

Faith Practices for Families:
SERVING OTHERS



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INTRODUCTION

Service, along with prayer, Bible reading, and worship, teaches us to turn our hearts and minds to God. We begin to think and act as Christ's ambassadors. As we develop our relationship with God, we receive his love, respond with service to our neighbors, and observe God's care for creation.

For you and for your children, our prayer comes from Ephesians 1:17: *"I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God."*



Don't let anyone make fun of you, just because you are young. Set an example for other followers by what you say and do, as well as by your love, faith, and purity.

1 Timothy 4:12



Serving Others

As Christian parents, we want our children to have a heart for others and for service. God calls us to be the main spiritual guides for our children, and the Holy Spirit equips us to do that. One of the best ways to teach is by modeling service and hospitality to our children, not just for their friends but also for new acquaintances, neighbors, and those who are in need. As you begin to find ways to serve as a family and think about God's calling to serve, you'll find God at work every day. Sometimes the work will be easy, and other times it will be difficult—maybe messy and even heartbreaking. Service will be a real joy, and it will change you and your children with a closer relationship with God, others, and each other.

We wrote this ebook to help you create a plan and a space for acts of service in your family's weekly routines. Even thinking and talking about service may open your eyes to find spontaneous opportunities for you to bless others. It's our hope that you find this guide practical and relevant. Please refer back to it as you look for new ways to serve others together.

The guide encourages you to find ways to serve with your children. One of the church's great leaders, Teresa of Avila, understood how Christians are called to be the body of Christ on earth when she said, "Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks on the world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world." Our goal is that our children become God's hands and feet on earth.



Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4



WHY SHOULD WE SERVE TOGETHER?



Servants reflect God's love. We are called to be servants of God. As his servants, we share his love by helping out our neighbors, friends, and other people in need. We serve others out of gratitude for what Christ did for us. Jesus came to live, die, and be raised again from the dead for each one of us. Think about how our service changes because of what God has done for us through Jesus. Our service doesn't earn us God's love, but it does reflect God's love to the world.

Servants care about others. Would you rather be a servant or be served? In [Matthew 20:26-28](#), Jesus says if you want to be great, you need to be a servant! When we choose to serve others instead of trying to get them to serve us, we are behaving like Jesus. Teach children from an early age what it means to have empathy for others. When serving others, wonder what it would be like to be the one in need. By putting themselves in other people's shoes, kids get a better understanding of why they serve.

Servants do important work. Anyone can be a part of God's plan. Think about Abraham's servant in [Genesis 24](#). Abraham sent his servant to a far-off land. He told him that God would show him the right woman to be a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. The servant prayed and trusted God, and God brought Rebekah to him! She was the woman God had chosen to keep his promise to Abraham. We don't know the servant's name, but his courage and faith made him a part of God's plan. Think of all the ways that you serve others. How is your family a part of God's big plan too?



Servants impact their communities. In the book of Acts, the church had lots of work to do. Many new people started to believe in Jesus. Some of these new Christians were widows who needed help with food and clothing. Dorcas had the gift of hospitality; she took care of the needs of the widows in her community. In [her story](#), it's clear that she was dearly loved. Dorcas made the lives of the people around her better. She saw that someone had to help and that things needed to be done, so she stepped up and served. Look around. Who needs help? Find small and big ways to help others.

Servants are forever changed. Acts of service actively teach children to get out of their comfort zones. As educator W.E.B. DuBois said, "Only responsibility teaches responsibility." When we are able to provide opportunities that tap into a young person's passion, big things happen. For example, after returning from a week-long volunteer service project of helping adults with physical challenges, one youth exclaimed, "I finally found the reason I was born!"



Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:34

HOW DO WE START TO SERVE?



Before serving, we have to know why we serve. Remember that Jesus modeled service for us so that, like him, we could spread God's love to those in need. We have plenty of opportunities each day to act on our faith. Here are some practical ideas to help you guide your children to grow and nurture their response to God's call to serve.



Start with a conversation. Ask your child to think of someone they might bless with an act of service: maybe a classmate who is struggling with a lesson, or a friend dealing with a difficult situation at home. Pray together that God will show you opportunities to actually do something for that person. It doesn't have to be big. Small acts of kindness can bring big blessings to others.



