

Finding Your Own Peace

Elephant and Hippopotamus Refuse to Fight (Sub-Saharan African)

PREVIEW

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REVIEW

Review a couple of stories from the Peace-Makers section if you want. Or, just review the stories from the Peace for the World section. Both lists are found at the end of this lesson plan. Then, review the first two stories from the Finding Your Own Peace section (shown below).

Prince with Useless Weapons (Buddhist/Jataka): Prince Five Weapons realizes his weapons won't work on the sticky-haired ogre, so he uses his brains instead. He also teaches the monster to live peacefully.

Sick Woman Who Found Peace (Christian): Woman reached out to touch Jesus and was healed/found peace.

BACKGROUND – SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Supplies

World map

Prompt: Today, we're going to read a peace story that comes from Africa. Does anyone know where Africa is? [Show world map. If they can't point out Africa, show them where they are and where Africa is.]

Prompt: Nowadays, Africa is made up of many different countries [Show borders on map.]

Prompt: But for a very, very long time, Africa was made up of different tribes. Each tribe had its own stories. Our story for today comes from the Hausa {HOW-sah} tribe. Today, there are about 50 million people in this tribe. That's a lot of people! [Compare that number, if you wish, to the number of people in your town.]

BACKGROUND – SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (cont.)

Prompt: The Hausa people live throughout western Africa. [You can roughly show the region where they live = northern Nigeria, southeastern Niger, plus Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Chad, Togo, Ghana, Sudan, Gabon, and Senegal.]

Prompt: Our story is about two really big animals that live in Africa. Can you think of a big animal that lives in Africa? [Brainstorm/Answer. Hint: It has a long trunk = Elephant]

Prompt: Yes – one of the animals in this story is Elephant. The other big animal in this story is Hippopotamus. Do you know what a hippopotamus looks like? [Show image on p. 149, and let them practice saying that word.]

Prompt: The word “hippopotamus” means “river horse,” so can you guess where hippopotamuses like to live? [Near water]

Prompt: Yes! They live near lakes and rivers and swamps. During the day, hippopotamuses like to swim in the water and the mud to keep cool. Would you like to swim in mud? [Share]

Prompt: In the evenings, hippopotamuses eat grass and other plants that grow near the water.

LESSON/STORY

Prompt: The other animal in our story is really, really small. It's a spider. Raise your hand if you've seen a spider before. Do you like spiders? [Share]

Prompt: People from all over Africa tell stories about a spider who is very tricky. Different tribes use different names, but a lot of times, the spider is called Anansi. [Let them practice saying that word.]

Prompt: Anansi, the tricky spider, causes all sorts of problems. In our story for today, Anansi's tricks come very close to starting a fight between Elephant and Hippopotamus.

Prompt: Many times, stories about Anansi are told at night around a fire. So, try to imagine that you are in Africa, around a fire, and someone is telling you this story.

Read: Elephant and Hippopotamus Refuse to Fight (pp. 151-153)

CREATIVE RESPONSE -- TUG OF WAR CRAFT

Supplies

One spider template (p. 154), one elephant template (p. 155), and one hippopotamus template (p. 155) per child; hole punch; tape; yarn/ribbon; scissors; crayons/washable markers/colored pencils. Other decorating items are optional.

Helpful Hints

Tape the yarn/ribbon securely to the templates, so the kids can pull on them.

CREATIVE RESPONSE – TUG OF WAR CRAFT (cont.)

Preparation

Cut around the templates. They are aligned, so you can use a paper cutter if you have one.

Punch four holes in the spider template at the X's.

Cut one 15-16" length of yarn/ribbon per child.

Prompt: Today, we'll make our own tug of war picture.



Here are the steps:

1. Color/decorate the three animal templates.
2. If you haven't already done so, cut the yarn/ribbon into pieces measuring about 15-16"
3. Thread the yarn/ribbon so it goes toward the back on the far left, then up to the front, then across the template below the spider, then toward the back again, and finally up to the front on the far right. (See illustration of completed craft as an example.)
4. On one side, tape the end of the yarn/ribbon to the back of the elephant template. On the other side, tape the end of the yarn/ribbon to the back of the hippo. Be sure to tape them securely.
5. Pull the elephant and hippo. templates back and forth to create your own tug of war.

