

## Leader's Handbook



## Welcome to the Parenting for Faith course leader's handbook

Running the Parenting for Faith course is an exciting addition to what God is already doing in your ministries and churches. We pray that you will see the fruit of it in the lives of the parents you support and the children that you influence and in the community that you love.

While this course is entitled 'Parenting for Faith', it is designed for anyone who influences children and teens. Often over half the people who attend the course are not parents, but uncles, aunts, grandparents, godparents, couples who have yet to have children, children's leaders, foster parents and congregation members who want to do more for the children and teens in their church.

There is also no age limit for the children whom participants want to influence. We firmly believe that it's never too early or too late to start using this approach. We often have attending the course parents of adult children – to continue owning their role of spiritually parenting their 40-year-old child – as well as parents who only have a baby bump.

As a team, we are committed to praying for every course that runs. Please tell us the dates when your course is running at [parentingforfaith.org/register-my-course](https://parentingforfaith.org/register-my-course) so we can journey with you in prayer.

If you have any questions or if we can support or encourage you in any way, you can contact us via [parentingforfaith.org/contact-us](https://parentingforfaith.org/contact-us).

May God bless you as you lead this course.

*BRF's Parenting for Faith team*

Parenting for Faith is part of BRF, a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches. Our vision is to enable people of all ages to grow in faith and understanding of the Bible and to see more people equipped to exercise their gifts in leadership and ministry. Find out more at [brf.org.uk](https://brf.org.uk).

## What to expect?

The Parenting for Faith course is a video-based resource for communities to use with parents, godparents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, foster parents, children's and youth leaders, church leaders and family friends – in fact, anyone who wants to support a child or teen (of any age) in their spiritual development.

The course has been designed to be simple and easy to use. You don't need any formal qualifications to run a Parenting for Faith course – just enthusiasm, a passion to see those parenting and supporting children equipped and inspired, and a bit of preparation. You don't need to be an expert and you definitely won't have all the answers – we're all on this journey of learning to spiritually parent together. The course doesn't need any special equipment – just the means to play or live stream the videos.

All the videos and supporting documentation are available free of charge from our website at [parentingforfaith.org/course](https://parentingforfaith.org/course).

To help you adapt the course to your unique context, we've added ideas to think about below. There is also a detailed help section at [parentingforfaith.org/faqs](https://parentingforfaith.org/faqs), which is well worth exploring. We will continue to add to the FAQs as we get feedback from courses like yours.

If there's something not covered in the FAQs, do let us know.

We have also produced a pack for course leaders of over 30 articles, which help answer some common questions that arise – for example, how chat and catch works with a baby, ideas for icebreakers, advice for parents of teenagers who don't want to come to church – and provide further examples of some of the techniques and tools taught in the course. This will be available to course leaders when they register their course ([parentingforfaith.org/register-my-course](https://parentingforfaith.org/register-my-course)).

This course can be run in many different ways, from home groups to large venues, from a weekend away to monthly sessions. It is most commonly run as a weekly course, but the most important thing is that it fits with how your community engages best. You can find examples of all sorts of ways churches have used the course materials at [parentingforfaith.org/different-ways-run-course](https://parentingforfaith.org/different-ways-run-course).

There are eight sessions in the course:

**Session 1: Positioned for influence**

**Session 2: Making sense of life**

**Session 3: Unwinding wrong views**

**Session 4: Conversational prayer – chat**

**Session 5: Conversational prayer – catch**

**Session 6: Surfing the waves**

**Session 7: Prayer ministry for children**

**Session 8: Helping children connect with church**

Each session takes between 90 minutes and two hours, depending on your preferences, and is a mixture of video content, individual reflection time and group discussion. A typical session is as follows:

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other’s weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week’s efforts.
- **Video introduction** – generally about eight to ten minutes long.
- **Individual reflection** – this pause can be as long or short as you want. A common time is eight to ten minutes.
- **Video main session** – generally about 20–25 minutes long.
- **Group discussion** – flexible time. This handbook includes a range of discussion questions for you to select, or feel free to create your own. Some course leaders prefer to put participants in groups according to the age of their children, others deliberately mix it up. A group size of between six and twelve is ideal to maximise participation and it is helpful, although not essential, to have a facilitator for each group who is familiar with the topics.
- **Regathering** – if you have had more than one discussion group, a few minutes to regather and feedback from each group.

