

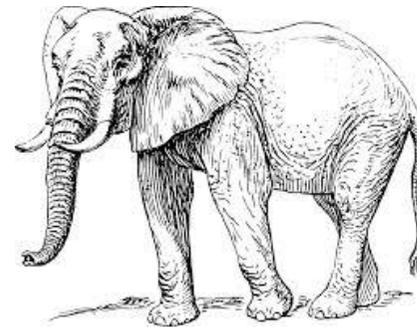
On Safari with Samson and Serena

Nine stories that teach about special gifts that God has given to us

Contents

	Page
Chapter 1 The safari begins	2
Chapter 2 The giraffe – the alert one	4
Chapter 3 The elephant – the thoughtful one	6
Chapter 4 The eagle – the strong one	8
Chapter 5 The monkeys – the teachers	10
Chapter 6 The rhino and its helper bird	13

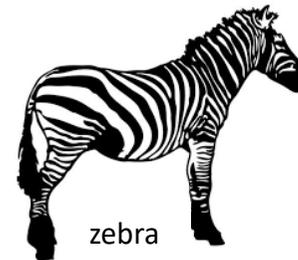
Chapter 7 The lioness – the generous one	16
Chapter 8 The meerkats – the organized ones	19
Chapter 9 The journey's end	21



elephant



giraffe



zebra

Chapter 1 The safari begins

Genesis 1:27 – God said, “I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.” (Good News Bible)

We are going on a journey to the African grasslands, the home of some of the most awesome animals in God’s creation. We’re also going to meet two children, Samson and Serena Mbali. Our friends live on the edge of a wildlife reserve with their Mum and Dad, Dan and Alice. Dan Mbali is a park ranger. His job is to help care for the park and its animals, as well as keeping a look out for poachers who might try to hunt animals illegally.

It was Friday afternoon. Dan answered his phone. It was George, the senior park warden.

“Our gate keeper on the northern gate says that one of the gates needs some attention,” said George. “Do you think you could go and fix it?”

“Sure. I’ll go there this weekend,” said Dan.

Dan returned home that afternoon and told his family about the trip he had to make that weekend. The northern gate was at the far end of the game park. It would take 9 hours to get there.

“Couldn’t we all go?” asked Samson.

Dan screwed up his face. “Well I don’t know. It will be a long and hot journey.

“We don’t mind,” said Serena, jumping up and down. “Please Dad?”

“Well OK then. Let’s all go. But you’ll have to help get everything ready!”

After dinner the children quickly got on to packing their things, and while Mum prepared the food. Dad loaded everything into the Land Rover, including several crates of bottled water.

“Off to bed now,” Mum called from the kitchen. “We’ve got an early start tomorrow.”

The children could hardly get to sleep thinking about their big adventure.

At 6 o’clock the next morning the alarm went off. They quickly got dressed, ate their bowl of white maize porridge, piled into the Land Rover. It was just a 10 minute drive to the southern gate of the game park. The sun was already up and the children were full of excitement.

The tyres made a rumbling sound as they drove over the metal grid leading up to the gates. Dad put his window down to greet the gatekeeper, then put it up again.

“We must keep our windows up while we travel through the park,” he explained. “An open window might be an invitation to a hungry lion! And another thing, we have to stay inside the Land Rover at all times.

We can only get out when we reach the secure camping area. Now keep a careful look out for animals. They will be hard to see because of their camouflage. Just be alert, and if you see something move, call out quickly. There are eight pairs of eyes in our vehicle, so we should have a good chance of seeing plenty of animals.”

Dad traveled slowly, at about 30 km per hour, in order to give everyone a chance to spot the animals. Any faster and many would not be seen.

“I see something!” Samson called out. “Look, over there!” Samson pointed to the left.

“I can’t see anything,” said Serena.

“Keep your eyes fixed on that clump of trees over there,” Dad encouraged her. “The zebras are hard to see because their stripes blend in with the shadows of the trees.”

“Yes, now I see them!”

“Good on you Samson and Serena,” laughed Mum. “You are getting the hang of animal spotting!”

Dan wanted this trip to be a special time for Samson and Serena. He knew that there was much to learn.

“You know, as well as learning how to spot animals, we can learn a lot about the animals. God uses the animals in His creation to teach us many things. Let’s see what we can learn on this trip,” he said thoughtfully.

The children wondered what Dad meant. But they were curious to find out.

Zebra facts

- Zebras are similar to horses.
- Zebras live on the plains where they can eat grass during the day and take shade under trees.
- Zebras live together in herds.
- Every zebra has a different striped pattern.
- Although a zebra’s stripes stand out when they are eating grass on the plains during the day, when the sun goes down and the shadows are long, the zebra’s stripes blend in with the trees. This gives them a better chance against the lions who hunt at this time.
- A zebra has good hearing, eyes on the sides of its head to see all around, and a good sense of smell.
- Zebras can run at speeds of 60 – 70 km per hour.
- Zebras kick fight of lions, leopards and hyenas with their hooves.
- Lions and hyenas hunt zebras, mainly at night.
- A young zebra is called a foal. It drinks milk from its mother.
- Zebras communicate with each other by sounds. When they sense danger, they make a ‘barking’ noise that alerts the other zebras.
- Zebras recognize each other by the sounds they make.
- Male zebras, called stallions, fight each other for a group of females, called mares. They kick with their hooves and bite with their teeth.

Chapter 2 The giraffe - the alert one

Psam 119:18 – Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law. (Good News Bible)

They traveled on a bit further, and this time it was Mum who spotted something moving by the trees.

“Look over there! Some giraffe,” she exclaimed.

Several tall giraffes were eating from the treetops, their sandy colour almost the same as the savanna grass. As they drove a bit further they saw some more giraffe, a bit closer this time, and with them were some zebra, some antelope called impala and some buffalo.

“Would you like to learn your first lesson from the animals,” asked Dad.

“Yes please,” said everyone.

“The giraffe is very tall,” said Dad. What advantage does that give him?”

“He can see very far,” said Samson. “A bit like standing on top of a hill and being able to see all around.”

