

## SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM NATURE'S WORLD PART IX

If you have been following this little series I trust that you are enjoying it and that you are able to grasp some of what I think are simple but true spiritual applications thanks to our furry and feathered friends.

I trust that you will continue to read and think through the remaining few in this series. This time I want to think about three more special animas God has blessed us with and the lessons we can learn from them. I want to start with



The Hyena

Say what you want about the hyena, they don't look very pretty. They actually wear a kind of hangdog look, as though they're up to no good, and are plotting something sleazy. So for most people it's pretty easy to dislike them.

The hyena is the most well-known of Africa's secondary predators. It is the most common large carnivore, and easily the most misunderstood. The hyena is often called a scavenger and a cowardly thief. While this is meant as an insult, a scavenger actually keeps the land from being polluted by eating rotting, disease-ridden carcasses.

There are only three species of hyenas, and all are found in Africa. The spotted hyena, the brown hyena, and the striped hyena. The spotted is the largest and most common species. The brown is the least common species.

Hyenas have a highly social lifestyle, and members of a pack do virtually everything together. Hyenas are successful hunters because of their persistence. They rarely give up. They keep trying until they get what they want.

To their benefit as hunters, they can run strongly, without tiring, for up to 2 or more miles at a speed of about 30-35 MPH. When one pack member tires, it steps back and allows another member of the pack with refreshed stamina to take its place.

The hyena's jaw is more powerful than those of the lion or tiger: they can break even the thickest bones of the cattle or buffaloes. The hyena's heavy-duty stomach is the envy of the animal world. When prey is downed, it consumes hides, bones, teeth, hooves and horns and digests all within 24 hours.

Hyenas can teach us a couple valuable spiritual lessons. Their clan habits illustrate the importance of working together in unison to get something done. When people work together, they work smarter not harder, because they put all of their resources together, and use the ability that God has given each one to get things done.

**Note:** Christians can accomplish much more in the Lord's work when everyone lends a hand. God's Word says, Nehemiah 4:6 *"The people had a mind to work"* when the time came to build a protective wall around Jerusalem. As a result of the cooperation, the wall was built in fifty-two days (6:15)

Their stamina and persistence as hunters is also something to consider. Sometimes it is easy to give up when the going get tough but with the prize in view it is too soon to quit. Whether it is on a building project, waiting for a friend to receive Christ, Waiting for a child to return to what they had been taught, waiting for church growth, or what ever it is, it is too soon to quit. The hyena may not be very pretty but it can leave a couple pretty good lessons if we will just be open to them.



### The Musk Ox

The natives call him "Oo ming mak" which is translated "Animal with skin like a beard" He lives in some of the coldest and harshest environments known on earth. From Northern Alaska and Canada, to the northern parts of Greenland, on to Norway, Sweden, and then to the farthest reaches of Siberia. Places where the temperatures can fall to 50-60 degrees below zero. There are no other hoofed animals that live that far North.

The Musk Ox is not an animal that is thought about on a daily basis, but it really is an animal that does show us some spiritual lessons.

#### A . Interesting facts

These animals can weigh from 400- 800 lbs. And live for up to 25 years. Besides man, they do not have many enemies except for the Arctic Wolf, although sometimes a polar bear will take a weak one.

Before going on though, I think about a warning concerning the polar bear. The polar bear blends in with the snow and is always on the lookout for the weak or sick and will exploit any opportunity.

Now I know that the Devil is known as a roaring lion and we think of lions as warm weather animals, but I can see him in this picture of the frozen North as well. I Peter 5:8 says *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

In the far north we need to be aware of his ice cold heart causing him to blend into the surroundings and waiting to wreak havoc on any humans or churches that are vulnerable

But moving on, the Musk Ox also resembles our Bison found here in the lower 48 states. It has long hair, the longest of any American animal, growing anywhere from 3-6 ft. in length. The underlying layer of that hair is much like cashmere and is eagerly sought after for clothing. This long hair also protects them from the mosquitoes and black flies that drive other animals crazy.

They live on plants and vegetation although sometimes they have to dig for it with their hooves and horns through the snow and ice, much like their southern neighbors the Caribou.

So we see that these creatures are really somewhat unique, but I want to move on and look at some

#### B. Interesting spiritual applications

**First**, like the musk ox, we are unique. We are the only portion of all creation that Christ came to die for. Do you know him? Have you accepted his sacrifice for you?

