HOW TO USE

HomeFront

Each issue highlights an environment your family can create in your home. This month looks at SERVING. Each magazine is divided into two sections: Family Time and Inspire, Equip, Support.

Family Time articles are created to equip you to engage with your children on a regular basis.

Inspire, Equip, and Support articles are parenting stories, devotions, and ideas to encourage you as you spiritually lead your household.

USE THIS GUIDE TO GET FAMILY TIME STARTED. IT’S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3 …

1 Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family’s natural rhythm—perhaps around a meal.

2 Look through HomeFront to see what stands out. Choose two or three experiences you would like to incorporate into your family times this month. Don’t feel burdened to complete all the activities—just do what fits your family best. This resource provides more than enough experiences to create transforming environments in your home throughout the month.

3 Remember to HAVE FUN! Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and one another.

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The environment of SERVING encourages a posture of the heart that asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and reminds us that we’re called to a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that, as followers of Jesus, we’re to view our lives as living sacrifices we generously give away!

“What needs to be done?” What if you and I and our kids walked into every situation, with every person, and simply asked this question? Somebody’s crying. What needs to be done? Does she need to be left alone? Does she need to be hugged? Does she need to talk to someone? Does she need someone to pray for her?

Out of my own selfishness, I don’t always want to answer that question the way I know the Holy Spirit wants me to. But when we hear it and respond to it, we enter a very rich environment that enables us to lead an others-centered life. What might it look like if we started pursuing this posture with our children from an early age … teaching them to walk into any situation asking, “What needs to be done?” Wow—we’d live in a different world!

Dr. Michelle Anthony
Michelle is the Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 25 years of church ministry experience as a children’s and family pastor. She loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

@TruInspiration

HomeFront magazine is a nonprofit ministry of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. If you are passionate about this resource and the families it equips, please consider making a one-time or monthly donation to allow this ministry to continue to reach thousands of homes.

Please go to pushpay.com/pay/nlcministries and choose “HomeFront” from the Giving Type to make your tax-deductible donation. Thank you for helping HomeFront minister to families around the world.
“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” 1 Peter 4:10.

This month’s FAMILY TIME VERSE (page 5) sounds good, doesn’t it? It makes perfect sense to use our gifts to serve others, right? Well, yes, until it comes to serving those closest to us. That’s when it gets a little harder. Why should I serve my sibling? Why would I want to spend a Saturday helping my grandmother? You get the point; it’s difficult to serve our family members. Vulnerability and selfishness often kicks in with day-to-day life. But, how can we cultivate true sensitivity to others if we don’t begin at home? Serving our families is foundational to living a life of service—it’s our training ground!

In this issue of HomeFront you will find practical tips for how to begin serving your family. It begins with the example Jesus set for us when He washed the feet of those closest to Him—His disciples. In GOD’S WORD (page 26) you can read about this act of service and be challenged to do the same in your own home. Our EVERYDAYDAD BLOG (page 40) focuses on instilling a heart and habit of service. Chris Goble shares how he transferred a concept he learned in the police academy to his home.

In this month’s KEEPING UP WITH YOUR KIDS (page 34) we focus on who is influencing your kids on social media. And GAME TIME (page 20) tangibly illustrates the importance of building a solid foundation of serving in your home.

We’re also excited and honored this month to share excerpts from two new books: Remarkable: Living a Faith Worth Talking About by Brady Boyd, Senior Pastor at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, and Blessed Broken Given: How Your Story Becomes Sacred in the Hands of Jesus by Glenn Packiam, Senior Pastor at New Life Downtown. Don’t miss the opportunity to preorder these life-changing books!

As always, we pray you are inspired, equipped, and supported in your role as a spiritual parent as you read this issue of HomeFront. Thank you for inviting us into your home each and every month!

Debbie Guinn
Debbie is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront magazine. She has more than 25 years of experience working in children’s and family ministries. She is passionate about equipping parents to become leaders of God’s truth in their own households. She is a recent transplant to Austin, TX, where she co-parents two of her four grandchildren with her son. She spends her free time enjoying her grandchildren and perusing antique stores and flea markets.
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FAMILY VERSE
Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God’s Spirit in these words who transforms. We come to know God more when we’re willing to open our hearts and listen to His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with this verse, and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit the verse to memory. Go to homefrontmag.com for a free downloadable copy of the family verse.
Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10
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Summer Serving Trays

WHAT YOU’LL NEED
- unfinished pine circle
- craft paints
- fast-drying polyurethane spray
- paintbrushes
- 2 handles
- electric drill
- screwdriver and screws

WHAT YOU’LL DO
1. Paint the top of the wooden circle—it may require two or more coats to fully cover the wood grain.
2. Paint on additional design elements like stars, stripes, colored edges, etc.
3. Once the tray is fully dry, blow off any dust and spray a light coat of polyurethane on the entire tray. This will protect the surface and give it a nice shine.
4. Use an electric drill and screwdriver to install the handles on opposite sides of the tray.
These darling Summer Serving Trays will be a fun way to serve up drinks and food at your next get-together. Let your creativity flow as you choose designs to fit your summer party. You may even want to add lazy Susans for added flair!
When I homeschooled our two children, we were home together—a lot! Consequently, piles of activity were scattered throughout the house. And in the busyness of our day, the basics of putting things away became neglected. Like Loonette on *The Big Comfy Couch* (PBS 2000 era), I was asking, “Who made this BIG mess?!” Of course, it was US! But often, it was ME who would be cleaning things up after the children went to bed. I wondered why no one else seemed to notice what needed to be done. “Chore charts” worked okay for a while, but who wants to do a chore? More importantly, I wanted our children to learn how to serve the family by being responsible for their own things and making our house a more pleasant environment for everyone. So that’s when I made cleanup into a simple game: See the Need, Meet the Need.

The rules of the game are super easy. You go into a room and look around. As you see things that need to be put away or cleaned up, you do it! Is there dust on the table? Grab a cloth and dust it! Are there shoes in the hallway? Put them on the shoe rack! Dishes in the sink? Well, you get the idea. Gradually, the kids became better at recognizing what needed to be done without my reminders. Make this time more fun with music and competition.

This game can be extended to other areas of service. For example, do you see someone who is sad or needing a friend? Think about serving people in our community, church, or school. We can often meet the needs around us when we’re paying attention.

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by Jill Nardini

Jill serves as an elementary and preschool teacher at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She loves Jesus and has been blessed to teach the Word of God to all ages for several decades. Her favorite title is “Mom,” and she homeschooled her two wonderful children (now 22 and 20) through graduation. Jill enjoys taking walks with John, her loving husband of 27 years, and spending time with family and friends.
Why is it important to keep our house tidy? Discuss things like safety, being responsible, and being ready for friends to visit.

As you go into a room, ask, “What needs to be done here?” and “What are some ways we can make cleaning up more fun?”

What are some needs of people in our family? What are ways we can serve and bless each other?

What are some ways we can serve our community? Pray: “God, show us someone we can serve today.”

What if someone doesn’t notice our efforts? Read and discuss Ephesians 6:7–8a.

Take time at the end the day to ask: “How well did we serve others today?”

Let this be a time of encouragement and blessing.
Years ago, Michelle Anthony introduced me to the 10 Environments. The simplicity of them struck me, and although I had heard some of the same language throughout my life, I had never fully realized how interconnected the environments are and how they weave in and out of one another. The reality is, these environments so easily connect to one another because they live under the banner of worship.
“SO, WITHOUT A CALCULATED PLAN FOR EDUCATING OUR KIDS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVING, MY WIFE AND I SIMPLY ASKED GOD TO BEGIN TO OPEN OUR OWN EYES TO WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE IN OUR HOME AND COMMUNITY IN HOPES THAT A NATURAL BENT TOWARD SERVING WOULD EMERGE IN OUR KIDS.”

Over the years, I began to intentionally introduce these environments in my home in the hopes that my children would understand and begin to grasp their inherited generational faith as their own. With a son, James (nine), and a daughter, Mazie (five), I’m slowly beginning to see the fruit produced out of an intentional focus on these environments.

I’d venture to say that the environment of Serving is probably one of the harder environments to introduce to a young child without the environment of Modeling being closely woven into it. So, without a calculated plan for educating our kids on the importance of Serving, my wife and I simply asked God to begin to open our own eyes to what needed to be done in our home and community in hopes that a natural bent toward Serving would emerge in our kids. We soon discovered that the mere question “What needs to be done?” (embedded in the Serving environment) is in itself an act of worship! However, with such a focus on our own contributions to this environment, we almost missed the effects of being served by others and how this would affect our children.