Look for examples. Point out examples of people who have put their faith into action. Read or listen to the [Parable of the Good Samaritan](#), and talk together about the ways service is demonstrated, even when it meant making a difficult, but ultimately, right decision. Learn together about people like Mother Teresa, who demonstrated faith in action

- **Follow the example of Jesus.** Read together the action-filled stories about how Jesus served others. The story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet ([John 13:1-20](#)) is a particularly good example, but also note the times throughout the gospels that Jesus fed and healed people. They're all examples for us to follow as we serve.
- **Get advice.** With your child, interview an older person that you know, maybe a grandparent or someone in your church. Ask them about ways they served as young people. Did those experiences prepare them to serve as adults? Did they discover any gifts of talents or abilities as they served? How do they use these gifts now? Thank them for their wisdom and inspiration!

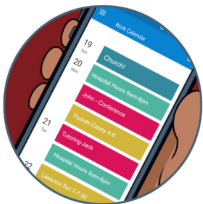
- **Pray for the servants around you.** Think locally, nationally, and globally, and in all ages, from young children to seniors. Create a list together with your family. From this list of God’s servants, as a family, choose one person to pray for each week. Reach out and ask them if there’s something your family can do for them, and encourage them with a kind note and prayer.



Think of your child’s gifts. Highlight the importance of a servant’s heart and the work for God’s glory. Remind your children that they all have unique and important gifts that help them share God’s love in different ways. Do a deep dive with your children, and fill out their [Gifts and Talents Survey](#) at the end of this booklet.



Serve at home. Extend compassion, hospitality, and service to your kids. Show them what it means to carry others’ burdens. The next time you help your kids with something, you could even teach them how to do it so that they are able to help others. Give your kids opportunities to help you. Ask for help bringing the groceries in or putting away laundry or hanging a picture. Model for them that even adults need to ask for help, and it’s okay for them to ask, too.



Plan. Think of one manageable act of service your child can complete and feel successful about. Perhaps it’s making cards for members of your church, or offering to help rake leaves in a neighbor’s yard. Help them plan out the steps involved. Pray for your child’s work, and pray with your child. Maybe do the act of service as a family and find ways to equip your child. Invite your child’s friend along to be company, support, and an extra pair of hands.



Check in often. As a regular part of family devotions, help your child see the ways that they have shown love to people each day. Ask your child “How did you show your faith today?” Share your own examples as well. This will help your child be more aware of opportunities around them, and learn that adults continue to use their gifts to serve God and others.



Pray. As you guide your children to put their faith into action, surround them in prayer. “Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying” (Romans 12:12). As you focus on faith in action, God will reveal more opportunities for action each day.

HOW CAN WE SERVE?



Show your children what it means to carry others' burdens. Maybe bring dinner to a family who is going through a hard time, and together as a family pray for them. Teaching our kids to be good helpers can also include helping with spiritual things—give them opportunities to read the Bible or pray after dinnertime. Remember that it might take a while for your kids to discern their gifts! Thankfully, God gives us the patience and insight we need as we help our kids learn about their strengths and how to use them well.



Offer prayers. God always has time to listen to your prayers! Make a list of people and concerns that you could add to your prayer list. Check out our resource page's [prayer list](#).



Serve a meal. Sharing a meal is a great way to show hospitality and get your whole family involved. Is there a new family at church or neighbors you'd like to get to know better? Invite them over for dinner. Or perhaps there's a new mom or someone who is sick who could use a meal delivered. A care package of baked goods to a college student means so much when they are away from home.



Share what you have. Work together to create the habit of giving a portion of your money to God.

- Make a special place (like a box or a piggy bank) to keep your child's offering until they can give a donation to your church or another organization that can make a difference for Jesus' sake.
- Talk to your family about supporting a child through Compassion International (www.compassion.com), or providing a poor family in another country with tangible help, like a goat or school supplies (www.worldrenew.net).
- Do an annual spring cleaning, and help your child clean out their closet and toy bins to find items that can be new-again donations to local thrift stores.

There are so many opportunities to give to others in Jesus' name. Find one that you can do with your family.



Serve willingly. What are some jobs around the house or at school that are usually at the bottom of the chore list? Maybe it is taking out the garbage, wiping tables, or doing garden work. Encourage volunteerism, and together do one of these jobs at home or at school. One of the ground rules is to take your turn willingly and not grumble.



Make an effort. Talk about the chores that everyone does around the house. Ask everyone to put in their best effort, give a little extra, and do more than is expected. Each family member then picks a job that they do around the house to serve the family. When they do that job this week, they'll be reminded to do a little something extra.



