

PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR THE

WEEK
of Outreach

APRIL 2024

VILLAGE  CHURCH

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use this guide to prepare your heart and mind for the service projects ahead of you. You will find several passages of Scripture emphasizing our Biblical invitation to do good works, a brief devotional on the Christian's call to serve, reflection questions, and prayer points.

TITUS 3:3-8

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

THE CALL TO SERVE

An excerpt from Rooted*:

“Jesus' mission isn't just to clean up the mess sin has made, to save people from their sins, and to make sure they have a place in heaven when they die. The New Testament is clear this is only part of His role. Jesus has come to restore all creation—that is, to bring everything in creation back to the way God intended. From the third chapter in Genesis to the last chapter in Revelation, God reveals His plan to bring a Redeemer who would not only offer forgiveness of sins and salvation but would reconcile creation back to Himself. In Colossians 1, Paul does an amazing job summarizing the reign and adequacy of Christ. Verse 20 says that God will “reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.” Through Jesus, God reconciled everything to Himself. And then it says it again: He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. And if that wasn't convincing enough, Paul goes on to say, “This includes you.” Because Jesus is about restoration and not just salvation, Jesus didn't end His mission at the cross. He was resurrected into a new kind of life.

Some people stop their Christian journey at the point of accepting forgiveness. They sit in that place and look forward to eternity. But in order to join Jesus in the resurrection life, we need to let ourselves experience the death of our old life and resurrection of the new. “We were therefore buried with him through baptism, into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4). We can no longer live as we did in the past, before we believed. We must begin new lives and follow Jesus into His continuing work.

How then, are we supposed to live this new life of faith? We live as Jesus did. We need to have the heart of Jesus. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:4)

We are called to share God's love by participating in the ministry of Jesus in the world and in His Church. In John 20:21 Jesus says, "Peace be with you. the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Jesus says we are to continue the work He started and do what God is calling us to do. <https://villagechurchbartlettill.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2267758> If we are prayerful and discerning, God will reveal what He has planned for us and then enable us to do it. Ephesians 2.10 tells us, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." We were made into a new creation, a "masterpiece" as one translation puts it, designed to do good things-not just any good thing, but those good things God has planned for us and has sent us to do.

Recognize that we don't do good things to secure our salvation. Rather, we do them because of our salvation. God redeemed us, and it's out of our love for Him can be Christ's hands and feet to care for the world and those in it. Our redemptive purpose is to help bring people closer to the Lord and to restore creation. We are part of that process. We partner with God to bring wholeness and healing. We are invited to be God's agents of reconciliation, mercy, truth, and hope."

RESPONSE

Where have you seen the redemption of Jesus in your life? Where has He made something new?

What project are you going to participate in during The Week of Outreach? How can you be God's agent of reconciliation, mercy, truth, and/or hope?

*Rooted Network, "Rooted, Connect with God, the Church, Your Purpose", 2020, Experiencerooted.com.

PRAYER PROMPTS

Use any of these prayer prompts to prepare for your service project or the Week of Outreach itself. These prayers are divided into four categories and include many suggestions. Pray through as many or as few as you wish. You can pray silently speaking to God or out loud together with a group before you serve together.

Prayer for You and Your Household

"Thank God for His kindness and love, and for giving us salvation through Jesus (Titus 3:4-7).

Titus 3:8 says that those who believe in God should be, "careful to devote themselves to good works." Ask the Holy Spirit to equip you for good works. Use the final section of the Rooted excerpt to inform your prayer: "Our redemptive purpose is to help bring people closer to the Lord and to restore creation. We are part of that process. We partner with God to bring wholeness and healing. We are invited to be God's agents of reconciliation, mercy, truth, and hope."

Ask the Holy Spirit to labor in and among us, accomplishing His holy purposes. Offer yourself and your household to Him now.

If serving with children, ask Jesus to draw their hearts to Him through the act of service.

Considering the vulnerable populations that these organizations serve, ask God if He is leading you to open your schedule or your home up to those in need.

Looking beyond this week or this service project, invite the Helper (the Holy Spirit) to grow in you whatever is most pleasing. Invite Him into your daily rhythms offering yourself as a living sacrifice, "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Prayer for the Village Church of Bartlett Community

Praise God for the opportunity to serve our local community together.

Ask Jesus to bear fruit in our church body through these acts of service. Ask for opportunities to share His love with those whom we serve.

Ask God to sanctify our church family to be more like Jesus. Ask that our we would be a people who imitate Christ and whose lives are marked by joyful obedience in gratitude.

Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts for the future opportunities to serve. Ask Him to work through us, building bridges in our community.

Prayer for Those Whom the Organizations Serve

Pray that the children, families, and volunteers would see and receive the hope of Jesus through the activities of each organization.

Pray for those in the foster care community who care for children, regardless of their status.

Pray for the children who are waiting to be adopted. Whether young or old, pray that they will be adopted by the right family so they are nurtured and loved for who they are. Pray that they will learn about Jesus and see that they were created with love and purpose.

Pray for the soon-to-be or new mothers who are scared, sometimes alone, and who don't know how they are going to manage having a child in their current circumstances. Ask that God will comfort them and meet their needs.

Prayer for the Organizations

The Village Church of Bartlett partners with organizations that serve vulnerable children and families in the greater Chicagoland area. These include:

- The Ruth Project
- The Evangelical Child and Family Agency (ECFA)
- The Forgotten Initiative
- Safe Families for Children

Pray for provision, endurance, peace, and wisdom for the employees of these organizations. Ask God to equip them daily to serve others. Ask God to meet both the organizations needs as well as the individual needs of each person and their family.

Listen to this Song

As you prepare to serve, consider the lyrics of the song, "Christ Be All Around Me." Sung both as an invitation to Christ as well as a reminder to oneself, this song recognizes the opportunity we have to include Jesus into every moment inviting Him to satisfy and sustain us. Scan the QR code below with your phone's camera and select the link that appears or search for the song "Christ Be All Around Me" by Anchor Hymns.

