

EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

Encouraging acts of service



Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? or thirsty and give you something to drink? or a stranger and show you hospitality? or naked and give you clothing? when did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

Matthew 25:37-40

Children and young people grow in faith and discipleship by engaging in acts of service to those in need.

Jesus calls us to be humble; he showed us this in a most intimate way when he washed the feet of his disciples.

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example

that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." John 13:14-17

Jesus not only served but encouraged his disciples to serve too. In the feeding of the 5000, he gave thanks and broke the bread and then gave it to his disciples to hand out. They were not only spectators but became engaged in the act too.

Why is it important for us to serve?

1. We are modelling Jesus!

We serve because Jesus came 'to serve and not be served.' Jesus' example shows us that he was here to show care, concern and compassion for others and that it was done in love.

2. Human nature means that we prefer to be served rather than to serve.

We prefer to be the ones having our feet washed! But something exciting happens when you reach out and serve, it is hard to explain but those that serve others feel a sense of accomplishment or fulfilment.

3. Ownership / Belonging

Acts of service lead to a sense of ownership and belonging; by serving we are investing some of ourselves into a project. If we serve our family, we are invested in our family; it helps us feel part of it. The same is true



when we serve in our church, school or community. By serving we become aware of the needs of others and become more interested in what is happening. We are invested too! Children and young people need to feel invested and that what they do matters.

4. Develops community

When we serve together, when we have invested some of ourselves into something together, it develops community. Having young people serve together is a powerful way to build their sense of commitment and connections. Acts of service are also a great way to create and develop important intergenerational relationships.

How do we encourage young people to participate in acts of service?

HOME

A great place is to begin in the home. Whether it's washing dishes, mowing the lawn or cleaning the bathroom, acts of service at home help children to feel more invested in their families. It also teaches them important life values and skills.



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CONGREGATIONS

There are simple things we can do to get our young people more involved. Invite them to choose an area that they would like to serve in.

Helping with the audio-visual system, or ushering are obvious choices, but also allow them to suggest other areas where they may like to participate, areas where they can use their gifts and talents.

It is really important that their serving is encouraged, not forced, as pressure could alienate them.

It would be a great idea if an older adult could mentor them and serve alongside them.

Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." 1 Timothy 4:12.

Congregations that nurture young people and allow them to be involved in serving opportunities find that the young people stay engaged in the church.

Young people can be passionate when they are given opportunities to express their faith by serving.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Start small – it allows for the young person to feel successful and gain confidence.
2. Young people can sometimes feel intimidated by having to deal face-to-face with people. Sometimes it can be useful to start with projects that don't involve having to interact with people. This could be things like dishwashing, garden/grounds clean-up or food preparation.
3. Allow them to step up into something bigger when they feel they are ready.

