

# The Potter Works Only With Soft Clay!

by K.P. Yohannan

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*God works with soft clay to form us into beautiful vessels, and we must maintain a tender heart by being honest before Him and submitting to His will.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 18:1

**Topics:** "Humility", "Heart Condition"

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## Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes that just as a potter works only with soft clay, God desires our hearts to be tender and pliable for His transformative work. He illustrates how God uses life experiences to soften our hearts, drawing parallels with biblical figures like Jacob and Moses, who underwent significant trials to become vessels for God's purpose. The preacher warns against the dangers of pride and hardened hearts, urging believers to diligently guard their hearts and remain humble. He encourages a response of repentance and submission to God's shaping, reminding us that our true value is determined by the condition of our hearts rather than our outward achievements. Ultimately, God's goal is to mold us into the likeness of Christ, not for our fame but for His glory.

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## Transcript

When I was a boy, growing up in India, I often went to a potter's house near my high school. I was fascinated watching him make clay vessels. During those visits, I never saw the potter take a hardened lump of clay and put it on his wheel to make something out of it. He, like every other potter in the world, used only soft and tender clay to work with. So does God!

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that God is like a potter and His people are the clay that He wants to form into a beautiful vessel. In order to accomplish this, God looks for soft and pliable hearts.

Man measures the quality and usefulness of a person by his education, ability and expertise. Yet God determines a person's true value by the condition of his or her heart: "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, niv).

I used to watch that same potter soften the clay. Day after day he would pour water on it and pound it thoroughly until it became soft. It took God 20 long years of "pouring and pounding" until Jacob's heart became soft enough. Moses needed 40 years of desert life to become the meekest man on earth (see Numbers 12:3, kjv), who could then lead Israel out of Egypt.

Hebrews 3:15 says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." This verse tells us that when God works in our lives and speaks to us, we have a choice. Will we choose to soften our hearts to His work in us, or will we harden our hearts to Him and the circumstances He is allowing?

In fact, it is possible for us as believers to have a tender heart for a season, but then slowly turn and allow our hearts to become hard. This is a scary place to be. We can go years before we really begin to recognize the symptoms.

But the Lord will not just let us go. He will allow circumstances to pound us so our hearts will once again become soft and pliable. The people of Israel are the perfect example of this. Just think of how many times God allowed them to face famines, hardships, oppression, defeat and captivity in order to soften their hearts and help them return to Him!

How should we respond to God in this process? We should yield to His work and not make it more difficult for Him. The Enemy works constantly to lure us to the place in which we harden our hearts. It must be our highest priority to keep our hearts with all diligence (see Proverbs 4:23). No matter how long we've traveled or how soft our hearts are right now, we have the choice just around the corner to allow either blessings or trials to harden our hearts. That's why Proverbs says "with all diligence." Keeping our hearts will not happen casually.

What are some of the potholes we may run into along the way?

Out of all the temptations, I believe the worst is having an elevated view of ourselves. Whether it is something significant we did for the kingdom or an area in which we feel superior, we can easily slip into feeling important and not recognize that our hearts are filled with pride, arrogance and an exalted view of ourselves.

We must remind ourselves that all the gifts, talents and ministry we have are given to us by the Lord. It's all God's grace. Look for opportunities to humble yourself. Choose to submit to one another (see Ephesians 5:21) and lay down your own preferences for the sake of others. Don't fight for your rights, and be willing to give up something. Grace is given to those who are humble (see James 4:6), not to those who are right or feel indispensable.

A hardened heart is contagious. Unless we are careful to guard our hearts, we will be poisoned by others' negative attitudes and talk. It can begin with one person in a church or ministry who is dissatisfied, bitter, critical and unwilling to change. Soon the atmosphere of love among the brothers and sisters is replaced by disunity, anger and hardness of heart toward each other and the Lord.

Don't keep company with these people who sow disunity. Love them and pray for them, but have no part with them. You and I are not strong enough to withstand the poison they spread. It's in the atmosphere, and we breathe it in whether we intend to or not.

Be especially careful to whom you go to receive your counsel. Don't go to a brother or sister who is not mature in the Lord and who will sympathize and agree with your complaints and tears. Go instead to someone who is mature enough to help you see the hand of God and His purpose behind the things you face.

Any form of rebellion is like a tiny seed that, if not dealt with, will grow and eventually harden our heart and bring destruction. You must stamp it out as soon as you see it, whether it starts in your own mind or

someone else's words. Don't let it linger. It will ultimately bring forth death in your life.

Maintaining the tenderness of your heart and humility depends on your honesty before God. Repent and run to the cross--a thousand times a day if need be. Whenever you seek the limelight, want to take credit, get hurt or have your expectations unfulfilled and your plans not work out, don't fight; go to the cross.

God always seeks to do one thing with us on the Potter's wheel--not to make us more powerful and famous, but to make us more like His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Are you that pliable clay?

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