

parenting for faith®

**FEATURING WISDOM FROM
RACHEL TURNER AND FRIENDS**

AN A-Z OF PARENTING FOR FAITH

BITESIZE WISDOM FROM THE PODCAST

**EDITED BY LUCY RYCROFT,
BECKY SEDGWICK AND ANNA HAWKEN**

An A–Z of Parenting for Faith



Ministries

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Listen to the Parenting for Faith podcast!

The Parenting for Faith podcast is here to equip you, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, to help the children and teens in your life to meet and know God. A new episode is released every Tuesday in term time.

parentingforfaith.org/podcast

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this A-Z of podcast wisdom from Parenting for Faith.

Parenting your kids for faith is full of adventure! Along the way, your kids will grow and change, you'll grow and change, and you'll encounter new seasons and new situations – good and bad. And you get to disciple your kids through it all.

One of the things we often say at Parenting for Faith is that there's no one way to help children – of any age – meet and know God. Every family, every child is unique, and you get to disciple your children in the ways that work for you and for them. God has placed us in communities of faith to support and encourage us as we do that. The Parenting for Faith podcast is one of those communities: a gang of people on the same journey of helping the kids in their lives meet and know God. Our guests' stories and experiences provide a rich seam of advice for you to mine – great nuggets of wisdom from the first five years of the Parenting for Faith podcast.

We've deliberately not covered 'situational' topics, such as additional needs or adoption and fostering, as they are too broad for us to do justice to in this format. Instead, we've covered topics that many parents and carers are likely to encounter at one stage or other. Each chapter contains questions to help you apply what you've read to your own unique situation, whether that's as a foster parent, a single parent, a parent or carer of multiple siblings... you get the gist.

No chapter will give you the final word on any topic! There's so much we could say, but we've stuck to our goal of condensing each one to a short, bitesize chapter that you can pick up and read in just a few minutes. There are 52 chapters, so you could pick one a week for a whole year, or you might want to just dip in and flick to the chapter that catches your eye.

Either way, if you like what you read, why not listen to the relevant podcast episode (you can listen for free online at parentingforfaith.org/podcast)?

We've added in the episode number next to the contributor's name: the 'S' tells you which season and the 'E' which episode; for example, S5E2 refers to Season 5, Episode 2.

The views expressed in this book belong to the contributors and don't necessarily reflect the views of all the other co-contributors. And, to repeat, none of this is the final word on any topic. You can talk to other parents or people, check out other podcasts or books, or speak to wise people at church. But in case it's helpful, where relevant we've put links you might want to follow up at the end of each chapter and some ideas for next steps.

At Parenting for Faith, we have some core ideas that we talk about, so you'll find our guests talking about those ideas too. If these are new to you, you will find an appendix on page 217 which covers our five Key Tools and core concepts and highlights more of what we offer.

Our prayer is that this book equips and encourages you as you go on this wonderful and sometimes extraordinary adventure of parenting the kids God has given you.

The Parenting for Faith team

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BEDTIME, SLEEP AND NIGHTMARES

RACHEL TURNER, ROBIN BARFIELD AND ANNA HAWKEN

Night

RACHEL S1E85

God made the night and thinks it's good. The creation story tells us God saved the night for something exciting. We can frame how excited we are about the night and what God's going to do while we sleep. We can explore what's good about the dark so our children start to find it interesting, asking, 'What is one really good thing about night-time?' just as they're going to bed.

Even if your child doesn't want you to pray with them, you can still frame where God is and your hopes that they'll find God's goodness as he goes with them into their dreams.

Helping our kids know that God is with them at night

RACHEL S1E85

I have a good friend whose children struggled with sleep and bad dreams. They learnt to say Psalm 3:5 every night: ‘I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.’ They stuck this verse on their beds so they knew, as they went to bed, that God was with them and if they woke up troubled, that’s the first thing they saw.

Bible input at bedtime is really helpful. Night-time is when our kids think and rest and dream, so we want that to be more affected by the great joys of the Christian gospel, rather than something on telly or something that happened with their friends that day.

Routine

RACHEL S3E11

The following aspects of bedtime routines help in developing a God-connected child.

Connection to you

Several studies confirm that children who feel connected to their parents have a higher rate of long-term faith stability. Their connection to you is a vital part of your ability to coach them in their spiritual life. Building in time to talk about your day, laugh, ask questions and wonder together is a significant part of bedtime – whether it’s two minutes, half an hour or whatever you can spare.

Connection to God

Bedtime is a wonderful space for our kids to connect with God; how that looks is up to you. You can read the Bible, worship or pray together and facilitate them to meet with God on their own.