“Exactly,” said Dad. “The giraffe sees everything because he’s so tall and because he has very good vision. His eyes are set on the sides of his head so that he can see all around. A giraffe has good hearing too. He watches and listens for approaching lions, and knows when to protect himself. As soon as a member of the herd senses danger approaching it will signal to the rest of the giraffes with snorts and hisses.

The giraffe constantly stays alert, watching and listening carefully for any sounds of danger. Once a lion knows it has been seen it will stop, knowing that one kick from a giraffe’s strong legs can be deadly.”

See the zebras, impala and buffalo grazing with the giraffe? These animals know that the giraffe is good at detecting danger. They feel safer grazing with the giraffe.”

“I wish I had eyes and ears as good as the giraffe’s,” said Serena.

“It is true that people do not see and hear as well as some animals,” said Dad, but people can see and hear in a way that animals can’t.”

“How is that?” asked Serena.

“God can give us special eyes and ears to hear what He is saying. When we pray we do not just have to tell God our thoughts, but we can be still, be alert, and listen. God can speak to us through our thoughts. He can also give us special ‘eyes’ to understand the things in the Bible...like the parables. When Jesus told the parables, many of the people listening did not understand the meaning. But some prayed for God to open their eyes and ears, so that they could understand the special meaning.”

“And do you know,” said Mum, “Children have very sensitive eyes and ears for hearing God’s voice and understanding

what He is saying. Once you know that you are a child of God, you just have to practice!”

They traveled around the bend and came across some giraffe in near view, eating from the tops of a tall acacia tree. Now they could get a closer look at the beautifully shaped animal, with an extremely long neck, legs like stilts and a remarkably patterned short body. The dappled pattern is what gives it a camouflaged effect. On the top of the head they saw the short horns. They could also now see how large the eyes were.

Dad knew the landscape well, and told them that they were nearing a waterhole.

“You might see some giraffes drinking,” he said. “It’s difficult for giraffes to drink, because of their long legs. They have to splay their legs right out, and at the same time watch out for crocodiles.”

“Look out!” shouted Samson. “An elephant is coming!”
“He’s heading for the water hole,” said Dad.

Feeling very excited, and a little bit nervous, they fixed their eyes on the elephant.

Giraffe facts

- Giraffes are the tallest animals in the world.
- Males can grow to nearly six metres and females are up to five metres

- A giraffe’s tongue 18 inches long and is tough enough to cope with prickly branches of the acacia tree.
- Giraffes can go for weeks without water, getting water from the leaves they eat.
- When drinking at a waterhole, a giraffe has to spread its front legs out to the sides so that it can lower its head into the water. This is when it is most likely to be attacked by lions, because it can’t stand up quickly from this position to run or defend itself.
- Giraffes may look alike to us, but each giraffe has different markings. This helps giraffes recognize each other.
- Giraffes have two horns on top of their heads.
- A giraffe has two ways of moving – walking and galloping. A giraffe can gallop at 48 km per hour, but most of the time it walks along slowly.
- Giraffes can sleep standing up or lying down, but don’t sleep much because they mainly spend their time feeding, even at night.
- The mother giraffe gives birth standing up and drops the calf about 1.8 metres to the ground. Although the baby weighs about 70 kg, it is not harmed by the fall.
- A calf, which may be two metres tall, will stand within five minutes and within half an hour will drink milk from her mother.
- Although a mother giraffe will defend her baby using her strong hooves to kick enemies, many baby giraffes don’t survive attacks from crocodiles, lions, leopards and cheetahs.

Chapter 3 The elephant – the thoughtful one

Psalm 41:5 – Happy are those who are concerned for the poor; the Lord will help them when they are in trouble. (Good news Bible)

A huge elephant approached from the right. Dad pulled up immediately so that the elephant could cross the road. Everyone had to be very quiet so as not to draw attention to the vehicle. Elephants, if angry, have been known to cause a lot of damage.

“This will be a male elephant,” Dad whispered. The males wander about by themselves.”

After the elephant had crossed safely they continued driving and saw in the distance a whole herd of elephants drinking at a waterhole. As they drove closer they could get a clear view using the binoculars.

“These are the females with their young,” said Dad. “We can learn a lot from elephants. See how the adults are touching the babies with their trunks? This is their way of showing how much they love and care for their young. But the amazing thing about the elephant community is that all the mothers take responsibility for looking after the babies. If a mother

elephant gets sick or dies, the aunties will raise the baby and take it on as their own.”

“Elephants will also help any animal in the herd that is sick or injured. Several years ago many elephants were killed for their tusks. Now the killing of elephants is banned, and anyone caught poaching will go to jail. But back then hunters could easily get rich from the sale of ivory. There were once some hunters who shot an elephant but didn’t kill it. Suddenly two elephants rushed to help the wounded elephant. They tried to hold it up and helped it to shuffle away.”

“I think that elephants are very kind and thoughtful animals,” said Serena.

“Yes they are,” said Dad. “They have feelings like us. They show love and care and they look after the weak. Elephants are a good example to us. We need to be aware of the needs of others, and do something about it. We should step in and help someone who has a need.”

“What kind of things could we do to help those with needs?” asked Mum.

“We could share food with those that don’t have much,” answered Samson,

“And we could make friends with people who are lonely,” added Serena.

So the family continued on, thinking about different people they could help in their own village back home.