You may also want to add time for refreshments, and many leaders like to have an icebreaker at the beginning of the evening.

# Adapting the course to your context

## Team

While the course is designed to be simple and easy to run, and can be led by just one person, a team will make life easier. You may want some or all of the following people:

- Prayer support before, during and after the course – a group within your church who will commit to pray for you, the course and the parents each week. It is even better if they are happy to spend time listening to God for those in the group and passing anything on to you.
- Co-host or co-leader – someone to support you leading the sessions.
- Group facilitators – people who are confident speaking about parenting and familiar with Parenting for Faith.
- Welcomers – also refreshments and tissues.
- Pastoral care – someone ready to support parents and carry on conversations outside the course.

## Planning the course

Here are a few things to consider:

- **Who will you invite and how will you do that?** Think about all the people your church already has contact with as well as those in the community that might be interested. How will you raise the profile of the course? Publicity material – a promotional video and course flyers – is available at [parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms](https://parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms). Give as much notice as you can of the dates of the course and remind them nearer the time.
- **How will you run the course?** It can work in many different ways, from small house groups to large venues, from a weekend away to monthly sessions, in the daytime or in the evening. Most people run it as a weekly course, but it really doesn't matter – the most important thing is that it works for you and your community. You can find different ways churches have used the material at [parentingforfaith.org/different-ways-run-course](https://parentingforfaith.org/different-ways-run-course).
- **The book.** Some courses give participants a copy of Rachel Turner's *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith – Omnibus Edition* (BRF, 2018). You can find information about this and other useful books and resources at [parentingforfaith.org/resources](https://parentingforfaith.org/resources). The cost of the book could be covered by making a small weekly charge.
- **How could you make it easier for people to come along?** It may be worth talking to people before setting times and dates to see what suits them best. People from your church could offer a night's babysitting, bearing in mind your church's safeguarding arrangements.

## On the night (or day)

The Parenting for Faith course is very simple to run. The following are a few ideas to ensure there are no hitches:

- The course is designed to be easy to use and all the teaching can be done through the video sessions – however, please do adapt it to suit you and your situations! Some people write their own talks, and we encourage you to use real stories from your experience as a parent or children’s or families worker to supplement the teaching.
- The course requires very little equipment. You will need the video for each session downloaded or ready to live stream, as well as the means to do that; if you have a big group you may want to have a microphone for the course leader. Jugs of water and glasses are good to have around, as are spare pens and pieces of paper and boxes of tissues. You will also need a **Participant’s Handbook** for each person, which can be downloaded from [parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms](https://parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms).
- You will need at least one children’s Bible per small group for Session 2 and a flipchart or large whiteboard and suitable coloured pens for Session 3.
- Almost any room will be suitable, as long as there is enough space for everyone. It’s great to have extra space for groups to use for discussion, and make sure everyone can see the screen.
- You may want to allow participants to self-select their discussion groups or you may want to group people according to particular criteria, such as the age of their children.
- If it is helpful for anyone on your course, the live stream versions of the videos can be watched with subtitles.

## Creating community

People can feel vulnerable talking about themselves as parents, so it is important to think about how you can welcome them and help them build connections with others on the course.

