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# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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## Jesus Loves Us

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To assure your children of God's never-ending love for them.
2. To bless your family's Easter preparations, as you remember Jesus' sacrifice for your sins.
3. To help your family members be "living sacrifices" who do all things for Jesus.

Last month's issue emphasized that love means nothing unless we put it into action. Jesus loves us so much he sacrificed everything—including his very life—on the cross. Then he rose again to give us new life.

That glorious Easter message is the best news we can share with our kids—and the world around us. God did something incomprehensible because of God's unfailing love. His resurrection opens the door to heaven.

As parents, we can put this big, abstract concept in understandable bites. But kids of all ages *can* understand the gospel, as well as what it means to make their own sacrifices to God. Use these tips to talk about Easter with your kids.

**Ages 2 to 5:** Tell young children that people who hated Jesus nailed him to a cross and left him there until he died. Explain how sad and afraid Jesus' friends were, but emphasize their joy when he returned to life three days later.

**Ages 6 to 9:** Fairness is a big deal at this age, so explain in simple language that Jesus willingly died in our place because he loves us. Kids may be fascinated by crucifixion details. Avoid euphemisms for death such as sleeping.

**Ages 10 to 12:** Kids who are familiar with the details of Easter are ready for the "why." Explain why Jesus had to die for us, referring to the blood sacrifices required in the Old Testament.

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## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### The Gift of Salvation

Make a giant cross out of poster board, draw a large heart in the middle, and tape it to a wall. Give each family member a gift bow with his or her name written on it in permanent marker.

Read aloud Ephesians 2:8. Say: **This Bible verse says we have a special gift from God. The gift is that we can go to heaven when we die because Jesus died on the cross for our sins.**

Play a version of Pin the Bows on the Cross. Have family members close their eyes and try to stick their bows on the heart in the middle of the cross. Afterward, have people each put their bow on their own heart.

Ask: **What gift did Jesus give each of us? How do we know Jesus loves us?** Say: **Jesus died on the cross so we can live forever in heaven with him. Let's pray to thank him for that!**

Close in prayer.

## Celebrate Jesus' Sacrifice

Because children think concretely, they understand Easter in vivid, literal images. They may understand that God brought Jesus back to life in a literal way, but from that point on, the account and its big-picture impact can get abstract. What does it mean that Jesus sacrificed himself for us? Why did he have to do that? For Jesus' sacrifice to make sense, children must know about sin—theirs and everyone else's. When kids realize they can't do anything to save themselves from that sin, they gain a greater appreciation of Jesus' suffering and death for the whole world's sins. Out of gratitude, kids also can make their own sacrifices to Jesus as they dedicate their lives to him. Use these ideas as you prepare for Easter.

**Saved From Sin**—Give your children sticky notepads. Ask them to write (or draw) things they've done wrong and stick the notes on themselves. Then quickly come by, take their papers, and stick them on you. Discuss how Jesus removed our sins by taking them on himself.

**Easter Hunt**—Hide treasures from the Easter account (such as nails, donkey "fur," a small cup). Then create a treasure map and send your kids to find all the treasures. After they're all found, read aloud *Benjamin's Box* by Melody Carlson (Zonderkidz). This is a fun way to remind kids what Jesus did for them on Good Friday and Easter.

**A Great Banquet**—Read aloud Luke 14:15-24, about the man who held a banquet with surprising guests. As a family, plan your own fancy banquet near Easter. Have each family member choose one guest who might not get many party invitations or who needs some extra love. Kids can make special place mats and decorations, as well as help prepare the meal. Use the experience to discuss making sacrifices for other people—and to share Jesus' love with your guests.

**Easter Art Show**—As Easter approaches, encourage family members to get creative. Have them demonstrate the reason we celebrate Easter by drawing or painting a picture, creating a clay sculpture, sewing an object, building a block structure, taking photos, or creating a collage. Display the depictions throughout your home or at church. You could also give some of the artwork to family, friends, or neighbors.

**Rose of Sharon**—Read aloud *The Little Rose of Sharon* by Nan Gurley (Chariot Victor). Sit in a circle and pass around a fresh rose, with each family member removing one petal until they're all gone. (What's left will be the stem with the leaves making the shape of a star.) Describe sacrifice as giving up something, and ask each person to share big and little sacrifices they make. Explain that when we sacrifice for God, we shine like stars. Tell how God sacrificed Jesus, God's only Son, for us, and then have family members share what they can sacrifice, or give up, for God. Afterward, make bookmarks with the rose petals. Laminate them with contact paper and deliver them to homebound church members.

**"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."**

**—Romans 12:1**

## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *Cinderella*

**Genre:** Adventure, Drama, Family

**Rating:** PG (mild thematic elements)

**Cast:** Lily James, Hayley Atwell, Helena Bonham Carter

**Synopsis:** The classic fairy tale gets a live-action retelling from director Kenneth Branagh. After her parents die, young Ella is at the mercy of a cruel stepfamily until she meets her prince. Throughout various challenges, Cinderella determines to honor her mother by being kind and brave.

**Our Take:** Children of all ages will enjoy this new version of a favorite story. Use the movie to spark discussions about family relationships, maintaining hope, being kind to people who aren't kind to us, and showing courage amid difficulties.



### MUSIC

**Title:** *Saints and Sinners*

**Artist:** Matt Maher

**Synopsis:** Maher is a 40-year-old contemporary Christian singer, songwriter, and worship leader. At World Youth Day 2013 in Brazil, he performed for a crowd of 4 million people. *Saints and Sinners*, Maher's eighth studio album, releases on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

**Our Take:** Maher says his new songs were influenced by quotes, hymns, and stories of godly people throughout history. But he also explores how "God can call you and I both saints and yet we are still very much tethered to the ground in our humanity." The new album's first single, "Because He Lives (Amen)," uses simple, straightforward lyrics to express the joy of Easter.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Social Media 101**—Proper online behavior is now a topic in some schools. Jay Donaldson, who teaches social-media know-how to 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders in Canada, says although many preteens now have cell phones, they're rarely educated on how to use them safely.

**Co-Parent Shopping**—Websites are multiplying to help people co-parent...with a platonic partner. At sites like Co-ParentMatch.com, people desiring children can set up various arrangements. Critics accuse such sites of encouraging adults to "time-share" a child.

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Kirby and the Rainbow Curse

Players guide fan-favorite Kirby through a Claymation world by drawing rainbow "ropes" for him. Waddle Dee allies provide backup, allowing players to collect lots of items and stars. This Wii U game is a sequel to *Kirby: Canvas Curse* on DS.

### OLOGY

When kids visit [amnh.org/explore/ology](http://amnh.org/explore/ology), sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History, they can explore various branches of science, from anthropology to zoology. Users receive immediate feedback on quizzes. Best for ages 8 to 10.

### GeckoLife

Billed as a "safe social app" for the whole family, this lets you create shared spaces for updates, memories, and interaction. Parents can control what kids share and who they hear from. The free app, which was recently updated, has no minimum age in its user agreement.

## QUICK STATS

**Keeping Up**—In a survey of more than 3,500 parents, 78 percent admit they've felt the need to outdo other parents when it comes to their kids. The average amount parents say they'll spend per month to ensure their kids have more than their peers is \$532. ([couponcodespro.com](http://couponcodespro.com))

**Take a "Stand"**—Kids who use standing workstations at school burn 15 percent more calories than kids who sit at traditional desks. For obese children, that figure jumps to 25 percent. Health officials say prolonged sitting increases people's health risks, even if they exercise regularly. (*Texas A&M; Annals of Internal Medicine*)

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