Elephant facts

- There are two types of elephants: the Asian elephant and the African elephant.
- The Asian elephant is smaller than the African, and has smaller ears.
- The African elephant is the world's largest animal living on land.
- A male African elephant can weigh 6,048 kg. It stands 4 metres high at the shoulder.
- Adult bulls and cows do not live together in family groups. The bulls spend their time alone, or with other bulls. The cows and calves live together in groups, with an older cow as the leader.
- Elephants have flat-soled, almost circular feet with five 'toenails' on each foot. As the elephant puts its feet down the toenails spread out as the whole foot expands under the weight.
- The trunk is made up of the nose, the upper lip and face muscles.
- An elephant can move its trunk in any direction because it has no bones down the middle.
- If an elephant gets something in its eye it uses its trunk to wipe it away.
- Trunks have 'fingers' at the tip, allowing it to pick up small objects.
- The trunk can be stretched out to reach food from the ground or high in trees.
- Everything an elephant eats or drinks, is put into its mouth using the trunk.
- Elephants' tusks can be used as weapons. Elephants were once hunted for their tusks.
- Elephants spend about three-quarters of their day and night selecting and eating food. They eat between 100 and 200 kg of vegetation per day.
- Elephants normally drink once per day, but like to stay at the pools to play in the water. They roll in the mud and squirt water over their bodies using their trunks.
- Elephants communicate with each other using all their senses. They use their trunks to touch one another.
- Babies drink milk from their mothers through their mouths, not their trunks.
- Elephants have remarkable memories. They can remember for years their relationships with other elephants and people. This might be because elephants have big brains.
- Elephants remember where their loved ones are buried. If one of their members dies, the other members will cover the body with branches, grass and soil. Whenever they pass this place in the future they stop, as if remembering it.
- African elephants have greatly decreased in numbers over the years.
- Although ivory trading is now illegal, poachers are still a threat. As human population increases, farms have taken over the elephants' territory. This means there is too little grazing land left for the elephants. Conservation areas are therefore very important for the elephants' survival.

Chapter 4 The Eagle - the strong one

Isaiah 40:31 – Those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak. (Good News Bible)

On the horizon they could see a rocky outcrop of craggy cliffs. The dusty road climbed gradually, then suddenly. The three passengers craned their necks to peer upward at the rock formation, while Dad kept his eyes on the road. At the very top of the rocky cliff they saw a nest.

“What bird do you think that nest belongs to?” asked Samson. Now they were through the rocky outcrop and had a clear view of the open sky.

“Over there,” shouted Mum. “I think that’s your answer.”

Out the left, high in the sky they saw two eagles, gracefully gliding on the air currents.

“What do eagles eat?” asked Serena.

“They eat small creatures like lizards, snakes and mice,” explained Dad. “See the eagles circling around way up there? They are probably looking for something to eat. They have excellent vision and they can spot a lizard basking in the sun on a rock, even from way up in the sky.”

“What’s fishion?” asked Serena.

“Not fishion, Serena – vision. It means eyesight,” explained Mum.

“Can the eagle teach us any of those special lessons?” asked Samson.

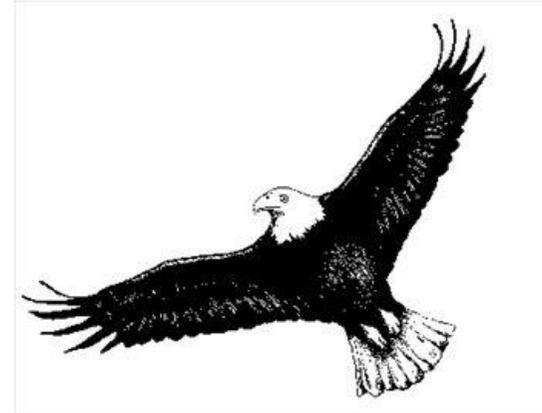
Dad thought for a moment.

“Remember how we said that people can have special ‘eyes’ to see the meaning of things in the Bible? The Bible teaches us about vision. Apart from having good eye sight, vision can mean having a plan for serving God. When God gives you the idea, you get very excited about it. Doing God’s work can be such an exciting thing. People who have a vision to do God’s work are very encouraging people. That means they are enthusiastic and happy. They don’t walk around being dismal and gloomy. They think and plan for the exciting thing that God has for them to do.”

“The Bible tells us that the eagle is a very strong bird. We know that it is a large, heavy bird. Take off requires lots of strength. But once in the sky, it takes advantage of the air currents, and glides majestically, quite unaware of its weight. The Bible tells us to be like the eagle – not to get weighed down by the problems of life, but to rise up above the problems, putting our trust in God. When we do this we don’t get all grumpy thinking about our problems, but instead we will have the joy of the Lord, and give it away to others. We can encourage others to trust God when they have problems.”

Eagle facts

- An eagle has long wings. Each wing has a set of large feathers, called primary feathers, which can be spread out to allow the air currents to flow through.
- An eagle learns to soar by using the warm air currents. It spreads its wings and tail feathers and lets the wind carry it higher and higher. Then it glides down to catch another air current. Soaring saves energy because it does not have to flap its wings as often.
- The beak is powerful, large and hooked for killing prey and carrying it back to its nest.
- The legs are large, strong and thick. The feet have long, sharp talons so that the eagle can grasp and kill its prey.
- The eagle lives alone or in pairs.
- Eagles eat medium sized mammals and smaller birds. They also feed on animals that are already dead.
- An eagle lays two eggs, but usually only one chick survives.



Chapter 5 The monkeys – the teachers

Psalm 32:8 – The Lords says, “I will teach you the way you should go; I will instruct you and advise you.” (Good News Bible)

It was 12 o'clock. The sun was high in the sky and everyone was getting hungry. After all, they had been up since 6 a.m.

“Can we eat now?” asked Samson?

“It’s just 15 minutes to the hippo pools,” said Dad. “When we get there we’ll pull in under the shade of the trees and watch the hippos and monkeys while we eat.”

They arrived at the hippo pools and pulled into the shady area.

“You can put your windows down just a bit,” instructed Dad. “That will let a bit of air in, and we can listen to the sounds.”

Immediately they heard a loud chattering of a large troop of monkeys. They were a hive of activity, leaping, jumping and swinging from tree to tree.

“Look, I can see babies clinging to their mothers,” said Serena. “They are so cute!”



“Yes,” agreed Dad, “The mother monkey carries its baby around with her for the first few months of its life. Then for next seven to ten years the young monkey spends their time at their mother’s side learning how to do many things. The mother teaches the baby how to find food, make nests in trees, how to get rid of fleas and ticks, and even how to use tools. The mother teaches the young one which fruits are ripe and which foods are safe to eat. They eat whatever food they can find - fruit, leaves and insects. If they find a termite nest they might get a rock to knock it down, or they might get a stick to dig up a nest.”

