

# home | front

M O N T H L Y

ENVIRONMENT

## servings

Asks the question, "What needs to be done?"

MARRIAGE p. 12

WORSHIP p. 10

STORYTELLING p. 8

GAME TIME p. 6

FAMILY FOOD TIME p. 4

Illustration by Anne Berry



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# How to Use this Resource

## It's as easy as 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...

**1** Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family's natural rhythm. (It's usually best to build this time around a meal!)

**2** Look through the HomeFront Monthly and see what stands out. Choose one or two experiences that you would like to incorporate into your family times this week. Don't feel burdened to complete all the activities at once, but carefully select which ones will fit your family best. Each month's issue provides more than enough experiences to last you throughout the month.

**3** Remember to **HAVE FUN!** Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and each other.



## Editor's Note

When I think of living in the environment of SERVING, I immediately think of Jesus and the amazing example He set for us.

Jesus' ministry was a tangible demonstration of God's love—being the ultimate servant and the highest King of Kings.

He tells us in Matthew 22 that when we love God, we will love our neighbors, and when we truly love our neighbors, it expresses our love for God. As we embrace God's deep and abiding love for us, we realize everyone is our neighbor.

Technology has connected continents like never before. Within seconds, we hear about triumphs or tragedies happening in faraway places. With this knowledge comes a deep responsibility to our neighbors worldwide. As parents, we have the privilege of introducing our children to this world; to its beauties, its cultures, and even its challenges.

Our hope is that as our families are exposed to and transformed by the love of God, they will develop hearts of compassion and cultivate a sensitivity to others, whether in our home, our neighborhoods, or around the world. This month's issue of HomeFront Monthly is filled with tangible ways to begin awakening your family to hear and respond to the prompts of the Holy Spirit asking them to love God, and their "neighbors," through a heart of service. ☺

*Debbie Guinn*

**DEBBIE GUINN** | EDITOR  
the Tru Team | Costa Mesa, CA

## ENVIRONMENT

# SERVING

This environment encourages a posture of the heart that asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and reminds each of us that we are called to a cause that is bigger than one individual life.

It helps fulfill the mandate that, as Christ followers, we are to view our lives as living sacrifices we generously give away!

“What needs to be done?” What if we walked into every situation with every person, no matter what, and simply asked this question of ourselves? Somebody’s crying, what needs to be done? Does she need to be left alone? Does she need to be hugged? Does she need to talk to someone? Does she need to be prayed for?

Out of my own selfishness, I don’t always want to answer that question the way I know the Holy Spirit wants me to. But when we hear it and respond to it, this becomes a very rich environment for us to lead an other-centered life. What might it look like if we started pursuing this posture with our children from an early age ... teaching them to just walk into any situation asking, “What needs to be done?” Wow, we’d live in a different world! ☺



*Michelle Anthony*  
**MICHELLE ANTHONY**  
FAMILY MINISTRY ARCHITECT  
the Tru Team | Costa Mesa, CA

## VERSES OF THE MONTH

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God’s Spirit in these words that transforms. We come to know God more when we are willing to open our hearts and hear His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with these verses and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit these verses to memory.

HOMEFRONT | ENVIRONMENT | SERVING

3

“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Mark 9:35b

“Serve one another in love.”

Galatians 5:13b

# FAMILY FOOD TIME

## Recipe

Be sure to check out the Traditions section of this month's HomeFront Monthly for a way to use these cookies to focus on the needs of others. Here are some tips to help make your baking experience safe and fun!

- Go over any kitchen safety rules, such as staying away from hot surfaces and how to hold a knife.
- Have all family members wash their hands thoroughly and put on an apron to protect clothing from food.
- Make this something everyone can help with. Tell the kids you are on a scavenger hunt, and encourage them to help you find all the items on the ingredient list.
- Children of all ages can participate! Encourage children to help with the measuring, pouring, and stirring.

## Clutter Cookies (MAKES 4 DOZEN COOKIES)

Prep Time: 20 min. Cook Time: 8–10 min.

