



# The Potter Shapes the Clay

Goal: To imagine God as a potter.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Jeremiah 18:1-6

Jeremiah must have wondered why God told him to visit the potter's house (18:1, CEB), but he obeyed.

There he saw a common occurrence. The potter was working on his wheel. But the piece he was making was flawed in his hands. So the potter started on another one ("reworked it" in NRSV).

Then the Lord's word came to Jeremiah. Before his eyes, he saw an enacted parable of God's relationship to the covenant people of Israel. God was saying, "Can't I deal with you like this potter, declares the LORD? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, house of Israel!" (v. 6).

Like the potter who has total control over the clay, so God the potter has the power to do whatever God desires with the nation. God is the Lord.

Yet God is at work. When the clay was flawed, the potter started over with it to make something new. So does God. The flaws—or sins—of Israel and its people do not cause God to reject them. Instead, God continues to redeem the people. This is pure grace. God does as God wills, and God wills to save and redeem. How grateful we are!

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children have experience with imperfection. Each one probably has a story about a time when she dropped a glass and it broke or when he knocked over something on a table and it came crashing down. Children hopefully also have experienced kind help from adults who have reminded them that mistakes happen. We are human; we are not always perfect.

Children also are able to make the connection between imperfect things and imperfect people. This story of God helping Jeremiah see how God does many incredible things with humans—just like a potter working with clay—is a good reminder of how we can recognize God's grace in all we do each day.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

One of the things that God hoped Jeremiah would understand with the vision of the potter and the clay was that God would always love God's people, flaws and all. Just as God wanted Jeremiah to remind God's people of God's love, so are you one of God's messengers with God's children.

Children need help in remembering God's love for everyone, flaws and all. Bring a box of plain adhesive bandages with you and invite each child to take one and think about something God would like them to remember.

*O God, make me, mold me, fill me, and  
use me according to your holy will. Amen.*



## Supplies

Music & Melodies  
(MM) 2019–2020

Stories, Colors & More  
(SCM) i–iv, 13, 15, 22

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

YouTube video “Making  
a Clay Pot”

## Guided Play

choice 2: blocks

choice 3: copies of  
**Grace Notes (GN) 1**

## Exploring

choice 1: air-drying clay  
(optional)

choice 3: copies of **GN 2**  
and **GN 3**

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers you do not know personally. Tell them today’s story is about the prophet Jeremiah and the special message God had for him.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Playing with Play Dough**—Invite the children to play with play dough. Give each child some dough about the size of a ping-pong ball and show them how to roll it into a ball, flatten it like a pancake, and roll it like a rope. Allow for free play as well.
- 2. Building Up Again**—Have a lot of blocks available and invite the children to build towers. After the children have built some towers, invite them to knock down the towers they have made. Invite the children to build new towers or structures. Help the children see that when something falls down, it can be built again. Some children will love this activity! They will love to knock down blocks. Other children might be upset about their blocks being knocked down, but they may enjoy building anew. Be aware of differing feelings.
- 3. Coloring Pots**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color matching pots the same color. There are six pairs of pots. Engage the children in conversation about bowls, pots, and pottery. Ask if anyone has ever made or painted a clay bowl or pot. Ask if anyone has a favorite bowl at home and what they use it for.

**SD** *Some children who have tactile sensitivities find working with clay or play dough unpleasant. Consider providing an option such as drawing.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “God Is So Good”—**MM 5**; **SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

### God Made Me



Sing or say the words to the song “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” while pointing to each body part. For the line “God made me, and I’m a child of God,” raise your hands for “God made me” and hug yourself for “and I’m a child of God.”

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,  
knees and toes.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,  
knees and toes.

God made me, and I’m a child of God.  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes.

Eyes and ears and mouth and nose,  
mouth and nose.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,  
knees and toes.

God made me, and I’m a child of God.  
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose.

