

Ransom Notes

Jungle Lessons

Returning from a recent trip to the southern part of Africa, we attempted to catch up on our sleep, shake the dust from our clothing, and remember the thrills, spills, and joys in “animal heaven.” I love Africa and the wild life. My camera, phone, and I had a magnificent three weeks. Now, however, my mind is catching up, and some thoughts and lessons from these jungle creatures are dying to be shared.

Lesson #1: My Giraffe friends suggest we “Stand Tall.” The height of these ambling creatures provides almost instant spotting as our jeep found hidden areas of the jungle. Yes, of course, they can blend in with the trees, but those long necks almost waved at us.

As Christians, we need to stand tall as people of the Word. Are we sometimes afraid or reluctant to even acknowledge we go to worship? Are we ashamed to say a public thanks for a meal outside our home? Perhaps we might even participate in an activity that discriminates as opposed to loving all of God’s children, regardless of their backgrounds or ethnicity.

Giraffes are unique. They do look and act differently than other animals. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 :14 tells us, “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” Let your life shine. **STAND TALL.** Tell the world about our Lord.

Lesson #2: These two “cuddly” Cheetah friends were resting in the dry grasses, almost hidden from sight. “Rest” and napping are necessary for all God’s creatures, both animal and humans. We actually had to exit our jeeps and follow our guides for several yards to find these cuddly cats. Even Jesus found that teaching all day to a hillside of people, required taking a nap in a small water craft, accompanied by his disciple, fishing friends. Mark 4:35-41



The cheetah is the fastest land mammal known, yet rest is an absolute necessity. Sometimes finding a spot in the shade, shutting your eyes, and clicking off your mind, is exactly what you need to remain calm in a later crisis or to think creatively as you plan your next Sunday lesson. Has your church provided significant periods of rest time for pastors and other church workers to restore their energies and re-unite with their own families? Check out Mark 6:31-32. Observe our cheetah’s example and **REST.**



Lesson #3: Meet the largest land mammals - the Forest Elephant. “Family Groups” are essential to this jungle creature. In this picture we see mama guiding her child across the dry earth. Elephants, especially the mother and children were often seen moving together, sometimes to find a drink or take a swim. Although protective of the little ones, at other times they exhibited curiosity of strangers sitting in jeeps, pointing cameras their way.

Families are essential for humans. God created us with parents to love and care for their children. Sometimes the way is tough, but just like our mama pachyderm, adults need to model, encourage, correct, and care for each of the little ones. Even teens need time with parents, grandparents, and other caring, adult Christian models. Time together may include recreation, but also, hopefully, finds **FAMILIES** worshipping and studying God’s Word together.

Lesson #4: Travelers to other lands provide the fourth lesson. We **WALKED AND TALKED TOGETHER.** This day we were at Victoria Falls. The wind was blowing. Spray dampened our bodies, as we tromped near the falls. Our eyes continually saw God’s rainbow in the sky. By the time we circled the area, the body was tired but joy filled our souls after viewing the world’s largest waterfall by volume, twice the height of Niagara Falls.

COMMUNITY is important. One way to build relationships is to **WALK** in the Lord’s creation. Share your faith with the family. Think about how God made our world so beautiful. Remember His promise to Noah in Genesis 9:13-17 including, “Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.”



The rainbow, on our walk that day, reminded us of God’s love for us.