### Ingredients

- ½ cup (1 stick) plus 6 tablespoons butter, softened
- ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)
- 3 cups quick or old fashioned oats, uncooked
- 1 cup of clutter (see below)



### Clutter: FUN TREATS TO ADD TO YOUR COOKIES.

Clutter can include one or more of your families favorite snack treats like:

- raisins • dried cranberries • other diced fruits • chopped nuts • shredded coconut • sprinkles • mini-marshmallows • chocolate or butterscotch chips • dried cereal • chopped up candy bars, or small candies

Try several combinations for loads and loads of variety.

### Directions

1. Heat oven to 350°F. In large bowl, beat butter and sugars on medium speed with electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs and vanilla; beat well. Add flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt; mix well. Add oats and clutter; mix well.
2. Drop dough by rounded tablespoonfuls on to ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until light golden brown. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheets; remove to wire rack. Cool completely. Store tightly covered.

## Conversation

### Starters

### *Serving Your Family*

(AN EXCERPT FROM *SPIRITUAL PARENTING* ©DAVID C COOK)

It's a great reminder to ask one another at dinner, *“How did you serve your family today?”*

On those occasions when your family has served one another, this will be a time of gratitude. When your family has been more self-serving, this will be an opportunity to remind one another of the ways you need the other members of the family. Perhaps after sharing, your family can pray that they will not only be sensitive to ways they can serve in the future, but that God will give them the strength to be selfless and generous with their time and energy. 🙏

SITTING DOWN AND HAVING A FAMILY MEAL IS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR KIDS AND IS A **GREAT WAY TO BOND** AS A FAMILY.



# GAME TIME

The following games are a fun way to help both younger and older children listen to and see things in different ways. When you are finished playing these games, talk with your children about how they can look at their neighborhood and the world differently, with an attitude of serving others. Pray together, and ask God to give you the eyes to see and ears to hear, “What needs to be done?”

## YOUNGER GAME

### *Serving Charades*

As a family, walk around the house and ask this question, “*What needs to be done?*” After discussing your answers, have each family member pick a specific act of service in his or her mind. These could include sweeping, folding laundry, washing the dishes, or feeding the dog.

Then *take turns acting out* the act of service you chose while other family members do their best to guess what you are doing. The person to your left guesses first, and is allowed only one guess. If incorrect, the next person guesses.

Keep going until someone figures out *what act of service* you are performing. The person who guesses correctly is the next person to take his turn. If time permits, play several rounds. 🎯

“As a family, walk around the house and ask this question, “*What needs to be done?*”

## OLDER GAME

### *Morse Code*

In this game, use a flashlight or a whistle to send and receive a message using Morse code.

Morse code is an international system for sending messages by using **dots (short signals)** and **dashes (longer signals)**. Give each family member a copy of the Morse code chart at the end of the issue and a supply of paper and pencils. If you play in daylight, you can use a whistle or a horn to send your message. If you choose to play at night, a flashlight is a fun way to communicate.

- Have each family member study the Morse code handout. Tell them you will be *sending them a message* using this system.
- While together, *try a practice* run signaling a simple message like, “cat,” or “dog,” or your name.
- When you think everyone is ready, *break into teams*. If possible, each team should have a signaler and a decipherer. Then teams try to communicate with each other using Morse code.
- Choose messages having to do with serving others. The team that is sending the message should walk around the house asking the question, “What needs to be done?” Then send that specific act of service as a message to the other teams. For instance: “Wash dishes” or “fold clothes.” *Have fun* taking turns sending messages of service.



# GOD'S WORD

## Dorcas—A Woman Who Made an Impact

The coastal region of Joppa was commonly known as a central hub for enthusiastic worship. For most of the church, including a woman named Tabitha (or translated, Dorcas) this manifested in great acts of service. For that church, service was equivalent to worship.

Dorcas was surrounded by women who were in very different walks of life than she was. Most were widows, who were very poor and could not easily take care of themselves.

The Bible is clear about how important the care of widows is. It says, "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords ... He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow ..." (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

James writes in his letter to the 12 scattered tribes in the New Testament, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ..."

(James 1:27). Widows are important in the eyes of God, but are often overlooked and neglected in society. Dorcas was one who shared God's heart.

