

Happy Easter / Resurrection Day, Etoonin'!

toon in'...

Heart Wide Open

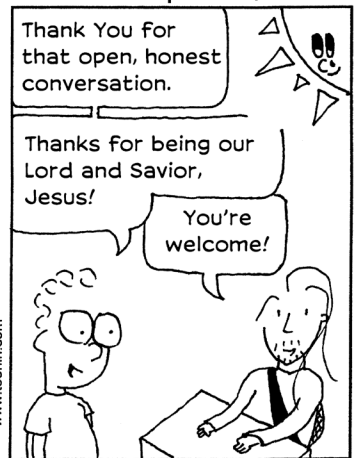
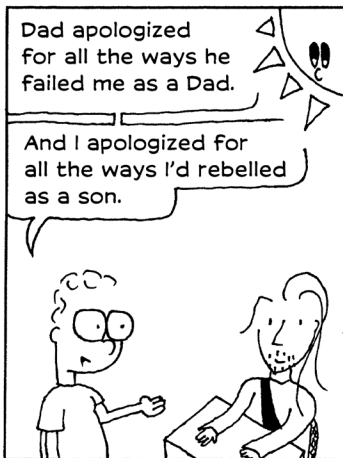
April 7th, 2020



toon in'...

The Best Dad

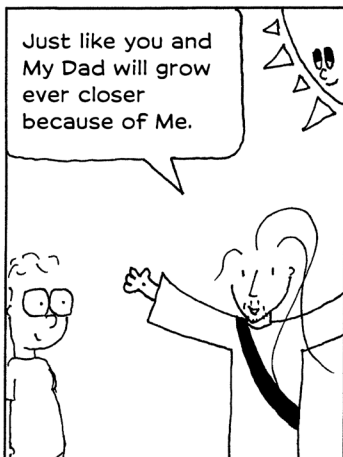
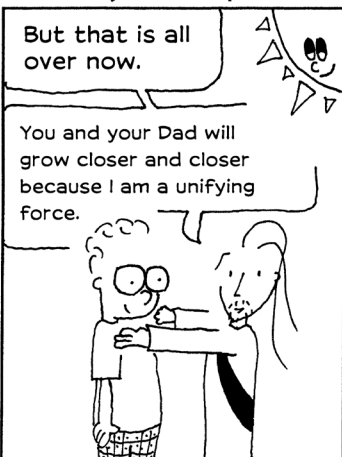
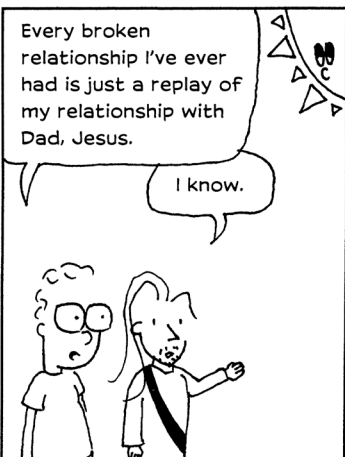
April 9th, 2020



toon in'...

Not Beyond Repair

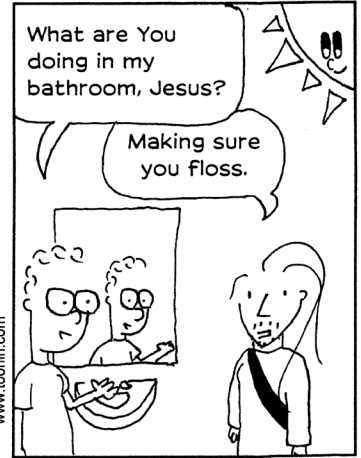
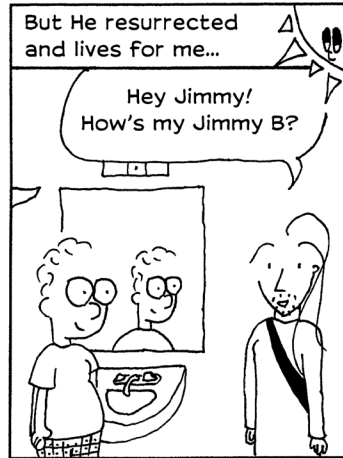
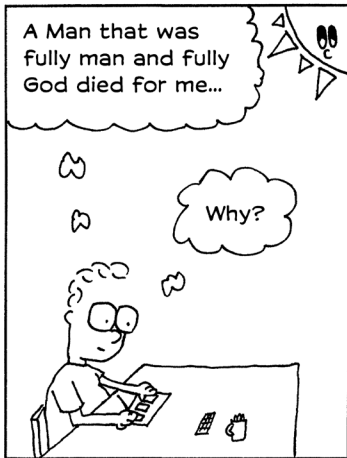
April 9^{1/2}, 2020



toon in'...

What would Nehemiah say?

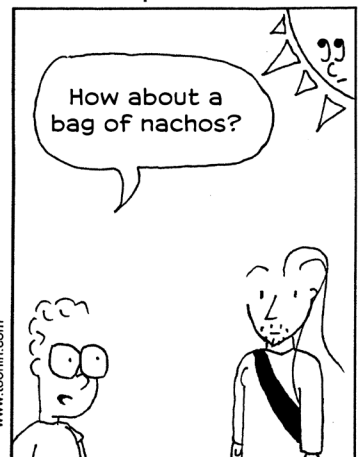
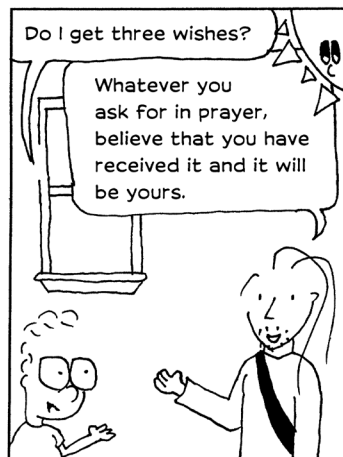
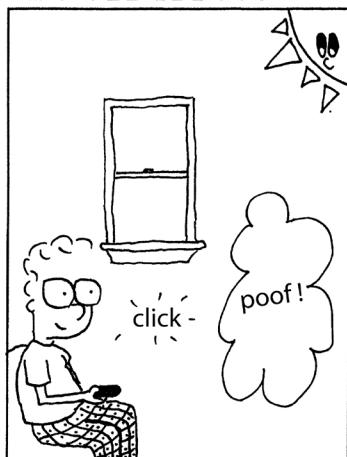
April 10th, 2020



toon in'...

