

## Faith Bible Study Guide

For the Week of June 2, 2024 - SECOND SUNDAY IN PENTECOST: "JARS OF CLAY"



**Be still [2 Minutes]:** As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

**CENTERING WORDS:** Before we speak, God knows our thoughts and minds completely, calling us into fellowship this day.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Merciful One, when life beats us down, you reach out and restore us to health and wholeness. Surprise us once more, O God, with your never-failing grace and the light of your love. Amen.

**Be the Word:** 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

<sup>5</sup>We don't preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. <sup>8</sup>We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren't crushed. We are confused, but we aren't depressed. <sup>9</sup>We are harassed, but we aren't abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren't knocked out.

<sup>10</sup>We always carry Jesus' death around in our bodies so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies. <sup>11</sup>We who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies that are dying. <sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

L: The Word of God for all people

P: Thanks be to God

**Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]**

1. Take a deep breath. How is it with your soul?
2. Are you a "saver" or a "tossler-outer"? Are you a collector or a minimalist? (You could be both!)
  - a. If you're a "collector" (unintentional or not), what do you collect? Where do you find space to put it?  
OR
  - b. If you don't like to keep a lot of things/don't like clutter, how do you decide what stays and what goes? How about gifts from other people?

3. Speaking of gifts, where do you store/put them? (answered in however way you understand this question.) *I was really going to ask if you had a safe spot for keeping things, but don't want you to disclose or expose your secret hiding spots!*

### **Be rooted: [Bible Study]**

A little background on the Apostle Paul's second letter to the people of Corinth:

*Paul is speaking about his role of serving Jesus as an apostle. And in this role, he is suffering through persecution and false accusations. And the Corinthians view this negatively. To them, this is weakness. This isn't the kind of apostle they feel they should have. They want someone more impressive.*

*The people want Influencers. Not social media influencers. But social influencers.*

*The Apostle Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians to the church of Corinth because they were being influenced by the pagan culture that surrounded them instead of being THE influencers themselves to model for others (1 Corinthians 1:10-11, 5:1, 10:17). That said, Paul did not write out of hatred towards the Corinthians. He wrote to them to convict them. He wrote out of love and care for them (2 Corinthians 2:4).*

*Paul is actually walking in Jesus' footsteps and trying to encourage others to do so as well, but the church is in disarray and does not have the confidence yet to be those "kinds of influencers." And so Paul takes on the role of serving as an example of someone with great confidence in Christ. Of a firm belief that Jesus died and rose from the dead to bring life. Of conviction that eternity is real.*

1. Can you relate to Paul? What do you see in this world that discourages or disheartens you about the state of the world today? If you were to write a letter like that of Paul, who would you send it to?

Now let's break down today's text:

**The Light of the Gospel:** <sup>5</sup> *We don't preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.* <sup>6</sup> *God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.*

2. **How do you understand light shining out of the darkness? If the obvious answer is "JESUS," then what part do you play?**

*[In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul talks about the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). He explains that, as Christians, we are to proclaim the light – that light being Jesus. Jesus allows us to see and know the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:6). We are to proclaim the light of Jesus in the darkness of this broken world.]*

**Jars of Clay:** *In the Bible, when Paul says, “We have this treasure in jars of clay,” the treasure he is referencing is the light of the gospel, the message of Jesus and the glory of God reflected in Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:7).*

### 3. BUT Why a Jar of Clay?

(Optional Video: Making of a simple pot: <https://youtu.be/XRDEQ84TM04?si=OFdTcAgHxjuhWL-p> )



**Is creating something new easy? What are some characteristics of clayware? (Pots, vases, jars...)**

*[A jar of clay is shaped and molded by a potter before being baked and refined in fire until the clay is hard. In ancient times, they were often used to hold things like sacred scrolls or valuable documents for safe keeping, but only temporarily.]*

*We are referenced as a jar of clay for a few reasons. We, like jars of clay, have a temporary life here on earth, are easily broken and are all made uniquely.]*

