

In any home there are chores that need to be done. Some of them are so routine, we don't even think about them. Some of them are pleasant or fun. Some of them are boring or even painful. What they all share is that they unite us to the household, making us part of the family. Guests do not do chores, but members of the household are given chores because they belong, the household is "theirs". In coming home for Christmas, we want to make our home with Jesus more real than it has ever been, and taking on some chores is a great way to get started.

Day 1

An Invitation to the Kingdom

Jesus went about His father's business, because he was a son. The kingdom that he invited people into was His kingdom, because as son He is inheritor of all things. Jesus was not shy about announcing the kingdom, and he spent the majority of his time in telling people that the kingdom was at hand, and that they were invited. Not everyone was pleased to hear this news, but many responded positively and began to follow Jesus, and after His death most of the world heard the news and a great portion joined and became citizens of this new kingdom. We, as Christians, have citizenship in this heavenly kingdom, and, as sons, we are inheritors of the kingdom. We, also should be about our father's business, and we should be giving others an invitation to the kingdom. This happens in a number of ways, and most of them are much more subtle than the street preachers that often come to mind when we think of inviting people to the kingdom. Most of the time, it starts with inviting others into your life, with making friends, with being someone who is there during difficult times, in being someone who shows love to others. Spend some time today thinking about how you can get better at inviting others to the kingdom, because it's yours.

Verses: Ephesians 1:11-14, Colossians 1:21-23, Luke 14:15-24

Prayer Topics: Attracting, Offering, Leading

Day 2

Feeding the Crowds

Jesus, when he was on this earth, spent some time inviting people into His kingdom, but at times he did much more than that, feeding people who were interested in hearing about His kingdom. It might not be practical for you to go find five thousand people to feed. That's o.k. What we can all do, is show hospitality to those who are in the kingdom or who might be persuaded to be in the kingdom. For most Christians, within a few years of being a Christian, they no longer have any friends who are not Christian. For most of us as we age, we start having fewer friendships and other relationships because life gets complicated, time is short, and we lose energy as time passes. It's important to understand the value and necessity of hospitality, because hospitality makes real the spiritual understanding of family, home, and kingdom that we are a part of. We all might live in different houses, but in Christ we are brothers and sisters and we form one family with the Father. The way that this truth is made manifest in our lives is our willingness to be hospitable to one another, but this often puts us out of our comfort zone. The fact that this puts us out of our comfort zone tells us that this truth is not really being true enough for us, and that there is a chore to be done to truly bring us home this Christmas. Try some hospitality this week, even if it's just inviting someone to eat out with you. Without a start, we can't hope to get better at making our home with Christ more real this Christmas.

Verses: 1 Peter 4:9-11, Leviticus 19:34, Mark 9:41

Prayer Topics: Accommodations, Companionship, Generosity

Day 3

Healing Afflictions

One of the most astounding things that Jesus did on this earth was to heal many who had physical afflictions of many kinds. From the blind to the lame, Jesus showed his power to bring wholeness to those who were suffering from many disfigurements and diseases. Since Jesus did this, so should you! You might not be able to heal physical afflictions, but you can help to make others whole. You can help by making people whole spiritually and emotionally. In our modern lifestyles, most of us deal with far more emotional and spiritual trauma than we will ever deal with physical afflictions. In an age where many find life to be meaningless, we can show people the value of their lives in Christ. I recently heard an interview of a Christian who happens to be a celebrity, and he talked about the impact a childhood friend who was Christian had on his life by just being a friend when no one else would. We can also make people whole by serving them, by helping to be the ability they may lack. We can help to serve the lame and the blind, even if we cannot fully restore their own sight and ability to walk. There are people all around us who experience a lack of wholeness in some way, and we can help to bring that wholeness closer to them.

Verses: James 5:16, Psalm 147:3, Proverbs 4:20-22

Prayer Topics: Alleviate, Improve, Rebuild

Day 4

Washing Feet

We speak often as Christians about Jesus washing the disciples' feet, even though most of the time we don't really know what to make of it or how to apply it to our lives. I have heard of churches doing foot washing services, and to be honest I don't know what to think about them. I'm not sure the literal washing of feet was what Jesus was trying to get us to do, although I could be wrong. It seems to me Jesus was performing a needed but unpleasant service, one that doesn't line up with our culture and practices today. Although we may not need actual foot washing today, there are still needed and unpleasant things that we can do to help others and ourselves to be part of the family of God, and to feel part of the family of God. In the ancient world, the household consisted of not only biological family members, but also functional family members. Although servants were not biologically part of the household, because they submitted to the ruler of the household, they were functionally part of it, which is why in Paul's missionary journeys it was often the entire household that converted to Christianity. In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus is taking responsibility for the whole of the household, because nothing in the household is unworthy of Him. Is there something that you could do to serve the household that would require humility from you? Think about how to make that real this Christmas.

Verses: John 13:8-15, Philippians 2:5-7, Luke 22:26

Prayer Topics: Responsibility, Duty, Submission

Day 5

Crucifixion

Jesus gave up his life to serve His Father and to redeem His brothers. Being in the family means that ultimately, we no longer live for ourselves but for the family. We cannot have it both ways, we can be alone, or part of a family. How can you make being part of the family of God more real this Christmas?

What in your life needs to be crucified so that the old life of being alone is truly dead, so the new life in the family can be alive? Make some plans to make it happen.

Verses: Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:16, Luke 9:23

Prayer Topics: Sacrifice, Surrender, Trust