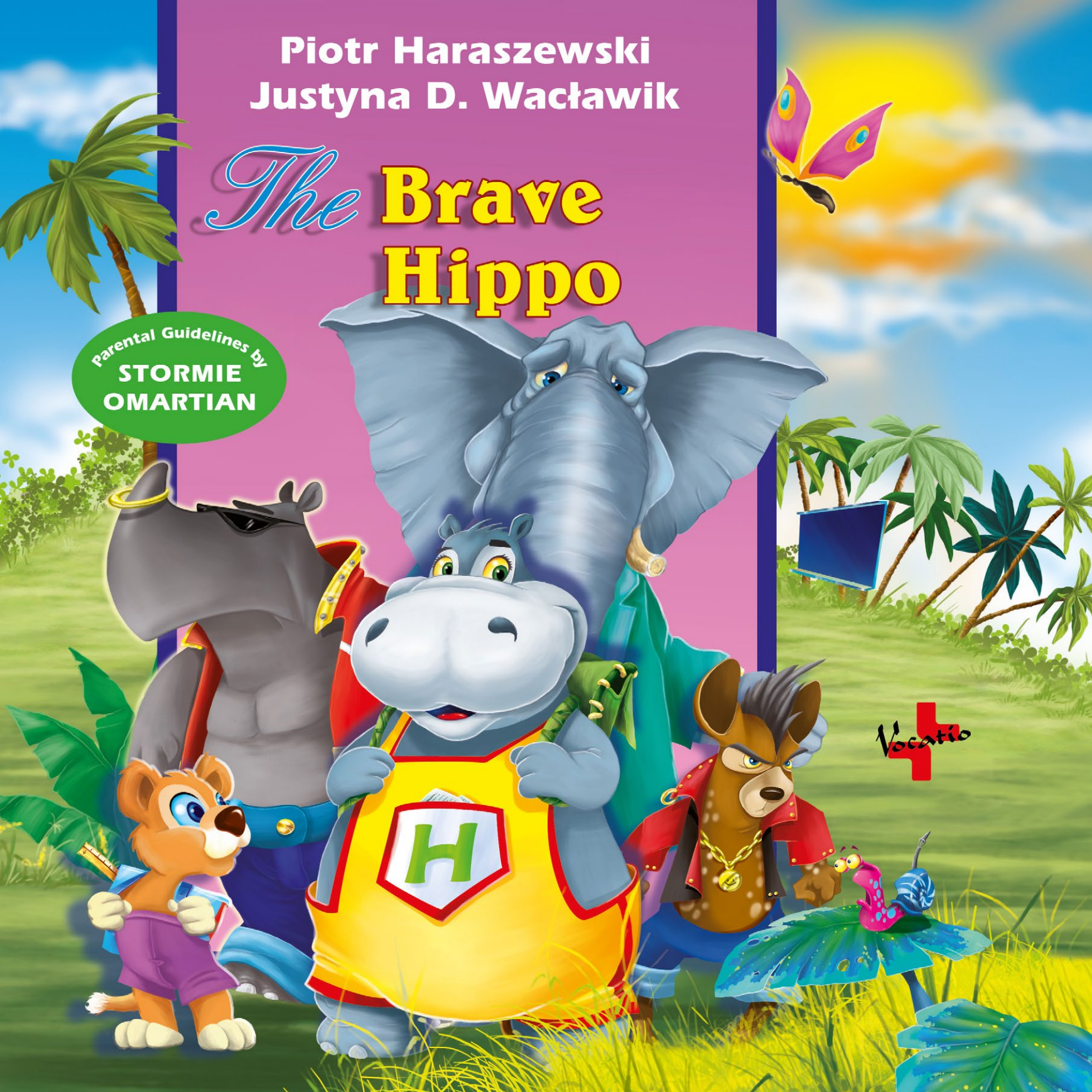


Piotr Haraszewski  
Justyna D. Waclawik

# *The* **Brave Hippo**

Parental Guidelines by  
**STORMIE  
OMARTIAN**



**Vocatio**

# CHARACTER BUILDERS

## Courage

The fascinating animals invite you into their world of challenges through a series of ten “Character Builders” books. These books will inspire children and have a positive impact on their lives. The purpose of this series is to provide parents and teachers with the proper tools to develop healthy character traits in children. The blessing of starting while they are young is seeing strong, solid fundamentals established, developed values and shaped character in your children when they become young adults.