- Have someone allocated to welcome people each week; name badges are a good idea if people don’t know each other already.
- Refreshments can be a good way to start the evening and to help people relax. You could open the doors early and invite people to come for pre-session refreshments if time allows.
- Don’t forget to run through any housekeeping – where the fire exits and toilets are, when there’ll be refreshments, the rough order of the evening, the finishing time. Do remind people of confidentiality – what is said in the room stays in the room – so that people can feel confident to share.
- You may want to use icebreakers at the beginning of each session to help people relax and settle in – for example, people bingo, a relevant video, a short quiz, a question related to the theme.
- Some course leaders send texts or email reminders between sessions to encourage participants to have a go at what they learned in the last session – jogging people’s memories like this can help avoid the awkward silence at the beginning of the next session when no one wants to admit that they forgot! Others create a WhatsApp group for the course.

- If people miss a session, do remind them they can view it for free on the website; do this in time for them to have caught up before the next session.
- In the discussion sections, try not to let one person dominate the conversation. Acknowledging contributions (e.g. 'That was really helpful') helps people grow in confidence and speak more. Saying 'Thank you. What do others think?' can help involve others.
- Families comes in different shapes and sizes, and who you have may affect how you run the course. One size doesn't always fit all, so you might want to sit down with your team to think through how to ensure families of all types can be catered for.

We would love to hear how you got on! Please send us your feedback to help us improve the course, as well as your ideas on how we can support you further.



# Session 1: Positioned for Influence

## You are perfectly placed to do this!

As parents, we are perfectly positioned and perfectly equipped to daily and easily show our child the reality of a day-to-day life with God – and God has shared with us in the Bible a simple plan for us to encourage our children into a vibrant, two-way relationship with God.

## Session outline

- **Connection time** – in subsequent sessions, this will be a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts. This week you may want to use this time for refreshments or an icebreaker, to help participants get to know each other.
- **Video introduction (12 minutes)** – this introduces the ideas of being 'God-smart' and 'God-connected' and explores the difference between the two; it talks about God's plan in Deuteronomy 6 for raising God-connected children and briefly outlines how the course will help parents do just that.
- **Individual reflection** – allow up to ten minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following questions:
  - Ten years from now, what do I want my child's relationship with God to look like?
  - Spiritually, where is my child now?
- **Video main session (15 minutes)** – this considers the difference between knowing God as part of the corporate crowd and having a one-to-one relationship with him, and shows how parents are perfectly positioned to coach their child into a connected relationship with God.
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - What is your experience of learning to have an individual, connected relationship with God? How did you learn this?
  - How are you already travelling with your child on this journey of faith?
  - Thinking about the ideas of creating windows and inviting them into your relationship with God, how might you do this with your child?
  - What struck you from today's session?
  - How might focusing on relationship with God rather than a discipline of Christianity impact your spiritual parenting?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.

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## Session 2: Making Sense of Life

### Giving our children a spiritual framework

As parents and carers, one of the most powerful things we do is to help our children and teens make sense of the world so they can engage well with it. We give them a framework for navigating life. They need a spiritual framework, too, to help them connect the knowledge they have about God with their experiences of life.

#### Note

The activities in the video main session will work best if you ask participants to do them in small groups of about four people. Allow between five and ten minutes for each of the three small group activities (you may need a little longer for the second activity if they are sharing their stories with another group).

#### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other’s weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week’s efforts.
- **Video introduction (7 minutes)** – we naturally create frameworks which help our children make sense of the world around them so they can engage healthily with it; we can also build them a spiritual framework for life.
- **Individual reflection** – allow up to ten minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following questions:
  - Who has been significant in your life for helping things make sense spiritually?
  - How have they given you a framework to understand life with God in it?
- **Video main session 1 (7 minutes)** – this introduces the first key to verbal framing: explaining everything and using stories. At the pause, have your participants get into smaller groups and take turns explaining something to each other in the way they might to their children, whatever their age. Here are a few suggestions; feel free to add your own.
  - Explain why we sing to God at church.
  - Talk about a change your family has had to make and where God was in that.
  - Explain why some people are really poor.
  - Tell the story of the last big decision you made and the part God played in it.
- **Video main session 2 (4 minutes)** – this introduces the second key to verbal framing: helping your child see the relationship between God and people in the Bible. At the pause, participants practise this in their small groups by retelling a Bible story from a children’s Bible, stopping to add in aspects of God or to ask others what God was doing, thinking or feeling at that point. For example, in the story of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37), they might ask, ‘What was God doing while Joseph was bragging to his brothers about his dreams?’, ‘What was God thinking when Joseph was in the pit?’ or ‘How was God feeling when the brothers lied to their dad?’ Alternatively, you could