“Young monkeys have a lot to learn!” said Samson thoughtfully.

“Yes, and their parents are very good teachers,” added Mum. “In fact, all animal parents are good teachers. It is very important for all the baby animals in Africa to be taught well by their parents and equally important for the young ones to watch and learn. Their survival depends on it. Lions are also very good teachers. They play games with their cubs, like hide and seek and tug of war. They encourage the cubs to play creeping and pouncing games, all in preparation for the days when they will have to catch their own food. We can learn from the animals about teaching and learning. A good teacher knows the most important information to teach. They look for interesting ways to teach it, so that the learner will remember. The learner must be attentive, and practice what they have learned. See the baby monkeys copying what the adults are doing! That’s their way of practicing.”

Then Dad asked the children a question. “Who do you think is the greatest teacher that has ever lived?”

The children thought for a moment, but soon came up with the right answer.

“I think it was Jesus,” answered Serena.

“He taught Mums, Dads and kids like us,” added Samson.

“That’s right,” said Dad. “Jesus wants to teach us today – not just the people who lived when He was on earth. We can learn about Him by reading the Bible. Then we practice what we learn by trying to do what Jesus did.”

“And remember that if we want to learn, we have to ask God to open our eyes and ears to understand what He is saying,” added Mum.

“Now we have been so busy looking at the monkeys we have forgotten about the hippos, Dad reminded them. “I can see two hippo eyes and ears above the water.”

They all looked at the muddy water and saw another smaller pair of eyes and ears. Yes it was a baby hippo.

“I’m glad we’re safe in the Land Rover,” said Mum, shuddering at the thought of crocodiles. “There are probably crocodiles lurking around these muddy banks. And I know that hippos can be very dangerous animals too, even though they eat only plants.”

“What do you think mother hippos would teach their babies?” Mum continued.

“I think they would have to know how to swim underwater and get water weeds from the bottom of the lake,” replied Samson.

Then suddenly the mother hippos and her baby decided to come out on the river bank.

“And the baby hippo must learn to stay close to its mother when it comes up on the bank, just in case there are lions or crocodiles about!” added Serena.

With everyone satisfied, they packed up the lunch things and set off again, knowing that they had to make the camping area by sundown.

Monkey facts

- Monkeys are mammals and the young drink milk from their mothers for the first two years.
- Monkeys communicate using special noises.
- Young monkeys play games together such as chasey.
- Monkeys use their faces to show different expressions.
- Monkeys have strong fingers and toes for gripping tree branches.
- Monkeys live in troops of up to 60 members. They warn each other of danger by screaming.
- Monkeys are omnivores, meaning they eat both plants and animals. They feed on fruit, leaves, seeds, buds, bark, stems, insects, and occasionally the meat of small mammals.
- On the ground, monkeys can walk on all fours.

- Grooming is an important behavior for monkeys. They do this not only to remove biting insects from the hair, but also because it shows their affection for one another.
- Monkeys spend about six to eight hours a day looking for and eating
- food.

Hippopotamus facts

- Hippos belong to the same family as pigs.
- Hippos spend two thirds of their life under water. They feel more comfortable in the water because it takes the weight off their feet.
- A hippo can weigh a ton.
- It is between 4 and 5 metres long.
- A hippo has small feet compared to his huge body.
- A hippo can stay under water for up to six minutes.
- The baby hippo often rides on its mother's back while she is swimming or floating.
- The hippo's nostrils, ears, and eyes are on the top of its head, and they stay above the water while the rest of its head and its body are underneath the water. This means that the hippo can breathe, see, and hear even while its body is submerged.
- When a hippo sinks completely underwater, its nose and ears automatically close so that no water gets in.
- Hippos are excellent swimmers and can hold their breath for about five minutes.
- Hippos can walk along the bottoms of rivers and lakes.

- At dusk, hippos leave the water, and walk on land as far as 8 kilometers from the water to spend the night grazing on grass, their main food.
- A hippo may eat up to 68 kilograms of grass a night.
- Hippos' toes are webbed, which helps them paddle through the water.
- A hippo's tail is about 56 cm long.
- Female hippos are able to have babies at about seven years old.
- Baby hippos are born underwater. They can swim almost from the moment they're born.
- Baby hippos are called calves. They drink milk from their mothers, often underwater.
- Hippos can live to be more than 40 years old.
- Hippos are aggressive, do not fear humans, and are considered one of Africa's more dangerous animals.
- Lions, crocodiles, leopards, hyenas, and wild dogs often kill baby hippos, but adult hippos are rarely attacked.
- The only land animals larger than hippos are elephants and rhinoceroses.



Chapter 6 The rhino and its helper bird

Luke 16: 10 – Jesus said, “Whoever is faithful in small matters will be faithful in large ones.”

As they prepared to set off again a snake slithered across the dusty road in front of the Land Rover. The sun was high in the sky now. The shade of the trees at the hippo pool had been a pleasant relief.

“Just two more hours and we’ll be at the camping area,” said Dad. “It’s quite safe there. The electric fence keeps out the animals. You’ll be able to get out and stretch your legs, and we’ll stay in one of the little grass huts overnight.”

As they joined the main road again, impalas, zebras and giraffe moved across the plains. Then they saw a herd of buffalo. These animals were plentiful. But the children were wondering when they would see the king of the beasts – the lion.

“Lions are often hard to spot,” explained Dad. “They like to stay far away from the road. They sleep during the day, and get more active at night. That’s the best hunting time for them.”

They continued on for another hour, with still no sign of a lion, but suddenly Samson gave a shout.

“Look! Over there! A rhinoceros!”

“It’s a white rhino,” explained Dad, “even though its actual colour is grey. There are more white rhinos than black rhinos. The black rhinos were almost extinct because of poaching, but in the safety of our game park they have a good chance of increasing in numbers. Even the white rhinos are in danger. Poachers get big money for their horns. The horns are sold to make medicine in China, although it’s proven that the horns do not help sick people at all. It’s just a superstition.”

