

PARENTING MATTERS: SPIRITUAL MILESTONES

SERVING

LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

...chaos. Even the most organized day is a constant balance of work, laundry, shuttling the kids, spending time with your spouse, getting everyone fed, and maybe even finding time to sleep. When someone asks you to do more, your gut is probably screaming, “no way!”. Sometimes “no” is the right and healthy answer, but when it comes to serving, take some time to reflect. How are you encouraging your child to grow up to be a selfless, empathetic, servant-hearted adult? What are you doing practically to lower the likelihood of them engaging in risky behaviors in their teen years? When you serve and volunteer, you are modeling what it looks like to be more like Jesus. Finding purpose outside yourself both inspires you to make better choices, and inspires those around you to serve and give. This milestone is about trusting that God will make space in your life when you say yes to serving his kingdom.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SERVING

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SERVE?

Serving others is the act of being like Jesus. It is hard. Often it means giving beyond your capacity, going outside your comfort zone, sacrificing other things, and trusting. When you pursue opportunities to serve, God steps in and provides time, energy, and a deeper relationship with him. Serving is about being the practical hands and feet of God's kingdom and helping others experience God's love.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IT?

Jesus says that the greatest commandment is to love God and love others (Mark 12:30-31). Serving shows practical love to both God and to others! Throughout Jesus' ministry, he often stops to serve those around him. In the final hours before he is crucified, Jesus makes a point to serve his disciples by washing their feet (John 13:1-17). This is not something that a teacher or leader would normally do, but Jesus wanted his followers to see how much he loved them and how humbly he served them. After finishing, he challenges them to do the same for each other. These men were Jesus' friends and followers, but they were also Judas and Peter, both of whom Jesus knew would betray and deny him. Jesus knew that service wasn't always fun or glamorous, but it is always powerful and life changing.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT TO US?

One of the biggest questions in life is, "Why am I here?". Throughout life and across communities, this question frames so many life choices. When you give kids opportunities to serve at each phase, you answer that question consistently with, "You are here to love and serve". Engaging in service together begins to show them that helping others can be joyful and rewarding. Studies have shown that children who serve just one hour a week are less likely to be involved in high-risk behaviors, and are far more likely to serve regularly in the future. While these are all great reasons, serving others is more about our connection to God than our personal reward. Service is significant because you are wrapping your behavior in humility and love, and acting in a powerfully selfless way that builds relationships and glorifies God.

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

FOR KIDS

Supplies: plate with an edge, small bowl, toothpicks, milk, 3 or 4 colors of liquid food coloring, dishwashing liquid

Do: Pour a few drops of the dishwashing liquid into the small bowl, soak the ends of the toothpicks in it and set it aside. Pour enough milk into the plate so the bottom is covered with a thin layer of milk.

Say: Pretend that this is the world without God and without Christians. It's pretty plain and pretty boring.

Do: Add a few drops of each food coloring to the milk, try to keep the colors separate

Say: These drops represent Christians. God places Christians throughout the world, but if we don't choose to talk about God and serve others, then we just stay in one spot.

Do: Give each kid a toothpick and ask them to touch the soaked end to one of the drops of color.

Say: When we do what Jesus tells us to do, telling his good news and serving people, look how beautiful things become!

Do: Continue to dip the toothpick until the whole plate is filled with color.

Say: When we choose to serve and love one another, that love spreads! Serving others is important because even one small kind thing can change the whole world.

To see it in action, search "Milk and Food Coloring Experiment" on YouTube.

FOR STUDENTS

Work together to identify your student's strengths and find a way for them to serve based on what God has gifted them to do. Here are a few suggestions, but get creative!

If they're good with kids...serve in children's ministry, volunteer at an after school program, or babysit for family friends for free.

If they're musical...find a younger musician to work with and mentor, volunteer for the worship team.

If they're creative...make crafts to donate to a local women's shelter or retirement home, do crafts with neighborhood kids, search online for projects with a purpose.

If they're academic...find them someone to tutor, get them plugged in with a mentor who has similar interests

FOR THE FAMILY

Create a serving jar! Get a mason jar or a glass, and a bag of rocks or marbles. Each time someone in your family serves, celebrate by adding a rock or marble to the jar. When it's full, celebrate together by doing something fun like going out to a favorite restaurant, getting ice cream, seeing a movie, whatever you like to do together.

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:3-4

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

PRAYER FOR PARENTS

Dear Lord, reveal to us consistently the moments and opportunities to care for others. Help us to see others through your eyes and to love them as you do. Help our family to be open to small opportunities to serve others. Show us the places where we can make bigger commitments to serving. Move our hearts to be humble, to value others more than ourselves, and to be filled with a deep desire to serve. Help me see the spiritual gifts you have given my kids and give me the wisdom to help them use their gifts well. Fill us with immense joy when we follow your example and love others well.

RESOURCES

Kidworldcitizen.org - 35 service projects for kids

Mountainpark.org/Outreach

KristinKoonce.com - How to Love Deeply by Serving Others

Pinterest.com - Service Projects for (your child's age)



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