encourage the group to choose a simple Bible story (such as Daniel in the lions' den, David and Goliath, or Noah) and write a bullet-point outline of how they would tell it with God as the main character. After five minutes, have the groups get together with another group to tell the story to each other.

- **Video main session 3 (8 minutes)** – this introduces the third key to verbal framing: using tools to explore questions together. At the pause, participants practise this in their small groups by having a go at answering some of the following questions using the four tools:
  - How many ears does God have?
  - Will my friend who is a Muslim go to heaven?
  - Were there dinosaurs on the ark?
  - Why does God let bad things happen?
  - Is there McDonalds in heaven?
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - Can you think of something you have framed for your child – for example, moving house or starting school?
  - How could you bring the reality of God into your everyday conversations with your child?
  - What frameworks might you need to start building for your child to prepare them for something coming up? What stories from the Bible might help with this?
  - Does your child ask questions about God and life? If not, what is a question you could ask them to get them thinking about how God sees a situation and what he's doing?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.

## Session 3: Unwinding Wrong Views

### Helping our children build a healthy understanding of God

We can be so keen to help our children connect with God that we forget that they have to want to connect with him. No matter how equipped they are to connect, many choose not to because they find him unlikeable or unappealing. There are five common views of God that children can create in their heads which cause a disconnect. In this session, we'll think about how we can accidentally contribute to these views and how we can proactively unwind them and journey to a healthy view of God.

#### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts.
- **Video introduction (4 minutes)** – children (and adults) can accidentally shape wrong views of God, which affect how they relate to him.
- **Individual reflection** – allow about ten minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following question:
  - We have all been on a journey of how we see God. What has shaped your view of him?
- **Video main session 1 (15 minutes)** – this section looks at five common views of God and how to unwind them:
  - Distant, busy God
  - Jolly, optimistic God
  - Angry God
  - Mysterious, eccentric God
  - Buddy Jesus or overindulgent father God
- **Group activity: identifying our bias** – see instructions below.
- **Video main session 2 (5 minutes)** – journeying to a healthy view of God.
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - What ideas of God might you want to unwind for your child? What might be the difficulties in doing this?
  - Are there any areas of God's character that you would like to share with your child? What are the next steps for you as a parent in this area?
  - Have you noticed any changes in your child's attitude to God recently? How might you explore this with them?
  - For parents of younger children: how could you help them understand that God's love is constant and not dependent on what we do?
  - How might thinking about all the everyday bits of Jesus' life that we don't read about in the Bible help children or teens understand God better?

- For parents of older children and teens: how might the following truthful, but incomplete, statements contribute to a wrong view of God?
  - ‘God has a plan’
  - ‘That was a lovely prayer’
  - ‘You need to forgive your sister!’
- Which Bible stories or passages do you or your child enjoy the most? Do they give a balanced view of God? Are there any stories or passages you could explore to broaden that view?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.

## ‘Identifying our bias’ activity instructions

The point of this activity is to draw people into realising that we all tend to communicate God to our children with a slight bias towards one or more views.

You will need:

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Flipchart or whiteboard pens
- Paper and pens for the members of the group

Get the group to name as many attributes of God as the group can name, writing them on the whiteboard. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Independent/transcendent, unchangeable, eternal, omnipresent (is everywhere), omniscient (all-knowing), wise, truthful, faithful, good, loving, merciful, graceful, patient, holy, wrathful, peaceful, righteous and just, jealous, perfect, beautiful, glory-filled, joyful, musical, creative, powerful.

