

Celebrating the Easter Season

by Lynne Thompson

He is risen, He is risen indeed! It's Easter. Time to celebrate that triumphant morning when our Savior rose victorious from the grave.

According to the New Testament, during the Jewish Passover season, Christ was tried for treason by Pilate, the Roman appointed governor, and then Herod, King of Judea, and again by Pilate, before being sentenced to death on a cross. Though declared innocent by the authorities, Christ was crucified and laid in a sealed and guarded tomb, but on the third day rose from the dead, with the power to save mankind from their sins. This event is commemorated every year in the spring as a holy day for Christians around the world.

Yet, according to author Kim Wier, co-director of Engaging Women Ministries, Easter was never intended to be just one day. "For most families, including Christians, God gets an hour on Sunday, and we get the rest of the day to hunt eggs and feast on sweets." Wier is quick to point out there's nothing wrong with traditional Easter celebrations; it's just that those in themselves are not enough.

"The shame isn't that we are celebrating Easter Day; it is that we are missing Easter *Season*. It's like scraping off the icing without realizing you could have had cake too. That may be hard for most of us to comprehend in our culture that prizes a hurry-up and move-on attitude. But God, who specifically called his people to times of annual celebration and festival, did so because seasons of celebration accomplish significant things in the lives of His followers."

How about your family, ready for some cake? Try these faith-filled activities that go beyond Sunday morning as you usher in this Easter season.

Ages 0-3

Help your little ones stuff hollow plastic eggs with one chocolate heart, because Jesus came to give us a new heart towards God. Then allow your little one to hand them out to friends, neighbors, or people you meet during the day. You might include a note inside with the passage from John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."-Jesus

Ages 4-7

Hold a neighborhood egg hunt, but award the large basket filled with candy for whoever finds the one empty egg, representing the empty tomb. When the child finds the empty egg he or she must call out, "He is not here he has risen, just as he said." Be sure and conclude the hunt with an Easter story on the lawn. I'd recommend *The Parable of the Lily*, by Liz Curtis Higgs.

Ages 8-12

Sometimes the greatest joy is in the giving. Visit a nearby hospital or retirement home and greet one of the residents with a fresh Easter lily. You may want to attach a card with some encouraging words about the hope we have in our risen Lord.

Age 13-18

Children this age might enjoy a surprise field trip for a sunrise service at the park or a nearby lake. Be sure and bring a Bible, hymnbook and maybe even a guitar for a worshipful early morning celebration.

All Ages

Since there are many new visitors attending church for the Easter service, make a point to greet and invite someone to lunch afterwards. Then remember to make plans to sit together next Sunday at church.

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