



April 2014

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**St. Michael
Lutheran Church**

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Promise in the Emptiness

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To renew your passion for God.
2. To remind you to continue seeking God, even during empty and difficult times.
3. For opportunities to teach your kids about Jesus' victory over the tomb.

Christmas has the tree, and the stable, and, of course, the Divine Infant. These are all physical things we could touch, and understand.

But Easter is different. In many ways it's about celebrating emptiness: a missing person, unoccupied burial clothes, and a vacant tomb. When you think about it, celebrating the emptiness is very different than celebrating the overflowing gifts and abundance we do at Christmas.

This Easter, don't hesitate to venture into the emptiness with your family. There's incredible hope there, and it's also a place filled with unseen

things—like great opportunities to learn more about the true nature of Jesus.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6)

As the earth wakes from its winter slumber and Easter's hope approaches, remind your family that Jesus was awakened as well. Together, focus on that promise in the emptiness. Plant a tree as a reminder that new life comes from the cold ground. Serve others together to honor Jesus' ultimate service to us.

God loves your family. And this is the perfect season of promise to explore that truth together.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Seeds

Help your kids experience the rebirth of spring and Jesus' resurrection.

Take your family shopping for seed packets. Have each person select a seed packet that most reminds him or her of Easter. Don't explain what you'll do with the packets.

Once home, ask: **Why did you choose the seed packet you did? What other things remind you of Easter? What's most important to you about Easter?**

Say: **The new life of Spring is approaching, and we can also focus on Jesus' new life. As our seeds grow into plants, let's each take time to reconnect with Jesus and thank him for his promise to us of new life.**

Together, plant the seeds in pots or in the ground, and pray: **God, in this time of renewal, please also renew our hearts. Take root in our lives, just as these seeds take root in the ground. In Jesus' name, amen.**

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Real. Bold. Love.

Easter Traditions

Typical Easter traditions include dyed and hidden eggs, sparkly new outfits, and baskets stuffed with candy. You can add something even more important than baskets, bunnies, and bonnets to your family's celebrations, though. Here are easy ideas to create new Easter traditions with deep meaning. Choose an idea that works for your family and add it to your festivities. Your kids will be delighted—and so will you!

Egg Candles—These take a little work, but they're memorable centerpieces for your family devotions, mealtimes, and faith conversations.

You'll need:

- Raw, washed eggs
- An egg-dye kit
- Double boiler
- Votive candles
- Wire-core candle wicks (available at craft stores)
- Funnel

Break off the top portion of the eggs and clean out the shell. Dye the eggs following the directions on the package. In a double boiler melt the votive candles.

Cut the wicks to four inches, flatten one end into the bottom of the egg, and fasten it to the bottom with a drop of wax. Use the funnel to pour the wax into the eggs. Let the wax harden for two hours, and trim the wick to ¼-inch. Enjoy your candles!

Empty—Gift-wrap an empty box. Then gather as a family and talk about the importance of Easter, and why it's a cause for celebration. Sing a couple of Easter songs, such as "Christ the Lord is Risen Today," and then open the empty box. Pray together, thanking God for the gift of an empty tomb and Jesus' Resurrection.

Easter Egg Account—Number 12 plastic eggs from 1 to 12. Inside the first 11 eggs, place a slip of paper with Scriptures from Luke 24: 1-12 relating to Jesus' crucifixion. Leave the last egg empty to represent the empty tomb.

- Have family members take turns reading and discussing the Scriptures, saving the empty egg for last.
- Or, open one egg every day leading up to Easter—like an Easter Advent calendar.



Family Tablecloth—Place a new, white tablecloth on the table for Easter dinner. When the meal is over, have each person choose a permanent marker and sign or draw on the tablecloth. Write the year near the signatures. Each year, sign again in a new spot—adding the year each time. You could have kids draw pictures near their names. Years later you'll have a wonderful memory—maybe one you'll have the grandkids sign, too.

"You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body."

—Mark 16:6

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIES

Title: Heaven is for Real

Genre: Drama

Rating: PG (for thematic elements)

Cast: Greg Kinnear, Kelly Reilly, Thomas Haden Church

Synopsis: When a 4-year-old boy has a near-death experience, he wakes up with vivid accounts of heaven—and knowledge about things he's never been told. His family grapples with how to handle this information. The movie is based on the real-life experience of Colton Burpo.

Our Take: Whatever your take on Colton's experience, this film will create great opportunities to discuss heaven and our place in it.



BOOK

Title: Battle Bunny

Synopsis: In this picture book by Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett, a young boy's Gran Gran gives him a sweet little bunny picture book for his birthday. He proceeds to draw all over the book—adding his own art, changing the story, and making it just the sort of book a boy would want to read.

Our Take: This little book is ridiculously clever. It's original, slightly subversive, and laugh-out-loud funny. It does skew toward boys, but that doesn't mean girls won't enjoy it, too. You could use this book to talk about how God has given everyone creativity, and how we can exercise it—in nondestructive ways.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Researchers at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research say most preschoolers can tell the difference between healthy food options and junk food. Unfortunately, research also found that kids exposed to more TV commercials don't listen to their voice of reason and will often choose junk food if it's available. (*counselheal.com*)

QUICK STATS

Easter Cavities: Americans spend more than 2 billion dollars annually on Easter candy. (*statisticbrain.com*)

Keeping Tabs: Thirty-eight percent of children under age 2 used a tablet or smartphone before they could speak in full sentences. (*mashable.com*)

Alone and Online: Fifty-three percent of kids in the UK often go online without parental supervision. (*anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Teslagrad

This 2D platformer uses magnetism and other electromagnetic powers to solve puzzles and advance the story, which is told with no text or dialogue—only through beautiful, hand-drawn visuals. *Rating: Pending; Nintendo Wii U*

mowillems.com

This site is a launching-off point for all the author's creations, including Pigeon and Gerald & Piggie. The site is full of games, book summaries, and parent guides you can download and use with the books.

Chatterpix Kids app

This free app lets kids take pictures of animals, people, or whatever strikes their fancy. Kids can add a mouth to the object, record a message, and their picture will speak. It's cute and lets kids be creative. Plus, there are no in-app purchases! Available in the App Store.

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April

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 April Fool's Day. Just kidding. It was yesterday.	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Scrabble Day	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 Easter	21	22 Earth Day	23	24	25	26 National Pretzel Day
27	28	29	30			

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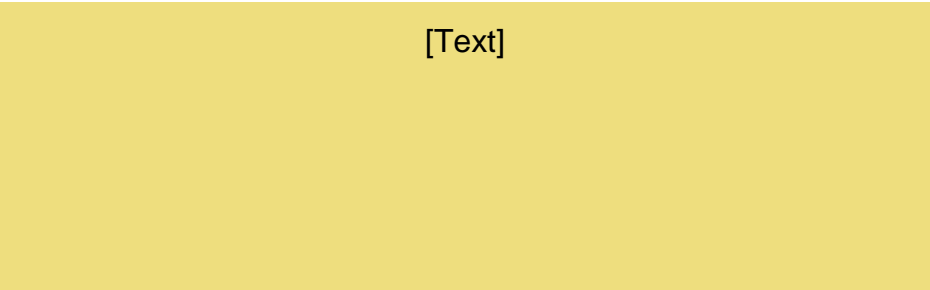
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