Serving

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

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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.
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!

Michelle Anthony
Executive Pastor: Family Ministries | New Life Church
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

A NOTE FROM MICHELLE
We live in a broken world. Opportunities to serve surround us, but far too often we live self-focused instead of others-focused. Because of this, we are blind to the needs around us. The environment of SERVING teaches us to ask God to show us what needs to be done. When we do, it won’t take long to see these opportunities magnified and in plain sight.

This month, in GOD’S WORD (page 28), we recount the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman from John 4. Jesus served this woman and her whole village when He offered them the living water of God's kingdom. Our FAMILY TIME VERSE (page 5) encourages us to search for what Christ offers: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

In MARRIAGE (page 46) we meet a couple who has made it a habit to ask each other one simple question that comes from a heart to serve one another the way Christ served His church—“What can I do for you today?” Simple, yet oh so profound! You’ll want to try out both of our recipes this month—FAMILY TIME RECIPE (page 24) and KIDS IN THE KITCHEN (page 26)—and make them for your family or make them to give to someone else as an act of service.

Our goal was to fill this issue with creative ways to remind children (and adults too!) to search for what needs to be done in every situation. When we learn to live in this posture, God will meet us, magnify the needs He has placed before us, and equip us to serve!

Debbie Guinn
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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.

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.

Consider purchasing an 8” x 10” frame to hold your family memory verse each month!
But seek First his kingdom & his righteousness, & all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33
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Autumn Acorn Banner

It’s amazing to think that inside each tiny acorn there is an oak tree waiting to grow. It is no different with our children—inside each of them is a special person God created waiting to grow into something mighty and strong. As parents, we need to be reminded that big things often have small beginnings. This holds true with the environment of SERVING. Our children may start out with small acts of service, but they will become a generation of world changers if they enter every situation looking for what needs to be done.

Make this banner together as a family and talk with your children about all the ways God wants to grow them into the people He has uniquely created them to be.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- acorn template found at bit.ly/HFAcorns
- card stock
- fabric scraps
- 8’ twine
- felt, enough for 12 acorns
- 12 old book pages
- spray adhesive
- scissors
- Fray Check
- 12 mini clothespins
- pen or pencil

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Print two acorn templates onto card stock.
2. Cut the acorn top off of one of the templates.
3. Trace the acorn top onto the fabric 12 times.
4. Cut out all of the fabric tops and use the Fray Check to keep the edges from fraying. Set them aside to dry.
5. While the fabric acorn tops are drying, cut out the other acorn template.
6. Use it to trace 12 full acorns on the felt. Then cut them out.
7. Use the full template to trace an acorn onto each of the 12 book pages. Then cut them out.
8. Use the spray adhesive to attach each book page acorn to a felt acorn.
9. Follow by using the spray adhesive to attach the fabric acorn top to the book page.
10. You may have to trim the felt/book page acorn before attaching the fabric so it doesn’t peek out.
11. Use the mini clothespins to attach the acorns to the twine.
12. Display this beautiful banner in your home!

by Debbie Guinn
In the environment of Serving, the question we ask ourselves is, “What needs to be done?” The Bible tells us of many times when God saw a need and did something about it. God is constantly at work serving and helping His creation. In fact, in the New Testament, Paul writes these words to the church in Philippi, “None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others. As you deal with one another, you should think and act as Jesus did. In his very nature he was God. Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn’t take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing. He did this by taking on the nature of a servant ...” (Philippians 2:4-7a NIRV, emphasis added).

The environment of Serving reminds us that we can serve and help people too. When we ask the question “What needs to be done?” and respond with an act of service, we’re being like Jesus and our service is an act of worship to God!

This month, spend some time as a family doing a service-oriented word search together. Download the word search provided at bit.ly/HFwordsearch and print a copy for each family member. Search for each word listed, circling them as you go, until you’ve found them all. Then, have each family member choose one item from the word search that he or she will do this week as an act of service to the rest of the family.

Serving does not come naturally to most of us. Just like in a word search, we must train our eyes to be on the lookout for what needs to be done. When we see a need and then do something about it, it’s worship to the God who became a servant Himself.

by Emily Schulz

Emily is the Family and Women’s Ministries Pastor at New Denver Church in Denver, CO. She has her BA in Christian Ministries from Biola University and her MDiv from Denver Seminary. Emily loves seasonal activities; date nights with her husband, Phil; cooking; playing games; spontaneous song and dance; and creating space for people to be known and loved.
WORSHIP
FAMILY TIME

DISHES
PICK UP TOYS
LAUNDRY

VACUUM
CLEAN BATHROOM
GARBAGE

SWEEP
RAKE LEAVES
FEED PET

DUST
MAKE DINNER
MAKE BED
Sundays were my favorite day of the week as a kid because it meant lunch at my grandparents’ farm after church. When we arrived, everyone pitched in to get the table set and finish prepping the food. I loved visiting my grandparents because there was always something to do at the farm. I wanted our time at Grandma and Grandpa’s to last as long as possible, so after lunch I would search for ways to help.

In the house, I would quietly sneak back to the bedrooms to strip the beds and remake them with clean linens. I would clean the shower in the master bedroom knowing it was hard for my grandparents to do. I would start doing their laundry and press my grandpa’s jeans. Yes, he loved pressed jeans for work. I would head out to the chicken coop to clean and put down fresh straw or hike out to the pasture to dig up the thistles that frustrated Grandpa.

Sundays were days of playing Hide and Seek around the farm finding hundreds of hidden ways to serve my grandparents. Seeing the smile on my grandma’s face at her freshly made bed or feeling my grandpa’s pat on the back of thanks for ironing his jeans gave me a deep sense of joy! An unstoppable joy that I have continued to cultivate in my lifetime and now see being passed down to my daughters.

The beauty of serving others is discovering a sensitivity to the needs of another person. Cultivating this in our children means we must model attentive posturing of the heart toward others with our eyes and ears to see and hear ways we can serve. It’s leading our kids to play the biggest game of Hide and Seek, where winning is discovering serving another.

When we play Hide and Seek, we hide so others can’t discover us. The same is true when we genuinely need help; we can be so embarrassed or ashamed of our need that we hide it from others. In
CONVERSATION STARTERS

FAMILY TIME

order to seek out how we can serve others, we need God’s wisdom. Engage your family in conversation around these questions.

GET YOUR FAMILY TALKING …

• Take turns as a family going around in a circle sharing ways God can use you to serve others: prepare a meal, walk someone’s dog, mow a lawn, make a bed, write a card, weed a garden, etc. Keep going until you run out of ideas.
• God says to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). What are “all these things” that will be given to you?
• Share about a time you discovered a way to serve someone else and how it made you feel.

