I felt alive! I had a new sense of purpose. I wanted to really get to know Him! I wanted to tell others what He had done for me and could do for them! Because Jesus was now living His Life in me by His Holy Spirit and was opening my eyes and teaching me, I could understand the Scriptures. I wanted to live in a continual awareness of His presence with me! As I worked on the clay, He started whispering parables to my heart. This is one of my favorites. When throwing a pot on the potter's wheel, I was to put one hand inside and one outside of the clay piece I was forming. As I applied pressure on the outside, I was to oppose it with an equal amount of pressure on the inside. That is what kept my pot from collapsing, and as I gently pulled up, it made my pot grow! The Lord showed me that was like our lives lived in relationship with Him. When difficult life circumstances happen to us on the outside, He is always there on the inside to equalize that pressure, be the support we need, gently pulling us upward, and that causes us to grow. I was so excited! I'd call my instructor over. "Mr. Alexander, look at this! This is just like the Lord..." and I'd tell him what the Lord had just shown me. He'd slap his forehead and say, "Oh, you remind me of my Southern Baptist mother!" As I got involved in studying the Bible, I found those truths that He was teaching me from the clay were in His Word! What a thrill that was!

Years later, when I got involved in media production, the Lord laid it on my heart to share these lessons. As I listened to Him, He wove together the truths He had taught me through the clay for the script of this presentation. But what about the visuals? There was only one potter I even considered asking to work with me for the visuals. It had to be Mr. Alexander. This was now 1978. I was living in Nebraska. I had graduated in 1964 from Colorado State University. Would Mr. Alexander still be there? Could I find him? I called. Yes! He was still there! He was changing universities at the end of the year. I asked him if he would work with me. He said that he couldn't because he had a big show coming and lots of pots to prepare. I begged. No, he couldn't. I begged some more. And then...He agreed. HE AGREED! I sent him the script to make sure all of my facts were correct. I described the pots and the various stages I needed. He prepared everything. I went to Colorado, and in one day I shot 52 rolls of film...all of the visuals needed for the show! Thank you, Lord, and thank you, Mr. Alexander.

And so it was that *The Potter* was originally created as a 3-projector slide presentation which I showed in venues around the country. In the 80s, I converted it to VHS. In the late 90s the Lord started encouraging me to digitally remaster it. I thank the Lord for His great patience and perseverance with me. What joy that it is now available without cost on the Worldwide Web. Only the Lord could design a presentation which is so undated that its message which began in 1978 is still touching hearts! I am truly amazed! I praise His name!

There are many spiritual illustrations in this presentation. The breaking, the wedging, the forming, the drying, the first fire, the glazing, the second fire...but through it all, it's the presence of the Pitcher with and later within the pot that made all the difference. For Christians, coming to realize that Christ is alive with us and in us and wants to live His life through us is life-giving and life-changing! When we are living with that awareness, when we are in conversation with Him throughout the day, it becomes natural to turn to Him for wisdom, direction, courage, patience, and love. Slowly, we come to realize that He doesn't give us courage...He IS our courage! He doesn't give us strength...He IS our strength! He doesn't just give us life, He is the Life He gives us! When we become aware of His presence, we begin to understand that we are not alone. We can give Him our anxiety. He can help us not yield to temptation. Being aware of His presence makes all the difference in all of life!

Our culture values independence. We can't wait to grow up so we can be independent! We want to have life all figured out...even in the Christian world. We want a 3 1/2" x 5" card with answers for every question... directions for every situation. But the Lord wants us to depend on Him for direction and to be responsive and available to Him. When we are letting Him live His life through us...that is fulfillment! Jesus was dependent upon His Father! He showed us how to live. Some say that the Lord isn't interested in the little things in our lives. Oh my, that is not true. He wants to be involved in every detail of our lives.

What can we do to become more aware of God's presence? Creation is a great reminder and can stir us to turn to Him in gratitude. He often uses visuals in my life. After becoming a Christian, I went to InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's Bear Trap Ranch. The first summer, I was a camper and received wonderful teaching and inspiration through the speakers. The second summer I was on the work crew. I remember standing in the kitchen...feeling sorry for myself because I was not able to hear the speakers. The Lord spoke to my heart: "I can teach you just as much in this kitchen as I can at the Lodge!" I believed Him because He had been teaching me over the clay the semester before at CSU. That began an amazing summer adventure with the Lord. I began anticipating what He would teach me! I would look at something and say, "How does this remind me of the Lord or my relationship to Him." And I'd listen. Once I asked, "How does this dirty dishwasher remind me of the Lord or my relationship to Him?" Here's what He said: "The dirty dishwasher is like Jesus. The dishwasher took the dirt off the dishes so they could be clean and used again. Jesus took the dirt...the sin from your life so you could be used by Him." This is how the Lord started helping me be intentional about being aware of His presence. Why don't you give that a try? Just know that anything you believe you hear must always line up with the truths of the Bible. The more we listen and respond to His still small voice, the more we will be able to recognize it!