My wife recently visited an IKEA store with our kids and, of course, our kids begged for a treat after the shopping was over. My wife relented and went to get in line for some ice cream. Out of the blue, the woman standing behind them in line asked if it would be okay for her to pay for our children’s order. She went on to explain that from time to time, she notices kids around her (in the absence of her own nieces and nephews) and chooses to bless other kids in the same way she would her own family if they lived close by. It was a touching moment that had lasting effects.

It wasn’t the act of serving that had the most effect. It was the question: What needs to be done? In that moment, our kids’ takeaway was that they were seen and noticed. Yes, they got their treat, but they don’t yet understand the concept of “free treat.” The concept they DO understand is the kindness of a stranger. A few days later, we found ourselves at Starbucks waiting for an order. Nearby were two Army servicemen, and Mazie quickly took notice of them. She was captivated by their uniforms and would not stop staring. So, we talked about their uniforms and what these men do for our country. When Mazie asked if she could meet them, other customers began to take notice and were touched by the kindness of a five year old. She had a chance to meet them, thank them, and get her picture taken with them.

My own takeaway from these two examples is how they are so closely tied together: one moment feeding into the other. The heart of a servant is nurtured by what it receives. Take time today to ask the question “What needs to be done?” and to also notice the question being answered on your behalf. It’s only then that you and your family will begin to notice the change around you and also the change within you. In this world, we are a part of a collection of strangers who are bonded together in the image of God. It’s up to us to recognize Him in the everyday and ask ourselves how we might join Him in displaying His love to those around us.

Make time this month to notice the simple needs around you. As you and your family go about your daily routines, ask God to show you the needs in your local trip to the grocery store, in a restaurant, at a gas station, or just anywhere life takes you. You’ll be surprised to find that the heart of serving will naturally grow and develop simply by opening your eyes.

by Tommy Larson

Tommy has been serving as a pastor at ROCKHARBOR Church in Costa Mesa, CA, for the past 11 years. He was part of the development team of the Tru curriculum. He lives in Costa Mesa with his wife and two children.
How Can I Pray for You?

In the environment of serving, we teach our kids the heart posture of asking, “What needs to be done?” But what if we took it a step further and asked, “How can I pray for my family today?” This stretches our families to look past physical tasks and encourages us to look for things that only God can do.

What if your son asked if he could pray for you when you weren’t feeling well? Or, if your daughter prayed for her brother before he took a test at school? When we look for intentional ways to bless one another through prayer, we invite the Holy Spirit into our relationships and more readily recognize His work in our lives. As you pray for your children, you will give them the experience of how personal prayers make someone feel seen—both by God and others.

Learning how to pray for your family will lay the building blocks for having hearts to serve and pray for others. The home is where we learn to serve, especially when it’s hard and inconvenient. But once your children have mastered praying for family members, they will develop the discipline to pray for and serve others faithfully outside the home.

Choose a night to sit down with your family and explain the heart of serving one another through prayer. Remind them that Jesus Himself chose to spend the last night before His arrest washing His disciples’ feet and praying for their needs. As a family, ask the Lord how you can serve through prayer. Have each person write down or draw some needs of family members and talk through some prayer requests together. Depending on the ages of your children, they may need some help with requests as well as with learning how to pray for others.

Serving one another through prayer can be a beautiful expression of love and humility in a way our Savior has modeled for us!

by Amanda Visser

Amanda Visser is the Executive Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator for Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. She enjoys running, painting, and a strong cup of coffee.
“LEARNING HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR FAMILY WILL LAY THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HAVING HEARTS TO SERVE AND PRAY FOR OTHERS. THE HOME IS WHERE WE LEARN TO SERVE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT’S HARD AND INCONVENIENT.”
**THIS IS ADLEY**
As the “baby” of the family, Adley has generally had things done for her. She’s incredibly creative, solves problems really well, and likes being in community. When she has company, she can do anything she sets her mind to, but when left on her own, everything becomes much harder.

**THIS IS JED**
Jed is a hard worker and works well independently. He is gifted in organization and spatial intelligence, so putting things in logical places and in ways that maximize space comes easily to him. He can take a task list, figure out the best way to accomplish it, and will not give up until all of the tasks have been checked off.

Though I was excited about my newly learned terminology—acts of service—I certainly wasn’t fooling my four brilliant children. As I announced we no longer did chores but rather acts of service (because we need to take a posture of “what needs to be done”) my kids obviously weren’t buying it. I made “Acts of Service charts” with stickers and rewards—but all I had done was replace the word “chores” with the words “acts of service.” I tried paying, rotating jobs, charts, bribes, encouragement, and Scripture, but my kids didn’t adopt the happy, willing attitudes I had expected from this simple change in vernacular.

As I interviewed a new volunteer at work one day, I called Jeremiah in to the room. “Jeremiah, could you teach Adley how to set the table?” He smiled and said, “Sure!” Minutes later, he and his sister were making a game of tossing the plates and silverware to each other and setting them on the table. After

What’s Your Gift?

“What are your spiritual gifts? What experiences do you have? Do you like to work independently or with other people?” After a short conversation, I had narrowed the best volunteer position fits for him down to two and scheduled a date to have him come to observe those opportunities.

After work, when it came time to set the table, my kids had scattered. Suddenly the acts of service were met with apathy, and their answer to “What needs to be done?” was “Homework,” or “Going to the bathroom,” or “If I stop building this Lego set now, I won’t know where I was!” My mind came back to my conversation earlier in the day. If I believed in gifts-based ministry at church, why would I not believe in it at home?
Micah likes to move from task to task and desires something new almost moment by moment. He is definitely a kinesthetic learner and focuses best when given jobs that allow him to move around or use his physical strength. Tedious tasks will sap his energy and lead to a bad attitude or excuses for why he can’t complete them.

As the oldest, Jeremiah is the “leader child.” He can get his younger sister to do any task, and because he is also gifted in working with kids, he makes those tasks a game. He has a gift to teach, and his college major echoes that gift. His brothers can easily frustrate him though they generally listen to what he tells them to do. He lacks focus when given a task list, but when given ownership over a job, he will rise to the occasion—especially if his little sister helps him.

I realized these were true “acts of service” as my children used their gifts to serve the family. If they simply asked, “What needs to be done?” they might have accomplished a few tasks, but ultimately there would be more fighting, more struggle, and less healthy relationship. By acknowledging their gifts, I was allowing them to serve in ways that demonstrated stewardship of the grace God has given each of them—a gift that works together in the body of Christ and in the immediate family.

Assessing your child’s gifts and strengths will always result in a deeper appreciation for her identity and for the God who made her! The question “What needs to be done?” is intended to be asked with open and outstretched hands, not through clenched teeth and with tight fists. Our own frustrations with our kids not helping around the house might be resolved by knowing their unique gifts and passions and seeing how your family functions as a body, each part working together to serve each other and glorify God.

May you delight in each child’s unique gifts and abilities to serve your family!

by Courtney Wilson

Courtney is the Elementary Director at Christ Community Church in the suburbs of Chicago. You can usually find her chasing her four amazing kids around with coffee in one hand and a camera in the other.
Building Blocks of Serving

This “Acts of Service” board will be a fun way to teach your children that families serve each other. It is a tangible reminder of “what needs to be done” to make a household function. Serving each other in our own homes is the foundation for learning to serve others outside of our homes. It’s the first step in cultivating sensitivity to others and focusing on a cause bigger than just our own lives.

This is not a “chore chart” because the point is to cultivate an internal motivation rather than simply impose a requirement. As you compile your “acts of service” be sure to include things that anyone in the family can do. Do not assign specific acts to specific family members. Explain to your children that this list is a way your family can serve each other. There is no allowance or reward; it is just what needs to be done to make your household function, and, as members of the family, everyone participates in serving each other.

