

## God's Faithful Servant

*You might begin by saying something like, "Stewardship is taking care of God's stuff God's way. One of the most important ways we can do that is to be faithful in serving Him. We can serve God by taking care of people, or taking care of our minds and hearts, or taking care of physical things; and we want to do all of that God's way, because it all belongs to Him. Today's story is about a girl who wants to serve God."*

*This story is suitable for children of any age.*

Shayna was bored. She wriggled on the hard pew. She had already filled the back of Dad's bulletin with doodles, and made lots and lots of little marks under the words Love, God, Jesus, and Grace that Mom had assigned for her to do. She counted the marks. Pastor Jenson had said God 27 times, Jesus 13 times, Love 33 times, and Grace 18 times. He might say some of them again, but she was tired of listening.

Oh, good!, Shayna thought. Finally, there goes the organ.

Dad and Mom were finding their place in the hymnal and standing up to sing. Shayna stood too, and Mom held her hymnal where Shayna could see it: "The Old, Rugged Cross." Good, she knew the chorus of that one. She followed the words with her finger as she sang along.

On the way home in the car, Mom said, "Shayna, you really are getting big enough to not wiggle around so much during the church service. Did you listen at all to the sermon?"

"Sure, I listened. He said God 27 times."

"That's not what I meant," said Mom.

But before she could say anymore, Shayna asked, "Mom, why do we call it a church service?"

"That's a good question, Shayna," said Dad. "Do you know what service means?"

Shayna thought about it. "It seems like it means all kinds of stuff. Aunt Jodie says Bo is 'in the service,' and she means the army. I heard Grandpa say that the restaurant had 'bad service,' and you say 'service' for church, too. What does it mean, Daddy?"

Dad and Mom laughed a little in the front seat. "I guess it is a little confusing, with all that, but it's really quite simple. It comes from 'to serve,' which means to wait on someone, like a servant." Dad was starting to use his school teacher voice. "Most people don't have servants anymore, but my mama, your grandma, used to clean people's houses for them. That's one kind of service. When we go to a restaurant, the people who bring our food are called 'servers,' because what they do is serve us."

"So they're helpers, kind of," said Shayna.

"Right. And in the army, Bo is serving his country, helping to protect it. Any kind of helping or taking care of somebody is service. It's really important, too, because we're all God's servants, and the most important thing we can do is serve Him. Most of the time, we serve God by serving other people. When Grandma used to clean houses, she tried to think of it as cleaning for Jesus. When mamas and daddies take care of their children, they try to remember they're doing it for God, because children really belong to God. Then there are some people who give their whole lives to serve God in special ways, like pastors and teachers. And that's why we call church a service, because the pastor and elders and teachers are all serving God."

“But we’re all serving God during church, too,” added Mom. “We’re serving God directly, when we sing to Him or when we give money for His work, and we’re also coming to church to get trained, you could say—to listen to the sermon and our Sabbath School lessons and learn more about how to serve God all week long.”

“So what did you learn today about serving God?” asked Dad.

Shayna tried to remember what they’d talked about in Sabbath School. “Ms. Singer said that stewardship is taking care of God’s stuff God’s way. She said all our things and our houses and toys and even us—everything belongs to God, and we’re just taking care of it. So does that mean when we take care of God’s stuff, we’re serving Him?”

“That’s exactly what it means.”

“Well, then,” said Shayna, “I think it would be a lot more fun if I could really do something to serve God at church instead of just sitting still!”

Daddy and Mom looked at each other. “That’s a good idea, Shayna. What kinds of things would you like to do?”

Shayna thought again. She couldn’t exactly preach a sermon! And she didn’t know how to play the organ. “I could pass out bulletins,” she said. “And I bet I could help lead songs, or maybe take up offerings. And, what else? I know! I could greet people and say ‘Happy Sabbath.’ And if I practiced, I think I could read a Bible verse sometimes.”

“Well, I think you’ve really hit on some good ideas!” said Mom. “I’ll talk to Pastor Jenkins and to Elder Simon about it. Maybe you and the other kids could help in church sometimes.”

Shayna gave a little bounce in her seat. Maybe church was about to get a lot less boring!

The next Sabbath, Shayna got to stand at the door with Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Simon, greeting people and giving them a bulletin. Two of her friends from Sabbath School got to help take up the offering with the grown-ups (they had to wait until they were a little bit older to do it alone).

But the truly surprising thing was, after the sermon had started, Shayna forgot to mark down the times Pastor Jenkins said God. She was listening for ways she might be able to serve. Pastor Jenkins was talking about the little girl who was taken far away from her home to be a servant to Namaan and his wife in Syria.

For the first time, Shayna realized that little girl, maybe not much older than herself, learned to serve in two ways. She worked for Namaan and his wife every day, doing ordinary household things like washing dishes, maybe, or sweeping floors, and she also served them and God by telling Namaan about God and about the prophet Elisha. Because of her, a great army general was healed of leprosy!

“This little girl, even though she was a child,” said Pastor Jenkins, “was a faithful servant of God.”

Shayna wanted to be a faithful servant of God, too. She found out there were lots of ways she could do that. She could do her best in school, and help with housework, and do her chores without fussing. She could take care of her money, and not eat junk food, and put plastic and glass in the recycling bin.

She could even share with her friends. One of them asked her, “Do you have to go to church every week? That must be so boring!”

"It used to be," said Shayna, "but not anymore. Now I'm learning to be God's faithful servant."

"You are?"

"Yeah! I'm taking care of God's stuff God's way!"

"What's God's stuff?" asked her friend.

Shayna grinned. "Everything!" she exclaimed, whirling in a circle with her arms out. "Every single thing! Even you! Come eat lunch with me, and I'll tell you all about it!"

*Thought Question: Are you a faithful servant of God, taking care of His stuff His way?*

*Taking Care of God's Stuff God's Way by Debbonnaire Kovacs pp. 57-60*