Once we have turned from our old self-serving lifestyle, and have received the gift of His forgiveness, once we are committed followers of Jesus, and He has taken up residence within us, He promises that He will never ever leave us! Why then do we pray and ask the Lord to be with us? Doesn't that make us question whether He is with us all the time? Instead, I've found it a real faith builder to say, "Thank you, Lord, that you are with us and promise never to leave us! Please help us be very aware of your presence." "...He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!] Hebrews 13:5b AMPC

Perhaps you don't yet have an intimate relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus. Perhaps you have a huge empty hole in your heart you are trying to fill with everything and anything and anyone...none of which is satisfying your aching emptiness. Perhaps you feel that your life has no meaning or purpose. Perhaps you feel desperately lonely. Perhaps you feel like life is no longer worth living. Perhaps you are involved in church activities...doing lots of good things...but it doesn't satisfy your heart. I have great news for you! Jesus loves you, and He is the answer! Here's what the Bible says:

- We are all in the same condition! "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 ESV
- "For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23a ESV
- Because of love, Jesus died on the cross to pay that penalty for us: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 ESV
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23 ESV
- "But to all who did receive him (Jesus), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12 ESV
- "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 ESV
- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV

God loves you and wants to have an intimate relationship with you! This is absolute fulfillment! This is being who you were meant to be. This is living the life you were meant to live. This is fulfilling the purpose for which you were created! This is the great adventure! The God of the universe wants to live His life in you and through you! Does it get any better than that?

Do you sense He is calling to you...knocking on the door of your heart? Is this what you want in your life? Is this WHO you want in your life? Just tell Him. You could pray a prayer such as, "Father God, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I have been going my own way and doing my own thing all my life. Thank you that you love me so much that you gave your one and only Son Jesus who died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I believe in Him. Thank you for forgiving me of everything I've ever done wrong. Lord Jesus, I'm so thankful that you rose from the dead so you could give your life to me and live your life through me. Please come into my heart and take over my life. I want to be and to do all you have planned for me! I give my life to you. Thank You for giving Your life to me! I receive you as the Lord and Savior of my life. I want to know you more and more! Thank you for giving me your Holy Spirit who will be my Teacher and my Guide. Thank you that you will never ever leave me and that one day I will live with you in heaven! Thank you! In Jesus' name I pray! Amen!"

I celebrate with you that you have chosen to believe, receive, and follow Jesus! You have just moved from death to Life! You are a brand new person! Remember, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." II Corinthians 5:17 ESV

To help you grow, start reading the Bible. I'd start with the book of John to get to know Jesus more and more. I strongly encourage you to get involved in a church that teaches from God's Word the Bible. Get involved in a local Bible study.

When we give up living our lives for ourselves and commit our lives to Jesus and to following Him, we can truthfully say, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20 ESV

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

"Now may the God of peace [Who is the Author and the Giver of peace], Who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood [that sealed, ratified] the everlasting agreement (covenant, testament), Strengthen (complete,

perfect) *and* make you what you ought to be *and* equip you with everything good that you may carry out His will; [while He Himself] works in you *and* accomplishes that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ (the Messiah); to Whom be the glory forever and ever (to the ages of the ages). Amen (so be it)." Hebrews 13:20-21 AMPC

STUDY GUIDE

At the beginning of *The Potter*, we find a broken, discarded piece of pottery on the pile to be recycled. I'll refer to it as "the clay." It had had other potters before. It had been used and abused, and it had had promises broken and hopes shattered. It had been rejected and thrown aside. Can you identify with any of these feelings?

It was at this point in the clay's life that the Master Potter came along. Who does the Master Potter represent? Think of words which describe Him and His treatment of the clay.

What was the clay's initial reaction to the Potter's promise to make him into something special?

What gave him the courage to believe?

How does that relate to you and your relationship with God?

Did the Potter keep His promise?

Think of words which describe the clay. What various steps did the Potter take the clay through before He took him to the potter's wheel?

Was there a purpose for each of those steps?

Were those all pleasant experiences?

After softening the clay, the Potter put him through a sieve to separate him from the things that would keep him from being what He had in mind. Have you experienced that in your life?

Who does the Pitcher represent? What influence did He have on the clay?

What was the Pitcher's attitude toward the Potter?

What was the clay's purpose?

What did it take for the clay to fulfill its purpose?

What does the water represent? What was its purpose?

How are we like the clay in the Potter's hands?

Do you think you are being molded by God as the clay was molded by the Potter? How? Why?

Where in this program do you see trust relationships? How were they established? Do they remind you of any situations in your own life?

When the Potter threw the lump of clay down onto the table during the wedging process, empty holes popped out on top of the clay. If the Potter had not worked to remove these holes, they would have caused the pot to explode when it was in the kiln. What do these holes represent?

Have you ever experience being on God's wedging table? Was their purpose in what you experienced?

"It seems for every bit of pressure He puts on the outside, He opposes it with an equal amount of pressure on the inside. I began to grow!" Have you experienced this equalizing pressure in your life?