4. **Our Bodies Are Temporary...** *And like Jars of clay, they are just like our earthly bodies in the sense that they are temporary holding places for treasure. This life on earth is so short in comparison to the eternity awaiting us in heaven (James 4:14). We are not here to pursue worldly treasures, but to pursue godliness and share the treasure of the light of the gospel with others so that they may join us in eternity (1 Timothy 6:11-12). We really aren't here very long when you consider how long eternity is.*

**What does eternity look like to God? To humans?**

**Does realizing that our bodies are a temporary place for the Spirit of God to dwell give you a sense of urgency to share this said treasure we hold? Instead of saving it forever for a rainy day... what happens when you store/hoard/hide/keep things too long? (Think perishability or usefulness)**

5. **We Are Easily Broken:** *And like a jar of clay, we can easily be broken. Before a jar of clay is actually baked into a jar, it is just a piece of clay, easily bent and molded. But once complete, they are very easily broken, just like us. Physically and emotionally, this world corrupt by sin will bend us and try to break us (John 10:10).*

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” – 2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

*This world will try to break us. We may bend, but by God's strength we will not break or be shattered (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). Without him though, we are easily broken by this world. We are referenced as a jar of clay to point out our weakness without God.*

**But does God sometimes allow us to crack? Why?? Especially if we think of God as being all-knowing, and all seeing, and all encompassing (omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent).**

*[Not because he doesn't love us, but rather to show us and the world his love through us. You see, when there is light in a perfect jar it is dimmed. But once cracked, the light shines through even brighter. When we allow our cracks and weaknesses to be used for his glory, the light of the gospel can shine through us and his treasure can be seen in us even more.*

*Or perhaps the cracks allow us opportunities to mend and become whole again. The Japanese art of KINTSUGI involves repairing broken pottery by gluing the pieces back together with lacquer and then painting the seams with gold or silver powder. The word "kintsugi" literally translates to "join with gold". An understanding that even in brokenness, we can make ourselves whole again and with beauty. The cracks, no longer being flaws.]*

### **Be transformed: [Call to action]**

- 1. We Are Uniquely Made** - *Yet, society tells us all kinds of lies about who we are. This world says we need to look a certain way, act a certain way, be successful in this way or be a certain type of person. But the Bible is clear in explaining who we are in Jesus Christ. By calling us jars of clay, Paul makes it clear that we are all unique. We come in different shapes, sizes, colors and we even have different uses.*

*Jars of clay don't all look the same. The potter, God, is an artist. He is purposeful in how he shapes, molds, details and designs every part of us. There is beauty in each jar of clay, even cracked ones. Ultimately, we are all used by God for his glory, but he can use us in different ways, just like a jar of clay.*

**What do you think of this idea that we are being represented as Jars of Clay? Does it make a difference if you use the contents of your jar or not? What happens when we squander or waste the contents in the jars? Can they be replenished? How?**

*[You are a jar of clay. You hold treasure and were created to share that treasure with others. Be confident in who you are and how you have been created. Our God is an artist who made you with great purpose and beauty in mind. And as we continue to grow together, may we continue to find God's love to guide into using our treasures here on earth, as though we are in heaven.]*

- 2.** Does this "Jars of Clay" story sometimes remind you of the "This Little Light of Mine" song? How do those connect to such a simple understanding of sharing the light? How does the "Jars of Clay" analogy go deeper than "hiding a light under a bushel" though? What are you hiding or storing for a rainy day? When do you pull out the contents and use it?

## Prayers & Concerns

### **Celebrations...**

Rev. Eric Iki, passed his Ordination interviews to be Ordained at AC in June (June 15 @1pm in Burbank; please let Church know if you would like to attend/carpool.)

Eron & Jazmine Iki, son and daughter-in-law of Donna & Darrell Iki gave birth to a baby girl, Jordyn Iki, early Wednesday, 5/22 morning.

