

Formaldehyde and Frogs

*****WARNING***** this encouragement is intended to be read by those with a strong stomach. If you suffer from a weak stomach or get grossed out easily, this may not be for you! This is a story about two little country boys (yes, my sons) and if you have country boys...enough said!! Continue reading at your own risk.

When my sons were younger, I worked in the junior high department at our school. My job during the summer was to go through the buildings and inventory the items in all the departments. There was no set schedule so my boys went with me as I worked and they had quite a bit of freedom to run, play and check those things out that they couldn't check out during the school year. Because they knew the school so well, they could be turned loose to explore on their own. The rule was to just stay in the building and check in every now and then.

I was inventorying the science lab one day and they came to check in with me at their appointed time. They caught sight of the 'things' in the jars of formaldehyde. As you can imagine, to little boys it was way cool to see the frogs, the embryonic pigs, tadpoles, snakes and the like. They were fascinated by them and that is usually where I found them when it was time to call it a day and go home.

Fast forward...summer passed and school started. I didn't give any more thought to the inventory days or the science lab and I didn't think they did either. However, that fall we had an abundance of rain and with that rain came...you guessed it....FROGS!! Frogs and lots of them. What could be better for little boys than mud and frogs? They were in heaven. They came in one day and asked if they could use my canning jars to play with. I told them they would have to settle for empty mayonnaise jars (back when they were glass) if they could find some. Of course, they dug around and found what they needed. With adventurous little boys, I usually didn't question what the requested items would be used for. They were always taking something outside to play with. So, off they went with their jars and I never gave it another thought. (You can see where this is going, can't you?)

*****FINAL WARNING*****this is not for the weak stomached person!

Much to their dismay, the rain stopped and the frogs went away and they were off to their next adventure. Days passed and my house began to have a sour smell. I cleaned and cleaned and it wouldn't go away. After a week or so, the stench was incredible and I narrowed it down to the boy's rooms. I looked under the beds for food. I dug through the closet for bug collections I may not have known about. NOTHING!! One day I opened a dresser drawer to

put away some laundry and was almost knocked down by the stench that emerged like a fog. There, buried underneath some shorts were mayonnaise jars filled with something. The 'something' was unidentifiable. Let's just say it wasn't a pretty sight.

"BOYYYYSSSSSS!!! Get in here!!! "Soon, they were standing front and center.

"What in the world is this?" said a mom that always believed she had a strong stomach until now!

"Oh yea. That's our frogs" said two little boys. "But they don't look like Mrs. Foster's frogs, do they Mom?"

Frogs??? It looked more like...Ok, never mind. You get the gross picture!

Mystery (and stink) solved. After having a brief science lesson on the difference between formaldehyde and water, the mushy substance that used to be frogs...and the mayonnaise jars...went to the trash barrels. The boys were not in trouble. They meant no harm. They saw something that intrigued them and wanted to do the same thing. The problem was, because they didn't have the full understanding, their desire turned into a stinky mess. We've laughed about that adventure (one of many) throughout the years but I realized the other day that there's a lesson in it.

We live in a world where people get a glimpse of God and like what they see. They get a glimpse of Him in creation or in an undeniable 'God moment'. They see the little 'like if you love Jesus' posts on Facebook. They get little pieces of scripture that feels good to them and hang it on their refrigerator. They do a little devotion in the morning because they really are looking for something. They go to church because they think that's where they'll find Him. They don't have the full understanding but they see something they like...something they want...and they set out to do all they know to do. My boys just saw frogs in a jar of clear liquid. The only clear liquid they knew of, or had access to, was water. That water couldn't preserve those frogs but to the eye, it looked the same. They didn't have a clue how their experiment would end up.

The world and even many Christians are looking for the real deal. They are looking for the Kingdom of Heaven and only finding religion. Without the revelation and understanding, to their natural eye, it looks the same so they dive in. It doesn't take long for some to realize the church can't sustain them. They come and read, pray, give their offerings and yet they still struggle with their same stuff. In frustration, they leave and become pretty sour on the things of the Lord because in their experience, God didn't work for them. Others stay but still live frustrated lives. The difference is, instead of leaving soured on the things of God, they stay and build doctrines around the experiences they've had instead of on the Word of God. Their experiences most often are those of remaining sick, broke, depressed, in shame, discouraged and beaten up. They've built a doctrine around those experiences and believe that it will all be better in the sweet by and by but on this earth we must live in poverty and lack in all areas of our lives. That way of life is just as sour smelling as bailing out and giving up.

Either way there's no hope for what's hurting. There's no joy or peace. Neither of these outcomes is found in the heart of God. But on the outside, it looks the same. We sing songs, we read scripture, we take offerings and we pray.

What's happening? We were created by our Father to know there's something more....to know there's power. It's in us and we feel it. Why do you think super heroes have always been a favorite of little kids...and even adults? We know we were created to be more...to have more...to walk in power. The problem is we've looked to religion, denomination, rituals, and law to give us that. We've been taught that because they talk about God there, and read the Bible there, and pray there, it's the place to be. It looks like the place to be with our natural eyes. Instead, it's the Kingdom of Heaven we are really searching for. So many times Jesus said, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." What does the Kingdom of Heaven look like? The Bible says it looks like healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons, speaking in new tongues, freely giving what we've freely received. It looks like full salvation (sozo)...forgiveness of sins, eternal life, healing inside and out, peace (nothing missing, nothing broken), prosperity, and deliverance from demonic oppression. It looks like what Acts 10:38 says of Jesus, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." It looks like John 14:12 where Jesus Himself says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." It looks like Mark 16: 17-18, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

The Kingdom of Heaven is what every soul is searching for. That's the real deal. That's what preserves. Instead, because we don't have the revelation we try to attain that with religion...church attendance...rituals and what we end up with is a stinky mess. On the outside it may look the same. It may look good but it is void of power. The power was in the formaldehyde to preserve those frogs. When that was missing, there was nothing but mush left. Religion is void of power. 2 Timothy 3:5 speaks of this when it talks of "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof".

I told you that my boys didn't get in trouble because they truly didn't understand. They saw something cool and wanted to do the same thing. They were innocent and there was no ill intent in their hearts. That is the picture of many Christians (or those seeking it out) today. They see something cool. They read about the wondrous works of Jesus in the Bible. They believe it. They're hungry for it and they are doing all they know to do. They go to church. They do their rituals. They read their devotions. They learn with their minds and yet, they haven't had the real deal. They haven't ENCOUNTERED the tangible presence of God. They haven't had the revelation of Jesus Christ in their hearts. They don't know. It isn't working

out the way they read about or believed it would and they don't know why. Unfortunately, no matter how innocent they are in their hearts, the end result is the same...a stinky mess.

Just because things look the same on the outside, doesn't mean they are the same underneath. What we're all looking for is Kingdom. When Jesus said, 'repent' He meant to change our way of thinking. We've always 'thought' religion and church attendance was where it was but that's not the truth. Change your way of thinking. Agree with the Word of God that says, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.' (Matthew 10:8) Everything else stinks!

Religion is not in the Kingdom and the Kingdom is nowhere to be found in religion. "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord." 2 Corinthians 6:17. Step into the Kingdom. Step into your destiny and all God has for you today!