

Five Easter side-by-side encounters

Easter is a great time to help whole families, including those whom we don't usually see in church, grow in faith by giving them an opportunity for a side-by-side encounter with God in the service or event, and then equipping them with a way to replicate it at home. We've picked five popular Easter themes and given an example of a side-by-side encounter and a way to use it at home.

Find out [more about how to use side-by-side encounters to equip fringe families](https://parentingforfaith.org/post/fringe-families) (parentingforfaith.org/post/fringe-families).

Theme	In the service	At home
God rescues us from our sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain sin like choosing to play in a dirty sandpit when God has something so much better for us (see longer explanation here). • Show a picture of sand, or depending on your set up, have some sand as a prop or small containers of sand. • Ask people as they touch or look at it, to think about if they are choosing anything that's not good for them. • If they think of anything, invite them to tell God they don't want to do that anymore, that they're sorry and they'd like his help to choose something better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever you spot sand, maybe at a building site or a park, ask God to show you if there's anything you're choosing that's not good for you. • Wait and see if a picture, thought, or idea comes into your head. • Ask God for his help to take you out of whatever messy situation or choice he's brought to mind. • Ask what the better thing that he has for you is. Again wait and see if a word, picture, thought, or idea comes to mind. It might be his forgiveness or peace or something more specific about a different option you can choose.
God keeps his promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share that the Easter story is an amazing example of how God does what he says he will, even when things are difficult. • Play a song that talks about who God is and how he keeps his promises, for example 'Waymaker'. • Ask people to listen (and read the lyrics if you can print them on paper or project on a screen) and see which words stand out to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a link to the song you used (you could also share via social media and/or email afterwards). • Encourage people to play the song (out loud or in headphones) when their life feels difficult. • Explain they can ask God for a specific word or phrase from the song to hold on to or just for a general reminder that God is with them and keeps his promises.

Theme	In the service	At home
<p>God’s love is stronger than fear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask people to think of, draw, or write something that makes them feel afraid. • Share 1 John 4:18a (ICB): ‘Where God’s love is, there is no fear, because God’s perfect love takes away fear.’ • Ask everyone to whisper that verse together or say it in their head. Ask for God’s love to take fear away. <i>Younger children might want to wave and whisper ‘Goodbye fear, God is here’.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give people a little card, or share an image they can save in their phone with that verse on. Encourage them that any time they feel afraid, they can whisper that verse. • Share with parents and carers that if their child has nightmares or is afraid, they can whisper the verse or simply wave and say ‘Goodbye fear, God is here’.
<p>Jesus’ resurrection brings light and hope into dark and difficult situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give everyone a battery operated tealight but tell them to keep it turned off for now. • Make the room darker if you are able to (warn people before you do). Think about something dark or difficult in your life at the moment. It could be to do with friends, money, health, work, or school. • Turn the tealight on and as you look at it, ask God to bring hope to that situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the tealight home and put it somewhere you will see it and remember God’s light. • Whenever you need hope, or spot a situation where hope is needed, turn that light on and sit with it for a moment and ask God to bring hope into the situation.
<p>We can share the good news (like the women at the tomb)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about something exciting that happened to you that you were desperate to share with a friend or your family. • What does it make you want to do? Run? Shout? Wiggle? Get your phone to call or text someone? Jump up and down? Do whatever actions comes to mind now. • As you do it, thank God (in your head or out loud) for the amazing news that he came back to life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next time you are excited to share something with someone, remember the excitement of those women discovering Jesus was alive. • Ask God if there is anyone he’d like you to share the good news with. See if you <u>catch</u> (parentingforfaith.org/tool/chat-and-catch) a name or face as a word or picture in your mind. Then ask God what to share with them. It might be the whole story of Easter or a small encouragement or single Bible verse.