

MISSION EXPLORERS KENYA, LESSON SEVEN

Masai Mara National Reserve

ANIMAL THEOLOGY

Lesson 7 is different from the other lessons in this curriculum. This lesson focuses on the many animals that Jesse encountered in Kenya. We call it “Animal Theology.” We have made a connection between a primary trait of each of the featured animals and principles from God’s Word. There are 12 animals featured in the video and the lessons. We believe that these lessons will be unforgettable as the animals serve as reminders of biblical truths.

You may decide to break this lesson into more than one. That is up to you and what works best for your class. The animals are presented in the lesson in the same order that they appear in the video. You can either start the video at the beginning, stopping it after the animal for that week is shown OR you can watch the entire video each week. This would give the opportunity for a weekly review of the animals your class has studied in previous weeks before learning about a new animal.

Several options for dividing Lesson 7 are listed below.

1. One lesson with twelve animals. This would make your entire Mission Explorers Kenya safari 12 weeks.
2. Two lessons with six animals in each one. This would expand your Mission Explorers Kenya safari to 13 weeks.
3. Four lessons with three animals in each one. This would expand your Mission Explorers Kenya safari to 15 weeks. This is the option that has been successfully tested in a church. **There are FOUR take-home letters at the end of this lesson, corresponding to this division of the lesson into four parts. This is the recommended option.**
4. Twelve lessons with one animal in each one. This would expand your Mission Explorers Kenya safari to 23 weeks.

We believe that your students’ favorite lesson will be this one on Animal Theology!

Lesson Purpose: To help children make a connection between the animals they have seen in Kenya and the God who created them.

Lesson Objectives:

- To teach that vultures are garbage-eaters, but God doesn't want us to look at garbage with our eyes or have garbage in our hearts.
- To teach that God wants Christians to have "swarm intelligence" just like the wildebeests and to work together in unity.
- To teach that God gives rewards that should cause us to leap for joy like the impala.
- To teach that God shelters us under His wings just like the mother ostrich shelters her chicks.
- To teach that just like the giraffe is the "early warning system" of the African grasslands, God has also given Christians several things to warn us when danger is approaching.
- To teach that the black and white stripes on a zebra can remind us of the darkness a person is in before they come to the light of Jesus Christ.
- To teach that the Bible compares our Christian life to running a race, and we need to be good runners like the cheetah.
- To teach that God's timing is always perfect. Just like the crocodile patiently waits hours, days, and even weeks to attack its prey, we need to be patient.
- To teach that the Bible says we are not to hold a grudge like Cape buffalo do, but we are to be kind and forgiving. When people say or do hurtful things to us, we are to have "thick skin" like the Cape buffalo.
- To teach that God doesn't want us to be a big-mouth like the hippopotamus. He wants us to speak good words, not rotten words, and the words we speak are a reflection of what is in our hearts.
- To teach that God's memory is even better than the elephant's. He never forgets any of His promises.
- To teach about two lions in the Bible: a roaring lion that is seeking to devour and the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

VIDEO INTRODUCTION

Jesse visits the Masai Mara Reserve in Kenya where he witnesses the world famous Great Migration that takes place every year. He also explores the reserve with Travis, who shares his knowledge of the many animals in Kenya.

PLAY VIDEO NOW (13:51)

Materials needed: Print out a set of Safari Animal Scripture Cards (template located at the end of this lesson). Hold up the cards one at a time and ask the children: What animal is this? Have we seen this animal in Kenya (on the previous videos)? What was it doing? Did Jesse get close to any of these animals? Which ones? Why do you think he couldn't get close to some of them?

VULTURE (Lesson 7a starts here.)

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE VULTURE?

Lesson Objective: Vultures are garbage-eaters, but God doesn't want us to look at garbage with our eyes or have garbage in our hearts.

Vultures are called nature's garbage men. Do you know why? Because they eat garbage! Well, not really garbage, but they do eat what most other animals do not want to eat. They feed on dead or dying animals. This sounds gross, doesn't it? But this is actually a very important job. Vultures help keep our environment clean by eating dead carcasses. If they didn't, then the bodies of dead animals would rot and stink. To a vulture, a dead animal is like a gourmet buffet! Vultures also help control the spread of disease by eating animal carcasses that are full of bacteria that can make people and other animals sick.

How would you like to eat a garbage sandwich? Or how about a garbage pizza? Or maybe some garbage ice cream? No way! Garbage is something that we do not want to eat. Garbage is something that we throw in the garbage can so that the garbage truck will come pick it up and take it away. But did you know that sometimes people put garbage into their minds?

We put garbage into our minds by looking at things that are wicked and do not honor God.

Read Psalm 101:3-4:

"I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness." (NKJV)

King David is speaking in these verses. He says that he will not put anything wicked before his eyes. That means that he has made up his mind that he will not look at anything wicked. This was written a long time ago before there was television or computers or video games. Those are not things that King David had to think about, but they are things that **you** have to think about.

What kinds of movies and television shows do you watch? What kinds of video games do you play? What kind of websites do you look at on the internet? Are they garbage? The things that you look at with your eyes can cause you to sin. You need to make sure that you are not looking at anything that does not bring honor to God or that God's Word says is wicked.

King David also says that he hates "the work of those who fall away." That means that he is not going to have anything to do with the things that wicked people do. If you rolled around inside the garbage truck, what would happen? You would have garbage stuck to you, and you would

smell terrible! If you hang around wicked people, their wickedness tends to “cling” to you. You start looking and acting like them.

