

CELEBRATE THE SEASON BY ENCOURAGING SERVANTHOOD

Community service is now a graduation requirement at many U.S. high schools. That may be one reason volunteerism is on the rise among young people today. But another is that teenagers are recognizing the value and joy of helping to meet other people's needs.

Youth ministry researcher Laura Widstrom summarizes the power of service:

- Service offers kids many opportunities for taking on significant responsibilities.
- It leverages deep and meaningful relationships.
- Service is a powerful catalyst for community.
- Service-related struggles expand teenagers' capacity for overcoming hardship.
- Service offers kids a context and process for "owning" their faith.
- Service-learning makes a profound connection between our hearts and minds.

This Christmas, as you celebrate the birth of our Servant-Savior, help your kids follow Jesus' example by looking beyond themselves to serve other people in his name.

THE VIEW

Group Magazine surveyed more than 23,000 Christian kids who attended a summer workcamp. Here's how they completed the line: "Service to others has..."

- Made me feel closer to God. (82%)
- Made me feel better about who I am. (80%)
- Created new and valuable friendships in my life. (74%)
- Increased my compassion for people in need. (70%)
- Made me more likely to serve others in everyday life. (69%)

TIPS >>>

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, youth leader Tim Kurth offers even more benefits when kids step up to the plate and serve:

- **Service encourages young people to be salt and light.** Kids share their Christian faith with people by demonstrating God's love in practical, tangible ways.
- **Service takes kids out of their comfort zones.** This forces teenagers to rely more directly on God—and helps them grow closer to him in the process.
- **Service makes people in need become real and human.** Teenagers gain a greater sense of value for every life, as well as sensitivity to how God can use them to touch others with his love.
- **Service becomes a habit.** When teenagers help others, they establish a lifestyle of service that often carries over into adulthood.
- **Service makes kids appreciate how fortunate they are.** Helping others in need puts life into perspective and makes kids count their many blessings.
- **Service builds a wide range of life skills.** Teenagers learn tolerance, accountability, good citizenship, compassion, friendliness, acceptance, self-control, determination, endurance, and dependability.
- **Service creates a hunger for God.** Kids who serve realize they're also serving God in the process and often desire to get to know him better.

PONDER THIS

- What are your views about serving others and volunteering?
- What joys or benefits do you gain from helping other people?
- How might your family work together on a service project in your church or community?



GOING DEEPER

Expert Insights for Parents of Teenagers

By Doug Franklin

Doug Franklin, president and founder of LeaderTreks, shares how to unlock young people's hearts for service. His comments from LeaderTreks.com are reprinted with permission at SimplyYouthMinistry.com:

The best way to connect kids to a life of service for God is to show them how they are uniquely made for an important role in God's kingdom. First, we need to challenge their world view and expose them to realities that less-fortunate people face. Once kids ask, "What role do I play?" we have an open door to teach them about how God has made them for a unique mission.

Second, we must help young peo-

ple understand that God's plan for them can be known. I use this formula to explain how to discover your mission:

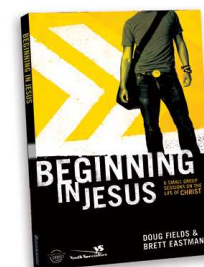
Burden + Passion + Vision = Mission

When kids discover these three things, they'll have a road map to the mission God has for them. **Burden** is what breaks your heart, **Passion** is what you love to do, and **Vision** is God's calling for your life. God will give you a vision when you get your eyes off yourself and on him. Vision comes only through prayer. When young people put burden, passion, and vision together, they'll not only discover their mission but also joy.

Consider Nehemiah, whose heart broke for the people left in Jerusalem. Because Nehemiah had a passion for administration, the King of Persia had put him in charge of his household and made him cup bearer. God gave him the vision to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's walls. Nehemiah's love for his people brought him home. His skill as an organizer allowed them to finish the wall in 52 days, and his willingness to follow God brought God glory.

God has given your kids everything they need to accomplish the task. Let's help them understand and prepare for the mission. After all, that's our mission.

RESOURCE



In *Beginning in Jesus*, the first book in the small-group curriculum series "Experiencing Christ Together" (Simply Youth Ministry), Doug Fields explores Jesus' character qualities. One session explores why servanthood is so important to Jesus.

BIBLE FOCUS

"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