

An Unlikely Set of Ingredients

Matthew 20:20-31

You will need:

- 100ml 6% Hydrogen Peroxide (+ measuring cylinder if you have one)
- 15ml (1 tbsp) dried yeast
- 50ml (3 tbsp) warm water in insulated coffee cup
- Large squirt washing up liquid
- Food colouring (pref blue and red)
- Small water bottle / plant sprayer (200-300ml capacity, small neck)
- Plastic measuring jug and spoon
- Plant pot
- Funnel
- Tray (containing all above)
- Waterproof mat
- Large towel
- Small table
- Lab coats / safety specs (optional)

Kids, you might want to come forward and sit at the front because it's worth being able to see this. You won't get messy, I promise. Well, not much. And it'll wash off. Eventually.

[set out water proof mat and towel] You know it's going to be good when it needs a waterproof mat! ***[Put table on towel and tray of stuff]***

I wonder if you can guess what I'm talking about today. Let's have a look at what we've got. I have a plant sprayer, a flowerpot and coffee cup with, yes, some warm liquid inside. Any guesses? ***[Gardening]*** Yes, it does look like I'm doing a talk about gardening.

What else? Ah, here I have a measuring jug and yeast and food colouring. ***[Cooking]*** Hmmn, yes. These are more for cooking. I don't think they go with the flowerpot very well.

What else? Oh, a measuring cylinder, funnel and, what's this? Hydrogen Peroxide? Goodness! We're certainly not using that in cooking! And washing up liquid? I can see we might need that for clean up, but what kind of cooking or gardening uses it as an ingredient?

Hmmn. These don't go together very well, do they? How could we possibly make anything good out of this weird set of mis-fit ingredients? Any ideas? ***[Ideas]***

Those of you who guessed science, you're right. So I am going to transform into the Batty Boffin while you welcome my glamorous assistant, Igor! ***[Applause, put on lab coats]***

Igor, please mix the yeast with the warm water. ***[Igor mixes 15ml dried yeast with 50ml warm water and stirs until consistency of melted ice cream.]***

These ingredients don't seem to go together well. ***[Clear tray while talking and place flowerpot upside down in middle of tray, bottle (minus sprayer) on top]***

It's a bit like Jesus' disciples. They were a bit of a mixed bunch too. You had Matthew, a rich, educated tax collector, and hot-head Peter, a fishman with a bad case of foot-in-mouth disease; James and John, the Sons of Thunder, radical Simon the Zealot, helpful Andrew and good old Thomas, always mentioning the elephant in the room.

They don't go together very well, do they? And in our Bible reading today we'll hear about one of the many times when the disciples got it totally wrong. Again. How could God possibly make anything good out of that weird set of mis-fits?

And us, too. ***[Look round]*** I mean, no offense, but we're a weird set of mis-fits too. Some more than others. We're all so different. We're good at different things. We like different music. We eat different food. We watch different TV shows. You wouldn't think we go together, like my ingredients here. How could God possibly make anything good out of such a weird set of mis-fits?

And yet that is how God chooses to spread his good news.

So let's make something spreading out of this set of weird mis-fit ingredients. Behold, the wonderous Elephant Toothpaste! That's worth a whoop. Elephant Toothpaste!

Igor, please put a good squirt of washing up liquid in the bottle and I'll add the Hydrogen Peroxide. ***[Measure 100ml H₂O₂ and pour into bottle]*** Give those a good swirl to mix. Now we'll add some food colouring ***[Drip blue and red alternately inside neck of bottle]***

Are you ready for this? Just as God can build his church from the weirdest set of mis-matched ingredients – us, so our weird set of mis-matched ingredients can make Elephant Toothpaste! ***[Add yeast mixture and stand back]***

The Science Bit

Hydrogen Peroxide breaks down into water and oxygen. This reaction is catalysed (speeded up) by the yeast, so it happens in a few seconds. The washing up liquid captures the bubbles of oxygen.

The reaction is exothermic (gives out heat), so the bottle and foam will be warm and may steam a bit.

You can clean up by washing everything down the sink.