

A cracked pot.

A water bearer in India served his master by toting water from the stream to his master's home. He carried the water in two pots that hung on either end of a pole balanced across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it; the other pot was perfect. The perfect pot always delivered a full portion of water from the stream, while the cracked pot always arrived at the master's house only half full.



For a full two years this went on, every day the water bearer delivering one full and one half-full measures of water to the master's home. Naturally the full pot was proud of its service, perfect to the end for which it had been made. But the cracked pot was unhappy; ashamed of its imperfection, miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After an eternity of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the water bearer one day. "I'm so ashamed of myself," it said. "I want to apologize to you."

"But why?" asked the water bearer.

"For the past two years," spoke the pot, "this crack in my side has let water leak out all the way to the master's house, and I have been unable to deliver but half my load. You do the work carrying me from the stream to our master's house each day, but because of my defect, you don't get full value from your effort," sighed the anguished pot.

Kindly, the water bearer told the distressed pot, "As we return to the master's house today, please notice the lovely flowers along the way."

As the trio returned up the hill, the cracked pot noticed the winsome flowers - the sun glistening off their bright faces, the breeze bending their heads. But still, at the end of the trail, the faulty pot felt bad because it had again leaked out half its load, and again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

But the bearer said to the pot, "Did you not notice that the flowers were only on your side of the path? Because I have always known about your 'flaw' I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we wind our way back from the stream, you have watered them. And every day I am able to pick these beautiful flowers to adorn our master's table. Were you not just the way you are, the master would not have had this beauty to his house."



Willy McNamara - from "Chicken Soup for the Soul"