

Taking It Home

When Samuel was only a young boy, he heard the Lord call him. Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10). Samuel held his hands open (*extend arms, palms up*). Speak, Lord . . . what do you want me to do?

You, too, have heard your Lord’s call. And like Samuel, you have answered him with hands open, saying, “Speak, for your servant hears.” Your answer—your work among us—is a sign of his work in you. Your “dirty hands” point to your Spirit-filled heart—your servant heart. And we thank God for your God-pleasing willingness to serve him among us.

As a small token of our gratitude for your God-given “dirty hands,” we have for you—not a bar of soap (*show soap*)—but (*show and briefly describe gift*). We hope it will remind you how much your work in this congregation means and how much you’re truly appreciated. Let it remind you, too, of his work in you. He came “not to be served but to serve,” and you have taken on his call to service. God bless your dirty hands . . . your servant heart . . . and you!

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#TGSFDA



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Thanking God
for Your
Servant Heart!

Getting Started

Have handy a bar of soap, a towel, and a pair of work gloves or colorful mittens.

Introduction

“Wash your hands!” Who hasn’t heard that before? Some of us needed plenty of reminding when we were growing up (*you may want to offer a specific example from your childhood*). And those of us who are parents and teachers of little ones say it all the time: “Wash your hands!” Am I right? (*Pause to encourage general agreement. If kids are present, invite their response.*)

Well, whether you’re a kid or a grown-up, the best solution for hands that need washing—dirty hands—remains the old standby that uses soap, water, and washcloth (*use soap and towel as you make hand-washing motions*). But there are other ways to take care of dirty hands. Hide them! (*Put hands in pockets or behind your back.*) Cover them up! (*Put on gloves or mittens.*) Can you give some other suggestions? (*Solicit kids’ responses, as well as the responses of parents and elementary school teachers.*)

But guess what? We’re not here to wash hands. We want to keep ’em dirty! In fact, we want to give thanks for dirty hands—**your** dirty hands! Is it because I think you forgot to wash before you came here? No. It’s because dirty hands mark you as one of God’s good servants.

Getting to the Heart

The remarkable woman of Proverbs 31 “works with willing hands,” and “with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard” (Proverbs 31:13, 16). This woman dug in and got her hands dirty!

When we say, “He’s not afraid to get his hands dirty,” we mean he’s not the type to go home and let others do the work. He doesn’t sit on his hands. His hands are busy doing what needs to get done. He’s not afraid of dirty hands.

Your service among us proves you’re not afraid of dirty hands, either. And neither was our Lord, Jesus Christ. When it came to serving us, he got his hands plenty dirty. He was born in a manger—a feeding trough. He spent his childhood in Nazareth, the foster son of a common working man. He traveled the dusty roads of Galilee and walked the grimy streets of Jerusalem. He was not afraid to get his hands dirty to be our hands-on healer . . . teacher . . . listener . . . shepherd . . . friend . . . and Savior.

Even as Jesus approached the hours of his agony and crucifixion, he continued to serve us. He served his people with passionate prayer and fervent supplication to his Father in heaven. Do you remember that prayer, the one in John 17 called his High Priestly prayer? Our Servant-Lord was ministering to you and me, for we are “those who will believe in” him through the Gospel (John 17:20). In his prayer, he said to His Father, “I made known to them your name, . . . that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

The love with which he has loved us extended all the way to Calvary. His dirty hands became nail-pierced hands on the cross. Jesus suffered and died to serve as our perfect sacrifice for sin. On that first Easter morning, he rose from the grave to serve as our living Redeemer. He ascended into heaven to serve as our ever-present God and Lord. He dirtied his hands so he could hand us His righteousness, so we could say with the psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

Jesus came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Because of his complete and sacrificial service, we have a clean heart and right spirit within us. You have the clean heart—and the “dirty hands”—that bring Christ’s love to others through your service as Sunday school teacher, youth leader, musician, singer, usher, elder, committee member (*choose from this list or substitute specific roles filled by those being recognized*). You have the right spirit—and the “dirty hands”—that mark you as a servant, a willing servant of our Servant-Lord, Jesus Christ.