King David talks about a “perverse heart.” This is a heart filled with wickedness. It is a mind or heart filled with garbage. The things that you look at with your eyes tend to make their way to your mind. When your thinking becomes filled with sin – or garbage – then it affects what you think, what you do, and what you say. You have to get rid of the garbage. But how do you do that?

Read Psalm 51:2:

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” (NKJV)

Once again this is King David speaking. He asks God to wash and cleanse him from his sin. If you have garbage in your heart, then that is what you need to do, too. You need to confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you.

When you confess your sin to God, you agree with Him that what you have thought or done is a sin for which Christ has died. You can immediately start enjoying the new life that God wants for you in Christ. It’s a daily battle to put off the old, self-centered way of thinking and to see yourself and the world the way Christ sees things.

Read Psalm 51:10:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (NKJV)

When God forgives you, he gives you a new heart (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 11:19). When you trust Christ as your savior, God cleanses you from sin’s penalty once for all time (Hebrews 10:1-18). You’re now God’s child and in his family forever. God gives you a new heart. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you (1 Corinthians 6:19). However, you still have the same body. You have not received your resurrection body. Think of the Holy Spirit as God’s first installment that guarantees you’ll receive a resurrected body that will never get sick or die (Ephesians 1:14).

When you receive your resurrection body from the Lord, you won’t be able to sin. God will wipe away all sin and the sorrow that comes with it (Revelation 21:4). The body you live in now remembers what it’s like to live selfishly. God wants you to live a Christ-centered life, not a self-centered life. You should constantly renew your mind by concentrating on what God says about you in the Bible (Romans 12:1-2). Look at yourself and the world around you from God’s perspective. When you do sin, confess that sin to God so that you can once again experience the grace and power of the Christ-centered life.

But do you know what can happen if you don’t ask God to clean your heart? Your fellowship or experience of God will be hindered. It’s like you’re eating garbage instead of the good food or

blessings that God has for you. Get rid of the garbage in your life so that you can feast on God's grace and provision for you. Stop eating the garbage of this world and start feasting on the glorious future you have as God's beloved child. When Jesus returns to Earth, he will get rid of all the world's garbage or evil. Until then, set your mind on things above. Instead of eating the world's garbage of selfishness, greed and lust, enjoy God's love, power and provision.

Read Psalm 66:18:

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." (NKJV)

This verse teaches that if you keep iniquity, or wickedness, in your hearts, then God will not hear your prayers. He will not answer your prayers if you hold onto the garbage in your heart and don't confess your sins to God so that you can live the Christ-centered life.

It is so important that we are careful not to eat garbage by looking at things that are sinful. If we eat garbage with our eyes, then that garbage goes to our hearts and affects everything we think, say, and do. Let the vultures of this world eat their garbage while you feast on God's grace.

The self-centered life is a very small one. Imagine if Jesse had chosen to stay home to play with his dog and cat instead of going to Kenya to see lions, elephants, giraffes and other African animals. By going to Kenya, Jesse has lived a much bigger life. If you concentrate on Jesus Christ, you will live a much bigger life.

WILDEBEEST

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE WILDEBEEST?

Lesson Objective: God wants Christians to have "swarm intelligence" just like the wildebeests and to work together in unity.

Wildebeests are strange-looking animals. Their name actually means "wild beast." Every year wildebeests do something amazing. More than one million of them travel together more than 1,000 miles to find food and water. Can you imagine one million wildebeests moving at the same time?

During this huge trip, wildebeests have something called "swarm intelligence." Even though there are so many of them, they move almost like they are one animal. They all run together as one massive group, following twists and turns in perfect unity and even jumping over obstacles as one.

Did you know that Christians should be like wildebeests? God wants us to all work together the way wildebeests do.

Read Psalm 133:1:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (NKJV)

Unity means as one. God wants Christians to live together in peace with one another. He wants us to love each other and get along with each other. It makes God happy when we do this, and it is good for us. The Bible uses a word picture to show us how Christians should live and work together. It says that we are like a human body.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12:

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (NKJV)

Think about the human body. It has lots of different parts – both on the outside and on the inside. All of those parts work together to make the body work like it is supposed to. That is exactly how Christians should work together.

Jesus is the head of the body. We are the rest of the parts. Let’s pretend like I am the ears on the body. What if I said, “I don’t want to be an ear anymore. I’m tired of listening all the time. I want to be a mouth so that I can do some talking!”? What would happen? How would the body hear anything? It couldn’t.

Now let’s pretend like I am the feet. What would happen if I said, “I don’t want to be a foot anymore. I am tired of walking around all the time. I want to be a nose.”? How would the body walk? It wouldn’t be able to walk. Each part of the body was created to do a special job. When all of the parts do their job, then the whole body works properly.

It's just like that with the Christians that make up the body of Christ. God has created everyone for a special purpose. Some people are like hands, some are like feet, and some are like eyeballs. When they all work together in unity, they make a whole body that works the way God intended it.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:26:

“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (NKJV)

This verse shows another way that we are supposed to work together as Christians. When our friend is sad, then we need to feel his sadness, too, and try to comfort him. If our friend is excited about something, then we should be excited with him.

Just like our bodies have many different parts, so does the church. Every person doesn't have the same gifts or talents or the same job as everyone else. We are all different. We need to be like the wildebeests and have swarm or group intelligence. When we do the job that God wants us to do, and everyone else does the job God wants them to do, then we can have unity and work as one body.

IMPALA

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE IMPALA?

Lesson Objective: God gives rewards that should cause us to leap for joy like the impala.