Start at home. Pray for God to use your family, and then send everyone in the family on a Hide and Seek hunt to discover a way to serve in your home. Challenge your family members to think about how they can serve extended family, neighbors, friends, and strangers.

by Dawn Heckert

Dawn is the Children’s Pastor at Christ Community Church Leawood Campus in Leawood, KS. She loves Jesus and the opportunity to share His story with all ages. She spends her free time deep in glitter, crafting, creating, and chasing life with her two teenage daughters and husband.
Families Who Serve Together

How do you serve others? How do your kids serve others? How do you serve together as a family? Serving is not just something that we do in college or once a year around the holidays; it should be a part of our regular, everyday lives. If we get out of the “volunteering mindset” and enter the “What needs to be done?” mindset, we can start searching for ways to meet needs in every situation we enter. If serving isn’t something your family already does regularly you may want to start a tradition of a monthly Family Serve Day and schedule it on your calendar until it becomes a natural way of life. Here are some ideas to get your family going!

For Kids

- Donate a birthday—instead of asking for presents, ask for donations to or supplies for a local charity
- Read books to children in the hospital
- Use your allowance to “sponsor a child” (parents, encourage your children to have a generous heart by “matching” what they spend)
- Help out at your local food pantry: donate food, help prepare the meals, set tables, serve meals
- Offer water, popsicles, or Gatorade to your mail carriers and waste collectors on hot days (or hot cocoa and coffee on cold days)
- Donate toys and clothes to a local foster care agency
- Make dog and cat toys for an animal shelter
- Deliver treats to your local police and fire stations
- Write a thank you note or draw a picture for your Sunday school teacher
When our children see us serve and when we serve others as a family, it starts to become second nature to them. This kind of mindset will foster in their hearts and attitudes a focus on the needs of others and not their own wants and desires. In a self-serving, self-consumed world, let’s help this generation of children be the children who walk into a room and say, “What needs to be done here?”

by Samantha Fugate

Samantha Fugate is the Subscription Manager and Social Media Coordinator for HomeFront magazine. She and her husband, Joseph, live in Colorado Springs, CO, with their two young children, Liam and Sloane. Samantha enjoys lazy days and spending time with her family.

FOR YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY

• Join your local “Meals on Wheels” to deliver meals to people in your community
• Clean up litter from your neighborhood, park, or community center
• Provide respite care for children in foster care
• Adopt a person in a nursing home to visit weekly, do crafts, read to her, talk to her
• Habitat for Humanity—check your local organization, but most will allow older children to serve alongside their parents
• Help out with Special Olympics
• Surprise the neighbors with dinner—kids can help cook and deliver the meal!
• Go on a mission trip together

Adults

• Jump in and help in your child’s Sunday school class
• Offer to watch a single parent’s kids for the day so she can have a break
• Serve the teacher in your child’s classroom—cut out activities, organize books and supplies, grade papers, etc.
• Surprise the neighbors and cut their grass or shovel their driveway
PRAYER

FAMILY TIME

Seasons of Service

A few months after my second daughter was born, our family was hit by a bug we just couldn’t shake. For weeks we passed the illness around, losing all traces of sleep and sanity in the process. So when a good friend texted me early one morning to let me know she was on her way to my house, I mistakenly assumed she was bringing dinner.

Oh, thank you, I responded. I can just grab it from the porch so you’re not exposed to germs.

Grab what? she typed back. I’m coming over to clean your house.

Wait. What? No. No, no, NOOOOO.

I dialed her number as quickly as I could. “You really can’t come over here,” I blurted. “I’m sure we’re still contagious, I haven’t cleaned in weeks, and I look like death. Please, don’t come right now!”

She brushed me off like a pesky fly. “Hush. I only have a couple hours free, but I’m going to focus on your kitchen and bathrooms. I’ll be there in five minutes. And DON’T PICK UP ANYTHING.”

I reluctantly complied. And for the first time in my life, I didn’t just allow somebody a peek into my filth … I threw the door open wide and let her serve me in the midst of it.

POWER IN WEAKNESS

Fast-forward three years and I am struggling through the home stretch of a difficult pregnancy. Most days I can barely meet my family’s most basic needs.

I’m once again in a season of extreme weakness and I just. don’t. like. it.

Yet Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

Living a life of service to others is a beautiful, gospel-drenched calling. (I have never felt more loved than when my friend gave up her morning to scrub my toilets!) But may I suggest that there is equal beauty to be found in seasons of intense need? I know that in my own life, mustering up the courage to admit my insufficiencies is far more difficult (and spiritually stretching) than serving others through theirs.

And yet it’s only when we confess our need that we allow Christ’s strength to be radically displayed in us and impact our children as well.

If you’re currently walking through a season of weakness and need (illness, unemployment, grief, etc.) resist the temptation to carry your burdens alone. Talk with your children and be open about the season you are in. Remind them there are times when you can serve others and times when you need to be served. Ask a friend to help coordinate offers of service, and together with your family, pray for strength in the following areas:

Acceptance—for the challenging season the Lord is allowing in your life
Humility—to allow yourself to be served
Desire—for God to be glorified in your need
Discipline—to seek contentment in all circumstances

Humble service is a powerful form of worship, both in the offering and in the receiving. May we allow space for its beauty in all seasons of our lives.

by Brittany Woodward

Brittany is a born-and-bred Oklahoman living in the heart of Tornado Alley with her husband and two 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 allllll the coffee).
with both hands, Annabelle picked up the large glass mason jar she kept on a shelf beside her bed. She turned the lid, removed the top, and flipped the jar upside down, shaking it gently until all of her money fell out. Slowly picking up each dollar bill, she whispered, “One, two, three...”

“Annie!” her mother called from the kitchen. “Your breakfast is ready!”

Quickly, Annie gathered up her money and dropped it back into the jar. “Coming, Mom!” No need to count it again. She knew she had saved enough. After one garage sale, two lemonade stands, and walking her neighbor’s dog she had earned enough to buy herself a new paint set.

Annie loved to paint; it was her favorite thing to do. She painted so much that her old paint set was starting to run out of the best colors. Today she was going to the store for a new one. And then, a whole Saturday of painting!

Annabelle’s grandpa lived in a tiny apartment in a place called a retirement home. He liked it there. He played card games with his friends almost every day. And in the clubhouse near the pool he took classes like photography, yoga, pottery, and cooking.

“Well,” her mother answered, “he needs a ride to his doctor’s appointment and then he’d like to go to the market. There are also a few chores that he hasn’t been able to do lately.”

