



theParentLinkSM

Children's Edition

October 2009



Practice Your Family's 'Serve'

Most children are naturally eager to give and help, and parents are eager to develop those young servant hearts. Volunteering together is a great way for your family to show love for others and for God.

Despite our best intentions, it can be tough to fit in time for service projects during the school year. But with our new 20/20 vision, this can be an ideal time to explore some volunteer opportunities.



The serving opportunity on October 18 is a perfect way to start teaching these young hearts how God wants us to help others. The children are learning this exact message all week. While it might be tempting to hire a sitter or leave your children at home, I strongly urge you to use

this opportunity to demonstrate how we serve others and volunteer as a family.

Look to your children's passions for volunteer ideas. If kids love singing and talking with others, I would encourage you to go to serve the nursing-home residents. If your kids enjoy playing at the park and meeting new friends then go serve at the park. We will be cleaning the equipment, handing out coffee and water, and offer games and crafts. There are many ways to get involved!

Make volunteering a regular part of your family's life. The excitement of helping others is contagious, so children won't want to stop when this project ends. Find ways to continue serving year-round with our 20/20 initiative. (Trunk or Treat car is a great one!)

The Many Benefits of Volunteering

Christians serve in response to God's love for us. But serving also helps children learn responsibility, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-respect, self-discipline, self-motivation, and tolerance. When we teach children to serve, we're also teaching them to become servants for life because children who serve become adults who serve. Consider these statistics from *Engaging Youth in Lifelong Service* (Independent Sector):

- Two-thirds of adult volunteers began serving as children.
- Adults who volunteered as children give more money and time than adults who began serving later in life.
- Across incomes and age groups, people who volunteered as children give and volunteer more than those who didn't.

PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To show your family some meaningful ways to serve.
2. To bless your work and the people you're helping.
3. To grow your children's desire to serve him and others.

Parenting Insights

Veteran children's ministers Gordon and Becki West offer these tips for effective service projects with your family:

Plan ahead and prepare

everyone. Let children know what to expect during each volunteer outing—as well as what will be expected of them.

Structure projects so they're age-appropriate. Younger children need more hands-on tasks. Choose activities that your child can engage in and be a part of.

Give everyone a task. Children feel valued when they're given responsibility, and they'll rise to the occasion when given jobs that fit their skills and interests.

Quick Stats

- When asked what they'd change about the world, kids said they'd save the environment (44%), end wars (21%), cure diseases (14%), feed the hungry (11%), and end racism (4%).

(USA Today)

OpenTheBook

"Since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

John 13:14-15

By dying on the cross to save us, Jesus was the ultimate example of service. Because of his sacrifice, we, too, can give of ourselves. Try one of these ideas to teach service:

Teachable Moments

1. Charity begins at home.

When you assign household chores, let children know they're helping you. Thank them for their willingness to pitch in and for their positive attitude about serving.



2. Serve anonymously sometimes.

It's nice to be recognized for our service, but that shouldn't be our motivation. Remind children that everything we do is for Jesus, who knows our hearts and rewards our efforts.

3. Give a service challenge.

At the beginning of the week, challenge family members to complete one act of kindness for each family member during the next seven days. Afterward, celebrate all the good deeds and share ideas about more ways to serve one another.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up."** **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Children will experience lots of emotions while volunteering. Get them talking about service with these discussion starters and debriefing questions:

1. Talk about what you liked and didn't like about this time of serving. What felt good? What surprised you?
2. How do you suppose these people felt when we helped them?
3. Talk about a time when someone helped you. How did you feel, and what did you say or do in return?
4. What are some ways you make a difference by helping at home? at school? at church?

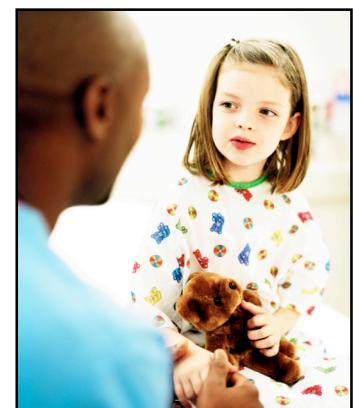
Family Experience: Ready, Set, Serve!

