

Faith @HOME

Events designed to help parents
shape children's faith at home

Baptist Children and Family NZ



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Acknowledgements

The Faith@Home sessions in this resource are based on the resources found in Mark Holmen’s book, *Take it Home*. We recommend getting Mark’s book as a companion resource.

The session outlines in this resource have been contributed by the following people:

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- Brigitte Crowe, Pakuranga Baptist Church
- Jan Ozanne, Otumoetai Baptist Church
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Thank you to these pastors for sharing their work and providing encouragement for so many churches and families.

This resource has been compiled by Baptist Children & Family Ministries for **@home+church**.

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Introduction

The family is the most powerful influence in the faith formation of children and teenagers. Parents are the first educators of their children and provide the foundation for spiritual life. The home, therefore, is the primary place where faith is nurtured.

We know that parents want the best for their children, but parenting can be a complex and often confusing task. This is where the church can partner with parents by walking alongside them. It's about preparing children to face the realities of life and to eventually be able to handle them without parental guidance. They will need to be able to make mature choices to follow Christ; to find great relationships to support their growth; to set their core values and morals; to handle romance, dating, marriage and family pathways; and to craft their passions and careers. Research shows that children who experience a household of clear and appropriate boundaries, delivered with love and warmth, are better equipped to meet the demands of life's reality.

In this challenging and fast paced world, churches need to provide families with support and empowerment. Mark Holmen in his book *Church + Home* says, "What happens in the home is more important and influential than what happens at church when it comes to faith formation and behaviour. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to realise we spend way more time at home than we do at church." Well known researcher George Barna, in his book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* says: "The local church should be an intimate and valuable partner in the effort to raise the coming generation of Christ's followers and church leaders, but it is the parents whom God will hold primarily accountable for the spiritual maturation of their children."

So, how can we empower families to pass on a saving, transforming, life-changing relationship with Jesus to their children and to the next generation? We believe that Faith@Home sessions, where parents and children are trained and encouraged together, are a great way for the church and the home to partner together in this discipleship journey. This concept was birthed by Mark Holmen in his book, *Take it Home* and has been contextualised by NZ churches, as seen in this resource.

In this manual we outline Faith@Home sessions, how they can be part of a strategy for faith formation, and how to run them in your church. Three churches also share stories of how this methodology has encouraged and equipped families in both their church and local community.



Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7



What is a Faith@Home session?

Faith@Home sessions are parent-child interactive workshops where parents and the children come together and learn a new faith skill that they can continue developing at home. The sessions vary in length, based on the congregation's approach to youth and children. Each of these sessions is designed to be held during the Sunday morning worship time so that parents are not required to add an extra event into their week. This means that it is very important that senior leadership are onboard with this initiative, as parents will be leaving to attend the session before the sermon time.

A typical Faith@Home session includes inspirational teaching time, interactive activities, parent-child discussion time (usually in small groups with two or three other families) and a Take-It-Home resource. This resource is intended to enable the family to continue what they learned at the Faith@Home session.

Each session has a clear faith formation goal in mind.

The purpose of each Faith@Home session is to:

- Inspire families to practice the faith skill at home through biblical teaching and personal testimony.
- Enable to families to experience the faith skill together as a family in an active learning manner.
- Equip families to continue practising the faith skill in their home by providing a resource that will enable and empower them to do so.

Congregations are all different, therefore the Faith@Home strategy you develop for your church will need to suit your context and your people.

Faith@Home stories

Below are some stories we have received from churches who have been running these sessions as part of their faith formation and discipleship strategy.

Raewyn Moodie, Westgate Baptist Church

I had an unchurched family whom I had contacted through my chaplaincy in a local school. I had taken food parcels to this family and then offered to bring the children along to Kids Church which they all enjoyed.

Finally we came to the week of our first Faith@Home event. I had advertised it to the whole congregation and stressed the importance of each child having a parent with them for the event, when I thought, how will these children feel if they are the only ones with no parent in the room?

I decided to ring the mum and give her the choice what to do. It sounded like this, “Hi there. This Sunday we are having a special Faith@Home faith event on ‘Service’ and all the children and parents will be coming along together during the church service. I don’t want your children to be the only ones without a parent there so either I don’t pick them up this week or you come along with them. What would you like to do?” Mum calls out to the kids in the room, “Hey kids, would you like me to come with you to Kids Church this week?” Resounding “YES” from the background.