Provider, Shepherd, Healer, God with Us, Father, Comforter, Counsellor, Deliverer, Guide, Friend, Lamb, Lion of Judah, King/Ruler, Lord of Lords, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Ask each participant to reflect on which three or four they tend to major on when talking to their children about God. Which aspects are most important to them for their children to really understand? Then have them all come up together and circle their three or four aspects. What you will come up with is a very interesting chart. Some aspects won’t be covered at all, some will be hugely popular.

Reflect with the group about the activity. Explore some questions with them. Here are a few to consider: Were they surprised by their list? What are their thoughts about the communal list? Isn’t it interesting how having our wider community involved means our children get exposed to a broader understanding of God? What does it say about us that we are missing some crucial aspects of God’s character? Why have they chosen to major on these aspects? What is the possible fruit and drawbacks for the children in how they present God to them?



## Session 4: Conversational Prayer – Chat

### Helping our children develop a heart-to-heart connection with God

We can all struggle with prayer – and so can our children. Over the next two sessions we will be looking at releasing our children into a two-way conversation of sharing life with God and him sharing back. ‘Chat’ is the first stage of that conversation and this session will equip you to introduce your child to chat.

#### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other’s weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week’s efforts.
- **Video introduction (7 minutes)** – our children often see prayer as a set of formulas or patterns, rather than the overflow of a heart connection with God. ‘Chat’ is a useful way to describe prayer because it sounds like the first part of a conversation.
- **Individual reflection** – allow about 10 minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following questions:
  - What is your pattern of connecting to God as you go through your day?
  - How does your child connect with God?
  - Does your child engage with corporate prayer or pray on their own?
- **Video main session (20 minutes)** – it’s easy to fall into a ‘high priest’ role when helping our children pray: being the go-between between them and God. To counter that, we can model chat as we go through our days, as well as framing it, helping them to understand how and why chat is so helpful to us. Rachel shares a model for introducing chat to children, and some tips for teaching chat to young children.
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.

#### *For parents of under fives*

- How can you model chat with your child?
- How can you create opportunities for them to chat to God alongside you?
- Before children can talk, how do they communicate with you?
- How can you help them talk to God and include him in however they communicate with you?

#### *General questions*

- Do you notice the ‘high priest’ tendency in yourself, or in your upbringing? How did it affect you?
- Are there any views of God you may need to unwind to help your child feel free to chat to God?

- Children like communicating in different ways – some like talking while doing something, others like to talk while walking or cuddled-up in bed, some like drawing or journaling. In what ways can you create opportunities for your child to chat to God in a way or place that fits them best?
- How do you know if your child is connecting to God?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.



## Session 5: Conversational Prayer – Catch

### Being ready to hear from God with our whole body and mind

Helping our child to hear God's voice is one of the most precious gifts we can give them. Jesus' death and resurrection not only bought us the ability to talk to God personally, but also bought us the ability to hear his voice clearly and confidently. 'Catch' is just a way of showing children how to be prepared and expectant with their whole bodies to receive God's communication.

### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts.
- **Video main session 1 (9 minutes)** – the Bible is full of references to hearing God's voice, and he promises that he is speaking and we can hear him. The story of Samuel and Eli is a great introduction to 'catch', showing that you don't have to be an adult to hear from God!
- **Individual reflection** – allow about ten minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following questions:
  - How do you access God's voice in your life?
  - When was the first time you became aware of it and what does it mean for you? If you are still on the journey of discovering God's voice, how do you feel about it?
  - What difference does it make to you?
- **Video main session 2 (19 minutes)** – six ways we catch from God.
- **Group activity: catch practice** – see instructions below.
- **Video main session 3 (9 minutes)**
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - What has been your journey of learning to hear God's voice? Where on the journey are you and what have you learned so far?
  - Who or what has helped you on your journey?
  - Do you have any concerns about doing catch with your child? If you already do any catch at home, how has it gone?
  - What is your experience of hearing from God? What aspects of that might be helpful in coaching your children in this?
  - How can you model catch for your child?
  - Is there any framework you may need to put in place to introduce this to your child well?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.