Show interest. “Think globally; Act locally” motivates us to do something. It doesn't matter what it is; we just need to act with good intentions. It will be a blessing. Use your interest, time, and effort to learn about the world and your community.

- For example, learn about countries that are dealing with war, natural disasters, or persecution; who the people are; and let's pray for that country.
- Take a drive and show your children where the local food bank, women's shelter, and housing-focused emergency shelters are in your community.
- Use the right language and correct factual information about the community's efforts to help those in need.



Care for creation. God created us to be stewards, or caretakers, of his creation. Try these ideas to teach an appreciation of nature and good stewardship of God's world to your kids.

- Plant flowers outside or volunteer at a community garden. If you're planting flowers or non-edible plants, plant native plants. Keep track of your plants' growth by keeping a journal or taking pictures. Take joy in watching God's creation grow!
- Decorate cans and repurpose them into herb planters. Discuss how reusing and repurposing items is a way we can respect our earth and be good stewards of our resources.
- Teach recycling, composting, and minimizing waste in your home. Have your children help you separate the recyclable items from the trash.
- Plant a tree. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God ([Genesis 21:33](#)). Find a local conservation authority and ask them about their next tree planting. Earth Day is a great time to find opportunities to do this.



But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

1 Samuel 12:24



Show hospitality. Hospitality is a gift and a calling from God. And it doesn't just benefit the people you extend hospitality to; it benefits your family too. You can model both extending and receiving hospitality for your children. It's as simple as accepting a playdate invitation, inviting new neighbors for dinner, or having an extended family member or exchange student stay with you. Your child's circle of influence and understanding will grow as they hear and learn from the stories of guests, and their heart for hospitality will blossom.



Thank a friend. Friends show love and care for each other. Your child can also be a friend. Have your child make a list of their friends or draw a picture of them together doing something that they all love to do. Over the next few weeks, encourage your child to do something special for each friend. Maybe bring their favorite snack to share with them, play their favorite game with them, or invite them on a family outing.

Ask your child to think of the last time a friend helped them. Have them find a way to thank that friend. They can write a card, give them a treat, or just say thank you!

As your child does things with and for their friends, together with your child, thank God for his gift of friendship and for the friends in your child's life.



Invite a friend. Invite your children's friends along to serve with you. This gives kids an opportunity to do something constructive together while having the safety of being with people that they know. They will also learn a lot about their friends while they serve together.



Serve together in church. Maybe you can serve together in children's ministry or as greeters or serving refreshments. If no current opportunities exist, you can talk to your pastor about starting new ones! Children benefit when they hear the reasons why we serve, both at church and at home. Remind your children that when families serve together, the body of Christ is strengthened and church communities continue to grow.



Give an unexpected gift. Who do you know who might need an unexpected gift? Help your child think of someone in your church or neighborhood who is hurting in some way. Maybe it is someone who is sick, out of work, or grieving. What can your family do or bring for that person that would be an unexpected but welcomed gift? Do they need a meal, a ride somewhere, or some yard work done? If you can't think of someone, talk to your pastor. Give an unexpected gift, and let them know about God's gift too!



Do secret servant time. Draw a family member's name from a jar and surprise that person by making their sibling's bed or preparing a tea party for a younger sibling. Maybe hide a secret love note in their bag or bedroom telling them what you value most about them. Do something special just because, to let them know that they matter and are seen by you. Maybe it was about spending time together or doing something special together. Encourage everyone to do this work with a joyful heart. Talk together afterward about how it made each family member happy.

