

Share Easter's message of forgiveness



As we prepare to celebrate another Easter, young people (and adults, for that matter) may have heard the story so many times that they forget how it impacts them. Christians know that Jesus rose from the dead so we can spend eternity in heaven. But what does Easter mean for your teenagers—and your family—on a daily basis?

Because Jesus didn't stay in the grave, our sins are gone. The good news for teenagers, who often feel overwhelmed by temptations and failures, is that God not only forgives but also forgets. He removes our sins "as far from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12, NLT). Easter's message, year after

year, is that we're forgiven, no matter what sins we've committed. The weight of sin is released, so young people don't need to live with regret over past mistakes.

Look for opportunities during this season to remind your teenagers that Easter is specifically for them. Share the good news that each of us is a new person because of Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Then set an example by asking for and granting forgiveness within your family. Just as importantly, forget offenses by letting go of grudges, which take a toll on relationships.

Just as Easter is the most important Christian holiday, the Easter message of forgiveness is the most important news you can share with your teenagers. Use the ideas and questions in this newsletter to get kids talking about forgiveness—and to remind them what Easter means for them.

Help your family start some conversations about forgiveness and then put it into practice:

1. Read about Bible characters who have been forgiven. Talk about what each person did, what led to repentance, and how God showed mercy. How did lives change after sins were forgiven?

2. Talk about current events. Recent news stories have been filled with issues of forgiveness. Discuss people's decisions to forgive, talking about what you would do in each situation.

3. Celebrate a clean slate. Start some new Easter traditions that focus on forgiveness. For example, have family members each write down some sins on slips of paper. Take turns nailing the slips to a slab of wood or shredding them. End with time for silent prayer.

4. Discuss conflicts openly. When problems arise, immediately sit down to talk things out. Approach disagreements with an attitude of forgiveness, and don't rehash old issues that have already been forgiven.



How much do you rely on God's forgiveness?

Adults were asked, "The last time you prayed, did you ... ask for forgiveness?"

Yes — 67%
No — 33%

(Baylor Religion Survey)



Teens were asked, "How much has religion helped to relieve your feelings of guilt by providing you [with] forgiveness?"

A lot — 27%
Some — 25%
A little — 15%
None — 18%

(The National Study of Youth and Religion)

Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Forgiveness is crucial for Christians, but it might not be on your teenager's mind outside of a church setting. Use these questions to get kids thinking and talking about the subject:

1. Do you feel like you deserve God's forgiveness? Why or why not? Is there any sin you could commit that God couldn't or wouldn't forgive? Explain.
2. How often do people need to ask God to forgive their sins? Do we need to confess everything we've done wrong (or failed to do right)? Explain.
3. After you ask God for forgiveness, do you still feel guilty about your sins? How can you be sure that your sins are really forgiven?
4. How does it feel to be forgiven? What does repentance look like in someone's life?
5. How easy or difficult is it for you to forgive other people? Are you willing to forgive someone over and over again?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will bless your family's Easter worship and celebrations, making them meaningful and uplifting.
2. God will forgive you and help you model forgiveness in your family.
3. Your teenager will confess their sins to God and be freed from the burdens of sin and guilt.
4. Your teenager has a forgiving spirit toward other people.

Verse of the month

"Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him.... So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.... Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace." (Romans 6:9, 11-12, 14, NIV)

Since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, sin has literally had a "death grip" on people. Sin's reign ended on Easter morning, when Jesus conquered the grave. Still, we struggle each day with urges to serve our sinful natures. Teenagers, who face all kinds of rules and pressures, may feel doomed by their sinfulness. So it's essential that they hear the good news of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. While you encourage teenagers to confess their sins to God, also let them know they don't need to beat themselves up for being sinners. Jesus' Easter victory makes us victorious as well!



Did you know...

* Two-thirds (63%) of teenagers said their church has helped them learn about forgiveness "very well." But 29% of teenagers indicated that they want to learn more about this topic: "Can I really be forgiven for all my sins, even the really bad ones?" (*Group Magazine*)

* Less than half (43%) of teenagers said their church has helped them know whether Jesus really rose from the dead. (*Group Magazine*)

* More than one-third (35%) of teenagers said their parents have the most impact on their spiritual lives. That was followed by religious leaders (15%), teachers (4%), friends (15%), and others (32%). (beliefnet.com)



MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Background: Ryan Tedder founded the pop-rock band OneRepublic in Colorado Springs in 2004. The group has gained popularity thanks to MySpace, where it receives high exposure and consistently ranks as a top musical act. The band's debut album, *Dreaming Out Loud*, peaked at No. 15 on the Billboard charts. The single "Apologize" was featured on Timbaland's release *Shock Value*, as well as on several TV shows. "Apologize" has sold almost 2 million copies in the United States.

Albums: *Dreaming Out Loud* (2007)

What Parents Should Know: While OneRepublic isn't labeled a Christian band, the members openly profess their faith in Christ. *Dreaming Out Loud* deals with the themes of friendship, being authentic, and redemption. The hit single "Apologize" explores the personal pain of broken relationships and the necessity of moving on.

What OneRepublic Says: According to Tedder, "There are certain things that are within your control. That's how hard you work, how determined you are, how much you want it, but you can't control timing."

Discussion Questions: What parts of your life do you think are within your control? Does God have a perfect plan and timing for everything? If so, do our actions matter? Why or why not? How can you trust God to let everything work out for the best?



Background: David Crowder began this band after realizing that almost half of Baylor University's students weren't attending worship. As a student, he co-founded University Baptist Church and began leading worship and writing songs. The church eventually released an independent CD, followed by more from Sparrow Records. The David Crowder Band is part of the Passion Conferences. Despite extensive touring, the band makes it back to Waco, Texas, almost every Sunday to worship where it all began. The band has received four Dove Awards and remains a top seller on iTunes.

Albums: *Remedy* (2007), *B Collision* (2006), *A Collision* (2005), *Sunsets and Sushi* (2005)

What Parents Should Know: *Remedy* is a worshipful album focusing on how everyone needs Christ, the ultimate remedy. One reviewer called the album "a great journey through sound, passion, conviction, and exuberance for our risen King!"

What Crowder Says: "I'm always aware that first and foremost our function isn't to express ourselves as artists. We help people articulate their faith."

Discussion Questions: How easy or difficult is it for you to articulate your faith? What methods of worship are you most comfortable with, and why? When you worship, is it mostly for your sake or for God's? Explain.

FILMWATCH

| Title | Rating: Red Flags | Genre | Starring |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|---|
| <i>10,000 B.C.</i> | PG-13: For sequences of intense action and violence | Action/Fantasy | Steven Strait, Camilla Belle, Cliff Curtin |
| <i>College Road Trip</i> | G: Approved for all audiences | Comedy | Raven-Symoné, Martin Lawrence, Donny Osmond |
| <i>Drillbit Taylor</i> | PG-13: For crude sexual references, strong bullying, language, drug references, and partial nudity | Comedy | Owen Wilson, Leslie Mann, David Dorfman |



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