

This Danger Lurks Nearby

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In a scene from the television show, *Animal Planet*, a compelling image shows a herd of gazelles grazing in the middle of a meadow. The golden grass is two, maybe three-feet high. The sky is heavy and gray, with hot clouds hanging like old sheets. The graceful gazelles with their ringed horns, that curve backward and inward, focus on the grass, not the danger that lurks nearby.

In the foreground a leopard creeps slowly from the left to the right of the screen. A soft breeze blows through the grass. It waves back and forth in front of the leopard making him almost invisible. He stops and gazes at the herd.

A single gazelle, savoring the sweet grass, forgets the herd and its safety. He stands alone, head down, eating the grass. The leopard locks his eyes on the lone gazelle. He stiffens—like a statue. He attacks.

A Safe Place

The gazelle springs. He darts to the right. He cuts to the left. The leopard runs as fast as the wind. He closes in on his prey. He lashes out with his right paw and hits the rear legs of the gazelle tripping the antelope. In an instant, the leopard clamps his jaws on the gazelle's throat. The graceful gazelle lies motionless—his brown eyes dart about. In a few moments he will be dead. Why? Because he wandered from the herd. He could have been the slowest, smallest and weakest gazelle in the meadow, but had he stayed in the middle of the herd he would have been safe.

Each time I watch that clip I'm moved by the cruelty of the leopard and the weakness of the gazelle. As a scuba diver I frequently see large schools of fish. Like the gazelle, they find safety in numbers. And it's instinctive. God programmed it into their psyche. We lack such instincts. But face a greater danger.

Learn A Lesson From the Gazelle

Peter said, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Hidden from our view, the devil stalks us. He waits to attack. He watches to see when we're alone, weak, and vulnerable. He waits until we're distracted.

We must learn a lesson from the gazelle and stay close to the herd. Alone, we're weak, together we're strong. That reality raises an important question: are you regularly connecting with a few friends? If so—stay close to them. If not, look up, danger is lurking nearby. Get close to the heard.