

BIBLE STUDY – THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

The Christian life takes real commitment, and thanksgiving is a key discipline. Although a new year offers the chance to look ahead, it is also the perfect time to look back and give thanks.



GOD IS DOING GREAT THINGS IN MADAGASCAR.

Melias, a Malagasy missionary, is now based in the village of Befotaka. The village is full of spirit-possessed people, and they know it is a power that controls them. When the gospel was made known to a very small group of people, they were delivered from their oppression. They are now studying the Bible, two or three times a week. God has accompanied this ministry with miracles. Now, people knock on Melias' door at night, asking him to come and to pray for their sick, and they see more healings take place!



WHAT DO WE HAVE TO BE THANKFUL FOR?



- How good are you at giving thanks? Would you describe yourself more as a grumbler or grateful? Why?
- What does thanksgiving look like in your life? Is it a regular or rare practice?

Read Psalm 103.

- How do you feel reading v1-5? Does it describe your life, or do you find it hard to relate to?
- It can be easy to overlook God's goodness if we are not in the habit of giving thanks. Consider God's forgiveness and grace in your life, take time to reflect on v6-12.
- In many churches, the significance of sin and God's holiness is hardly mentioned; how might this take away from what God has done in forgiving us?
- Take a moment to give thanks to God for his forgiveness: "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:11-12
- How does the story from Befotaka help you to see who God is and what he is doing?
- As we read verses 13-22, we see a stark contrast between our seemingly momentary lives and the Lord who is everlasting. How does this contrast further highlight God's goodness?

SHARING WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Aidani, a young man of 22, has been living on the streets of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for many years. He comes from a remote village in the Kigoma region and grew up in very poor conditions.

Kathleen Quellmalz, at Safina Street Network, got to know him in 2020 as he sought help for a severe foot infection. For almost five months he went daily to the centre for treatment, giving them plenty of time to share Jesus. Finally, he put his trust in Jesus, and was saved and baptised in the same year.

Aidani was unable to write or read. Staff at Safina met with him for discipleship, introducing him to a church who helped him enrol in a school for adult education for the illiterate. He attended faithfully, despite still being homeless and, in January 2021, he joined the Network's school in Morogoro. During that year, he developed tremendously, both spiritually and academically. He now loves reading his Bible and sharing God's word with others. He does it with commitment and a fire in his heart; his desire is to become an evangelist.

Over Christmas, Aidani went home to visit his mother and attended a Tanzania Assemblies of God Church nearby, sharing his testimony with the church. As a result, he was asked to preach God's word twice on Sunday mornings.

We pray he would continue to grow in his faith and love for Jesus and, if it is God's plan, that he does become an evangelist.



A FIRE IN HIS HEART

- Would you describe yourself as an evangelist? What makes it difficult to speak to others about Jesus?
- Read 1 Chronicles 16:8–21. What are some of the things this passage recalls? Why does Asaph want Israel to remember God's deeds in the past?
- Aidani wasn't a trained preacher or evangelist, he simply shared what God had done (v8). How could you share what God has done for you? Have you told your family, neighbours or friends what Jesus means to you?
- As you look back over the last year, you will no doubt also remember difficult moments. Can you recall trials you've walked through in the past that taught you more about who God is or where you experienced him in a deeper way? Are there ways that you can encourage others about God's love and faithfulness through sharing your stories?
- What are your hopes for 2023? Lift them to God and ask that he would help you grow in faith and be better equipped to share the good news with others.



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