

## Session 9: Multi-Age Worship

### Session 9: Multi- Age Missional Worship Resources

This session is an 'extra' to offer something different to the material you would use normally in a 'holiday gospelling' context. If you are on a beach mission – these resources can be used to develop an open-air worship service, or resource a team contributing to a local church service.

Multi-age missional worship expressions have the potential to be beautifully authentic and inclusive. Participation, rather than formal performance culture is the engine of these events. As you consider how to use these ideas, look for the opportunities for community, contribution and interaction.

Remember that the 5 C's: Connect-Context-Content-Consider-Consequence, provide a good framework for structuring any event; a small group session, a parent coffee conversation or a service of worship.

#### **A word about music:**

Usually in our mission context, we are diligent to avoid lyrics that put words into children's mouths that would not be true for them to sing. Simple turns of phrase make a difference in this:

Using '**We can**' (trust in Jesus ... know God's love, etc...) rather than '**I do/must/should**' (love Jesus, give him everything, etc) language maintains integrity for everyone.

If children (or adults for that matter) are going to sing 'I love Jesus', let it be of their own desire, not to please us or conform to our expectations.

If, however you are running a worship service and you have clearly identified your event in this way – see sample below – theologically sound songs of worship, expressing our joy and devotion for God are very appropriate.

#### **Music Suggestions for Session 9**

Indescribable (Chris Thomlin)

Forever Reign (Hillsong)

Light of the World: Here I am to Worship (Tim Hughes)

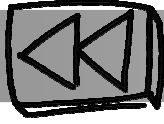
Your Grace is Enough (Matt Maher)

Before Before (Beth Barnett)

God in a Bod (Beth Barnett)

#### **A sample announcement/invitation:**

"We are not running our regular program on Sunday morning, because it is our habit to worship together then – so normal small groups and upfront aren't happening, but we will be here on the beach. We are going to have an outdoor church service – and you are very



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welcome to join us. We love to worship God. It's a time to stop and be thankful for our lives and to strengthen our lives in God's good ways. We'll sing, there'll be a story from the Bible, just like every day here, and some time to think and reflect and to pray. It will be simple, family friendly and relaxed – just like everything at SUFM/Holiday program/Playgroup. We would love for you to come as a whole family and join us.”

### Tips for Leading

Our Christian culture is full of strangeness: we often over-explain simple things we are doing, and then assume everyone understands other things, that can be quite obscure to the uninitiated.

If you are leading in Multi-age Missional worship, think firstly about what the people there will be doing. Design your leading and instructions around their actions, rather than your own thoughts.

Model what you expect to see.

Keep good eye contact with everyone – a leader can still show their passion for worship with their eyes open!

Avoid jargon terms like ‘praise and worship’, ‘the word’, ‘sermon’, ‘Bob is going to come and bring us the...’ ‘enter into a time of...’, ‘come before God and...’

Best to stick to concrete verbs that everyone knows: ‘sing’, ‘read’, ‘think’, ‘move around’, ‘get up and talk to someone’, ‘Bob’s turn to talk now’.

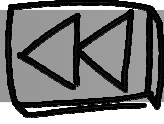
Remember that we are simply formed over time by what we do; giving a long theological reason for something doesn't make an action any more valid, or speed up the process. For the families that may choose to join us, even though they are not regular attendees of a church, just being there will be putting a big grin on Jesus' face.

### Extra ideas for running smoothly

If you are outdoors, make a colourful word sheet with the song words and the Bible reading and the visuals on it.

Have some ‘arrival’ activities – for example, if you have a cartoonist in your team, set them up to do quick ‘caricatures’ of people as they arrive. Or set up a whiteboard on an easel and invite people to try their luck at drawing a simple stick figure on the whiteboard – blindfolded.

Use these activities to welcome and connect, to set the tone of a relaxed community event, with good humour, creativity, a go for everyone – all the things the kingdom of God would look like.

