

FAMILY BLESSINGS

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* 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* 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* 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* 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* on website).