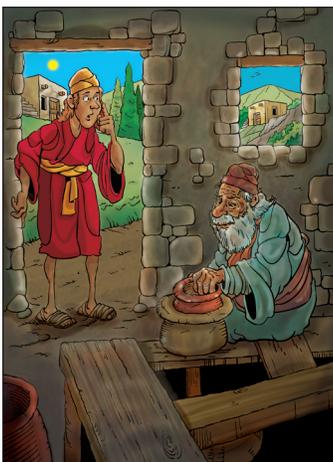
### Watch a Potter at Work



Show the children a video of a potter making a clay pot. Show the YouTube video “Making a Clay Pot” ([bit.ly/ClayPotVideo](https://bit.ly/ClayPotVideo)). Discuss:

- I wonder, “How does the clay feel in the potter’s hands?”
- I wonder, “What would the potter do if the clay fell over?”

Note: [bit.ly](https://bit.ly) web addresses are case sensitive.



### Hearing the Story



Open the Bible to Jeremiah 18 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about the prophet Jeremiah. In this story, God shows Jeremiah a special message.

Read **SCM 13**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Before you read the story again, give each child a small ball of play dough. Tell the children that, whenever they hear the word *potter* in the story, they should reshape their ball of play dough. Read the story again, pausing for the children to reshape their ball. After the story, ask the following questions:



- ▼ What does a potter do?
- ▼ What did the potter do to the fallen pot? (*started over again*)
- ▼ I wonder, “How is God like the potter?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How are we like the clay?”

## EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE



The story uses a metaphor to describe God. The children will make the connection between the potter and God as they mature.

If you are using air-drying clay, set the pots aside to dry. You can have the children paint the pots in a later session or send them home as is. If you are using play dough, the children can keep the pot or squish it and use it another time.

### 1. Making a Pot

TD SD

Invite the children to make a pinch pot using play dough or air-drying clay. Give each child some play dough or clay, or let them choose from different colors available. Show the children how to make a ball. Tell them to put the ball on the table in front of them. Demonstrate how to push your thumbs down into the center of the ball to make an indentation. Push one thumb down and out in the indentation while moving the ball in a circle with the other hand. A small pot should appear. Let the children form their own pots using this method.

**TD** *Some children struggle with touch and feeling messy. Give advance warning and provide options such as crayons or markers for drawing. Allow the child to wash their hands often if needed.*

### 2. Being the Pot

MS

Remind the children that Jeremiah saw a potter making a clay pot and that showed him how God is like a potter, and we are like clay that the potter shapes. Tell the children that they are going to pretend to be a lump of clay and be molded by a potter. Use the following directions to guide the children:

- ▼ Sit on the floor, keeping your hands and feet to yourself.
- ▼ Bend your knees in front of you and wrap your arms around your knees. You are now a lump of clay.
- ▼ Drop your shoulders and feel your lumpiness.
- ▼ Roll your head and shoulders around; feel how you move as clay.
- ▼ Now imagine you are being shaped with clay where your right arm is being stretched out. The potter decides differently, and the clay is pressed back into place.
- ▼ Imagine the potter shaping the clay where your stomach is and the potter has pushed and prodded your stomach back and forth.
- ▼ Now the potter decides to make a pot and pushes thumbs deep onto your head and pulls back, lifting your head.
- ▼ The potter’s thumbs are forming the center of the pot as your arms widen into a circle in front of you and you sit cross-legged.
- ▼ You are now a pot being turned in the potter’s hands. Gently roll on your bottom in a circle.



- ▼ Uh-oh! The potter's hands have slipped and the pot goes all wonky. Move your arms and legs all around.
- ▼ The potter doesn't worry. The potter just squishes the clay back into a lump and begins again. [*Go back to "The potter's thumbs are forming the center of the pot . . ." and continue from there, skipping this step the next time.*]
- ▼ The potter stops and gently smooths the pot's edges. Feel your arms and legs being smoothed.
- ▼ The potter is done. The pot is beautiful! The potter is very happy.

Add other directions of your own choosing.

Be sure to always end with the pot being beautiful or special, and the potter being pleased with the pot.

### 3. Make a Book FM

Tell the children that, no matter what we do, God always loves us. Invite them to make a book with pictures showing scenes where they might have done something wrong, but at the end they are reminded that God loves them. Hand out copies of GN 2-3. As the children color, wonder together what might be happening in each picture. After the children finish coloring, assist with cutting the pages apart. Have the children put the first three pages in any order they choose, making sure that the book ends with the reassurance of God's love. Staple the pages into a book.

