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parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Learning Healthy Independence

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To guide you as you nurture independence in your children.
2. To remind your family of the freedom from sin that Jesus offers you.
3. To help you model for your children how to completely depend on Jesus every day.

Early in life, children are wholly dependent creatures, relying on their parents for almost everything. A parent's job is to help kids become self-reliant and eventually become independent as they grow. But with independence comes increased responsibility. You can teach your kids to continue relying on God—even when they're independent from you.

Consider the stages of independence a child grows through:

- **Toddlers** A child's desire for independence begins at 12 months, not 12 years. Your toddler's "me do it!" autonomy may complicate daily routines, but continue to offer encouragement, supervised guidance, and assurance of your love as your child learns to do things on his or her own.

- **Preschoolers** As children age 3 to 5 become more independent, they can also be less cooperative. They take increasing pride in making decisions. But they also find comfort in predictability. Help your kids by maintaining routines while letting them make some simple choices on their own.
- **Elementary Age** From ages 6 to 9, kids enjoy making more decisions. They also begin to learn that decisions have consequences. Encourage confident decision-making in your kids by asking open-ended questions, seeking their opinions, and trusting them with increasingly complex tasks.
- **Preteens** By age 10, most kids start taking ownership of their beliefs and values by analyzing and challenging what they hear. As they do, encourage them to talk with God about those things too.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Free From Sin

Place bricks or heavy items in a shoebox and seal the lid. Have family members hold the box with arms outstretched as long as possible, and then pass it to the next person.

Ask: **What does it mean to be free? How are you free? Are you free to do whatever you want? Explain.**

Read aloud Romans 6:18. Ask: **What does it mean to be free from sin?**

Take the box. Ask: **How did you feel when you could pass this box on? How's that like being free from sin?**

Say: **Sin weighs us down, but believing in Jesus frees us from sin. The Bible says that once we're free from sin, we become slaves to righteous living. That means we have the freedom to worship God and serve him and other people.**

Close in prayer, thanking God for freeing us from sin and for the freedom to serve him.

Free to Grow!

While meeting kids' growing need for independence, parents engage in quite a balancing act. Either extreme of offering too few or too many freedoms can backfire—for kids and for entire families. When parents try to control children's behavior (through bribes, for example), they promote dependence rather than independence. And when parents avoid discipline because they don't want to stifle a child's independent nature, disrespect for authority often results. As you seek a healthy middle ground, consider each child's age and personality. Try some of these activities to emphasize the importance of being faithful and free.

Growing in Grace If your family uses growth charts or marks heights on a doorframe, make it a family affair. Read Luke 2:52, and talk about how Jesus grew. Ask children about the different ways we grow—and how growing can help us become more independent. Then talk about whether growing closer to Jesus makes you more independent from him or dependent on him and why.

How Do You Use It? Set out a tool or kitchen gadget, and have family members act out ways it could be used. Talk about what might happen if the item were used in a way it wasn't designed to be. Read aloud Galatians 5:13, then discuss different ways we can use our freedom to serve others.

Set Free Stand in a circle. Hold up a ball of yarn or string, and say it represents a chain. As you pass the yarn around the circle, have each person wrap it around one body part. When you're thoroughly entangled, read aloud Romans 6:20-23. Discuss what it's like to be tangled in sin, how Jesus sets us free, and ways we can receive the freedom Jesus wants to give us. Then untangle!

Follow the Leader Place several coins in a bag, and have each person take one out without look-

ing. Instruct those with a quarter to do 10 jumping jacks; those with a dime to hop around; those with a nickel to shout, "Nickel, nickel, buy me a pickle"; and those with a penny to shake someone else's hand. After several rounds, talk about what it's like to obey instructions—even when we don't want to. Read Hebrews 13:17. Discuss why God wants us to obey those in authority, even when we're grown.

Squirt Gun Volley On a hot day, tie a balloon to a pole and play tetherball, using water guns to move the balloon rather than your hands. Afterward, talk about why the tether is important to the game and ways the balloon is and isn't free, even though it's tethered to the pole. Read aloud Psalm 16:7-8. Discuss how God's instructions help us to keep tethered in life.

Live Out Your Liberty Show children a symbol of freedom relevant to your culture, such as a bird in flight or a broken chain. Read aloud Leviticus 25:10. Talk about why it's important to celebrate freedom. Then read Luke 4:14-19, and discuss how we can help others know about the freedom Jesus gives. Finally, use craft materials to create greetings cards with pictures on them that symbolize freedom. Give them to people as a reminder of their freedom in Jesus.

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

—Galatians 5:1

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Minions*

Genre: Animation, Family, Comedy

Rating: PG

Cast: Sandra Bullock, Jon Hamm, Michael Keaton, Allison Janney

Synopsis: In this spin-off (and prequel) to the two hit *Despicable Me* films, the popular yellow creatures take center stage. After unsuccessfully serving a series of masters, the Minions sink into depression before deciding to search for a new one.

Our Take: Expect this film to be a box-office hit with plenty of laughs. After seeing the movie with your kids, discuss topics such as good and evil, who we serve, and who influences our behavior. Also talk about why Jesus is the best master to serve and how we can faithfully follow him all our lives.



MUSIC

Title: *E-MO-TION*

Artist: Carly Rae Jepsen

Synopsis: This 29-year-old Canadian singer-songwriter is best known for “Call Me Maybe,” her mega-hit from 2012. She gained fame by finishing third on *Canadian Idol* and being signed by the same label as Justin Bieber. Some compare her to pop music performers from the '80s. On *E-MO-TION*, her third album, Jepsen continues to sing about love and teenage longing.

Our Take: On songs such as “I Really Like You” (the new album’s first single) and “Run Away With Me,” it’s clear why Jepsen calls herself “a romantic at heart.” The album is filled with catchy hooks and flirty lyrics that are rather mild, compared to other chart-toppers.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Pool Safety—Health experts are warning against the perils of DUBB, or “dangerous underwater breath-holding behavior”—intentionally hyperventilating before going underwater. DUBB can lead to drowning, which accounts for 10 deaths per day in the United States. (*nbcnews.com*)

Parent-Child Twinning—Moms and daughters often dress alike, but now moms and sons—and even dads and daughters—can match, too. Designers like Roberta Freyman are offering mini-me versions of swimwear, PJs, and accessories for stylishly adventurous families. (*playgroundtalk.com*)

QUICK STATS

Print vs. Digital—According to a survey by the Scholastic Corporation, the number of children ages 6 to 17 who’ve read ebooks at home or in school increased between 2012 and 2014. However, of those same children, 55 percent still prefer print books over ebooks—a 12 percent increase from 2012. (*scholastic.com*)

Happiness On the Rise—According to a survey by FamilyFun Magazine, when asked to compare their family’s happiness today to when they were kids, parents say they’re 17% happier now. Kids and parents both say the activity that makes their families happiest is taking a vacation. (*prnewswire.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Story of Seasons

In this Nintendo 3DS farming simulation game, players produce crops, raise livestock, and learn how to manage inventories. Be warned, though, that characters include a tiny witch and a tiny goddess.

Quarked!

To teach kids and adults about subatomic physics, a professor and her team developed this website where visitors can play games, watch videos, and ask questions about the subatomic universe. The site is targeted to families with kids ages 7 to 12. It can be found at www.quarked.org.

Hunger Crunch

Recently named Facebook’s 2015 Social Good App of the Year, this game lets players fight world hunger while having fun. Groups can hold tournaments, with all proceeds going to feed hungry children. Created by the nonprofit Rice Bowls, the app is free but has some features that cost.

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parenting
CHRISTIAN
kids

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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.