“So terrible for God’s wonderful creatures,” said Mum sadly. “God tells us in the Bible that we are to be caretakers of His creation. Every animal in the animal kingdom has its place. On the African plain the animals all help one another to survive. We’ve seen how giraffes warn the zebras of danger. But even the cats have their place. They catch the slower animals that might be old or sick. That keeps the herds stronger and healthier.”

Dad drove along very slowly so that they could all get a good look at the rhino. Then Serena noticed something.

“Look at those little birds on the rhino’s back,” she said. “They just stay there all the time and don’t fly off. They must get a good ride.”

“Yes,” said Dad. “And they have a special job to do. As well as getting a free ride, they get a free meal. These are the tick birds.”

They help the rhino by eating the ticks on his back and in his ears. A tick is a nasty little biting insect that can cause sores on the skin, so the rhino lets the birds ride on his back as much as they want to. The tick birds are the little helpers of the animal kingdom. They're like servants. Serving the rhino is their special job, and they love doing it. Many people in God's kingdom are like that. God puts within people the desire to help others. And they are so happy when they are doing it."

"We have many helpers in our country," said Mum. "There are many needs in our country and other parts of Africa. I'm so glad God has sent His special helpers from other parts of the world to serve here in Africa. Often people think that the greatest job they can do for God is to be a teacher or a leader, but being faithful in helping others is one of the greatest jobs anyone can do. "

They were almost there now and the children were feeling rather tired.

"It doesn't look as if we'll see our lions today," said Dad, "but you will certainly hear them tonight. They are very noisy at night as they prowl around making all kinds of noises. But don't worry. We'll be perfectly safe. They can't get into the camping area."

The thought of lions made the children alert again, and they carefully scanned the horizon for any signs of cats. But there were none to be seen.

Rhinoceros facts

- Rhinos are herbivores, meaning that they eat plants.
- Rhinos are short sighted but have a good sense of smell.
- Rhinos charge when they are angry or frightened. They can run up to 50 km. per hour.
- Male rhinos use their horns when they are fighting. The front horn can grow 1.3. metres long.
- Both male and female rhinos have horns.
- A white rhino weighs up to 2,500 kg. Black rhinos are slightly smaller.
- A white rhino has a wide mouth with square lips. A black rhino has pointed, hooked lips like a parrot's beak.
- A white rhino is not white. It is grey. A black rhino is not black. It is a darker grey than the white rhino.
- Male rhinos mark their territories with piles of dung. Male rhinos will fight with other male rhinos that come into their territory.
- Rhinos need a large area of land to find enough food to eat. Their habitat is being taken over by humans for farmland.
- Droughts have meant the drying up of waterholes. In desert areas rhinos have to travel a long distance to find water and might not survive.
- Rhino skin looks tough but can be damaged by the sun and insect bites. Rhinos keep their skins covered in mud to protect themselves. Rhinos do not have hair except at the ends of their tails and on their eyelids.

- Rhino mothers can have a calf every year.
- The male rhinos do not help to bring up the calves. The babies stay with their mothers for at least two years.
- If a predator such as a crocodile or lion comes near, a mother rhino will stand over her baby to protect it.
- Black rhinos are in danger of becoming extinct. Poachers shoot rhinos and illegally sell their horns. They are sold on the black market in Yemen where they are made into handles of daggers. There is also a black market in China where the horns are ground down to make medicine. The medicine does not work.

Facts about the rhino's helper bird

- The tick bird is also called the "oxpecker":
- The bird eats ticks it finds on the rhino and noisily warns of danger.
- The birds also eat the insects the rhinos stir up when they graze.



Oxpecker/Rhino



Chapter 7 The lioness – the generous one

2 Corinthians 9:7 – Each one should give – not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. (Good News Bible)

In the distance they could see a small rocky outcrop. Next to it was an umbrella tree growing in the sandy soil. The correct name for this tree is the Umbrella Thorn Acacia, which is a very common tree in the African grasslands. It spreads at the top like an umbrella, and provides good shade for animals.



No one noticed any signs of life, apart from the tree, but Dad had an idea that this would be just the right place for lions. He slowed down and told everyone to take a careful look, just in case.

It seemed as if there was nothing to be seen, until something moved. Now they could focus their eyes more clearly. The rocks were surrounded by some lionesses and their cubs, sleeping in the sun. Their yellow sandy coats blended perfectly with the landscape. It wasn't until one of them got up and stretched that they could see the whole family. As well as the lionesses and cubs there were two adult males, with large shaggy manes.

“Why are there only two male lions?” asked Samson.

“Each of these lions will have their own group of females,” explained Dad. “Any more and the pride numbers would become too big. There is great competition between the males to be leaders. When a lion gets old, a younger stronger lion will come along and challenge him for his group of females. If the older lion loses the fight, he goes off to join a group of male lions who have also lost their place in the pride. They spend the rest of their lives roaming around together. It's a hard life for them because it's the females who are the best hunters. Without females to catch food for them they often go hungry.”

“It's a hard life for the females too,” Dad continued. “As well as rearing the cubs, they have to hunt to get food for the male lion and the cubs. After a kill they may be hungry, but they don't eat straight away. The adult males always eat first. The lionesses are hard workers and give their time and energy for the survival of the pride. We could say that the lionesses are the givers. They give what they have to others. God wants His people to be givers too. The Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver. People sometimes say, ‘I've worked hard for what I've got, so I'm keeping it all to myself.’ But God wants us to be generous. We can help so many people that way. We can give money to those in need, and that's important, but God wants us to give more than just money. He wants us to give our love, our time and our effort. Everyone can work for God, even children.”

They left the lion pride behind, and Samson wondered whether they would see any other big cats. Dad told them about the other cats that lived in the game reserve.

“Other cats do live here,” he said, “although it’s unlikely that we will see them. There are not many leopards and cheetahs left now. Unfortunately, they were hunted for their skins years ago. The cheetah is the world’s fastest mammal, capable of sprinting at speeds as high as 100 km hour, although the average speed is more like 45 km per hour. The cheetah is different from the leopard in that it doesn’t attack humans, even when cornered. A leopard however, can be very dangerous.”

