

A woman with long brown hair is seen from the back, holding a young child in her arms. They are standing in a grassy field during sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare effects. The child is wearing a striped sweater. The woman is wearing a dark-colored dress. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

TAKE FIVE

17 SIMPLE WAYS
TO SERVE OTHERS

Take Five: Simple Ways to Serve Others

17 Ways to Encounter God and Others in the Real Circumstances of Your Life

When we are hurried inside, serving others may be the last thing on our minds or in our hearts. We may feel there is so much on our plate that doing something for others is beyond our bandwidth. But that kind of hurry is unreal.

Our first work is not our already-too-long to-do list. Our first work as followers of Jesus is the work of Jesus, whether our job is at a church or non-profit or not.

Serving others does not always require heroic, time-intensive efforts. We can serve another in any moment. We have often said that anything worth doing is worth starting *small*.

Ministry as a way of serving the good of others can be done in just a few moments during our day. Some claim that Mother Teresa once said, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

With our 24/7 news cycle presenting needs to us from all around the world, we can easily become overwhelmed. We can feel fearful and powerless to make a difference. Those needs are far beyond our capacity. We can feel uncertain as to how we can help.

Mother Teresa often spoke of loving the one right in front of you. When someone came to her, asking how they could serve God, she would often say something like, “Go home and love your family.” She believed in loving those who were present in our lives.

Ministry does not require traveling to another continent. Ministry happens right where we are, in our day-to-day circumstances. Ministry does not have to be a major event requiring weeks and months of planning. Ministry can be the overflow of God's love in our life to others in a simple moment.

Jesus invites us to love our *neighbor*. He doesn't say, “Love everyone at once.” Only God has the capacity to do that. We can love our neighbor—the one who is near enough to us that we can serve their good.

The little “five minute” ideas below are not complex. That's the point. You could easily add plenty of other creative ways to bless another. We simply encourage you to do the good that God has put in your heart for the benefit of another.

These mini-ministries can be done as you live your real, day-to-day life, including emailing, grocery shopping, driving, doing laundry and washing dishes.

Blessings to you as you live, love and serve.

Alan & Gem Fadling

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1. **PERSONAL EMAIL** - On your next personal email spend a couple of minutes praying for the person that you're sending it to. Then tell them what you like, appreciate, admire, or enjoy about them. Feel free to add a verse and/or a prayer.
2. **DRIVING** – As you pass a car take a few minutes and pray for the people inside. Most people have complicated lives with relationships and work. Ask God's blessing on as many people inside of cars as you can for five minutes. It is always helpful when we become mindful of people. It can foster humility and an enlarged heart for those around us.
3. **DISHES** – As you wash dishes or load the dishwasher, think about some of the dirty, broken, unclean events of your day. Notice the situations where you missed out on the grace of the moment. Pray that the Holy Spirit will come into those situations and breathe cleansing, healing life.
4. **5-MINUTE MISSIONS** - Google a country somewhere in the world. Choose a country that has been in the news lately or one about which you are curious. Spend three minutes reading about it on a site like [CountryReports](#) or [Time For Kids](#). Spend two minutes praying for the people there, asking God for his presence to be known among the leaders and the people. Operation World offers a [Prayer Calendar](#) so you can pray for a different region every day. This is a wonderful resource for expanding your prayer for the world.
5. **INTERRUPTIONS** – Give others the gift of your full attention. The next time someone comes into your work space and interrupts you, stop what you're doing, turn your body towards them, and give them your full attention. [Multi-tasking is a myth](#) anyway. We aren't talking about dropping appropriate work-place boundaries. We understand deadlines and important work. However, there are times when the person in front of you is more important than the task at hand.
6. **LAUNDRY** – While you fold the laundry, choose a few articles of clothing from the pile. Think about who wears it. What do they do as they wear it? Pray for them in those circumstances. If it is your child's school shirt, pray for their friendships at school. Pray a blessing on their teacher are well. If it is a sock, give thanks that your family has socks to keep their feet warm. If it is your spouse's shirt, ask God to bless them in a special, personal way that day. If it is your own article of clothing, let God know your most pressing need. Turn mundane chores into a kingdom moment.
7. **CHILDREN** – If you have children, the next time one of them comes up to you, do not remain distracted. Put down your phone, turn your body toward them, look them in the eye, and listen fully. Empathize as appropriate. Show them you are listening and you care. Express interest and curiosity. This is especially helpful in the teenage years, and is a blessing at any age.

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8. **WORK EMAIL** - On your next work email spend a couple of minutes praying for the person you're addressing. Offer some personal word of appreciation or thanks that goes beyond the piece of business you're writing about. It is good to see work colleagues as people and not merely as work. As we know, most people carry burdens around with them each day. A word of appropriate encouragement can go a long way in the middle of a busy work day.
9. **DRIVING** - The next time a bad driver cuts you off, take five minutes to pray for them in the spirit of Jesus' command to pray for your enemies. Ask God to bless them, keep them safe, and teach them patience. But seriously, after you react to their poor driving choices, let yourself pray for them from a sincere heart.
10. **SOCIAL MEDIA** – The next time you are scrolling through Facebook, choose a friend, go to their Facebook wall, and write a blessing. Encourage them. Let them know what you admire about them. Think of it as a very premature eulogy (eulogy literally means “good word”). Let's not wait until someone passes away before we say out loud how important and amazing they are. Facebook is a nice public space to say good words to your friends.
11. **SHOPPING** - Next time you are in any kind of store, slow down, stop and look at the cashier. Look them directly in the eye. Genuinely ask them how they are. Listen to their reply and interact with them. They are not typically treated like this and it will likely make a difference in their day.
12. **WRITTEN ENCOURAGEMENT** - Keep close at hand some notecards with already-stamped envelopes. Keep them in your briefcase, purse, desk drawer, glove box or kitchen drawer. Write a note of blessing or encouragement. Write to someone who comes to mind or someone with whom you recently had a meeting. Sincerely thank them for their time or for simply who they are. Let them know how much you appreciate them. It seems so rare to get a good piece of real mail anymore.
13. **LISTEN WELL** - The next time you gather with your spiritual community or social group be intentionally focused on others. Ask good questions. Listen to understand. Get to know someone on a deeper level. Ask them about something good that happened that week. If you know them a little better, you can also ask them about challenging situations in their life. See them. Hear them. A listening ear is a hot commodity in our culture of hurry.
14. **PROMOTE MINISTRIES OF COMPASSION** - Locate one of your favorite ministries of compassion on Facebook. Take five minutes to share one of their pages on your feed and tell your friends why you love this ministry so much. Encourage them to check it out and offer their support. Some examples: [World Vision](#), [Compassion International](#), and [Word Made Flesh](#).

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15. GIFT CARDS - Keep a few gift cards with you. Watch for opportunities to practice random acts of kindness. If you see someone who needs a lift in their day, give generously. You might even want to pair this with #12 and place the card in your note of encouragement. Most major grocery and department stores have racks of cards from multiple businesses. The next time you shop, just pick up a few and be ready to brighten someone's day.
16. PLAN AHEAD - Take five minutes to prayerfully think about someone in your life. Think about what kinds of words would be most helpful to them – encouragement, blessing, affirmation. You can also think about an act of kindness that would bless them. Think about when you will likely see them next. Plan to say your encouraging words to them or offer your service in some way.
17. OLD-SCHOOL RESPECT - Hold the door open for someone and speak a word of encouragement as they pass you by. Wish them a good day.

