

BE A HELPER

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours.”

— Teresa of Ávila

Can you remember the first time that you knew the delight of serving someone else? Remember the deep sense of well-being that came when you knew that you contributed to the joy or well-being of someone you cared about?

Jesus set the example for us as he served his disciples by washing their feet. John 13:4-5 tells us: *“Jesus ... got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.”* He condescended to inconvenience himself for those he loved.



Imagine what it must have been like to be a disciple and have the hands of Jesus washing your feet! How satisfying and refreshing. How humbling. After the foot washing came Jesus’ instructions: *“And 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). **He invites us to inconvenience ourselves for others.**

Serving others, rather than our own self-interests, is not natural for us or for the children we care for. **Reflecting the love of God by serving others is a spiritual practice that can easily be lost in our culture of entitlement and self-advancement.** Burdensome, faux service can become our habit if we respond out of obligation rather than out of love for our Foot Washer.

If we sense within our heart a resistance to demonstrating God’s love to others, we can ask the Spirit of God to change our heart. As our love relationship with Jesus deepens, we will have a growing desire to be part of his work. Transforming change will occur as we pray, “‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.’ And also, in me.”

As the Spirit of God transforms us, our hearts begin to beat with the “may I?” of love rather than the “must I?” of duty. **We begin doing for others what Jesus would do if he were still here in human form.** This is part of the abundant life with God that we can offer to the children in our care.

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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come sit with me awhile so we can talk with God about showing other people that he loves them.”

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Did you know that we give a love message back to God when we show love for others by serving them?

Jesus said, “Do as I have done to you.” **God has given so much love to us that we have enough to give to others.** Today, we are going to give a love message to someone to remind them that God loves them. Let’s ask God who he wants to get that message. *(Pray with the child and then listen for God’s prompting.)*

Jesus showed love by washing his friends’ feet. *(Read John 13:3-5, 14-15.)* So we are going to clean someone’s shoes. Then, let’s make a little “God loves you!” heart to put by their shoes to remind them of God’s love.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Let’s read John 13:3-5 & 14-15. Jesus’ friends were very surprised that he served them this way. It will be so exciting to surprise people this week with acts of service!

Here’s one idea: As a secret friend, see how many times this week you can make the bed in the morning *(or some other household chore)* for one of your siblings. Or, we can take our garden tools and walk through our neighborhood together and see if we can pull some weeds for people.

When we serve others, we are doing things for them that Jesus would do if he were still here in his human body.

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Read John 13:1-15 for me. Let’s think of other ways that Jesus served people while he was here in his human body, then we will read verse 15 again. He created beauty, gave food, helped the sick, was kind to the poor, reassured those who were fearful, befriended outcasts. Which of those things that Jesus did could we do, too?

Let’s ask God to show us how he would like us to pass along his love by serving others. And maybe we can do it secretly so that God alone gets the credit instead of us. *(Consider artwork for a grandparent, a meal to a sick friend, new socks to a homeless shelter, encouragement cards to a nursing home, or a summer valentine or kind note to a new neighbor.)*

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Spiritual Disciplines for Children: A Guide to a Deeper Spiritual Life for You and Your Children
by Vernie Schorr Love