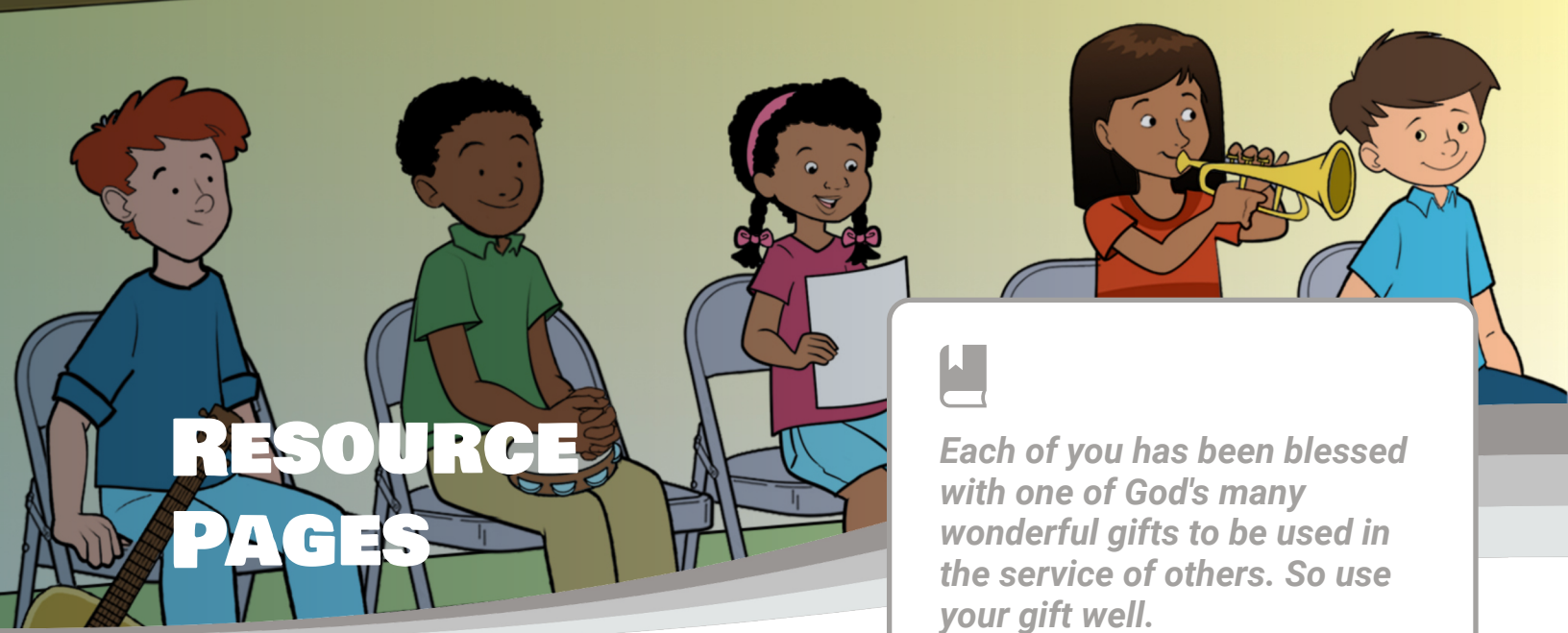


Use a blessing chart. Ask your child to keep track of their blessings this week. Have them create two columns on a sheet of paper. Title one column "How others bless me" and title the other column, "How I bless others." Each day have your child fill out all the ways God used other people to bless them, and all the ways God used them to bless other people. Spend time reflecting on it together at the end of the week.



But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:18-19, 27



Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.

1 Peter 4:10

Gifts and Talents Survey

Work together with your child and choose three encouraging adults that your child admires and who know them well. They might be in your family, your child's school, your church, or your neighborhood. Have your child ask them the questions below. Your child could write to them or email them so that they have some reflection time to give you their best answers.

1. What do you think I'm good at?
2. What do you think I'm passionate about or interested in?
3. How have you seen me serving God?
4. Do you have any suggestions about how I can serve God right now?

Collect all the answers and review them with your child. Ask your child:

1. What conclusions can you make?
2. How can you use the gifts and talents God has given you to help restore God's world?

Pray together and ask God to show your child how he has gifted them, and how he wants them to develop and use their talents for him and for others. Find something that matches the interests of your child and that suits their personality and strengths. If your child is an encourager, help them think of what they can do to encourage someone. If they are a diligent and hard worker, help them find opportunities to show love through hands-on tasks. If your child is outgoing, who in your community would benefit from their company?

Have your child choose one (or more!) of their talents, and find a way to bless someone with them!



Prayer List

Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people.

Ephesians 6:18

God always has time to listen to your prayers! Make a list of people and concerns that you could add to your prayer list.

<p>Prayers for my family:</p>	<p>Prayers for my friends:</p>	<p>Prayers for my church:</p>
<p>Prayers for my school:</p>	<p>Prayers for others around the world:</p>	<p>Prayers for myself:</p>



Blessing Chart

God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

Ephesians 2:10

Keep track of your blessings this week. Fill out all the ways God used other people to bless you and all the ways God used you to bless other people.

How others bless me	How I bless others



Quotes from Kids

"And anyone who gives one of my most humble followers a cup of cool water, just because that person is my follower, will surely be rewarded."

