

Why to Teach the Crucifixion to Kids

The Easter season is upon us. Pastel colors and candy abounds, but as believers, we know Easter means remembering and celebrating the event most crucial to our faith, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some preschool and children's leaders approach this time of year with trepidation. *How am I going to talk to young children about the cross? What if we have guests who have never been to church? Some leaders avoid the issue altogether. Let's just have a party. Maybe we can do an egg hunt?* Here's why you should not shy away from teaching the crucifixion to kids of all ages:

1. The cross is the center of the gospel narrative.

What is Christianity without the cross? In the grand narrative of Scripture, we see everything pointing to Jesus' death on the cross. Avoiding the crucifixion story is like fast-forwarding through the climax of a movie. We won't fully grasp the happy ending if we don't see the pain and toil the characters triumphed over. How will children understand the gravity of redemption if they don't know the cost? Celebrating the resurrection without the crucifixion just doesn't make sense.

2. The cross equips children to deal with the harsh realities of life.

We live in a culture that tries to shield children from anything sad or scary. The problem is, life really is harsh. Sometimes the baby in mommy's tummy doesn't come home. Sometimes the kid on the playground gets very sick and can't come out to play anymore. Sometimes Grandma spends months in the hospital and then we go to her funeral. Sooner or later, kids of all ages will encounter suffering and loss. Rather than avoiding pain and death, we can teach kids to confront pain and death head-on with a hope that lies not in this life but in the one to come. The message of the cross points to the One who swallowed up death in victory. We want kids to say with triumph, "O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?"

3. The cross saves children.

The proclamation of the gospel is the means by which God ordained that people are saved. There isn't a special gospel message for kids and another one for adults. There is only one message: Christ and Him crucified. I think it is safe to assume that every Christian parent and kids ministry leader's greatest desire is to see our kids turn from sin and trust in the finished work of Christ. How can a child trust in what Jesus did on the cross if he doesn't know about it? There is no salvation apart from the cross.

As you teach preschoolers and children this Easter season, by all means, tell them why we celebrate! Trust that God has created children with the spiritual capacity to understand His message. And most of all, trust the Father in heaven to reveal Himself to even the youngest ones in your midst.