

A mosaic illustration of a family of five (two adults and three children) standing together, rendered in a pixelated, mosaic style using warm colors like orange, red, and yellow. The background is a dark blue gradient with a subtle mosaic pattern.

# FAMILYING THE FAITH

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EFFECTIVE WAYS TO EQUIP PARENTS  
AS FAITH-INFLUENCERS

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## Introduction

Our Vibrant Faith Team is laser-focused on accompanying ministry leaders as they equip parents (and those who are like parents) to influence their kids toward a lifelong relationship with Jesus. To live this out, we write and train and coach and create. We've piled up a mountain of generative work, producing blogs and resources and MasterClasses and coaching relationships. And we realized we've created enough of all of this to curate a training resource that combines a new e-book with three MasterClass sessions featuring Dr. Christian Smith, professor of sociology at Notre Dame, and Laura Kelly Fanucci, writer and founder of Mothering Spirit.

We believe, as you almost surely do, that parent influence is the key to influencing a deepening faith in young people. Because experience and three decades of targeted research supports this belief, it naturally follows that the focal point for transformational ministry is in the home, not in church-based programs. In this e-book *FAMILYING the Faith*, and in the MasterClasses "Religious Parenting" with Dr. Christian Smith and "Faith Formation at Home" with Laura Kelly Fanucci, you have a transformational resource—the pieces working together to plant and nurture a home-centered, church-supported focus in your church. In this User Guide you'll find practical suggestions for using this resource in your church. If you have questions, please email us. We're honored to serve with you...

### **The Vibrant Faith Team**

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# User Guide

Welcome to *FAMILYING the Faith*—a multi-media resource for planting a home-centered, church-supported approach to ministry. Here are some simple suggestions for using the e-book and videos in this resource...

**1. With Your Leadership Team** – Read the e-book *FAMILYING the Faith* together, perhaps one chapter a week (these are short chapters), followed by a 30-minute discussion time. Ask these questions after each chapter:

- What stuck out to you in this chapter, and why?
- What is affirming of our church's approach to ministry?
- What is challenging to our church's approach to ministry?
- Based on this chapter, what might be next steps for our leadership team?

After you've completed the e-book and collected notes from your conversations, watch the video MasterClass "Religious Parenting," with Dr. Christian Smith. Gather for a 30-minute discussion time, asking similar questions:

- What stuck out to you in this MasterClass, and why?
- What is affirming of our church's approach to ministry?
- What is challenging to our church's approach to ministry?
- Based on this MasterClass, what might be next steps for our leadership team?

After you've completed the "Religious Parenting" MasterClass, watch both sessions of the MasterClass "Faith Formation at Home," with Laura Kelly Fanucci. This is a significant commitment of time (two 90-minutes sessions), so you might plan to do this on a Leader Retreat or half-day leader training experience. Gather for an extended discussion time, asking similar questions, plus two additional questions:

- What stuck out to you in this MasterClass, and why?
- What is affirming of our church's approach to ministry?
- What is challenging to our church's approach to ministry?
- Based on this MasterClass, what might be next steps for our leadership team?
- What will it take for us to shift our focus to a home-centered, church-supported mindset in our church culture?
- What is our timeline for implementing this approach, and what resources will we need?

**2. Individual Exploration** – If you are unable to use this resource with a leadership team, or want to explore this on your own before extending the experience to others, simply follow the same sequence as in Section 1, journaling your responses to the questions. At the end of this experience, finish this sentence: “As I prayerfully consider my experience of FAMILYING the Faith, I will \_\_\_\_\_.” Share your experience, your notes, and your concluding statement with any relevant leaders and stakeholders in your church. Use your personal experience to spark a corporate conversation.

**3. With Parents and Ministry Leaders** – Adapt the approach used in the Leadership Team section to include parents in your church. Here is the adaptation:

Ask all participants to read the e-book FAMILYING the Faith together, perhaps one chapter a week (these are short chapters). Each week, at a time convenient for parents, plan a hour-long listening and discussion time. Ask these questions:

- What stuck out to you in this chapter, and why?
- What is affirming of your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- What is challenging to your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- Based on this chapter, what are your wonderings and longings?

After you’ve completed the e-book and listening sessions with parents, plan a special time to watch the video MasterClass “Religious Parenting,” with Dr. Christian Smith, together. Afterward, gather for an hour-long listening and discussion time, asking similar questions:

- What stuck out to you in this video MasterClass, and why?
- What is affirming of your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- What is challenging to your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- Based on this video MasterClass, what are your wonderings and longings?

After you’ve completed the “Religious Parenting” MasterClass together, plan a concluding listening session with parents, perhaps on a Saturday morning. Watch both sessions of the MasterClass “Faith Formation at Home,” with Laura Kelly Fanucci. Then gather for one last listening time, asking similar questions, plus two additional questions:

- What stuck out to you in this MasterClass, and why?
- What is affirming of your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- What is challenging to your approach to parenting and faith formation?
- Based on this MasterClass, what might be next steps for your family, and our church?
- What help and guidance do you hope for from our church leaders?
- What is a reasonable way to continue this conversation in our church?

**Special Note:** Vibrant Faith has trained and experienced ministry leadership coaches who can help your leadership team implement and live out the discoveries you uncover in these conversations.

**Learning to Listen:** One of the most important practices that will enhance the experience and outcomes of FAMILYING the Faith is engaging in deep listening. As you dive into these resources together and begin the conversation, consider practicing these listening tools.

## Be Prepared to Fully Engage In Listening

- Phone turned off
- No distractions
- Upright posture—be present in the conversation
- Look at the person speaking (as much as you can)
- Allow the other person to speak until they have said all they need to say
- Train your brain not to advance towards YOUR next response. Learn to build your response from what has been fully shared
- Be comfortable with silence (allow five seconds to transpire to ensure the person has completed their thought)
- Ask short questions that show interest and affirmation. For example:
  - ▶ Tell me more...
  - ▶ Can you say more about that?
  - ▶ What else?
- Ask specific questions that show you care. For example:
  - ▶ If I only had one minute, what would you tell me about this?
  - ▶ How does that make you feel?
  - ▶ What do you think I might miss when I hear your story?