It appears from Scripture that Dorcas had money. She could have very easily just thrown her money at the church and gone on with her normal life. Instead, she asked the question, "What needs to be done?" The answer for her was to help the poor and widowed in her community by making them clothes. It was a simple task that she was good at, and it had a huge impact on her community.

Had Dorcas been able to hear what people said about her after her death, she probably would have been surprised at all the fuss. Her actions were a natural overflow of a heart that had been sensitized by the Holy

Spirit. Her life was a living example of God's love to so many. **So significant was her contribution** that when she got sick and died, the church sent for the apostle Peter. What they expected of Peter is unclear—perhaps they felt Dorcas deserved someone of Peter's standing to speak at her funeral. Or, perhaps, they had heard of the miracles he had performed in Jesus' name and hoped for a miracle of their own.

Having heard of the life of service Dorcas led, Peter prayed. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter restored her life. **With this miracle, Dorcas continued to live a life of service**—which is testament to the holy and living God of the Gospels.

### HEAR IT

Read the account of Dorcas in **Acts 9:36-40**. Dorcas is a great example of a Christ follower who allowed her heart to be transformed by God's love. She listened to the Spirit and asked, "What needs to be done?" **Read James 1:27** with your children, and then spend some time in prayer. **Pray the Spirit will give your family eyes to see what needs to be done in your community!**

### DO IT

Service is an act of worship. In the Worship section of this month's issue of the HomeFront Monthly, you will find a tangible way to worship God by answering the question, "What needs to be done?"



by Debbie Guinn

# STORYTELLING

## *We Are His Hands*

I once heard a story about a church in France that was bombed during World War II. When the war concluded, the people in the community cleared away the rubble and found a statue of Jesus, the base of which was inscribed with these words: “Come unto Me, all ye that are weary.”

It was remarkably preserved, except for both hands, which had been destroyed. Hearing of this, the sculptor who made it immediately offered to replace the hands. But the pastor wisely declined. And so it was, that the statue was returned to its

we feel ill-equipped to bring the good news to a lost and hurting world, but we must remember that **God faithfully gives us just what we need** when we step out in faith.

I remember feeling this so strongly when leading my first international mission trip. I felt very unprepared and ill-equipped to lead a team of 40 people ages two through fifty to a small village in Romania. We had been asked to come and train volunteers on how to lead a Vacation Bible School.

When we arrived, the language barrier was tough, along with a miscommunication of expectations. We had to let go of all of our preplanned programming, which our team had worked so hard on before leaving the U.S. We truly had to depend solely on the leading of the Holy Spirit to answer the question, “**What needs to be done?**”

On our last night together, the children's pastor from the church we were partnering with got up and began to talk with the kids. No one on our team understood a word of what was being said, but we suddenly realized the room was filled with children praying to receive Christ. God had used our feeble efforts. We were humbled and astonished to see how **this ragtag team of 40 ill-equipped but willing servants had been able to bring the good news** to our neighbors halfway around the world. There were many lives changed that day, especially mine.

This month, share a story with your children about a time in your life when you were chosen to be the hands of Jesus on earth. Talk about how you may have felt ill-equipped, but you allowed the Holy Spirit to lead you to impact someone else's life. ☺



original position in front of the church, but with a new inscription that read: “**He has no hands on earth but ours, for we are His body.**”

It's true; we are the body of Christ. If Jesus is going to reach out and touch a lame person today—a beggar or a hurting individual—it will be through our hands. **He will use us.**

It starts with us. God simply calls us to be faithful to the things He has given us to do. He doesn't require us to be superstars, but rather to be faithful and obedient, by praying, loving, serving, giving, forgiving, caring—**doing small things with great love.**

He chose us. We are the ones who will bring the good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, and stand up for justice in a fallen world. Oftentimes

# CREATE

## Who's Your Neighbor?

*At this moment, there are more than 6 billion people on the planet! It's hard to imagine so many people at one time—but what if we imagine the whole world as a village of just 100 people? In this village:*

*22 people speak a Chinese dialect*

*20 earn less than a dollar a day*

*17 cannot read or write*

*60 are always hungry*

*24 have a television in their homes*

(Smith, David J. 2011. "If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People." [www.kidscanpress.com](http://www.kidscanpress.com).)