Matthew 10:42

Check out these comments from a group of 12-year-olds reflecting on their service experiences. As you serve together, read Scripture, reflect together, and begin to intentionally look at the world through the lenses of justice and mercy.

"It really helps you understand how to be a disciple of Jesus better."

"It is important to pay attention to what is being told to you because it may affect you in the end."

"You learn about yourself and what you like to do."

"We got to learn new skills."

"It is hard when you see something sad happening in the community."

"I really liked getting the opportunity to go and serve in the community."

"It is fun meeting new people and working in different places."

"It was fun getting a chance to bless others."

"It was hard trying new things that you aren't used to."

"It was fun when you were helping because you get to see someone smile."

"It is hard being done especially if you really enjoyed yourself."

"We got to experience new things."

“Serving Others” Bingo



Make a grid that has 25 squares (5 x 5). In each square, write an idea of how family members can serve each other. Give each person a different card for the week. Each time you find a way to serve someone this week, cross off that square on your bingo card. Can you make a line on your BINGO card before the week is over? Perhaps you could even fill the whole card!

Here is a card example to get you started. Create your own bingo card with the blank card provided.

Give a parent a hug and a kiss before school.	Put away the groceries.	Sing a song after supper.	Read the Bible during family devotions.	Bless a family member with a treat.
Fold the clean laundry.	Bless a neighbor with something special.	Read a story out loud to a younger sibling.	Help clean a sibling's room.	Find a way to serve at church.
Walk the dog.	Set the table and clear the table.	Free Square “Serving Others”	Empty the dishwasher.	Use good manners.
Play cooperatively.	Scrub a toilet.	Care for a younger sibling.	Listen well.	Pick up something someone has dropped.
Make a family member's bed.	Give a compliment to a local store owner.	Hold the door for someone.	Hug a family member.	Mail an encouraging card or fun letter to a faraway friend or family member.



***Kids Corner* Devotions About Serving Others**

Please share these three *Kids Corner* devotions with your family. They are good ways to introduce what "serving others" means, but they could also be great reflection tools for when your family has participated in a service opportunity.

Find more devotions about serving others right here:

<https://kidscorner.net/categories/serving-others>

DEVOTION:

SERVE LIKE JESUS

Bible Readings: [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

Today's Verse: Children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it. When we love others, we know that we belong to the truth, and we feel at ease in the presence of God. ([1 John 3:18-19](#))



A new family moved in next door, and James was excited. They had a boy his own age, named Michael. He hoped they could be friends. On Friday, the new neighbors came over for dinner. While he was excited about meeting the new neighbor, James wondered, "How can I be a good host?"

When the new family arrived for dinner, James helped his dad take coats and hang them up. After dinner, he invited Michael to pick what they could do together. Michael wanted to play video games, so James let him use the best game controller. Later, James told his parents that it was fun meeting Michael's family. It felt good to serve others and share. That night, James prayed and asked God to help him to always be generous to others and thanked him for his new friend, Michael.

Jesus commanded his disciples to feed the hungry, welcome strangers, give clothing to anyone in need, take care of the sick, and visit those in prison ([Matthew 25:34-40](#)). When we do these things for any of God's people, it is like we are doing it for him. As God's children, he wants us to think about the needs of other people before our own.

Following Jesus means following his example. Kind and generous, Jesus came to serve rather than be served ([Mark 10:45](#)). When we treat people the way Jesus did, they experience his love for them.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being the greatest example of showing love and care for others. Help me to care for others the same way you care for the world. Amen.



DEVOTION:

WE SERVE OTHERS

Bible Readings: [John 13:1-17](#)

Today's Verse: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45 NIV)



Winter was on a retreat with a bunch of other students. At the end of the retreat, the leaders challenged everyone to wash someone else's feet as a way to serve each other. Imagine how grossed out you'd feel about kneeling down and washing the sweat and dirt off of your friend's hot and stinky feet after playing outside all day. That's exactly how Winter felt.

But that's also exactly what Jesus did in John 13. He and his friends had been traveling all day, and as they prepared for supper, Jesus took a bowl of water and a towel, knelt before each of them, and washed their tired and grimy feet. Jesus wanted to make sure his disciples understood that serving others was important. In Mark 10—when Jesus' disciples were arguing about the positions of authority they wanted in his kingdom—Jesus told them that he hadn't come to be served, but to serve others. By washing their feet, Jesus showed them what it means to serve others.

