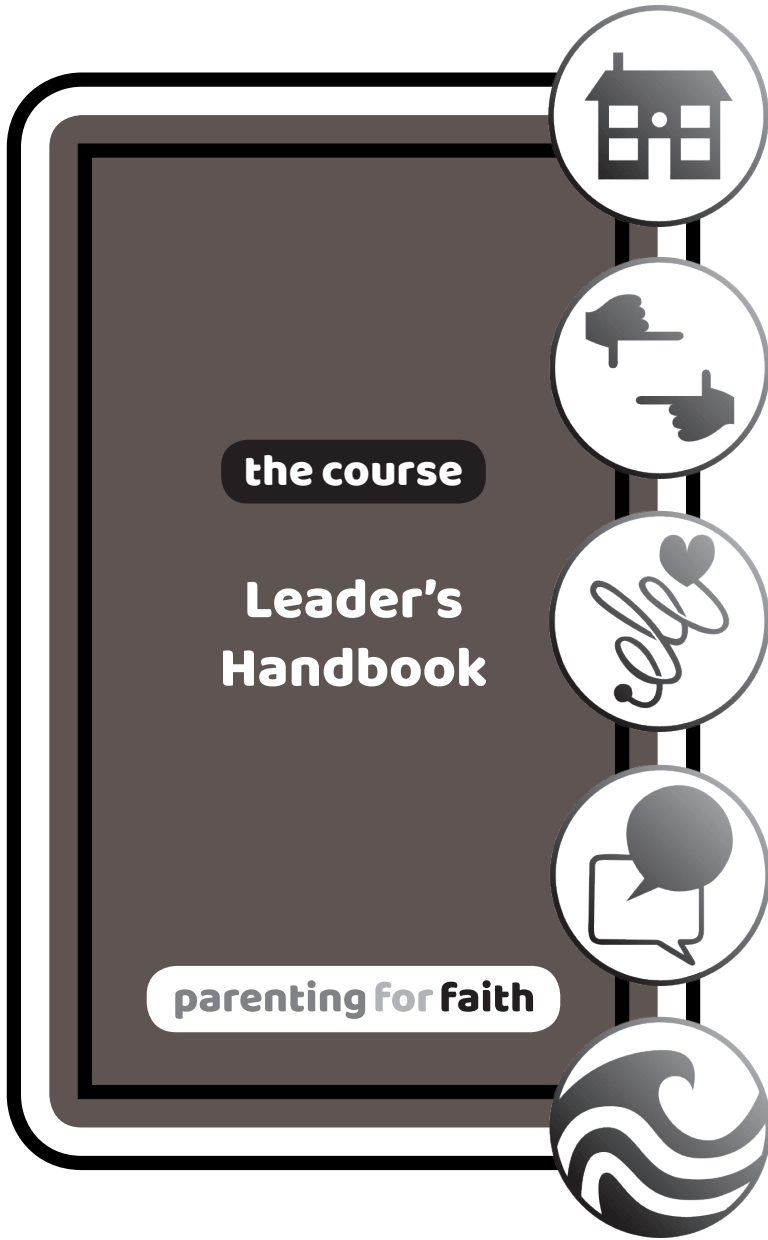


parenting for faith

the course

**Leader's
Handbook**





The Bible Reading Fellowship

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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.

Register your course

We'd love you to register your course! It makes a huge difference to us to know your course is running. It means we can pray for you and provide you with one-to-one support, as well as advertise your course on our website if you'd like us to.

We also know that every course is different, depending on the mix of participants. We at the Parenting for Faith team have run this course many times and we know that all sorts of questions can pop up. So we've got our heads together and written a bunch of over 30 articles, all answering common questions that come up, as well as some training documents for your team and further examples of some of the techniques and tools taught in the course. So if you want to know how to encourage chat and catch for teens, or reassure a participant who doubts they should be on

the course, or what prayer ministry with babies looks like – and lots more! – we've included something that will help, and will send it to you when you register your course (parentingforfaith.org/register-my-course).

We are also planning a similar supplementary pack for when you are leading a course which includes families with children with additional needs, which we'll also send you once it is available.

BRF's Parenting for Faith team

Parenting for Faith is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship.

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 at 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, 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.

This course can be run in many different ways, from home groups to large venues, from a weekend away to monthly sessions, in the daytime or in the evening. It is most commonly run as a weekly course, but it really doesn't matter; 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.

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 who 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/course-downloads. 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: in home groups or large venues; as a weekend away or monthly; daytime or evening. While most people run it as a weekly course, the important thing is what works for you and your community. See parentingforfaith.org/different-ways-run-course for different ways the material has been used.

- **The book.** Some courses give participants a copy of *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith – Omnibus Edition* by Rachel Turner (BRF, 2018). You can find information about this and other useful books and resources at 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.

We have collated some feedback from course leaders about what helped their course go with a swing, which you might find useful: parentingforfaith.org/post/four-keys-running-your-parenting-faith-course

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 means to play the video for each session, which can be purchased as a DVD from brfonline.org.uk, or downloaded or streamed from parentingforfaith.org/course. 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 copy of the **Participant's Handbook** for each person, which can be purchased from brfonline.org.uk or downloaded from parentingforfaith.org/course-downloads.
- You will need at least one children's Bible per small group for Session 2 and a flipchart or large whiteboard and 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, remind them that 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.



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.



Enabling all ages to grow in faith



Anna Chaplaincy
Barnabas in Schools
Holy Habits
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Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches and provides a professional education service to primary schools.

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.

To find out more about our ministries and programmes, visit
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