ACTIVITY #1 – TUG OF PEACE

Supplies

Milk crate or small laundry basket, rope measuring 15-20' (depending on how many kids you have), heavy books

Helpful Hints

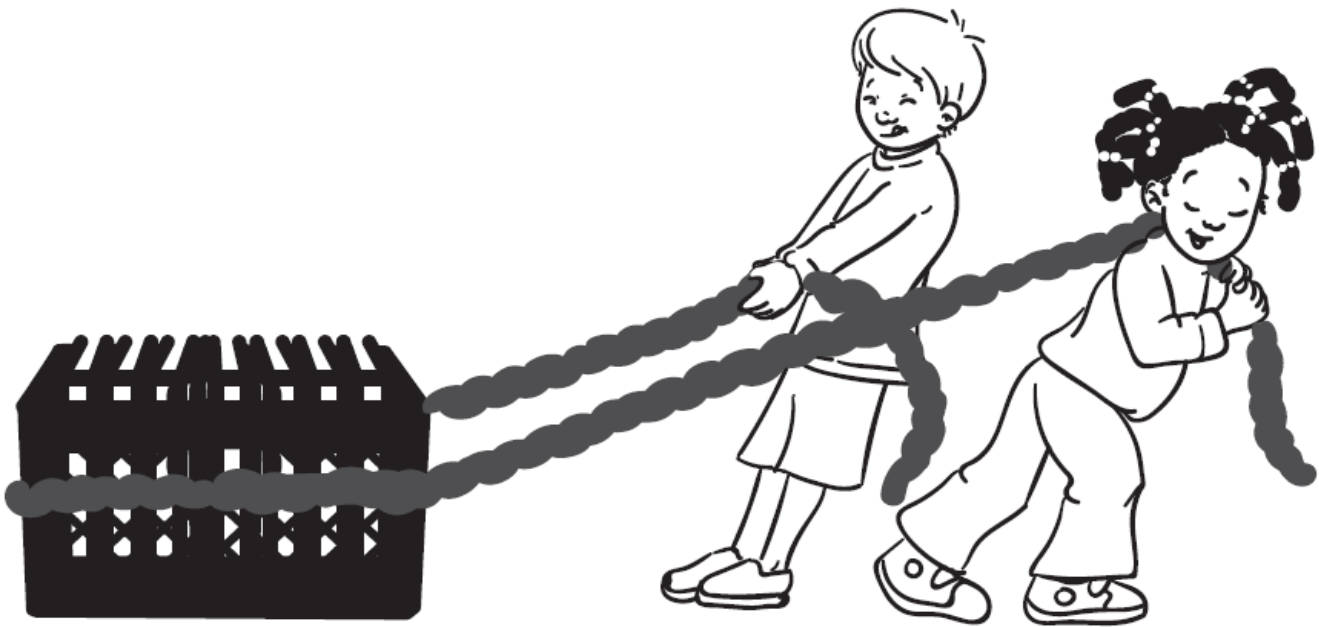
Consider using clothesline as your rope; it's inexpensive and plenty sturdy.

Prompt: In our story for today, the elephant and the hippo. pulled in opposite directions on a very long rope. That's called a "tug of war." Does "tug of war" sound like a peaceful game? [No!]

Prompt: Today, we're going to tug on a rope, too, but we're going to pull together, so our game is called Tug of Peace.

PEACE

Set the milk crate on one side of a fairly open space. Thread the rope through two of the holes on the back side of the crate. Put one end through a hole on the left front side, and the other end through a hole on the right front side. Even up the rope so the center of the rope is at the center, back of the crate. Fill the crate with books (shown below).



Have one child grab one end of the rope and another child grab the other end. Have them pull together to see if they can move the box. Even two kids in this age group – one on each end of the rope – will be able to pull the box which makes them feel really strong.

Variations

Have more than one child holding each end of the rope. It's a great lesson in cooperation and pulling/walking backwards together.

Place two lines of tape on the floor that are as wide as the crate to make a runway. Have the kids pull the crate evenly, so it moves across the floor between the two lines of tape.

ACTIVITY #2 – HUNGRY ELEPHANT

Supplies

Peanuts in the shell, spoons, one larger bowl, one or more small bowls/cups

Prompt: One of the animals in our story for today was an elephant. What do elephants like to eat?
[Peanuts]

Prompt: That means we get to play a peanut game today!

Put the larger bowl, containing peanuts still in the shell, on one side of the room. Place a smaller bowl on the other side of the room. Tell the kids to pretend that this smaller bowl is the elephant's mouth. Then, tell them they are in charge of feeding the elephant.

Have the kids place a peanut on a spoon, walk to the other side of the room without dropping it, and place it in the smaller bowl/elephant's mouth.