“This is not a chore chart because the point is to cultivate an internal motivation rather than simply impose a requirement.”
WHAT YOU’LL NEED

• thin, rectangular piece wood—we used a precut 18” x 14” from a craft store
• 24 wooden clothespins
• black permanent marker
• chalk paint
• paintbrush
• chalk
• drill
• 30’ twine or rope

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Drill holes in the upper right and left corners of the wood.
2. Using the chalk paint, paint the wood.
3. Once the paint dries, tie the twine or rope to create a hanger on the top of your canvas.
4. Write your family’s “acts of service” on the clothespins. Leave a few blank for special acts your family can add during different seasons.
5. Using the chalk, write “Acts of Service” across the top of the board between the two holes.
6. Draw a line down the middle of the board to divide the rectangle into two sections.
7. Label the top of the left section “What Needs to Be Done?”
8. Label the right section “Done!”
9. Encourage your family to choose acts of service from the left side of the board and place the clothespins on the right side of the board when they are completed.
GAME TIME
Building Block Jenga

ROUND UP YOUR KIDS FOR A FUN GAME OF GIANT JENGA!

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 22’ x 4’ x 8’ planks of wood (6 planks, each plank cut into 9 [10 3/8”] pieces for 54 total pieces—your lumber store can cut these for you)
- paint or stain and paintbrush (optional)

BEFORE YOU START

1. Use the paint or stain to color and seal the blocks (optional).
2. Set up this game up on a table or hard surface outside.
3. Build your Jenga tower by making a layer of three “blocks” in one direction, making the next layer with three blocks in the other direction, and so on. When you finish, you’ll have a tall 18-layer tower.

TIME TO PLAY!

Take turns removing any one block below the top layer. After removing your block, place it crosswise on top of the highest layer. As you get further into the game, the tower will become shakier and shakier! The last player to stack a block without making the tower fall wins the game.

REMEMBER!

This game is centered on having a solid foundation. Without a solid base of blocks, the whole structure crumbles, and the less carefully built the foundation, the more likely it is to fall early on. Much like this game, the things that happen in our homes create a foundation for each and every one of us, especially our children. Everything we do and everything we practice as a family adds another building block to our whole structure. Serving starts here! We must practice serving one another at home to create a solid foundation to build upon as we step outside the home.

by Heather DePartee

Heather worked in children’s ministry for seven years and recently earned her degree in early childhood development. She is now working on her Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and MA in teaching at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, CA. She is in love with her husband, Adam, and all of their adorable houseplants!
FAMILY TIME RECIPE

Cheesy Cheeseburger Slider

NOTHING SAYS SUMMER LIKE BURGERS, BAKED BEANS, AND BANANA PUDDING! THIS MONTH’S RECIPES ADD A TWIST TO ALL THREE—AND THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF FOOD TO SERVE UP TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY. YOU’LL FIND THE BANANA PUDDING DELIGHT ON PAGE 24 IN KIDS IN THE KITCHEN.

| PREP: 10 min. | COOK: 30 min. | YIELDS: 12 sliders |

WHAT YOU’LL NEED
- 2 1/4 pounds lean ground beef
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt (or to taste)
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup grated onion
- 6 slices American cheese
- 6 slices mozzarella cheese
- 6 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 12 brioche slider buns
- 3-4 large leaves of green lettuce
- 2 tomatoes, sliced thin
- dill pickle chips
- condiments like ketchup, Thousand Island dressing, mayonnaise, mustard, and/or hot sauce

WHAT YOU’LL DO
1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Grease or spray a 13” x 9” nonstick rimmed sheet pan.
3. In a large bowl, combine ground beef, salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and grated onion. Mix well until all ingredients are evenly combined.
4. Press half of the ground beef into a thin layer on the sheet pan.
5. Layer the cheeses into 2 rows, keeping the rows about an inch from the edges to prevent the melting cheese from running over while the burgers cook.
6. Cover the cheese with the remaining beef mixture.
7. Transfer the sheet pan to the oven and bake for about 30 minutes or until cooked through.
8. While the sheet pan burger cooks, slice the buns in half. Arrange the bottom buns on another 9” x 13” sheet pan or cutting board. Top the bottom slider buns with lettuce and tomato.
9. When the burger has finished cooking, carefully drain off excess grease. Use a pair of sturdy tongs or 2 spatulas to gently transfer the giant burger to the slider bun bottoms.
10. Cover with pickle chips and drizzle your condiments. Top with the slider bun tops.
11. Use a large knife to slice between the rows of the sliders.
12. Serve warm while the cheese is still melted.
Baked Beans

PREP: 15 min.  COOK: 45 min.  YIELDS: 12 servings

* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the Internet for “metric kitchen.”

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 1 pound bacon
- 1 large Vidalia onion—chopped
- 4 (15-ounce) cans pork and beans
- 1/2 cup dark molasses
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Fry the bacon in a large skillet over medium-high heat until crisp.
3. Remove the bacon from the pan and drain it on paper towels.
5. Pour out and discard all but 4 tablespoons of the bacon drippings.
6. Add the onion to the pan and cook until softened, about 7 minutes.
7. Stir in the beans, molasses, sugar, mustard, and bacon. Mix well.
8. Pour the beans into a 3-quart casserole dish and bake uncovered for 45 minutes.
KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

Banana Pudding Delight

Here's a fun twist on a summer favorite that your kids will love making with you. This banana pudding delight will pair perfectly with the cheesy cheeseburgers and baked beans found in our Family Time recipe this month.

What you’ll need

Crust
• 1 1/2 cups flour
• 3/4 cup butter
• 2 tablespoons sugar
• 1 cup finely chopped almonds

Filling 1
• 1 cup powdered sugar
• 1 cup frozen whipped topping (from a 12-ounce container)
• 15 ounces cream cheese
• Few drops vanilla

Filling 2
• 2 packages instant vanilla pudding
• 3 cups milk

Topping
• 5–6 bananas
• 4 ounces frozen whipped topping (left from filling 1)
• Sliced almonds for garnish

* For an easy metric conversion chart, search the internet for “metric kitchen.”

What you’ll do

Crust
1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Mix the crust ingredients together until crumbly.
3. Press crust mixture into the bottom of a 9” x 13” baking dish.

Filling 1
1. Blend together all ingredients and spread on cooled crust.

Filling 2
1. Beat milk and pudding mix together until thick.
2. Pour on top of the cream cheese mixture.

Topping
1. Slice 5 or 6 bananas lengthwise and arrange on top.
2. Spread the rest of the frozen whipped topping over the bananas.
3. Sprinkle with nuts.
4. Refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.


HERE’S A FUN TWIST ON A SUMMER FAVORITE THAT YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE MAKING WITH YOU. THIS BANANA PUDDING DELIGHT WILL PAIR PERFECTLY WITH THE CHEESY CHEESEBURGERS AND BAKED BEANS FOUND IN OUR FAMILY TIME RECIPE THIS MONTH.
The two young servants peeked around the corner into the room where the Rabbi, Jesus, was eating with His disciples. They were scared of being discovered, but they just had to sneak away from their tasks for a few minutes to eavesdrop on the Rabbi. These two boys had never met or observed anyone like Jesus. Even though they were the lowliest servants in the household and Jesus was a famous teacher, He always took time to speak to them and even called them by name!

As they spied on the dinner gathering, they nearly gasped out loud in disbelief! Jesus, a man who had spoken to thousands, healed the sick, and even raised people from the dead, was on His knees washing His disciples’ feet! This was scandalous! Unheard of! What was He doing?!

The servant boys each felt a pang of shame in their hearts. You see, every time guests came to the house, the boys argued about who had to do the nasty, humiliating job of washing the guests’ feet. In fact, they had just been arguing about it earlier that evening when the Rabbi and His disciples had arrived!

Now, the boys watched in shock and confusion as Jesus, the guest of honor, performed this humble act for each of His followers (who were equally shocked and confused!). What made the whole scene even more astounding was the fact that these young servants had just heard whispers that this great teacher, Jesus, was more than just a powerful man, but that He was actually God in human form. It was almost too much to take in. “But what if it is true?” they thought to themselves. What if the Creator God, who made the earth and who rescued His people from Egypt, was right there in front of them on His knees like a servant—washing feet?

HEAR IT
Read the story aloud to your family. Then, read John 13:1–17 aloud. Talk about the story with your family using questions such as: How would you feel if you had to wash someone’s feet? How would you react if Jesus, the Creator God, washed your feet? Do you frequently think of God as a humble servant?

DO IT
If we are to attempt “big” things for God, we must first do the “small” things like serve those closest to us. Jesus, in this story, gives us a beautiful picture of the God who serves in “small” ways. Pick one of these two examples of serving and do it this week:

1. Get a basin of warm water, some soap, and some towels and, as a family, take turns washing each other’s feet. As you wash, pray silently for that person. Notice how you feel while washing and while having your feet washed. Do you feel uncomfortable? Humbled? Loved? Served?

