

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

A while ago, Sharon U. wrote the following in an email to the editor of the Mood Disorders Association of BC newsletter, copied to me:

“For people ages 15 - 44, in the prime of their lives, Depression is the #2 reason for disability worldwide. Bipolar Disorder is the #6 reason, and approximately 30% of *people with bipolar disorder face being off work permanently - that's a lot of people!* Yes, there are treatments, but obviously they are far from perfect, given these numbers.

“I personally feel discouragement, a loss of identity, and a lot of shame and guilt having been off work for this long

“It's good to have hope, but if you're not one of the 'success stories', it's hard not to feel like a personal failure. I'm wondering how can I actually feel OK about accepting this new life, and be at peace with it?

“Maybe being permanently disabled isn't necessarily a bad thing? That is where a great discussion could start in our groups and in the newsletter and/or web site - how to rebuild a life around our permanent disability.”

- Can you identify?
- How can we find purpose and meaning when we're so limited in what we can do?
- What have you done that you've found meaningful?
- What's been frustrating?

LIVING FOR GOD

When we live for God – when we give ourselves to God – He will make clear what He wants to do in and through our lives. When we let God mold us, little by little, life will become meaningful.

The prophet Isaiah wrote about how we can be molded by God, our potter. “*Still, God, you are our Father, we're the clay and you're our potter. All of us are what you made us.*” Isaiah 64:8 (The Message)

ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE MOLDED

- Have you ever had an urge to do something that wouldn't go away? Did you? Or did you procrastinate and do something easier – something safer?
- Has anything ever really bothered you? Has anything ever broken your heart...enough that you wanted to do something about it? Did you? Or did you decide to leave the problem up to others to solve?

A pastor once said, "If something really breaks your heart, God is saying, 'Do something about it!'" My experience has shown that it's indeed true. And as God leads us in this way – as we respond to His call to us – we are molded.

There are times in our life when what worked for us in the past isn't working anymore. We enter a different season. We allow God to start molding us all anew. Those can be exciting times.

[God gave a message to Jeremiah:] He said, *"Go down to the shop where clay pots and jars are made. I will speak to you while you are there."* So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so the potter squashed the jar into a lump of clay and started again. Then the Lord gave me this message: *"O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand."* - Jeremiah 18:1-6 (NLT)

BRING ALL YOU ARE

Someone who inspired me said:

"God has been preparing you. He has been at work in your life long before you even knew there was a God out there. You may have had a painful life, experiences you wish you could forget, but if you give your life to God – surrender your pains to God ...he can make good things come out of the bad. He doesn't make bad things happen, but if you give your life over to God he can make good come out of them....Out of the greatest pain God can bring the greatest work."

Coming back to Sharon's original question:

"Maybe being permanently disabled isn't necessarily a bad thing?"