### 4. Coloring Page C FM

Hand out copies of GN 4 and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of a potter making a pot. Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "What was Jeremiah thinking?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What was the potter making?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What did the potter and Jeremiah talk about?"

**T** *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as hopping up and down, wiggling their nose, and wiggling their fingers.*

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, singing “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—**MM 25; SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as it seems appropriate. Instruct the children to do the following call and response with you.

Call: God loves me,

**Response: All the time!**

Call: All the time,

**Response: God loves me!**

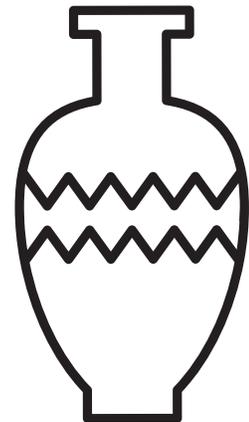
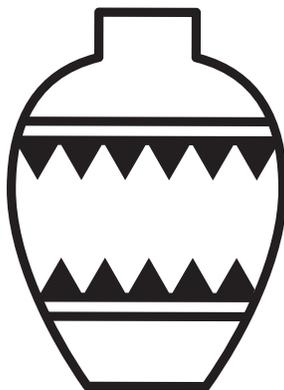
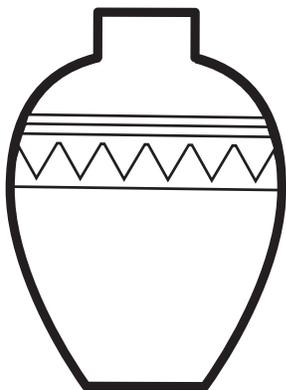
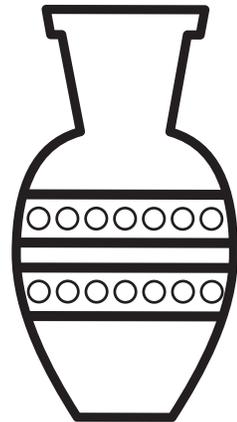
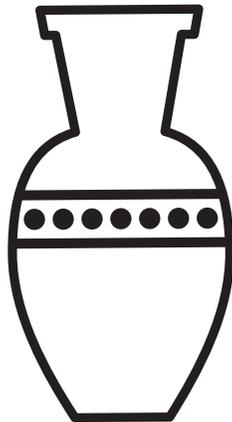
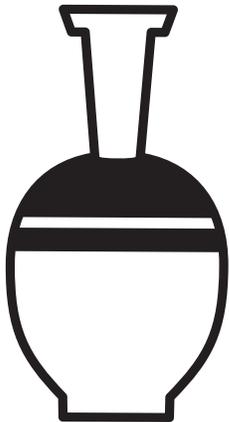
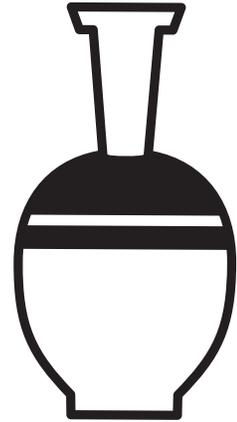
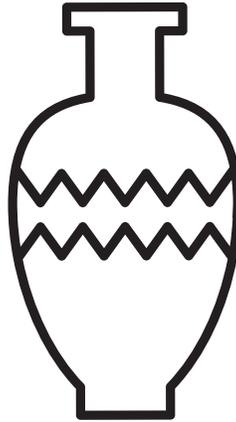
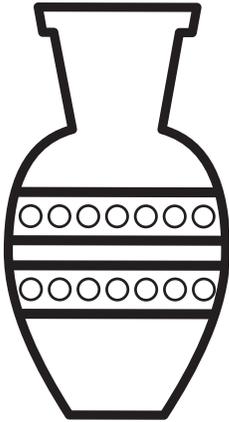
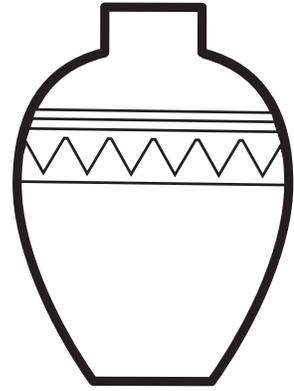
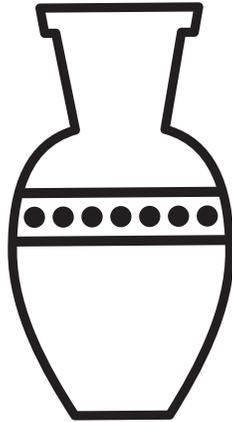
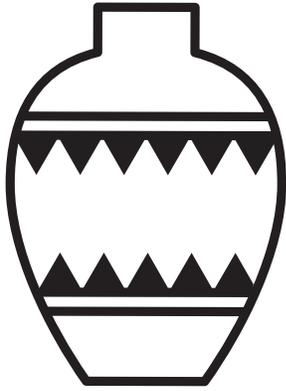


