

Psalm 103

This week we are looking at Psalm 103, a psalm which David wrote, praising God and remembering all that he does for us and how much he loves us. So this is what we are going to do this morning!

*With all my heart I praise the LORD,
and with all that I am I praise his holy name! (Verse 1)*

Praise God together:

What one thing do you enjoy doing so much that you can say that you do it with "your whole heart" or with "all that that you are"? Why do you like this activity so much?

How can we praise God with all our hearts and all that we are?

Maybe you could play a worship song and sing and dance - choose your favourite or you could use this video <https://youtu.be/oP41XM9a0Jo>

Maybe you could find a musical instrument and make a joyful noise!

Here's a simple shaker you could make:

Find an empty cardboard tube and cut into 5-6cm length.

Decorate the outside of the tube however you like, you could cover with paper, tissue paper or stickers.

Squash together one end of the tube and staple the ends together and then seal the end with sticky tape.

Put some rice (or dried peas or pasta or lentils) into the tube and seal the other end as before, this time squashing the end in a different direction as in the picture.



Or you could think of all the things that you would like to say thank you to God for - I wonder how many things you can think of? You could turn this into a prayer!

The LORD is full of mercy and grace;

he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. (verse 8)

How great is God's love for all who worship him?

Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!

How far has the LORD taken our sins from us?

Farther than the distance from east to west! (verses 11-12)

Chat together:

Isn't it amazing? God loves us so much - greater than the distance between heaven and earth! How much is that?

Have a look at some pictures of space - the stars and galaxies - how far away they are and then think how this compares to how much God loves us!

I wonder what it means that God takes our sin (the things we do wrong) from us 'as far as the east is from the west'?

Do you think that this is proof of God's great love for us?

Isn't it amazing that God never stops loving us, even when we get things wrong sometimes? When we ask God to forgive us then he not only forgives us but puts all the bad stuff far away. In verse 12 it says as far as the east is from the west - have you ever watched the sun rise in the morning and then set in the evening? The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, opposite directions and you can't get any farther away than that! This means that if you say sorry to God and ask his forgiveness, then he forgives you - the bad stuff is dealt with, you don't need to feel guilty about it anymore, it really has gone. God won't come back to it in a few days' time and say 'what about when....' so you don't need to either.

Pray together:

Find a bowl of water, soap, towel and hand cream and sit together around them.

Take a quiet minute to think about anything that you need to ask God to forgive you for. Talk to God in your heart and head and say sorry. When you are ready, wash your hands as a sign that you understand that God has forgiven you. Dry your hands and then as a reminder of how much God loves you and how special you are, rub some hand cream into your hands.

Activities to do together:

Mercy and grace

God does not treat us as we deserve to be treated when we've done something wrong and he forgives us when we ask him to, this is mercy.

However, God goes a bit further, he doesn't just not punish us, instead he carries on blessing us and this is grace.

And God would love us to do the same! So how can we show the same mercy and grace to our families and friends? I wonder what ideas you might have?

We can bless them by loving them and helping them too. Maybe you could help tidy up at home when your grownups are busy or tired? Or maybe you could make a card to send to someone who is sad or lonely at the moment. You might like to make some cards or draw pictures for people you don't know that can go into boredom bags or go to a care home.

Maybe take a moment to think of someone that you can help this week, and then pray together asking God to help us to be caring and help other people.

Psalm 103

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote a tender love poem which you may recognise:

How do I love thee?

Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach . . .

Think of Psalm 103 as God's love poem to us. In its message we can hear God, our Abba Father, saying, "How do I love you? Let me count the ways . . ."

In this psalm, King David doesn't complain about anything nor does he ask God for anything. Instead, the entire psalm focuses on God's goodness and love to us and David's desire to respond with praise that comes from the deepest part of his person. David is not giving us a list of facts about God. This psalm comes from his personal experience of God.

Read through the psalm together. Spend a few moments reading it quietly again.

Is there anything that puzzles you?

Is there anything that really stands out, 'speaks' to you?

I wonder if your experience of God matches David's?

You might want to share together some of these things. Or maybe write some of your thoughts and prayers in your journal. Maybe you would like to write a poem of your own praising God for all he has done for you.

East and west picture

Draw or paint a beautiful picture of a sunrise or a sunset to remind you of how much God loves you or print off the colouring sheet below.

Make a crown

In verse 4 it says that God crowns us with love and compassion. Think about who usually wears a crown - maybe a king or a queen? This is how special we are to God, that he crowns us with his love. So to remind you of how much God loves you why not make a crown? Find a long piece of cardboard or cut a crown from an empty cereal box. Decorate it and write the words 'God loves me' on the front or write a verse from the psalm that you particularly want to remember.