In the distance, they could see the gates of the camping area. As they reached the gates the tyres rumbled over the metal grid. The gates opened and they drove through and traveled along the road to a little group of round African huts. The caretaker pointed out their hut for the night and at last the Land Rover came to a stop. A chance to stretch their legs at last!

The little hut was quite comfortable. It had walls made of baked mud and a grass roof. There was a grass mat on the floor, four beds, two small open windows without glass and a wooden door. The children laid out their sleeping bags, drank some water and played outside for a while before the evening meal. They took turns with the skipping rope that Serena had brought along and kicked Samson’s ball.

Outside the hut Mum prepared some corn meal on a little gas stove. She opened some tins of salted meat and then unwrapped some sticks of dried meat. These meat sticks, which everyone chewed on like toffee, were a special treat. To finish the meal there were some bananas.

It was now six o’clock and as they sat outside the hut eating their meal they could see the huge sun sinking rapidly in the west. The colours of orange and crimson soon faded and darkness started to fall quickly, as it does in these parts of Africa. The family quickly cleaned up the dinner things and went into their hut.

“Off to bed now you two,” said Mum. “We have a very big day tomorrow and will have to get up very early.”

The air was cool now that the sun had gone down. The children lay in bed listening to the sounds of the African night. They heard birds calling to each other, probably warning each other that it was time for the hunt to begin. The children remembered that lions do most of their hunting at night. They could hear the grunting and growling sounds of lions outside the camp. But they were not afraid because Dad had assured them that the electric fence surrounding the camp kept them safe. In a few moments, they were asleep and knew nothing more until the sound of Mum’s voice at 5.30 the next morning. “Quickly Samson and Serena. Come and get your porridge. We have to leave soon. Dad has to get to the northern gate this morning to do his work”

They dressed quickly and rolled up their sleeping bags. After a quick bowl of corn porridge they were in the Land Rover and all set for another day's adventure.

Lion facts

- The lion is the biggest cat in the world.
- Only two other types of big cats live in Africa: the leopard and the cheetah.
- A male lion is about 1.2 metres high, from the ground to the top of its shoulder.
- A male lion can weigh between 150 and 250 kg. A lioness can weigh between 120 and 182 kg.
- A group of lions, lionesses and cubs living together is called a pride. A pride can consist of two to four adult male lions, up to 10 females, their cubs and some young lions that are not yet full grown.
- Members of a pride recognize each other by their smells.
- Lions fight with each other to be the leader of a pride. The lion's mane protects him during fights.
- Each pride has its own territory that may be 50 square kilometers.
- Lions mark their territory by their scent.
- Lionesses do the hunting. It is difficult and dangerous. They may be kicked by the hooves of animals. They might catch an animal only once in every five times they hunt.
- Male lions that no longer live with the pride group together and try to catch their own food. They are not as good at hunting as the lionesses. They often feed on dead animals or steal food.
- Lions need between 5 and 10 kg. of meat every day.
- When lionesses are stalking their prey they need to walk quietly. The pads on the soles of their feet soften the sounds of their footsteps.
- Lions have four claws on their back feet which are pulled in when they are not being used. Lions use their claws to grip their prey or as a weapon for fighting. They also use them as a comb for grooming.
- A lion's jaws are short. This gives the lion a powerful bite.
- Lions have large teeth. Their long canine teeth hold and kill prey.
- The lion's tongue is rough so it can scrape meat off bones.
- Lions see more clearly at night. They can see for a longer distance than humans can.
- Lions sleep for up to 19 hours a day. They are active at night.
- Lions roar to find out where other lions are, and to announce to other lions that this is their territory.
- A lioness gives birth to 2 to 4 cubs. She gives birth in a hidden spot.
- Newborn cubs are in danger of being taken by hyenas or leopards when their mother goes hunting. Usually only half the cubs in a litter live to become adults.

Chapter 8 The meercats – the organized ones

Matthew 20: 28 – Jesus said, “If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest.” (Good News Bible)

Mark 9:35 – Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all.” (Good News Bible)

As they drove along they watched the sun rise in the east, putting on another display of colour. The landscape on the northern part of the reserve became dryer, with fewer trees and more rocks. There was less grass for grazing herds, so there were fewer animals to be seen.



“If you look carefully you might spot a meerkat colony,” said Dad. “This is the type of country they like – desert type country. This is the time of day you might see them too. They’re up with the sun looking for food.”

“What do they eat?” asked Serena.

“They have a very good sense of smell,” explained Dad, “and can follow the scents of their favorite foods - beetles, caterpillars, spiders, and scorpions. They’ll also eat small reptiles, birds, eggs, fruit, and plants.”

Dad was familiar with the territory and remembered where he had previously seen a colony.

“Look over there,” he said. “See those little hills coming out of the ground? That’s a meerkat colony. They make their homes underground by digging holes and tunnels. I’ll stop for a moment and you can use the binoculars. You might see something. Serena, you go first.”

Serena took the binoculars and focused on the little mounds.

“I can see some!” she shouted. “They are so cute! They have brown-stripes, a tail, and big eye with dark patches around them.”

She watched for a couple of minutes and gave the binoculars to Samson. He could see that they were very busy little animals, all running around doing different things.

“I think I can see one standing on top of a mound keeping guard,” he said.

“Yes, that would be right.” said Dad. “That’s the sentry. To survive, meerkats must live in groups for protection. The meerkats are the most organized animals on earth. Each meerkat has an important job to do. There is a male leader and a female leader of the group. They give out the jobs to the others. Some are sentries, or guards, like the one you’ve just seen. They stand on the mound and watch out for enemies,

like eagles, hawks or jackals. At the first sign of an enemy, the sentry lets out a high-pitched squeal, and all the meerkats go scrambling deep down into their burrows.”

“What other jobs do they have,” asked Samson.

“Well,” continued Dad, “there are baby sitters who mind the young ones, foragers who look for food, excavators who keep the burrows in good shape, trainers who train the pups, and groomers who take the insects out of the meercats’ furry coats.”

“I guess meercats can teach us a lot of things,” said Samson.