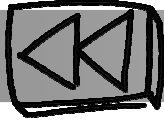


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### Putting it Together

A suggested order:

- Gathering Song:** **God in a Bod** *(A familiar kid friendly action oriented song, that sends the message that this is safe, normal territory)*
- Statement of Welcome:** *See sample above*
- Song of Praise:** **Your grace is enough.** *(Finish with a simple prayer acknowledging God's presence among us, and his desire for us to know him.)*
- Connect:** **Character** *(A small group activity for getting us thinking and telling our stories)*
- Context:** *This is perhaps a little like a theme intro or kids' talk. But don't call the kids forward!*
- Song of Praise:** **Indescribable** *(Link from the dreadfully difficult to describe activities in to the indescribable God.)*
- Content:** **Opening the Bible with Art**
- Songs:** **Before Before;** **Light of the World** *(Both of these songs highlight that Jesus has a history from before his birth, following up the ideas in the Bible reading.)*
- Rewind Poem:** **Jesus alive and Jesus Living** *(This is an opportunity for those who may be visitors, local church folk, or parents who don't usually hang around the program to see the children and team present the Rewind Poem – giving an overview of the stories of John – and giving testimony to who Jesus is!)*
- Consider:** **No one has ever seen God** *(Bible Byt-esque)*
- Song:** **Forever Reign**
- Consequence:** **Plasticene Prayers**
- Finish:** *Invite the gathering to vote on which song they would like to finish with...*



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### **Connect:**

### **Show us a little bit of Character**

#### **Resources:**

You will need a large collection of small toy 'characters' – the kind that come in McHappy meals. You will need enough for one per person – so perhaps ask each of your team members to bring half a dozen. Most shops sell these for about 20 cents each. Set these up on two long trestle tables with access all around each side.

Sample characters – Winnie the Pooh, Disney/Pixar, Star Wars, superheroes, Sesame Street, ABC kids programs ...

#### **Script:**

Welcome. We are a wonderfully, diverse, mixed bunch. Some of us are regulars, team members, some visitors, some are used to meeting on a Sunday to reflect and worship and consider how we are living life with God on this planet. Others are not so accustomed to that. Some are in holiday mode, and some are in party mode, and some are in chillaxing mode.

We are also different personalities, characters, we have different histories. The Bible is also full of lots of strange histories and characters. But most of all it is about people trying to get to know God. We will be doing that too, today. But first, we're going to get to know each other a little.

We are going to do this in small groups with a few people sitting near you, but first we invite you to cruise past the tables and pick up a character that in some way reflects something about you. Take the character back to your group and spend some time telling each other why you chose that particular character and how it is like you.

*(Give 5-7 minutes to this, and play some cheery music in the background to facilitate a friendly atmosphere.)*

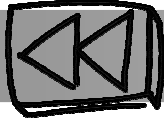
#### **Wrap Up:**

Hopefully we have discovered something new about each other, and gotten to know each other a little better. These toys have been a way for us to find out what we are like.

The book of John in the Bible is all about how we can know God, even though no one has ever seen God. John says, Jesus shows us what God is like.

Here's a little snippet from John, chapter 1: "No one has ever seen God, but Jesus, who is the same as God has made him known."

So we watch and listen out for the things that Jesus does, and we pay attention to the character of Jesus, and we get an idea of who God is.



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### Context

#### Preparation

- Make a sign saying “Definitely Dreadfully Difficult to Describe.”
- Blow up 4 coloured balloons, each containing a small slip of paper with one of the following words inside: **Air, Electricity, Taste of Carrots, Love.**
- Tie the balloons to a pole that can be held either end by helpers.
- Blow up a fifth balloon and write on the outside ‘God’

#### Presenter

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, mums and dads, locals and visitors, questions and answers, wheelers and dealers, thinkers and do-ers, adventurers and discoverers: I invite you to join me in a challenge I like to call: “definitely dreadfully difficult to describe.”

I have here a number of balloons. Inside the balloons are some words, no one has seen. They are all things that are very common – things you will find almost everywhere, but which are definitely dreadfully difficult to describe.

I will be looking for volunteers to come and burst a balloon, to read the dreadfully difficult to describe thing in the balloon, and then to try to describe that definitely dreadfully difficult thing, to see if we might be able to guess what that definitely dreadfully difficult to describe thing is. Our Decidedly Dapper and Dextrous Judge will also award points for the descriptions.