Annabelle took a sip of orange juice and her thoughts drifted to her day of painting. Her mother sighed. “Annie, I’m not sure if we’ll be able to get your new paints today. I’m sorry, sweetheart, but Grandpa needs our help. It’s what needs to be done.”

Annabelle walked slowly to her bedroom to get dressed. Disappointed and sad, she looked at her jar of money. She felt like crying, but she knew helping her grandfather was the right thing to do. It’s what needed to be done.

After Grandpa’s doctor’s appointment and a stop at the market, Annabelle helped carry bags to her grandfather’s kitchen. While her mom swept the floor and folded some laundry, Annabelle watered the plants and emptied the dishwasher.

“Annabelle,” her grandfather smiled at her from the couch. “What a big helper you are. I’m sorry about your paint set, little one.”
Annabelle put a smile on her face. Her mother must have told him. Even though helping made her feel good, she was still sad about the paint set. “It’s okay, Grandpa. It’s what needed to be done.”

Her grandfather reached for her hand. “Annie, come with me; I want to show you something.” She followed Grandpa out of his apartment and down a long pathway with flowers on both sides. They passed some men hitting golf balls on a little grassy area, then a large swimming pool where ladies were exercising. Past the pool, there was a large white building with a red roof and lots of wide windows.

“This is the clubhouse where they teach classes,” he told her, pushing open the door and waving her into the room. Annabelle could hardly believe her eyes.

Dozens of people were seated around large round tables. In the middle of each table was a thick stack of oversized white paper, a huge tray filled with paint bottles of every color, and several glass jars holding stacks of brushes—Long brushes, skinny brushes, big fat brushes—just like real artists use.

Grandpa led Annie to one of the tables with an empty chair. The people seated around the table stopped painting just long enough to look up and smile at her. Grandpa pulled out a chair for his granddaughter.

“For me? Are you sure?” Annabelle’s eyes were still wide. She sat down and picked up a brush while Grandpa pulled the tray of paint closer and set a large blank paper in front of her.

“Yes, little one...”

“It’s what needs to be done.”

by Kathryn O’Brien

Kathryn O’Brien writes books for kids and has a heart for moms. She’s published five children’s picture books, including her latest series (Sit for a Bit, Tydale) which teaches Bible verses to little ones in a fun and lasting way! Kathryn loves writing about faith and family for several publications and online blogs.
CREATE

FAMILY TIME
I’ve always been terrible with directions. Sometimes I impress myself with how often I can get lost even while using a GPS. When I was first learning to drive my dad used to tell me to head north or turn east and I would get so frustrated. My dad was a pilot so the cardinal directions were of utmost importance to him. All of his headings in the plane related to directions, and he always had to know which way was north. He wanted to teach me to value directions just like he did.

While I would still consider myself directionally challenged, I at least understand how important it is to have that kind of direction for driving or flying. I’ve also learned that we need that same kind of direction every day in our lives to guide our choices. There are days when we get lost. We forget to search for what needs to be done and we selfishly focus on our own wants and needs. In those moments we can remember this compass. When we lose our way or get off track, a compass can lead us back to the right path. In the same way, when we are searching or confused in life, God can lead us back to the way we should go—His way. When our eyes are fixed on Him, our True North, we are best able to serve those around us.

This month, have fun together as a family creating this compass and talking together about how God is our True North and how we should always look to Him for clear direction!

**WHAT YOU’LL NEED**
- permanent marker
- cork stopper (found at most craft stores)
- needle
- magnet
- pliers
- bowl
- water

**WHAT YOU’LL DO**
1. Slice the top of the cork stopper to approximately ½’ inch.
2. Using a permanent marker, write the four cardinal directions—north, east, south, and west—on the flat side of the cork.
3. Take the needle and rub the pointed end on the magnet for about 30 seconds.
4. Push the needle through the cork so that it runs from south to north. The pointed end should stick out of the side marked north. (You may need pliers to push the needle through. Be gentle; you do not want to break the needle in the process.)
5. Fill a bowl with water.
6. Place the cork with the needle in the bowl of water and watch as your compass points north.

**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.
WHAT YOU’LL NEED

• magnifying glasses (1 for each player)

OR

• magnifying glass template found at bit.ly/HFMagglass

• 1 sheet cardboard or card stock

• black cardstock

• pencil for tracing

• large resealable bag

• scissors

• hot glue gun

• hot glue sticks

AND

• paper

• pen

• a gift to give away to another family e.g., candle, movie tickets, gift card for dinner, ice cream

BEFORE YOU START ...

Each player will need his own magnifying glass to help him during the search. To make magnifying glasses, start by drawing and cutting out the template magnifying glass on the cardboard or card stock. Then cut a circle out of the center of the template—this will be the viewing circle on the magnifying glass. Using the template on black card stock, trace and cut out as many magnifying glass shapes as there are players.

Next, use the circle cut from the center of the template to trace circles on the resealable bag. When you trace, make the circle a little bigger than the circle template so there is some surface area where you can place the glue. Cut out each circle; this is the “glass” portion of the magnifying glass. Now that you have all pieces cut out, use a hot glue gun to glue the plastic circles to the black magnifying glasses.

Now you’ll need to create scavenger hunt clues to guide players throughout your home, eventually leading to the gift at the end. Cut squares out of the plain paper and write a clue on each one. Fold each clue in half and write a number on the front to help keep them in order. You’ll want to customize the clues to match your home and the age of your children, but listed below are some examples to help get the ideas flowing:

• For a bed: I have four legs, but I have no feet. You love to use me when it’s time to sleep.

• For a stove/oven: I’m shaped like a cube and I get really hot. You can open my door or place a pot on top.

• For the bathtub: Fill me with water and everything floats. You can scrub yourself clean or play with toy boats.

• For the TV: My screen shows your favorites and many more. When you sit in front of me, you never get bored.

• For the couch: You sit on me to rest or lay your head. I’m not a chair—not even a bed.

Once you’ve written out all of your clues, hide them and the gift accordingly. Now you’re ready to play!
GAME TIME
FAMILY TIME

TIME TO PLAY!

Invite your family to join you in a common area of your home. Give each player a magnifying glass. Explain to the players that they will be working together on a scavenger hunt and will use their magnifying glasses to help them search for the clues.

Give the players clue one. You may choose to have each player take turns reading a clue aloud to the group or encourage the group to read each clue aloud together—whichever works best for your family! Feel free to nudge your kids along if they are struggling to crack a clue.

