

Before Serving Together

Some things to do in preparation.

FIND A SHARED PASSION:

Spend some time talking with your child/teenager about the things that interest and concern them. It will be more meaningful if you have a shared passion for the specific area of service. (Examples: If your family has an interest in poverty-stricken areas, find a place to feed the homeless. You may have a teenager that loves kids and it would be great to serve in an orphanage or at the church with the children's ministry.)

FIND A GOOD FIT:

Serving can be as simple as baking cookies for a homebound neighbor or making birthday cards for those in a nursing home. It can be an extended serving time such as a missions trip or meeting a particular need on a regular basis. Keep in mind, there are often great projects and scheduled mission events already planned that your family may want to take part in. (For ideas stop by the HomePointe Center or bencoc.org/homepointe) It is important for the kids to participate in the selection process. Share a short list of pre-screened opportunities with them and ask each to make a case for which they would like to do and why. If you can't select just one, schedule several over the coming months. Think through each of the following questions as you consider serving options for your family. . .

1. Skills:

What are the skills, strengths and talents of each family member that might influence your choice of where you serve?

2. Learning:

What kinds of things would your family like to learn from volunteering?

3. Logistics:

What are the best times and locations for your family to volunteer?

SET EXPECTATIONS:

Put your child more at ease by explaining what to expect. If visiting a nursing home, for example, explain they may encounter odd sights, sounds and smells. If feeding the homeless, share why some people may not be able to take regular baths but we love them anyway. If helping children with special needs, explain why some can't respond "normally" to conversations, etc. You may also want to coach them on manners and explain what they will likely do while serving. Set the tone for a great time together!

While Serving Together

Some things to keep in mind during your family service project.

BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:

Serving together is an ideal time to get to know each other better. Take note of what different family members do well. Intentionally encourage them and tell them you are proud of how they demonstrated a great attitude or area of strength.

GO DEEPER:

Work as a family to really invest in others' lives. Spend some time learning the names of those you serve. Look them in the eyes and find out their interests and their story. Allow those you serve to learn about your family. This will allow your children to see those you are serving as valued individuals and possibly similar to your own family. This may also create great conversations later with your child.

BE SAFE:

While it is great to serve together and try new things, it's just as important to make sure that you are not putting anyone in your family in a risky situation. Keep a close eye on one another, especially children/teenagers. You might want to make sure that you are working directly with each other or that you can see your child at all times.

SERVING WITH YOUR SPOUSE...

- Helps create intimacy
- Allows you to learn more about one another
- Provides opportunities for greater communication
- Models meaningful partnership

Serving  Together
To Build a Stronger Family

After Serving Together

Some things to do afterwards to get the most out of your experience.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Take time right after you finish serving to talk about your family volunteer experiences. By reflecting and talking about it, the experience will have a greater impact and allow family members to share what really meant a lot to them, moved or challenged them. This is a great way to get to know each other better.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The following questions may be helpful to guide conversation when you finish your time of serving together:

What?

What kind of difference did we make together?

Allow each member to share any stories about the experience. They can be sad, silly, frustrating, funny or serious and touching stories.

Why?

Why was it important to do this project together as a family?

How did it fit with the values and beliefs that are important to your family?

How did it impact you?

Now what?

Is there anything that you will do differently as a family as a result of your time serving together?

How did it impact your entire family?

What kinds of activities do you want to do in the future?

PRAY FOR THOSE SERVED:

Take a few minutes to pray as a family asking God to bless those you served by using your act of service to bring hope, healing and grace into their lives.

Advance Activities

Use one or more of these family activities to help your children learn more about what it means to be a servant.

ISPY:

Take the family to a sit-down restaurant. Tell the children they are spies who must identify the best servant. Help them notice the waiter/waitress by asking them to point out clues that suggest a servant's attitude, spirit and work. (i.e. Listening well, taking care of the needs of others, etc.)

FROZEN ARMS:

Tell the children that you magically froze their arms so they are not allowed to bend elbows or wrists. Place candy or cookies in the middle of the table and tell them they can each eat one. Without bending their arms, however, it will be impossible to serve themselves – so they must figure out how to serve one another to get the good stuff! When done, explain that we are called to serve those unable to serve themselves – but the real blessing comes back to us.

READ TOGETHER:

Read and discuss the following Scriptures.

Mark 10:43-45 (Jesus described servants as “great.”)

Philippians 2:5-7 (Jesus modeled humility & service.)

James 1:27 (Christians are to care for the needy.)

REFLECTION:

Take time to reflect together about the spiritual discipline of service. In addition to the activities above, you may want to use the *Families on Mission* or *77 Ways Your Family Can Make a Difference* books described on the back panel.

“More than any other single way, the grace of humility is worked into our lives through the Discipline of service.” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*)

Going Further Resources

Additional resources are available at the HomePointe Center to help you become intentional about building a God-honoring family one step at a time.

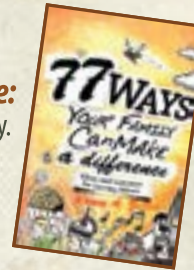


Families on Mission:

Ideal for families with younger children trying to instill the value of serving others.

77 Ways Your Family Can Make a Difference:

Practical tips and ideas for serving together as a family.



Serving Together *To Build a Stronger Family*

Creating Meaningful Family Serving Experiences

Why Serve together?

One great way a family can grow closer to God and one another is by doing simple acts of service together. Benefits include . . .

- The joy of making a difference together
- An opportunity to emphasize virtues like generosity and humility with our children
- Increasing a child's sense of gratitude through exposure to those less fortunate

Why don't we serve together?

Which obstacles can you intentionally overcome?

- Never considered serving together with the family
- Schedules too full with “us” focused activities
- Age of kids makes it challenging
- Have not found the right opportunity for our home

The following pages contain ideas to help your family overcome such obstacles.

bencoc.org/homepointe