### Supplies

- World map (in this issue)
- Push pins or sticky tabs—1 color for each family member

### Directions

- As a family, sit down with a world map.
- Have each family member choose a country and put a pushpin or tag in that location.
- Use the Internet or find a book from the library to find out as much information as you can about the people who live in that country. Learn about the culture and customs, the language spoken, and what religion is practiced.
- Discuss as a family what you think might need to be done for the people who live there so they can know God's love.
- You may want to check with your church to see if it already has a relationship with a ministry you can partner with in that country to help a family that has needs.
- Keep the map posted in a prominent location in your home to serve as a reminder that we have "neighbors" all over the world that Jesus calls us to care for and love. ☺



by Lauren Francis

# WORSHIP

## *Serving Your Community*

This month, follow the example of Dorcas and the church in Joppa by worshipping through service. Talk together as a family about what the poor in your area need: food, clothing, shelter. Ask God to give you new eyes to see the needs.

Encourage your children to look through their closets and find clothes they can share with someone less fortunate. Make sure you do the same! Look for extra blankets or anything that might keep someone warm. Go through your pantry and collect food you can do without or replace. ***Challenge your family to not only give what you no longer want or need, but to give out of the abundance that you have.*** Gather your family's items together in a box or two.

Pray God will direct and show you as a family how and where to bless someone with the items you have collected. You may want to check with your church to see if there is a homeless shelter that would appreciate the donation of your items. You might also be aware of an area in your neighborhood where homeless people gather. ***Together, with your children, look for an opportunity to give these items away,*** and as an act of worship, go together to donate them.

After you have donated your items, spend time thanking God for the opportunity to serve others in your community. ☺



WE OFTEN THINK OF WORSHIP AS SINGING, BUT WE CAN WORSHIP GOD IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS: PRAYER, SILENCE, ART, DANCE, GIVING, SHARING, AND THANKSGIVING —JUST TO NAME A FEW. MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR FAMILY WORSHIP TIME, BUT PREPARE YOURSELF TO HOLD THESE PLANS LOOSELY IF THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS YOU IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.

by Debbie Guinn

# TRADITIONS

## *An Impacting Visit*

After the holidays, many people in retirement or nursing homes face weeks and months of loneliness and neglect. The elderly are some of the most forgotten people in our society.



*A tradition is the handing down of statements, beliefs, stories, or customs from generation to generation. What traditions are in place for your family? What would you like to pass down to the next generation? It is always fun to create new traditions with each generation.*

Since many people have moved on and forgotten the needs of others after the busyness of the holidays, it's a great time to start a tradition of serving. Consider taking your family to a retirement home and visiting with the elderly who live there?. **Locate a retirement home in your community**, and call ahead to set up a time for your family visit. Take another family along for fun.

Find a creative way to package the **Clutter Cookies from the Family Food Time** section of this HomeFront Monthly issue to **take with you and pass out**. Many older people have dietary restrictions, so you will want to check that out first.

You might consider bringing a checkerboard and playing a game or two with the people who live there. Making cards or bringing a piece of art is another way to bless the residents.

During your visit, remind each family member to have eyes to see **“What needs to be done?”** After your visit, talk together as a family about ways you might continue to serve the elderly in the home you just visited. ☺

by Reed Robinson

# MARRIAGE

## *In Sickness and In Health*

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

What does being a servant look like? Simply defined, a servant is a person who performs duties for others, and there are thousands of ways to serve. It can be as simple as holding open a door to help someone pass through or as extreme as laying down one’s life for another, as Christ did for us.

I find short-term service to be easy. It takes a smaller amount of my time. Whenever I hold open a door for a stranger, it might take me an extra five seconds. For those five seconds of service, I am typically rewarded with a “thank you” and a smile. For very little effort, and very little time, I get to feel quite good about myself. Not a bad investment.