Variations

Many kids will be able to do this activity fairly well. To make it more difficult, place two (or even three) peanuts on the spoon.

Ask them to drop the peanut/s into a small cup (e.g., a yogurt container), instead of a bowl, to make the game more difficult.

Give each child a certain amount of time (e.g., one minute), and count the total number of peanuts transferred.

Some kids this age will not yet know how to shell peanuts, so you can show them, as long as you're prepared to clean up afterwards!

TAKE-HOME OPPORTUNITY – PEACE FOR OUR ENEMIES

Prompt: In our story for today, Elephant and Hippopotamus decided not to fight even though they were very angry. This week, try to make peace with someone you don't like very much or even someone who is your enemy. Can you all think of someone you don't like very much right now? [Share] Can you think of something nice you might be able to do for that person to make things more peaceful between you? [Brainstorm]

PREVIOUS LESSONS FROM PEACE-MAKERS SECTION

Theme: What peace means, popular symbols of peace, the word peace in other languages

Loo-Wit (Native American): Keeping peace between two fighting brothers; turned into mountains

Muhammad (Islam): Keeping peace between tribal leaders when replacing the sacred stone

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev (Hasidic): Keeping peace between the innkeeper and the thieves

Bhai Sud (Sikh): Keeping peace by tricking the robbers into returning home

Jesus Calms Storm (Christian): Bringing peace to his disciples when they were afraid in a boat during a storm

Jesus Appears to Disciples (Christian): Bringing peace to his disciples when they were afraid/locked in a room

PREVIOUS LESSONS FROM PEACE FOR THE WORLD SECTION

Hatim Ta'i Risks his Life (Sufi): Hatim Ta'i, the most peaceful king ever, moved to a cave to keep from fighting a rival king. When the rival king offered a reward, Hatim Ta'i returned to the village, so the reward could be given to an old, poor couple.

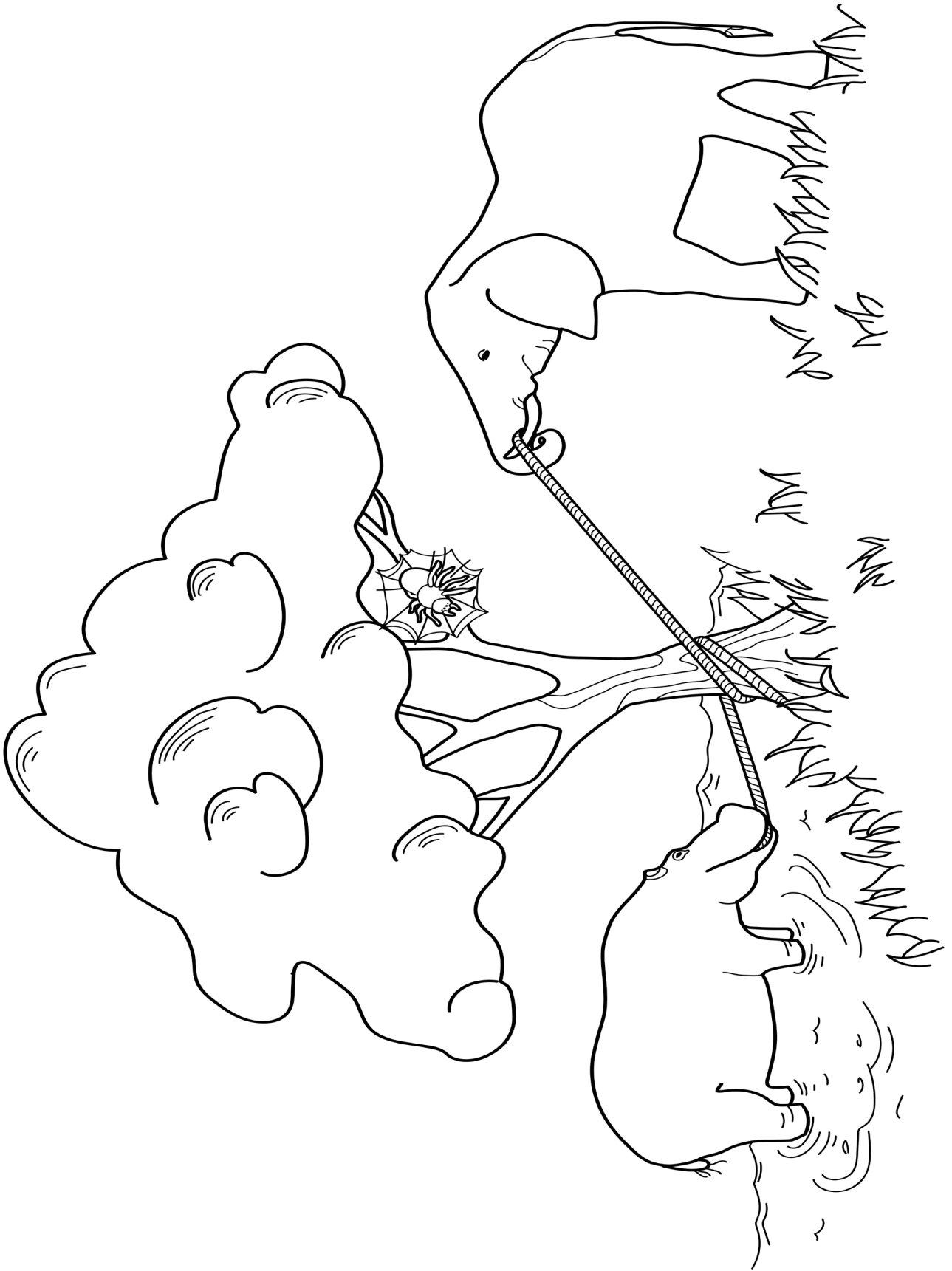
Isaiah's Peaceful Kingdom (Jewish/Christian): Isaiah imagined what a peaceful kingdom and a peaceful leader might look like. He used animal pairs as examples (wolf/lamb, leopard/goat, cow/bear, lion/ox, baby/snake).