2. Select a family member whom you want to serve. Choose the chore/task/responsibility that he most dislikes (Dishes? Laundry? Trash?) and show God’s love by doing that chore this week.

by Jason Kliewer
Jason is a teaching pastor at Canopy Church in Orange County, CA. He lives with his wife and two daughters in a 200-square-foot RV camper. Jason loves to hear from readers, so feel free to send any comments or questions to: jasonmklewer@gmail.com
“WHAT IF THE CREATOR GOD, WHO MADE THE EARTH AND WHO RESCUED HIS PEOPLE FROM EGYPT, WAS RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF THEM ON HIS KNEES LIKE A SERVANT—WASHING FEET?”
These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

This sweet rhyme set to the tune of “Three Blind Mice” will be a great way to wake your little one up and start the day with serving others on her mind! Even our youngest children can benefit from the truth that putting the needs of others before their own is key to living an abundant life with Jesus!

Get the audio recording of this song at bit.ly/julytottimerhyme2019

by Jeff Fernandez

Jeff lives in Costa Mesa, CA, with his wife, Heidi, where he serves as the weekend experience director at Beachcities Community Church. He is committed to raising up leaders and releasing them as ministers. He enjoys songwriting with other worship leaders and cooking for his friends.
Blessing with Your Words

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God’s protection, joy, and wisdom over him.

One thing I love about being a mom is having the opportunity to bless my child. I love holding Eva’s tiny, sweet face cupped in my hands. I love gazing into her big brown eyes, always so alert and curious about the world around her. And I love speaking truth—putting words to my heart’s deepest desires for her life and character.

The best part is that I know my blessings aren’t just empty words. Blessing your child is a form of prayer. When we bless our kids, we’re not merely articulating hopes or wishes. We’re asking God to shape our sweet little ones into who He’s created them to be. We’re asking Him to plant the truths we’re speaking deep inside them, to mold their hearts to be more like His, and to give our children the ability to live lives of joyful service to Him.

If we want our children to be servants in our homes and beyond, we would be wise to embrace the blessing. Our kids are not naturally wired to be selfless and others-focused. But in our blessing, we can ask God to help them desire to serve. We can ask Him to form in them tender hearts of compassion, gratitude, and humility. And we can ask that He might open their eyes to the people and needs around them so that they live ever asking the question, “What needs to be done?”

I encourage you, if you’re not already in the habit of doing so, to begin blessing your child regularly. If you aren’t sure how to start, try using this format: “(Child’s name), may you know that [insert truths you want your child to know]. May you become [insert godly characteristics you want your child to have].”

Here’s a blessing about serving to get you started:

“(Child’s name), may you know that even Jesus, though He was fully God, lived a life of service. May you become like Him, having eyes to see the needs around you, a compassionate heart willing to respond, and the humility to serve even in secret and unglamorous ways.”

“WHEN WE BLESS OUR KIDS, WE’RE NOT MERELY ARTICULATING HOPES OR WISHES. WE’RE ASKING GOD TO SHAPE OUR SWEET LITTLE ONES INTO WHO HE’S CREATED THEM TO BE.”

by Emily Schulz

Emily is wife to Phil and mom to baby Eva. She serves as the Family Ministries, Women’s Ministry, and Discipleship Pastor at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. Emily has her MDiv from Denver Seminary and her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University. Her current hobbies are the same as Eva’s: all she wants is for someone to feed her and let her sleep!
Serve a Widow. Fund an Adoption.

We’re building a world where finances are no longer an obstacle to adoption.

OUR MISSION
Our mission is to fulfill James 1:27 by serving orphans, widows, and Christian adoptive families.

OUR PURPOSE
Our purpose is to help Christian adoptive families fund their adoptions by coordinating a service project fixing up a widow’s home.

OUR VISION
Our vision is to see the day when finances are not an obstacle for Christian families who are led to adopt, while simultaneously serving every widow in need of home repairs.

TAKE PART IN THE MOVEMENT: bothhands.org
WE’VE FOUND THE EASIEST WAY TO EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF BOTH HANDS IS TO TELL HOW WE STARTED, SO HERE IT IS IN A NUTSHELL FROM OUR FOUNDER, JT OLSON ... 

Almost 10 years ago, I served on the board for Bethany Christian Services in Nashville and was responsible for an annual golf fundraiser where we sent letters asking for sponsorship while we golfed. A few days before the event, my friend sent my sponsorship letter back to me and scribbled on it, “JT, if you were working on a widow’s house I might sponsor you, but you’re just golfing. Nice cause, but not my money.”

I’ll admit I was a bit surprised, but I called him and we had a good laugh about it. His idea never left me. A few years later, one of my friends came up to me in church and told me he was adopting four orphans from Moldova. Since I had adopted, I knew it was expensive. I asked how much he needed to raise. He replied, “About $65,000.” He had no clue how he was going to do it but knew it was God’s calling.

Long story short, we gathered about a dozen of our friends and found a widow’s home to work on. All of us sent out letters asking for sponsorship while we worked, with the proceeds going towards my friend’s adoption. We ended up raising about $55,000. Soon after, another friend asked to do a project for his adoption.

Fast forward 10 years and I think our numbers say it all. In 2008, I left my job to start Both Hands full-time. Mark Twain said, “The two most important days in a person’s life are the day they were born and the day they find out why.” That day I found out why. If you’re interested in partnering to make an impact in any way, feel free to contact us. Let’s do more for orphans, widows and adoptive families!

JT Olson, Founder and Executive Director

BOTH HANDS IN ACTION

In the spring of 2019 Jeremiah and Andrea VanDorsten were finally matched with a precious girl who lived in an orphanage in China. It was an answer to years of prayers to a God who cares for orphans and widows all around the world with a fierce love. The adoption process wasn’t new to the VanDorstens.

In 2011, they had their first Both Hands project where they gathered a team, found a widow, served for a day, and raised funds for the adoption. Both Hands gave the VanDorstens the confidence and reassurance that they were exactly where God had called them to be. Both Hands came alongside their family by sharing the burden of the hefty financial responsibilities up ahead. The Both Hands project helped bring Mae home to her forever family. Today, Mae is a brave and clever nine year old who has a huge heart for the Lord. She was beyond excited, along with her brothers Isaac and Loyal, when they found out they would soon be welcoming a new sister into their family.

The daunting financial responsibility of $40,000 came to mind once again as they simultaneously praised God for making a way for an orphan to be rescued and be given a home. Knowing our God is faithful, Andrea and Jeremiah partnered again with Both Hands to bring home their six-year-old daughter Lily from China.

The VanDorsten’s community rallied together, not only to prepare a way for an orphan to become part of a family but to also come alongside a widow just down the road. It was a beautiful picture of how Christ followers who are ignited to serve with an attitude of sacrifice, genuineness, and selflessness can truly impact the kingdom of God in ways bigger than themselves.
Awakening a compassionate heart and a global mind-set in children for people beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhoods.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS...

GUATEMALA

Located in Central America at the southern tip of Mexico between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, Guatemala has a total area of 42,042 square miles. Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico all share land boundaries with Guatemala that total 1,048 miles, while Guatemala’s coastlines along the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea total 249 miles.
If you lived in Guatemala, you might eat something called empanadas. These are crispy, buttery pastries that are perfect for lunch on the go. Throughout Central America, these usually have a meat filling, but in Guatemala, most are vegetarian and filled with potato and/or spinach and covered with a variety of toppings such as guacamole, tomatoes, onion, and cilantro.

**NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE IN THE WORLD GUATEMALA IS, LET’S MEET AND GREET THE PEOPLE**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- The name Guatemala means “land of trees” in the Mayan language. Today, the country has the largest tree reserves in Central America.
- The first ever chocolate bar was invented in Guatemala.
- Blue denim was first invented in Guatemala. Shortly after its invention, the Levi’s brand began distributing blue jeans around the world.

If you lived in Guatemala, you most likely would worship at a Catholic Mass. Religion: Catholic 45%, Protestant 42%, No religious affiliation 11%

If you lived in Guatemala, you would speak Spanish. To say “hello” in Spanish, you would say: Hola (pronounced OH-Lah)

If you lived in Guatemala, you might eat something called empanadas. These are crispy, buttery pastries that are perfect for lunch on the go. Throughout Central America, these usually have a meat filling, but in Guatemala, most are vegetarian and filled with potato and/or spinach and covered with a variety of toppings such as guacamole, tomatoes, onion, and cilantro.

