

Session 23

In the potter's shop

God wants his people to show by their lives that they belong to him. As we work with and relate to the children in our group, our words will have far more significance if they can see our faith in the way we live.

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Opening, Into the Bible* and *Living the life* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Options to open your session...

Pass it on

Activity time: 15 minutes

Aim: to see what a prophet does

- 1 Write out the words of the Bible verses Jeremiah 4:2 (CEV) and Isaiah 12:1 (GNB) on slips of paper.
- 2 Explain that today they are going to hear about the prophet Jeremiah. Ask the children if they know what a prophet does. Say together, 'A prophet is someone who passes God's messages on.'
- 3 Invite the children to stand in two rows. Say that you are going to read two messages that God asked prophets to pass on to his people, and then pass them on. Read the verses then give the slips of paper to the first child in each row. Each child should read the verse aloud and then pass the slip on to the next person. Be on hand to help those less confident with reading. See which team manages to pass their slip around completely first.

Game

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to get to know Jeremiah

- 1 Find Jeremiah on the *SU Bible Timeline*. Explain that Jeremiah keeps telling God's people in Jerusalem to change because they are always doing bad things, but they won't listen.
- 2 Choose one child to represent 'Jeremiah', and stand them facing the wall. Encourage the other children to pretend to be the people doing bad things, and stand with their backs turned to 'Jeremiah'. Ask 'Jeremiah' to turn around suddenly and shout, 'God says to change your ways.' Everyone freezes. Whoever 'Jeremiah' sees moving is out!

Aim

To realise that God knows everything and wants us to change

Bible passage

Jeremiah 18:1-12

Ready to use activity

Praise

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to praise God because he knows everything

- 1 Ask the children if any of them are experts at anything in particular. Perhaps they know everything about horses or Superman. Tell them that there is someone who knows absolutely everything! Challenge them to guess who that person is.
- 2 Ask the children to suggest some of the things that God knows. When you shout 'everything' they should jump up in the air and shout out, 'I praise you, God'. Do this a few times.

Tip for Leaders: Challenging behaviour is not exclusively the responsibility of the child. They may just be tired, bored, find an activity difficult or just be feeling out of sorts that day.

Into the Bible - options based on the Bible passage...

Ready to use
activity

Bible story – all change

Activity time: 20 minutes

Aim: to realise that God knows everything and wants us to change

1 All change game

Invite each child to find a partner, asking one to go to one end of the room, while the other stands opposite them. Explain that when they hear the word 'change' or 'changed' both children must run to the other side of the room, giving their partner a 'high five' (a hand slap in the air!) as they run past them. As they pass, they shout, 'All change!' Read the account here, remembering to pause while the children exchange places. If there's an odd child out, invite that child to join another pair and run with them. If you have no room to run about, you could ask them to swap chairs or jump up instead.

Story: Hello, this is Jeremiah. I am a prophet and God gives me special messages to pass on to people. The other day God told me to go to the pottery. He said that when I got there he would tell me what to say to the people. So I went there and saw the potter making clay pots on his pottery wheel. I noticed that whenever the clay would not take the shape he wanted, he would **change** his mind and form it into some other shape. I saw him **change** his mind over and over again. Each time the clay **changed** shape, he formed another pot. He was very clever. As the potter **changed** his clay, God showed me what he wanted to say.

This is God's message: 'I have power over you, just as a potter has power over clay. I am going to destroy you and your country because you have **changed** from your good ways into bad ways. But if you decide to **change** back to your good ways, I will **change** my mind, and not destroy you. If I promise to make you strong, but then you **change** and start doing bad things again, I will **change** my mind and not help you. I have decided to strike you and your country with disaster, and I won't **change** my mind unless you stop doing bad things! You need to **change** your ways and start living good lives. But I know you won't listen. You might as well answer, "We don't care what you say. We are not going to **change**. We have made plans to do very bad things, and we are going to be stubborn and do what we want!"

2 Counting

Read the story a second time, challenging the children to count how many times you say 'change' or 'changed'. (There are 12.)

3 Reflect

Say that the people were reminded so many times in the story to 'change' their ways. Ask the children what they think God was trying to tell his people. God knows everything and, because he loves us, is always giving us opportunities to change. Pray together and ask God to help us to listen to him, and put right the things in our lives that he wants us to change.

Bible search

Activity time: 20 minutes

Aim: to realise that God knows everything and wants us to change

You will need: pictures from page 163, photos of modern potters (optional), air-hardening modelling clay, pots of water, aprons, old newspaper or plastic sheeting

1 Introduction

Show everyone the photos of a modern potter. Find out what the children know about making pottery. Ask if any of them have ever seen a potter at work. Explain that in today's story Jeremiah, the prophet, is told by God to go and visit the pottery.