Materials needed: Tape measure, masking or painter's tape

Impala are one of the most common kinds of antelope in Africa. Their Zulu name means "gazelle." Like all gazelles, impala can run very fast. They can also jump really high and far. They can leap almost 10 feet/3 meters high. And they can jump as far as 32 feet/9 meters. (Show with the tape measure how high and how far this is.)

Look up the current (human) world records for high jump and long jump and show with the tape measure how high/far each of these is. The impala still wins!

Do you think that you could jump that high or that far? (Use the tape to put a mark on the floor. Let the children take turns seeing how far they can jump. Use the tape measure to measure the distances.) We can't even come close to jumping as far or as high as an impala! Even though we can't leap like an impala, God's Word tells us that there are some things that should make us leap for joy.

Read Luke 6:23a:

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven..." (NKJV)

This verse says that we are to leap for joy. Why? Because if we glorify God in certain ways, we will have a great reward in heaven.

Did you know that God rewards us for being faithful to Him? The verses before that verse talk about when we go through difficult times. Things like being poor or hungry or sad or being

treated badly because we are Christians. Jesus said that if we endure those things for Him, then we are blessed. We can still be happy even when it is hard because He will reward us in heaven.

The Bible talks a lot about being rewarded when we get to heaven.

Read Luke 6:35:

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (NKJV)

God tells us not to hate our enemies but to love them and do good things for them. He tells us to do that because that is what He does. He is kind to people who don't love and obey Him. He wants us to be kind to people who are not nice to us. If we do, God says our reward will be great.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:8:

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.” (NKJV)

Here God shows us that different people do different kinds of work for Him. Think about planting a garden together. I will put the seed in the ground and cover it with dirt. You will come along with a watering can and water the seed. When it grows into a plant, did you or I make it grow? Neither one! God made it grow. But He allowed us to be part of the work.

It is the same way with sharing the gospel or doing any kind of work for God. We all work together doing things like: telling people about Jesus, helping those in need, loving people who are hurting. When a person gets saved, usually not just one person but a lot of people have told them about Jesus and have shown them His love. So, who gets the credit for their salvation? God does because He is the one who saves them. He uses all of us in this process, but He is the one who gets the results.

When we do anything that brings glory to God, the Bible says that it doesn't matter if you “plant” or if you “water.” God gets the glory and each person will receive his reward based on what he did – not on what someone else did.

We might not be able to leap as high or as far as an impala. But isn't it exciting to know that God will reward us for being faithful to Him? That is definitely something to leap about!

OSTRICH (Lesson 7b starts here.)

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE OSTRICH?

Lesson Objective: God shelters us under His wings just like the mother ostrich shelters her chicks.

An ostrich is a really strange bird, isn't it? It has wings, but it cannot fly. What does the ostrich use its wings for? They actually use their wings for lots of things. Their wings help them balance. They also help them change direction when they are running. They even use them to scare away predators. One of the best things an ostrich uses its wings for is to protect its chicks. During a storm, the babies will gather under their mother's wings to stay safe and dry. It reminds us of something that God says in the Bible. Did you know that God compares Himself to a bird sheltering chicks under its wings?

Read Psalm 91:4:

"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (NKJV)

This verse says that God will cover you with His feathers. Does God really have feathers? No! He is comparing Himself to a bird to teach us something. He is saying that we can find safety and comfort in Him just like a baby chick can find safety and comfort under its mother's wings. God comforts and protects us just like a mother bird protects its chicks.

What are some reasons that we might need God to comfort us? (Help them give examples such as when we get hurt, when someone hurts our feelings, when our pet dies, etc.) When things like this happen, it hurts. When we fall down, we might skin our knee and that hurts. But sometimes we hurt in our hearts where no one can see – except God! He sees ALL of our hurts and He is there to comfort us through His Word and through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes He comforts us by sending a friend or a parent to give us a hug.

God also protects us. That verse says God is our "shield and buckler." (A buckler is a small shield.) What does a shield do? It protects you from things like arrows or rocks or other things someone might throw at you. How does God protect us like a shield? (Help them give examples here, too, such as bringing us safely to church today, protecting us when we are running and playing on the playground, keeping us safe in our homes at night, etc.)

But what if we run away from God? If we run away from God and are disobedient to Him, we leave the safety of His wings and the protection of His shield. Even though we are forever in God's family, He won't force us to obey him. He wants us to obey Him because we know and love Him.

The baby ostrich is safe and warm under its mother's wings. Run to God for comfort and protection and He will cover you with His wings!

GIRAFFE

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE GIRAFFE?

Lesson Objective: Just like the giraffe is the “early warning system” of the African grasslands, God has also given Christians several things to warn us when danger is approaching.

Giraffes are called the “early warning system of the African grasslands.” Why? Because they are so tall and have such excellent eyesight they can see danger coming from really far away. When they see danger coming, they snort to warn not only other giraffes but also all of the other animals that might be hanging around them.

Did you know that Christians have an “early warning system?”

Read John 16:13a:

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...” (NKJV)

The Bible teaches that when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. The Holy Spirit helps us know God's truth from Satan's lies. The devil is always trying to trick us into disobeying God. Lying is his specialty. In fact, the Bible says that he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Sometimes it is hard to know when something is the truth or a lie. We can always go to the Bible to find out truth. But the Holy Spirit also works in our hearts and our minds to help us know when Satan is lying to us and trying to trick us.

Another warning system we have is the Bible. Every word in the Bible is true. It is filled with warnings to us.