Jesus and Mission of Peace (Christian): Jesus wanted to spread his message of peace to more people, so he gave his followers instructions on how to do that – no suitcase, no sandals, eat the food offered, say “peace to this house,” etc.

Vishnu/Varaha (Hindu/Vedic): The evil Hiranyaksha put the world on the bottom of the ocean. The god Vishnu appeared as Varaha the boar, rescued the world, and defeated Hiranyaksha to restore peace and harmony.



[Wikimedia Commons: (public domain courtesy of LadyofHats)]



Elephant and Hippopotamus Refuse to Fight

1 Once upon a time, in the faraway land of Africa, there was a great famine. The crops had not grown well, and all the animals were hungry. Spider and his family were among those who were suffering. They had almost nothing to eat, and Spider's children were constantly complaining about how hungry they were.

Spider was known for being very clever and very tricky. If he wanted to keep his family fed, he would need to put those skills to good use. But, first he had to come up with a plan. He decided to target two of the biggest animals in Africa – Elephant, who lived on the land, and Hippopotamus, who lived in the water.

Have you ever felt hungry before? What happens when you feel hungry?

2 “Hello there!” Anansi the spider called to Elephant. “I come as a messenger from Hippopotamus. He and his family are very, very hungry, and they would like to strike a deal.”

“I’m always happy to help a friend,” replied Elephant. “Especially one who is very large like me!”

“Since you live on land,” said Anansi, “Hippopotamus was hoping you could give him 100 baskets of corn. In return, he will give you a tasty black bull when the crops finally grow again.”

“There’s only one catch,” continued Anansi. “Hippopotamus wants the deal to be a secret. He doesn’t want his tribe to know he needed help from the elephants.”

“Yes, I understand,” replied Elephant thoughtfully. “Tell Hippopotamus I will give him the baskets of corn in return for a tasty black bull, and I will keep it a secret.”

Have you ever been asked to keep a secret? Is it hard or easy to keep a secret?

3 And so the deal was done.

Elephant gave 100 baskets of corn to Anansi.

But, you remember that spiders are tricky, right?

Instead of taking the corn to Hippopotamus, who knew nothing about this little deal, Anansi took all 100 baskets back to his house and gave them to his family!

Of course, his family would probably get a little bored eating corn all the time, which gave Anansi yet another idea.

Have you ever eaten corn? Do you like it? Would you want to eat only corn?

4 “Hello there!” Anansi the spider called to Hippopotamus. “I come as a messenger from Elephant. He and his family are very, very hungry, and they would like to strike a deal.”

“I’m always happy to help a friend,” replied Hippopotamus. “Especially one who is very large like me!”

“Since you live near the water,” said Anansi, “Elephant was hoping you could give him 100 baskets of fish. In return, he will give you a tasty black bull when the crops finally grow again.”

“There’s only one catch,” continued Anansi. “Elephant wants the deal to be a secret. He doesn’t want his tribe to know he needed help from the hippopotamuses.”