Once the players reach the end and find the small gift, explain that they now have the opportunity to serve someone else by giving this gift away. As a family, talk through who would be best served by receiving this gift. Work together to wrap it up and deliver to the person or family you have chosen.

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!

REMEMBER!

As followers of Christ, we should always be searching for ways to serve God by serving others. Serving others can look different every time. Sometimes it may look like giving away a small gift, and other times it may look like raking the leaves in your neighbor’s front yard. Either way, when we ask the question, “What needs to be done?” there is always an answer. It is important to keep our eyes open so we do not miss the multitude of ways we can serve the Lord. Encourage your children to hold on to their magnifying glasses as reminders to always be searching for different ways they can serve God by serving those around them.
Saturday Surprise

SURPRISE SOMEONE ON A SATURDAY MORNING WITH THIS DELICIOUS BREAKFAST BAKE!

Before gathering the ingredients, brainstorm names of people you know who could use encouragement. Talk as a family about who might be carrying a heavy load (maybe a single parent), or someone who hasn’t been feeling well, or maybe someone who has been busy serving others and could use a yummy meal. Then, choose a person from your list and put together this breakfast bake. Deliver it hot or with the baking directions. You may want to deliver in ding-dong-ditch fashion or write an encouraging note so the person knows who it’s from—either way it will surely be a Saturday morning surprise!

| PREP: 25 min. | BAKE: 35 min. | TOTAL TIME: 1 hour |

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 8 small croissants, cut up
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup raspberries
- 12 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup milk
- powdered sugar to serve, packaged in a disposable container
- Optional: baking directions card found at bit.ly/HFBaking

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Place croissant pieces in a 9” x 13” pan.
3. Scatter blueberries and raspberries over the top.
4. Beat cream cheese, sugar, eggs, and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer on medium speed.
5. Gradually add milk, mixing until well blended.
6. Pour evenly over croissant pieces. Let stand for 20 minutes. This is the perfect time to deliver your surprise with the baking directions card!
7. Bake for 35 minutes or until set in the center and golden brown.
8. Serve warm with powdered sugar sprinkled on top.

by Debbie Gunn
Caramel Apple Poke Cake

NOTHING SIGNALS THE BEGINNING OF FALL QUITE LIKE THE SMELL OF APPLES BAKING IN YOUR HOME. THIS CARAMEL APPLE POKE CAKE WILL BE A FUN DESSERT FOR YOU AND YOUR KIDS TO MAKE WHILE FILLING YOUR HOME WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF FALL. THIS IS ALSO A TASTY TREAT TO GIVE AWAY TO A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER!

PREP: 10 min.  BAKE: 30 min.  TOTAL TIME: 40 min.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

• 1 box yellow cake mix
• 1 can (21 ounces) apple pie filling
• 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
• 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
• 2 eggs
• 1/4 cup milk
• 1 can sweetened condensed milk
• 1 jar (11.75 ounces) caramel topping
• 1 tub (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, semi thawed
• 1 cup chopped toffee bar
• straws

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Grease a 9” x 13” pan. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine cake mix, apple pie filling, vanilla extract, cinnamon, eggs, and milk. Mix until just combined.
4. Pour batter into prepared pan.
5. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
6. While cake is baking, combine condensed milk and caramel topping. Set aside.
7. When cake is done and while it’s still hot, poke holes in it with a straw. This is a perfect job for children of all ages.
8. Pour milk mixture over cake. Allow cake to cool completely.
9. Sprinkle half of chopped toffee bar over cake.
10. Spread whipped topping over the top and then sprinkle with remaining toffee bits.
11. Chill before serving.
Seeking God’s KINGDOM

PARENTS: THIS STORY IS BASED ON JOHN 4, WHERE JESUS SERVES OTHERS BY SEEKING OUT THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND REVEALING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO HER AND HER VILLAGE THROUGH HIS WORDS AND ACTIONS.
“Through Samaria?”

Jesus’ disciples stared at each other in horror and disgust. They mumbled some harsh complaints, thinking Jesus must have made a mistake.

They were headed to Galilee from Judea. Between those two areas was Samaria. All of their lives these Jewish disciples had been taught to avoid Samaria and to hate Samaritans because Samaritans were “unclean” and not as loved by God. There were perfectly fine routes around this impure, unclean area of people. But now their teacher, Jesus, was telling them that He must go through Samaria!

“Why would Jesus insist on going through?” they questioned. “Why does He always do the unpopular, uncomfortable thing?” A few disciples thought they saw a little smirk on Jesus’ face, like he was up to something.

They began the journey early that morning. They walked and walked as the sun blazed hotter and hotter. When they arrived at the outskirts of a Samaritan town called Sychar, they were hungry, thirsty, and ready for a break. Jesus sat down by a water well, and His followers went into town to buy food from the people they despised.

When the disciples returned to the well, they were so shocked by what they saw they almost dropped the food … Jesus, a Jewish teacher, was chatting with a Samaritan woman! Had He lost his mind? It was one thing to travel through Samaria, but to talk to a woman? The men were speechless. They had been taught that it was inappropriate to have a conversation with a woman in public, even if that woman was your own Jewish mother, or wife, or daughter! But this … this was unheard of!

Jesus glanced up at them with a twinkle in His eye. Their eyes did not share that same twinkle.

Then they watched, dumbfounded, as the Samaritan woman stood up, her face glowing with joy. She turned and ran directly into town, shouting happily, announcing that everyone should come immediately and hear the life-giving words of Jesus! Within minutes, as if the day could not get any stranger, crowds of Samaritans came flocking to hear this Jewish Rabbi teach them about the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus grinned as He saw the eager crowds approaching. He looked at the stunned faces of the disciples and laughed.

Suddenly the same question popped into each of the disciples’ minds: “Was this why He had to go through Samaria?”

HEAR IT

Read the story aloud to your family. Also read John 4:1–14, 27–42.

Ask questions to spark a discussion amongst your family members. Here are some examples:

• Why do you think Jesus said He must go through Samaria?
• If you had been one of the disciples, how would you have reacted to Jesus seeking out the Samaritans to befriend and teach?
• It was difficult for the disciples to love and accept the Samaritans. Is there anyone you find difficult to love and accept?

DO IT

Jesus sought out this Samaritan woman and her people even though it was not the popular thing to do. He surprised them and blessed them by showing them the love and acceptance of God— the kingdom of God. Find one person whom you can surprise and bless today by showing him or her what the kingdom of God is like. For example, you could:

• Deliver dinner to a hard-to-love neighbor.
• Have your children make a card, picture, or other work of art to encourage someone who needs it.
• Bring flowers to a neighbor who may need some beauty in her or his life.