2 Jeremiah's story

Hand out copies of page 163. Read Jeremiah 18:1-12 from a child-friendly version of the Bible, such as the Contemporary English Version. Ask the children why they think God was telling Jeremiah these things. Now ask the children to look at their picture of the busy pottery. Challenge the children to search the main picture to find the six things shown underneath. When they have found each item encourage them to write down the first letter of each word in the space provided – c-h-a-n-g-e. Say the word together.

3 Reflect with clay

Ask the children what God wanted the people to do (*change*). Explain that even though God knows everything, because he loves his people he still wanted to give them the opportunity to turn from their stubborn ways and change their behaviour. Explain that God helped the prophet Jeremiah understand this when he sent him to the pottery to watch the potter at work changing his clay over and over again to make the right shape.

Ask the children to put on aprons and give them each a piece of clay. Tell them they are going to make pots. Demonstrate how to take a blob of clay and push a thumb into the middle to make a pot shape. Have some bowls of water available so that they can keep the clay moist, but not wet. (Guide the children to wet their hands, rather than the clay itself.)

As they are doing this, encourage them to think about how God wants us to be shaped and changed, too. He always wants to give us opportunities to change the things in our lives that are not right and make them better. As the children mould the clay, draw their attention to the fact that they are shaping and changing the clay into something beautiful, just as God wants to shape and change us. When everyone has made a pot, put them to one side to dry. The clay should harden completely overnight. (Take care when clearing up after this activity: clay can easily block drains so filter any washing water.)

More on this theme

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

Session 24 Buying a field, Jeremiah 31:1-6; 32:1-15

Session 25 Burning a scroll, Jeremiah 36

Session 26 Down a well, Jeremiah 38:1-13

Living the life - options to help live God's way...

Bible pots

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to search for more things that God knows

You will need: copies of the *Splash!* sheet from page 164

- 1 Give out copies of the *Splash!* sheet from page 164. Explain that they are going to find out more about God, using the Bible.
- 2 Ask the children to search with you in the Bible to try to find one of the verses on the sheet. When they have found the verse, ask a child to read it out and then chat together about what it tells us about God. Cut out the pot that shows the right answer and stick it over the correct pot outline.
- 3 Challenge the children to look up the other verses at home this week, and remember to thank God for knowing everything!

Play dough

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to ask God to show us where we need to change

You will need: play dough

- 1 Be aware of allergies before you start. Sit in a circle and hold up a blob of play dough. Ask the children what they have learned about God today. Pass the blob around and ask each child to change its shape. (With a large group, have several pieces of dough going round.)
- 2 While they are doing this, ask the children how we know what changes to make in our lives. Explain that as we listen to God and talk to him and read the Bible, God will show us things that we need to change in our lives.
- 3 Pass round more dough, so everyone is holding some. Ask the children to pray silently as they continue to mould, shape and change the play dough.

Ready to use activity

Sorry

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to think about what we need to change in our lives

