

## Pray Like a Penguin

I turned on the TV and saw thousands of Emperor penguins trudging across the Antarctic ice. Waddling awkwardly, they walked or slid 70 miles to their destination, guided only by an inner sense of which way was right. There they chose mates and laid one large egg which the male penguins immediately balanced on their feet, letting down a flap of skin in the front to cover it and keep it warm.

The females then started the 70 mile trek back to the open water for food.

Balancing the egg like a basketball on his feet, the Papa penguin could barely walk on his heels with his toes curled up. Mostly he just stood still.

Mostly he just stood still because, if he accidentally let the egg roll off his feet, it would be frozen within two minutes.

Mostly he just stood still for the next 125 days of the harshest winter known to this planet: minus 140 degrees F with winds up to 120 miles an hour.

Mostly he just stood still huddled tightly into the group of other expectant fathers. Like one solid mass, they all faced toward the center and took turns being in the middle.

Mostly he just stood still, starving for over 4 months with ice forming on his head and back, eyes closed against the onslaught. Not one penguin gave up and left!

*Stupid penguins! It's too much to ask. Don't die out here in the wasteland; you need to go somewhere where there is food and water, somewhere you can thrive and prosper. Just let the egg roll off and go eat! Just let go of the promise of new life, and go save yourself! Where are the mothers? Why are you the only one suffering? It's not fair.*

Mostly the father penguins just stood still, checking on the egg from time to time, readjusting it slightly to keep it in the most stable position.

Sometimes one or two of them shuffled a few feet to a new position, but mostly they just stood still and they waited. They waited for help to come. For 125 days they fasted almost to death believing that help would come in time.

Mostly they just stood still until one day the egg cracked open and a fluffy chick clambered out. Is it over? By no means! Now the father has to balance the chick on his feet and keep it from freezing until the mother returns with food.

But the chick is hungry, and if food doesn't arrive in the next day or so, it will die. The starving father has a special pouch in his throat in which he has kept a little food just for this time, and he feeds the baby a meal that will keep it alive for one more day.

Meanwhile, the mothers have been trudging for almost a week across the ice toward the waiting fathers. They arrive just in time to save the lives of their chicks. The chick is shuffled from the feet of the father to the feet of the mother so that the father can leave for the open sea and food. But before he goes, the father bends down and talks to the chick and listens to his little chirping noises. He is memorizing the little voice, and will be able to find his own chick by that sound when he returns.

Now it is the turn of the mother to keep the chick safe until the land warms and the chick grows a thick coat of feathers. She feeds him, talks to him, and keeps him safe.

**So God tells me to pray like a penguin....**

Sometimes I am the Papa penguin: besieged by storms, starving, ice forming over my head, unable to advance in any direction – just holding on, holding on, holding on in the darkness – never letting go of the promise. Huddling tight with those of like mind and mission, gotta keep believing that somewhere others are doing their part, and that help is on the way. Never give up.

Sometimes I am the Mama penguin: gotta keep going even when I'm bone tired. Gotta find food for myself and enough to share. Gotta be brave – there are hungry sea lions out there. Gotta keep listening for that inner voice that will get me where I need to be at exactly the right time. Gotta keep believing that somewhere others are doing their part, and that the prize is worth more than all the struggle. Never give up.

### **Penguin Prayer Principles**

1. Protect the Promise of new life that God is bringing into some dying situation. Don't let that promise drop even for a minute.
2. Plod on. Just keep taking one more step. Don't fear the sea lions.
3. Pack in tightly together with others of like mind. Keep believing that help is on the way, and the goal shall be achieved. Never give up.
4. Pay attention to the inner voice and obey.
5. Persevere through the fasting and the bitter cold and the twenty-four hours of darkness. Look up! The aurora borealis blazes across the winter sky almost every night!



**REACHING PEOPLE  
PLANTING CHURCHES**