**Secondly**, we learn that, like the Musk Ox, we can survive in some pretty harsh environments because we have been specially prepared. We need to remember that this harsh world we live in is not our final home. Alfred Brumley recognized this and put it to words

This world is not my home, I'm just passing through.  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.  
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

**Note:** It is easy to want to give up and take the easy road along the journey, but the Musk Ox has no easy days in the frozen northlands, and we don't need to be afraid of some rough water because our forever is coming.

**Remember:** We are even more special than the Musk Ox because when it gets too bad, God makes a way out. I Corinthians 10:13

**Thirdly**, sometimes we need to act like Musk oxen once in a while in the church or home. These intriguing animals have a very unique defense system. When danger approaches, the adult bulls stand shoulder to shoulder with their heads all facing outward. The cows and calves stay inside the circle and any predator has to get past that set of horns before it can get to the weaker ones inside the circle.

**There is a great lesson here.** We need to stick together and defend one another in our churches and families from both the outside, and sometimes from within as well.

*Acts 20:29 says I know that after I leave, some people will come like wild wolves and try to destroy the flock. In other words, some of the attacks will be from outside but V 30 says Also, some from your own group will rise up and twist the truth and will lead away followers after them.*

We can best protect one another if we take a lesson from the musk ox and we stand shoulder to shoulder against the enemy. For example

Here, **from without**, it is the older believers, surrounding and protecting the younger ones from heresy, or poison food, by keeping them encircled with prayer and the teaching of sound doctrine.

Or, **from the inside**, it is the encouragers within, surrounding the believers with strong faith, encircling and protecting the weak and vulnerable, and timid

Ecclesiastes 4:12 gives us the reasoning behind this approach as it says what? The MSG says it like this; *By yourself you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst. Can you even round up a third? Why is that you may ask. It is because we know that A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.*

So as we grow as a church, lets determine to present a united front with our horns pointed outward against the enemy instead of using them on one another in the family.



### The Kangaroo

Kangaroos belong to a group of marsupials called macro-pods, which means 'great footed animals'. Kangaroos are good swimmers, and will sometimes escape a threat by going into water if there is any nearby. It is interesting that kangaroos do not sweat, so in the heat they lick their front paws and rub the moisture onto their chests to cool down.

These animals live in groups of ten or more called mobs. Mobs can number over 50. Living in a group means there is protection for the weaker members. Kangaroos feed at night on grass and other low growing plants. Kangaroos can survive on very little water; sometimes going for many weeks without it. When they do need water, will dig their own water wells to find it.

The baby Joeys weigh less than 2 grams when they are born and is small enough to fit in a teaspoon. After birth the tiny baby climbs up its mother's belly and into her pouch. The mother can't touch it because it is so tiny. She licks a path in her fur for it to travel along.

These interesting animals can leap up to 29 feet in one bound, and can reach speeds of nearly 30 mph. One other oddity of the kangaroo is that they cannot move backwards.

Just as God has created Kangaroos for us to enjoy, he has also given us some spiritual observations from them as well

First, just as God gave them big and powerful hind legs for speed and protection, God gives us power in our Christian walk sufficient to overcome and outrun Satan's darts.

In thinking about the kangaroo, I personally think of strength like the hind legs, stamina, like going weeks with out water, and balance which is one of the jobs of the tail of the animal. Using these thoughts, lets learn from then kangaroo to Trust God, which is faith

We are being called upon to leap into the unknown without fear. Don't forget, the kangaroo only moves forwards, it cannot move backwards. With God and faith, movement in the Chr. life is forward, forward, forward

Another thing is to stay balanced. Just as the tail provides balance Jesus provides balance so we won't get so spiritual, that we cannot be practical. Faith without works is dead being alone. Faith and works must be balanced

Then also we need to be balanced in our outreach. To all men, the up and outers as well as the down and outers

When being hunted, kangaroos are very fast and hop effortlessly to safety We are being hunted by the enemy of our soul so we need to hop quickly to the safety of the Lord and among his people. Hop quickly to the safety of His word and in time of danger or confusion, also hop quickly to prayer.

I am sure you can think of other applications from this special animal but lets al least begin with these.