



Helping Parents Engage Spiritually

How can I help parents and carers, including those who are new to faith, engage with the spiritual things we do?

In church we use strange language - worship, blessing, communion for example - and do unusual things: we sing to God, we might dance or move our bodies when we sing; we drink tiny sips of wine and have a few crumbs of bread; we pray to an invisible God. This is particularly true for church services, but you might be using worship songs as part of your toddler group, sharing bible stories at a family holiday club or asking people to pray before your Messy Church tea.

Parents and carers who are new to God, faith or church may not feel comfortable to engage with the spiritual aspects of what we do, or know how to do it. It's important that we help them understand what we are doing and how they can join in. Remember that if people feel uncomfortable in church or your group, they are less likely to come again, but the big bonus of helping parents and carers engage is that then they can help their kids engage too - something we explore in the next question.

So how can we help them? Here are some ideas:

01 Key Ideas

- **You can give people information in advance about what will happen in your group or service**, so they have time to process the ideas - this could be a page on the website, a social media post, a flyer.
- **You, or the service leader, can frame well from the front** - there's a really helpful video on this [here](#).
- **Rather than correcting or instructing people**, consider using a 'hint drop'.
- **If you are leading, take time beforehand to consider what might be new for parents and carers, and how you can frame that:** for example, the bible story, prayer, worship.

- **Make it clear that things are optional and give choices:** ‘we’re going to pray now .. if you’d like to join in ...’. “We’re going to worship God through singing. You can join in by singing, dancing, or doing the actions, or if you prefer you can just sit quietly’.
- **Consider using a visual timetable or a service guide** to help people know what’s coming next.
- **The Parenting for Faith website has a number of helpful posts:** for example, this one thinking about giving families good information in advance, this one thinking about helping families with babies and toddlers, and a training session with more ideas for parents and carers of under fives. *Here are some top tips from other children's, youth and families leaders:*
- Explain the ‘why’ as well as the ‘what’ - not just ‘now it’s time for our bible reading’ but ‘we believe that the bible is a book full of God’s words for us, so it’s important we listen to it’. (There’s a post here explaining this idea further.)
- Reassure parents and carers that it’s ok if this stuff is new for you.
- Be clear from the front about what is going on, particularly if you expect people to join in.
- Imagine you have never been to church before - that will help you see what might be weird for anyone new.

FIND OUT MORE

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SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