**MEETING THE NEED IN GUATEMALA**

New Life Church of Colorado Springs, CO, has a deep-seated history of being on the forefront of global missions. In 2018 our leadership sensed the Holy Spirit’s leading to engage in Central America, and since then we have travelled to Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru to see what the Lord would have us do. Our hearts were drawn to Guatemala’s beauty found in her people and their desperate need for transformation as a nation.

Guatemala has a population of over 16 million. Approximately 50 percent are children, of whom more than 25 percent stay at home to work in order to cover basic family needs for survival. Guatemala is the poorest country in the entire Latin American world in regards to number of completed school years and is also fifth in overall malnutrition globally. There are more than two million Guatemalan-born people in the U.S., and Guatemala is one of the top 10 senders of migrants to the U.S.

We believe we have a role to play in helping Guatemala realize God’s potential for her future. That is why we are partnering with the District for High Performance, a ministry focusing on meeting the needs of children in some of the poorest areas of the country. Our first step was to purchase a strategically located piece of land where we plan to provide clean water, community services, medical camps, state-of-the-art playground for kids, and skills training centers.

We appreciate your prayers for and participation in this journey.
Early this summer, there was a fair amount of news about two people in pop culture who were feuding based on actions that took place online. There are full recaps of the dispute online, but basically two social media influencers (Tati Westbrook and James Charles) had a very public falling out when Tati felt that actions James took betrayed their friendship. This article isn’t a place for celebrity gossip, but their public fight brings about an opportunity for education and conversation.

What is a social media influencer? Why is this important?

“A social media influencer is a user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry. A social media influencer has access to a large audience and can persuade others by virtue of their authenticity and reach” (pixlee.com).

Social media has been on the rise for the past 20 to 23 years. There are sites reported as early as 1997, but the first one I was aware of was Myspace created in August of 2003. There have been many different social media platforms over the years (Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube to name a few). What we have learned in using these spaces is how influential they truly are, and social media is a multi-billion-dollar industry.

Using Tati Westbrook as an example:

- Westbrook launched her YouTube channel in 2010 and has gained over 10 million subscribers. Her channel averages over 30 million views per month.
- She typically uploads five YouTube videos a week. Her videos commonly get around 880,000 views per day, and 1,000 views are worth about $2 to $5.
- This means that her page makes around $1,600 per day, which is $600,000 per year, just from the ads on the videos.
- Tati Westbrook’s estimated net worth is valued at somewhere near $1.2 million.

So then, when Tati and James got into a very public fight online and lost thousands of subscribers in one day, it had a significant impact on them and their source of revenue. They don’t have as much influence, so they are not perceived as being as valuable to people, businesses, or the products they use and display.

In all of this, recognize that we are talking about a different economy than the one many of us know or understand. However, we are raising a generation that would rather be YouTube stars than movie stars. They see the influence these people have, and the power is appealing. It is our job to help our students understand that regardless of how much money, fame, and notoriety is directed toward social media influencers, they actually impact a miniscule percentage of the population. We must point students toward the community of people God designed them to live in and to be influenced by. It is a long shot to think that social media influencers will be silenced anytime soon, but it is our job to help keep them and this big business in perspective with what it truly is: a shadow of real life, face-to-face, and person-to-person interactions that have the ability to glorify the God who made us.

by Jeff and Shara Bachman.

Jeff and his wife, Shara, have more than 40 years of youth ministry experience between them. When they are not spending their time equipping family ministry workers, taking photographs of adorable newborns, or keeping their three children alive and thriving, Jeff and Shara co-host a pop-culture podcast called “What It Is, What It Means.” They love all things youth ministry and pop culture—specifically Marvel movies.
TOP 5 MOST LISTENED TO MUSIC ARTISTS

1. Ariana Grande
2. Lady Gaga
3. Jonas Brothers
4. Post Malone
5. Cardi B

* billboard.com/charts/artist-100

SLANG TO KNOW

Straight fire (adj. “before all else” / A way of describing something that is trendy, hot, or popular

“That new Netflix show is straight fire!”

* netsanity.net/teen-slang-parents-guide/

QUICK FACTS

59.6% of tweens and 75.8% of teens engage in online conversations surrounding illegal alcohol/drugs.

* Bark’s 2018 Children & Teen Cyber Fact Sheet

TECH TIME FAMILY CHALLENGE

Our phones and tablets are gifts that not everyone has the privilege of having. How can you remind your family this week of the gifts your devices are? Foster gratitude through specific appreciation and also stewardship. Challenge your family to take care of your devices differently this month. For example, be conscious to not drop them, not lose them, put cases on them, etc.

EQUIPPING RESOURCES OF THE MONTH

After You Drop Them Off: A Parent’s Guide to Student Ministry by Dr. Jeramy Clark and Jerusha Clark

What It Is, What It Means is a youth ministry/pop-culture podcast in a rapidly changing world. Join Jeff and Shara Bachman as they navigate through the complex world of music, movies, media, and tech to tell you what it is and what it means for you, your family, and your ministry. You can find What It Is, What It Means on iTunes podcasts or wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts.

by Haley Downey

Haley is the middle school pastor at Arbor Road Church, Long Beach, CA.
Learning to Put Others First

When our children are small, we often give them chore lists, create charts, or simply let them help us in our daily tasks—and young children often smile and get to work. But then they reach middle school: “Take out the trash? Empty the dishwasher? Ugh!”

As parents, how do we continue to cultivate a spirit of looking out for others when the heart is not as willing?

First, lead by example. Children often pick up behaviors more quickly based on what they observe. Do your children see you serving in your home or outside of your home? Do you willingly put away your spouse’s laundry or help do dishes when you visit someone else’s home? The first step in your child learning to serve is seeing a model of serving.

Middle schoolers tend to be very self-focused. Help your child to focus on others through simple things like inviting him to come with you to drop a meal at someone’s house or ask him to help you make it. Rather than having her only do her laundry or pick up her room, rotate through family members doing the whole household’s laundry or making dinner for the whole family one night of the week. Focus on the skills your child needs to learn before he leaves your house and help him learn those skills while also practicing a servant heart.

In addition, lean into your child’s gifts. When I was in middle school, my brother and I would wake up in the morning to a list of must-do chores and an additional list of bonus chores we could choose from. It was no surprise that I chose the chores that involved cooking, painting, or anything organizational, while my brother chose chores that involved tools, outside work, or more athletic endeavors. But, we did those tasks, often without complaint, in part because of the expectation that we all help each other, but also, because of our choice in the matter.

So, when guiding your child to serve at home, harness the gifts God gave her. As 1 Peter indicates, we all have gifts. As adults we sometimes forget that the reason we gladly sign up to take someone a meal yet cringe at pulling weeds at our mother’s house is based on the gifts God has given us. Yet, we push our children to do the things we need done rather than providing them some choice in their areas of serving—and then we feel pushback. Provide your child with a few options; don’t make serving an option, but give him an option in where he can serve. It is vital to continue to teach your kids foundational skills like how to cook basic meals, do laundry, empty trash, and keep a house clean so they can be successful in life, but once they are old enough to have some choice in their daily or weekly tasks for the family, give them a few options.

Finally, remember that part of serving others and being served by others is that it won’t always be done the way you might do it. Give your children grace in how it is done. When trying to teach them to serve, you must humble yourself to allow it to be done differently than you would do it. So, if the socks are folded differently or the bathroom mirror has smudges, that’s okay this time, because in the end your child has learned to put the needs of others above his own.

by Elizabeth Daniel

Elizabeth taught middle school for 10 years in Arizona before moving back to her home state of Wisconsin, where she is now a pastor’s wife and stay-at-home mom to her four young children. She has a passion for middle schoolers and their parents. Elizabeth and her husband, Ben, have been married since 2008.
When I was in high school, I became obsessed with being friendly. That might sound positive, but my friendliness had a SO THAT connected to it. I was kind SO THAT others would love me in return, SO THAT they would invite me to hang out, SO THAT they ... you get it. I served and loved others from a place of lack, need, and insecurity. My serving and kindness to others may have appeared to be a fragrant offering, but, up close, it actually stunk!

