



*faith* PATH

**GIVING** *and*  
**SERVING**

# GIVING AND SERVING

*teaching your child to make a difference*

One of the most important virtues to instill in our children is *self-giving*. And here's why: at the heart of any act of love there is a gift of the self. The ultimate example of this self-giving is Jesus Christ on the cross. But you, the parent, sacrifice much for your child as well. Most of which goes unnoticed and unappreciated. But you *give*, because you *love*. Our children must likewise be taught this relationship between self-giving and love.

## THE PROBLEM

But there's a problem: our children are being raised in the most prosperous and self-centered culture in the history of the world. They are surrounded by spoiled kids at school, and everything they observe in the literally hundreds of advertisements they see every day will try to convince them to be the same way. The world wants your child to be a spoiled brat. Is it even possible for us as parents to push back against this tidal wave of selfishness and consumerism? Yes! "With man it is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). It is not easy, but nothing worth doing is easy. The way to overcome the greed is this: give away your two most precious possessions—your money and your time. Or what we are calling *Giving* and *Serving*.

## GIVING

It is not uncommon, even in the secular world, to hear someone say, "Put your money where your mouth is." Followers of Jesus give a portion of their income to their church as an act of obedience and worship to God. In Genesis 28:10–22 we see Jacob making a vow to the Lord, worshiping Him, and giving ten percent (also called a tithe) back to God. During this season of parenting young children, we may have the sense that time and money are two things that are far too short in supply. But God blesses and entrusts each of us with gifts, talents and resources. *And how we spend these resources, especially our time and our money, is the only authentic test of our true priorities.* In a deeply penetrating psychological and spiritual insight, Jesus taught us: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Teaching children about stewardship is not just about giving back to God. It is also about reminding ourselves that we are completely dependent *upon* God. All good gifts come from Him. As Christians we are *stewards*, not *owners*—that's why we call it "stewardship". The bottom line is this: tithing will change you. It will change you in ways that you don't even realize. And your child will be formed through this change, even before he or she understands the value of a dollar.

Here are some ideas about how to teach your child to be generous in giving:

### MODEL IT

Start by putting into practice the disciplines you want your child to learn. This may mean taking steps to become a better steward of your family's finances. Begin by giving what you can to your church, and work your way up to 10% of your income, even if you have to increase your gift by just 1% per year. Let your child see that you first give money toward tithing, then savings, and then everything else. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 St. Paul says "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Let your child participate by putting your money into the offering plate. Watch with them as the plate goes up to the altar and is blessed by the priest at the Offertory as an offering to God.

### TEACH IT

If your child receives money from an allowance, jobs or gifts, take the time to help him or her divide the money wisely. Set aside 10% for giving, 10% for savings, and 80% for spending on everything else. Lastly, do not spoil your kids. They need you to tell them "no" every day. They need you to put limits on their desires, and they need you to teach them that it is ok—even normal and good—to go without.

### SERVING

In addition to financial resources, God has also entrusted us with gifts, talents and time. As believers we have the great opportunity to worship and glorify God through the spiritual discipline of service. Help your child discover their unique gifts and explore how they might use those gifts to glorify Him. Here are some suggestions:

- **SHARED PASSION** Spend some time talking with your child about the things that interest and concern him or her. Serving will be more meaningful if you share a passion for the specific area of service.
- **JOIN A MISSION & OUTREACH MINISTRY** Our church has many incredible ministries that are often looking for new volunteers. To choose a ministry that catches your child's attention, visit [incarnation.org/serve/local-outreach](http://incarnation.org/serve/local-outreach).
- **SET EXPECTATIONS** Put your child more at ease by explaining what to expect. If visiting a nursing home, for example, explain that he or she may encounter odd sights, sounds and smells.
- **BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIP** Take note of what your child does well while serving. Intentionally encourage him or her by saying you are proud of how they demonstrated a great attitude or area of strength.
- **TALK ABOUT IT AFTERWARDS** Much of the spiritual fruit from you and your child's experience with serving others will come from reflecting on the experiences themselves. Ask questions when you finish serving together such as "What kind of difference did we make?" "Why was it important to do this project?" "How did it impact those we served?" and "How did it impact our family?"
- **PRAY** Take a few minutes to pray, asking God to bless those you are serving.

## INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

*How will you be intentional this next year?*

- Pray daily for and with my child.
- Attend church regularly.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Create a habit of worship with my child, teaching them “why we do what we do”.
- Consistently spend time in God’s Word with my child.
- Help my child develop the habit of giving some of their money back to God.
- Schedule a time to serve the wider community together as a family.
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The next step on the FaithPath is *Preparing for Adolescence*, recommended at age ten. You will receive an email in the month of your child’s birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child’s name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *The Wise Woman*, by the famous storyteller George MacDonald, tells the fictional story of two spoiled children, and what must be done to rescue them from their predicament. It should be required reading for any parent!
- *77 Ways Your Family Can Make a Difference* by Penny A. Zeller
- *Your Kids Can Master Their Money* by Ron and Judy Blue, Jeremy White
- *Financial Peace Junior* by Dave Ramsey

**INCARNATION'S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY**

Bringing Faith Home: [incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home](http://incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home)  
Children & Family Ministry: [incarnation.org/grow/children](http://incarnation.org/grow/children)