

# What We Can Give

*"We are here to help clean up the ponds," said Auntie Nikki.*

By Aliya Jakeman  
(Based on a true story)

*This story happened in the USA.*

"Are we there yet?" Aliya itched her leg where a mosquito had bitten her. They had been hiking over lava rock for so long! Aliya was getting tired.

"Almost," said her teacher, Auntie Nikki. "And trust me. It will be worth it."

Aliya wasn't so sure. They were on a school trip to Kīholo, a nature preserve on the Big Island of Hawaii. Aliya was excited to learn about the animals and plants on their island, but she felt nervous. She was new to the island, and she didn't know very many people yet. All the other kids were older, and they laughed together the whole hike. Aliya walked quietly next to them. She wanted to make a friend, but she didn't know how.

Finally they reached the cove. As they walked over a sandy hill, the fishponds came into view.

"Welcome to Kīholo," said Auntie Nikki.

Aliya looked around. It was beautiful here! Her teacher was right—the hike had been worth it.

For the next few hours, Aliya and her classmates learned all about the preserve. Aliya loved watching the fish swim through the water.

"The fishponds were made so that some fish can be caught and taken from the pond while others stay and grow big and strong. This way, everything stays in balance, and there are always enough fish," explained Auntie Nikki.

After lunch, Auntie Nikki called the kids to one of the bigger ponds. "OK, everyone, put on a pair of gloves. We are here to help clean up the ponds."

"Do we have to?" asked one of Aliya's classmates. "Yes! Part of visiting Kīholo is working together to help keep it clean. It's about what we can give," said Auntie Nikki.

Aliya was excited to help. She put on some gloves

and started picking up trash and tree branches from around the pond.

One of her classmates walked up next to her. Aliya had never talked to her before. She was wearing a bright pink shirt.

Aliya felt her heart beating fast. She wanted to say hi, but she was scared. What if the girl thought she was weird?

Then Aliya thought about what Auntie Nikki had said. *It's about what we can give.* Aliya took a deep breath and smiled. "Hi," she said. "I like your shirt."

The girl smiled. "Thank you! I'm Zoe."

"My name is Aliya."

The girls spent the rest of the day talking and laughing as they gathered up pieces of plastic and paper that had been left behind in the ponds. The

more Aliya got to know Zoe, the happier she felt. Zoe was so nice.

At the end of the day, the teacher made a fire for the kids to sit around. Aliya's muscles were sore from cleaning up the ponds.

"Aliya, come here. You have to see this!" Zoe ran toward her, waving her arms for Aliya to follow. Aliya followed Zoe to a bridge that crossed over the ponds.

Under the bridge, a huge turtle sat in the clear water. Smaller turtles swam past.

Aliya smiled. It was beautiful! She and Zoe stood on the bridge, side by side, and Aliya felt peaceful. Cleaning the ponds had been hard, but now these animals could keep living safely in their home.

Aliya looked at Zoe. She had a new friend now too, all because she'd been brave enough to say hello. Aliya said a little prayer in her heart. *Thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for this beautiful world and for my new friend. Thank Thee for helping me focus on what I could give.* ●