So I picked up the whole family that week. Mum’s first time coming to church, and she really enjoyed being part of the learning about how to serve as a family. During the notices, she heard a message about Girl’s Brigade and mentioned to me that she used to belong to that too. That ended up being an opening for her daughter to join our Girl’s Brigade as well.

After that week, Mum began attending church with her children. She joined the Alpha course and really enjoyed it. When we had the opening of our new church building, I invited her partner as well and he came to church for, what was for him, the first time in his life. His interest ended up with me leading a Bible study series in their home.

When you have unchurched children in your Children’s Ministry, invite their parents to come along for Faith@Home. You may be overwhelmed with where it may lead!

Brigitte Crowe, Pakuranga Baptist Church

The Christophers are a family at Pakuranga Baptist who try to live their faith out at home. They have been part of our Faith@Home sessions for a number of years. Below is story of how a Faith@Home focus has helped them parent their children.

“

After that week, Mum began attending church with her children. She joined the Alpha course and really enjoyed it.



Recently two teenagers were involved in a fatal car accident near their home. The dad saw a teaching moment on his way back from Saturday sport. He told me, “I actually I took George and Joshua there on our way home from rugby to show them the accident site because the sheer dynamic of it was almost overwhelming.” He went on to say, “When we arrived in the car park under the building, where the car from the accident had finally stopped, we found three teenagers, one of them a Year 9 girl, who obviously wanted to engage with us. She wanted to tell the story and the back story. She was obviously hurting. In the end we asked if we could pray for them. They willingly agreed. They were a little unfamiliar with our style of praying but stood still and thanked us afterwards.

Life is busy, our life is busy, three children playing sport and doing music on Saturday. I wanted to make scones for them but I had an appointment to meet with my wife at her friend’s house. Not wanting to miss us, our friend baked some scones and I took them home and added butter and jam. The children wanted to go back to deliver the scones to the teenagers. Arriving we found the numbers had swelled with older teenagers there engaged in some other activities, all sitting/standing in the gloomy car park. We announced ourselves and our connection with the girl we met earlier, we gave our condolences to them and left.

They thanked us nicely for the scones. On the Sunday evening I visited the car park to invite them to our Holy Spirit encounter service, but they were gone, some place better I hope.”

This family did more than they set out to do. They didn’t only pray for the families of the deceased students, they also prayed for the three grieving teenagers. The parents were not only modelling their faith in prayer and generosity, they had created opportunities for their children to experience those faith habits themselves.

Jan Ozanne, Otumoetai Baptist Church

I have found that parents are very appreciative of the ideas and resources we give them at our Faith@Home sessions. Many want to take an active role in discipling their children but need help with the ‘how’. In the busyness of life they need encouragement, inspiration and practical ideas and resources they can easily use at home. I have received feedback from many parents who are talking about God at home and have introduced spiritual practices as a direct result of a Faith@Home session. Here are some small examples:

- Several parents have told me that once they started the bedtime routine of blessing their children, they were not allowed to forget! One mother forgot the words of the Numbers blessing, only to have her daughter finish saying the prayer herself.
- I visited a family and saw a ‘prayer for school’ taped to the front door. I had given this out at a Faith@Home session and they prayed this every morning.
- A two year old girl in our creche was praying the Numbers blessing over her dolls as she role-played putting them to bed, copying what happened at home.
- One mother returned home from a session with a *Jesus Storybook Bible*, and sat down with a reluctant child to read a story. An hour later they were still reading together—her daughter didn’t want her to stop!
- After a workshop on ‘Service’, one family gave a care basket to a child at school who was struggling. They shared with me how significant this had been for their son—and the child who received it.

These are all simple examples but they show how these sessions are an effective tool which have a significant impact on how faith is lived out in the home.



The parents were not only modelling their faith in prayer and generosity, they had created opportunities for their children to experience those faith habits themselves.

