

# 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.

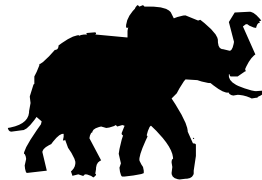
“Yes they are,” said Dad. “They have feelings like us. They show love and care and they look after the weak. Elephants are a good example to us. We need to be aware of the needs of others, and do something about it. We should step in and help someone who has a need.”

“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.

