



March 2008

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Nurture Friendship With Jesus

Easter offers many opportunities for families to reflect on Jesus' love and sacrifice—and to strengthen relationships with him. It's also the perfect time to help children realize that Jesus is more than a long-ago historical figure. He's alive and always with us, and he's the best friend we'll ever have.

Most children won't yet understand terms such as "Savior," "Redeemer," and "Lamb of God"—terms they'll likely hear a lot of this Easter. And concepts such as death and resurrection are too abstract for little ones to grasp. To describe a relationship with God in child-friendly language, there's no better word than "friend." Children are familiar and comfortable with the concept. They're starting to form their own friendships and know how it feels to have and be a friend.

Try this approach for sharing the message that Jesus is our forever friend:

Talk to children about their friends. Have kids talk about their friends' special traits. Ask what they like to play with each individual and why their friends are important to them.

Brainstorm the qualities of good friends. Ask children what good friends do and how they act. Discuss what makes someone your best friend. Ask older children what they're willing—and unwilling—to do for their friends.

Share the good news that Jesus is the perfect friend. Children learn pretty early that friends can let them down. Remind your kids that God's Son, Jesus, loves them so much that he died for them. He'll never leave them or disappoint them. No matter who your children befriend on earth, Jesus will always be their best friend. Because Jesus came back to life on Easter, we can have a "forever friendship" with him on earth and in heaven.



Faith-Filled Families

Almost two-thirds (64%) of parents said they've grown more religious since having children, in a recent *Parents* magazine poll. More than half (57%) said they attend worship more than once a week. And 90% said they regularly talk with their children "about God or a higher power." When parents were asked about the challenges of raising spiritual kids, their top two answers were society's lack of support for religious values (33%) and busy schedules (24%).

PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To show your children that Jesus is their very best friend.
2. To help you nurture your children's growing friendship with Jesus.
3. To fill your Easter celebrations with joy, learning, and spiritual growth.
4. To assure your children—and you—that Jesus is always with you.

Parenting Insights

Help your children build strong, lasting friendships with Jesus:

1. Show kids how your relationship with God works. In age-appropriate words, talk to children about times you've felt really close to God.
2. Model a prayer life for children. Let kids overhear your daily talks with God. Also, frequently discuss ways that God answers your prayers.
3. Emphasize that the Bible is relevant. Apply a specific biblical message to a child's situation. For example, if your children are afraid, explain that the Bible says God will never leave them.
4. Encourage children to trust Jesus during tough times. Remind kids that their best friend, Jesus, has a plan for their lives.

(Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children)

OpenTheBook

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves.... Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you.”
John 15:12-16 (NLT)

Jesus demonstrated the ultimate love and friendship for us by dying on the cross. Because he didn’t stay in the tomb, we’re no longer slaves to sin. Instead, he chose us to be his friends and to live with him forever.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Use signs of spring to introduce children to the Easter story.** When you see blooming flowers and budding trees, talk about how God makes things come alive again.
- 2. Say simple prayers with children throughout the day.** Friends like to talk to each other often. By praying, we can keep in constant contact with God.
- 3. Tie in the Easter message to your family traditions.** During an egg hunt, for example, talk about how Jesus is always looking for us—and looking out for



“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

What does Easter mean to your children? While it’s fun to fill baskets and enjoy candy, make sure kids know Easter Sunday’s real significance. Start a conversation with your children about the holiday—and the real reason we celebrate. Ask:

1. Why is Easter so exciting? What do you look forward to the most, and why?
2. What happened on the first Easter? What would it have been like to see the empty tomb that morning?
3. Why did Jesus die for us? What can you tell him for doing that?
4. Why is Jesus such a good friend? What do you want to tell other people about him? Who can you tell about Jesus this week?

Family Experience: Friendship Eggs

Try this easy, memorable Easter experience to celebrate your relationships with each other. Invite extended family members or neighborhood children to join in the fun!



When you dye eggs this Easter, make the experience even more meaningful by affirming one another in the process. Prepare several dozen hard-boiled eggs. Cover a table with newspaper, and set out crayons, spoons, and bowls of egg dye.

Give each person an egg. Have everyone use crayons to write on the egg the name of the person to their right. (Assist younger children.) Then encourage people to write or draw something they appreciate about that person. Take turns dipping eggs into the dye.

Afterward, have each person tell what they wrote and why. Continue writing affirmations and coloring eggs so everyone has a pile of eggs—and friendship reminders.

For a faith connection, use this egg-dyeing experience as an opportunity to talk about how God changes people when they believe in him (just like the eggs changed!).



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *College Road Trip* (Disney)

Genre: Comedy

Release Date: March 7

Cast: Raven-Symoné, Martin Lawrence, Donny Osmond

Synopsis: An overachieving high school student (Raven) is eager to gain independence at college. But her protective father (Martin Lawrence) isn't ready to let his daughter grow up. Cross-generational sparks fly during this wacky trip.

Rating: This family-friendly comedy is rated G (appropriate for all audiences).

Discussion Questions: Discover how your children feel about growing up. Ask: What are you most excited and most scared about, and why? How much independence should you have at each age? How do you want our relationship to change as you get older?



What Music Is Releasing

Song: "Tattoo"

Artist Info: Jordin Sparks, 18, won *American Idol* last year. She recently released her debut, self-titled album. Sparks describes herself as energetic, independent, and positive. She stays grounded in her faith, saying, "I want [people] to know God loves them, Jesus died for them, and that God has a plan for their life."

Summary: Sparks is a positive role model for kids. Her music ranges from pop to ballads, with clean lyrics that are appropriate for a young audience.

Discussion Questions: "Tattoo" tells about moving on from a broken relationship with a person who remains on the singer's heart "just like a tattoo." Ask kids: What impact do other people make on your life, even after they're gone? What impact does God make on your heart when you have a relationship with him?



What Games Are Out

Title	Rating/Age/Content	Platform
Rock Band	T for some suggestive lyrics. Kids become rock stars and go on a worldwide tour.	Xbox 360
NFL Tour	E for mild lyrics and mild violence. Cartoonish violence with extreme unprotected tackles.	PS3, Xbox360
Burnout Paradise	E10+ for language and car-related violence. Songs contain some edgy lyrics. Game rewards dangerous and illegal behavior.	PS3, Xbox

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



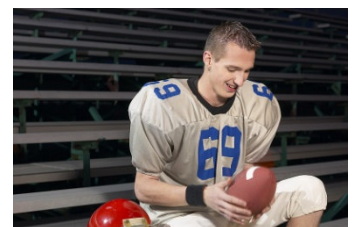
Culture & Trends

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

- Because childhood obesity has skyrocketed, toy makers are trying to get kids to move. Videos, dance mats, and even a stationary bike game system promote exercise.
- Designers are keeping kids' preferences in mind when creating new schools. Features include spaces for individual work, more technology, and better air quality.

Quick Stats

- Kids who feel close to their dads are twice as likely to go to college or get a steady job after high school, according to a 20-year study. (*Parents*)
- 10% of athletes ages 9 to 15 admitted cheating, 13% admitted trying to hurt an opponent, and 27% 'fessed up to acting like bad sports. (*USA Today*)



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