

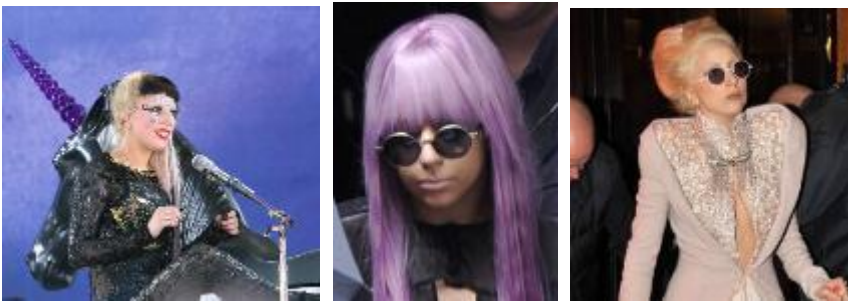
“God’s Take On Lady Gaga”

Isaiah 64:4-8

So how can we be saved? All of us have become dirty before you, and all our “good works” are like filthy rags; we shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to know you for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. Yet, Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

What would God say to Lady Gaga?

In case you aren’t aware of the phenomenon that is Lady Gaga here she is...



Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta better known by her stage name, Lady Gaga, is an American singer and songwriter from New York.

She’s shocking, entertaining and upsetting - like when she recently wore a ‘meat dress’.

In 2010 she was on the Time list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

This woman is influential – people are listening to her and copying her.

In the last few years she has sold 23 million albums and 64 million singles worldwide.
That makes her one of the best-selling music artists of all time.
She has won award after award, Grammys, MTV, and named artist of the year last year.

Lady Gaga is big.
But the thing that commentators keep asking is “who is she?”
Every time she comes out in public she’s different again.
She keeps reforming reshaping remodelling her image.
It’s like Gaga is living art – she doesn’t paint or do sculpture,
Instead she keeps reshaping herself – she is her own living work of art.

What would God say to Lady Gaga?
What would God say to someone who keeps changing their image all the time?
What would God say to someone who has made themselves into a living piece of art?

I think God would say to Lady Gaga “yes, you are a work of art – but you art my art!”
“I am the potter, you are the clay.”

I think God would say to Gaga,

“I am the potter, you are the clay.”
Lady Gaga it’s true you are art.
You were already beautiful art before you ever dyed your hair or changed your image.
You keep remaking yourself so much many people don’t know the real you.
But I made you as a work of art in my own image.
You don’t need to try to remake yourself.
You are already God’s work of art.
You are the clay – let God be the potter.
Let God do the shaping!”

And that’s what I want you to learn today.

Would you say with me from Isaiah 64:8

“We are the clay – You are the potter.”

[ROLL THE CLAY]

I want you to take out that play dough you received as you came into church today.
Take it out now and roll it in your hand.
Notice how pliable it is.

Human beings are like that.
We are shapeable, bendable, malleable.
Things in our lives can change us and we can even attempt to mold ourselves.

Would you say with me what we all need to say to our creator?
“We are the clay – You are the potter.”

I’m going to get you to do some activities with your clay.
Don’t do other things with the clay or the next activity might not work – OK!
So let’s begin.

ACTIVITY 1 – MAKE A PERSON FROM YOUR CLAY.

I want you to take that clay and make a person out of it.
Form it however you want – it's your creation. Create it carefully!
Now, while you're doing that say these words after me:

We are the clay, You are the potter. We are all the work of your hand.

Here's the first point I want to make today:

***“We are God’s artwork –
Carefully formed and lovingly cherished.”***

God doesn't make something for nothing!
We are his artwork – his carefully formed creation.

Right at the start of the Bible it says God made us from clay.
And chemically that's about right!
God made us – human beings like a potter making clay.
Carefully formed.
We are art, beautiful, living art,
Made to reflect the artist.

Now for the next activity I have for you to do with your clay person.

ACTIVITY 2 – SHOW YOUR NEW ARTWORK TO SOMEONE – BE PROUD OF IT!

Take that clay person you made and show it off to the person next to you.

See God made us – and he cherishes us.
Do you know what cherish means?
God looks at us and sees what he carefully formed and he cherishes it.
No matter what happens.
He made us and we are His.

No matter what someone else thinks, or you think of yourself.
God cherishes you – and wants you to be his.

It says in Isaiah 29:16 that the clay shouldn't criticise the potter,
The clay should be open to the potter's work!
You don't have to change your image.
You don't have to create an image like Lady Gaga does every time she steps out.
You are God's artwork – God's clay – carefully, miraculously formed, and cherished!

ACTIVITY 3 – TAKE YOUR CLAY PERSON AND DENT AND TWIST THEM!

Take your clay model and put a dent in it somewhere.
Now get the model and twist it just a bit.
That's what sin does to a human being.
Makes it “twisted” – “distorted”.
Now twist it a little more – twist it out of shape.

“Clay can get distorted and molded.”

This is today's Bible reading...

But when we continued to sin against your ways you were angry. So how can we be saved?

All of us have become dirty before you, and all our “good works” are like filthy rags;

we shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

No one calls on your name or strives to know you for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. Yet, Lord, you are our Father.

We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. - Isaiah 64:4-8

Do you understand what this is about?

It's a prayer to God.

And the person praying is saying that we've become all twisted and distorted.

