

Why Does God Use Hardship?

By: Lynda Savage, M.S., LMFT, LPC

It is clear that God uses hardship for us if we allow it. In 11 Tim. 2:20-21 the bible speaks of many different vessels in a house. Vessels represent working structure: In the household of the time Timothy was written, jars or vessels were important for holding things, some honorable and some not so honorable. When we give ourselves to the Lord, we have invited God to be in us. We are held by him, and also we hold him in us: we are "containers" of God. In order to make us able to hold him and his purposes, we are continually in the state of being shaped by his hand. As we become more like Jesus or a vessel made unto honor by and for him, we go through many things on the way.

To articulate this process of "becoming" shaped by God, many have given sermons on the potter and the clay. I believe this process happens many times over in our walk with the Lord. This is what the potter's clay goes through:

1. Clay is dug out of the ground. (We are moved out of the ground/our surroundings, by his shovel and his might.)
2. Then clay is separated from that which is not clay. (If we are still wistfully hanging around the culture of sin we were dug out of, we are still not in full heartfelt dedication to the way of the Lord.)
3. Clay is washed. (Continual washing with the water of the word and his refreshing Holy Spirit.)
4. Clay is soaked in water (the word and living water of the Holy Spirit) to keep us pliable.
5. The clay is smitten or flattened by the potter. (We are put in our place by the Lord and sometimes even flattened out by Him).
6. The potter uses a thin wire to run through the clay to check for and burst any bubbles. (God bursts our grandiose narcissistic bubbles).
7. Then we are ready to be centered on the wheel. (Centered in his will-centered in focus).
8. The clay will be stretched and pulled apart again. (More purified pliability produced.)
9. Then God starts to mold clay (He molds us as increasingly purified vessels).
10. Then the potter puts clay on the shelf and walks away. (He puts us there to harden us to become strong-testing our commitment in his absence for a time).
11. Then hard clay is put into the furnace of fire. (God has produced in us endurance for going through the fire as per Isaiah who says "when you go through the fire")
12. Then the vessel is put to use. (Then God uses the sound product in a higher state; though there are continued tests, this structure for honor has been made more like him; more pure in operation and beauty by His hand.)

I outline this process, to show that our walk with the Lord is finely tuned by difficulty in life. Along the way of our time with him there are times that the Lord hugs us and holds us. There are times when he touches our shoulder in encouragement, times of joyful fellowship. And there are times when he is walking along side us away from our being able to see him because he knows that we trust him through the faith he has built in us.

This journey and process is flowing with continual strengthening to be more like him, the One we love. He makes us ready: All the while in deep relationship to Him. If we have said yes to Jesus, we are also asked along the way to say yes to this process.

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