

JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

	HOW KIDS VIEW JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION	HOW TO RESPOND
Ages 3 to 5	Children this age have difficulty with abstractions such as death and resurrection. They can't make analogies to even simple things, let alone an abstraction like resurrection. In these early years, children may have no understanding of death's finality. In their concrete thinking, being dead and coming back to life is much like going to sleep and waking up again.	Focus on the fact that Jesus is live. Reenact the Easter story using hand puppets. Have children retell the story. Use short prayers or simple one-line songs to help children praise God that Jesus is alive. Walk through the children's daily activities, and at each step of the way talk about how Jesus is alive. For example, lay on the floor and pretend to wake up saying, "Good morning, Jesus"; bless a pretend breakfast; pretend to play with Jesus; and say a prayer before a pretend nap.
Ages 6 to 8	Primary-age children are amazed that the Creator of the whole world can be their loving friend. The sacrifice of God's only son Jesus is baffling to children because their family members are so important to them. At this age, children are figuring out that death is permanent. Believing in Jesus' victory over death is an exciting challenge to their young faith.	Because children finally realize that death is permanent, celebrate the reality and power of the Resurrection. Help children look at Jesus' cross as a symbol of God's great love. Ask questions such as "How do you show others how much you love them?" "What does it cost to show your love?" "Is there someone in your life who makes sacrifices for you?" Help children see the beauty of the Cross by decorating a cross with flowers and/or colored silk drapes—purple for Jesus' majesty and white for victory.
Ages 9 to 12	Older children are still very much literal and concrete thinkers. They accept the Crucifixion in all its reality, ugliness, and pain. Children focus on what actually happened. They identify blood, nails, crown of thorns, spear, pain and suffering with the Cross. Children willingly identify the Cross with the forgiveness of sin. They accept it for its simplicity because they readily accept its truthfulness—God dealt with sin and this is how he did it.	Speak openly and matter-of-factly about Jesus'; death. Permit open discussion of the pain and suffering. Don't avoid, hide, or play up the details too much. Answer questions s they arise, especially about death. Listen to kids. Concentrate on how God deals with sin (<i>John 3:16 and Romans 6:23</i>). Emphasize that we re the winners since God raised Jesus from the dead.