But short-term service is not what God has called us to. **He wants us to live as servants every day, all the time.** Living with a heart attitude to serve others is a significantly greater investment—one that usually takes a greater commitment and always takes more stamina.

In my marriage, short-term service sometimes looks like taking out the trash or washing the dishes. It could also look like a bouquet of flowers or perhaps

a well-timed back rub. Even something as simple as showing interest in one of my wife’s passions can be a form of short-term service. **Short-term service helps keep energy and romance in a marriage.** It repeatedly sends out messages stating, “You are loved,” and “I care about you.” But living daily in a posture of serving can look much different. It is usually not as exciting.

**Nearly 25 years ago, I exchanged wedding vows with my bride.** One of the promises we each made was to love each other “in sickness and in health,” a promise easily made by a couple of 22 year olds basking in health. About a dozen years into the marriage, my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Our lives have not been the same since that diagnosis. The battle is now more than a decade old. The past five years have been tough, and the last two-and-a-half years have been really tough. Through it all, we must keep a positive attitude, even when the news is not good. We must cling to our faith, even when the evidence and the odds are against us. It often requires working tirelessly day in and day out to make the best of this difficult situation and to maintain a sense of normalcy in our home.

While short-term service communicates, “You are loved,” we have found that long-term service goes further to say, “I am committed to you,” and “We are one, we will go through this together.” Living in service to each other has created a deep bond, a bond previously not known in our marriage relationship.

Whether short-term or long-term service, the highest form of serving is motivated by love. It is selfless giving for the benefit of others. Our Lord Jesus Christ modeled it for us.

I encourage you to look for ways to serve your spouse today. Be intentional with the short-term, and be prepared for the long-term. And if you are feeling weary in the midst of a lifetime of serving, take heart and be encouraged. God’s goodness is abundant and His love is never ending. Let Him strengthen you, and rest in the promise that at the proper time you will reap a harvest. ☪

*(In loving memory of Angela Robinson who, one year after this article was written, lost her battle with cancer. Because of her faith, she is healed and whole in the presence of her loving heavenly Father.)*



# BLESSING & PRAYER

## What Does Love Look Like?

A few years ago I read a quote by Saint Augustine that has since woven itself deep into my life.

It reads, "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."

I remember vividly the moment I first encountered this quote. In that instant, God reminded me of a familiar Scripture I had not taken a look at in quite a while: 1 Corinthians 13. The first few verses of this passage read, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

God reminded me that He is all about love. Real, true, Jesus-type love is about more than nice feelings. It is a compassionate love that sees the pain and sorrow in our world and cannot help but be compelled to action.

**As you bless your children this month, read Colossians 3:12 (NIV):**

**You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness as if they were your clothes. Don't be proud. Be gentle and patient.**

Do this several times throughout the month. Each time you do, remind them, as we look around our world and ask, "What needs to be done?," we can be sure that everyone we encounter needs to be loved. However, remind them also that love is active; it is often much more than simply saying, "I love you," to someone. True love creates in us a heart that cannot help but do something in our hurting

A BLESSING CAN BE A PRAYER OF COMMISSION, A BIBLE PASSAGE, OR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. AS YOUR CHILDREN ARE BLESSED, TELL THEM THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ALSO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS. ENCOURAGE THEM TO FREELY SHARE WITH OTHERS THE JOY AND LOVE THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD. BLESSINGS CAN ALSO BE SPOKEN OVER A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING GOD'S PROTECTION, JOY, AND WISDOM OVER HIM.

world. It often looks like helping those who cannot help themselves. Love involves caring and providing for the brokenhearted, the poor, and the oppressed. After you have read the blessing, pray over your children. Pray they will have the sensitive eyes and hearts to see those around them who are in need. And pray God will show them what loving each of those people might look like. ☺

HomeFront  
MONTHLY



At your fingertips



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**HomeFront Weekly:** Don't forget to grab your HomeFront Weekly: A resource to get parents and kids talking about God's Word together.

MORSE CODE		
A •—	J •—	S •••
B —•••	K —••—	T —
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# LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

# What's Happening in Your FAITH COMMUNITY?