

*Teaching the Bible with
Children, Youth and Families*

**UNIT 2:
Service and
Learning**

-Session 2-

**Cultivating Lives of Service and
Compassion in the Home**

Select Learning

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home

Gathering Table

Place on the gathering table a children's story Bible and a traditional Bible along with some objects that children might use to help with at home: dish soap and a sponge, a broom and dust pan, a mixing bowl and measuring cup, a setting of dishes. Be playful with your visual cues.

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Prayer

2. Introduce the Video -- Guest Marcia J. Bunge, Ph.D., Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana

You may introduce the group to the theme in the following or similar words. The introduction and questions help participants begin to focus on the theme of the session and to think about their own questions and experiences.

Welcome to this session on "Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home." Numerous passages in the Bible as well as Jesus' own example emphasize the importance of serving others.

Loving the neighbor and serving others is a central part of Christian faith and life, and it can and should be a part of family life.

As a way to reflect on our theme of "Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home," the first part of this video explores the importance of service in various Christian understandings of the home. The second part of the video offers some concrete examples and practical guidelines for ways that all kinds of families can love and serve others and cultivate lives of service and compassion.

Our guest in the video is Marcia J. Bunge, Professor of Humanities and Theology at Christ College – the Honors College of Valparaiso.

We will watch the video and then discuss our own views on the role of the family in serving and ideas for how families can fully engage in serving others. As you watch the video, focus on these questions:

- What are some of your favorite biblical texts that emphasize service to others?
- How significant is "service to others" in your view of the role of family?
- In what ways can all households, even those with young children, serve others?

3. Watch the Video

4. Discussion -- "Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home"

In each of the following 3 sections choose a few questions that you want to focus on.

a. Christian Understandings in the Home:

In Part One, Bunge emphasizes that many theologians in the past and today believe the home should be “Christ-centered” and “service-oriented.” Chrysostom and Bushnell speak about the home as a “little church” that reaches out to those in need. Luther emphasizes that both parents and children have a divine calling or vocation to love God and serve others.

1. How do you respond to the idea that the home is a place centered in Christ and committed to serving others (“Christ-centered” and “service oriented”)?
2. How significant is “service to others” in your view of the role of the family.
3. In what ways do you experience children serving others and living out their vocations here and now (not just when they grow up)?

b. Biblical Connections:

She also highlights several passages that emphasize love of others and service to the neighbor. Read together Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This text emphasizes that parents must center their own hearts on God and share their faith with their children in their daily lives.

- What is most striking to you about this text?
- What wisdom does this text offer as we think about child-parent relationships and cultivating lives of service in the home?

Bunge says that the Bible includes stories of named and unnamed children and young people who play important roles in families and community. These stories and texts remind us that children are called to love God and to serve others now, not just when they grow up. Some of the biblical passages that Bunge mentions that emphasize service are:

- Commands to help the “widow and orphan.” (Deuteronomy 10:17–18; 14:28–29)
- The story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37)
- Jesus’ command to “Love the Lord your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:28-24; Mt 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28)

1. How do these biblical stories and Jesus’ actions toward children, influence you and your own relationships with children?
2. In what ways do we sometimes minimize the needs, strengths, gifts, and responsibilities of children in our families and congregations?
3. What are some of the ways children contribute to your life as a family? Your congregation? In the community?
4. What are some of the ways you have witnessed children being models of faith for adults or agents of change?

c. Concrete Examples and Practical Guidelines:

In Part Two, Bunge offers several concrete examples and practical guidelines for households as they seek to serve others. As you review her suggestions (see “Participant Handout”), consider these questions:

- Who or what has most strengthened your own faith and commitment to serve others?
- Give examples of positive forms of service you have carried out with children - in your family. In your congregation. In your community.
- As you look at the “concrete examples” of service, what could you add to the list?

5. Making it My Own—Take it Home

a. What? Name and affirm those acts of service you already carry out with your immediate or extended family.

b. So What? In what ways could you expand the ways you love and serve others to make the actions/relationships more meaningful and authentic, both inside and outside the home?

c. Now What? What new forms of service did the video and discussion prompt you to consider? Brainstorm ways your congregation can cultivate lives of service and compassion in households.

6. Closing

7. Extend the Conversation

If you have not already viewed Session One about Accompaniment, do so. Then set a time in your small group or within your household to watch the movie, *Finding Nemo* (appropriate for children 2 and older) and *Shrek, 2001* (appropriate children age 6 and older). View and discuss these films through an accompaniment lens.

Accompanying this Session

- Participant Guide
- Handout: List of Concrete Examples and Practical Guidelines
- Bibliograph

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home

1. Welcome, Introduction, Opening Prayer

2. Introduce the video

As you watch the video keep these questions in mind:

- What are some of your favorite biblical texts that emphasize service to others?
- How significant is “service to others” in your view of the role of family?
- In what ways can households, even those with young children, serve others?

3. Watch the video

4. Discussion

a) Christian Understanding of the Home

- How do you respond to the idea that the home is a place centered in Christ and committed to serving others (“Christ-centered” and “service oriented”)?
- How significant is “service to others” in your view of the role of family?
- In what ways do you see children serving others and living out their vocations here and now (not just when they grow up)?

b) Biblical Connections

Read together Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This text emphasizes that parents must center their own hearts on God and share their faith with their children in their daily lives.