*Call up volunteers – don’t choose children who are too young to begin with.  
Even if the audience members are not able to guess what the thing is, keep it moving and fun. The point here is not to have a successful round but to experience how difficult it is to describe some things.  
After 2 rounds...*

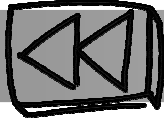
Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, mums and dads, locals and visitors, questions and answers, wheelers and dealers, thinkers and do-ers, adventurers and discoverers: we are now going to have an ‘all play’ round. With the delightful company around you, divide into small groups. One person in your group can volunteer to describe something, perhaps that they have in their pocket, as the rest of the group tries to guess what it is.

*Give a couple of minutes to this. Then continue with the ‘upfront’ process, bursting another balloon, and guessing as a large group.  
Leave one balloon unburst.*

Boys & girls, mums & dads, friends and fellow travelers, that is all we have time for in “definitely dreadfully difficult to describe” today, but let me leave you with one more definitely dreadfully difficult to describe thing.

*(Bring out the balloon with ‘GOD’ printed on it.)*

For a very long time, in very many places, human beings have been trying to describe God. Like air, and electricity, love, the taste of carrots, God is very, very real, and very, very powerful, but also very, very difficult to describe.



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### **Content:**

#### **Opening the Bible: John 1:1-18, selected verses**

*A Bible reader/presenter and an artist present this reading. If you don't have a confident artist available, pre-draw the images below in posters in light grey-lead pencil as a guide to be traced over in thick black marker during the presentation.*

Time to read the Bible. *(Hold up a supersized cardboard folder saying 'Bible')*

We've been reading and hearing and thinking about lots of stories from a part of the Bible 'the Book of John'. *(Pull out of the Bible folder another folder called 'John')*

This is one of four books that tells us the stories of Jesus. *(Pull out three more folders saying 'Matthew', 'Mark', 'Luke.' But then put them aside.)*

Today we are going to rewind back to the very beginning of John's Gospel. John wants to tell us about the very start of Jesus' life. But he doesn't start with the Story of Jesus' birth that we often hear at Christmas time. Two other books, Luke and Matthew tell us about that. *(Pick up Matthew & Luke)*

But not John. You see, John wants to remind us that Jesus' life doesn't start with being born in the town of Bethlehem, because Jesus is God, and so he has no start or finish. But how do you talk about someone who existed before there was anything, or even words to describe the indescribable? Tricky hey? John simply calls Jesus, 'the Word'.

So we're going to read from the beginning of 'John' and to help us see what John is about, [insert name of artist] is going to draw some pictures. We will need four people to help hold up the art. *(Choose four volunteers)*

*As the text is read, an artist firstly writes the letters, W O R & D on 4 large A1 sized pieces of card. As the text continues each of the letters is modified, turning into an illustration of a part of the text. Tip: while the artist is actually working on the poster, the holder-upper-er let's go and allows the Artist full control. See below for the illustrations that match each part of the text.*



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**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.