When it was her turn to wash her friend's feet, Winter realized she hadn't come to this retreat just for herself. She was there to serve others as well. As she dried her friend's feet with a soft towel—and her friend did the same for her—she was moved by the beauty of the event.

When we think about following Jesus, serving others is at the top of the list. It is a privilege to be able to walk alongside other people and use the gifts that God has given us to share the love of Christ with them as we serve.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us such a great example of what it means to serve each other. Help us use the gifts that you have given us to serve others everyday. Amen.



DEVOTION:

"TEAMWORK ON THREE! 1...2...3..."

Bible Readings: [Galatians 6:1-10](#)

Today's Verse: "You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand."
(Galatians 6:2)



Let's talk football. What do you think would happen if the quarterback told the offensive line that he did not need them to block for him? How about if only one defender tried to play all of the positions? It probably would not go well. In fact, it would be very, very bad.

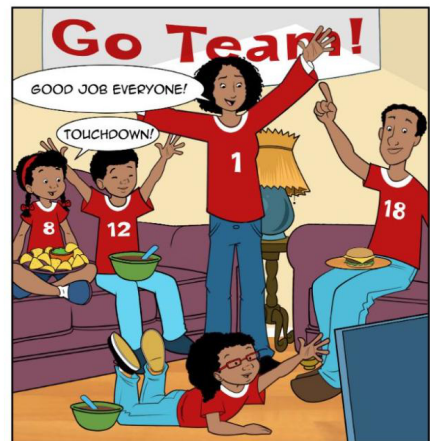
Teamwork is an important part of football. Each player has a job to do. The team will not win very many games if all of the players are trying to do everything on their own. Running backs need someone to block for them, receivers need someone to throw them the ball, and linebackers blitzing need someone to cover for them.

Paul reminds us of the importance of working together in Galatians 6. We are to carry each other's burdens. Just like coaches expect their players to work together, God has called us to help each other. When we help someone, we remind them that God loves them, that he knows if it is a good day or a bad day, and that he is with them.

Carrying someone's burdens might seem like a major responsibility, but there are lots of little things which you can do that make a big difference. To help your parents, clear the table or wash the dishes. Help your brother or sister with their homework. Be a good neighbor and pick up litter. Pray for someone who is sad. Sometimes, like scoring a touchdown, you might help in a way everyone notices, and other times only a few people may notice, but God celebrates all of the ways we help each other

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for blessing me with family and friends and for how they help me. Give me eyes to see how I can help them and remind them of the family of God. Amen.



CONCLUSION



We are praying that the ideas in this book help you support your child's effort to tangibly love others and make their invisible faith visible. For some children, serving will be natural and feel easy. Others need to experience it and be taught how, while some might say that serving is not their gift. In any case, serving takes practice because, at times, service takes us out of our comfort zones. But it allows us to learn and use the gifts God has given us. Help your children to make a good decision to serve.

Service is a thankful response to Jesus's ultimate sacrifice. We can be encouraged by Jesus' words in Luke 22:27, "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Both our actions and our attitudes matter to Jesus. He cares about our motives. People will see God's love and our concern in what we say and do. We can show others that they matter and they are seen.

And Jesus gave some very concrete ways to serve, and he teaches that we should serve others as if we are serving him.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:35-36, 40)

Thanks for engaging with our materials and sharing service opportunities with your family.



Ron Vandenburg

Senior Producer of Kids Corner

KIDS CORNER



Wow! Creation!

April 15, 2023



BIBLE READINGS

Take a few minutes to read the Bible verses listed and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in how this verse applies to you.

[Psalm 19:1-14](#)

MEMORY VERSE

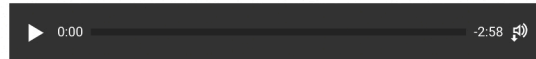
[Psalm 65:8](#)

The whole earth is filled with awe when your glory is proclaimed. In the evening, you call forth song and praise.



Easter: A New Beginning

April 8, 2023



BIBLE READINGS

Take a few minutes to read the Bible verses listed and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in how this verse applies to you this week.

[Luke 24:1-12](#)

MEMORY VERSE

[Luke 24:6-7](#)

*Jesus isn't here! He has been raised from death. Remember that while he was still in Galilee he told you, "The Son of Man will be handed over to sinners, but will not die. He will be raised from the dead on the third day."



KIDS CORNER WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

Written just for kids, each devotion includes a Casey's Day comic strip, Bible reading, reflection, and prayer.



ReFrame Ministries

God's Story. Today's Media.

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