



June 2008

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## 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 summer, when schedules usually ease up a bit, can be an ideal time to explore some volunteer opportunities.



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.



Your church may already have projects that are ideal for family involvement, or you can come up with your own. Whether you're serving on your block or helping people across the globe, keep these suggestions in mind:

**Start small.** Your family can make an impact without going on a weeklong mission trip. Begin with a project that takes an hour or two a month, then grow from there.

**Look to your children's passions for volunteer ideas.** If kids love animals, walk dogs at an animal shelter together. If they enjoy making crafts, deliver seasonal gifts to nursing-home residents.

**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 summer ends. Find ways to continue serving year-round.

### 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.

### Parenting Insights

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

- 1. Plan ahead and prepare everyone.** Let children know what to expect during each volunteer outing—as well as what will be expected of them.
- 2. Structure projects so they're age-appropriate.** Younger children need more hands-on tasks. Instead of a canned food drive, for example, have younger kids deliver the collected cans to a food pantry. When children stack food on the empty shelves, they'll see the impact of their service.
- 3. 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.

## 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!

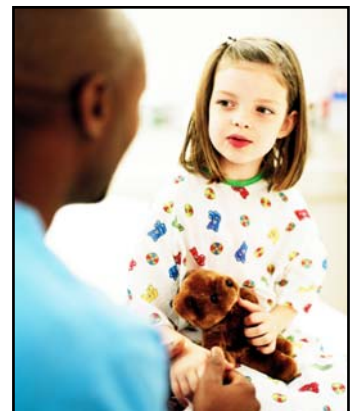
**Here are some ideas to spark your thoughts about the many areas where families can volunteer together:**

- **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/](http://www.group.com/ok2k/)) and Operation Christmas Child ([www.samaritanspurse.org/occ.asp](http://www.samaritanspurse.org/occ.asp)), sponsor and pray for a child overseas.





## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Kung Fu Panda* (Walt Disney)

**Genre:** Animated comedy

**Rating:** PG for sequences of martial-arts action

**Release Date:** June 6

**Cast:** Jack Black, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie, Jackie Chan, Lucy Lui

**Synopsis:** Po the Panda (Jack Black) is a lowly waiter who's obsessed with kung fu fighting. But he's from a lazy species, and his body shape doesn't lend itself to the sport. An ancient prophecy has named Po as the "Chosen One" to save the village, which faces powerful enemies. A group of martial-arts masters must turn the slacker panda into a kung fu fighter before it's too late.

**Discussion Questions:** Talk about a time when you struggled with laziness. Why is it sometimes so hard to get motivated? Can you think of something you'd love to do but are afraid you wouldn't be good at? What keeps you from trying, and what would help you give it a shot?



## What Music Is Releasing

**Artist:** Raven-Symoné

**Album:** *Raven-Symoné*

**Artist Info:** Most preteens know Raven-Symoné as the psychic teenager on the Disney Channel hit show "That's So Raven." She starred in the movie *College Road Trip* and is a former member of the band Cheetah Girls. This is her fourth solo album.

**Summary:** Raven-Symoné is now 22, but her lyrics remain positive and appropriate for younger audiences. The album is full of fun, upbeat songs, plus some sweet ballads. Raven-Symoné's lyrics promote self-confidence and being comfortable "in your own skin"—flaws and all.

**Discussion Questions:** How much self-confidence do you have right now? When does self-confidence cross the line into pride? What does it take for young people to become comfortable in their own skin?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Toy Shop</i>	Teaches kids entry-level business skills such as supply and demand. Contains culturally diverse characters.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Speed Racer: The Video Game</i>	Contains mild language, fantasy violence, and mildly suggestive outfits on female racers.	E; Nintendo DS, Wii
<i>Cory in the House</i>	Based on the Disney Channel show "Cory in the House." Contains comic mischief. Cory throws pastries at people to "stun" them.	E; Nintendo DS

**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:



- More prepubescent girls are now indulging in full-color hair dye and highlights, treatments once reserved for their moms. Stylists say the average age for a girl's first hair coloring is now down from 15 to 10.
- Researchers estimate that more than half of preteens will have their own cell phones within the next three years.

## 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)

- Every day, 5% of girls stay home from school due to relationship issues including bullying.

(Penn State University)

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