



**40**WAYS

**YOUR FAMILY CAN  
SERVE  
YOUR WORLD**

## INTRODUCTION

Recent research has now discovered that there is a strong correlation between families being involved in service and the spiritual growth of children. Family service could be seen as a catalyst in the spiritual life of your child that grows them spiritually exponentially. Why is that? How can families and churches capture that and what is involved in family service projects?

I am convinced that the answer to this is crucial, not only in growing our kids spiritually but in allowing them to practice their faith and make faith real to them

Family service projects are not hard to do and the benefits are of eternal significance not just for the recipient but for your family as well.

### About the Author

Pr Daron Pratt is the Family and Children's Ministries director for the North New South Wales Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. He is married to Lisa and has two children; Andrew and Maddison. Daron is passionate about the importance of bringing Churches and homes together with a strategic focus and to intentionality raise our children to know and love the Lord.



# THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON FAMILY SERVICE

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One of the greatest mandates given in the whole of Scriptures is Micah 6:8. He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

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Service to others really does make a difference and acting justly, lovingly, with mercy and walking humbly with God is what God requires. Sometimes we can be so busy in our life and religion that we fail to see the needs of others. Being good is found in service to others.

Jesus definitely knew what worked and what was the most important priority in life. When He was asked about what the greatest commandment was He answered as follows. (Matthew 22:26-40)

‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’

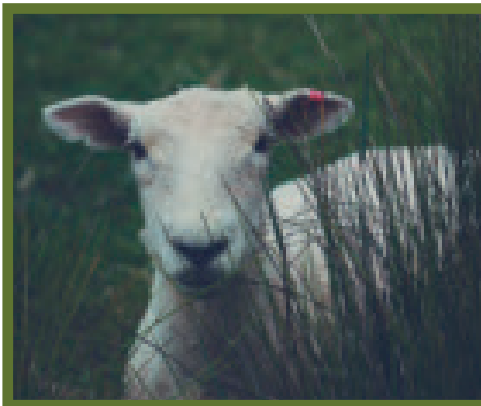
37 Jesus replied: “ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments

Jesus quotes the “Shema” found in Deuteronomy 6 and says that when it comes to the crunch, loving God and loving others is the be all and end all. Our Christianity and spirituality is displayed and grows best when we roll our shirt sleeves up.

Romans 12:1-2 puts it well. We are asked to offer our lives as living sacrifices. I like the way that The Message puts it

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your

sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life — and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.



When Jesus divides the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25, He does so on the basis of those that were the hands and feet of Jesus by serving those in need. Clearly, we model the Kingdom of Heaven when we serve others.

James 1:27 says “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress

and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” Here is where we find the perfection that God wants. It is not found in striving to perfect ourselves but in striving to serve and care for others.

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*the Son of Man did not come  
to be served, but to serve*

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Finally, Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 20:28 that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Service to others is mandated in Scripture and the research backs up why this mandate is so important when it comes to growing our children’s spirituality.

## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH AND LITERATURE SAY?

The research is clear that service and faith development are inextricably linked. Service appears to be more powerful than Sabbath School, Bible study, or participation in worship in the faith development of children. Diana Garland (2016) says that “As families serve together, they grip a deeper understanding of one another and God. They find their faith more resilient and meaningful. Their children develop a faith that helps them stick to the church and to their beliefs into young adulthood.” (Diana Garland, *Inside Out Families*, 2011)

Ivy Beckwith writes that “If we think that cloistering our children in a Christian ghetto will make them into God’s people we are sorely mistaken. But by being a community that models concern and care for the rest of the world and by involving our children in that care and concern, we can help our children become people of faith.” (Postmodern Children’s Ministries 2004)

Further Ivy Beckwith and David Csinos (Children’s Ministry in the way of Jesus, 2013) say that Children are often moved to action when they are allowed to see the needs of the world around them. Children are Kingdom bearers and as such must participate in God’s redemptive work by sharing hope, showing compassion, and proclaiming the gospel. This kingdom work is essential to the spiritual formation of children.