### **Prayers for healing and wholeness...**

Mutsuko Nishi (Henry's mom)

Claretta Foster

Jack Hamada

The Sasaki Family; Jordan Sasaki, Sally, Ken, & Jason

Jerry Osaka

Victoria Dela Torre

Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda

Audrey Goto

Tak and Irene Ryono

Ralph Ichikawa's brother, Jim (Tio)

Alice Kajiya

Faye Toma

Jason's friend, Kaitlyn Sabedra

Glenn & Millie Shimizu

Faith Tanaka

Sam Kobayashi

Chic Miyake

Winnie Osaki

Postal Worker, Dexter

Alveena Fukuhara

Harry Lum

Kyle Ichikawa (Ralph's son)

Masako Akiyama

Maxine Butcher

Florence Uchida

Deron Tokishi (brother of Sheri Tong)

Fred Endo (father of Sharon Ann Endo)

Paul Mito

Pam Fink

\*Kim Foster's friend, Gabriel's father

\*Susan DeGracia's "nephew," Danny

Tokudomi

**\*Susan Slade**

**Mary Jung**

### **Prayers for Grieving Families...**

**\*Herb Kaku (memorial service, 6/29, 3pm)**

Sumi Maruya (memorial service: 5/17, 11am)

Virginia Flood (memorial service, 6/1, 11am)

**\*Preston Akiyama (husband of Masako, passed on 4/15/24)**

Dr. Ernesto Fontecha, (Gilbert Vinluan's cousin)

Shizue Nomiya, (Mother of Tash Nomiya, 4/10/24)

Kyoko Nakahara, (Kelly DeGracia's mom)

James Kawamoto

Nelson Mark (husband of Alice, father of Darrell, passed on 3/10/24)

\*Frances Yonemori (Florence Uchida's sister, passed on 3/12/24)

Kurt Kuniyoshi (passed 3/xx/24)

Bing Duck Pang (father of Stanley, passed 3/11/24)

Bernice Kashiwai (mother of Kent/Nicole Morita-Kashiwai)

Lori Takayesu (Georgine Morita sister)

Pat Hiroshima (Harriet Tateyama's sister-in-law)

Takako Takao (mother of Jerry, passed 2/22/24)

Charles Kvitky (husband of Lily; passed week of 2/11/24)

Greg Kubo (passed away on 2/3/24)

Henry Uepi Isama'u (passed on 1/24/24)	People of the Holy Land
Elaine Suzuki (Ralph's sister)	Families rebuilding after natural disasters
Gene LeFebvre (Andy's mentor and friend)	Election year
<b>For our hurting world...</b>	Covid (and for those who are sick, ailing, in need of God's love and healing
<b>Japan Mission Team</b>	The United Methodist Church)
Japan Earthquake / Volcanic Eruption in Sakurajima (near Kagoshima)	Victims of domestic violence

**And Know that He is God: Commission & Benediction**

**Jars of Clay, "Benediction"**

**FF to 5 minute mark for song: [https://youtu.be/\\_BmtQe4fMvE?si=bqw8BaMNWBaAtUtl](https://youtu.be/_BmtQe4fMvE?si=bqw8BaMNWBaAtUtl)**

**Or for a sweet video of just the song: [https://youtu.be/Cd62t8yG3as?si=N\\_M2-0J9P4pEyfHS](https://youtu.be/Cd62t8yG3as?si=N_M2-0J9P4pEyfHS)**

**Lyrics to BENEDICTION by Jars of Clay (Album: The Shelter)**

Go into the world  
 Showing how much He loves you  
 Walk in the world  
 In merciful ways, He loves you  
 He loves you

And Yours are the eyes to look  
 compassionately  
 To bless you and me  
 Bless you and me  
 He will bless you and me

Emmanuel on Earth  
 Yours is the body  
 The hands and the feet  
 And Yours are the eyes to look  
 compassionately  
 To bless you and me  
 Bless you and me  
 He will bless you and me

To bless you and me  
 Bless you and me  
 To bless you and me  
 Go into the world  
 Showing how much He loves you

Go into the world  
 Showing how much He loves you  
 Walk in the world  
 Meaningful ways, He loves you  
 He loves you

Emmanuel on Earth  
 God with us on Earth  
 Yours is the body  
 The hands and the feet