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.
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

Lie Down

This month, as you put your little one to bed, sing this rhyme to the tune of “The Wheels on the Bus.” Remind your child of ways he can serve God by serving others in his home, church, and neighborhood every day.

I will serve God with my heart, and my hands, and my feet
I will serve God with my heart, my hands, and feet
I will serve God in my home, in my church, in my town
I will serve God in my home, my church, and town

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

by Jennifer Krogmann

Jennifer is the Children’s Pastor at Christ Community Church in Olathe, KS. She loves working with children of all ages and their families too! She and her husband, Jason, have two teen boys who make life really busy but interesting. The Krogmann family loves hiking/walking trails, coffee, and watching movies together.
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.

You may have heard the parable of the treasure in the field. It was sealed in my mind during childhood using those not-so-glamorous felt boards. Do you remember it? It goes something like this: The kingdom of heaven is like a man hunting for treasure. Finally, he finds a treasure hidden in a field, buries it again, goes to sell all of his stuff, and then buys the field where the treasure is.

Did I miss anything on the felt board? Yes. In fact, I think I missed the parable’s central point; namely, the miracle it describes. I overlooked three words that depict the Christ-bought, Spirit-wrought miracle of Christian service. I missed the words, “in his joy” (Matthew 13:44). When we see Christ for the true treasure He is, our heart’s affections change from seeing our possessions as valuable to seeing all as rubbish compared to having Christ (Philippians 3:8-10).

Once we are in Christ, we change from serving and doing as a means for God to see us to serving and doing because we have seen the greatly surpassing treasure we have in Him. That is why Christians are able to serve without needing the reward of man’s praise but can do it secretly—just us and the Father knowing about it. It is from this heart that we can serve joyfully and seek to meet the needs of others.

Read Matthew 6:1-4. Then have your family figure out what (or who) is the reward the passage mentions.

Bless

Take intentional time to bless each of your children individually. You can use these words to help guide you.

(Insert child’s name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you enough to give you His Greatest Treasure—He gave you Jesus. May you know that the treasure of knowing Jesus and abiding in Him will always be better than anything else this world can offer you. I pray that the Holy Spirit would do a miracle in your heart by changing your desires to long for the presence of the Father. And, (insert child’s name), may you know that Jesus loves it when you seek to serve others with joy and a heart of worship.

by Chase Windebank

Chase and his wife, Katie, live in Colorado Springs, CO, where he is a children’s director at New Life Friday Night. They love the performing arts, hiking, reading, and the little things of life. Their passion is to show the world the love and grace of Jesus in every aspect of daily living.
Our story began with a little girl—age 11—whom we met in a border town between Thailand and Myanmar in 2008. She was begging on the streets with her younger brother in tow, and in the efforts made to protect her, we discovered a world of injustice faced by millions of children globally.

Through engaging her community and many like it, we’ve become accustomed to these issues that threaten marginalized children and families, and we’ve learned how we can create lasting change, both locally and internationally.

Our mission is to strengthen the layers of protection around children to prevent abuse, trafficking, and institutionalization and to empower through education and advocacy.

Our vision is to see every child safe and thriving.
OUR STORY IS NOT ABOUT US.

It’s not about the impact we’ve made over the last 10 years, the lives we’ve protected, or the hope we’ve restored. Our story is about a God who loves every man, woman, and child—One who asks all of us to advocate for those who are vulnerable.

WE EXIST TO PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE.

Injustice exists everywhere, but young women and children who lack the love and support of a strong family are at the highest risk of abuse and exploitation.

Globally, violence is the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls.

There are 40.3 million people around the world in modern slavery—71% are women and girls.

An estimated 8 million children live in orphanages, and 80–90% have a parent.

ABUSE     TRAFFICKING     ORPHANHOOD
SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Solomon Islands consist of a chain of six large islands and more than 900 smaller islands situated in the South Pacific, about 1,200 miles northeast of Australia and about 300 miles east of Papua New Guinea. The Solomon Islands have an area of 10,985 square miles. The largest island is Guadalcanal, covering 2,047 square miles; other major islands are Makira (formerly Malaita), San Cristobal, Vella Lavella, Choiseul, Rennell, New Georgia, and the Santa Cruz group.
If you lived in the Solomon Islands you might eat a lot of fish. Fish is the staple protein in the people’s cuisine. Usually any meat is cooked and served with sweet potatoes, rice, taro roots, cassava, taro leaves, and many other vegetables.

Religion: Christianity 92%, Animism 5%, Other 3%

The world’s largest saltwater lagoon is Marovo Lagoon situated in New Georgia, Solomon Islands.

The island nation got its name from a mistake. Spanish explorer Alvaro de Neira visited the island and found some gold. This made him think that biblical King Solomon must have gotten the gold for his temple from this island. So, he named the island after King Solomon.

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DID YOU KNOW?

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In December of 2008, the Choate family of six arrived in the Solomon Islands to begin serving the Lavukal people through Bible translation. Most of the time, the Choate family lives in a small island village among the Lavukal people to learn their language. Lavukaleve is one of four Central Solomons languages of the Solomon Islands. Over the past 10 years, the translation team has completed the books of Ruth and Jonah and continued to draft the Gospels and Acts. Please pray that the translations of Ruth and Jonah in Lavukaleve will inspire a new hunger for God’s Word and language development. Please consider how you can partner in this Wycliffe ministry with them financially and/or in prayer.

wycliffe.org/partner/Aaron-Choate achoate.blogspot.com
“Eyes up!” I often have to remind my oldest son to lift his eyes from his phone as he texts and “finishes one more game,” completely oblivious to the world around him.

As a parent of three boys in middle and high school, I love the texts I get from them and the convenience of communicating for rides and forgotten lunches during the day, but I feel the conflict of their heads down, eyes fixed on a screen instead of on the world around them.

Our middle schoolers have a desire to change the world, can see far beyond the borders of their own communities through digital media, and can quickly communicate to others through a text, snap, or tweet. What if that desire to change the world came with eyes lifted to heaven, aware of their immediate surroundings, rather than buried in a screen?

In John 4:35, Jesus says, “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (emphasis added). Other times in Scripture we see the phrase “lift your eyes” in relation to finding help or the coming of Christ. I don’t want my kids to miss those moments. While I appreciate the convenience of technology, nothing posted on snapchat or texted with an emoji can even come close to the opportunities we see when we lift our eyes. I can’t stand the thought of my boys missing out on the harvest around them, the promise of help from heaven, and even the return of Christ! How can we help our middle schoolers lift their eyes from their ever-present devices and ask, “What needs to be done?”

