

# Disciple Your Children by Serving Together

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by Ben Purves

The discipleship of our children is an essential part of the Great Commission. As parents (and as a church family), we are to make disciples of every nation, and this begins first in our homes as we seek to make disciples of every generation. We teach our children about Jesus, and pray that they will learn to love God with their heart, soul, and might (Deut 6:4-9). We seek to be diligent in raising them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and we pray that they will set their hope in God and walk in the truth (Eph 6:3; Ps 78:7; 2 John 4). We are overjoyed when we see our children trust in Christ and confess their faith through baptism.

## **Let us Teach our Children to Worship by Serving**

One important aspect of children's discipleship that can easily be overlooked is the teaching of our children to serve the Lord through service in the local church. We do not want our children to simply know the things Jesus said. But as Jesus commands in the Great Commission, his disciples are "to observe all that I have commanded you." We want them to serve as Jesus taught his disciples to serve, and to reflect the self-giving love of Jesus.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught the disciples to love and serve others. He brought his disciples with him, modeled what ministry looks like, and called them to serve alongside him. The ultimate expression of this is Jesus, the Suffering Servant, at the cross. In Mark 10:45, Jesus tells them, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

If we do not teach our children to follow Jesus and serve, we could unwittingly shape their orientation toward entitlement and consumerism. Not only that, but they might perceive that the work of ministry is not for them, but only for adults, deacons, or elders. To guard against this, we want our children to know the reality of the truths of 1 Corinthians 12. Believing children are part of the body of Christ, and they are called to serve.

If our children are not believers or they have not yet become church members, you can still encourage them to serve. Even though many ministry roles are only appropriate for adults or church members, there are still appropriate ways for children to serve with their families. Serving with others may provide opportunities for adults to speak the gospel to them, and it allows them to see the gospel lived out in the selflessness of those who serve out of love for Jesus.

On the other side of things, we must beware of allowing service to become a moralistic task. May our service be joyful worship, and not an unwanted chore. Let it be motivated by love instead of obligation. Let us set an example for our children by serving with joy. Service is an act of worship, and a practical way to express the love of Christ to one another. It is not a means to some other end.

## **Practical Ways to Involve your Children in Service**

Here are a few practical ways to involve your children in ministry. Please note that this is by no means an exhaustive list, and there are countless creative ways we can serve one another.

1. Serve together as a family. This requires discernment to know what's appropriate (it would be right to talk to your ministry leader first). Modeling what it looks like to serve is one of the best ways to teach service to your children. Jesus taught his disciples by having them serve with him. I love how some of our parents regularly include their children in serving alongside them. Here's a few ways I've seen families do this at OBC:
  - Serving on our welcome team to welcome our church family at the front door as they come in to worship, handing out bulletins and kid's coloring pages, and serving together as ushers.
  - Serving together on our coffee team. This includes setup, brewing coffee, and cleanup afterward.
  - Working together on building and grounds projects during church workdays.
  - Youth serving as assistants in the Nursery and Busy Bees classrooms.
  - Serving together at outreach events.
  - Preparing and delivering meals to those who are ill in our church family.
2. For some of our younger children, here's a list of a few specific ways your children might serve our church family on Sunday mornings. After second service, your children could help reset the sanctuary by doing the following:
  - Collect and toss used communion cups on the first Sunday of each month.
  - Check under the seats for our Bibles and redistribute them evenly so there's one Bible under every third seat.
  - Restock *Communication Cards* and the pencils in the chair seat-backs as needed.

Think about the ways your children might be able to serve alongside you. And I encourage you to talk as a family about how you might serve the Lord together. Let us show our children that service is worship that flows from a heart of gratitude for the gospel.

May our children learn to imitate the servanthood of our Lord, and may they grow up to love Christ and his bride!

Pastor Ben