Read Luke 12:15:

“And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’” (NKJV)

This verse warns us about something. It says “beware.” What is the Bible warning us about here? It is warning us to watch out for covetousness. Covetousness is greed or wanting something someone else has. Why do we need to watch out for it? Because life is not about material possessions! Life is about glorifying God. Sometimes we let “things” get in the way of that. Sometimes we begin to care more about our stuff than about God. God's Word warns us to be careful to not be greedy wanting more and more and more. This is just one warning in the

Bible. There are many others. So, we need to read the Bible so that we will know what God warns us to watch out for.

Another warning system that we have is other Christians.

Read Titus 3:10:

“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.” (NKJV)

A divisive person is one who likes to argue all the time about everything. This can cause division in God’s family, and God does not like that. In this Bible verse, He tells us to give a person like that two warnings to stop causing arguments and division. After the second warning, God says we should avoid that person because all they want to do is argue and cause trouble. The Bible tells us to warn other people about a lot of things. Can you think of anything else that we should warn others about?

Read Romans 6:23:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NKJV)

What is the warning here? The wages or payment for sin is death! That means that anyone who has sinned deserves to die. Death means being separated from God and suffering in hell forever. All of us have sinned. We deserve to go to hell. But the good news is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be free from sin’s penalty of eternal death and live in God’s glorious kingdom forever! Jesus is on His throne in heaven now. God the Father has given Him all authority. When He returns to Earth, He will establish His kingdom here. We need to warn people about hell and to tell them that Jesus wants them to live with Him forever in His kingdom. The good news is that they can be saved by believing in Jesus.

Read John 16:7-9:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me;” (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit is the helper of every Christian, but He also helps those who don’t know Jesus as their Savior. The Holy Spirit wants everyone in the world to know that they can live forever with Jesus in His kingdom.

Aren’t you glad that giraffes aren’t the only ones who have an “early warning system?” God has blessed us with several “early warning systems.” We have the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and other

Christians to warn us of danger and help us get to safety. Listen to God's warnings. And be like the giraffe – be the first one to warn others when you see danger approaching!

ZEBRA

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE ZEBRA?

Lesson Objective: The stripes on a zebra can remind us of the darkness a person is in before they come to the light of Jesus Christ.

Materials needed: Cut some long strips of black and white paper. On each black stripe write with a white marker sins that most children can identify with like disobeying parents, lying, cheating on a test, watching movies or TV shows with bad language, etc. On each white stripe, write with a black marker good things like obeying parents, telling the truth, studying hard, reading the Bible, etc.

Links to supplies for this activity can be found at our website www.KidsTalkAboutGod.org/supplies.

Zebras are known for their stripes. Every zebra's stripes are different. This makes it easy to identify them. Baby zebras learn their mother's stripes soon after they are born. This helps them know which mommy zebra to follow.

Did you know that the Bible tells us that we can also be identified by our stripes? Well, we don't really have stripes! But there is a way to tell who follows Jesus and who doesn't. It is kind of like the zebra's stripes. What color are a zebra's stripes? Black and white. The Bible teaches a lot about darkness and light. Darkness is like the black stripes, and light is like the white stripes.

Read John 8:12:

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" (NKJV)

Before we are saved, the Bible says that we are walking in darkness. (If possible turn the light in the classroom off to illustrate darkness.) This means that people without Christ do not know God or His Word. They live however they want and don't care about pleasing God. But Jesus is light. When you get saved by believing in Jesus, He shines a light into your life. (Turn the light back on.) Instead of doing sinful things, God wants you to do things that please Him. God knows what is best for us. He wants to bless us.

Read Ephesians 5:8:

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (NKJV)

Before you were saved, you were in darkness like the black stripes on the zebra. When you get saved, you are now light like the white stripes on the zebra. What are some things that go with the darkness? (Stick the black stripes on the wall or board and discuss each one. Have some blank ones so that you can add things the children say.) What are things that go with the light? (Stick the white stripes on the wall or board and discuss as you did with the black stripes. Have some blank ones to add things the children say.) Jesus said that when you get saved, it is just like He shines His light into your life. He wants you to live for Him so others can see your light and they can know who God is. This pleases God. The more we learn His Word and obey Him, we should have more and more white stripes and fewer and fewer black stripes.

When you look at the zebra’s stripes, think about darkness and light. If you are in darkness, believe in Jesus and let Him shine His light into your life. Once you are saved, walk in the light!

CHEETAH (Lesson 7c starts here.)

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE CHEETAH?

Lesson Objective: The Bible compares our Christian life to running a race. We need to be good runners like the cheetah.

Cheetahs are uniquely designed to run very fast for short distances. In fact, they are the fastest land animal on earth. They can run up to 70 mph/112 kph! That’s as fast as a car driving on a highway! They are so fast that they can catch prey that other big cats like lions and leopards can’t catch. God made cheetahs to be the fastest runners of all land animals. If a cheetah were in a race, it would get the prize every time.

Did you know that God says that you are in a race?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24:

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” (NKJV)

The Bible compares our lives to running a race. Have you ever been in a race or watched one? Many people are running, but how many people win? Only one person wins first prize. God isn’t saying that only one person out of all the Christians in the whole world will “win” His race and

get the reward of blessings now and in God's eternal kingdom. He is saying that you should live in a way that if only one person did win, then – just like the cheetah – the winner would be you!

So, how do you win the race? First, you have to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible often compares the life of a Christian to a race. Getting saved puts you in the race. Then, you obey God's Word every day. Every time you obey, it helps you run better and faster. You will win the race of life. God will help you overcome temptation. You will live a life focused on what God wants you to do rather than what you want to do. God's purpose for you is greater and higher than anything you can plan for yourself. If you run your race well during your lifetime, God will reward you with a place of responsibility in his eternal kingdom. You will help Jesus rule when he establishes his kingdom on Earth.