The fourth volume in the series, *The Brave Hippo*, focuses on courage. Each of the African animals in this book has its own unique character and values. Through their attitude and choices their character is revealed which affects their behavior. This story helps children to understand that courage doesn't necessarily mean being stronger than anyone else or doing something that no one else can do. It means doing something that is good and right that perhaps no one else will do at that moment.

This book contains guidelines for parents and teachers. Discussion questions are provided which link the story with biblical principles. This will help to shepherd the child's heart enabling him or her to think through situations and to make wise decisions.



**Justyna D. Waclawik** is young and very talented and imaginative author who is admired by children. With her special sensitivity, she can easily visualize a child's world. Her stories captivate the attention of young readers and cultivate ethical morals as well as the best traditional Christian values. In a compelling manner, her books aid parents to help develop individuality and positive character in their children. Justyna resides in Phoenix, Arizona.

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CHARACTER  BUILDERS  
Courage

*This book is a gift for:*

.....

*From:*

.....

*For:*

.....



*We dedicate this book to Bozenka,  
the most delicate human being we know.  
Your sensitivity is your strength  
and a blessing to everyone around.  
Maintain it with courage.*

*Authors*



**Piotr Haraszewski**  
**Justyna D. Waclawik**

# The Brave Hippo

**Parental Guidelines by Stormie Omartian**  
**Illustrations by Jakub Kuźma and Andrzej Chalecki**



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The summer was ending and the day little Hippo had been dreaming of finally came. He was going to school at last! The school was beautiful, indeed! It was situated in the savanna close to the river, in the pleasant shade of a cluster of palm trees. Every child was to have his own little desk. The school desks were arranged in such a way that everybody could easily see the blackboard and hear the teacher, Miss Giraffe.



*I*n the morning Hippo received a splendid schoolbag made of palm leaves. He went to school together with his mom for the first time in his life. Many of his classmate had already arrived. There were two cute twin Zebras, and Impala the antelope, and Little Gorilla. Even Donkey shuffled along, although the school was a long way from his home.





Everybody respectfully kept a safe distance from the Lion family, who brought their youngest kid to school as well. But the headmaster, the old and wise Elephant, knew how to maintain order and safety. In his presence even Lions would think twice before roaring too loudly. More and more animals kept arriving from everywhere.



Elephant, the headmaster, thanked the parents for coming in such great numbers, and introduced Miss Giraffe who presented the schedule and the regulations. The most important point in the regulations was the safety in and around the school. No one was allowed to bite or kick anyone else, and everybody should do his best to study diligently. The parents, very pleased, returned to their own work, while Orangutan, the janitor, drummed the tom-tom. It was a signal to start the class, so all the animals entered the small clearing among the palm trees.





*M*iss Giraffe assigned a desk to each kid. Suddenly the animals were startled by a horrible noise with a loud crack at the back of the class. It was Hippo's school desk, collapsing under his weight. All the little animals turned to see this and were now rolling with laughter.



“You fatty! It serves you right!”, some were shouting.

“Why do you eat that much, fatso?!”