“Yes, the meercats can teach us about working together,” explained Dad. “When God’s people work together it is important to have leaders who can help organize the jobs that people must do for God. Some people are very good at leading. But God tells us in the Bible that if a person is a leader, then they must also be a servant. That means they should do more than just give out jobs to people. They have to get in there and help. For example, if you’re a leader, you can’t just tell someone to go and clean your toilet because you don’t like doing it. You have to clean it yourself. A leader has to be kind and friendly, not bossy. A leader has to be prepared to give up their own comforts to make someone else comfortable. So being a leader is one of the hardest jobs. Jesus was the greatest leader that ever lived. He could have had a very comfortable life, but he chose to travel around with

His twelve friends, without a home or a bed. He did something that no other leader has ever done – He died for us.

John 15:13 – Jesus said, “The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them.” (Good News Bible)

Meerkat facts

- Meercats dig their burrows with their long, sharp claws. Living underground keeps mob members safe from predators and out of the harsh African heat. These burrows can be 16 feet (5 meters) long and contain multiple entrances, tunnels, and rooms.
- A meercat is 25 – 30 cm. long, (head and body), with a tail 17 – 25 cm. long.
- A meercat weighs 620 – 960 grams.
- They have a variety of calls such as chirrups, trills, growls and barks.
- A meercat can live up to 10 years.
- A meercat is related to the mongoose.
- Soil erosion can destroy the meercat’s home.
- Meercats make themselves look as big and fearsome as possible when confronted by an enemy. They stretch their legs to stand tall, hold their tails up and lower their heads.
- A meercat uses its tail for balance and as a way of signaling.
- When defending itself a meercat throws itself on the back of its enemy, and uses its teeth and claws.

Chapter 9 The journey's end

It was 10 o'clock and they had arrived at the northern gate. Dad stopped the Land Rover, got out and collected the things he needed to work on the gate. As well as his tool kit and oil can, he carried a rifle. Working in the open meant that he had to be ever alert in case a hungry lion or angry rhino happened to be about.

Mum and the children stayed in the vehicle and watched Mr. Mbale work on the gate. Suddenly they saw a large cobra a few metres away. The children wanted to shout "Look out!" to their Dad, who had his back to the cobra and totally unaware of its presence.

"Be quiet," whispered Mum. "If you alarm the cobra it may strike."

The cobra came closer and reared itself into a striking position. Mrs. Mbali and the children could do nothing except pray. Then the gatekeeper noticed the cobra. With careful aim he took a shot at it with his rifle, and the cobra immediately fell to the ground. The gun shot echoed across the plains. Alarmed by the deafening sound, Mr. Mbali stood up, looked around and spotted the dead cobra.

"Thanks! You saved my life," he said to the gatekeeper gratefully.

He ran over to the Land Rover, and the children told their Dad how they had seen the cobra but could not make a sound – only pray. They all said a prayer of thanks for God's protection and Mr. Mbali got back to work.

Soon the job was done, and they were on the road again. They set off for home, traveling on the main road that ran alongside the reserve. They drove faster now that they were out of the game park. The sun was high in the sky and everyone was getting hungry.

"There's a village up ahead," said Dad. We'll stop there for lunch.

As they approached the village they passed some women in brightly coloured dresses carrying things on their heads. A shop came into view and Mr. Mbali parked the vehicle. The shop had many different things for sale. There were colourful blankets, pieces of material, beads and bangles, bags of yams and mealies, bananas, tinned food and bottles of water.

They bought some water and some tinned food and bananas, then drove down the road a little way and found a shady spot to have lunch. Mum got out the gas stove and a cooking pot, opened the tinned food and heated it. They finished off the meal with the bananas.

A little chameleon scampered along a thin branch, one foot in front of the other. They were used to seeing chameleons in their own village and knew how clever these animals were at

changing colour. When they need to warm up, they become a dark colour, because dark colours absorb heat better than light colours. And when they need to cool down, they become lighter, because light colours reflect the heat.

“Who can remember some of the things we’ve learned from the animals on our safari?” asked Mum.

“I can,” said Serena. “The giraffe can see well and spots danger. And the Bible tells us that we can have special eyes to understand what God is saying.”

“The meerkats are the organized ones,” said Samson. “They teach us how to be good leaders – kind and not bossy.”

“The lionesses are my favourite,” said Mum. “It’s up to the mothers to do the hard work without complaining, to provide for their family. They are the givers.”

“And I also like the elephants,” continued Mum. “All the aunties care for the babies, whether the baby is their own or belongs to another Mum. And elephants care for the sick or injured members of the herd. They are the caring ones.”

“My favourite is the rhino and his little bird,” said Dad. “That little bird works hard at helping the rhino, getting the ticks out of his skin. Being a helper is very important.”

“I like the eagle,” said Samson, “because it is like my name. Samson in the Bible was very strong, and the eagle is very

strong. It is strong enough to take off from a high cliff. It can fly for a long time and not get tired. When we trust in God He can help us to be strong when problems come, and we can encourage others who have problems.”

“And what about the monkeys?” asked Dad. “What do they show us?”

“I know,” answered Serena. “They show us how to be good teachers and learners. The mother monkeys show the babies how to get food, comb their fur and how to stay safe from enemies. The babies watch and listen carefully and copy everything the adults do.”

“Certain animals are good at certain things,” said Mum. “and the Bible tells us that in the family of God people are good at different things. The things we are good at, we can call ‘gifts’ because they are gifts from God. One person might be a good leader, one person might be a good teacher, and another person might be a good helper. But what we all should do is to be available for God to use us in whatever situation we find ourselves. If there is someone who is hungry, then we should feed them. If there is someone who is sad, then we should encourage them. And when we meet someone who doesn’t understand the Bible, we can help them to see with special eyes of understanding.”

“It’s a bit like that chameleon,” added Dad. “We can think of the gifts from God as colours. The chameleon has the right colour for the right situation – a dark colour when it’s cold, and

a light colour when it's hot. Like the chameleon, we can use the right gift from God in the right situation. We can ask God to help us get better at using all the gifts for serving Him."

It was time to get back into the Land Rover for the last leg of the journey. The children were very tired and fell asleep for the last hour.