**2** <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life,



**3** and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.



**4** <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.



**5** <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.



**6** <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

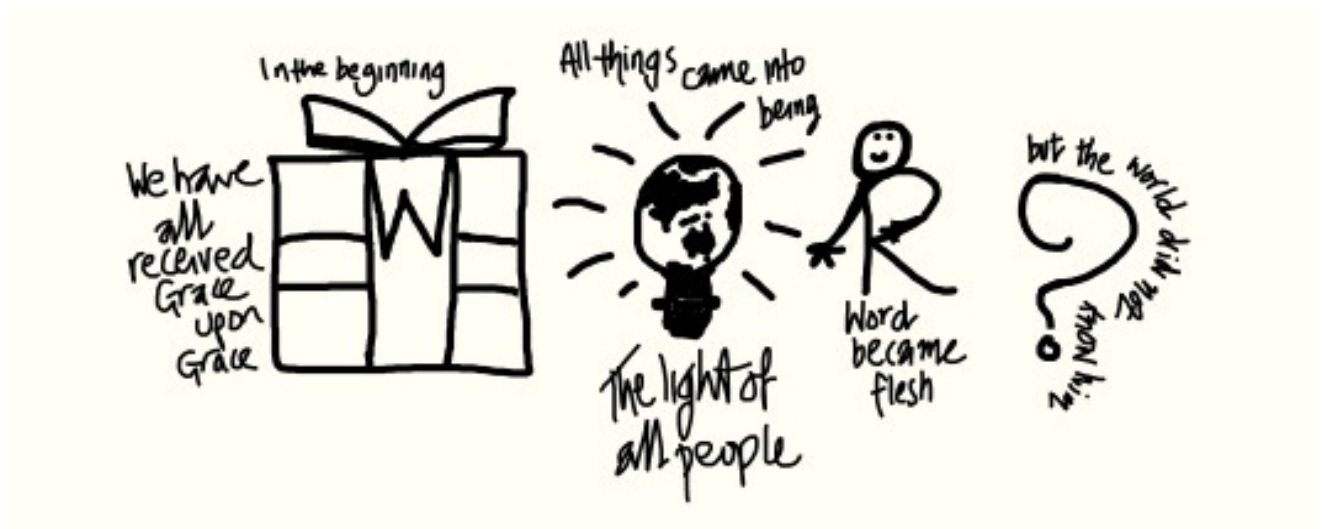




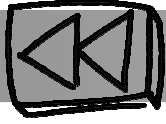
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At the end of the reading, put all of the poster letters together and revise the 'plot-line' of the passage.

- God exists
- Everything is made
- God brings light and understanding
- People didn't recognise God
- God comes as a human being, as Jesus
- Jesus shows us the love and life God wants to give us over and over and on and on and on.







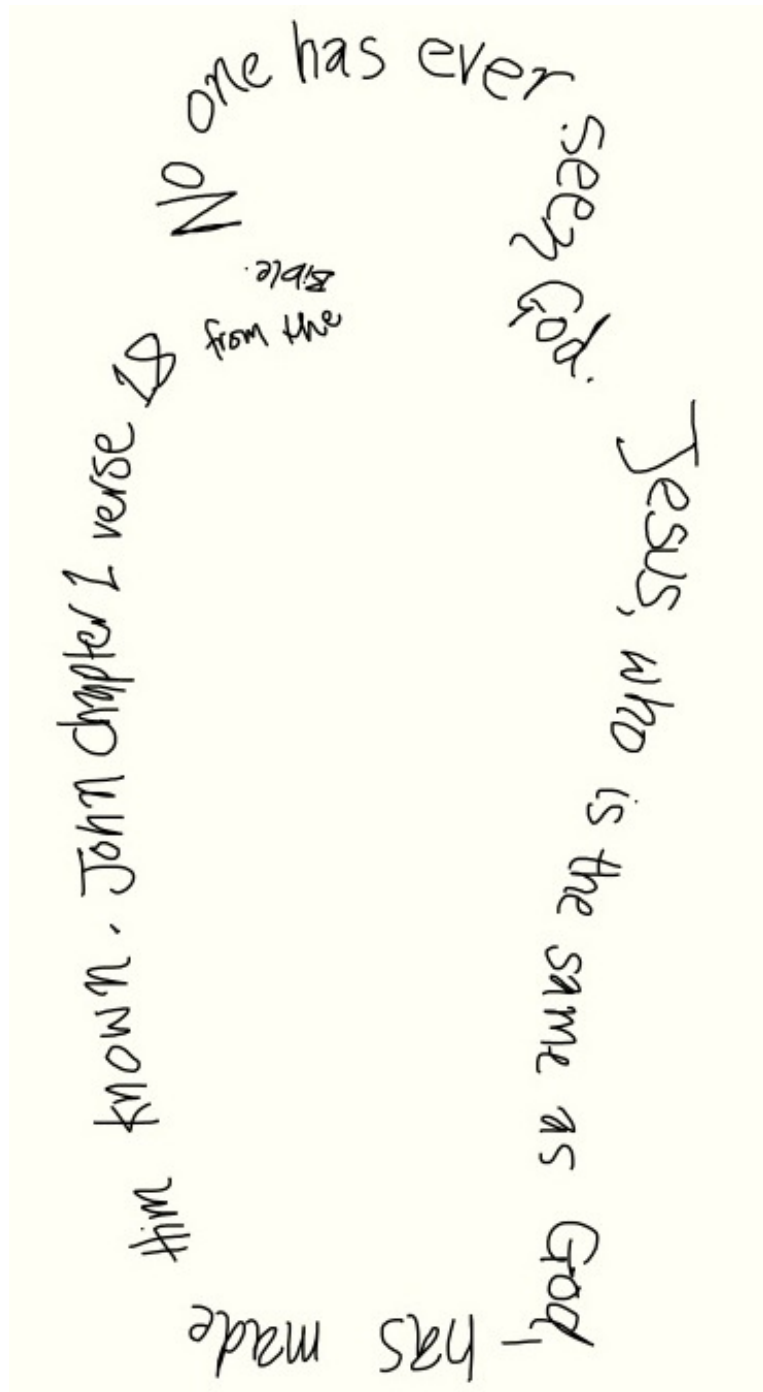
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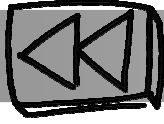
### Consider