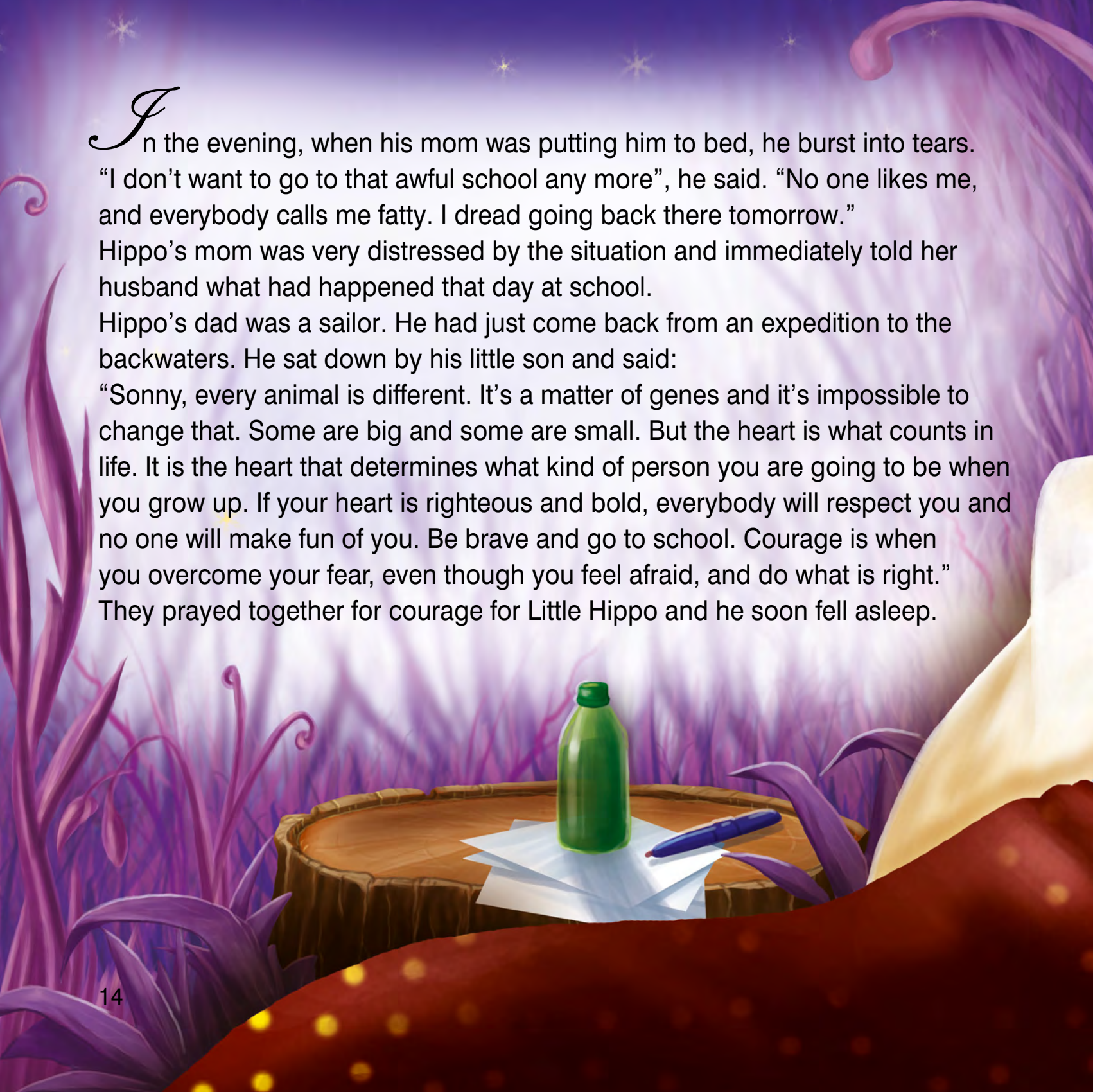
Tears filled Hippo’s eyes. He was so eager to have new friends,  
but now all the little animals were making fun of him.



During the break Hippo was too ashamed to take the sandwiches his mother made from his school bag. He watched the other children gorging on goodies and frolicking in the savanna while he sat all alone on the ground by his broken desk. Hippo was very hungry and at the same time eager to play with others, but the scoffs and jeers made him so ashamed that he was afraid to do anything at all. He dared not utter a word so as not to provoke anyone to make fun of him again.







*I*n the evening, when his mom was putting him to bed, he burst into tears. “I don’t want to go to that awful school any more”, he said. “No one likes me, and everybody calls me fatty. I dread going back there tomorrow.” Hippo’s mom was very distressed by the situation and immediately told her husband what had happened that day at school. Hippo’s dad was a sailor. He had just come back from an expedition to the backwaters. He sat down by his little son and said: “Sonny, every animal is different. It’s a matter of genes and it’s impossible to change that. Some are big and some are small. But the heart is what counts in life. It is the heart that determines what kind of person you are going to be when you grow up. If your heart is righteous and bold, everybody will respect you and no one will make fun of you. Be brave and go to school. Courage is when you overcome your fear, even though you feel afraid, and do what is right.” They prayed together for courage for Little Hippo and he soon fell asleep.