Beckwith and Csinos also say that “When children and their families as a way of life are involved in the practices of practising generosity, addressing the “isms” (racism, ageism etc.) and making lifestyle choices that respect justice, this correlates strongly with their spiritual growth. Transformative Justice is part of living into God’s story and following Jesus.” (Ivy Beckwith and David Csinos, *Children’s Ministries in the way of Jesus*, 2013)

Shannon Rains in *Along the Way*, (2013) explains the spiritually forming power of service further

saying the children are spiritually formed through service when a project is bathed in prayerful reflection. When children are able to connect the why of service with the person of Jesus, they are being formed into His image. They learn to view each person with the eyes of Jesus, to step into their brokenness, and to share the hard stuff of life with them. Their experience with suffering empowers them with a more intimate knowledge of a Saviour who has served and suffered on their behalf and to accept the ups and downs of life — joy and suffering as a part of normal life.

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*“...children are spiritually formed through service when a project is bathed in prayerful reflection.”*

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The research is very clear that service and faith development is most effective when families do it together, rather than children doing it as part of some other group. Marcia Bunge says, “The family has the most potential of any institution for shaping the spiritual and moral lives of children. Best vehicles for transmitting faith: family rituals, family service projects and meaningful conversations with children in the home.” (Marcia Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought*, 2001)

Allen and Ross (*Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 2012) believe that as children minister along with their parents and faith

families they are able to “test” their ideas about God, “apply” those ideas to real life, and most importantly debrief the experience with significant adults. This reflection allows children to make sense of suffering and develop spiritual awareness, allowing them to strengthen and articulate their own faith.

The research also highlights the significance of combining service projects with mentoring as highly significant, especially when it comes to growing our children spiritually. Jason Lakers 2010 study on natural mentoring and teens found that the successful participants were on average 11 years old when they met their



mentors. No better setting for these opportunities exists than in intergenerational small groups, mission trips, service projects and worship.

Kara Powell and Chap Clark in their sticky faith research discovered that justice and service will create “sticky faith” when it hits kids close to home. “It needs to be in their home literally, as we as parents exemplify, encourage, and actually participate with our kids in righting the wrongs around them. It needs to hit close to home thematically, as we help our kids understand how particular injustices relate to their lives. It needs to hit home personally, as we expose our kids to actual people who have been oppressed, thereby giving injustice a face and a name. Justice ministries need to hit home relationally as we help our kids’ others in partnership with their family and friends.” (Kara Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky faith*, 2011)

Another benefit of community service is its effects in the sense of entitlement and narcissistic tendencies in our children. A recent study by Credo, Lanier, Matherne and Cox (2016) discovered that involvement in community service activities lessens the effects of narcissism and entitlement in our children. Further, community service increased the levels of engagement of individuals with an organisation. In other words, community services makes children less self centred and more involved in and committed to their church.

## KEY POINTS

1

There is a strong correlation between a child's spirituality and family service projects.

5

Intergenerational mentoring and service is also a powerful combination when it comes to spiritual growth and the child's sense of belonging.

2

Children need to break out of their church community and see the world and its needs and find ways to fill those needs.

6

When children are able to connect the why of service with the person of Jesus they are literally being formed in his image.

3

Children are moved to action when they are allowed to clearly see the needs around them.

7

Service activities help children to articulate and own their faith.

4

The benefits to a child spiritually are most effective when families serve together and debrief those service projects together.

8

Involvement in community services creates less entitled and narcissistic children and increases their commitment and engagement with their church.



# MY STORY

*I grew up in a large family - four brothers and one sister. Every night when we were younger Mum would faithfully come to each of us to pray with us and say good night. Often she read to us a story such as Florence Nightingale or George Mueller or the great stories of the Bible that often involved acts of service. We would then say prayer and Mum would then pray a prayer over each of us boys and she would always end with words to the effect, "Please help Daron to understand that he is here on this earth not for himself, but for Your glory, Your honour and Your work of service to others." I heard that prayer prayed over me and my four brothers every night. I would then hear her go and pray that prayer with my sister in her room as well.*

*The value placed into our DNA as children growing up was that service to others really does make a difference. Our hearts were directed and our eyes were opened to see the needs of those around us and serve where we could, just as Jesus did.*

*Whether it was chopping wood, putting a food parcel together, weeding a garden or helping out on a farm, we were taught to open our eyes to the needs around us and serve in that space.*

