

The background is an abstract, textured composition of colors. It features a mix of warm tones like gold, yellow, and red, and cooler tones like blue and green. The texture is reminiscent of thick, layered paint or a rough, aged surface, with various shades and tones blending together in a non-representational way.

The Masterpiece

The remaking of Benjamin Sloetjes

*I went down to the potter's house,
and I saw him working at the wheel.
But the pot he was shaping from the clay
was marred in his hands;
so the potter formed it into another pot,
shaping it as seemed best to him.*

JEREMIAH 18:3-4 NIV



A piece of pottery made by Benjamin that was mysteriously found broken where it sat on display by our fireplace.

Broken pottery

Everybody has red letter days—days that change our lives in dramatic ways. But September 19, 2002, a beautiful autumn day with a brilliant sun and an azure sky, would change Benjamin Sloetjes' life and those of his family in such profound ways that we could never have imagined.

Benjamin was athletic, a fun-loving 18-year-old, a budding musician with a zest for living. His body, like a well-shaped clay vessel, was full of potential. But that day, the car he was working under slipped and crushed him under its weight, leaving his brain oxygen-starved for twenty minutes. What was God allowing in his life—and ours?

He was airlifted to Hamilton General Hospital. The prognosis was not good. He was in a coma, on life support. The doctors were quite certain that, if he lived, he would be blind, and unable to communicate with us. Then his blood pressure began to plummet. At an emergency meeting with the medical staff, we were told that surgery was impossible. Our son's life was slipping away.

Do you believe God hears prayer? While we stood by our dying son's bed, an SOS was sent around the world by e-mail, asking those who trusted in the Lord to ask Him to spare Benjamin's life. You may think it just a coincidence, but at 8:30 that night, an hour after the call went out, his blood pressure slowly and miraculously began to rise. According to the doctors, it was unheard of for that to have happened.

Slowly, doggedly, our son turned the corner. After seven months of intensive rehab, he came home in April of 2003. But it was a different Benjamin.

The master keeps working

The words from the ancient prophet Jeremiah (quoted on the front page) have been a great comfort to me. God asked him to watch the potter work at his wheel. Of course when a potter looks at the unshaped clay, he sees something others don't see. He sees a perfect vessel—not the clay on the wheel, but the vessel he has in his mind.

Then slowly, as the potter applies pressure at the right time and in the right way, the clay begins to look more and more like the vessel in the master's mind—until you would not be able to tell one from the other. But I've discovered that if I want to benefit from life's pressures, I need to let God get His hand inside. I need to let Him change me where it matters most—in my thoughts and feelings and beliefs.

Not everyone thinks that life has meaning, that there is a personal God working in our lives to accomplish the purpose for which He made us. But it was this that kept me going in the dark times with Benjamin and the family. As a child I had become familiar with the story of God's amazing journey into our pain-riddled world, not only to share in our suffering but to provide the ultimate solution to it.

In childlike faith I had entrusted my life to the one who had died for me, taking my personal sin so that I might be freed of its crushing weight. I knew I could trust someone who would sacrifice Himself for me. And in the hard times I can't imagine what I would have done without sensing Him nearby, "a very present help" (Psalm 46:1).

As the potter thinks best

Benjamin in some ways is still made of the same "clay" but he has been reshaped by his troubles into a new and wonderful vessel. We have all come to love Benjamin in a new way. He has taught us so much about life.

I used to look back and grieve over all the losses of the talents he had. He was athletic, musical, computer smart. He was funny and had so many friends. But one day I was struck by the words from a song taken from the book of Job: “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away—but blessed be the name of the Lord.” God gave us Benjamin with a bright and capable mind and He also took aspects of that mind away, but blessed be His name. The new Benjamin has many talents. He of all people should be depressed; instead he is so content and happy, experiencing a deep inner peace that most people long for. It is God’s faithfulness that is seeing us through. —Anita Sloetjes

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About the Artist

Since Benjamin started his journey as an acquired brain injury survivor, he has received four years of intense therapy that focused on walking and balance, speech pathology, cognitive and fine motor skills. Now, his emotive paintings encompass all of these therapies.

A typical painting day for Benjamin includes getting out of bed and walking to his studio.

He is then presented with a variety of colours of paint and is asked to communicate the hues he wants for the project at hand. He holds the paint brush and generates the expression of art through the movement of his hand. His artwork has become therapeutic and gives him great sense of purpose in his life. *Front-sample reproduction of Ben's acrylic paintings.*



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where you can listen online or request a free copy of the CD, **HOPE in the Storms of Life**. This audio message shares the hope that Ben Sloetjes and his family enjoy, even in the middle of very difficult circumstances. They trust it will be a help to you too.