*S*chool was much the same the next day—Hippo had to sit on the ground, while other little animals mocked him. But Hippo did not cry any more. He remembered what his dad had told him about heart and courage. He made up his mind to have a bold and righteous heart. Still it wasn't a nice feeling to hear all the nasty names being shouted at him. He felt rejected by the other animals. The mocking continued week after week.





One day a suspicious gang of troublemakers appeared around the school. Its ringleader was a young rhinoceros, who never attended classes. He commanded a pack of hyenas. They would bully all the little animals on their way to class. Unfortunately, Elephant the headmaster was absent that day, having left on a business trip, and Orangutan, the janitor, hid somewhere, scared of the gang. Miss Giraffe was at a loss what to do. She, too, was afraid of Rhino. Everybody knew that no one and nothing could stop Rhino if he went berserk. He was really unpredictable. Even lions would flee from him in panic.





During the break no little animal ventured to go to the watering-place. Everybody was afraid. Rhino was sitting on his motorbike by the river, hurling threats he would vandalize the school. The Hyenas were running to and fro, sneering at them all. It was already afternoon, but the little animals had no idea how to return home.





After the last class Hippo decided to overcome his fear. He put on his schoolbag and started back home. Other little animals followed behind him, hiding for protection as if he were a shield. Once they reached the watering-place, Hippo asked Rhino in a polite way to let them pass. But Rhino got mad. "Who do you think you are?", he shouted. "You think you can ramble anywhere you wish and I'd give in to you?" At once he jumped on his motorbike heading towards Hippo.

But Hippo was faster. He swiftly leaped aside, just in time, and Rhino fell right into the river at its deepest place along with his Harley.







The Hyenas, startled, were frightened to death. Their ringleader could not swim, and neither could they.

“Help Rhino!”, they were begging. “He can’t swim! If you don’t help him, he’s going to drown, and his parents will sink into despair!”

Then Hippo jumped into the water. Soon he pulled Rhino out on the bank of the river and told the Hyenas to take him back home. They meekly complied. Other animals were staring at Hippo, completely astonished. Only now did they realize that they did not know him at all and that they had underestimated him. Now they all huddled around Hippo, eager to make friends with him.





*N*ext day at school Elephant, the headmaster, could not find enough words to praise Hippo. Handing him a special certificate for courage, he asked: “Tell us, young hero, what did it feel like? Weren’t you frightened when confronting this dangerous fellow?”

“I was really scared”, Hippo replied. “Still I decided to do what my dad had taught me. We can’t let fear determine what we do in life. I have learned that we ought to do what is right in spite of fear.”

“Now I see why you saved the life of this rogue”, said the headmaster.

“I wish all the kids in our school had such generous and brave hearts as yours.”





*I*n the evening many parents arrived at Hippo's place. Even the proud Lion, who is never quick to thank anybody for anything, came to pay his respects. The animals admired Hippo's courage and his good heart. Even the old Gorilla promised to build a new specially buttressed desk next day at school, just for Hippo, as a token of appreciation. All the animals wanted to be his friend. His fatness was no longer a problem.







## **PARENTAL GUIDELINES**

**by Stormie Omartian**

Having courage is not valued today as it should be. We certainly admire it in others, such as popular athletes and military heroes. But when it comes to having personal courage, too often we don't see ourselves as especially brave. And that may be because we are afraid that being courageous will require more from us than we have to give. But having courage doesn't mean the absence of fear. It means doing the right thing in spite of any fear we may have. And that is something we must teach our children.

We must help our children understand that courage doesn't necessarily mean being stronger than anyone else or doing something that no one else can do. It means doing something that is good and right that perhaps no one else *will* do at that moment. We can tell them that having courage is not a feeling; it is a choice they make. And the more they choose to do things that take personal courage, the more their courage will grow. Making right choices builds their character and helps them to maintain a clear conscience. This doesn't mean doing risky or unwise things just to prove something, but doing what's right no matter what is happening.

