



Hot Chocolate Club

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Have you ever noticed those kids in your ministry that show a deep connection to the Lord? I call them “magnet kids”—the ones that seem to have a strong magnet between God and themselves. They are drawn towards Him and we see it expressed in times of worship, prayer and discovery.

These kids have been a joy and reward during my 20 plus years of children's ministry, being both a visual encouragement to me personally and carriers of God's presence in our programmes. However, with the need to balance Sunday morning with activities that will engage all kids of a wide age range, time for deeper spiritual pathways can be limited.

It was with great excitement, that three years ago, I heard David Goodwin explain his Hot Chocolate Club resource. The name itself captured my interest, but as he unfolded the concept behind this resource, inspiration flowed through me. I've learned to recognise those times when God is awakening a new thing.

David's resource is a creative six-part discipleship programme for children, based on the Biblical analogy that we are vessels for God to use and fill.

So, three years ago using this resource, and definitely the name, our Hot Chocolate Club was launched. We pitched it for 'kids who want to go deeper with God', aged 8+ and stated that it would be a time of prayer, worship and Bible study. Our first series, using David's resource, went wonderfully! Twelve kids signed up for the series and loved it. It was clear that these kids were hungry for a deeper time of calm, of space, of freedom and of encounter with the Lord, as well as a hunger to learn more of the Scriptures.

After the series ended it was obvious that we would continue Hot Chocolate Club. Each term since, I have written a six-part series covering a variety of topics that have included:

- Treasure—the treasure to be found in the scriptures.

- Easter Journey—a sensory journey through the week before Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Light—Jesus and us as the Light of the World.
- Christmas (2)—the gifts God gives us through Jesus; the nativity.
- Water—discovering different Scriptures about water and what it symbolises.
- GROW—How to grow closer in our relationship with God.
- The Bible—The history and formation of the actual physical book.

Each series includes reading and discussing scriptures, as well as a physical element such as object lessons or craft. Most kids who attend a series become regulars, and our numbers have grown to nineteen currently.

Our Hot Chocolate Club meets on a Tuesday after school and finishes at 5pm. We start in our church lounge, where hot chocolates are enjoyed and friendships have grown amongst the kids. At 3:30pm we move into our kids' ministry space, which is set up as follows:

- One large table area in the middle of the room.
- Enough chairs for all around the table.
- Soft lighting, instrumental worship music playing, candles and wax melts to provide fragrance.

Our kids are reminded before we enter the ministry space, that we are leaving behind our chit chat and coming in to draw near to God.

We start with a time of prayer where we can all bring any prayer needs. This has become a time where kids have felt safe to share their issues knowing that there is prayerful support amongst each other. It is also a time where we bring our

praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. This is followed by worship, which begins without announcement. Two or three worship tracks, that the kids know well, are played as everyone finds their own space anywhere in the room. There they are free to worship in whatever manner they prefer... hands raised, dancing, kneeling, still. This is their time to connect deeply with the Lord.

Straight after worship we go back to the table and into journaling time. Each child has their own journal which is also used for recording information about the current series. This is a silent ten minutes, or more, where everyone writes or draws what they believe God is showing them, or writes a prayer to Him. This is always a very focused time where each kid is deeply engaged one-on-one with the Lord. After a while I ask if anyone would like to share and there are always keen volunteers. We listen to each other and affirm what God is showing us. There's often a discussion around the interpretation of a picture, as we seek what God is saying. I have found in my experience, that children are very open to hearing from God. They lack the barriers that many adults have and receive from Him in a very clear and simple way. We then proceed into the study time of our theme and finish with an activity.

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Our Hot Chocolate Club is a rich time of relationship building and deeper journeying with God. It is a joy for me as I engage with the kids who attend, and a joy for them, as they so readily express.

If anyone is interested in further discussion or would like copies of the resources we've developed, please feel free to contact me—lois.rodler5@gmail.com. ♦