Speaking of things that stink, have you ever wondered how smelly the upper room must have been the night Jesus washed His disciples’ feet in John 13? The famous scene opens with our King putting on the clothes of a servant, getting down on His hands and knees, and systematically moving from disciple to disciple—scrubbing their dirt-caked, stinky feet. This part of the passage trips me up the most:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. (John 13:3–4)

Jesus KNEW that everything was His, SO He served! Jesus’ motive for serving was far more noble and far less stinky than mine. To Jesus, service was an expression of His power and security. We see service, as did Peter in this passage, as denigration. “Lord, are you going to wash MY feet?” Most of us see service as either degrading or as a means of gaining from another (my SO THAT way of serving). As Jesus continues His interaction with Peter it becomes clear that serving and giving to others is secondary to receiving. Peter had to first receive being washed before he was later commissioned to wash another’s feet.

Verse 14: “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

I’m convinced that the greatest struggle in the Christian life is not doing things FOR God but receiving FROM God. The essential flow of any river must be receiving love FROM God before giving love TO others. I often exhaust myself trying to swim upstream—serving others first in hopes of receiving love from God. I’ve got it all backwards!

Throughout the Bible, God seems to want our hearts more than our deeds. One of the greatest ways to learn to love and serve without a SO THAT attached is to love and serve your family. These are the “one another.” But you don’t get many accolades when you serve your family. I prefer to serve those far from me. When I serve people “out there,” I’m noticed; I get credit for it. High schoolers can literally get community service hours to help them get into college!

I also like serving others far from me, people I hardly know, because when I really know someone I know just how unlovable he or she can be. It’s hard to love and serve my brothers/sisters/wife/kids/parents when they annoy me or don’t notice or just expect my service. Serving others far from us can make us feel great but does very little in our hearts. We can have a great servant-leadership brand but little transformation. This kind of service can stink but is often difficult to help our high schoolers understand.

We need to encourage our teens to first receive love, identity, and affirmation from the Servant Himself. Then, as they move into serving without a motivation of SO THAT, they will open themselves to the Spirit’s transformation in their hearts—and truly become a fragrant offering to the Lord.

by Stevy Yorki

Stevy currently serves as the Youth Pastor at Rockharbor Church in Costa Mesa, CA. One of his favorite things is to watch students connect faith to their everyday lives and live it out wherever they go. He deeply believes in the next generation and wants to see God’s kingdom come in the youth as it is in heaven. Stevy loves living in Costa Mesa and being married to his wife and best friend, Trisha. He enjoys surfing, brewing/drinking good coffee, and eating poke. You can often find him at his favorite coffee shop or poke place with a leader, student, parent, friend, or great book.
“This is going to be a horrible day!”

The morning’s disappointments had been trivial, but in the eyes of my seven-year-old daughter, they loomed larger than life. She lay curled on the couch, tears streaming down her face, as I fed the baby and bit back my own frustrations.

There’s so much to do today, I thought wearily. I don’t have time for bad attitudes.

And then the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart: Forget your to-do list ... and lay a feast.

Within 10 minutes I had burped the baby, grabbed our beloved copy of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, and instructed my big girls to drag chairs, pillows, and blankets into the living room. They squealed in delight when I told them we were going to build our own ship, and they laughed hysterically when I tied a pirate bandana around their little sister’s head.

We lit candles. We found YouTube footage of waves breaking on a sandy beach and streamed it to our TV. We rolled old posters into spyglasses. We read and laughed and pieced together the jagged shards of a seemingly broken morning. And after two chapters, my seven-year-old turned to me and grinned in spite of herself.

“Okay,” she conceded. “I think it’s actually gonna be a really good day.”

The feast changed everything.

SETTING THE TABLE

As I recently read through 2 Kings, I couldn’t help but notice how often a king’s mother was mentioned in his introduction. Although we aren’t given specific information about these women’s lives, a fascinating detail unites all of them: immediately after the royal mothers are introduced, we are told whether their sons walked in the ways of the Lord or did evil in His sight.

Did you catch that, Mama? The mother’s identity was attached to the king’s influence every single time. The way in which she raised her son didn’t just impact the royal family—it changed the course of entire nations.

These passages confirm to us the tremendous opportunity we have to shape our children’s appetites—whether they will hunger for the things of the Lord or for the offerings of the world—but with so many options on the table, how do we direct our families to the best, most sustaining choices?

We lay a feast.
We read them great books. We light candles. We introduce them to poetry and hymns and nature and art. We explore together. We study Scripture and play games and work with our hands. We garden. We cook delicious meals. We talk deeply through the hard things. We serve each other. We use our imaginations. In essence, we fill our children so full of truth, goodness, and beauty that when the world lays its paltry offerings before them they will say, “I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Your fare has nothing for me.”

And when, like my young daughter, they are tempted to indulge in a buffet of self-pity and negativity, we gently whisper, There is a better way. Just as we wouldn’t allow our children to snack on gummy bears when dinner is roasting in the oven, we must not allow them to nibble on the fruits of worldliness when a veritable feast of joy awaits them.

It sounds simplistic, doesn’t it? To believe that we can change the world with such simple pleasures as homemade bread, flickering candlelight, and family read-alouds must, at best, be painfully naive. But in the words of writer and cultural commentator Anthony Esolen, “He who has the imagination of your child has your child.”

So set the table, Mama. Ask yourself, “What needs to be done, and how can I do it beautifully?” Whether your offering is a favorite meal, fresh flowers on the table, a love note tucked into folded laundry, or a morning of imaginative play, serve your children such a banquet of beauty that their mouths will hunger and thirst after it all the days of their lives. For the way in which we raise our children won’t just impact our own families—it will change the course of entire nations.

Let the feast begin.

by Brittany Woodward

Brittany is a born-and-bred Oklahoman living in the heart of Tornado Alley with her husband and three young daughters. She is a homeschooling mama by day, an aspiring picture book author by night, and a lover of literature, worship, fitness, The Office, and coffee (give her alllll the coffee).
Years ago, when I was a new cop, one of my first field training officers taught me something that's stayed with me: “Everywhere you go, you’re looking for work. Every call, every scene, every traffic stop, no matter how big or how small, be the officer who’s always looking for what needs to be done, and just do it.”

This mindset has stuck with me ever since, and it’s formed me not only as a cop but as a husband and father as well. In the years since I went through my own training, I’ve had the privilege to train numerous new officers, and I’ve passed this lesson on to them. “No matter where you go, you’re always looking for work.” It’s been the difference between being the type of officer that is just there and the type of officer that other officers want there.
As our boys have gotten older, I’ve worked to instill this same mindset in them. Whether it’s little chores around the house or times when we’re serving together as a family at church, I find myself saying the same thing to them: “Fellas, look for work. What needs to be done? Use your eyeballs and brain, and just do it.”

The older they get, the more I try to encourage them to do this on their own. Now on the cusp of middle school, they’re expected to do certain things around the house without our prompting: Their Legos are all over the basement floor? Just handle it. The backyard is a mess and we have guests coming over? Handle it. A quick glance in their rooms reveals piles of dirty clothes on the floor? <clears throat> “Yeah, Daddy, we know.” Good.

As our boys grow, so does their independence; but so does the expectation that they “look for work” and take care of it independently. On the one hand, this is just part of growing up and completing common sense tasks on their own, but on the other, it develops a deeper discipline of looking outside of themselves at the opportunities God’s given them to serve, no matter how small.

All throughout Scripture, we’re implored to assume postures of service rather than entitled attitudes of waiting to be served. The latter follows the example of the world while the former strives to follow Jesus. Just as Jesus looked to serve wherever He went, I too am called as a father to train my sons to serve wherever they are. And that starts in our home, doing little things.

Serving is an act of love, a spiritual habit that can be formed over time. By starting this at home when they’re young, we create springboards for our children’s hearts into a lifetime of habitually looking for ways to serve those around them, in both small ways and big.

Someday, my boys will be out of our home and called to do even bigger things; I want those heart habits ingrained. I want them to be used to serving like Jesus served. “Always look for work” eventually becomes a habit that looks similar to “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

by Chris Goble

Chris is a graduate of Westmont College. A former teacher, communication strategist, and Army combat vet, he currently serves in law enforcement in the Denver area. When he’s not catching bad guys or training new cops, he’s either adventuring outside with his family or somewhere in the Rockies with a fly rod in his hand. When he gets within range of a cell tower, he can be reached at:

chrisgoble04@gmail.com
Out-Serving One Another in Love

I hate emptying the dishwasher. Sure, it’s not the worst job (that’s definitely cleaning the toilet), but, for me, it’s up there. There are just always dishes that need to be put away!