We should also teach our children that the greatest hero and most courageous person of all time is Jesus Christ. He willingly sacrificed His life for us through great suffering, humiliation, torture, and death. And worst of all, He became *temporarily* separated from God. He did this to save all who believe in Him, so that we will never have to be separated from God. That means when we need to do courageous things, God will be with us to help us stand strong.

When our children have to stand in opposition to sin of any kind, they need the strength and courage only God can give them. We parents can teach them to pray, "Lord Jesus, help me to do the right thing in every situation. Give me the wisdom to know what the right thing is to do and give me the courage to do it". Then when they encounter negative peer pressure and the temptations that they will surely face, their own personal courage will be built up by the knowledge that God is with them, and he will help them resist instead of going along with the crowd. This is one of the most important lessons your children will ever learn. It will protect them. It will not only help them stand up for themselves, but also stand up for people who are being mistreated. It will enable them to stand up for the things of God.

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage,  
and He shall strengthen your heart"

Psalm 27:14



## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN**

### **1. What does it mean to be courageous? Are brave people never afraid?**

- a) Psalms 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble?”
- b) Isaiah 41:10 “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”
- c) Proverbs 29:25 “Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.”

### **2. What was the reason other animals ridiculed Hippo at school?**

### **3. How did Hippo feel when others made fun of him? Have you ever been in a similar situation?**

- a) Proverbs 12:25 “Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.”
- b) Proverbs 15:13 “A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart crushes the spirit.”
- c) Proverbs 12:18 “Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.”

### **4. What do you think about the attitude of the animals in the school? Have you ever acted in a similar way?**

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Don’t be fooled by those who say such things, for “bad company corrupts good character.”
- b) Ephesians 5:17 “Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.”
- c) Proverbs 14:21a “It is a sin to belittle one’s neighbor.”

### **5. Was Rhino brave? Explain why.**

- a) Proverbs 14:22a “If you plan to do evil, you will be lost.”
- b) Proverbs 12:26 “The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray.”
- c) Proverbs 21:7 “The violence of the wicked sweeps them away, because they refuse to do what is just.”
- d) Proverbs 13:18 “If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace.”