“Yes, I understand,” replied Hippopotamus thoughtfully. “Tell Elephant I will give him the baskets of fish in return for a tasty black bull, and I will keep it a secret.”

What do you think Spider will do with the baskets of fish?

5 Instead of taking the fish to Elephant, who knew nothing about this little deal, Anansi took all 100 baskets back to his house and stored them right next to all that corn!

Spider and his family now had enough food to last until the next harvest. But, before all those little spiders could eat, Anansi had some work for them to do.

In addition to being tricky, spiders are also master weavers. Most of the time, they weave beautiful spider webs; but, this time, Anansi's tribe made something quite different. They wove a rope. The rope was very, very long and very, very strong.

Have you ever seen a spider web before?

6 Eventually, the crops did grow again. All the animals had plenty to eat, and the world was at peace.

Until Elephant and Hippopotamus remembered that tasty black bull.

"Hey Spider!" Elephant called out one day. "Remember that deal I made with Hippopotamus? He was supposed to give me a tasty black bull when the crops grew again. The crops have grown, so where's my black bull?"

"Ah, yes, you are correct. Let me work on that," Anansi said as he scurried off.

"Hey Spider!" Hippopotamus called out the next day. "Remember that deal I made with Elephant? He was supposed to give me a tasty black bull when the crops grew again. The crops have grown, so where's my black bull?"

"Uh...let me work on that," Anansi said again.

Do you think Anansi will tell the truth about taking all the food?

7 Anansi had no intention of telling the truth, and that's when he did the trickiest thing of all.

First, Anansi found a large tree that was halfway between the land where Elephant lived and the water where Hippopotamus lived. Then, he took the very long, very strong rope made by his family and tied the middle of the rope to the tree.

Anansi gave one end of the rope to Elephant and the other end of the rope to Hippopotamus. Then, he told them both exactly the same thing, "Your tasty black bull is at the end of this rope. If you pull very hard, the black bull will be yours."

Anansi had really tricked Elephant and Hippopotamus this time! There was no tasty black bull – just a rope tied to a tree!

Who do you think will win the rope-pulling contest?

8 Both Elephant and Hippopotamus began to pull. When nothing happened, they began to pull harder.

Eventually, they were pulling as hard as they possibly could, huffing and puffing with all their might.

Elephant and Hippopotamus clearly needed help, so they asked their tribe members to start pulling, too.

The two tribes pulled all afternoon and into the evening. When it got dark, they stopped and rested for the night, but they were all pulling again at daybreak.

They pulled until the sun was high in the sky, but the rope never moved. That tasty black bull was nowhere in sight.

Elephant said to a few of the elephant children, "Run to Hippopotamus and find out what is going on! He promised me a black bull!"

Hippopotamus said to a few of the hippopotamus children, "Run to Elephant and find out what is going on! He promised me a black bull!"

Do you think the children will figure out that the two chiefs were tricked by Anansi?

9 Slowly but surely, the children figured out Spider's tricky ways. There was no tasty black bull. There was just a tree halfway between the land and the water with a very long, very strong rope tied to it.

When the children shared the bad news with their chiefs, Elephant and Hippopotamus were furious!

Elephant said, "I will invade the hippopotamus tribe and run them all out of water. If I have my way, all the hippopotamuses in this region will soon be dead."

Likewise, the Hippopotamus said, "I will invade the elephant tribe and run them off the land. If I have my way, all the elephants in this region will soon be dead."

Do you think going to war over Spider's trick is good idea?

10 Both tribes prepared for war. It would be a mighty battle between some of the largest animals in Africa. Many hippopotamuses and many elephants would die, but that's what they deserved.

Or did they?

Elephant began to wonder, "Why am I mad at Hippopotamus? We have been friends for a long time, and it's not his fault I was tricked by Spider."

Hippopotamus was wondering the exact same thing. "Why am I mad at Elephant? We have been friends for a long time, and it's not his fault I was tricked by Spider."

Both chiefs agreed that keeping peace was better than making war. They untied the rope from the tree and gave up on ever getting that tasty black bull. And as much as they hated to admit it, Anansi really was pretty clever.

Even today, some people say this is why spiders are so thin. It is because they are still hiding from elephants and hippopotamuses after fooling their ancestors so long ago.

On the plus side, this is also why elephants and hippopotamuses still live in peace, with one group living happily on land and the other group living happily near the water.

What about you? Can you think of a time when you wanted to fight with someone, but you decided not to – choosing peace instead?