Leaving them with God

Bedtime is often, 'I love you', and then we're out the door, but the next step is leaving them in the room with God. Whether you say, 'Have a good time with God! You chat and catch and have dreams with God – I'll see you in the morning', or enable them to have some time connecting with God alone, after which you come in to give them a next step, they will know that their connection with God can and will continue without you present.

Helping God-connection at bedtime

ROBIN S3E11

We think carefully about what we say regularly to our children at bedtime – the same phrases, to embed certain truths. Perhaps, 'Daddy loves you very much, Mummy loves you very much and Jesus loves you very much as well', and then, 'Jesus, please would X know that you're with them. Would they love and trust you.'

I want them to know that Jesus is with them in their sleep, and that they're dearly loved by us and Jesus. Different parents will choose different emphases, but having the same thing every night helps it to stick in their memories.

Nightmares

RACHEL S3E11

Sometimes we try to explain away nightmares, but that doesn't tend to be helpful. Even if they sound ridiculous during the daytime, nightmares feel very real as your body experiences fear. Our job is to help children understand what's happening, find peace and take control of their minds.

Enabling our kids to voice the dream can help in learning to take thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). They could visualise putting a box around it or crumpling it up and throwing it away because it doesn't get to live in their head. Then we can help them find peace.

Talking about nightmares as a biological process takes away the mystery. As we sleep, our brain clears the gunk of the day and makes memories. It's pondering, processing and deciding how to connect things together. Sometimes dreams are simply when our brain puts things together in a weird way as it processes. There's no meaning to it, so we don't need to worry about it; it's just our brain doing something funny.

Then we can refocus our brains with something else we want to think about. We can read, listen to music, sing, read Bible stories, bring up memories and begin to help our brain process all the joyful bits of our day. In putting kids to sleep again, we can ask God to go with them into their dreams; he is not limited by biology or consciousness.

Navigating our children's nightmares is not so much about preventing something bad happening but reconnecting into peace when it does happen.

Nightmares

ANNA SIE34

If your child is experiencing nightmares, ask some trusted friends to pray for them. Be specific, so they know how to pray.

Next, give your child tools for when they're scared. Three different ones are suggested in the 'Scared of the dark' series on the Parenting for Faith website. For my niece, telling stories to God helped her be free of nightmares and was a significant part of her faith journey. These tools can be powerful not just for combating nightmares but also for the rest of their life and faith journey. Finally, *Comfort in the Darkness* is a helpful book to try reading with your child before bed.

Follow-up

- parentingforfaith.org/topics/bedtime
- parentingforfaith.org/post/scared-of-the-dark-helping-our-children-through-the-night
- Rachel Turner, *Comfort in the Darkness: Helping children draw close to God through biblical stories of night-time and sleep* (BRF Ministries, 2016)

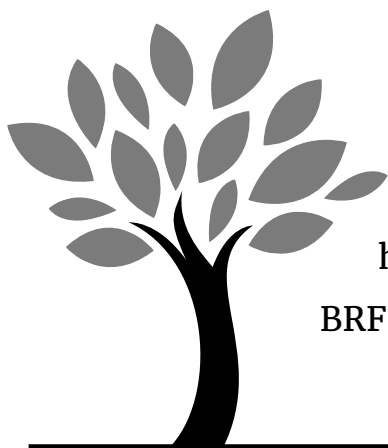
Next steps

- Do you have a bedtime routine? What ideas from here might you incorporate to help your children know who God is at night?
- If your children are older, how could you help them know truths about God, night-time and sleep?
- Are any of the ideas about coping with nightmares helpful? Think about what you'll say next time your kid has a nightmare, so you remember what to do when you're half asleep!



Ministries

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**How does a Christian parent tackle common parenting issues?
What can we bring to the table that will help our children to
not only navigate a complex world, but do so with faith and a
growing awareness of God's presence with them?**

The Parenting for Faith podcast has been equipping parents since 2018, with over 200 episodes in its back catalogue. This book draws out wisdom from our guests, brought together by the Parenting for Faith team, on 52 relevant topics for parents and carers.

Listen to the Parenting for Faith podcast for free
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Featuring wisdom from:

Rachel Turner | Matt Varah Wilson | Natalie Thomas Runion
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Justin Brierley | Sheila Wray Gregoire | Jess Monteiro | Ed Drew | Olly Goldenberg
Rae Morfin | Dr Oluseye Arikawe | J. John | Melissa Kruger | Lizzie Laferton
Christie Thomas and more!

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