



January 2015

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**St. Michael
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Start Fresh This Year

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To guide and protect your family in the new year ahead.
2. To help you de-clutter your lives and hearts so you can stay focused on Jesus.
3. To show your children the importance of living for Jesus—and living like Jesus.

As you look forward to 2015, it's an ideal time to make sure your family is looking toward God. A new calendar year can mean a fresh start in many areas—including your family life and your faith life.

With busy schedules, it's easy to fall into "survival mode" and lose focus on what really matters: the eternal future of our children and ourselves.

So no matter what other goals you set for the year ahead, keep in mind the "end goal" of an eternal relationship with God. Then be intentional with all of your choices. Arrange plans around the big-picture goal. If activities or possessions start interfering with what's really most important, re-evaluate and rework your family's schedule.

When faith is your top priority—and your family's—it'll also become your children's top priority.

Here are more ideas for staying focused on Jesus during the new year:

- Create a family mission statement together. Decide your values, purpose, and vision. Then have everyone commit to living that way, publicly and privately.
- Start reading an age-appropriate devotional book together after dinner. End each time with prayer.
- Make worship a weekly highlight. Afterward, talk about what you learned. Show kids that following Jesus is a joyful, lifelong pursuit.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Press On

On opposite walls, hang signs that read “2014” and “2015.” Remove obstacles between the walls. Have family members stand in front of last year’s sign and reflect on things they’re proud of and things they regret from 2014. Then have them walk backward to cross the room, keeping their eyes on last year.

Ask: **What happens when we focus on the past? Why do you think it’s hard to look ahead when we only think about the past?**

Say: **It’s good to learn from the past, but because God forgives us, we get a fresh start and can move on.**

Read Philippians 3:13-14. Then have family members go back to last year’s wall, face the 2015 sign, and “race” forward toward into the new year.

Close in prayer: **Dear Jesus, thank you for fresh starts. Help us focus on you in 2015. Amen.**

Stay Focused on Jesus

As a parent, your most important role—and goal—is helping your kids know and follow Jesus. He’ll help you and your family focus on him, no matter what you’re facing. Have a conversation with your kids, starting with these questions:

- What things would you like to achieve or accomplish during the next week, month, and year?
- What are ways you can stay focused on a goal, despite challenges?
- What goals do you think Jesus wants us to set? How can he help us reach them?

Try these other active ideas to begin the new year right.

De-clutter and de-stress. If you didn’t purge some of your family’s belongings before the holidays, do so now. Together, sort and donate clothing and toys you’ve outgrown. Talk about how possessions are a blessing from God but don’t replace God. Also examine your family’s schedule and see if you can cut an activity or two. Try to set aside at least one free evening per week.

Tend to your goals. Take turns tossing buttons into a bowl that’s three feet away. Gradually move the bowl farther away. Then move it closer. Talk about what it means to persevere and try new strategies when meeting a goal. Also discuss ways we can reach the goal of moving closer to Jesus (reading the Bible, praying, singing praise songs, showing love to other people, and so on).

Stay focused. Play this “pay attention” game (with a twist!) as a reminder to focus on what’s really important. Give each person paper and a pencil. Fill a tray with a variety of items (office supplies, candy, small toys, etc.). Choose one family member to walk around displaying the tray for a few minutes and then leave the room. Ask everyone else to write or draw

what he or she saw. Then ask questions not about items on the tray but about the family member with the tray. (What colors of clothing was he wearing? Was she wearing anything in her hair? Was he wearing a watch?) Have that person return to the room. Then read Romans 2:7 and talk about what we miss when our focus is wrong. Discuss what really matters—God and our relationship with God.

Avoid distractions. As a family, read Luke 10:38-42. Give each person paper and a pencil. While you spin a toy top three times, have family members write or draw things that take their focus off God and their relationship with God. Afterward, share the distractions you came up with, and make a plan to overcome them in the week ahead. Close in prayer, thanking God for always loving us and being faithful to us, even when we lose our focus on him. Also ask God to help your family not forget God in the year ahead but to seek God and put God first, above everything else.

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.”