## Catch practice activity instructions

During the session, the video will ask to be paused while you lead a catch practice. The goal of this activity is for participants to experience boldly attempting to ‘catch’ God’s voice in response to a simple question. Some people will be very experienced at this, for others it will be their first time. We suggest you run it like this:

1. Explain it again in a similar way the video did, encouraging them to not strive and for just this moment not to dismiss whatever pops into their head.
2. Pray quickly that God would still their minds and hearts so they may catch clearly from him with their hearts, minds, bodies, skin and emotions and invite the Holy Spirit to come and speak.
3. Encourage the participants to ask God the question in their mind as you say it out loud. You can also have them repeat it after you. The question we always use is ‘God, if you could play one game with me right now, what would it be?’ We use this question because it sidesteps the ‘Christian’ answers and forces them to really focus on what God is saying instead of triggering an instant conditioned response in them. You can use another one if you like.
4. Wait for about 30 seconds.
5. Then encourage them to ask a follow up question ‘Why that game God?’
6. Wait for another 30 seconds.
7. Interrupt gently but firmly by calling them together with, ‘Alright, so how did that go?’ Try not to ‘close’ in prayer so the participants get used to dipping into and out of direct connection with God in a chat-and-catch way. Ask if anyone would be willing to share what they caught from God, both the game and the reason. Affirm those who share.
8. Ask if anyone didn’t manage to catch that time around. Affirm them that that is totally okay too – we are all on a journey of catching God’s voice – and not to worry: they can always ask him that question on the way home, in the shower, in bed. God is speaking and the more we make ourselves ready for his voice, the better we will recognise it.
9. Open up the discussion to general reflections on the experience. When done, return to the video main session from where you paused it.





## Session 6: Surfing the Waves

### Building on our children's connection with God

So far we've discussed some important principles about how to parent for faith, but as with any part of parenting it's a job for life! So how do we continue to disciple our child on this journey? In this session, we will learn about a simple six-stage model that will enable you to proactively disciple your child, whether they are 4, 14 or 40, and how, as our children's spiritual lives come in waves, we can jump on board to disciple our children in any season of life.

### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts.
- **Video main session 1 (10 minutes)** – we naturally proactively train our children in all sorts of skills and values, so we are perfectly placed to continue, using a six-stage circle, proactively disciplining our children in the values, habits and characteristics that God longs for in his children.
- **Individual reflection** – allow about ten minutes for participants to discuss in pairs or triplets the following questions:
  - What values or skills did your own parents successfully grow in you – for example, a love of the theatre or the importance of thriftiness? Can you see some of the six-stage model reflected in how they did it?
  - What values have you been struggling to grow in your children? Looking at the six-stage model, which stages might you be missing out?
- **Video main session 2 (15 minutes)** – our children's spiritual interests come and go in waves, which can make us nervous and unsure about their connection to God. But this is a normal part of their development, and if we partner with God in proactively surfing these waves, they can create great opportunities to do spiritual parenting well. We need to learn to recognise the waves, engage with them at their pace and stay with the wave until it begins to peter out.
- **Group discussion** – allow about 30 minutes for this. Here are some questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - What waves are currently rising in your children's lives? What are they interested in? What are they curious about? What makes them angry (holy discontent)? What stories do they play out? What spontaneous ideas have you noticed? What questions do they ask?
  - How can you paddle to get on board these waves?
  - How do you feel about the idea that waves peter out? Does this cause anxiety or fill you with relief?
  - Which of the six types of waves mentioned in the session did you recognise, and which were a new idea for you?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group.