Read Revelation 3:21:

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (NKJV)

Can you imagine how much fun it would be to be mayor of a city, governor of a state or president of a nation with Jesus ruling over all nations as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Let's look at some specific things that will help us run our race well.

Read James 1:19:

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;" (NKJV)

This verse tells us to be swift to hear. Swift means very fast. So, we should be fast "hearers" or really good listeners. This verse also says that we should be slow to speak. Sometimes we get those mixed up, don't we? We don't listen very well, and we speak before we think. It also says we should be slow to wrath or anger. Do you have a bad temper? Do you get angry very easily? To run your race well, you need to be quick to be a great listener and slow to speak before you should and slow to get angry.

Let's look at another thing we need to do to run our race well.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22:

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (NKJV)

Flee means to run really fast from something. Youthful lust is another way to say sin. This verse is telling us that sometimes the best way to deal with a temptation to sin is to run like a cheetah

as fast and as far as you can! We are to run away from sin, but we are to run towards righteousness, faith, love, and peace with others. These are things that are pleasing to God. Run towards those things and away from sin and you will run your race well.

Let's look at one more thing that will help us run our race well.

Read Hebrews 12:1:

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," (NKJV)

This verse tells us some things we can do to run our race well. First, it says we are to get rid of anything that is weighing us down. These could be things that are not necessarily wrong but keep us from being the best we can be for God. And then, of course, we are to get rid of anything that God's Word says is sin. After we get rid of those things, the Bible says we are to run with endurance. Endurance means to keep going no matter what. Endurance means never giving up no matter how hard it is.

What happens sometimes when you are running outside for a long time? (Let the children offer things that happen to them such as getting hot or thirsty, feet start to hurt, get tired, get a cramp, etc.) Now think about your life as a race. What are some things that make us want to quit or to give up living for God? (Help them think through this by offering some suggestions such as sometimes doing what is right is harder than doing what is wrong, friends may make fun of you when you don't go along with the crowd, you may even lose friends because they don't want to follow God, etc.) But the Bible tells us that when we feel like quitting, we need to keep going. We need to endure even when it is hard.

The Bible compares living a life for God with running a race. Run your race with your eye on the prize. Run away from sin and run towards righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Be like a cheetah – the best runner around!

NILE CROCODILE

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE NILE CROCODILE?

Lesson Objective: God's timing is always perfect. Just like the crocodile patiently waits hours, days, and even weeks to attack its prey, we need to be patient.

Nile crocodiles are one of the largest reptiles in the world. And, they are one of the deadliest. They are at the top of the food chain and have no predators. They can swim underwater for 30

minutes. They can hide from their prey by staying almost totally submerged in the water for long periods of time because their eyes, nostrils, and ears are on top of their heads.

Crocodiles are very patient. They stalk their prey. This means they are silent and secret when they are hunting for food. They watch the animals they want to eat for hours, days, and sometimes even weeks before they launch a surprise attack. They wait for just the right moment to bolt out of the water and catch their prey in their powerful jaws.

Crocodiles have to be very patient to wait hours, days, and weeks for the right moment to catch their lunch. If they aren't patient, then they will go hungry!

Did you know that God wants us to be patient, too? Do you like waiting for things? Or do you like to get them right now? Of course, we like to get it now and we don't like to wait. But the Bible tells us that we need to learn to be patient and wait for God's perfect timing.

Read Psalm 27:14:

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (NKJV)

This verse tells us to wait on the Lord. It also tells us to have courage and God will strengthen our hearts. Why should we wait patiently on the Lord? God is in control of everything. He knows the end from the beginning. And He knows exactly the right time when things should happen.

How long is a really long time to wait for something that you really want? (Let the children answer what they think is a long time to wait.) Well, the best promise God ever made took Him 4,000 years to keep!

Read Galatians 4:4:

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law," (NKJV)

When did God send His Son Jesus to be born on earth? It says "when the fullness of time had come." That means that at exactly the right time, Jesus was born. Do you know when God promised to send Jesus to die for the sins of the world?

Read Genesis 3:15:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (NKJV)

When you first read it, this verse is a little hard to understand. But let's look at it together. This is God talking to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Who is the serpent? That's right – it's the devil. What did the serpent do in the Garden of Eden? He tempted Eve to eat fruit from the tree that God told them not to eat. She ate some fruit from the forbidden tree and gave it Adam. He ate it, too. That was the first sin. That is how sin entered the world. Since sin came into the world, every person who has ever been born is born into sin. Every born person is a sinner.

What is God telling the devil here? (Read Genesis 3:15 again.) He says He will put enmity between the serpent and the woman. Enmity means hatred or hostility. So, the serpent and the woman became enemies. God also said that He would put enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's Seed. Seed is another way of saying offspring or children. Not only are the woman and the serpent enemies, but so are their children.

Does the devil have children? He does, but they are not children that are born into his family like you were born into your family. The devil's children are wicked people who follow him and not God.

Who is the Seed of the woman? This is talking about Jesus! God says that Jesus is going to bruise Satan's head, and Satan is going to bruise Jesus' heel. Do you remember when Jesus was crucified? How did they hang Him on the cross? They drove nails into His hands and feet. Really the nails went through His wrists and the heels of His feet. When Jesus died on the cross, the devil thought he had won and that Jesus was dead. But what did Jesus do three days later? That's right! He rose from the dead! Jesus has already bruised Satan's head by defeating death when he rose from the dead. The Bible says that one day Jesus is going to throw the devil and everyone who follows him into a lake of fire. This is when Jesus will complete the destruction of Satan and bruise his head like it says in Genesis.

