



When Parents Don't Want to Engage

What can I do if parents and carers just don't want to engage?

It can be incredibly frustrating if parents and carers who bring their kids to church just don't want to engage. Maybe they are talking through your Messy Church worship, aren't encouraging their kids or won't bring their toddler across for the bible story and singing.

Some of the following might be helpful:

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Key Ideas

- **The reality is that this does and will happen. But consider why that might be:**
- They might not realise this is for them too - they are there because their kids can't be there without them, but they wouldn't be there from choice.
- They may assume the content is just for kids or can't see how it's relevant for them.
- They might feel uncomfortable with the spiritual content - worship, bible, prayer.
- They may feel unsure how to engage.
- **Ask yourself: How can we make this seem relevant to the adults?** What about adding in things adults can relate to and might be drawn in by. For example, a story from an adult about a time they prayed and what God did, or using a worship song that doesn't feel childish.
- **Ask people to do things in families, so the kids will draw their parents or carers in:** 'Find the grown up you came with and chat to them about one thing you think God should do to make the world a better place'. 'OK everyone, it's race time! Every family needs one of these packs, and when I say 'go', let's see which family will be the first to finish the challenge!'

- **In something like Messy Church, consider having more complex crafts for the parents and carers to do,** so they actively join in too.
- **Look at ideas from the first question in this section** - these might give parents or carers more confidence that they can engage.
- **Focus on building relationships with those parents and carers** - see the ideas in Session 2 Part 1.
- **Relax if nothing changes.** None of us like being forced into doing what we don't like. Some parents and carers need time to observe, and one day you might just see them starting to engage. *Here are some top tips from other children's, youth and families leaders:*
- Be clear about the structure of the session and that there are times when they will need to help and be with their kids
- Use a microphone so you can be clearly heard when you give instructions
- General shushing! But do it with a smile and only if you have a good relationship with those parents and carers.
- Meet them where they are, be patient and don't be judgmental

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SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
