

# A letter to Church Leaders



Dear Friends,

You don't need us to tell you that the children in our churches are growing up in a world where God has very little voice, or even presence, in the society around them. They hear increasingly varied and damaging ideas about marriage, gender, bodies, feelings and how to think about themselves. Parents (and others in the church) are nervous and feel ill-equipped to talk about these topics in an honest and compassionate way, which both holds on to God's truth and shows love for those who think differently.

To help in this situation, we have developed a new resource, *Growing Up: God's Good Story*. Through a six-week teaching programme, podcasts for parents and the whole family, and accessible take-home sheets, we hope to start good and age-appropriate conversations about marriage, relationships, bodies, puberty, gender and feelings. We want our children to know that God speaks into all of these areas and that his is the voice that is most trustworthy amongst so many others. A full outline of the scope of the teaching can be found at the end of this letter.

Growing Up builds on the teaching of, *"Who Am I?"*, a foundational resource about understanding our identity in Christ. Since we launched *"Who Am I?"* in 2022, we have been asked for more help with tackling the thorniest identity issues our children face. In answer, we developed Growing Up, working with other organisations to ensure that our teaching is Biblically-faithful, culturally-responsive and age-appropriate.

At the heart of Growing Up is partnership between parents and churches. We firmly believe that parents are the people God has put in their child's lives to talk about these topics. They have more opportunities, they know their children better and understand the specific situations that they are encountering. However, we have taken the step of going through the church because we hear from the majority of parents that they do not feel able to start talking about these issues. Our aim is to start conversations by mentioning some of these hard topics in church, so that children and adults alike know that the Gospel speaks into the loudest cultural arguments. Our prayer is that these conversations will continue amongst families in homes.

Before running *Growing Up*, it would be helpful to share the scope of the teaching with parents and carers to allow them to ask questions, perhaps during a face-to-face meeting. This should avoid any surprises and complaints down the road. Unlike a typical Sunday school resource, we believe that *your* personal support and involvement will be of huge value to the families and leaders involved. Your flock trusts your voice and will look to you for help and guidance on these topics more than many others.

To further help partnership between church and families, each lesson is accompanied by two podcasts, one aimed at parents and one for the whole family to listen to together. The parent podcasts feature experts on each topic and could be listened to before a session is run. Each lesson also includes a take-home sheet, summarising what has been taught and suggesting simple ways of continuing the conversation at home during the week. Encourage leaders to put these directly into the hands of adults rather than relying on children to pass them on.

We trialled this resource before publication and the feedback indicated that there is a lot of nervousness among leaders around these topics. To help people feel more confident, each lesson is accompanied by a short training video and also includes a section to help leaders respond well to questions and comments that children might make. These videos could also be shared with parents to give more of a flavour of the content.

We recognise that teaching this resource could touch on many pastoral situations, and there are various reasons why this resource may not be appropriate for your church right now. As the church leader, you know best where families are in their thinking and their lived experience. It may be necessary to share some information with leaders before particular sessions, and you could invite leaders to bring the most difficult questions to the church leadership.

One church who trialled Growing Up sent this feedback: "Our staff team agreed it was really important to be teaching into these topics in an age appropriate way with God's truth and felt that the series enabled us to do this, and helped put important foundations in place for the younger children who aren't yet facing these issues."

We are praying that this resource will be of huge value to your ministry and to the lives of the families and children in our churches. We would welcome any feedback you would like to give after teaching the resource, and we are always eager to hear from you with suggestions about further ways Faith in Kids could help to support your ministry.

Yours in Christ,



*Ed Drew, Ministry Director at Faith in Kids*