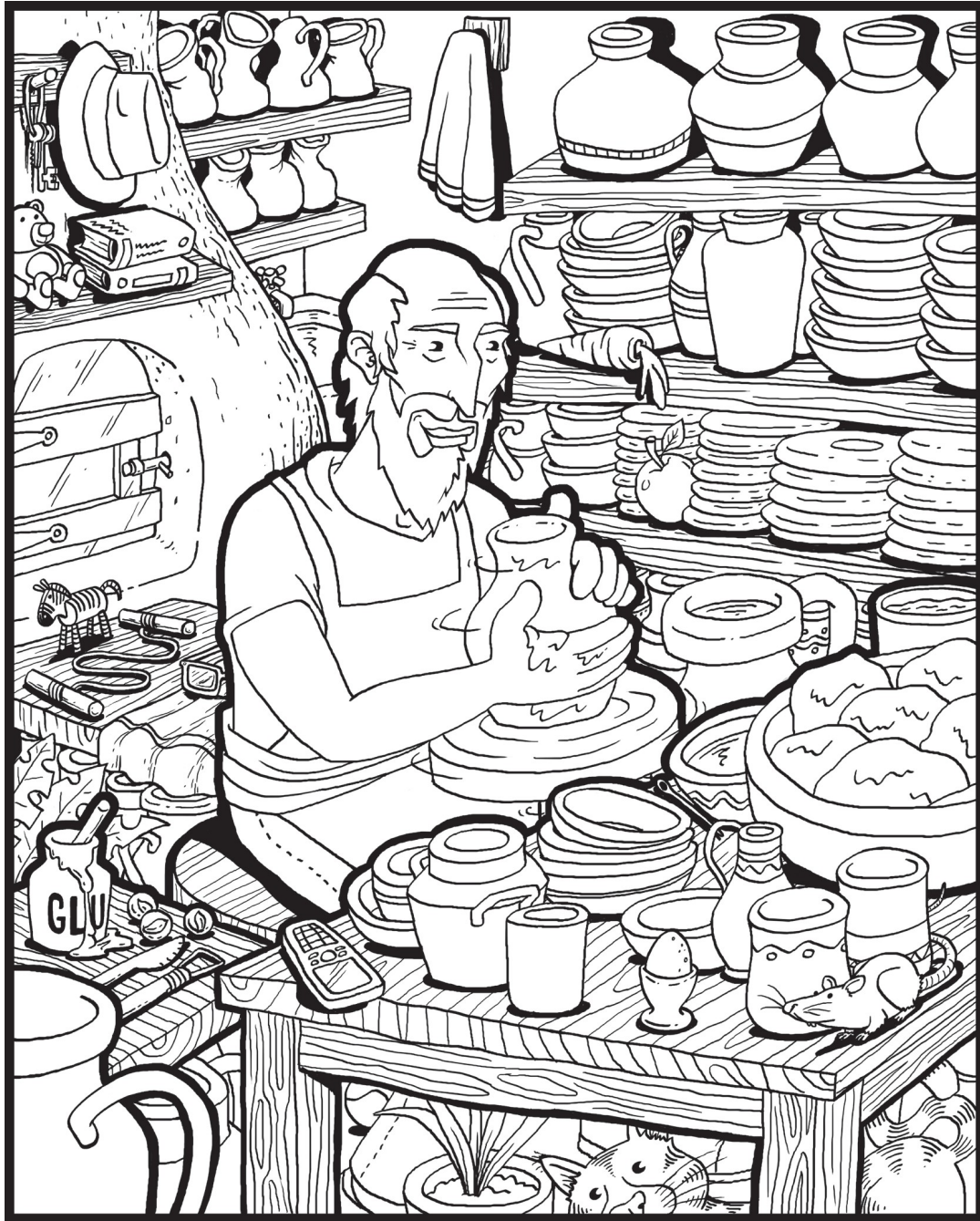
You will need: copies of the *Splash!* sheet from page 165

- 1 Ask the children to find the pictures of the wonky pots on the *Splash!* sheet from page 165. Explain that, just like these pots, we all go a bit wonky at times, and do or say things that would not please God. Explain that because he loves us he wants us to say sorry and change these things in our lives.
- 2 Encourage the children to write or draw something in the first pot that they want God to help them change in their lives, then spend some quiet time saying sorry to God. Ask the children to continue this during the week with the rest of the pots.

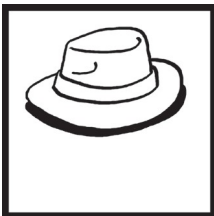
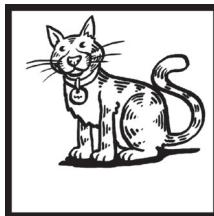
Extra ideas for the session, and beyond...

Put a large sheet of paper on the floor, with the words 'God knows everything' written in the centre. Ask the children to draw or write things that God knows, or to make their own picture of Jeremiah visiting the pottery.

Invite the children to write a letter or draw a picture to God of something they want to change in their life.



Find the following things in the main picture and draw a circle around them.
Then put the first letter of each object on the line below the little pictures underneath.



Splash!



In the first pot, draw or write something you would like God to help you change in your life.

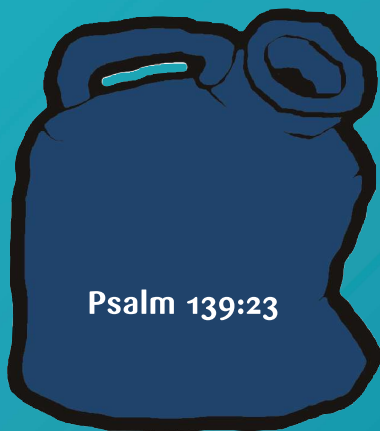
Draw or write something else in one pot each day this week.



Spend some time saying sorry to God for these things and ask God to help you make these changes in your life.



God knows everything!



Look up the Bible verses on these pots and find out what they tell us about God.

Then cut out the pots at the top and stick them onto the correct silhouette.

Remember to thank God for knowing everything!