*When I was in Grade 3 at primary school, I started a service club where a few of*

*us would knock on the doors of the neighbours around the school and do things to help them like chopping wood, weeding gardens etc. We would also make gifts to take to them as well.*

*I used to love following my Uncle Lionel around at church who was the head deacon. I would help him to open up the church, pull up the blinds and stack chairs. Uncle Lionel never told me to go away but allowed me to serve alongside him and always thanked me for being there with him.*

*My family had a regular territory where we collected money door to door for the Red Cross, Salvation army and ADRA Appeal, three times a year we collected donations from the same street. We each had our own territory and over the years we got to know the people in our streets and their stories. After our collection days, we would then debrief our stories of service over a picnic lunch in the park.*

*My parents taught me to always have my eye out for people down on their luck and to do small acts of kindness to make their day a little bit better.*

*The importance of living a life of service to others, to stand up for justice and mercy seeped into my bones and became a part of who I am today.*



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*Whether it was chopping wood, putting a food parcel together, weeding a garden or helping out on a farm, we were taught to open our eyes to the needs around us and serve in that space.*

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# BRINGING SERVICE HOME TO YOUR FAMILY

Keep it simple. Read stories from the Bible and from the literature of people who served others. Brainstorm with your children ideas for service and build it into your families' routine. Make sure you take the time to serve with your children and debrief your families' acts of service afterwards. Below are some ideas to get you started.

## CHALLENGE

See how many of these you and your family can do. If you can do 25 of them, scan your sheet and photos and send to your Children's Ministries Director and receive a special award.



01

Volunteer in a soup kitchen together

02

Visit a retirement home

03

Chop wood for an elderly person

04

Cook some muffins, cupcakes and deliver them to your neighbourhood

05

Mow an elderly neighbour's lawn

06

Go on a Stormco trip together as a family

07

Volunteer at a food bank together

08

Volunteer at an op shop

- 09 Go to the local hospital and make balloon animals for the children there
- 10 Volunteer at a homeless shelter together
- 11 Put together care packages for a refugee detention centre
- 12 Grow a garden together and take the vegetables grown to a food bank or similar
- 13 Send thank you notes to your local police, fire, ambulance station
- 14 Make a small gift of appreciation to your child's teacher
- 15 Leave a plate of treats out for the mailman
- 16 Go out for ice cream and pay the bill of the person behind you
- 17 Write letters/thank you cards to the soldiers serving on overseas assignments
- 18 Take flowers to a widow or older person
- 19 Have a garage sale and donate the proceeds to an ADRA project
- 20 Assign each child a sibling to secretly serve for a week
- 21 Babysit for a family friend or neighbour so that the couple can go out on a date
- 22 Adopt a lonely elderly person as a grandparent
- 23 Volunteer at an animal shelter
- 24 Take care packages to homeless people in a city near you

- 25 Adopt a child through ADRA or similar
- 26 Choose an ADRA project and brainstorm ways to fundraise for it
- 27 Pick up rubbish on a street near you.
- 28 Collect for charity (e.g. Red Cross)
- 29 Mow your whole streets nature strip
- 30 When you are at a drive thru, pay the bill of the car behind you
- 31 Set up a lemonade stand to raise money for a charity
- 32 Find a community building/Park and do something to clean or maintain it
- 33 Offer free sunscreen and water at a beach
- 34 Go to your local state school and ask them what you can do to help
- 35 Go busking and give the money raised to a homeless person
- 36 Make care packages for a women/s shelter
- 37 Invite local single people to your house for a meal
- 38 Help an older person to Facetime their loved ones
- 39 Start a backyard blitz group and help local people with their yards
- 40 Make quilts for orphan babies or cushions for Open Heart International

# OUR FAMILY SERVICE MEMORIES

## CHALLENGE

Paste a photo in each square of your family completing your 25 acts of service.



OUR FAMILY SERVICE MEMORIES



# OUR FAMILY SERVICE MEMORIES



## WELL DONE!

You made it! Now scan your sheet and photos and send to your Children’s Ministries Director to receive a special award.



Prepared by Pr Daron Pratt  
Family and Children's Ministries Director  
North NSW Conference  
We invest in others.