**John 1:18 - No one has ever seen God, but Jesus who is the same as God has made him known.**

#### Resources:

A1 (approx) piece of transparent perspex, plastic or glass. If you have trouble finding this, a cheap, but not very tough alternative is to use a large sheet of transparent cellophane. On the transparent surface write the Bible verse in the shape of a body.





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### You will also need

- Christmas tree or leafy branch
- Crown and robe
- Mp3 player

### Script:

A: I don't know about you, but I reckon if there is a God (and the majority of the world think there is, we just are not all sure what to call God). I reckon if there's a God, and that God made everything there is, including me, I want to get to know God. I think knowing God would be possibly the most amazing thing ever. And I actually have been trying to get to know God for quite some time.

Are you curious? Do you want to know what I've found? Do want to see what God is like?

Ok. Here it is ...

*(call up a couple of volunteers to hold up the transparent sheet)*

Here's what I've discovered. No one has ever seen ...

B: *(making a rushed and dramatic entry)* It's amazing! Wow!!! I heard that you were showing people what God is like. I want to see... *(Crashes into transparent sheet, and falls with standard slapstick style.)*

A: Careful! I was just about to say, "No one has ever seen..."

B: *(Interrupting)* Oh, I'm really sorry. I didn't see your... your ... what is that?

A: As I was just about to say – no one has ever seen God, but ...

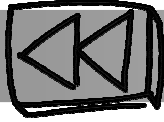
B: *(Interrupting)* Now you tell me. I'm wasting my time here with you. I'm going to look for God myself.

A: All the best with that. My apologies for the interruption. I wonder if you can see the outline on my glass? It's true that no one has ever seen God. There is too much God for our eyes to see – God is so great. God is so much more than we can look at.

B: *(enters, carrying a bush; interrupting)* I've found it. I've found the way to see God. I was out in the bush, the sky was beautiful blue, the birds were singing. All of nature was glorious, and it made me think how amazing is God! How beautiful, how creative ...

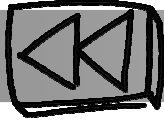
A: Well, you are not the first person to look at the world around and be drawn to think about God.

B: Oh, the tree, the beautiful tree, marvellous tree! Oh, tree I love you tree. Tree, tree, I worship you tree ...



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- A: Hang on, stop! Stop! You've started treating the tree like it's God.
- B: Oops. I just got kind of carried away.
- A: You're not the first person in the history of the world. Lots of times people have been inspired by nature to think about God. But they have sometimes ended up like you, worshipping the actual trees, rivers, animals, instead of being drawn to God.
- B: Right. So the tree isn't God.
- A: No. As I was saying, 'No one has ever seen God.'
- B: *(has lost concentration and is wandering around)* Oh, Look! I found [insert name of director here]. It's the boss. He's so important – you're in charge here, right? Do you know anything about God?
- Director: Yes --
- B: *(cutting in)* Great! Well, you can tell me all about it. But you know what, you're so awesome, I think you should not be 'Director [name]'. You should be 'King [name]'. *(Gives the director a crown).*
- King! King! *(stirring up the audience to join in)*
- King! King! *(begins to bow down before the 'king')*
- A: Hang on, stop! Stop! You've started treating our director like they're God. He's/she's not God.
- B: Oops. I just got kind of carried away.
- A: You're not the first person in the history of the world. Lots of times people have been inspired by great, and some not so great leaders, to think about God. But they have sometimes ended up like you, worshipping the actual leaders, Kings, governments, even ideas, instead of being drawn to God.
- B: Right. So the King isn't God.
- A: No. As I was saying 'No one has ever seen God, but Jesus who ...'
- B: *(wanders off again and is distracted by finding an mp3 player)* Hey, look what I found! Gonna listen to this ... Oh yeah, songs about God. So cool. Whose music is this? Some band called Snack. They are pretty good. *(Sings a few lines of a song, invites the audience to join in.)* Snack are awesome. *(Begins chanting)* Snack! Snack! Snack! Snack!
- A: Oh, dear – we can see where this is heading. Hang on, stop! Stop! You've started treating Snack Music like they're God. They're not God.
- B: Oops. I just got kind of carried away.