**LOOK IN!**

Constantly saying, “Eyes up!” will likely be met with an annoyed sigh or a snappy, “Just a minute!” Looking in at your habits together will build trust and make the process easier. Take your children out for a meal or ice cream and talk about phone use. Ask how you can help them remember to lift their eyes and look around to see how they can serve their family or community. Make an agreement on when devices need to be in a pocket or bag and when they can be out. Examine your own phone use and agree to look up together! If your children are younger middle schoolers, don’t be afraid to set limits around when you will get them their own phones. Not every sixth grader has a phone (if they doubt you, they can ask my kids!). The longer you can give your kids time to build face-to-face relationships and learn how to speak with people without a device in their hands, the more others-focused they will be.

**LOOK OUT!**

God has given your child certain passions and gifts! With those in mind, where could you position your child to be interested in the things around him or her and seek what needs to be done? Maybe your child has a heart for children who have less than he does or students with special needs. Do some research, or give your kids responsibility to find some places to serve (probably using their mobile devices), and then take them there. Have them send out a group text inviting their friends along to serve! Leave the phone in the car and help train your middle schooler to look for things that need to be done!
LOOK BACK!
At this age, we help our kids’ brains develop by recalling the good things that happen when we make good choices. By spending time together—with phones and other devices put away—recounting the stories of how you saw your children lift their eyes and ask what needed to be done and celebrating the resulting harvest, we are building the connections in their brains to help them process situations they might encounter in the future. By putting our own devices away and dedicating time to them, we are showing them the value in relationships. Maybe what needs to be done in our own lives is to set aside time with our kids!

By having conversations about what keeps our kids from looking around them, we model the behavior we want to see in them, and we give them the skills to have eyes up: looking in, looking out, and looking back. With a generation lifting their eyes toward heaven, the future looks pretty great!

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.
I recently found myself sitting in a college information meeting for my son—my eighth-grade son. I must be honest: I sat there in disbelief. This was not supposed to be happening yet. I thought I had four more years before I had to think about all of this.

My son, like many other students, is in a place of searching for a lot of answers for his life. Where do I go to college? What classes and extracurricular activities do I need to get where I want to go? What career do I pursue? And so much more! The pressure...
keeps being pushed to younger and younger students.

As I sat there, I could not stop thinking about the one fact staring me in the face. No, it was not all the amazing things my son will accomplish with his life. No, it was not the question of what in the world will my son major in.

I sat there with the stark realization that my son will be only be living in my house, under my direct influence, for four more years. What will I do with that time? No matter what age our kids are, a clock is ticking down to when they will leave the protection of our homes.

I FOUND MYSELF ASKING, “HOW DO WE TEACH OUR KIDS TO SEEK AND SERVE WHEN OUR CULTURE TEACHES THEM TO ASK, ‘WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?'”

I was reminded that we as Christ-followers have been given a mandate in Romans 12 to view ourselves as living sacrifices to generously give away. What does that mean? It means to search for what needs to be done.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (1 Peter 4:10 NLT).

In a world that tells my son it’s all about him, I want to teach him to use his gifts well to serve others. I want him to see my example of serving others well—to see my life as a living sacrifice. I want him to see me throw the ball with the kid who does not have a dad living at home. I want him to see me serving at the food pantry. I want him to see me giving a listening ear, even when things are busy. I want him to see me seeking and responding to God—ultimately learning to focus on the needs of others and not my own wants and desires. It can be as simple as holding the door open for someone. The main thing is we must teach our kids to have their eyes open for people in need by putting others first ourselves.

What I know to be true is this: Teens will not learn what they don’t see modeled.

Lord, please help us as parents to model what it means to seek and to serve you with all our hearts. Amen.

Serving is sacrifice with great reward!

by Matthew Prather

Matthew is the lead pastor and church planter of The Bridge Church in Waxahachie, TX. He has 16 years of youth ministry experience. His passion is to advance the gospel by planting churches and leading the next generation to invest their lives for the glory of God. He is married to his college sweetheart, Amy, and they have two boys, Ethan and Jonas. In his free time he enjoys kayaking, hiking, and spending time with his family.
“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”
(St. Francis of Assisi)

It is amazing to me what a child will do for a sticker. I scoffed at the idea of sticker charts for far too long, not fully understanding the power of the gold stars. Now I know that my children eagerly drink more water, make beds, and brush teeth if a sticker is involved. The joy and anticipation of a sticker-filled box on the other side of the task is a great motivator in our house.

However, my approach to cultivating a heart of service in my three children is “sticker free.” I want them to experience joy in the act of serving another, not in the act of earning something on the other side of the service. My hope is to cultivate in them hearts that serve because they are passionate about people experiencing God’s gracious love. I want them to get excited about their part in The Big God Story: that God can answer another’s prayer through their acts of service, whether big or small.

There are three different ways we plant the seeds of service in our children.

FIRST, WE BRING THE KIDS ALONG TO SERVE.

When my oldest was a baby, some friends met at a local park once a week to have lunch together, and it so happened that it was a place people experiencing homelessness would gather as well. We began bringing extra food and invited others at the park to join us and enjoy the potluck-style lunch. I showed up each week with Lainey in the baby carrier and a pot of chili or a platter of sandwiches, and as the months passed and our friendships grew, others would hold her for me so I could eat my lunch with both hands free. My desire to serve a group of people living in a park turned into a weekly break for me to enjoy lunch with friends old and new. This community that started with a few men and women bringing extra food to a park turned into opportunities to serve one another. And while my daughter was probably too young to remember, her very presence allowed me to break down barriers as (cute!) babies often do.

SECOND, WE INTENTIONALLY PRACTICE SERVING ONE ANOTHER AT HOME.

The home is an opportune place for a child to exercise acts of service. I don’t want the environment of serving to get associated with a dreaded or required chore. Scripture says God loves a cheerful giver and
I believe that translates to our acts of service. My middle daughter loves to set up toy displays all over the house. When I ask her to serve our family by setting the table for dinner, her face lights up as she pulls out the linen napkins and her favorite flower plates with a handmade name card at each spot. I want to remind my kids that serving is often connected to our talents and passions; serving just puts them to work for the sake of others!

LAST, WE TRY TO SAY YES TO OUR CHILDREN’S IDEAS FOR SERVICE.