So, God promised a Savior to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Guess how long it was before Jesus came? 4,000 years! Can you imagine waiting for something for about 4,000 years? (Read Galatians 4:4 again.) But God says that Jesus came at **exactly** the right time.

We don't like to be patient and wait for things, do we? But some things are worth the wait. We need to be patient like the crocodile. If we learn to wait on God and His perfect timing, then we won't miss out on any of His wonderful promises.

CAPE BUFFALO

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE CAPE BUFFALO?

Lesson Objective: The Bible says we are not to hold a grudge like Cape buffalo do, but we are to be kind and forgiving. When people say or do hurtful things to us, we are to have "thick skin" like the Cape buffalo.

Cape buffalo are one of the most dangerous animals in Africa. They are related to cows, but don't mistake them for their gentle cousins. Cape buffalo kill more hunters in Africa than lions, leopards, elephants, and rhinoceros combined. They are so deadly that hunters gave them the name "The Black Death." They are very aggressive and they hold grudges. They have been known to stalk and take revenge on hunters who have tried to kill them even if it was many years before.

A grudge is when we don't like someone because they have hurt us in the past. We hold onto those feelings and don't want to forgive them. And we want to get back at them. Have you ever held a grudge against someone? Why? (Let the children share their experiences.) Do you think God is happy when we hold a grudge against someone? No, He isn't.

Read Ephesians 4:32:

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (NKJV)

God wants us to be kind and compassionate and forgiving. Does this verse say that we are only to treat people we like in this way? No. It says "one another" and that means everyone. Why does God tell us to treat people this way? Listen for the answer. (Read Ephesians 4:32 again.) Because God forgave us.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (NKJV)

This verse tells us that when we were saved, it was by God's grace. Grace means getting something good you don't deserve. We are sinners and don't deserve salvation. But God shows us grace. He offers us the gift of salvation because He loves us. And there is nothing we can do to earn it. It is all His grace.

That's why God doesn't want us to hold a grudge. He wants us to be kind and forgiving because He has been kind and forgiving to us. He wants us to treat people the way He has treated us.

Besides being very good at holding grudges, Cape buffalo also have very thick skin. Around its neck, the skin can be as thick as 2 inches/5 cm! (Show with your fingers or a ruler how big 2 inches/5 cm is.) This helps protect them from the sharp horns of other Cape buffalo when they get into fights.

Sometimes we say about a person, "They have really thick skin!" When we say this, we don't mean that they really have skin that is thick. But it is a way of saying that they don't let things

bother them. Their feelings are not easily hurt. They don't let others hurt them with their "sharp horns" or their sharp words. What are some things that people do or say that hurt us? *(Let them give examples.)*

Remember the Bible verses we read about grace? When we are saved, we have experienced God's grace. As we continue to grow stronger in God's grace and become mature Christians, God shows us more and more grace. And we should be showing others more and more grace – even when they do or say things that hurt us. We need to have thick skin and show them grace.

Read 1 John 3:1:

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." (NKJV)

If you are saved, then God says you are His child. You belong to God, the ruler of the universe. People who don't know God don't really understand you either. They don't understand that you belong to God, and you live for Him. They don't understand that you live to please God and not them. Sometimes when we do things they don't like, they are mean to us. How should we react? Should we hold a grudge? Should we try to get even with them? No. Should we forgive them? Yes. Should we show them love? Yes. Even though they don't deserve it, we show them these things. That is showing them grace.

When you are a Christian, you are supposed to be different. You aren't supposed to fit in with everyone. You are supposed to live in a way that pleases God, not other people.

Read Colossians 3:23:

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men," (NKJV)

This verse tells us that no matter what we do, we should do it to please God, not other people. When we are obeying God, many times other people don't like it. Sometimes people tell us we're crazy or they make fun of us or say mean things to us. When this happens, don't be like a Cape buffalo and hold a grudge. But DO have thick skin like the Cape buffalo and don't let it hurt your feelings. Show people love, forgiveness, and grace just like God has shown you!

HIPPOPOTAMUS (Lesson 7d starts here.)

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE HIPPOPOTAMUS?

Lesson Objective: God doesn't want us to be a big-mouth like the hippopotamus. He wants us to speak good words not rotten words. The words we speak are a reflection of what is in our hearts.

Materials needed: A hand mirror

Hippos might look cute and cuddly, but they are one of the most fearsome creatures in Africa. They kill more people every year than any other large land animal. They look kind of like pigs and are called “water horses,” but they are not related to either one. They are actually related to whales. They even make sounds underwater similar to the sounds that whales make. They are very vocal out of the water, too. They grunt, bellow, groan, roar and make wheezing sounds that can be heard far away. They have been called the noisiest animal in Africa. And all of that noise comes out of their great big mouth. Hippos have the largest mouth of any land animal in the world.

When we say a person has a big mouth, what do we mean? Are we talking about the actual size of the mouth? No, we mean that person talks too much. Have you ever gotten into trouble for talking too much? Having a big mouth can get you into a lot of trouble. The Bible warns us about our mouths getting us into trouble.

Read Psalm 141:3:

“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” (NKJV)

What does a guard do? He protects something and keeps it safe. This verse teaches that your mouth is like a door. When you open it, do good words come out or bad words? Maybe a little of both. You need to ask God to put a guard at your door (mouth) to keep the bad things from coming out. God wants only good things to come out of your mouth.

