



Leader's Handbook

Welcome to the Parenting as a Church Leader course

Whether you're committed to leading a course or just looking, welcome to the leader's handbook for the Parenting as a Church Leader course.

Parenting when you are also a church leader can bring up some unique situations and challenges! This course is based on Rachel Turner's book *Parenting as a Church Leader* and explores how to lead well and help your family thrive spiritually and emotionally. Over four sessions, the course explores:

- how to help children and teens feel connected to you, even when you are leading from the front or pulled away for a pastoral crisis
- how to help them know they are prioritised in your life whatever the church may be doing
- how to cover them from the congregation's scrutiny and enable them to discover and grow their own relationships in the congregation
- how to empower them to go on their own journey of faith.

This course is for anyone leading in church who is a parent or carer and feels the tension of their children sitting in the in-between of church and home. This may include ministers, leaders in training, children's, youth and family leaders, and key volunteers in church, as well as their partners.

If you decide to run a course, do let us know. 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-your-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.

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.

What to expect?

We have designed the course to be as flexible as possible and easy to lead. You can download each video-based session or view them online. Each session is 40–50 minutes long, with suggested questions for discussion, and each breaks into three (or four) parts, allowing you to offer the course in a variety of formats.

- You could run the course over one day. Including lunch and breaks, this can be done in a short day, finishing at 2.30 pm.
- You could run the course over four weeks, watching and discussing one session a week. This would fit comfortably into about 75 minutes, including discussion time.
- You could run a ‘bite-sized’ version of the course, perhaps as part of staff training or devotions, watching just one part of each session at a time, over twelve weeks. You would need on average about 15 minutes for this, although the length of these do vary, plus time for discussion. We have added how long each part takes on the information on each session in the following pages.

You may also wish to use the course material in other ways that suit your needs and environment best. The course is easy to lead, requiring little preparation, and can be done in person or online. On our website you will find support material, including a free participant’s handbook, both in printable or form-fillable format. We also have a section on our website for church leaders who are also parents, which contains over 50 questions that Rachel Turner has answered live on Parenting as a Church Leader courses: parentingforfaith.org/topics/parenting-church-leader

Adapting the course to your context

You will probably have run dozens of courses in your time, but here are some things we’ve found useful to think about when we’ve run this course.

- Team: depending on the size of your group and the context you are meeting in, would other team members be helpful?
- People can feel vulnerable when talking about themselves as parents, so it is worth reminding participants about confidentiality right at the beginning. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and it may be worth thinking beforehand about the group you have.
- If this group doesn’t know each other already, how can you help them feel welcome and relaxed?
- If you are running the course over several weeks, it can be helpful to have a way of staying in touch with the group between sessions and you can also use this to send out encouragements and reminders.
- If people miss a session, please feel free to send them a link so they can catch up.

While all videos and support documentation are available free at parentingforfaith.org/pacl-course, we would love for you to make a donation, if you are able, to Parenting for Faith to enable us to continue producing resources such as this, as well to continue supporting church leaders, churches and the families they serve. You can make a donation at brf.org.uk/donate. There is more information at the end of this guide about how to support Parenting for Faith financially.

If you have any questions or if we can support or encourage you in any way, contact us at parentingforfaith.org.

Session 1: Connected

As church leaders, you are on the great adventure of ministry, and your children come with you. What will help them get through the adventure well is a strong connection with you, because everything flows through connection. We want our children to feel connected to us, not just in the happy times or just when you are present, but in the actual midst of ministry.

Please note that the questions for all three parts of each session are included at the end of the notes for that session in the participant's handbook, and at the end of the video for that session. If you are running a 'bite-sized' version of the course, where you only watch one part of the course at a time, you will need to skip to the end of the session's notes or the video to see the discussion questions relating to that part.

Session outline

- **Course introduction (6 minutes)** – an overview of the course and why it's helpful
- **Part 1: The importance of connection (9 minutes)** – drawing on the analogy of a skydiver, this section explores why connection can make all the difference for church leaders' children and teens, and why we don't wear two hats – a church leader hat and a parent hat – but just one – a church leader who is also a parent.
- **Part 2: How to build connection (15 minutes)** – in this section we look at simple ways to build connection with your children, whether at home or in the middle of a sermon, and explore how the five love languages can help with this.
- **Part 3: Coaching children through the complexity of church (11 minutes)** – church leaders' children see and hear a lot about the inside of church, and this can feel complicated for them. This section teaches two easy tools to help coach children through the tricky areas of church, whether it's not liking the church they are in, dealing with church conflict or being part of a group which their parent is leading.