- What is most striking to you about this text?
- What wisdom does this text offer as we think about child-parent relationships and cultivating lives of service in the home?

Some of the biblical passages that Bunge mentions that emphasize service are:

- Commands to help the “widow and orphan.” (Deuteronomy 10:17–18; 14:28–29)
 - The story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37)
 - Jesus’ command to “Love the Lord your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:28-24; Mt 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28)
1. How do these biblical stories and Jesus’ actions toward children, influence you and your own relationships with children?
 2. In what ways do we sometimes minimize the needs, strengths, gifts, and responsibilities of children in our families and congregations?
 3. What are some of the ways children contribute to your life as a family? The congregation? In the community?
 4. What are some of the ways you have witnessed children being models of faith for adults or agents of change?

c. Concrete Examples and Practical Guidelines

In Part Two, Bunge offers several concrete examples and practical guidelines for households as they seek to serve others. As you review her suggestions (see “Participant Handout”), consider the following questions:

- 1) Who or what has most strengthened your own faith and commitment to serve others?
- 2) Give examples of positive forms of service you have carried out with children - in your family. In your congregation. In your community.
- 3) As you look at the “concrete examples” of service, what could you add to the list.

5. Making it My Own—Take it Home

- a. **What?** Affirm and name the kinds of service you already carry out with your immediate or extended family.
- b. **So What?** In what ways could you expand the ways you love and serve others both inside and outside the home?
- c. **Now What?** What new forms of service did the video and discussion prompt you to consider? Brainstorm ways your congregation can cultivate lives of service and compassion in households.

5. Closing

Extend the Conversation

If you have not already viewed Session One about Accompaniment, do so. Then set a time in your small group or within your household to watch the movie, *Finding Nemo* (appropriate for children 2 and older) and *Shrek*, 2001 (appropriate children age 6 and older). View and discuss these films through an accompaniment lens.

Included in this Session

- Participant Guide
- Handout: List of Concrete Examples and Practical Guidelines
- Bibliography

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home

LIST OF CONCRETE EXAMPLES:

- 1) Helping the immediate and extended family (Ex: helping with chores, doing dishes, weeding the garden, cleaning the house, recycling; or helping grandmother move).
- 2) Serving others through family projects (Ex: eating less in Lent and giving the money to your favorite charity, or offering to help your neighbors).
- 3) Participating in church-sponsored events (Ex: singing at a senior living facility or going on mission trips with your church).
- 4) Participating in community-sponsored projects (Ex: participating in food drives, habitat for humanity, scouts, or neighborhood service days).
- 5) Supporting environmental efforts that honor God's creation and serve the neighbor (Ex: planting trees, driving less, or reducing your carbon footprint in others ways).
- 6) Seeking peace and justice and addressing the causes of poverty and suffering even as you help others individually (Ex: becoming politically involved, lobbying; advocating for the poor, and writing letters to political leaders).
- 7) Teaching and practicing financial responsibility (Ex: living within your means, giving generously to others, and tithing).
- 8) Studying and cultivating your gifts and talents so that you can serve others and contribute to the common good.

LIST OF PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

- 1) *Start Early:* Cultivating lives of service and compassion begins early.
- 2) *Respect Children and their Gifts and Ideas:* Remember that children are complex human beings who are in relationship to God. They often have many good ideas and are often models of faith for adults. Respect them, listen to them, and treat them as full human beings and members of the community.
- 3) *Prepare and be Authentic:* Do authentic service that truly serves the needs of others. Do not have children do meaningless tasks but tasks that truly help the family. Be in touch with the people you are serving so that you understand their needs and what you can do to be truly effective.
- 4) *Work Together:* Do service together. In this way, you practice what you preach.
- 5) *Reflect and Discuss:* Talk about and reflect together on your experiences. Studies, as well as common sense, show that service is most meaningful when you discuss your thoughts and feelings with others.
- 6) *Pray and Read the Bible:* Do service in the context of other important faith practices, such as praying, reading the Bible, and worshipping together.
- 7) *Connect Home and Congregation:* Homes and congregations need to work together to help nurture and pass on faith. Look for ways to mutually enhance and build upon the common work of parents, pastors, and church-leaders.
- 8) *Be Amazed at the Benefits and Blessing of Serving Others:* Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." It is truly amazing how serving others benefits you and your children as well as your neighbor.

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PRESENTER'S PROFILE

Marcia J. Bunge is Professor of Humanities and Theology at Christ College, the Honors College of Valparaiso University (Indiana); Director of the Child in Religion and Ethics Project; and the University's W.C. Dickmeyer Professor. Her current area of research is religious understandings of children and childhood as reflected in: *The Child in Christian Thought* (Eerdmans, 2001); *The Child in the Bible* (Eerdmans, 2008); and *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts* (Rutgers, 2009). Bunge served on the National Task Force on Education for the ELCA. Marcia.Bunge@valpo.edu