

# Excellence: Life at its Best

FBC Small Group Materials; Week of October 22nd, 2006

Jeremiah 18:1-18; God's Shaping Hand

## For Small-Group Leaders

*Dear Leaders,*

*By way of introduction, consider Eugene Peterson's words from his book, Run with the Horses.*

*"The great masters of the imagination do not make things up out of thin air; they direct our attention to what is right before our eyes.... They assist us in seeing what is around us all the time but which we regularly overlook. With their help we see it not as commonplace but as awesome, not as banal but as wondrous. For this reason, the imagination is one of the essential ministries in nurturing the life of faith. "*

*Of all these masters of whom Peterson speaks, Jesus was the greatest. He had the incredible knack of taking what was in front of his disciples, and teaching them rich truths about life in the Kingdom. Whether it was a vineyard, a mustard seed, or a common loaf of bread, Jesus knew how to use those simple everyday things to open eyes and change lives. This is what God did for Jeremiah when he directed him to go down to the potter's house.*

*May God open our eyes and change our lives this week as we consider the Potter and his work in our lives.*

**Scott**

These small group materials are available at the info table each Sunday and at [www.fbcdavis.org](http://www.fbcdavis.org).

### **Before this Week's Meeting:**

As you consider the three aspects to your group time, here are some things to consider:

- **Fellowship:** To help people get to know one another better there are a multitude of things you can do. You could ask for a volunteer each week to share their testimony about how they came to faith in Christ. It is best to pass around a sign up sheet for this since people generally need some time to prepare. Another possibility is to go around the group and ask people if they know what their name(s) mean(s). The name Jeremiah means either, "*the Lord exalts*" or "*the Lord hurls*." And speaking of names, here is one last possibility: have people share about a nickname they were given sometime during their life.
- **Bible Study:** This week we continue our look into the life of Jeremiah by looking at chapter 3 of Eugene Peterson's study guide on Excellence. If you are reading the companion book, Run with the Horses, you should read chapters 6-7 in preparation for this week.
- **Worship:** When we pray in groups we often resort to that of simply praying about prayer requests or needs. For a change, consider focusing your group's prayer time on "thanksgiving." Invite people to pray out loud, thanking God for his blessings.

### **At the Group Meeting:**

#### **Discussion Starter:**

- **Analogy** – In this week's study, we discover God using the analogy of a potter's wheel to communicate truth to Jeremiah. What is your favorite analogy in Scripture? (Examples include: Running the Race as seen in Hebrews 12; the Vine and branches in John 15, etc.)

### **Discussion Questions:**

Introduction: As a group, read Jeremiah 18:1-18. If it seems appropriate to provide some context, read the opening introduction to the group (above).

1. Why did God direct Jeremiah to the potter's house?
2. What lessons did Jeremiah learn at the potter's house?
3. Question 3 in the study guide asks us to consider a modern day analogy that would be similar to a potter's house in Jeremiah's day. What analogy did you come up with?
4. Reread Jeremiah 18:13-17. How would you describe God's feelings and thoughts about his people, Israel? What are the reasons that God felt and thought as he did?
5. What is the significance of the action performed by the potter in verse 4?
6. Our job as the clay is to stay on the wheel. Figuratively, when we resist God, it is as if we are hopping off the potter's wheel and resorting to creating ourselves. What are some ways that we jump off the wheel or resist the Potter?
7. In 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, Paul borrows from the analogy of pottery to teach us about the presence of Christ in our lives. What insights does Paul teach us through his analogy of pottery (clay jars)?
8. Jeremiah paid a price for his involvement with the Potter. What price did he pay? What blessings came his way?

### **Getting Personal:**

- Have you ever known a time in your life when it seemed that God was starting over with you, like we see the potter doing in verse 4?
- Paraphrasing the last question in chapter 3, "What are some possible struggles or hardships we might face as a result of allowing the Potter to have his way with us?"

### **Putting it into Practice:**

- Our job is not to create ourselves but rather to stay on the wheel so that the Potter can do his creative work in our lives. What do you need to do this week in order to stay on the wheel?
- Close in a time of prayer asking the Lord to strengthen each one for the week ahead.

### **At the End of the Meeting:**

Remind group members to work their way through chapter 4 of the study guide for next week. Make sure everyone knows where the small group will be meeting next week. Encourage people to pray for one another during the week.

### **During the Week:**

Send an email to members of your group whom you think are in need of encouragement.