

ARE YOU AN AMPHIBIOUS CHRISTIAN

The frog is a truly fascinating creature. Adult frogs, as opposed to their water-dwelling young, have body structures that enable them to move about on land as well as in the water. A frog is an amphibian. Similarly, the early disciples lived naturally in two environments.

Very early in His ministry, Jesus picked twelve men to walk with Him on His mission. Mark 3:14 reveals the purpose of Jesus choosing these men: “He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.” Here we have the two environments: community (being with Christ) and mission (being sent out). Jesus designed the church to be able to breathe, live, and thrive in two worlds.

One world exists behind closed doors, the private and intimate side of the church, where believers enjoy mutual exhortation and fellowship. The other world is all around us as soon as we walk out the door. It’s the world to which we’ve been sent. We can flourish here too. We are amphibious.

Jesus openly ate with tax collectors and sinners. What was amazing about how Jesus related to people was not only the fact that He was comfortable in that environment, but that prostitutes and drunkards were comfortable around Him. Unlike the Western Church today, Jesus had a good reputation with most of the people. The early church in Acts had the same type of reputation,

“having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47). A healthy and vibrant church is one that can flourish in both habitats, in our own intimate gatherings and in our mission to make disciples of all nations.

This is one of the signs that the church in the West may be in trouble. Many believers are not comfortable around (and are even frightened by) unbelieving people. There exists a deception that makes it feel unnatural for Christians to be with unbelievers.

Amphibians actually need to live near water for their survival. There are two reasons for this. The first reason has to do with something called “homeostasis.” All living things have this in common. They must maintain stable internal conditions to stay alive. These include heartbeat, water content, and temperature. Most amphibians control their internal temperature through a healthy balance of time in water and time on land.

As a Christian, I cannot spend long periods of time in community and fellowship without going back out into the world to advance the kingdom of God. There is probably nothing more uplifting than having the opportunity to share Jesus with someone who doesn't know Him. However, spending too much time in the water is going to bring my temperature down to dangerous, life-threatening levels. I must get up on land once again and let the sun warm me up.

Finally, there is another reason why amphibians must be near water. Only in water can they reproduce. Staying away from water means we have no babies. Jesus said, “Go out into the entire world.”

This is the only environment where we can reproduce and have more people added to the kingdom of God.

CALL ME KERMIT, THE TECHNO-COLORED FROG

A few years back I had some friends over at the house to hear my life story and listen to some of the music I had written. They were all in their early twenties, and I learned quickly what they loved to do. Every Monday night was “Techno Night” at one of the local nightclubs. They insisted that I come with them one night to experience it. I politely replied, “Well, maybe one day.” Inwardly, I dismissed the idea.

Later, during a personal time in prayer, my mind wandered to thinking about my newfound friends. The Holy Spirit said to me, “I am presenting you to them in techno-color.” After a moment of confusion over what the Lord was saying, I realized that God wanted me to go out with them “clubbing.” So, I picked up the phone and called to accept their gracious offer. They were absolutely thrilled.

In no time at all, there I was. The music was loud, the air was thick with smoke, but my companions were really happy to have me with them. I even dared to venture out onto the dance floor to partake in this cultural phenomenon. With those multicolored disco strobe lights shining down on me, I must have looked like Kermit the Frog in a white John Travolta suit. I remember thinking while I was dancing, “I hope this is okay with you, Jesus. I’m doing this for you, and to reach out to these people. You told me to go. So, here I am.”

Meeting them on their turf went a long way. I'm sure they knew that it wasn't my regular scene and they never asked me to do it again. However, from that point on everything changed. One time was all it took to win their hearts. They let me into their world. They also let Jesus in. Each one of them, over the next several months, gave me a place to speak to them about my faith and relationship with Christ. They were truly open to hear what I had to say. It's as though I suddenly had a voice. We need to return to our true nature as followers of Christ. Let's get our feet wet once again and thrive out in the place where people live.

Paul Vieira Taken from his new book, Jesus Has Left the Building.