I once mentioned this to my husband, Greg, and ever since it has been a race to the dishwasher. He knows I don’t like it, so he is always looking for sneaky ways to unload it without me noticing. But I know my husband doesn’t love putting away dishes either, so I try to make a point of running the dishwasher at times when he can’t get to it. It’s a regular occurrence in our house for one of us to start unloading and the other one coming over to help while telling the other to stop unloading!

Okay, I know that’s a silly example, but it is a reflection of the way we long to serve one another. Both of us are naturally selfish people. If we had it our way, neither of us would do chores, but from day one of our marriage we have constantly looked for ways to out-serve one another.

My husband has taken the lead on this, and his example has encouraged me to become even more selfless in an effort to out-serve him. In our almost six years of marriage I’ve never had to make him a honey-do list. He is diligent about looking for tasks to be done and doing them. And since I can’t let him lavishly love me without serving him right back, throughout the day I’m continuously asking, “What needs to be done?” so I can jump in and never let the task make it to him.

There are a few things we’ve found that have helped us in the area of serving one another. Maybe they will help you lay a foundation of service in your marriage as well.

1. Start Small: While I always appreciate a grand act of service, it is the small things that Greg does that truly make me smile. Last week I was hosting a women’s group at our house, and while I was getting ready, I noticed Greg cleaning the toilet for the ladies! An easy way to cultivate this heart of service is to look around your home asking the question, “What needs to be done?” Then when you find something, do it!

2. Say Thank You: While I almost never serve him for the recognition, sometimes I slip into wanting him to notice. It is so nice when he says, “Thank you.” I always try to get to Greg’s meal prep before he runs out of something and needs to ask for it. When he notices I’ve taken care of it, he will say, “Thank you,” and it makes me want to find more ways to serve him.

3. Talk About It: Every so often my husband and I do a marriage checkup. We ask, “How am I doing at loving you? Is there anything I could be doing better?” We enter these conversations with grace for one another, and it is a great time to ask for what we need or talk about places we feel unappreciated or would like the other to carry a little more weight.

Neither of our primary or secondary love languages is acts of service, but I can say that the way Greg serves me makes me fall more in love with him every single day. I hope that when we are old and gray, we will continue to race each other to the dishwasher to out-serve one another in love.

by Krista Heinen

Krista is a pastor who desires to help the next generation understand its place in The Big God Story. She has her BS in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her MDiv from Bethel Seminary. Krista loves to preach, play board games, and spend time chatting over coffee. She and her husband, Greg, live in Wisconsin.
“BOTH OF US ARE NATURALLY SELFISH PEOPLE. IF WE HAD IT OUR WAY, NEITHER OF US WOULD DO CHORES, BUT FROM DAY ONE OF OUR MARRIAGE WE HAVE CONSTANTLY LOOKED FOR WAYS TO OUT-SERVE ONE ANOTHER.”
A few years ago, I moved to Texas and, for the first time ever, lived within city limits of all four of my grandchildren. Although the adjustment from my native Southern California to small-town Texas was rough, having all four kids around more often made it bearable. Once school was out at the end of May, they all gathered at “Mimi’s” house while their parents worked. That first summer was filled with pools and popsicles—anything to stay cool. By the end of the summer the kids had affectionately named their time at grandma’s house “Camp Mimi.”

Throughout the next year, the three youngest began planning what they wanted to do at Camp Mimi for the upcoming summer. The wish lists grew from pools and popsicles to include craft projects, fort ideas, and games; and it was another great summer! But something interesting happened this past school year: the kids (on their own) began thinking of ways they could serve others at Camp Mimi. When we passed people who appeared to be living without homes, they said, “Let’s make Blessing Bags and deliver them here during Camp Mimi!” They saw people at the bus stop and said, “What if we brought water bottles for people who might be hot waiting for the bus?” or “What if we walked dogs for people in our neighborhood who have a hard time getting out?” They actually began one-upping each other with new ways to serve during Camp Mimi.

Now, before you begin to wonder how and why eight, nine, and ten year olds would be looking for ways to one-up each other with serving ideas, let me tell you it doesn’t come from pure hearts of service. It may have started that way, but it quickly became a “which grandchild has the best idea” situation! And, although all the ideas were good, the competition was not. There have actually been a few fights over which idea to do first and quick dismissals of one another’s ideas. So, as the director of Camp Mimi, my job will be to help my grandchildren learn the heart of serving, which is putting the needs of others (cousins in this case) in front of our own.

This summer at Camp Mimi may be filled with a lot more time serving each other glasses of water than traveling to the bus stop to relieve hot and weary travelers, but I pray that practicing the genuine heart of serving will last a lifetime!

by Debbie Guinn

Debbie is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront magazine. She has more than 25 years of experience working in children’s and family ministries. She is passionate about equipping parents to become leaders of God’s truth in their own households. She is a recent transplant to Austin, TX, where she co-parents two of her four grandchildren with her son. She spends her free time enjoying her grandchildren and perusing antique stores and flea markets.

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HAPPY CAMPERS
live here
Chances are, you’ve been to a Christian wedding, and chances are, at that Christian wedding, you heard a familiar passage of Scripture read. At least in modern times, it seems the quintessential go-to text for the occasion of a bride and groom becoming one is 1 Corinthians 13, otherwise known as “Paul’s Hymn to Love.” And for good reason: Who in a right mind wouldn’t want a spouse who never gets irritable, who never gets jealous, and who never keeps track of your wrongs?

In fact, these well-known verses—"love is patient, love is kind," and so forth—were not written to husbands and wives. Not to burst any bubbles, but the “love chapter” that is so often read at Christian weddings has nothing to do with marriage. The context here is the church; Paul's instruction was for the church. With that in mind, let's revisit what Paul had to say.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels," Paul wrote, "but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give my body over to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

Let me stop us for a brief consideration: Imagine for a moment that you could do these things that Paul is talking about. You could speak in the tongues of men and angels. You could fathom all mysteries and all knowledge. You could have faith that can move mountains. You could give all you possess to the poor. You could surrender your body to the flames, courageously being burned at the stake as a martyr. I don’t know about you, but I find this to be a pretty impressive list. If I ever met someone who could do even three of these five, I’d probably want to hang out with them. If I knew someone who consistently did even one of these things, I’d think, “Now, this is an admirable friend.”

And yet, God is not impressed.

You can do all these spiritually impressive things, and yet without love, you’ve got nothing at all. In the words of Eugene Peterson, we’re “bankrupt without love,” (1 Corinthians 13:7, The Message). The language of this new kingdom that Jesus was ushering in, this new citizenship of heaven, is love—not the self-focused love the Greeks were accustomed to, love as licentiousness or weapon or tool. But a love that seeks to serve.

The implications of this shift were severe. To help those believers—and also us—know whether they’d made the shift, Paul offered up a handful of ways to tell. In the same way that figs hanging from a tree reveal the type of tree that it is, six clear-cut characteristics reveal that that person belongs to Christ.

Love is patient and kind.

Paul's first description of love was this: "Love is patient and kind,"—or, in the Amplified Bible, “love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful” (v. 4). And while at face value, these concepts seem reasonable to us, you have to remember that the people to whom Paul was speaking lived in the shadow of a violent Roman regime. Values such as “patience” and “kindness” weren’t exactly the norm. Jesus’ teachings in his Sermon on the Mount, which serve as the basis for Paul’s comments here, were seen as radical departures because they indeed radically departed from the ways of life back then.

In the Jewish culture, scholars believe, most everyone was right-hand dominant. People ate with their right hands. They gripped with their right hands. They struck with their right hands. You may recall that one of Jesus’ exhortations was that, despite people having heard that the “law says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’” they should instead choose not to resist the evil person behind the affront (Matthew 5:38). “If someone slaps you on the right cheek,” Jesus said, “offer the other cheek also” (v. 39).

Now, think about what he’s saying. If I’m right-handed, and you’re right-handed, and you slap me “on the right cheek,” the only way you’re going to get that done is by backhanding me across the face. If you backhanded me across the face, I’ll admit that I’d be upset. But if I were
a Jew living in Jesus’ day? I’d be appalled. Outraged. Incensed. To backhand someone in the first century was to convey that they were less than human, that they were worthy of being treated like a dog. The human-nature reaction to being backhanded is to flatten your hand and slap back. And yet this is the opposite of what Jesus advised.

“That’s not the kingdom I came to usher in,” Jesus conveyed. “My kingdom is built on peace.”

