

# Helping Children Learn to Serve



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### Children may serve by...

Planting flowers, recycling, weeding, raking, reading to others, writing letters, singing, pushing wheelchairs, doing drama, being helpful, giving, praying, thinking and participating.

### Serving takes place...

In the church, in the community, in the classroom, in homes, in nursing homes, in hospitals, in neighborhoods, almost anywhere.

### Ideas for Projects

Make place mats for Wednesday night suppers, hand out worship bulletins, make visitor kits, collect food for Thanksgiving baskets, write 'thank you' letters to staff, adopt a missionary, collect games, sharpen pencils for the pew racks, return Bibles and hymnals to storage after worship, create a 'giving tree', gather communion cups after use at Lord's Supper, and many more. What might you add?

### Steps to Success

- Pray with and for the children
- Choose a project
- Explore all aspects related to the project
- Talk about it with the children
- Contact group the project affects, include permission and thank you notes
- Allow time to complete project (time to collect items, etc.)
- Celebrate by sharing results (numbers involved, etc.)



As followers of Jesus, we are called to show compassion, to be a community who cares about others. We are called to serve others as Jesus did. We are called to create in children the desire to serve others. To help children begin to develop caring actions, pray with and for them as they begin to minister to the world around them. Children can only be good stewards of their talents and experience the joy of doing for others by their actual involvement in ministry.

### It's Biblical

Jesus' disciples went about serving others, from passing the food to feed five thousand people to managing the crowds that followed Jesus. Jesus taught the disciples to serve one another. They were an important part of Christ's ministry on earth.

### Model It

Children may and will make serving others a natural part of their lives, if we model serving others. Express thanks to children who are helpers or to other teachers for doing a good job. Recognize 'acts of kindness' in the classroom, encourage children and provide opportunities for them to help others. Help them to understand the importance of what they do.

### Involve Children

As you begin considering ways to involve children in ministry, first ask for God's leadership. Next, include the children in the planning process. Ask them what they would like to do. Be open to their suggestions and ideas. Talk about ways the children are already serving others everyday (sharing toys, praying for a sick friend, sending a card to grandmother, etc.).

### Involve Parents

Any activities you plan for children should include parents. Their support, skills, resources, and permission are invaluable to ministry. Even more so, when a child's parent is involved, family relationships are strengthened. Provide a fact sheet on the project/ministry for the children, parents and others.



### Discover Needs

Your church is already meeting many needs through your church mission organizations. You might consider joining them in ministering to others (food pantry, clothing closet, church work day, migrant kids, etc.). Look around your community for needs. Educate the children as to the needs around them and seek ways to meet those needs (recycle, provide school supplies to children, sing in nursing homes).

### Make a Plan

Once a ministry project is agreed upon, meet with teachers, helpers, and parents. Include the pastor, by providing him information about what your children are doing. Set a date, develop a schedule and discover needs. Think hard: Is the project realistic for the children to accomplish? Is it too complicated? Is it too simple? Is it age-appropriate? Is transportation needed? Do you want to take pictures or video the event? Every detail needs to be addressed to ensure success.

### Consider the Receiver

Discover the receivers and their needs. Do they want your help? What are they available? Consider their special diets, physical limitations or allergies. Will the receiver come to the children? Will they children go to the receiver? Explore all aspects, who it affects, what is needed, and when and where the ministry will take place.

### Secure Permission

Important! Permission slips do two things: (1) the parents' approval allows the child's involvement; (2) the parent knows what his/her child is doing. Permission may also be needed for use of the church building (date, time, rooms needed, etc.). Permission may be needed for off-campus sites as well (nursing home, hospital, shut-ins home, etc.).