## Session 7: Prayer Ministry for Children

### Helping our children connect when it's tough

Sometimes our children need a bit of help connecting with God. This could be because they are having a hard day or because they are struggling to connect. Sometimes they just need someone alongside them. On those days, we as parents can help our children meet with God face-to-face. In this session, we will be looking at a simple model of prayer ministry designed for use with children and teens to ensure we keep our high-priest hats off and our coach heads on, and we will be giving it a go ourselves.

### Note

This session is structured differently to the others. After the main teaching, most of the rest of the session is a time for the participants to practice what they have learned. When participants have finished practising, there is time for feedback discussion led from the front, before returning to the video.

### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts.
- **Video main session (19 minutes)** – there's a difference between praying for our children and helping them to pray. Sometimes, when it's tough for them, they need help to connect with God. In this session we will learn about a simple model of prayer ministry that is designed for use with children and young people.
- **Prayer ministry practice activity and discussion** – allow about 30 minutes plus ten minutes for feedback.

After the model is taught on the video, the activity will be for all the participants to pray and be prayed for in order to explore and practise the model. We recommend that you allow five minutes per person when practising praying for each other.

In most cases, it helps to do a live demonstration so participants can see it all put together. Have two chairs ready, and invite someone to come up and share something real in their life that they want to meet with God about. Do prayer ministry for them in this model well, allowing them the full time to meet with God on their own terms and in their timing. This is important, as the participants need to see that using the model can result in good ministry being done.

Suggest people get into groups of three or four: one praying, one receiving prayer and one or two observing for feedback. Each person is to pray once and is to receive prayer once, so everyone has a turn doing it all.

Common mistakes include people praying ten sentences instead of three, closing their eyes while praying for someone, so they can't see what's happening with them, and asking closed questions during the 'check'.

When everyone is done, bring them back together and ask for their general feedback and impressions. What was surprising? What was that like as a pray-er? As a prayee? Was any part difficult to stick to? Take any questions they have about it. When ready, return to the video.

- **Common questions (12 minutes):**
  - Do I share what I am catching?
  - What if my child is struggling to catch?
  - If it doesn't work, will it damage my child's belief in God?



## Session 8: Helping Children Connect with Church

### Thriving, not just surviving!

For most Christians, getting our children to church and hoping they love it occupies a large part of our brains! But our kids don't always enjoy church and often don't want to be there, and we can feel powerless to help them engage. In this session we will look at how we can help our children grow in the biblical values of what church is and their place in it, so they feel connected, powerful and loved in their church communities.

### Session outline

- **Connection time** – a time to catch up with each other's weeks, tell stories of things we have tried, and build faith and encouragement from last week's efforts.
- **Video introduction (2 minutes)** – church is a wonderful gift to us; in this session we'll be exploring ways to help children become fully connected with church and the church family.
- **Individual reflection** – allow about ten minutes for participants to reflect individually on the following question: When my child leaves home, what do I want them to have in their hearts and minds about 'church'?
- **Video main session (25 minutes)** – when we are thinking about our child and church it's easy to default to rules and boundaries, but what if we shift to thinking about church in terms of the relationships and values we want to communicate to our child, so that their attitudes towards church flow out of these values? We explore five key values about church. We can use the six-stage circle to grow these values in our child, meaning that, whether or not your church needs to change, you can proactively train and encourage your children so that they feel connected, valued and powerful in their church community.
- **Group discussion** – allow about 20 minutes for this. Here are some suggested questions you could use, or feel free to write your own.
  - Which of the five values of church resonates with you? Do any not?
  - Which values does my child hold?
  - Which values are you most passionate about?
  - What are your main struggles, concerns and passions with your child regarding church?
  - How can we as a church and as individuals instil these values in our children? What help might you need?
- **Regathering** – a few minutes to get feedback if you have more than one discussion group

## What next?

We do hope that you have enjoyed running this course and that you are already seeing the fruits of what you have shared with the people who came along.