Where I used to feel responsible to come up with ways my children could serve outside the home, I realized I needed to tap into my children’s natural resource: their imagination. I do my best to say yes to their ideas whenever I can. Because of this posture, we have built a lemonade stand to raise money for schools in Africa, we have served on our church’s hospitality team as greeters, and we have helped teachers set up classrooms prior to the school year starting. We didn’t do these things because I wanted to but because my kids wanted to, and I chose to say yes. Because of that, service now comes full circle as I get to join my kids in serving where their little heartstrings are pulled.

More amazing than what a child will do for a sticker is what a child will do with a heart attuned to God’s voice.

by Kelli Coltman

Kelli is a stay-at-home mom who serves as a community pastor and life-care counselor at ROCKHARBOR Church in Costa Mesa, CA. She and her husband, Chad, have been married for 10 years after meeting while serving in children’s ministry together at ROCKHARBOR. They have three elementary-aged children: Lainey, Katie, and Liam.
"How do you get your kids to serve?" It’s a good question. My answer? Simply, if parents want kids who serve, they need to serve. If principles are caught and not taught, it must be modeled. So, what is the model? The ideas below are not comprehensive, but I hope they will be good launching points.

DO SOMETHING

Ever since American churches embraced Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*, there has been a widespread movement to find individual purpose—in relationship with God but also specifically in regard to service. I wholeheartedly agree with the concepts of identifying our spiritual giftedness, personality types, passions, and strengths. But I wonder if the American church has leaned a little too far into the concept that unless you find your own true calling, any efforts are wasted or unnecessary. I’ve noticed, through past service and leadership positions, that this belief leaves necessary work undone and even produces a lack of joy among believers. Instead, if there is a need, fill it—even if it’s not classifiable as a “true calling.” When I’ve set aside my desires and sacrificially served in areas I don’t particularly care for, or feel ill-equipped for, God has honored it, ultimately providing both growth and fulfillment.
As an example: My hope for my own kids is that they achieve their highest and best calling, fully utilizing their unique gifts and abilities. There are also times I just want them to take out the trash, do the dishes, scoop dog doo, or any number of everyday tasks. How is it any different as God’s children? Yes, we should seek to fully utilize our gifts, but sometimes there are less self-actualizing things that need doing. I wonder if God also expects His children to pitch in with good attitudes. When my kids serve well and without complaining, I want to lavish them with praise and good things, including helping them eventually fulfill interests and unique abilities.

DON’T FORGET HOSPITALITY

I value my privacy and the feeling that my home is a sanctum—yes, I’m an introvert. Conversely, my wife loves people. She intentionally makes our home a place where everyone feels welcome, from simple things like always having popsicles in the garage freezer for our kids’ neighborhood friends, to more complex issues like happily accommodating dietary restrictions when others come for a meal or being sensitive to the vastly different backgrounds or ideologies of our guests.

I’m grateful for a spouse who stretches me to graciously welcome neighbors, our kids’ friends, and fellow churchgoers into our home. Doing so is key to the relational connections that are a bedrock of sharing the gospel and encouraging believers. What’s more, it’s been a blessing, even for an introverted curmudgeon like me.

EMBRACE A WIDER SCOPE OF SERVICE

Our daughter, now 17, is in the midst of selecting a college and, as a byproduct, setting a direction for a career path. More immediately it means her search for a part-time job to help pay for upcoming college expenses. We’ve been talking about the fact that such work is not just about the compensation she’ll receive; more importantly it is about the contribution she’ll make to glorify God and serve her fellow man.

Genesis 1–2 shows we are created in the likeness of God and are commanded to be creative and productive (fruitful), just like our heavenly Father. He created us for work, not as a means of economic remuneration (or status) but as an extension of who we are and how we are made to glorify Him while also providing value for others. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for cultivate (aboda) in Genesis 2:15 is translated contextually three different ways throughout the Old Testament: work, service, and/or worship. Even as members of the workforce, we are called to service and worship in our work and called to faithfully serve God and our neighbors with our abilities, creativity, and fruitfulness regardless of the role.

How would our communities look if we all served when needed and where needed, regardless of our personal preferences, as an act of love? How would society and the workplace change if we all viewed our daily work, whether paid or unpaid, through the lens of contribution instead of compensation as an act of loving service to others and God-honoring worship? How could we impact generations to come if we modeled this attitude of work, service, and worship to our children?

by Clay Nickel

Clay resides in the Kansas City metro area with his wife, Sarah, and three children: Audrey (17), Andrew (13), and A.J. (9). He has attended Christ Community Evangelical Free Church since relocating to Kansas City eight years ago and has served in various capacities. Clay works in the finance industry.
The beautiful gift of generosity is often misinterpreted or pushed aside. When we hear the word generosity, we can feel intimidated or fear that we lack the resources to be generous. Yet the truth is you and I can walk in generosity every day regardless of our bank account balances. Our God is a generous God who sent His only Son as a sacrifice to die for our sins. As a reflection of God’s magnificent generosity to us, we can glorify Him by meeting the needs of others.

If generosity is not tied to your bank account, then what exactly is it? Generosity is beautifully defined in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 as an act of “supplying the needs” of others “not reluctantly or under compulsion” but cheerfully (vv. 7, 12). When we supply the needs of those around us, cheerfully, we bring praise to God:

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

(2 Corinthians 9:12-13)

Take a moment to think of a joyful, generous person you’ve crossed paths with. Did that person’s character point you back to God? Our generosity is a part of our testimony. Generosity is one of the most powerful characteristics you can implement in your life and the lives of your children because it affects you as well as so many people around you and points them to Jesus.

We are all on a journey and we know we have not reached perfection yet. Work together as a family to find ways to become more generous and point others to Christ. Here are three ideas:

1. **AFFIRM ONE ANOTHER**

All of us can benefit from affirmation; a pat on the back or a thumbs up lets us know that we’re valued. When you see each other acting in generous ways, affirm one another by saying, “That was so generous of you to share your favorite bear with your sister. Generosity is a beautiful characteristic of God, and you just acted like He does!” Husbands and wives, affirm one another when you see generosity in each other: “I noticed that you mowed the neighbor’s lawn for her. That was so generous and thoughtful of you!”

2. **BE HOSPITABLE**

We can meet the needs of others by simply opening our hearts and our homes to them. Join together as a family to invite others over once or twice a month. There is something powerful about sharing a meal and conversation together. By doing this, you are giving your time and resources by providing a meal and being intentionally generous.