Discussion questions

Part 1: The importance of connection

- When do you feel your parent and church leader hats conflicting?
- When does your family feel most connected?
- How do you currently build connection with your kids?

Part 2: How to build connection

- What language might work to help your family talk about being connected?
- Can you identify any ministry 'pressure points' when your children feel disconnected from you?
- What are your kids' love languages? How could you harness those to help create connection in the midst of ministry?

Part 3: Coaching children through the complexity of church

- Has your family experienced church conflict? How have you helped them navigate it?
- Which bits of your ministry or your life with God might your kids need you to frame for them?
- Do you or your family feel the pressure to look good for the congregation? How could you help your kids handle this well?

Session 2: Prioritised

The second thing church leaders' children and teens need to flourish is that they need to feel prioritised: valued, important, and safe and secure in your affection and love, and not in competition with the church for your time and attention.

Session outline

- **Session introduction (5 minutes)**
- **Part 1: Removing the competition of needs (14 minutes)** – to children and teens, it can feel as if the needs of the congregation and the church are so big that they cannot possibly compete. In this section we explore ways to redress that.
- **Part 2: Tuning in – making your presence count (12 minutes)** – children value availability and attention more than the time you spend with them. In this section we look at things you can do so that whatever your schedule looks like, you can help children and teens know that, even when work takes you away, they come first.
- **Part 3: Working from home (9 minutes)** – working from home is hard! By creating good boundaries and structures – and taking advantage of your flexibility superpower – children can still feel connected to you and prioritised by you, even when you are unreachable just beyond the door.

Discussion questions

Part 1: Removing the competition of needs

- Do you see a 'competition of needs' in your family?
- How could you communicate the 'yes' in the following scenarios:
 - You can't sit with me because the bishop is here today
 - I can't take you to the match on Saturday because I have the church away day
 - I have to miss the school play because someone is dying
- Do you feel able to choose to be a parent?

Part 2: Tuning in – making your presence count

- How could you use the flexibility in your schedule to help your children feel prioritised?
- Of the three ideas for being fully present – not multitasking, using bridging activities and ditching the phone – which do you think you might try?
- What might your family need you to do to reduce the stress of flexibility?

Part 3: Working from home

- What do you like most and least about working from home?
- How can you set boundaries about being interrupted that still allow your children to feel prioritised?
- How do your children know when you are 'working' and when you are 'home'?

Session 3: Covered

Church leaders' children can be very exposed. The congregation's love and interest can mean they feel like everyone's watching them and has an opinion. But there are things we can do to cover them, to protect them from that scrutiny, giving them security in their private lives and the choice to make relationships on their own terms.

Please note that in this session, there are four parts. If you are running a 'bite-sized' version of the course, parts 3 and 4 are considered together for the purposes of the discussion questions.

Session outline

- **Session introduction (5 minutes)**
- **Part 1: Protecting children from exposure (16 minutes)** – when children are uncovered – when they are pointed out or information about them is exposed to all – they can feel vulnerable. Even if they enjoy being in the spotlight now, there will be times when they just won't want to be there. In this session we explore ways to allow them the safety of the shadows.
- **Part 2: Dealing with congregational expectations (17 minutes)** – congregations will have expectations of church leader families, even if they don't realise it. By thinking ahead of time, you can help your family and your children not to feel the pressure of these expectations.
- **Part 3: Navigating confidentiality (9 minutes)** – church leaders' children are in a position where they may hear or discover a lot of confidential information about the congregation. This section considers how we can equip them to manage confidentiality and how to help them feel positive about the congregation, no matter what they know.
- **Part 4: Freeing children to have close relationships (4 minutes)** – we know that building authentic and healthy relationships with other Christians in church is an important part of children's faith journeys. We can actively coach our children in how to do this.

Discussion questions

Part 1: Protecting children from exposure

- Do you think your children feel a spotlight on them?
- How could you use a story about your family without exposing them?
- How could you reply to one of these questions:
 - How did Harry's exams go?
 - What was Elizabeth doing out in town so late yesterday?
 - Which school will Luka be going to?
 - Why isn't Emma in the worship band – she sings so well!

Part 2: Living in the goldfish bowl

- Do you feel the pressure of congregational expectations on you and/or your family?
- What sort of family do you feel called to be? What are your children's roles in this church?
- Do you have any unspoken expectations of your children at church? How might you free them from the weight of being under the spotlight?

