



# The Potter's House

*The following article is an excerpt from a letter sent at Christmas by the Nelson family (Richard, Susan, Mary, Tori, and Josiah). It was written after a trip to Nicaragua in December, 2006. A visit to a potter during a field trip (which included graduates from Oscar's school) opened up a new understanding of how God works in our lives.*

We were so grateful to be able to go to Nicaragua in December along with many others to attend the graduation of our sponsored child, Jeronimo, from Oscar's school. As part of the graduation festivities, we took all of the graduates on a field trip to the scenic town of Catalina to visit the house of a potter. His name is Marcel. He is a precious Christian man who has a beautiful gift of making pottery. God has given him the unique ability to take the process of creating pottery and apply it to a more full understanding of the journey of the Christian life. We were humbled and blessed at the teaching that he provided to us as well as our graduate students. At the end of our time with Marcel, each student received a beautiful pot to give them to keep as a visual reminder of the work of God in each of their lives.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the LORD came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

**-- Jeremiah 18:1-6**

The potter and his family live in a very humble home, and everyone in the family works to create this beautiful pottery.

The first step in the creation is to dig the clay out of the ground in the potter's own backyard with a machete. He explains that in a similar way, we were formed literally from the dust of the ground by our Lord. He chooses to create each one of us.

Marcel then adds sand to make the clay and dirt more pliable and workable. God does the same for us when we give our lives to Him. He places us in relationship with Himself and gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us... the process of refining has begun.

At this point, the potter's son kneads the clay vigorously with his feet for 3 hours! God has to do the same with our hearts. They must be pushed, and pulled and kneaded until they become more pliable. This process is necessary so that impurities begin to surface. At the point that things that don't belong begin to appear, they can begin to be removed. This part of the process of refinement is

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(continued)

often not pleasant. In fact it is often vigorous and even very painful. It may go on for a very long time.

When the potter is satisfied that most of the obvious impurities are removed, he then begins the process of molding the piece on the wheel with his own two hands constantly around it, shaping it. If he removes his hands, it will be malformed. This is the same for us in our lives. We need to constantly be in God's hands, if we step away, if we allow sin in, we become misshapen and marred. If the pot becomes misshapen, pulls away from the creator's hands, the potter must crush it and begin again. As believers, at

times, this may be very difficult. In the process of molding and shaping to God's unique form, we must hold fast, stay in His grip, lest we fall away and God has to start the process again of vigorous kneading and shaping.

After molding has been completed, the potter then removes more impurities from the pot. However this time they are harder to see, and more subtle. Yet, they would still ruin the ultimate form of the pot if they are not ultimately removed. In the same way,

as we mature in the faith, our imperfections are more subtle, yet God still demands holiness and continues to reveal our imperfections for His glory. Our calling is perfection, Christ likeness; the process of removing imperfection is actually lifelong. But, if we fight the process, resist God's hand and work; it will only be more difficult.

Marcel then showed us how he decorates the pot, adding color and design to set it apart and make it beautiful. Each pot is uniquely decorated with shapes and colors all its own. God also gifts each one of us with spiritual gifts, talents and blessings to be used for His kingdom. We certainly don't choose them; in fact, they are quite literally carved into us. Yet, each is designed for His glory to be used in specific ways.

Only at the point that the potter is satisfied that the

impurities have been removed and the decoration is complete can he place the pot in the fire. He knows that even tiny impurities can not only cause that pot to burst, but quite possibly ruin the other pots in the furnace as well. He is meticulous in this process.

The pot is in the furnace for many hours carefully tended and watched. It is removed at just the right time to be hardened and usable, but not destroyed. Many times our trials can seem never ending and unbearable, yet we must choose to cling to our Savior and remember that His purpose is always for our good. He is with us in our fiery

trials and He promises never to leave us, never to waste a trial, but to bring true beauty for ashes.

The pot has become a beautiful and useful vessel for many purposes. The same is true for those of us in Christ. We journey through this process of life surrendered to the hands of our most gracious and capable potter. We must remain pliable, yet become strengthened and more Christ-like by our times of trial. We want to emerge from the "furnace" as true instruments and testaments of the mercy and grace of our Lord, Savior



and potter, Jesus Christ.

As believers we cling to the fact that indeed we are just clay in the hands of our loving potter, molding, shaping, refining, and changing and decorating and gifting us to be vessels for His glory.

-- Susan Nelson