



April

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



## Explore the Meaning of Easter

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK JESUS:

1. To make biblical events and symbols meaningful to kids.
2. To use Easter celebrations and Holy Week worship to strengthen family members' faith.
3. To guide your efforts as a spiritual role model.

Understanding the deep meaning of biblical events is a vital part of our faith journey. While children may not have the same understanding as adults, we can introduce them to concrete concepts and then guide them to understand more abstract levels of meaning. This progression from concrete to abstract thinking means your children will begin to understand events and symbols of the Bible on a deeper level. Begin by presenting Bible events, including Easter, in their entirety—and in age-appropriate ways.

Symbols and objects play a key role in some Bible accounts, such as the events of Holy Week. Determine which symbols kids understand and which are more difficult. Then keep these tips in mind.

- **Add relevance.** Identify themes your kids have experience with, such as friendship, fear, or kindness. Then connect the Bible account to one of those themes. Stories that show how God works in kids' lives will stick with them.
- **Be faithful to the Bible.** Present God accurately and tell the whole story in an age-appropriate way.
- **Build "cognitive bridges."** Make connections by expanding on common experiences. For example, city kids may not relate to the image of sheep and a shepherd. Begin with the familiar—the pets kids may have—and talk about how they love and care for them. Proceed to other animals and their keepers, and finally to the sheep and shepherd.

## Celebrate Jesus—and Faith



### TEACHABLE MOMENTS

#### Wiped Clean

Demonstrate how Jesus' death on Good Friday wipes away our sins. You'll need newspapers, baby wipes, a candle, matches, and a trash can. Sit in a circle around some newspapers. Say: **These newspapers represent sin, or ways we disobey God. Grab some and rub the ink on your hands.**

Read aloud 1 John 1:9. Say: **Just as the ink stains our hands, our sins leave dirty stains on our hearts.**

Give each family member a baby wipe. Dim the lights and light the candle. Say: **Jesus came into a dark, sinful world to be our light. Because Jesus died for us, we are forgiven and can live in his light forever! As you focus your eyes on the light, Jesus, clean your hands with the wipe. Then drop it into the trash can to remind you that when Jesus erases your sins, they're gone for good.**

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for being a light in our dark world and for dying on the cross for our sins.

Holy Week and Easter are ideal opportunities to use Christian symbols to share the Gospel. Remember that although children are wired to be spiritually curious, they reason concretely. Keep kids' perspectives in mind and realize that their brains are continually developing. Faith growth is a progression, not a leap, and children's images of God expand as they struggle with life's complexities. Accept immature perceptions for now, but challenge kids more as their ability to think abstractly develops. Try these activities to spark discussions about Jesus' death and resurrection.

**“Palm” Parade** Say: “In Bible times, people waved palm branches to show honor. Today we support people such as athletes by waving rally towels or signs.” Use fabric markers to decorate large cloth pieces for Easter week. Include words and pictures such as “Jesus is King!” and “He’s Risen!” Re-enact Palm Sunday by cheering for Jesus. Then display the fabric pieces as reminders of Jesus’ place of honor in your lives.

**Precious Preparation** Read aloud Mark 14:3-9. Say: “Before Jesus died, this woman gave him a very special gift. We can give Jesus gifts from our heart, too.” Have family members take turns sharing things they can do to honor Jesus. As each person shares, spray perfume into the air or on the person.

**Given for You** Celebrate Jesus’ last meal with his disciples—and his gift of Holy Communion. Share a loaf of bread, with each person tearing off a bit before passing it on. Read aloud Matthew 26:26-28. Say: “It might sound strange to eat Jesus’ body and drink his blood. What do you suppose the disciples thought at this supper with Jesus?” Share your church’s tradition of Communion or talk about what the special meal means to you.

**Betrayed!** Set out 30 dimes and let kids count them. Read aloud Matthew 26:14-16. Say: “Judas betrayed Jesus, or turned him in to soldiers, for about 120 days of wages.” Ask: “Was Jesus’ life on earth worth more than that silver? Why or why not? What’s the true value of Jesus’ life to our family?”

**Egg-stra Impact** For kids who won’t swallow small items, fill plastic Easter eggs with symbols of Holy Week. Ideas include purple cloth, a thorn, a sponge, a nail, a rock, and so on. (For more, visit [childrensministry.com/new-resurrection-eggs/](http://childrensministry.com/new-resurrection-eggs/)) Let kids handle the objects as you discuss Jesus’ journey to the cross.

**From Death to Life!** Set three small cups in a row. Fill the two outside cups halfway with water. Add blue food coloring to one and yellow to the other. (Leave the center cup empty.) Say: “When Jesus died, people were sad and blue. But on Sunday, they were happy to see he was alive!” Fold two paper towels. Put one partway in the blue water and partway in the empty cup. Place the other partway in the yellow water and partway in the empty cup. Water will travel through the towels, filling the center cup with green water. Say: “Jesus rose to give us life!”

**“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will have life, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”**

**—John 11:25-26**