Parts 3 and 4: Navigating confidentiality and Freeing children to build close relationships

- How do you manage confidentiality and your children currently?
- Which of the ideas for teaching the values of confidentiality did you like? Which might you try?
- How are you currently encouraging your children to develop their own relationships in church. What might your next step in this be?

Session 4: Empowered

We long for our children and teens to go on their unique faith journey and have their own adventure with God. Both the discipling that happens at home in the everyday and the influence of the church community that wraps around the family are vital for this. There are some things only parents and carers can offer, and others that only church can provide.

Session outline

- **Session introduction (2 minutes)**
- **Part 1: Helping children meet and know God in everyday life (5 minutes)** – God’s plan for discipleship is that it happens primarily in the home, in the ordinary everyday bits of life. This section touches on the five Key Tools that can help all parents and carers proactively disciple at home.
- **Part 2: Coaching children to engage with church (22 minutes)** – church is a deep and powerful blessing God has given us that we want our children and teens to know too. We explore a simple model that enables us to coach children and teens in the deep values of church and find their next step in learning the love the church.
- **Part 3: Building children into the body of Christ (10 minutes)** – church leaders’ children often find themselves helping out at church: but this isn’t always the same as fulfilling their part of the body of Christ. In this section we explore ways you can help children and teens find their own place and purpose in the church, just as any other member of the congregation.

Discussion questions

Part 1: Helping children meet and know God in everyday life

- What has worked for your family in terms of discipling at home? What hasn’t worked so well?
- Who was influential in your journey of faith as a child or young person? What did they do?
- Are you familiar with Parenting for Faith’s five Key Tools? If so, which have you tried and what happened?

Part 2: Coaching your children to engage with church

- Which bits of church do you really love? How can you share that with your children?
- Do you agree with the five values of church? Would you add any of your own? Which do you think your children experience?
- Which value of church would you like to explore with one of your children? Problem-solve how you might do that using the six-stage circle.

Part 3: Building your children into the body of Christ

- Where have you seen your children playing their part in the body of Christ?
- How do your children currently serve in church? Thinking about the difference between just helping out and finding their unique purpose in the body of Christ, where does this fit?
- Would you be comfortable with your teen attending a different church they prefer? Why or why not?

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/pafl-course. If there's more you want to tell us, do get in touch with us via parentingforfaith.org.

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 is a good place to start. We have a topic devoted to church leaders who are also parents – parentingforfaith.org/topics/parenting-church-leader

We're regularly adding new content, and we're working to develop what we offer. Do keep in touch with us (see next page) and help us shape what we offer.

Books and resources

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

- *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith – Omnibus Edition*, 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* explores how churches can intentionally create a culture where parenting for faith can flourish.
- *Parenting as a Church Leader* 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* 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.
- *Parenting Teens for a Life of Faith* – even when it doesn't feel like it, parents and carers remain the most significant influence in a teen's life. This will equip everyone involved in teens' faith journeys to understand the teenage faith journey and find their place in it.

Rachel Turner has also written two books, published by BRF, designed for parents and carers to use to help their children draw near to God:

- *Comfort in the Darkness*, 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.
- *Comfort in Uncertain Times* helps children draw close to God and stay connected to him through biblical stories of anxiety, loss and transition

You can find these and other useful books and resources at parentingforfaith.org/topics/shop

Keep in touch

There are several ways you can keep in touch with Parenting for Faith:

- **join our email newsletter to keep up to date** – sign up at parentingforfaith.org/email
- **follow us on Facebook** – facebook.com/parentingforfaithBRF. We also have a group for church leaders who are also parents – facebook.com/groups/96212811418184
- **follow us on Twitter** – twitter.com/godconnected
- **follow us on Instagram** – [@parentingforfaithbrf](https://instagram.com/parentingforfaithbrf)
- **follow our podcasts** – parentingforfaith.org/podcast
- **check out our events and training** – parentingforfaith.org/events-and-training

And finally...

If you'd like to help support the work of Parenting for Faith, you or your church can make a donation or become a Friend of Parenting For Faith by giving as little as £2 a month. To make a one-off donation or set up a monthly gift, visit brf.org.uk/donate, or contact our fundraising team via giving@brf.org.uk or call **01235 462 305** for more information.

You can also give via text message. Text PARENTING followed by your donation amount to 70450 (e.g. Text PARENTING 3 to 70450 to donate £3). Texts cost your chosen donation amount plus one standard rate message.

Not all phone networks support text giving. If yours doesn't, your message won't be delivered, and you won't be charged. Our privacy policy is available at brf.org.uk/privacy