



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 9: Motives

Suggested Week of Use: October 27, 2024

Core Passage: Acts 19:11-20

News Story Summary

A new study in the journal *iScience* shows that bottlenose dolphins communicate when it's time to play. According to the research, these dolphins use “open mouth” facial expressions (like a human smile) to communicate with each other when they engage in social play. These mammals almost always use this “smile” within other dolphins’ line of sight. About a third of the time, the other dolphin returns the smile. This study reinforces the idea that visual communication plays a crucial role in social interactions not only in dolphins, but also in other species.

Researchers believe the smile communicates friendliness so actions like playing chase, playfighting, and acrobatics are not perceived as aggression. The dolphins used the open mouth expression with other dolphins, but not with humans or during solitary play. More than 1,200 “smiles” were recorded, with 92 percent taking place during dolphins’ playtimes together.

For more about this story, search “Bottlenose dolphins smile during playtime”

Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, group adults into pairs as they arrive (separating couples). Explain that you will give one adult in each pair a list of facial expressions to perform, while the other adult guesses which emotion is being portrayed. The list could include anger, concentration, surprise, amusement, disgust, sadness, confusion, fear, exasperation, and so forth.

After several minutes, bring adults together. Ask: *Which expressions were easiest to decode? Which were the most difficult? Why?* Share the new research released recently regarding how bottlenose dolphins smile when they play with one another. Say: *A lot of times, even among humans, intentions cannot always be easy to interpret or understand. Today, we will look at the importance of having proper intentions and motivations for serving others.*

Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, recall the study on bottlenose dolphins. Point out that many animals (not just dolphins) communicate their intentions with facial expressions and body language. Ask: *Why is it more difficult to discern motives or intentions in humans? How can we make sure we pursue proper motives and intentions in serving or caring for others?* Say: *The first step is to examine our hearts honestly before the Lord and to allow Him to show us our true intentions.* Provide a few moments for silent prayer, as adults examine their hearts and listen for God to speak. Close in prayer.