Read Ephesians 4:29:

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” (NKJV)

This verse tells us that corrupt words shouldn’t come out of our mouths. Corrupt means rotten. How many of you would like to eat a rotten apple? That would be gross, wouldn’t it? Rotten words are just like rotten apples. They don’t belong in our mouths! Instead, we should speak good words that lift people up and show them the grace of God.

Read Psalm 34:13:

“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.” (NKJV)

This verse tells us two kinds of words that should not come out of our mouths: evil words and deceitful words. We should never speak anything that is evil or sinful. Deceitful words are lies. We should not lie. We should always tell the truth. Jesus said that Satan is the father of lies and

the people who belong to him speak lies just like he does. But Jesus is the Truth. Those who belong to Him should speak truth.

The Bible tells us that what comes out of our mouths shows what is really in our hearts.

Read Matthew 12:34b:

"... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (NKJV)

God says that whatever is in your heart is what comes out of your mouth. If there is lying in your heart, then your mouth will speak lies. If there is love in your heart, then your mouth will speak love. If there is anger in your heart, then your mouth speaks angry words. If there is kindness in your heart, then your mouth speaks kind words. So, if you want to know what a person's heart looks like, listen to what comes out of their mouths.

(Hold up the mirror.) When you look in this mirror, what do you see? *(Quickly hold it up to each one. As you go by each one, ask things about what they see such as the color of their hair or eyes or shirt.)* If you have brown eyes, raise your hand. Let's pretend like you want blue eyes. Does this mean that the next time you look in the mirror, you will see blue eyes? No, of course not! What will you see? You will see brown eyes because that is the true color of your eyes. The mirror reflects or shows exactly what is there. That's what our words do. Our words reflect what is really in our hearts.

Did you know that your words are very powerful? They have the power to hurt someone, but they also have the power to help someone. Which kind of words do you think God wants us to speak? Yes! Words that help.

Read Proverbs 15:23:

"A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (NKJV)

This verse says that when someone gives you an answer that is good, it brings you joy. A helpful word spoken at just the right time is wonderful. When you see someone having a bad day, you can bring them joy by saying something encouraging to them. What are some things we can say to encourage others? *(Help the children with responses such as "God loves you," "I'm glad you're my friend," "I will pray for you," etc.)*

A big mouth can cause a lot of trouble. Ask God to guard your mouth so that kind, encouraging words come out instead of evil, rotten words. Speak words that lift others up right when they need lifting up. Let the hippo be the only big mouth around!

ELEPHANT

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE ELEPHANT?

Lesson Objective: God's memory is even better than the elephant's. He never forgets any of His promises.

Materials needed: A tray with several small items on it and a small towel or piece of fabric to cover the tray

Elephants are the largest land animals in the world. They do not have very good eyesight, and they are the only mammal that cannot jump. Elephants may not be able to see very well or jump, but they do something else better than all the other animals – remember! They have amazing memories. Elephants never forget a face. They remember everything – even elephants that they briefly met more than 20 years ago!

MEMORY GAME: *Have a tray with several (a dozen or so) small items on it. Cover the tray with the towel. Tell the children that we are going to play a game that will test their memories. Tell them that when you remove the towel, they have 20 seconds to look at everything on the tray and try to remember each item. After 20 seconds, put the towel back on. Then ask if anyone can name all of the items. Let them name what they can remember. Then remove the towel again so they can see the things they couldn't remember.*

Could everyone remember all of the items? If an elephant were playing the game with us, then it would remember all of them! Do you know who else **never** forgets anything? God! In God's Word, the Bible, He has made thousands of promises to us. Have you ever made a promise and not kept it? Of course. Everyone has because we are human and we are not perfect like God is. But God is perfect and He always keeps **all** of His promises. Let's look at some of the promises God has made to us.

Read John 10:28:

"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." (NKJV)

Jesus is talking to His followers. He tells them that those who are saved by believing in Him will have eternal life. They will go to heaven when they die. When Jesus returns, they will live in his kingdom on Earth. He also says that **no one** will be able to snatch them out of His hand. When you are saved, you are safe. Jesus holds onto you no matter what.

Let's look at another promise that God has made to us.

Read Philippians 4:19:

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (NKJV)

What promise does God make here? He will supply our needs. How many of our needs? All of them! What are some needs that we have? (Let the children give examples. If they give examples of things that are “wants” instead of “needs,” take the opportunity to explain the difference between a want and a need.) Does this verse promise that God will give us everything we ever wanted? No, it promises that God will give us everything we need. We just have to trust Him.

Right now, we cannot look at all of the thousands of promises God has made to us in the Bible, but let’s look at one more promise.

Read 1 John 1:9:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (NKJV)

After we are saved, we don’t suddenly become perfect, do we? Sometimes we still sin. This verse promises us that when we agree with God that we have sinned and name that sin to God in confession, then He will forgive us. There are two kinds of forgiveness. There is the forgiveness that occurs when you trust the Lord Jesus as your Savior. You are forgiven of all sins because Jesus died on the cross to pay for them.

Then there is the forgiveness that restores us to fellowship with God. It’s like this. When you disobey your parents, are you still your parents’ child? Yes! When you disobey your parents, your parents will probably discipline you. You may lose some privileges. They may punish you in some way. If you have good parents, they will never disown you.

God is much better than the best parents. He will never disown his children even when they disobey him. However, when we disobey God, we will not enjoy the excitement of seeing him work in our lives. Like a good parent, God will discipline his children. Why? Just like good parents who want the best for you, God wants the best for his children. God wants to bless us now and in his future kingdom on Earth. Isn’t that comforting? When we mess up, God doesn’t throw us away. When we agree with God that we have sinned, we can once again start walking in the light as God is in the light. We can enjoy God’s presence and blessings.