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A: You're not the first person in the history of the world. Lots of times people have been inspired by great music and art about God. But they have sometimes ended up like you, worshipping the actual artists, musicians, even the music, instead of being drawn to God. Look closely here.

No one has ever seen God. It's impossible. There's too much to see of God! A God that is really, really truly God, will be way more than our little eyeballs can manage.

B: So, it's impossible then, to know God. God's indescribable and unknowable.

A: Indescribable – yes. Unknowable – no. We can know God in the way that we can be friends with a person and our friendship can't be exactly seen, but it's very, very real.

B: How?

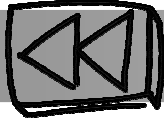
A: Well, if we read all the way around ... No one has ever seen God, but Jesus who is the same as God, has made him known. The way Jesus lived, the things he did and said – all of that shows us God.

B: So ... Trees – not God. Leaders – not God. Art – not God. Jesus – is God.

A: Yes. I reckon if there's a God, and that God made everything there is, trees, leaders, music and even including me, I want to get to know God. I think knowing God would be possibly the most amazing thing ever. And I actually have been trying to get to know God for quite some time.

Are you curious? Do want to see what God is like? Let's keep looking at Jesus, and getting to know God.

*The song 'Forever Reign' (Hillsong) is an excellent summary of the ideas – God being more than we can say, there being 'nothing that compares', the way Jesus displays God's love, and the commitment to sing of 'no other name'.*



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### ***Consequence:***

### **Prayer**

**John 1:18 - No one has ever seen God, but Jesus who is the same as God has made him known.**

Each person will need a strip of transparent plastic (~5x10cm). Overhead Transparency sheets or plastic book covers are ideal.

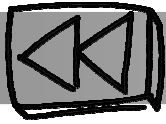
Pre-punch a hole and thread through a loop of fishing line, so it can be hung as an ornament.

Each person will also need a small lump of coloured plasticine.

As you move through the prayer, demonstrate forming the plasticine according to the pictures.

Invite the whole group to join in the phrases in bold.

If you are working in an outdoor setting, write each of the lines in bold onto a large piece of card to display.



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Loving God, You are so great.  
You are far more  
than we can see all at once,  
and so you seem invisible to us.

***Loving God,  
You are so great.***



Take a small lump  
of plasticine and  
squish it in your  
hand.

But we see your goodness and  
your creative power all around us  
in the world that you have made.  
Even though we don't understand  
it all, we are thankful for its  
beauty.

***We see your goodness  
in the world.***



Roll the plasticine  
in to ball, like the  
world.

Thankyou for making us all;  
everybody is unique and so  
precious to you.  
***Thankyou for making us all.***  
Jesus, thankyou for being a  
human, with an ordinary body, a  
down to earth bloke, just like us.  
Thankyou for understanding life as  
we know it.



Form the plasticine  
into a body shape.

Thankyou for showing us what is  
real and important – love, justice,  
truth, grace, living for others, not  
ourselves. Thankyou, Jesus, for  
reminding us that we are made in  
the image of God, that we are  
made for these things, not for  
greed, conflict, manipulation,  
control, hoarding and destroying.  
***Help us to follow your ways,  
aware that you are still close to  
us to help. Amen***



Press the body  
shape firmly against  
the plastic.