Here are some additional ideas to spark your thoughts about the many areas where families can volunteer together throughout the year:

• **In your neighborhood**—Plant flowers for a disabled neighbor, clean up trash at a park, show an elderly person how to use a computer, have a lemonade stand or garage sale and donate the proceeds to charity, offer occasional after-school or evening child-care for neighborhood parents, set up a lending library of Christian videos.

• **In your community**—Serve at a soup kitchen, collect gently used stuffed animals for hospitalized children, read to or tutor students after school, hand out free ice water at area functions, stuff envelopes for a charity that does regular mailings.

• **At church**—Wash toys in the nursery, wash windshields in the parking lot on a Sunday morning, arrange a workday just for families, visit shut-in members.



• **Across the miles**—Gather needed items during national or global crises, ask your children's pastor about child-centered service projects such as Operation Kid-to-Kid (www.group.com/ok2k/) and Operation Christmas Child (www.samaritanspurse.org/occ.asp), sponsor and pray for a child overseas.



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Where the Wild Things Are* (Oct. 16)

Genre: Family Adventure, Drama, Fantasy

Rating: PG (for mild thematic elements, some adventure action, and brief language)

Cast: Max Records, Catherine Keener, Mark Ruffalo

Synopsis: In this adaptation of Maurice Sendak's beloved children's book, mischievous, misunderstood Max is sent to bed without supper. His imagination runs "wild" as he travels to an island and meets strange creatures. After Max is crowned king, he realizes that ruling these beasts is more complicated than he expected.

Discussion Questions: What are some constructive ways to deal with anger? How active is your imagination? Read Psalm 27:1. What are your biggest fears? How do your fears affect your faith, and vice versa? How can you conquer your fears and worries?



What Music Is Releasing

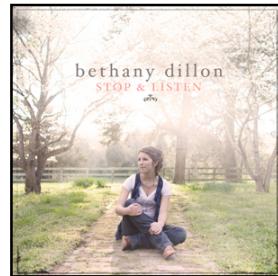
Artist: Bethany Dillon

Album: *Stop & Listen*

Artist Info: Dillon, 21, started playing guitar at age 10. Three years later, she recorded an album that led to several hit singles and award nods. Dillon, known for her deep songs and a life lived for Christ, is married to Christian musician Shane Barnard.

Summary: Dillon describes *Stop & Listen*, her fourth project with Sparrow Records, as her most confessional album yet. She encourages listeners to pause and find peace during life's chaos. "Most of the songs are about the not-so-simple ideas of stopping, listening, and waiting," Dillon says.

Discussion Questions: What makes you "stop and listen" to God? When you're busy, do you pray more or less, and why? How patient are you? Read Isaiah 40:30-31. What are some ways to "wait" on the Lord?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Shorts</i>	In this game, based on a late-summer movie, players' wishes magically come true. Features gross humor, name-calling, and enemies such as "booger monsters."	Nintendo DS; E
<i>Mini Ninjas</i>	Cool and cute warriors engage in combat with a variety of weapons. Contains cartoon violence but no blood.	Wii, Xbox 360, PSP3; E10+
<i>The Beatles: Rock Band</i>	This much-hyped game has only a few mildly suggestive lyrics. Families can discuss how music has changed across generations.	Wii, Xbox 360, PSP3; T

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Contrary to popular belief, research shows that children with busy schedules thrive emotionally. Instead, it's their parents who are stressed by all the activities and driving. (msnbc.com)

- Kids of all ages enjoy "KenKen," which has been called the new Sudoku. Players add, subtract, multiply, and divide numbers to fill "cages." (kenken.com)

Quick Stats

- Most school districts now recommend 10 minutes of homework a night per grade level (10 minutes for first-graders, 20 minutes for second-graders, and so on).



- While 57% of parents say they spend the right amount of time helping their children with homework, almost nine in 10 teachers say parents don't set aside enough time to help. (AP/AOL poll)