What do you see about the Potter's timing with the clay? Can you compare any of your experiences with the Lord to that?

What did the smashing of the pitcher represent?

"He took me back to the wedging table and sprinkled the small bits of the Pitcher over me and folded me over and over, just as before. What does this represent?"

Some of the other pots that were made by other potters exploded when they were in the kiln. Who or what today could be "other potters?"

"Some think that it's the glaze that makes you able to hold water, but it's really the degree to which you're fired." How does this compare with lives of Christians you know? How does it relate to your own life?

What did the glaze represent? Why was it transparent?

What happens when we try to look good on the outside and do those things we think Christians are to do but don't deal with the inside issues?

What were some of the differences the clay experienced when he was in the hands of the Master Potter as opposed to when he had been in the hands of the "other potters?"

Can you picture clay continually jumping off the Potter's wheel? Do you ever try to jump off of the Potter's wheel? Why?

What are some specific ways you can yield your life to God and let Him mold you?

Was there any particular place during *The Potter* that you felt the Holy Spirit really zero in on you? "That's what I did in your life! That's what I'm doing right now! That's what I want to do!"

What in your life has been broken? And mended? Is still in need of mending?

Being molded and following God's will is a lifetime process. Do you know someone who is letting God mold them? What is God using to mold them?

Are you cooperative clay?

Do you feel God's molding process in your life? What things, people, and experiences is He using?

In *The Potter*, the clay often intentionally turned his attention to focus on the Pitcher. What happened to him when he did?

In focusing on the Pitcher, he was encouraged, strengthened, gained hope, and received instruction. What does this encourage you to do?

Christ demonstrated this as it is recorded in Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus' focus was set, and He was able to endure the cross and despise the shame. For us, it requires being intentional about looking away from all that will distract us and then fixing our eyes on Jesus.

What is most often the focus of your mind?

What is a frequent distractor for you?

What can you do to remember to focus on Jesus?

In *The Potter*, the presence of the Pitcher made all the difference for the little pot. The Lord's presence...the awareness of the Lord's presence can make all the difference for us.

If you are aware of His presence, will it change what you think about?

If you are aware of His presence, will it influence what you say?

If you are aware of His presence, will it influence what you do?

Do you worry so much when you are aware of His presence?

If you are aware of His presence, how will you respond to temptation?

If you are aware of His presence, will you be so afraid?

What helped the little pot endure the flames of the kiln?

What was the end result for the little pot going through that entire process?

In observing the change in the little pot they had once known, how did the other pots who had been tossed aside respond?

What has the Master Potter done in your life? Have you shared that with others? What impact might your sharing have on their lives?

It's an astounding moment when you realize that the God of all creation loves you, picked you up off of the discard pile, and has a design, a purpose, and a plan for your life! "I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6 ESV He is able! We can trust Him!

My part? My part is to fully cooperate with God in fulfilling the purposes He has for me! I want to be dependent, responsive, obedient, and available to Him! I want to be and do all He has prepared for me!

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10 ESV

Suggested Reading:

Psalm 16:11

2 Corinthians 4

Psalm 91

Hebrews 13:5b-6

The Practice of the Presence of God

by Brother Lawrence

During the summer at Bear Trap Ranch, that I mentioned in the Producer's Comments, I often shared with a staff member what the Lord was teaching me through the pots and pans in the kitchen. What a wise leader she was. She listened. She waited. At the end of the summer, she gave me the little book *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence. What a thrill to discover that Brother Lawrence and I had had many similar experiences with the Lord in the kitchen. It would not have been the same...much of the intimacy of the experience and discovery with the Lord would have been lost

had that staff person given me the book at the beginning of the summer instead of at the end! She let me learn from the Lord and then reinforced what I had learned by sharing the story of another who had learned in a very similar way! The timing of her gift was a lesson in itself. Anticipate the Lord! He has much to teach us if we but listen!

Still Small Voice

There's a still small voice that calls to me
Deep inside my heart it calls to me.
Come away with me; I will speak to you
Take this time to be with me.

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Jars of Clay

We hold this treasure in jars of clay
To show the power comes only from Him.
Though pressed on every side, I do not faint.
My life is His to live and mine to give.
For God Who said, "Let light shine out of darkness"
Has made His light shine out of our hearts.

Based on II Corinthians 4

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For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"
has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of
the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
But we have this treasure in jars of clay,
to show that the surpassing power belongs to God
and not to us.

2 Corinthians 4:6-7 ESV

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV

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The Potter

A Shepherd & Associates Production

Called to produce the tools to equip the saints to do the work of ministry.

May the work of our hands become tools in your hands for the Savior!



Other Ministry Resources from Shepherd & Associates:

Listen to the Butterfly

26 minutes

(a parable comparing our spiritual development to the physical development of the monarch)

The Secret of the Vine

31 minutes

John 15 comes alive in this parable which compares our spiritual development to the process of growing grapes.

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