In the Bible, God has made thousands of promises. What three promises did we learn? *(Let them try to name the ones they can remember.)*

1. When you are saved, you will go to heaven when you die. When Jesus returns to Earth, you will live with Him forever in his kingdom. No one can snatch you out of God’s hand.
2. God will give you everything you need.

3. If you confess your sin, God will forgive you so that you can enjoy His presence and the blessings of doing His will.

God made elephants with an amazing memory. But God's memory is even better than an elephant's. He never ever forgets any of His promises to us!

LION

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE LION?

Lesson Objective: The Bible talks about two lions: a roaring lion that is seeking to devour and the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Swahili word for lion is "simba." That means king. Lions are usually called the King of the Jungle but they don't really live in jungles. Most lions live on the African savanna or in grasslands. Lions are like kings among other animals because they are at the top of the food chain. Adult lions are so strong and fierce that they have no predators. Lions are famous for their roar. It can be heard almost 5 miles/8 km away!

Did you know that the Bible talks about a roaring lion?

Read 1 Peter 5:8:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (NKJV)

Who does this verse say is like a lion? The devil! What does he do? He walks around roaring and looking for someone to devour (eat). This means that Satan is always looking around for someone that he can hurt or destroy. He never wants what is best for us. He never does anything good. This verse says the devil is our adversary. That means he is our enemy.

Since the devil is prowling around like a hungry lion, what does God tell us we need to do? This verse tells us that we need to be sober and vigilant. Sober means to be cautious. Vigilant means to be on the alert. If we are cautious and alert, we can avoid being devoured by Satan.

The Bible talks about another lion, too. But this is a good lion!

Read Revelation 5:5b:

"... Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed..." (NKJV)

The Lion of the tribe of Judah is Jesus. This verse comes from the last book of the Bible, Revelation, and it says that Jesus has prevailed. That means He has won! When Jesus rose from the dead after dying on the cross for our sins, he defeated death. The final victory where Satan and all sin are destroyed will happen when Jesus returns to Earth to establish His kingdom.

Do you remember the Swahili word for lion? It is “simba.” Do you remember what it means? It means king. The name of the tribe that Jesus was born into when He came to earth was Judah. So, He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. That describes Jesus as a King. The Bible says He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Even though Satan is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, the Lion of Judah has already destroyed Satan. When Jesus rose from the dead, he destroyed death. Satan’s final defeat will occur when Jesus returns to Earth to establish His forever kingdom. Satan, his demons and followers will be cast into Hell forever. Be on the alert for Satan and his tricks. He is like a lion who wants to hurt you. Follow Jesus, the Lion of Judah, because He has won. Jesus defeated our great enemy—death! And if you belong to Him, then you win, too!

MISSION EXPLORERS AFRICA: THE MUSICAL

The song in the Lesson 7 video called Celebrate Creation comes from Mission Explorers Africa: The Musical. Kids Talk About God has created a children's musical based on the true story of an 11-year-old girl who travels to Africa to begin her global journey reporting on the work of real missionaries. Because this musical focuses on Africa, we asked one of Africa's top music arrangers and producers to record all eight songs in his Kenyan studio. The result is a genuine African sound that makes children want to dance and sing! For more information on how your church, Christian school, or local theater group can perform Mission Explorers Africa: The Musical or to listen to the soundtrack, visit www.KidsTalkAboutGod.org/africa.

Dear Parent,

Today we continued on our safari to Kenya! Today we learned:

- that vultures are garbage-eaters, but God doesn't want us to look at garbage with our eyes or have garbage in our hearts.
- that God wants Christians to have "swarm intelligence" just like the wildebeests and to work together in unity.
- that God gives rewards that should cause us to leap for joy like the impala.

This week's Memory Verses:

Psalm 101:3 (vulture): *"I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me."*

Psalm 133:1 (wildebeest): *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"*

Luke 6:23a (impala): *"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven..."*

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- that just like the giraffe is the “early warning system” of the African grasslands, God has also given Christians several things to warn us when danger is approaching.
- that the stripes on a zebra can remind us of the darkness a person is in before they come to the light of Jesus Christ.

This week’s Memory Verses:

Psalm 91:4 (ostrich): *“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”*

John 16:13a (giraffe): *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...”*

Ephesians 5:8 (zebra): *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light”*

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- that God's timing is always perfect and to be patient while we wait just like the crocodile patiently waits hours, days, and even weeks to attack its prey.
- that the Bible says we are not to hold a grudge like Cape buffalo do, but we are to be kind and forgiving. When people say or do hurtful things to us, we are to have "thick skin" like the Cape buffalo.

This week's Memory Verses:

1 Corinthians 9:24 (cheetah): *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."*

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Philippians 4:19 (elephant): *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

1 Peter 5:8 (lion): *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."*

Mission Explorers Kenya is produced by KidsTalkAboutGod.org which provides lots of opportunities for kids to have a real voice in sharing the gospel around the world. To find out about upcoming opportunities for children, sign up for the newsletter at KidsTalkAboutGod.org/news.

Dear Parent,

Today we continued on our safari to Kenya! Today we learned:

- that God doesn't want us to be a big mouth like the hippopotamus, He wants us to speak good words not rotten words, and the words we speak are a reflection of what is in our hearts.
- that God's memory is even better than the elephant's. He never forgets any of His promises.
- that there are 2 lions in the Bible: a roaring lion that is seeking to devour and the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

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