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [gracesightings.org](http://gracesightings.org). Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).

Call the children to snack time. Invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer.

Thank you, God, /  
for the world we see! /  
Thank you, God, /  
for feeding me! /  
Amen! /

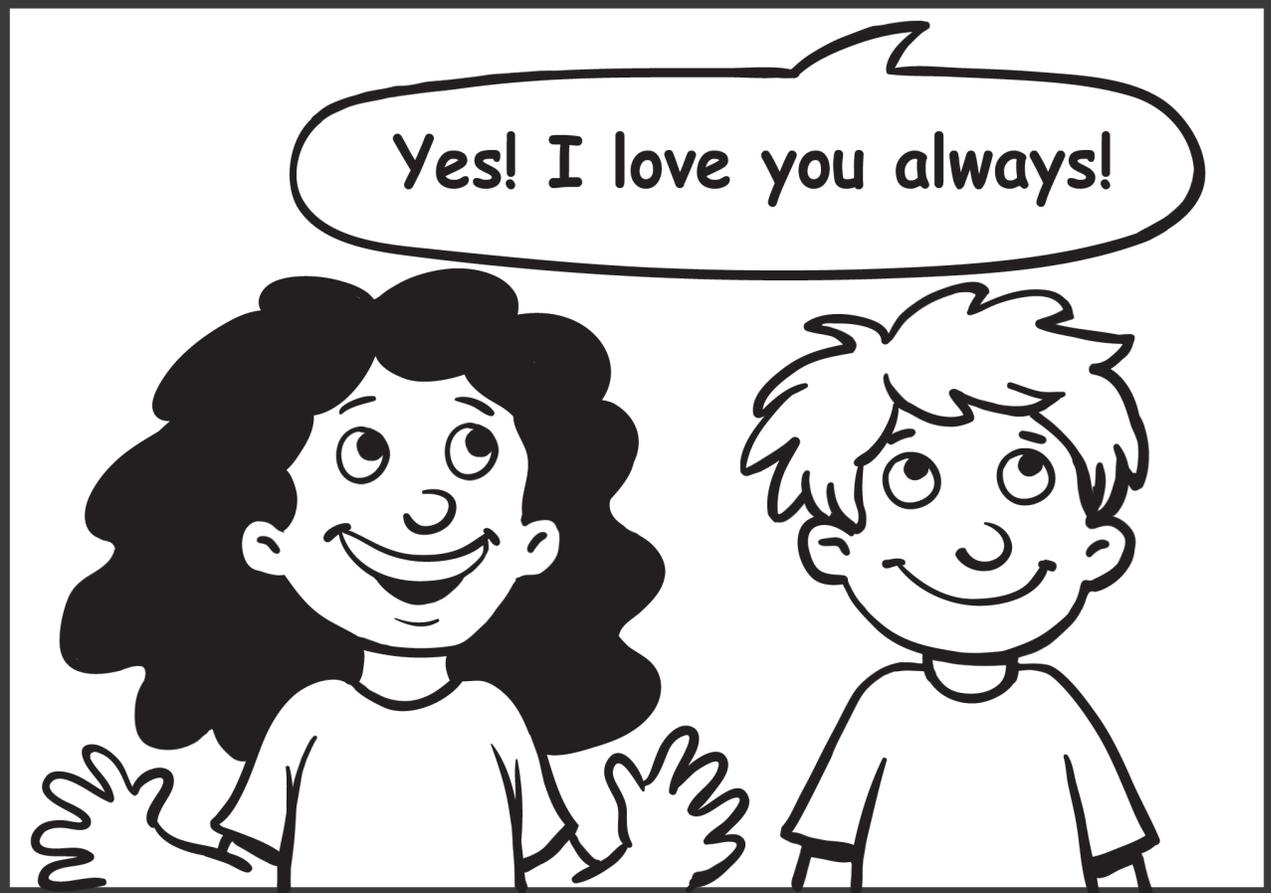
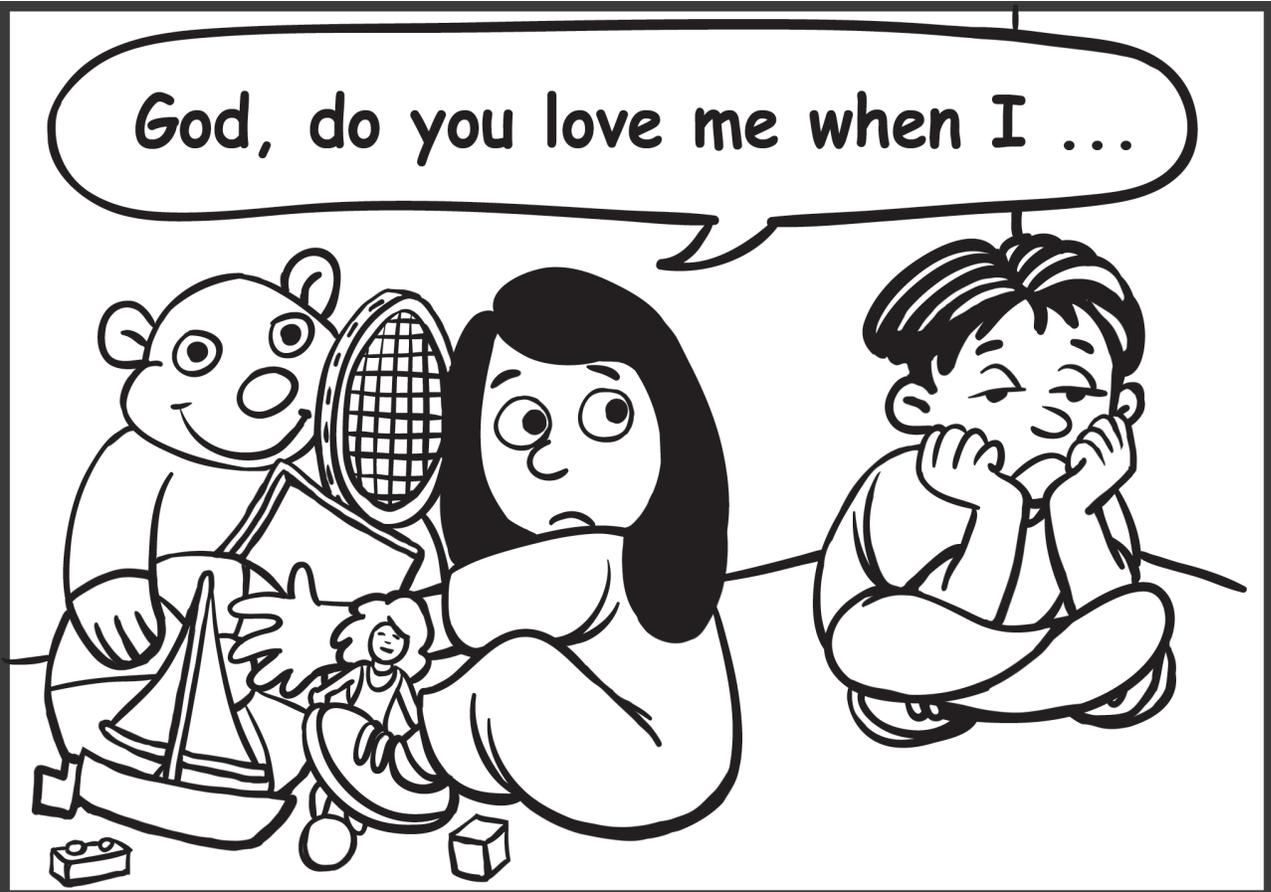
As the children leave, bless them. “(Name), God loves you all the time! Go out and let God’s grace shape you.”





