



I had the same feelings myself a few years back when I got stuck trying to find 100 answers to prayer. After the first week of my experiment I knew I was in trouble. That's when I called up Noah for advice.

### **A visit to Noah's Ark**

Of course I didn't phone the original Noah. I called Jama Hedgecoth, a woman I'd interviewed several years earlier for a magazine article. Jama started out with no money, no connections, a very basic education and a huge vision from God - to open a children's home and an animal refuge. She married young, moved into a trailer, started having babies and began taking in mangy kittens and blind dogs. Her husband worked construction jobs and she earned a few dollars delivering photos to drugstores. Then her little house got even more crowded when she started taking in teenagers who needed a place to stay.

### **Facing eviction.**

Jama's house was overflowing with cages and sleeping bags. She borrowed a few thousand from her father to put down on a farm. She promised to pay the rest to the owner – nearly \$485,000 – by June. May came and Jama couldn't pay up. Facing eviction, she went out under a tree in the field to pray. And God seemed to answer her. He said, "It's in My hands." "O.K.," Jama said, "But there's not much time."

Jama went back to the house and broke the news that they needed to find another place. She said, "I'm not sure where we're going, but God will show us." Suddenly the phone rang. It was a lawyer she'd called to ask what day she had to move out.

The lawyer said, "I was talking on the phone with a client who's out of town. I said

everything was going fine here except for a woman with hundreds of animals who was about to get evicted. Long story short, my client wants to pay off your whole \$485,000 debt so you'll own the farm." Jama was so stunned she literally dropped the receiver and her father had to pick it up and continue the conversation.

Today Noah's Ark is a 250 acre compound in Locust Grove, Georgia where Jama, her family, the paid staff and 250 volunteers care for 24 foster children and 900 displaced domestic, exotic and wild animals of every kind - horses, dogs, bears, emus, monkeys and parrots. Every day it takes \$600.00 just to feed all of the animals! (You can learn more at [www.noahs-ark.org](http://www.noahs-ark.org) )

### **Turning down a free African safari.**

Jama's story made a lasting impression on me. So when I got stuck on my 100 answered prayer experiment, I decided to go visit the woman who'd gotten a half million dollar answer to prayer.

I sat down in Jama's office and snapped on my tape recorder eager to hear Jama's secret to effective prayer. She began, "Recently I did a one week time study with Jackie who's our office manager. Every fifteen minutes we were supposed to write down what we were doing. At the end of the study I was surprised that I was spending an enormous amount of time, I mean literally hours and hours, praying and singing.

"At first I wondered if so much prayer made my schedule unbalanced. But I pray all of the time because I need God so much. This place is growing so fast sometimes it's scary. We constantly need volunteers and money and animal feed. I've got a lot of responsibilities."

Jama went on, "Praying has changed me. Things that used to be very important to me, things that I used to be driven by, no longer drive me. Recently someone offered to pay to send me on a \$6,000 three-week trip to Africa to see the animals. I've dreamed about doing that all of my life. A few years ago I would have broken my neck to go. But I turned them down. I said no thank you, but I can't be gone from here for three weeks where I can't go out and have my prayer time."

I realized that Jama wasn't saying that you can't pray on an African safari. She meant that being on a trip with preset schedules and group activities would leave very little time alone. Going would severely limit her prayer time in a way that wasn't acceptable to her. That's because her prayer time wasn't a ten minute obligation wedged into her schedule. The opposite was true. The rest of her schedule was determined by her prayer time.

A cold shiver went down my neck as I compared myself to Jama. I hated to admit that it took a whole lot less than an African safari for me to set aside my prayer time. In fact, all it took was seeing a garage sale sign by the road to sidetrack me from my daily prayer time.

Jama went on, “I crave that one-on-one time with God. I stand in the pasture and raise my hands up and sing even though I can’t carry a tune to save my life. If you walk in the woods with Jesus, tell Him everything, if you can nurture that love with God and do it on a regular basis you just fall in love with Him. That’s your energy. That’s your everything for the day.”

### **The prayer thermometer.**

As I drove home and compared Jama’s prayer life to mine I saw that she was miles and miles above me. I’d gone to Noah’s Ark to find out Jama’s secret and God had used Jama’s dependence and commitment to prayer as a way for me to see where I was on the prayer enthusiasm scale. God wanted to show me the unlimited possibilities of how much higher I could go using Jama as a prayer thermometer.

A prayer thermometer registers the stirrings deep down in our souls when we meet someone whose prayer life surpasses ours in enthusiasm, depth, vitality, passion and consistency. They show us how much warmer, even hotter we can get.

Jama’s amazing prayer secret was her passion to know God, her eagerness to enjoy Him every day. Prayer wasn’t simply another item to check off her to-do list. It was her everything for her day. She needed and wanted God. Desperately. Completely. Hourly. Nothing on this planet brought her more joy than spending time with God.

### **Going up one degree.**

When I got home I admitted that I was barely lukewarm compared to Jama. But how could I ever be like her? Then slowly it dawned on me that temperature doesn’t have to spike suddenly. Temperatures can go up surely but steadily one degree at a time something like the way winter turns into spring one day at a time. Instead of being discouraged that I wasn’t as warm as Jama I decided to start where I was. I simply asked God how to go up one degree higher. Over a two year time period God showed me how and in this series I’ll share some of the things that helped me that you might want to try, too.

During this journey you may encounter someone who acts as a prayer thermometer to you. Maybe you’ll try to compare yourself to someone in your discussion group, your church or your family. Maybe you’ll compare yourself to the experiences I share. Don’t dwell on how far you still have to go. Instead, **make it your goal to simply try and go up a single degree by taking the next small step in the direction of a deeper prayer life.**

### **The unseen spiritual side of life.**

When we define prayer as “the place where things happen between God and me” we become aware that we’re entering a different sort of reality, a place where we experience the unseen spiritual side of life. Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry trying to open our

eyes to the Kingdom of God. He says, “But seek His kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:31,32) Jesus says we find the spiritual side of life by seeking it, entering it and treasuring it.

Jesus explains the immeasurable value of this other-earthly quality of life by comparing it with things like a pearl of such value that we sell everything to buy it or to a tiny mustard seed that grows so big that it’s the largest plant in our whole garden. (Matthew 13:45-46, Luke 13:18-19)

**Change your life by changing the way you connect with God.**

I didn’t have to completely understand why Jama turned down the safari. I only needed to glimpse that there was much more of God that I could know and experience through prayer. And that one glimpse changed my life forever. I discovered that what Jama said about the joy of prayer is true. Prayer isn’t a stale religious duty or ritual. It’s a journey into an incredible Kingdom with our loving Father.

It doesn’t matter if you’ve just started praying for the first time or if you’ve been praying for 50 years. The Kingdom is vast and beautiful. Everyone of any age can find something new and deeply satisfying to explore every single day.

*I’m having a wonderful time. Wish you were here.*

*Love,  
Karen*