

ABCs Of Blessing

Family-Friendly Service Projects
Ideas from A to Z



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Blessing others is an important way to cultivate compassion, gratitude, and empathy in children and to bring your family together in meaningful ways. Involving children of all ages in the ministry of helping others is the best way to teach them about how we are to serve others and follow the example that Jesus gave us. Here are just a few ideas to get you started.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLESSING A to Z

A- Allowance. Invite your children to consider tithing from their allowance to be a blessing to others. And model faithful giving yourself.

B- Blankets. Make easy no-sew fleece blankets to donate to sick children and youth in hospitals in Southern California through Project Linus. Instructions can be found at www.projectlinus.org

C- Care and Share. Every week SVUMC collects food for the Care and Share Food Bank. Search your cabinets or stop by the store and bring food with you to donate. Have your kids pick their favorite food and donate that too.

D- Dog Biscuits. Bake homemade dog biscuits and give them to your local SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Animal Cruelty) or animal shelter. Recipes can be found at www.dogtreatkitchen.com

E- Example. Be an example. The best way to encourage your children to be a blessing is to be one yourself. Let them see you share your time, energy, skills and passion.

F- Flowers. Grow, pick or buy potted or a bouquet of flowers and give them to your neighbors, shut-ins or individuals in retirement homes.

G- Garage Sale. Gather all your old clothes, toys, appliances and unneeded stuff and hold a garage sale. Donate the money raised to your family's favorite charity. Be sure to allow your kids to participate fully, from picking the items they sell to making change and organizing the sale.

H- Homeless Bag. Assemble several bags of non-perishable food and keep the bags in your trunk or an easily accessible place so you will always have something to offer when approached by an individual in need.

I- Invite. Invite friends, family and neighbors to join in your service projects. While it is true that many hands make light work, they also build a sense of community and fellowship.

J- Jesus. Talk to your children about or read them Bible stories where Jesus reached out to the "least of these." We are to follow in his footsteps.

K- Kits. Put together health, layette, flood/cleaning or school kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Supply Kits are needed year round for families all over the world. www.umcor.org

L- Litter. Grab a trash bag (and some gloves) and pick up litter in your local park, the beach or even the sidewalk in your neighborhood. Take 2 bags and separate recyclables.

M- Make a List. Sit down as a family and think about who you want to help and then make a list of things you can do. Post the list somewhere everyone will see it and be reminded of who and how you have chosen to help.

N- News. Watch the local news together as a family (or read the newspaper together). Look for stories of people (especially kids) who help or opportunities to help in your own community.

O- Organize. Organize an event within your neighborhood for either fellowship and witness (Block Party, cookie decorating) or service (clean-up or Neighborhood Watch).

P- Pray. Take the chance to model the spiritual discipline of prayer. Gratitude for food can include gratefulness for the hands that gathered in and the hands that prepared it. Pray for Spirit-led sense of how God will use your family to be a blessing.

Q- Quarters. Collect quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies. Put all your loose change in a jar, on Sundays bring it to worship and drop them in our Coin Drop. Money collected goes to the mission and ministry of SVUMC.

R- Read. Visit senior centers, assisted living centers, hospitals or libraries and offer your services as a reader. If your children are old enough to read, encourage them to read themselves. If they are younger, have them help by picking the books.

S- Sweep. Grab a broom and sweep your sidewalk and your neighbor's sidewalk or driveways. Kids of all ages can (and often love) to sweep. You can also rake leaves or pick up trash.

T- Table. Family meals are also an opportunity for open dialogue about the day's activities and ways to serve and be a blessing.

U- UNICEF. When your child goes trick or treating, take along a UNICEF box and collect pennies and change.

V- Visit. Take the time to visit your neighbors, shut-ins or a retirement center. People thrive on relationship and interaction, so go be in relationship.

W- Write. Write letters or color pictures for individuals who need some encouragement. Check with the church office for a list of individuals in our church.

X- Xerox. Even the youngest child can help out in an office. Visit the church office or another non-profit and offer your copying, folding, filing or stamping skills.

Y- Yes You Can! Being a blessing is great for fostering self-confidence and responsibility. If your child has an idea, find a way to do it. When children of all ages participate in serving others, they are learning that everyone can make a difference.

Z- Zipper. Provide unused jackets and coats to shelters or groups that help others in colder months.

RESOURCES

TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SERVICE:

Growing Compassionate Kids: Helping Kids See Beyond Their Backyard Jan Johnson

The Giving Book: Open The Door To A Lifetime Of Giving Ellen Sabin

Raising Kids Who Will Make a Difference Susan V. Vogt

Raising Charitable Children Carol Weisman

IDEAS FOR SERVICE PROJECTS:

The Busy Family's Guide to Volunteering: Doing Good Together Jenny Friedman

77 Creative Ways Kids Can Serve Sondra Clark

101 Simple Service Projects Kids Can Do Susan Lingo

STORIES ABOUT SERVICE:

Planting the Trees of Kenya Claire A. Nivola

Melissa Parkington's Beautiful, Beautiful Hair Pat Brisson

Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan

The Giving Tree Shel Silverstein

Need another opportunity for service?

Faith in Action

Faith is more than a belief, it is an action. Once a quarter, all Sunday School children gather together as one class for a hands-on service project. Projects vary from crafty outreach such as making Christmas Cards for shut-ins to community focused projects like gathering and donating school supplies for local students. This is an opportunity for children to reach out into their community and their world with grace and love.