3. **GIVE**

The needs of others can be met with resources other than money. Once a week, sit down as a family and talk about people or organizations in your life that you each desire to give to. Work together to think of creative ways you can give to others around you, even if it is not always monetarily. Volunteer at your local soup kitchen, give a new mom your old baby clothes, or use your truck to help a friend move his couch. There are many ways we can bless others with what we already have.

by Katelyn Swiatek

Katelyn is the author of The Stewardship Movement and founder of MAP Financial Solutions. Katelyn is passionate about equipping believers with principles of biblical financial stewardship. She and her husband, Stephen, live in Colorado Springs, CO, with their two adorable children, Aaron and Adah. As a family they enjoy the outdoors, good food, good coffee, traveling, family and friends, and adventure.
Nearly 13 years ago we said, “I do.” Since then we’ve had three children, moved five times, taken 12 vacations, and shared over 5,000 meals together. (Not that we’re counting!)

Thirteen years have brought countless changes in our marriage and in our family, but one thing has remained constant since we tied the knot … ministry. Since the beginning we have actively served in some form or capacity in church. I (Andy) have served as a student pastor, lead pastor, and church planter. I (Erin) have served as a pastor’s wife, children’s volunteer, small group host, and graphic designer.

One of the lessons we’ve learned rather quickly is that we are poor servants of the church when we are poor servants of each other. It can become very easy to serve others at the expense of serving one another.

We’ve found that our service at church is more fruitful when our service at home is more intentional.

So …

We’ve made it a habit to ask each other one simple question. It’s a question that comes from a heart to serve one another the way Christ served His church.

Here’s the question:

“What can I do for you today?”

We’ll admit it’s a question that requires practice. At first, we each responded, “Nothing.” But after we became more comfortable asking the question, we found ourselves more comfortable sharing needs with one another that would have otherwise remained unspoken.

It’s a simple question that yields powerful results, and to help you better engage and serve your spouse, we want to share the three most common occasions we find ourselves asking the “What can I do for you today?” question.

There is never a wrong time to ask this question. These are just some practical times we have found occur most frequently.

1. AT THE START OF THE DAY.

We may ask the question while brushing our teeth or while rushing out the door to catch an 8:00 a.m. meeting. Either way, the morning is a great opportunity to ask your spouse how you can lend a hand that day. For us, it opens the door of communication. Maybe Erin needs me to prepare dinner for the evening. Maybe Andy needs me to run an errand for him.

2. IN THE STRESSFUL MOMENTS.

If you’ve been married for any amount of time, you know what stresses your best friend. When you sense your spouse getting strained, it’s time to pop the question. It’s a loving way to show that you’re concerned and willing to help out as needed.

3. AT THE END OF THE DAY.

As you lie in bed, your mind may drift to all the things you weren’t able to accomplish that day. Asking your spouse the question before falling asleep may prove fertile ground for a response.

by Andy and Erin Comer

Andy and Erin are church planters near Austin, TX. They enjoy time with their girls, restoring anything old, and always learning new things. They are growing forward together!
Random acts of kindness! You’ve heard that phrase, I’m sure. It was first introduced in our culture a few years ago. Or was it? It seems to me the concept of serving actually dates back to the beginning of time, and if you dig into Scripture, I think you’ll agree.

As Christians we are to serve one another by using our gifts, and we’re to do so with our whole heart according to verses like Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 6:7, and 1 Peter 4:10.

One of my favorite biblical examples of self-sacrificing service involves a little boy and his lunch. I’m sure he packed only enough for himself that day, but he saw a need and willingly gave his lunch so Jesus could feed the throng of hungry people. Can you imagine that little boy’s joy as he watched what happened that day?

Unfortunately, in today’s self-absorbed world, a more selfish mentality is the norm. Whether we’re five or fifty-five, we are often blinded to the needs of others by our inability to see beyond ourselves. It’s all about me! What do I want to do? What’s in it for me? Where do I want to go?

American writer Dale Carnegie once said this: “The world is so full of people who are grabbing and self-seeking, so the rare individual who unselfishly tries to serve others has an enormous advantage. He has little competition!” Sadly, that is so true today.

As grandparents, we can (and should) do all we can to counteract that selfish mentality and instill in our grandchildren a desire to serve—to perform random acts of kindness. The great thing is kids are often eager to serve, as was the case of the little boy with the lunch. Especially with a little encouragement and creativity from a grandparent!

Let’s challenge ourselves and our grandchildren to serve others this month. Let’s ask the Lord to help us become sensitive to the needs of people around us, to get rid of blinders, and to see people through His eyes.

Whether your grandchildren live next door or 200 miles away, brainstorm with them about whom you can help and how. Make a list and add to it throughout the month. Every day, in every situation, ask yourself what needs to be done—then just do it.

My grandkids and I have already thought of a few easy ideas:

- Mow grass, rake leaves, or pull weeds for a neighbor
- Visit someone in the hospital or nursing home
- Bake cookies for your firefighters and police officers
- Hold the door open for someone and greet her with a smile
- Send a card or write a letter
- Fill a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child
- Pick some flowers for someone

Record every act of kindness you do and have your grandchildren do the same (if they’re doing this challenge long distance). At the end of the month, discuss the experience.

- What did you learn?
- How many acts of service did you provide?
- Are you more aware of the needs of others than you were before?
- How did people react to being served?
- Was it fun? Were there any surprises?
- Would you do it again?

We’re all in! How about you? May your “September of Serving” be a blessing as you encourage your grands to see beyond themselves and generously give themselves in service to others!

by Elaine McAllister

Elaine served on staff at a Christian college and an evangelical church before retirement and now blogs and writes a column on grandparenting. She is also the author of two soon-to-be-published books! Elaine and her husband share the home of their cat, Mufasa, and the love of five pretty awesome grandchildren and their equally awesome parents in the middle of Kansas. Elaine has been involved in women’s ministry for years and continues to lead a Bible study. When she’s not writing, Elaine enjoys decorating, landscaping, and traveling.
# Our Ideas!

**NOT-SO-RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS**

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**EVERY ACT OF KINDNESS WE DID**

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DON'T FORGET TO DISCUSS.
10 ENVIRONMENTS

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.”

**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!

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

**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 belongs to God, and He loves me!”

“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.

“I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me.”

**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.

**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.

“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.

“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

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Be Empowered in Your Role as a Parent

_Spiritual Parenting_ creates spiritual environments that God can use to work in the lives of your children. It’s a biblical, innovative, and fresh approach to parenting. Be inspired as the primary nurturer of your child’s faith as you learn to practically create space for God-encounters in everyday life.

Awaken the Families in Your Church!

_Spiritual Parenting_ is a six-part program that empowers parents to be the primary nurturers of their children’s faith. Families will be transformed as they learn how to create space for God-encounters in everyday life.

Perfect for parenting classes, mom groups, midweek, retreats, and more!

Dr. Michelle Anthony 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.

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