"Out you get," said Mum. "We're home!"

Samson and Serena woke up and sleepily carried their sleeping bags into their little home. What a wonderful adventure they'd had, and there would be so much to tell their friends at school tomorrow. After a quick bite to eat they were in bed, sound asleep, dreaming of Africa's amazing animals.

Chameleon facts

- Chameleons are members of the lizard family.
- The name means 'earth lion'.
- Chameleons are "ectotherms", animals whose temperatures are controlled from outside their bodies.
- They eat locusts, praying mantis, crickets, and other insects, but larger chameleons have been known to eat small birds and other lizards.
- They have long tongue having a sticky tip on the end, for catching prey. Their tongue moves at lightning speed.
- Chameleons have teeth to grasp onto food. Their teeth are also used to help them crush and kill their food.
- They lay eggs in a 4 to 12 inches deep hole.

- They hear vibrations in the air, which help them find food and stay safe from their enemies. They are almost deaf, but can hear tones and feel vibrations.
- They can rotate their eyes and focus their eyes separately to observe two different objects at the same time. This gives them a full 360-degree arc of vision around their body.
- Each foot has five toes which are fused into a group of two and a group of three. With their specialized feet, they grip tightly to narrow branches.



Activities

Learning from the animals

The Bible tells us that we can learn from the animals.

We all know that God made the animals. But God also tells us in the Bible to watch the animals and see what we can learn from them.

Here are seven animals in the Bible that we can learn from:
The ant; the badger; the locust; the lizard; the lion; the rooster; the goat

You will find these in Proverbs 30:25 – 31. Read these verses in your Bible.

Write and Draw

Now take a piece of paper. Draw the animals in this Bible passage and write about how these animals can teach us important things.

Read

the following verses from Romans 12: 4-8.

Each one of us has a body, and that body has many parts. These parts all have different uses. In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body. And each part belongs to all

the other parts. We all have different gifts. Each gift came because of the grace that God gave us.

If one has the gift of prophecy, he should use that gift with the faith he has.

If one has the gift of serving, he should serve.

If one has the gift of teaching, he should teach.

If one has the gift of encouraging others, he should encourage.

If one has the gift of giving to others, he should give freely.

If one has the gift of being a leader, he should try hard when he leads.

If one has the gift of showing kindness to others, that person should do so with joy.

from the International Children's Bible

You will notice that these 'gifts' are the ones we have been learning about in our stories of Africa. They are called 'gifts' because they are in us from the moment we are born. Some people are naturally better at some gifts than others.

Remember

Our African animals help us remember the eight gifts:

- Prophecy (Being alert like the giraffe; seeing the meaning of what God is saying)
- Kindness (Caring for those in need, like the elephant)
- Encouraging (being strong like the eagle; strong in the Lord so that we can help others to be strong in the Lord)
- Teaching (sharing important knowledge like the monkeys who teach their young)
- Serving (helping like the oxpecker that sits on the rhino's back)
- Giving (being generous like the lioness; giving cheerfully)
- Leading in an organized way (like the meerkats, and being a servant as well)

Make a chart

Make a chart of the eight gifts. Next to each gift, draw the African animal that reminds us of that gift. Explain how each animal reminds us of the gifts.

The chameleon

Being naturally strong in a gift does not mean that we shouldn't try to use ALL the gifts. God wants us to practice ALL the gifts so that we get better at the ones we are not so good at. This means we can be available for God to use us in ANY situation. Remember the chameleon? It has the right colour for the right situation. God wants us to be prepared to be His servants and use the right gift in the right situation when helping others.

Using your gifts

On a new piece of paper make a list of the seven gifts again. Now next to each gift write some ways in which YOU could use that gift to help other people.

Questionnaire

Write a number next to each of the following sentences. Give yourself a number to show how much the statement is / or is not - like YOU.

3 – greatly

2 – quite a bit

1 – a little

0 – not at all

1. I am enthusiastic about explaining the meaning of the Bible to others.
2. I don't mind going without something myself if I know it can help someone else.
3. I enjoy doing class presentations.
4. I like to encourage those who are having a bad day.
5. I like to share my things with others.
6. I like to organize group members in class.
7. I feel sad when others are sad.
8. I like stories that have hidden meaning,
9. I like to have friends around and make them feel welcome.
10. I like to learn facts.
11. I encourage my friends to do their best.
12. I like to give gifts to others.
13. I like to be a group leader.
14. I like to visit those who are sick.
15. I would like to give class devotion.

16. I like to work under someone who gives me instructions on what to do.
17. I enjoy finding out the meaning of words.
18. I like to help people with their problems.
19. I like to give my money or things to those in need.
20. I like to make plans and carry them out.
21. I feel sorry for those who are having a hard time.
22. I sometimes know what God is saying to me.
23. I like to help Mum or Dad do preparations when visitors are coming.
24. I like reading the Bible.
25. I like to help others know more about God.
26. I like to make gifts for others.
27. I like things to be well organized.
28. If I do good work I don't mind if people don't know about it.
29. When I explain the meaning of the Bible to people they understand what I'm saying really well.
30. I like to help people who have a lot of work to do.
31. I like to look up Bible verses.
32. I can often understand what is troubling someone.
33. If I had \$20 a month I would like to use it to sponsor a child in a needy country.
34. In a game I am good at explaining the rules to others and I like teaching them how to play the game.
35. When a young child is crying I like to calm them down and find out what's wrong.

Now fill out the chart on the next page:

Write your scores for each question next to the numbers in the boxes.

1	8	15	22	29
2	9	16	23	30
3	10	17	24	31
4	11	18	25	32
5	12	19	26	33
6	13	20	27	34
7	14	21	28	25

Now add up the numbers in the rows horizontally. Write the total of each row at the right-hand end of the row.

Each row stands for a gift. Find out which gifts are your strongest. (See next page)

Key to table:

Row A (top row): Prophecy / insight

Row B: Serving

Row C: Teaching

Row D: Encouraging others

Row E: Giving

Row F: Leadership

Row G (bottom row): Caring for the needy (mercy)