



April 2015

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**St. Michael  
Lutheran Church**

**hope@stmhc.us**



## Rejoice in Forgiveness

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To show your family members the power of God's forgiveness and mercy.
2. To forgive sins that have been weighing you down.
3. To help you forgive one another, just as God forgives you.

When God created humans in God's image, we were perfect. But after sin entered the world, we needed a Savior. The good news of Easter is that Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross for our sins and then rose again. Because of Jesus' victory, we can receive the free gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

Jesus tells us, as forgiven people, to also extend forgiveness to others who wrong us. That isn't always easy, especially when an offender doesn't seem sorry. But Jesus helps us follow his example of offering love, compassion, and forgiveness—even to our enemies.

Writer Peter Ustinov called love "an act of endless forgiveness." A constant focus on forgiveness is

especially important in families. Every day, hurt feelings, grudges, and slights interfere with our relationships with the people we love most.

Children need to experience the feeling of being forgiven to begin forgiving others. They also must learn that forgiveness is more than just accepting an apology. It also involves resisting the urge to retaliate, get even, or make someone pay for mistakes. We become vulnerable as we allow that person back into our lives—and that's also a big part of loving others.

As you help your children understand that Jesus forgives them and that they can forgive others, share the joy and freedom that comes from both experiences. Read on to learn practical ideas for exploring forgiveness as a family.

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## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### The Math of Forgiveness

Sit in a circle, and give each family member a beanbag (or ball). Say: **The Bible says everyone does wrong things. Put your beanbag in the center of the circle to represent something you've done wrong.** Pause. Say: **When Jesus forgives us, it's like subtraction.**

Together, count the beanbags in the pile. Then have each person take a turn saying, "Jesus, please forgive me" while you take away one beanbag and place it behind you. After everyone has spoken, the pile will be gone.

Say: **When God forgives us, God takes away the wrong things we do.**

Ask: **What's important to you about Jesus forgiving you? How can that help you to forgive others?**

Read aloud Isaiah 1:18, and close in prayer, thanking Jesus for the gift of forgiveness.

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## Freely Forgiven

Because forgiveness is an abstract concept, it's important to model it for kids of all ages. When you mess up, let your kids see you apologize. Be specific about what you're apologizing for, and ask for forgiveness. When young children do something wrong, offer hugs and say, "I love you, and I forgive you." Learn to apologize together by practicing it with your kids. Help your kids learn to say they're sorry through nonverbal means (drawing a picture or giving a hug). During family prayers, practice saying, "I'm sorry." Admit to Jesus that you've all made mistakes and are sorry; then ask for forgiveness together. Try these fun activities to emphasize the freedom that comes with forgiveness.

### Wrapped in Forgiveness—

Spread a white sheet on the floor, and gather around it. Talk about how after Jesus died on the cross, he was wrapped in a special cloth. Say that Jesus died so we can have his gift of forgiveness. When we do something wrong, we can tell Jesus and say we're sorry. Then he forgives us so we don't have to worry about it anymore. Have family members use washable markers to "paint" their finger and place their fingerprint on the sheet as a reminder that we all do things that make Jesus sad. Have an adult use a permanent marker to draw hearts around the fingerprints and print people's names under each heart. Pray together, telling Jesus you're sorry for the things you do wrong and thanking him for forgiving you. Before Easter, wash the sheet. The fingerprint stains will be gone, leaving only a reminder of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

**Forgiveness Cross—**Cut red plastic film into a cross shape. On white paper, write "sin" with a red pencil. Then write "forgiveness" in lead pencil. Make sure the words fit within the cross borders. Cover "forgiveness" with red pencil dots or scribbles so the word can't be easily read. Slide the red film over the paper and watch "sin"

disappear and "forgiveness" shine through. Explain how Jesus died to take away our sin and replace it with God's forgiveness.

**Shake It Off—**Use an Etch-A-Sketch toy to demonstrate the clean slate of Jesus' forgiveness. Take suggestions for an item to draw, and after attempting it, express unhappiness with your artwork. Explain that one of the Etch-A-Sketch's greatest features is its erasing ability. Turn the toy upside-down and give it a big shake. Read 1 John 1:9 and discuss these questions: What is sin? What does it mean to confess our sins? What happens when we confess our sins to Jesus? to each other?

**Forgotten and Forgiven—**Pass around Silly Putty and comic strips. Show kids how to transfer pictures to the clay, stretch it, and then squeeze it into a ball to erase the pictures. After experimenting awhile, discuss these questions: How is erasing pictures like God forgiving us? How do you feel knowing that God doesn't remember your sins? What makes it easy or hard to forgive other people? Close by reading Jeremiah 31:34 and Ephesians 4:32.

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

—Colossians 3:13

## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *Home*

**Genre:** Computer-animated comedy

**Rating:** PG

**Cast:** Rihanna, Jim Parsons, Jennifer Lopez, Steve Martin

**Synopsis:** This buddy comedy is based on the children's book *The True Meaning of Smekday*. A lovable alien named Oh lands on Earth and strikes up a friendship with a girl named Tip. Through adventures, the duo embraces their differences, realizes it's okay to make mistakes, and learns the true meaning of home.

**Our Take:** This family-friendly movie is sure to generate laughs, but it can also spark conversations about deeper topics. Talk to your kids about unlikely friendships, coping with failure, and what "home" means to them.



### MUSIC

**Title:** *Cinema*

**Band:** 1 Girl Nation

**Synopsis:** This all-girl ensemble released its self-titled debut album in 2013, as well as a Christmas EP in 2014. They're busy this spring, releasing a 40-day devotional for girls (*No Filter*), embarking on a conference tour for preteens and young teenagers (Guard Your Heart LIVE), and releasing their second full-length album (*Cinema*).

**Our Take:** 1 Girl Nation has received positive reviews for high-energy pop melodies, as well as biblical lyrics that are relevant to young listeners. Reviewers agree that 1 Girl Nation avoids the clichés of preteen pop. The group's musical styles range from dance tunes to piano ballads.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Vaccine Pushback**—Due to recent measles outbreaks, more pediatricians are refusing patients whose parents are "anti-vaxxers." Doctors recommend that parents of at-risk children inquire about other people's vaccine status just as they'd ask whether someone smokes or keeps a gun at home.

**Unwrapped**—Oddly enough, one of the most popular YouTube channels features an anonymous woman unwrapping collectible toys. In fact, videos of people simply unboxing new toys jumped 57% last year. (*Open Slate*)

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Yoshi's Woolly World

This anticipated Wii U game has a look similar to *Kirby's Epic Yarn*. The characters and environment all have the look of yarn and cloth. Yoshi produces balls of yarn, which players can use to perform various tasks.

### Curiosity Machine

At [curiositymachine.org](http://curiositymachine.org), kids from grades K to 12 can tackle various engineering design challenges. Anyone can create a free account, and parents can help young inventors create hands-on objects while developing STEM skills.

### The Fools

This fun educational app introduces kids to computer coding. The free version has three levels of play. Although the app was created for children ages 6 to 8, older kids also will enjoy the characters and challenges.

## QUICK STATS

**Census Insights**—Of America's 73.7 million children:

- 38% have at least one foreign-born parent.
- 20% receive food-stamp benefits—more than before the 2007 recession.
- 15% have a stay-at-home mom.
- 0.6% have a stay-at-home dad. (*census.gov*)

**Young Caregivers at Risk**—About 1.3 million U.S. preteens spend their free time caring for a family member suffering from a physical or mental illness or substance abuse. Chronic stress of such caregiving puts kids at risk for school failure and poor health, experts say. (*psychcentral.com*)

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