Faith@Home topics

Age	Year group	Topic	What it teaches
0 - 1	Newborn	Parenting—the First Years: Baby Dedication	As parents prepare to dedicate their child, the church can encourage them to consider the importance of spiritual parenting supported by a faith community.
2 - 3	Preschool	Family Blessings	Praying blessings over children is biblical and a simple way to teach parents to pray for them.
		Story and Song	Using story and song in the early years to create God moments in the home.
		Grace and Mealtime Routines	Using grace and other mealtime routines as simple ways to build faith into the early routines of life.
4 - 5	Kindy-Year 1	Prayer	Encouraging parents to consider different ways they can incorporate prayer into everyday family life.
		My Church—can also be done with Years 2-4	What is the church and why is it important? How to help our children understand we are all a vital part of our faith community.
		Devotions/Faith talk	Communicating and passing on devotion to God in the everyday moments of life.
		My Bible	Encouraging and resourcing parents to use the Bible at home and think about the messages they are giving their children about God’s word.
6 - 8	Years 2-4	Worship*	What is worship? Why do we worship God? How can we create space in our homes so we can hear from God and focus on Him?
		Service*	With children growing up in a “what’s in it for me?” society, how can we help them care about and be willing to serve others in response to God’s love for them? How to involve children in serving God and being the hands and feet of Christ in our homes, communities and churches.
		Fight for the Heart*	Teaching parents to value their relationship with their child and acknowledge the child’s own faith journey.
		Worshipping Together (Parenting in the Pew)	Teaching parents how to encourage attendance and engage their children in multi-age worship services.
		Faith 5 at Home*	How to use the Faith 5 tool as a way of sharing highs and lows, reading Scripture, talking about it, praying together and blessing each other.
9 - 12	Years 5-8	My Identity*	Helping children to see themselves as God sees them.
		Hearing from God*	Being able to understand how God speaks to us is vital if we are to develop a close and authentic relationship with Him.
		My Media, Gaming and Electronic Diet	Empowering parents with information and tools to help them guide their families effectively into safe and healthy media habits.
		Family Roles and Responsibility	Inspiring and equipping family members to be mutual contributors, giving to the life of their families.
		Establishing Another Voice	To help students identify and establish an adult faith mentor, other than their parents that they can turn to for advice and support; to build intergenerational bridges.
		My Time, Talent and Treasure	Hearing what Jesus has to say about how we use our time, treasures and talents. To be challenged on how God might shape what we do when we hand it over to Him.

**suitable for all ages*

Running a Faith@Home session

Discuss with your whole church leadership team why it is so important for parents to be resourced to pass on faith to their children at home. Decide together when the most effective time would be in your church context for parents and children to come together for this event. In many churches with over-busy families, the best time is during a church service when families are already at church. Other contexts may work however, where all families can come together for an evening or on a Sunday afternoon. It could be good to survey your families to see what would be best.

1. Choose a date for the event in consultation with your pastor and wider team. You should ideally have at least 6 weeks to promote the event within your congregation.
2. Make sure you have a room/venue large enough to hold all the parents and children you expect to be there for that day. (For smaller churches, many of the Faith@Home events can be run for combined 6-12 year olds).
3. Get your pastor to promote the event in front of church. Email all your parents. Send a newsletter. Use as many communication methods as you can. Encourage them to attend by any means possible! (e.g. 'If you have to miss one Sunday this term, make sure it is not our Faith@Home Sunday!') Offer a yummy morning tea as part of the event and promote that too! Make sure parents understand that you are so passionate about this event (and your pastor is too) that you have planned it for a Sunday morning because you know how hard it is for busy families to come out during the week and that you have done everything possible to make it easy for them.
4. If you have unchurched children who regularly attend your ministry, either provide for another adult mentor to be their 'parent' for that Sunday or ask some families who would be prepared to 'adopt' these children into their family for that week. It is important that no child comes to the event alone.
5. The week before, prepare all the resources and materials you need to run the event and have a prayer team praying for the families who will attend. You may want to message parents the day before the event to remind them.
6. Make sure you are set up well in advance on the morning. Ideally have parents and children sitting round small tables with any materials they need to use, ready to go. Alternatively, chairs set out in semicircles can work. It is important for you to be in church greeting parents as they arrive. Ensure the pastor or worship leader has a very clear notice at the point where children and families go out, telling everyone that the parents are going out with the children this morning. Get them to wait if necessary so that everyone who needs to, leaves!! Make sure you are at the venue greeting parents and letting them know how glad you are that they could come.
7. After your session try to get some feedback from a few parents to share with your leadership team.