Despite how shocking this news must have seemed, Jesus was far from done.

“If you are sued in court,” he continued, “and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too” (v. 40). One layer, you could give and still be clothed, right? But both layers? Now, you’re cold.

Still, Jesus was not done.

“If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles” (v. 41). The Romans were the first civilization to put mile markers on the highways that they themselves had built. Jesus’ audience knew precisely what this instruction meant.

By law, if a soldier of the Roman army was walking along the highway and spotted you standing there, he could require you to take all his armor and equipment for the length of one mile. There was no way out of this “assistance,” aside from being beaten and left on the side of the road. This was just the law; it was simply the way things worked. Jesus’ counsel? Don’t fight it. In fact, go two miles, instead of one.

These ideas weren’t floated as suggestions, as you can see. They were presented as the way things ought to be. This was to be the new normal, by the Spirit’s empowerment, the new system, the new deal. Evidently, the One who could calm the wind and the waves could make peaceful the human heart too.

Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude.

Paul’s next phrase was this: “Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude,” and while those words certainly were relevant for the ego-stroked culture of Corinth, with its new-money wealth and newfound prominence, its shamelessness, grandiosity, and pride, the sentiment goes for the jugular with us too. We could stand some improvement here.

You’ve probably noticed that we live in a follow-me world. Follow me on Instagram. Follow me on Facebook. Follow me on Twitter. Follow me wherever I go. We think this is a new phenomenon, or at least only as old as is social media. Paul confirms that it’s a longstanding issue—rampant self-interest and pride. “If you’re going to be part of this new kingdom that Jesus is ushering into planet Earth,” he said, “then you will need to learn this new posture, one of others-centeredness and not centeredness on self.”

A friend of mine calls this near-universal tendency we feel to elevate self the “Me monster.”

In Paul’s view, it’s a monster that ought to be slain.

In the gospel of Mark, we read these words from Jesus: “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on the street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!” (Mark 6:5–8).

In Proverbs 27:1–2, Solomon, an Old Testament king who once was considered the wisest man ever to live, wrote, “Don’t brag about tomorrow, since you don’t know what the day will bring. Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth—a stranger, not your own lips.”

I’ve said to more than a few friends, only partially in jest, “Man, I’d sure love to brag on you, but you keep beating me to the punch ...”

Too often, I’m guilty of the same.

A verse I committed to memory years ago, I rely on still today. “Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God,” 1 Peter 5:6 says, “and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.”

We need not brag on ourselves; the Lord will lift us up.

These days, whenever I walk into a place of business or into a restaurant or into someone else’s home, I remind myself, “Brady, don’t be boastful. The Lord will lift you up. Work to draw out the other person’s story and experience. The Lord will honor you.”

That simple reminder is incredibly helpful to me. On social media, I try to follow the same rule by asking myself, Why am I posting this or responding to this? What’s my motive here? Am I trying to elevate myself so that people will like or respect me? Or am I trying to glorify God?

If you’d like a starting point along these lines, I encourage you work over the next seven days to turn every conversation away from yourself. Just for one week, stop making everything about you. Ask about people’s stories. Ask about their work. Ask about their families. Ask about their dreams. Respond to their questions in accordance with a natural give-and-take, but then turn the spotlight back toward them. And then, at week’s end, take stock. How do you feel? What did you learn? Why might love necessitate an intentional focus away from ourselves?

To read more you can preorder Remarkable wherever books are sold.
Is there anything more ordinary than bread?

The French have baguettes and croissants, Chinese have steamed rolls stuffed with delicious meats, Indians have naan and chapati, Mexicans have tortillas, English have scones, and Americans have sliced white bread. For all its different names and various forms, bread is the global common meal.

It is the very commonness of bread—its ordinariness, its "mere-ness"—that makes it the perfect metaphor for our lives. If we’re honest, most of what we do is ordinary. The everyday sleeping, waking, teeth-brushing, clean-the-house activities are common to everyone. Not much about our daily lives separates us from other people. We all get up, go to work—paid or unpaid—tinker at our hobbies, and try to do our best. Everyone shuttles kids around, mows the lawn, and shops for groceries. We’re all trying to make sure the accounts balance and the checks clear. For the most part, nothing about our daily lives sets us apart from people around us. It’s just life. Like bread. Is there anything more ordinary?

How do you see yourself? Have you settled for a life that may not matter much? Or are you living with an unsustainable manic optimism? Are you striving and straining, grasping and grabbing for something that always feels just out of reach? Perhaps you’re wrestling with an unkind and deeply troubling voice—the one that says that you just don’t matter, that you’re “less than” and “never enough.”
I have good news for you. There is more to this life than what you see. There is more to you than what you seem. Nothing in this world is as common as it seems. Even bread is really more than bread.

In the Bible bread is not simply a dietary staple; it is a picture of God’s provision. Bread became a guiding metaphor for the law of the Lord. Just as bread came from heaven to feed the Israelites in the desert, so the instructions of the Lord came to Moses on the mountain.

Bread is also the way Jesus demonstrated compassion to the crowd. He fed them, spiritually and physically. Jesus went so far as to call Himself the “Bread of Life,” the Bread that came down from heaven. This imagery reaches its fullest expression when Jesus, on the night of His death, took bread, gave thanks to the Father, and said to His disciples, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). Bread became the way the church commemorates and remembers, experiences and encounters Jesus.

Bread, as it turns out, is far from merely ordinary.

Every time Jesus took bread in His hands, He blessed it, broke it, and gave it. Those three words can reshape the way you see your whole life.

To be blessed is to have your true identity recovered and your true calling revealed. It is to be given a new name. This blessedness is not about accumulating or achieving more.

To be broken is to be opened up to the grace of God and to a community formed by that grace. When you place the brokenness of your failure, frailty, and suffering in Jesus’s hands, you allow the grace of God to humble you, to lead you into vulnerability with others, and to transform your heart. After all, bread that is not broken cannot be shared.

To be given is to discover your mission for the life of the world. You realize you are not here for yourself. Life with Jesus is deeply personal but never private. The openness that comes from being broken is meant to lead you outward. There is a hunger in the world around us, a deep groan for something more. When your life becomes blessed and broken in Jesus’ hands, He gives you out for the life of the world. You become the way others find the Bread of Life.

As it is with bread in Jesus’s hands, so it is with our lives. God takes the unspectacular and common, the imperfect and the inadequate, and makes it a carrier of His glory. In His hands, our story becomes sacred.

Now we see it: Is there anything more glorious than bread?

To read more, order Blessed Broken Given: How Your Story Becomes Sacred in the Hands of Jesus, available August 6 wherever books are sold.
10 ENVIROMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

1 Responsibility

“God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me.”

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one’s life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

2 Out of the Comfort Zone

“God transforms me when I step out in faith.”

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

3 Serving

“Asks the question, ‘What needs to be done?’”

This posture of the heart asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

4 Love & Respect

“God fills me with His love so I can give it away.”

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God’s grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one’s behavior.

5 Storytelling

“God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!”

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person’s life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God’s glory.
“God knows me, and I can know Him.”

Identity
This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

“God’s family cares for each other and worships God together.”

Faith Community
God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God’s faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

“God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!”

Modeling
Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.

“Course Correction
This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11–13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

“Known and loved by God.”

Knowing
Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God’s Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God’s truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

“IT IS OUR PRAYER THAT HOMES AND CHURCHES WOULD CREATE THESE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE IN SO THEIR FAITH WILL GROW IN A COMMUNITY OF CONSISTENCY, COMMON LANGUAGE, AND PRACTICE, TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THESE ENVIRONMENTS CAN IGNITE A TRANSFORMING FAITH IN YOUR FAMILY, WE SUGGEST YOU READ:

Spiritual Parenting: An Awakening for Today’s Families
BY MICHELLE ANTHONY
© 2010 DAVID C COOK
Brady is married to his college sweetheart, Pam, and is the dad to great kids named Abram and Callie. He has written five books: Addicted to Busy, Fear No Evil, Sons and Daughters, Let Her Lead, and Speak Life. (All are available online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble). He’s also really serious about caring for the people of Colorado Springs by opening numerous Dream Centers. He has a degree in Journalism from Louisiana Tech, has been a radio announcer for professional baseball and basketball teams, and was the Sports Editor for his college newspaper. Before coming to New Life in 2007, he served Gateway Church in Southlake, TX, for almost seven years.

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