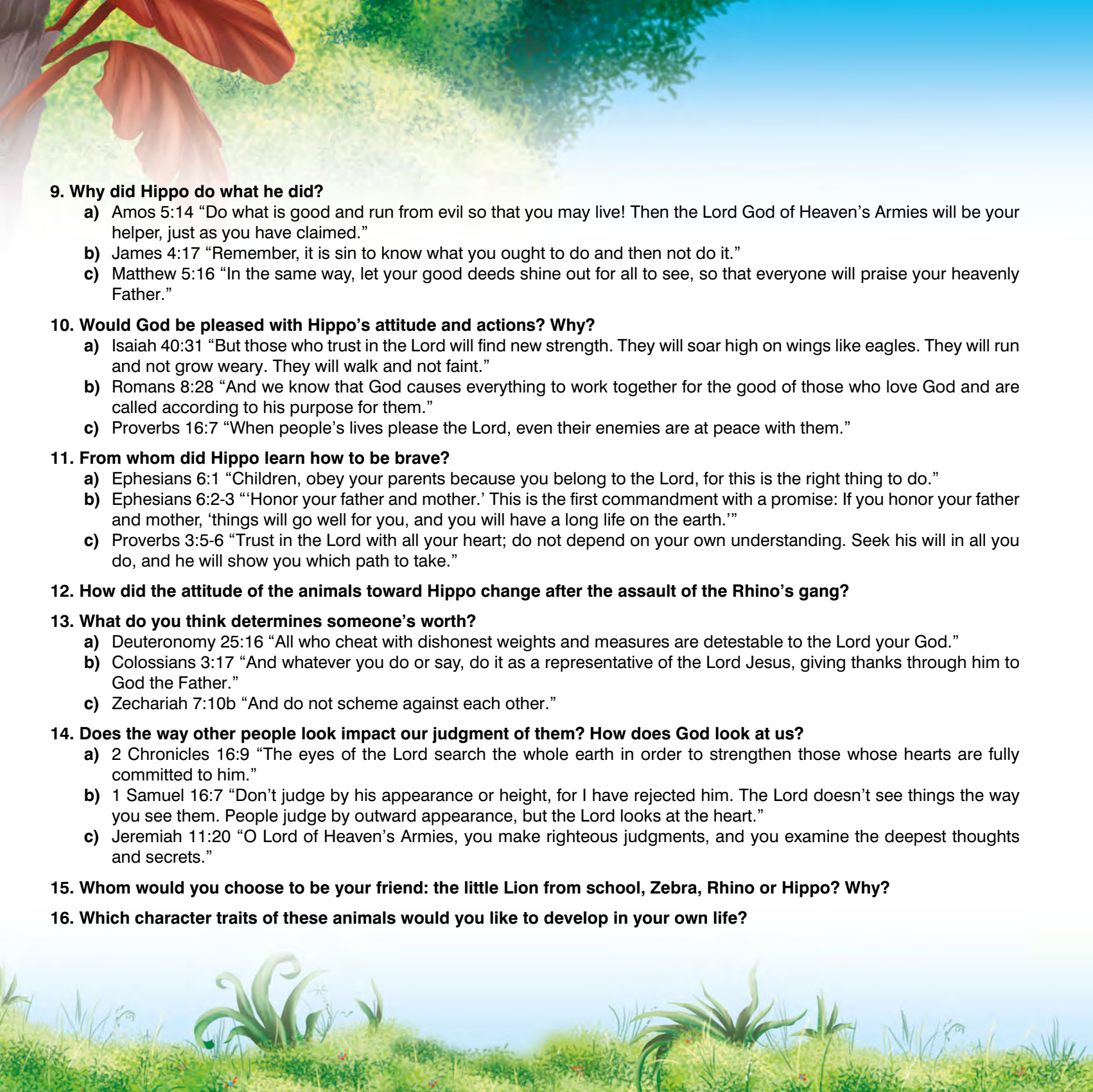
### **6. Why did the Hyenas hang out with Rhino? Do you know similar groups in your environment?**

- a) Proverbs 29:27 “The righteous despise the unjust; the wicked despise the godly.”
- b) Psalms 12:8 “Even though the wicked strut about, and evil is praised throughout the land.”
- c) Proverbs 4:19 “But the way of the wicked is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over.”

### **7. Why do you think Hippo saved Rhino? What would you have done in his place?**

- a) Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would like them to do to you.”
- b) Romans 12:21 “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.”
- c) 1 Thessalonians 5:15 “See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.”

### **8. Why don’t we often help other people who tease or make fun of us?**



**9. Why did Hippo do what he did?**

- a) Amos 5:14 “Do what is good and run from evil so that you may live! Then the Lord God of Heaven’s Armies will be your helper, just as you have claimed.”
- b) James 4:17 “Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”
- c) Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

**10. Would God be pleased with Hippo’s attitude and actions? Why?**

- a) Isaiah 40:31 “But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”
- b) Romans 8:28 “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”
- c) Proverbs 16:7 “When people’s lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them.”

**11. From whom did Hippo learn how to be brave?**

- a) Ephesians 6:1 “Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.”
- b) Ephesians 6:2-3 “‘Honor your father and mother.’ This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, ‘things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.’”
- c) Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

**12. How did the attitude of the animals toward Hippo change after the assault of the Rhino’s gang?**

**13. What do you think determines someone’s worth?**

- a) Deuteronomy 25:16 “All who cheat with dishonest weights and measures are detestable to the Lord your God.”
- b) Colossians 3:17 “And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”
- c) Zechariah 7:10b “And do not scheme against each other.”

**14. Does the way other people look impact our judgment of them? How does God look at us?**

- a) 2 Chronicles 16:9 “The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”
- b) 1 Samuel 16:7 “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”
- c) Jeremiah 11:20 “O Lord of Heaven’s Armies, you make righteous judgments, and you examine the deepest thoughts and secrets.”

**15. Whom would you choose to be your friend: the little Lion from school, Zebra, Rhino or Hippo? Why?**

**16. Which character traits of these animals would you like to develop in your own life?**