Of all the things you do as a leader in Christ's church, is anything more important than helping to bring Christ and Christ-like living into the center of every home?

Mark Holmen

May God richly bless you as you step out to empower families for Faith@Home!



Faith@Home session outlines

The graph on the previous page shows all of the Faith@Home sessions that are available with this resource. Each session has been written in the following format:

1. Goal for the session
2. Preparation
3. Explain it
4. Inspire them
5. Model it
6. Practice it
7. Take it home

Each step builds on the previous one and enables parents to observe the skill, and practice it, before they go home. Each session also aims to have something for the parent/s to take home with them as a helpful resource to encourage ongoing engagement.

Pakuranga Baptist always have a debrief and evaluation following each session. This normally happens within a week or two while it still fresh in their memories. The session facilitator also discusses this follow-up with the Senior Pastor.

These sessions have all been written by different people so while there will be similarities, there will also be contextual differences in style and approach. The aim is for you to use them as a guide, and then add and change as needed to fit your context. The writers are listed at the start of this resource and are happy to talk with you if you have questions. Extra resources for each outline are available online.

This booklet contains two example outlines with the remainder available online. For download information contact BCFM: childrensministry@baptist.org.nz | www.baptistcfm.org.nz

SERVICE — YEARS 2-4

GOAL: *To inspire and engage the family in being the hands and feet of Jesus through church, community and global service as a family.*

Preparation:

1. Ask a missionary, a fireman, a doctor or police officer to come share their experiences as a public servant.
2. Make Service Booklets with options for families to pick from (see *Extra Resources* section on the website).
3. Have cards and envelopes ready for participants to write encouraging notes to other people.
4. Create a picture wall with missionaries, firemen, soldiers, doctors, police officers, pastors, teachers, etc.
5. Questions to ask of person/people giving their testimony:
 - When and how did God call you into this position of servanthood?
 - What has been one of your greatest experiences serving others? Be specific.
 - In what ways do you feel like you are working with God?
 - How has serving others brought you closer to God?

Explain it:

Activity: The Picture Wall

As families arrive, ask them to sit around the tables. Direct their attention to the picture wall.

Ask what they notice about the people in the pictures. Allow time for responses on how these people serve others.

Ask them to think about people who have served them during the week. Let them write it on the pages on their tables and then to give some feedback.

Ask the children what opportunities they had to serve their parents and how they had used those opportunities.

Ask the parents what opportunities they had to serve their children and how they had used those opportunities.

Ask them to shout out characteristics of someone who serves and write it on the whiteboard or type it straight onto PowerPoint.

Inspire them:

Introduce the person who will be sharing their story and their testimony.

Allow 8-10 minutes for sharing and approximately 5 minutes for questions.

Model it:

Read the story below or ask volunteers to act it out as you read.

JESUS IS COMING

A family sits together at home when the phone rings. The person calling identifies himself as Jesus and lets them know that He is coming over that evening. After figuring out that this was a legitimate call, the family realizes that they have to get a few things ready for their prestigious guest, Jesus!! They hastily start cleaning the house. The preparation involves replacing the pictures on the walls with crosses, hiding the variety of magazines on the coffee table and putting out the Bibles. The teenagers discreetly remove a few items from their bedrooms.

During this time of preparation, the family has three different visitors who come to their door.

The first visitor asks for food donations for the local food bank.

The second visitor is raising money for the women's refuge.

The third visitor has had an accident with his car and would like to call someone to come help him.

On all three occasions the family pushes the visitor out the door exclaiming, "We are too busy right now preparing for a very important person. Please ask next door."

The family looks at the clock. It is one minute before midnight so they decide to really impress Jesus, as He is sure to come any second now. They sit down together, open the Bible randomly and begin to read. The text they happen to turn to is Matthew 25:41-45:

⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴ They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵ He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

By the time the family is done reading these verses, it is midnight. The teenage son says, "I guess Jesus isn't coming after all." After a moment of silence, the mother replies, "I think Jesus was already here."

