

## The Potter and the Wheel

<sup>1</sup>The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>“Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” <sup>3</sup>So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. <sup>4</sup>The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

<sup>5</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>6</sup>“Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ... Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter...”

I have to share a story with you. I was recently at a prayer conference called New Wine--"Cry Freedom" in England. I met a man named John Brown. 3 years ago, John grew so tired of being an extreme introvert that he cried out to God for help. See, John found himself to be uncomfortable around groups of people and he found it difficult to start or maintain a conversation. John was intensely private, spending most of his time reading and, when at church, quietly serving in the background. In his time of prayer, God led him to 2 Corinthians 5:17 "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation...the old has gone, the new has come." He believed the passage and asked God to give him confidence and skills when in conversation with others.

Then John did an amazingly brave thing. He tried it out to see if God answered his prayer. He went to the "High Street," an English institution for shopping sort of like the Plaza or Town Center or "Main Street USA." Every town in England has one. He walked up and down the street over his lunch hour, not to shop, but to just see if he could engage others in conversation. Three years later, John now does this 3 times a week--Monday, Wednesday, and Friday--and has brief but meaningful conversations with dozens of people each day over his lunch hour. John said he realized that he was a carrier of a viral-like infection--the love of God--but that he could only spread the "infection" if he was touching and connecting with people. Now, in his hometown of Tonbridge, England, the virus is spreading. I got to see when I was there. Everywhere I went, people were engaging others! (In England, it is culturally "illegal" to talk to another person in public if you have not been first introduced.) But the virus of open friendliness is now spreading through John in his village. As a result, in a given week, John gets 3 or 4 people A DAY to ask him to pray for them.

When we come to faith in God, his spirit comes to live inside of us. That’s right, the actual spirit of the God of the universe comes to live inside our personhood to work collaboratively with us. The purpose of this is to make us into something new, something different. Do you realize that what you are born with does not make much difference? Why, because as every good Catholic will tell you, we were born into sin, meaning we were born incomplete. But when the spirit of God enters us, we become complete. Our creation is fulfilled. God remakes us into something better.

Nabil Shehadi was born in Beirut in the 60's. As his family had means, he was afforded the best education. But then his world fell apart in the 70's when his beloved country fell into civil war. To flee the war, his family relocated to London, England, where Nabil practiced his love as an architect. As he was designing a new building in London, he was introduced to Sarah, an interior designer. Falling in love, they sought a church in which to be married. The local church was called Holy Trinity, Brompton. As a marriage preparation course, they were invited to take the Alpha Course. As classically educated secular Europeans, neither Nabil and nor Sarah ever considered God. Rather, they thought the concept to be sort of a quaint medieval sort of folklore. But on Alpha, they discovered God was not only real but could live inside them. God began to work his potter's magic on them as they continued to practice in their respective professions. One day, as Nabil and Sarah were hosting their small group, Sandy Millar, the vicar of HTB, asked if Nabil might like to lead a worship service at HTB. How would he do that, thought Nabil? But as he prayed, God came alive in him. The service was wonderful. Soon after, Nabil was invited to train for ministry in the church of England. To make a long story short, Nabil and Sarah, together with their 13 year old son, Sebastian, are now the vicars of All Saints Community Church, Beirut. That is right, God has brought them back home to lead ministry in their war-torn country. I met Nabil at New Wine a few weeks ago, too. He had no idea, nor did I, of our joint connection to Holy Trinity Church. In fact, he had told me his whole story and I had to ask about where this all started! We laughed and hugged when we realized that both of us were brought into ministry by HTB. We sat on the grass in Western England and enjoyed a Lebanese lunch—Sarah, Nabil, Sebastian, and me. God is so good.

In the scripture above, we see that God is the potter and we are the clay. But lost in the analogy is the wheel. Where is the wheel today? The answer is—you are sitting on it, or at least in it. The church, such as the Morse church, is a wheel. A church, of course, is not the building the pews, but the people. We, the people of the Morse Church, are standing together as a wheel upon which the clay of our lives can be thrown. I am inviting all of us to be thrown on the potter's wheel and to ask God to reform us into something new. Something better than the way we were born. To complete creation through us.

But the choice is entirely ours. God will only lay his hands on the clay of your life if you allow him to. Why not allow him?

This fall, we will be hosting Alpha in our church. God can reform you through Alpha. Also, we have small groups. God can reform you through small groups. But you have to do something. You have to throw yourself on the wheel.

What is your life? Anger, depression, fear, alcoholism, materialism, loneliness, hyperactivity, an endless string of events? What if there was more? What if you are the next John Brown or Nabil? You are, if you let God reform you. Then you can live a life that is wonderfully worth living.

Amen

