

God's Animal Kingdom Classroom

Hippopotamus



The hippopotamus is a very heavy animal with giant front teeth. At first this may seem like a scary animal but looks can fool you.

The hippopotamus may be very heavy but when underwater, it is very graceful. The hippopotamus is an excellent swimmer and can stay under the water for a long time as it feeds.

The giant teeth of the hippopotamus are used for digging up grass and for defending its home and family. The hippopotamus does not eat meat with those teeth but instead it eats grass. The big mouth acts as a scoop to pick up large amounts of grass.

Even though the skin of the hippopotamus is nearly two inches thick, it is very sensitive.

What can we learn from the hippopotamus?

We can learn something called perspective from the hippopotamus. Perspective is the way we see things. To one person, something looks good yet to another person the same thing looks bad. The hippopotamus gives us a chance to use our imagination as we learn about perspective.

Think about how God sees us when we sin and how ugly we look. Then think about how God sees us as forgiven through the blood of Jesus and how beautiful we look. This is how we see the hippopotamus.

Use your imagination. The hippopotamus is big, heavy and slow moving on land. This animal has a head that is large and ugly. It has a huge mouth with very scary teeth. This is how sin makes us look. We are weighted down by sin which is ugly and

slows us down. When we sin, we act against God. Have you heard the expression “*a swelled head*”? This means that a person thinks he or she is better than everyone else. When we sin, we think we are better than God’s commandments and have a “*swelled head*”. When we have an appetite for the sinful things in this world, we also have a big mouth just like the hippopotamus to eat all of the sinful things.

Still using your imagination, let’s look at how the hippopotamus appears in a different way. If we think about how Jesus saved us from our sins and how we are beautiful to God because of what Jesus did, then we can see how even someone as ugly as the hippopotamus is really pretty.

The hippopotamus, when it is in the water, is very graceful. The hippopotamus’s movements are like a dance underwater. The large head is perfect for scooping up enough grass to feed this large animal. The teeth make great shovels for rooting up grass to feed on. Instead of being a big, ugly animal, the hippopotamus is really beautiful and well made for its way of living.

The hippopotamus has a very sensitive skin and is easily hurt. We too are sensitive and easily

hurt. The hippopotamus is very careful to protect itself from harmful things and we should be the same. When we are tempted by sinful things, we should protect ourselves and not give in to sin. The result can be painful to us. Just as the hippopotamus will go into the water to avoid things that are harmful to its skin, we should go to Jesus to help us avoid sinful behavior. The water that protects the hippopotamus is much like the water of our baptism which protects us from our sins.

God tells us in Isaiah 1:18, *“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow.”* This Bible passage shows in God’s own words how perspective will change when our ugly, sinful appearance will be replaced with a beautiful new look through Jesus our Savior.