Jesus on demand...

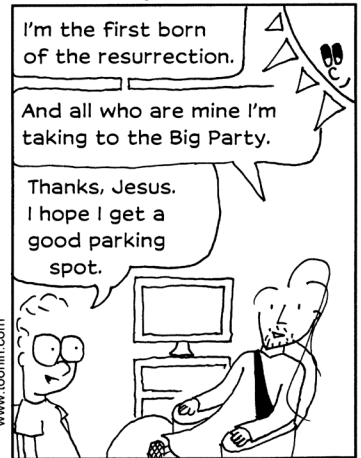
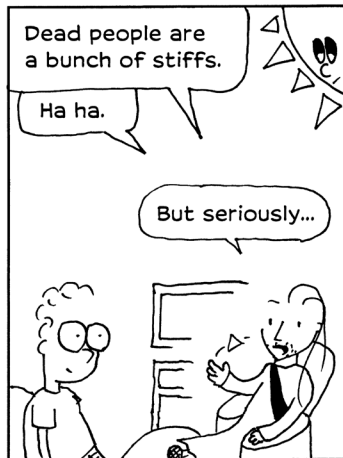
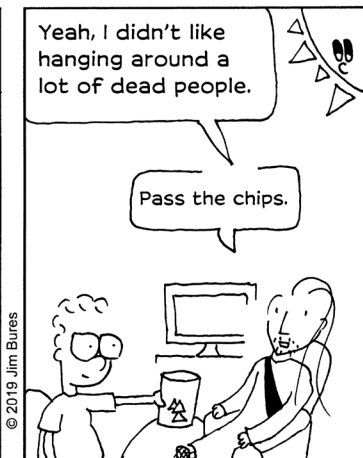
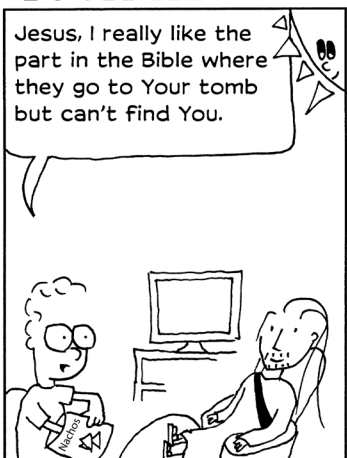
April 10^{1/2}, 2020



toon in'...

Bravissimo!

April 10^{2/3}, 2020



For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Eternal Life. ~John 3:16



God is for you. God loves you. That is why He came from Heaven and lived among humans, dying for everyone's sin. But His death wasn't the final word: He rose again. Through the Resurrection, you will live again too! Jesus wants you.

We love because God loved us first. That is the encouraging thing: God loves us as we are. Resting in that love changes us and makes us better people, but God loved us first without any precondition. Faith in Christ saves us, but that is a gift too.

Jesus died to forgive us. That is what Easter is all about. A heavy price was paid for our sin, but God did not leave it there. He raised Jesus to eternal life. And, with Him, He will raise us to eternal life too. Jesus suffered in a gory way, but for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. I am so glad I'm alive after that happened, because I know Jesus' suffering is over. However, often I feel guilty for causing it.

I'm a sharp man, and I'm not referring to my intelligence. I have a way of really hurting people. The closer I get to a person, the sharper the knife. Poison pen letters and emails I've written are the bane of my existence. I often write them without hesitation. Over Christmas, I wrote such an email to one of my closest Christian advisors, Kim. She waited days to respond, and when she did, she pointed out my errors gracefully while expressing her hurt. Immediately, I realized I'd treated her wrong. I felt so bad, knowing that I'd also written my very own sister such emails. I apologized to

both women immediately. Kim forgave me, but I continued to feel guilty. I apologized over and over until Kim finally texted, "You are utterly and completely forgiven. Now let us not speak of the past again, my brother, but move forward in grace and love." I realized that Kim had forgiven me like Jesus did: my sins were removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Kim taught me how to feel toward Jesus, who never wishes to think of my sins again. That feeling is relief. That feeling is gratitude. That feeling is love.

I continue to learn about forgiveness: how to extend it to others; how to give it to myself. I've got a long road ahead of me. I don't really love myself, so it is harder to love others, especially when I see myself in them. It has also been hard to forgive my Dad, because a lot of my hurts come from him. We are commanded to forgive no matter what, but sometimes healing is easier when someone apologizes. Dad did that, and it was amazing. Now we can both walk the mutual road to healing. I am very grateful my Dad apologized. And I'm no cherub, so I apologized to him too. I rebelled and caused a lot of family fights. Together we can fight the wedge put between us. I don't blame Dad for my problems, and I take responsibility for myself. I'm a grown man and make my own decisions. But life will sure get a lot easier now that our relationship has been restored. And that is the power of Jesus, who is humble in heart: assured and steadfast in love. That same power, the power of God, raised Jesus up that first Easter morning, and He continues to bless us ever since.