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theParentLink

Children's Ministry Edition

Santa Clara Church of Christ
Children's Ministry



Celebrate Jesus' Resurrection

Each spring, we see reminders of new life and rebirth. Trees bud, flowers bloom, and butterflies emerge from their cocoons. For Christians, the most important celebration of new life is Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter. Children may associate this holiday mainly with bunnies, baskets, and candy. So it's important to share with them the real reason we rejoice: the empty tomb.

Use these creative ideas to share the Easter message with children of all ages. Let them know that Jesus, our loving Savior, died and rose again so we can go to heaven and be with him forever.

Easter Sunday—Using a stamp pad and colored pencils, make thumbprint pictures that tell the Easter story. For example, draw a tomb with a rolled-away thumbprint rock and a butterfly with thumbprint wings.

Resurrection Buns—Make edible "empty tombs" with just a few ingredients. Wrap a packaged crescent-roll triangle around a large marshmallow. Dip the roll in melted butter, then cinnamon and sugar. Cook the rolls according to the instructions on the roll package. The marshmallows "disappear" and leave an empty, sweet surprise.

Read aloud Luke 24:1-12. Then give each family member a roll and have them take one bite. Ask: "What do you see inside your roll? How do you think the women felt when they found the tomb empty?" Say: "Remember that even as these rolls are empty, Jesus' tomb was empty, too, because he rose from the dead."

Faith Findings

- Researcher George Barna found that children are most likely to believe in Jesus as their Savior and form a lifelong relationship with him between the ages of 5 and 13. According to Barna's findings, people are up to eight times more likely to become Christians before age 13 than they are after age 13.
- According to a Gallup Poll, 84% of people who don't go to church believe that Jesus rose from the dead.



PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To bless your Easter celebrations and keep your focus on his resurrection.
2. To help your children know that Easter is for them.
3. To keep the joy of Easter in your hearts all year long.

Parenting Insights

These age-level insights from *Children's Ministry Magazine* will help you share the Easter message with kids of all ages.

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 Jesus returned to life three days later.

Ages 6 to 9

Fairness is a big deal at this age, so explain in simple language that Christ 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 the Easter story are ready for the "why." Explain why it was necessary for Christ to die, referring to the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament.

OpenTheBook

"Don't be afraid!" [the angel] said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen."
Matthew 28:5-6

By dying in our place and rising from the dead, Jesus gives his followers eternal life in heaven. That's worth celebrating at Easter—and every day!

Teachable Moments

1. Jelly Bean Joy—Use the candy in children's Easter baskets to remind them of God's love. In this poem, each color represents part of the Easter story:

Orange is for sins we've done.
Red is for the blood of God's only Son.
White is for the grace he gives.
Green is for new life in him.
Yellow is for your place in heaven.
Invite Jesus into your life and be truly forgiven.



2. New Life—Go on a walk to collect lots of twigs (or use toothpicks instead). Use a low-temperature hot glue gun to attach the twigs to a clean, empty soup can. Then fill the "vase" with fresh flowers as you talk about how the twigs are like our lives before Jesus (dead and broken) and how the flowers represent our lives with Jesus (new and alive).



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Talk to children about the real meaning of Easter—and what Jesus did for us—by asking these questions:

1. What happened on the first Easter, and why is that so exciting?
2. Why do you think Jesus had to die on the cross? Why were his friends so surprised to see him again afterward?
3. What does Easter mean to you? How does it change your life?
4. Why does God want us to tell other people what happened on Easter? What are some ways you can do that?

Instill a Deep Love for God's Word

During Jesus' earthly ministry, he encouraged people to bring their children to him, and he praised the qualities of childlike faith. More than 50% of Christians choose to follow Jesus between ages 5 and 9. So it's never too early to nurture this most important relationship. And you don't need a theology degree to help your children love the Bible. Here are some easy steps to spark a passion for Scripture:

Provide age-appropriate resources. Look for books and materials that encourage spiritual development. Take advantage of your local and church libraries, as well as experts at Christian bookstores.

Read to children and let them see you reading the Bible. Reading aloud is one of the best things parents can do for their children's development. So why not use that one-on-one time to read from God's Word? Also, model a love for Scripture by letting children see you read (and live) it regularly.



Partner with your local church. Parents and churches can work together to help children discover God's message of love and salvation. Talk to your pastor or children's pastor for ideas about nurturing your children's relationship with God.

Adapt as your children grow. Watch for cues that children have outgrown Bible storybooks. After reading with your older children, ask questions that encourage them to dig deeper into God's Word.



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

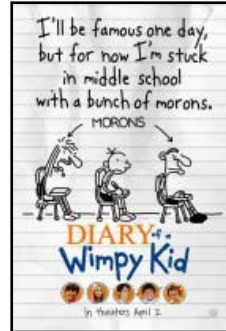
Genre: Live-action/animated comedy

Rating: PG (for some rude humor and language)

Cast: Zachary Gordon, Chloe Moretz, Devon Bostick

Synopsis: This film is based on the first book of Jeff Kinney's popular "novel-in-cartoon" fiction series. It features the adventures of Greg, an awkward kid trying to survive middle school. Greg faces teasing from bullies and embarrassment from his friends and parents. One character calls middle school an "intellectual wasteland."

Discussion Questions: For you, what are the funnest and toughest parts of school, and why? Where do you fit in as part of your school's social scene? What makes you feel either wimpy or strong? Read aloud Ephesians 6:10. How does God give you strength to face each day?



What Music Is Releasing

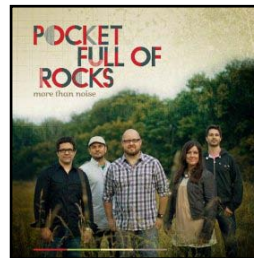
Artist: Pocket Full of Rocks

Album: *More Than Noise*

Artist Info: This band has been creating praise music together for 16 years. They got their start by leading worship at their Texas church and got their big break when Michael W. Smith used their song "Let It Rain" on his 2001 album.

Summary: *More Than Noise* has a more aggressive sound than the band's previous two albums. "Alive," the first single, is already climbing the Christian radio charts. In it, the band sings: "Every day I find your mercy new. And every moment that I spend with you, I am overwhelmed by grace I can't keep to myself."

Discussion Questions: How does having a relationship with God make you feel? What's the most amazing part of being a Christian? Read aloud 1 Corinthians 9:16. Why is it hard to keep God's good news to yourself? How often do you share your faith with others, and why?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>The Daring Game for Girls</i>	To earn gear, players face challenges ranging from freeze tag and jump rope to spy games and cave exploring.	E; Wii, Nintendo DS
<i>Touchmaster 3</i>	Twenty new games include card games, puzzles, word games, and strategy contests. Involves some poker-related strategy.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Supreme Commander 2</i>	In this real-time war-strategy game, players customize armies and machines for battle. Contains cartoon violence.	E10; Xbox 360, PC

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- New "social mapping" apps such as Loopt, foursquare, and Gowalla track users' movements and alert them to others' whereabouts. Safety experts warn that these apps aren't for kids.
- More kid-friendly electronic devices are on toy shelves, including digital scrapbooking kits, e-reading devices, and toddler-themed remote control items.



Quick Stats

- 30% of preteens say they often worry about their family's financial difficulties. (USA Today)
- Parents who are devoted to volunteerism and attend weekly worship with their children are correlated with having teens who are 40% less likely to be sexually active compared to the national average. (Institute of Marriage & Family Canada)