## Tell us how it went

We'd love to hear how you got on. One easy way to let us know how the course went is through our online survey at [parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms](https://parentingforfaith.org/download-flyers-trailer-course-handbooks-and-feedback-forms). If there's more you want to tell us, do get in touch with us via [parentingforfaith.org/contact-us](https://parentingforfaith.org/contact-us).

## The website

The Parenting for Faith website is packed with stories and resources for parents and churches to read, listen to and watch, covering a host of different topics – [parentingforfaith.org/parents](https://parentingforfaith.org/parents) is a good place to start.

We're regularly adding new content, and we're working to develop what we offer over the coming months. Do keep in touch with us and help us shape what we offer.

## Books and resources

There are four books in the Parenting for Faith series, available in print and on Kindle:

- *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith – Omnibus Edition* (BRF, 2018; also available as an audiobook), which contains the three original Parenting for Faith books plus some additional material.
- *It Takes a Church to Raise a Parent* (BRF, 2018) explores how churches can intentionally create a culture where parenting for faith can flourish.
- *Parenting as a Church Leader* (BRF, 2020) explores the unique challenges of parenting while also leading a church, and builds a set of simple tools and approaches to help leaders and their families flourish.
- *Babies and Toddlers: Nurturing your child's spiritual life* (BRF, 2021) is for parents and carers of 0–3-year-olds, wherever they are on their faith journey, to help them help their babies and toddlers connect with God. On the website you will find video-based resources for churches to use to accompany the book.

Rachel Turner has also written *Comfort in the Darkness* (BRF, 2016), a collection of retellings of Bible stories exploring God's character and promises that helps parents grow peace, confidence and an understanding of who God is in their children.

You can find these and other useful books and resources at [parentingforfaith.org/resources](https://parentingforfaith.org/resources).

## Plan a get together

You may want to schedule a regular get together, or an evening after a few months, to catch up and share news of how people are getting on.

## Encourage families to link up

You could encourage your parents to link up with a one or two of the other families to intentionally support, encourage and learn from each other as they carry on the journey.

## Keep in touch and be part of the Parenting for Faith community

We'd love to stay in touch with you and help you as you work with parents in your church and continue in this journey.

We'd also like to tell you upcoming events and keep you informed about developments within Parenting for Faith, including gatherings for people in local churches who are passionate about supporting parents and carers as they parent for faith, webinars designed to equip children and youth leaders, and Church Leaders as Parents days, aimed at supporting church leaders as they parent in their unique context. You can see more at [parentingforfaith.org/vision](https://parentingforfaith.org/vision).

There's several ways you can keep in touch:

- **join our email newsletter** – sign up at [parentingforfaith.org/email](https://parentingforfaith.org/email)
- **follow us on Facebook** – [facebook.com/parentingforfaithBRF](https://facebook.com/parentingforfaithBRF)
- **follow us on Twitter** – [twitter.com/godconnected](https://twitter.com/godconnected)
- **follow us on Instagram** – [@parentingforfaithbrf](https://instagram.com/parentingforfaithbrf)
- **follow our podcasts** – [parentingforfaith.org/podcast](https://parentingforfaith.org/podcast)

Parenting for Faith is also committed to equipping children's, youth and church leaders to equip, inspire and support parents and carers who are parenting for faith. There are several ways we do this:

- we host monthly webinars – Facebook Live events – for all those involved in children's, youth or family ministry
- we host annual retreats for children, youth and family leaders called 'The Forge'.
- in partnership with Cliff College, we run a Cliff College Certificate in Parenting for Faith, both online and in person.

For more information about any of these, see [parentingforfaith.org/events-and-training](https://parentingforfaith.org/events-and-training), or check out the events on our Facebook page.