



On your marks

A Father's Day special isn't the easiest of all-age services to put together nowadays, as there are children with absent fathers or those whose experience of fatherhood has been negative. This celebration idea could be used in an all-age service or at a Messy Church celebration and focuses on the qualities of the perfect father that come from God, and which can be found not only in families but also in surprising people.

Get set

You will need:

- a couple of presents wrapped up - one should be a cuddly toy animal and one a long present that looks a bit snake-like when wrapped up but in fact is a long string bag with sweets inside!

A useful Old Testament Bible passage to use is Hosea 11, in which God describes how he fathered Israel as his child with kindness and patience: teaching him to walk, healing his hurts and not giving up on him when he turned away.

A parallel New Testament Bible passage is Hebrews 12:7-11, in which the care of our earthly fathers and of God as our heavenly father are compared. God corrects us for our good because he wants us to become the best we can be.

The gospel story focus is Luke 11:11-13.

Go!

1. Story idea: Start by standing at the front, saying nothing but looking up to the ceiling purposefully and without looking down once, seemingly fully absorbed in 'something up there'. Hold this for as long as you can, hopefully arousing curiosity and perhaps amusement!
2. Who do you look up to? Who is a role model for you? Who inspires you to become the best you can be?
3. Today, we're thinking of male role models in particular. Let's hear of a few. Shout out the names of those who fit the following descriptions for you:

A male footballer you admire; a male singer you think is great; a male chef you'd love to prepare a meal for you; a male film star you love to watch; a male TV celebrity who is really good in front of the camera;...

4. Pause and then add the next suggested male role models but this time just ask everyone to think of the person that is this for him or her without shouting out any names:

A male teacher who inspired you; a male friend who has helped you; a male relative who you look up



to; a male member of the family who has loved and cared for you.

5. For many of us, our dads are the best male role models that we have had... but it's not true for everyone, and even the best dads can mess up being a father.
6. In the Bible, we have the best example of a perfect father described to us in how God is towards each one of us:
 - 'Our Father in heaven' as Jesus describes him.
 - A father who goes on loving us even when we refuse his help, as Hosea outlines.
 - A father who sometimes says 'no' or 'not yet' in order to discipline us for our own good, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it.
7. Produce the couple of presents wrapped up, asking what they think is inside - perhaps let some have a feel and take a guess.

Jesus once said that if this present was from your father, would you expect him to give you a cuddly... scorpion? Or a cuddly... snake? Of course not. Even a bad father figure wouldn't be so unkind. If that's true of earthly fathers, then how more eager will God, your heavenly Father, be to give you good things. (This is based on Luke 11:11-13.)

Now unwrap the presents.

God is the perfect father who is dying to give good gifts to us his children.

8. God is the pattern for being the very best father ever and we can find good father figures like this in all sorts of people.
 - For a young man called Timothy in the Bible, the apostle Paul was such a father, even though they weren't related (2 Timothy 2:1).
 - For an even younger teenager called John Mark in the Bible, his older cousin Barnabas was such a father (Acts 15:36-39).
 - And for Jesus, it was his stepfather Joseph who was his earthly father (Luke 2:51-52).

Friends... cousins... stepfathers... teachers... coaches... church leaders... dads... I wonder who you want to thank today because they have been just a bit like God and 'a father' to you.

9. Suggested song: 'Father God, I wonder' - and how about tweaking the chorus so that everyone sings '**We** will sing your praises?'
10. Prayer idea: Use an actions version of the Lord's Prayer, stressing the 'our Father' beginning with each line. For some possible actions, see [Acting out the Lord's Prayer](#).