That sin has ruined everything.

And at the end where the prayer says, *“we are the clay, you are the potter”*

It's a prayer – it's begging that we might be remolded.

To be forgiven and made new.

See clay can't fix itself up – we don't have that power.

Only when we admit that we're twisted and give it to God.

When we repent and receive forgiveness – then we get restored by the potter.

And that leads me to the final activity:

ACTIVITY 4 – Remake, Reform, Recreate Your Artwork Like New!

“Clay can be made new again.”

The LORD said to me, “Go down to the potter's house, where I will give you my message.” So I went there and saw the potter working at his wheel. Whenever a piece of pottery was imperfect, he would take the clay and make it into something else. Then the LORD said to me, “Don't I have the right to do with you people of Israel what the potter did with the clay? You are in my hands just like clay in the potter's hands.” - Jeremiah 18:1-7

This is a piece of Good News for you.

Too often we think that human beings can't change.

We say 'A leopard can't change it's spots'.

Or 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks'.

But you can.

We give up on people around us thinking they could never change, but they can, and we can too!

Clay can be reformed, remolded, restored!

Even modern science agrees, because they have discovered a thing called 'neuroplasticity'

Which basically means they have discovered that the brain can grow, change, reconfigure itself.

People can change!

There is hope.

And our loving God wants us to be made new.

Whatever it is that distorts, twists, torments us.
God wants us to be free and whole and new.
And the means to that is Jesus Christ.

What would God say to Lady Gaga?
He would say to her,

“You are indeed artwork – beautiful art – carefully formed and lovingly cherished.”

***“I know you have tried to be loved, significant, acceptable, beautiful, noticed.
But you have become twisted by sin, distorted by all your attempts to be someone.”***

“Come back to the Potter and I will make you new!”

During Holy Communion today you are invited to place your clay person under the cross
On this table up the front.
And as you do say to yourself, “We are the clay, you are the potter”.

Amen.

BACKGROUND - BIBLICAL WORDS FOR "CLAY"

TIT, rendered "mire," "mud," for the fine deposit left from the evaporation of water (Ps 69:14; Jer 38:6) or washed up on the shore (Isa 57:20) is used in the sense of clay for bricks or pottery (Isa 41:25; Nah 3:4).

HOMER is properly clay for bricks or pottery (Isa 29:16; 45:9; Jer 18:4; etc.). In Job 4:19 homer seems to indicate a mud hut, from the idea of being perishable. The distinction seems usually to be in the thought of the material as wrought or unwrought, though this is not always borne out (see 30:19; Isa 10:6, where the word is rendered "mire" or "mud"), but its usual meaning is in connection with human arts or processes (Job 10:9; 38:14, and passages cited above).

APHAR (Genesis 2:7, Job 10:9) – dust – interchanged with HOMER in Job 10:9. But also taking a broader meaning of dust, mud, earth.

PELOS is the NT Gk. word used in all the meanings for clay (John 9:6,11,14-15; Rom 9:21). The passage "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7) is a striking allusion to the custom of keeping gold or silver in earthen jars, contrasting the precious contents with the humble receptacle.

Figurative. **ONCE FIRED** Clay is often used as a type of fragility (Ps 2:9; etc.). Words usually employed are Heb. keli yoser, "earthenware," marg. "potter's ware"

Figurative. There are several allusions to both the potter and his products. The breaking of pottery is used, from its fragile nature, to illustrate the ease with which God punishes the wicked (Ps 2:9; Isa 30:14; Jer 19:11); from its cheapness, the depreciation of good men (Lam 4:2). The thorough acquaintance of the potter with both the clay and the vessel that he made from it is used to illustrate God's knowledge of humanity. The power of the potter in molding the clay is used to illustrate the absolute power of God in molding the destinies of men (Rom 9:21). To place one's self as clay in the hands of God, as the potter, is a striking figure of complete trust and surrender (Isa 64:8). The phrase "throw it to the potter" (Zech 11:13) is apparently a proverbial expression for contemptuous treatment, although we have no means of tracing its origin satisfactorily. "As the words read, they can only be understood as signifying that the potter was in the house of Jehovah when the money was thrown to him: that he had either some work to do there, or that he had come there to bring some earthenware for the temple kitchens" (see 14:20; K. D., Coms, ad loc.).

(The above is from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988 – the part on APHAR I have collected myself!)

We are God's artwork – formed and lovingly .

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, there were no plants or grain growing on the earth, for the LORD God had not sent any rain. And no one was there to cultivate the soil. But water came up out of the ground and watered all the land. And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person. - Genesis 2:4-7

Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? - Job 10:8-9

Clay shouldn't tell the potter .

Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill? Does anyone dare say to his parents, "Why did you make me like this?" The Lord, the holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says this: "You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do!" - Isaiah 45:9-11

Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?
- Isaiah 29:16

Prayer and worship designed to manipulate God or make him serve our interests won't work!

Clay owes all it is to the potter- the only way clay improves is through the potter's shaping!

Clay can get and .

But when we continued to sin against your ways you were angry. So how can we be saved? All of us have become dirty before you, and all our "good works" are like filthy rags; we shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to know you for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. Yet, Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.
- Isaiah 64:4-8

Clay can be made again.

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Clay can start again only because
of the Power of the Potter!

What area of your life is The Potter wanting to break and re-create again?