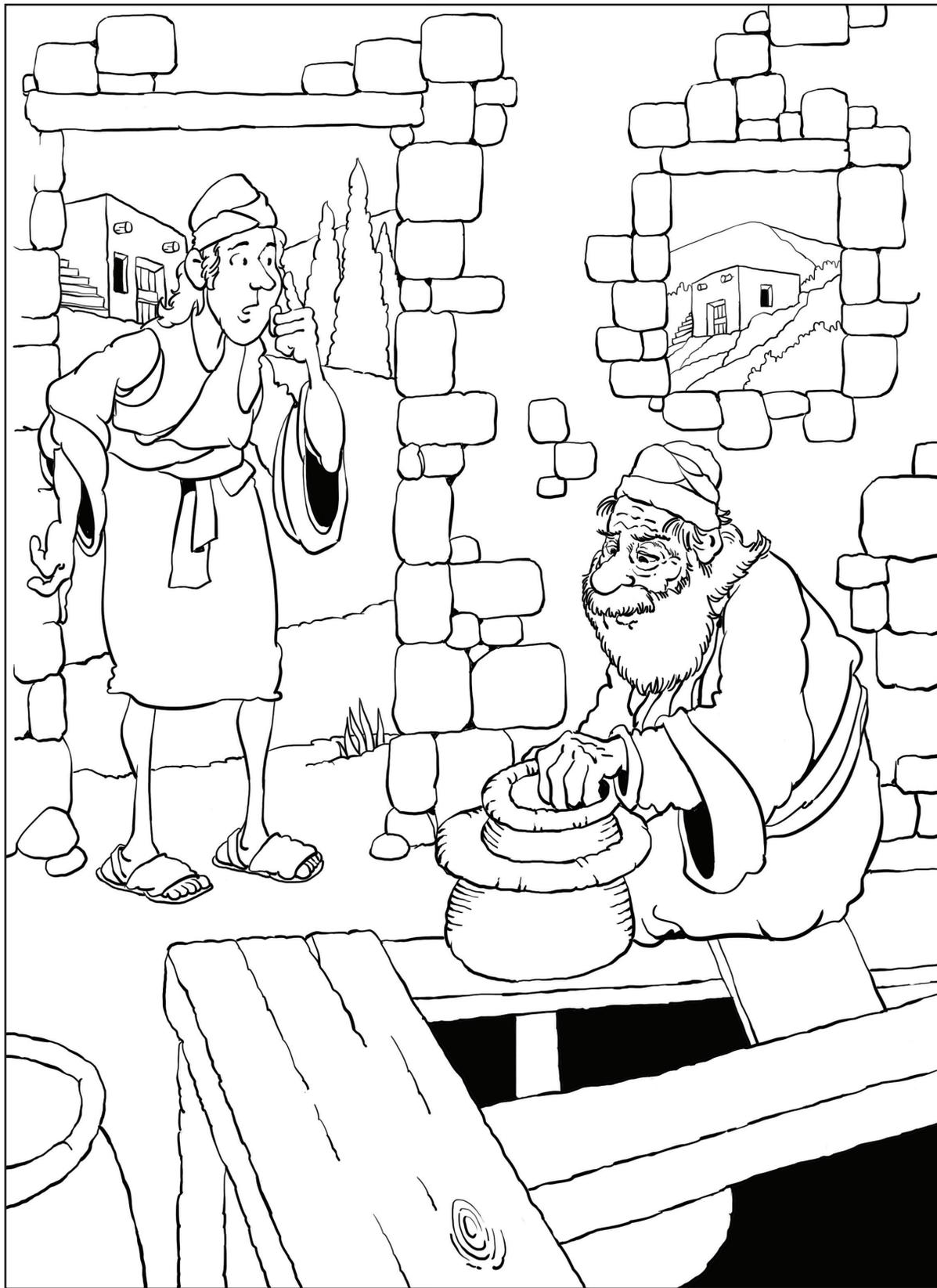








# The Potter Shapes the Clay



**GOD IS LIKE A POTTER WHO SHAPES US JUST AS A POTTER SHAPES THE CLAY.**