—2 Corinthians 5:17-18

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Paddington*

Genre: Family, Comedy

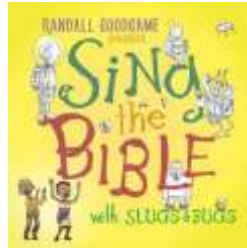
Rating: Not yet rated (likely PG)

Cast: Nicole Kidman, Peter Capaldi, Hugh Bonneville, Sally Hawkins

Synopsis: In this live-action feature, a young bear from Peru with a passion for all things British travels to London.

He's hoping to find a home but gets lost in Paddington Station. A kind family temporarily takes him in. Unfortunately, a museum taxidermist takes note of the rare bear, and is determined to capture him.

Our Take: With its theme centered on "home," this movie can spark discussions about where we belong and why. Because it involves a mild, threatening situation, the film might be intimidating for the youngest viewers.



MUSIC

Title: *Sing the Bible With Slugs and Bugs*

Artist: Randall Goodgame

Synopsis: The 18 songs on this CD are filled with silliness as well as lyrics straight from Scripture. The CD features guest appearances by the African Children's Choir, best-selling author Sally Lloyd-Jones, and several Nashville musicians.

Our Take: Goodgame, who's written silly songs for "VeggieTales," has many young fans, thanks to his "Slugs and Bugs" series. With this CD, listeners will learn Bible verses as they have fun dancing to the catchy tunes. Tracks include songs that help kids learn the names of books in the Old and New Testaments.



CULTURE & TRENDS

On the Run—With the increase in charity races, kid-friendly 5k's, and even mini-triathlons, more children are hitting the pavement. Experts say kids are usually able to run longer distances (say, a 5k) between ages 8 and 10—but parents need to let kids set their own pace. (*health.com*)

ADHD Link?—As rates of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder continue climbing, researchers are exploring a possible link to air pollution. New York City children who had high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in their umbilical cords after birth were five times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD later. (*nbcnews.com*)

QUICK STATS

"Read Me a Story!"—Twenty percent of parents don't read a bedtime story to their kids. Of those who don't, 25% said they're too busy, 14% aren't home for bedtime, and 8% admitted they find it boring. (*capitalbay.com*)

Poverty Persists—America has the second-highest rate of relative child poverty among economically developed nations. According to a study looking at health, education, and economic well-being, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and New Jersey ranked as the best states for underprivileged kids. Arkansas, Florida, and Mississippi rated the worst. (*wallethub.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Tetrobot & Co.

In this Wii U game, players go through mazes and solve puzzles. The plot involves a scientist named Maya, who builds Psychobot to help repair other robots. The game, rated E for Everyone, has mild fantasy violence.

WeGiveBooks.org

On this educational site, children and parents can read books for free while doing good at the same time. For every book you read, the site donates a book to the charity of your choice. You have to sign up to join, but membership is free.

Handwriting Without Tears: Wet-Dry-Try

This \$6.99 iPad app makes learning to write fun. On the virtual slate, children can practice capital and lowercase letters, as well as numbers. The newest version of the app also comes with a "lefty-friendly" setting.

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Group
Real. Bold. Love.

This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



January

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------|--------|----------|
| | | | | 1 New Year's Day | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

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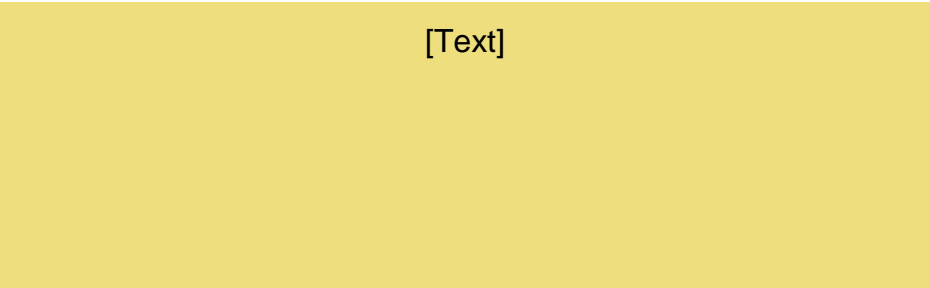
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