Discussion Questions:

Ask the following questions for discussion:

- What did you learn from the story? What was the main point?
- Is serving others important to Jesus? *Look at Matthew 20:28 and Luke 22:27*
- What should our attitude be towards serving others? *Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10*
- Who are people who serve God today? Have families name the people they think are serving God.

Practice it:

Explain to the group that they will have an opportunity to share in a family project. Explain that there are people in the church who are hospitalized or recovering at home. One way to serve them is to send a card of encouragement.

On each table have enough cards as well as names and addresses of people who are in hospital or recovering at home.

Give the families time to think about who they would like to encourage.

When the task is completed, ask:

- How difficult was the activity?
- How does it make you feel knowing that you have served?
- How do you think it will make the person feel who receives this card?

Take it home:

1. Give each family the 12 month Service Booklet (see *Extra Resources* section on the website).
2. Explain that there are many different ways to serve others.
3. Ask them to come up with 12 service opportunities that they can do together as a family.

FAMILY BLESSINGS — PRESCHOOL

GOAL: *To encourage parents to establish the routine of praying a blessing over their children.*

Preparation and Resources:

Print the infographic for 'Its Just a Phase' (see *Extra Resources* section on website).

It is important to send parents home with resources. I suggest something for them to read and a resource they can use with their children.

Some examples:

- www.forthefamily.org/bedtime-blessings
- Mark Holmen's blessing story (see *Extra Resources* section on website).
- www.homefrontmag.com/how-to-give-a-blessing-to-your-child
- Copies of two different blessings are available for download in the *Extra Resources* section on website. These could be laminated or put into cheap frames and given to families.

Morning tea: (10 min)

Start with morning tea to allow parents to spend time connecting with each other. Introduce any new parents. Alternatively you could allow some time for this at the end of your session.

Explain it: Why do we run these sessions for parents? (5 min)

Take a few minutes to reinforce to your parents the importance of their role in passing on faith to their children. Sell the vision by saying something like, "You are the biggest influence in your children's lives and the church wants to partner with you to help make the most of these early, foundational years."

Share some facts about the importance of the preschool years. You could show an infographic from the Orange 'Its Just a Phase' material: "*Preschool children have superpowers—at this age they are learning so much! This is such an important time for laying down faith foundations by doing a few simple things as part of your daily routine which become habits in our families. One example is blessing our children.*"

Explain it: What is a blessing and why is this a good thing to do? (10 min)

Spend some time explaining what a blessing is and the biblical background to praying blessings over others. The *HomeFront* magazine defines it like this: "a blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy and wisdom over him or her."

Give some examples from scripture, such as:

Ephesians 3:17-19

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Ephesians 3:17-19

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Numbers 6:24-26

Examples of blessings can also be found in some Children's Ministry curriculum (such as Tru Ministry) and the *HomeFront* magazine (www.homefrontmag.com/how-to-give-a-blessing-to-your-child).

Consider decorating your room with colourful copies of blessings which parents can take home at the end.

Inspire them: Share some stories (10 min)

Inspire parents by sharing stories which illustrate how special and significant it is to pray a blessing over their children. For example, one of my crèche helpers overheard one of our pre-schoolers praying the Numbers blessing over her doll as she put it to bed and several parents have shared that their children won't let them forget to bless them every night. One mother forgot the words after a busy and tiring day, and her four year old finished it for her. Reinforce that our children hearing and learning the words of a theologically rich blessing, can only be a good thing!

Mark Holmen also has a great story which you can read out or play from the DVD 'Raising Kids with a Faith That Lasts' (Focus on the Family—22:40 to 26:40 minutes). You could give parents a copy of this story to take home.

Allow some time for other parents to share too, especially if they have older children and have established this as part of their family routine.

Read the story of Mark Holmen (see *Extra Resources* section on website).

Practice it: Praying a blessing over their child (5 min)

Allow some time for parents to have a go at blessing their child. They can use the examples you have already shared and have displayed, or they may want to have a go at writing their own versions.

Take it home:

Offer a variety of blessings. Encourage them to frame their favourite one and hang it in their home where they can be reminded of it and where they will see it often (see *Extra Resources* section on website).

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