



parenting CHRISTIAN kids



through excellence in
ministry to children.

St. Luke UMC
www.stlukeumc.org

Religious Freedom

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To fortify world leaders working to overcome religious persecution.
2. To guide you as you strengthen your kids' faith foundation.
3. For opportunities to teach your kids about the freedom we have in Jesus.

As we celebrate our many freedoms this summer, it's important to remember those less fortunate, including those who can't worship freely. Three quarters of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions, the most persecuted being Christian, according to the Pew Research Center.

Christian persecution is any hostility as a result of one's identification with Jesus, from verbal harassment to imprisonment, even violent death. Around the world, more than 100,000 Christians are murdered each year for their faith, says the Vatican.

Christians are forced to hide their faith in more than 60 countries, including North Korea, India, and

Somalia, but mostly in the Middle East, where Christianity was born. There, the number of Christians has dropped significantly even in the past three years, from 25 percent of the population in 2011 to just 10 percent today, says the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Politicians and religious leaders are working to stop violence against Christians, using legislation, sanctions, and public visits to affect change. Pope Francis recently made a trip to the Holy Land to draw attention to those persecuted for their faith.

To learn more how your family can pray for and support efforts to combat Christian persecution, visit Opendoorsusa.org and Opendoorsca.org.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Hope-Scotch

Here's a quick game you can play at home to teach your children how poor choices weigh us down. Start with a sturdy backpack, a sack of potatoes, chalk, 25-30 index cards, and pens.

To Prepare: As a family, write positive and negative choices on the cards, such as "lying about doing my chores" or "giving my friend the first turn." Create a hopscotch path on your sidewalk or driveway.

To Play: One at a time, choose a card from the pile and read it aloud. If your family decides it's a good choice, the person gets to do the hopscotch without the backpack. If it's a bad choice, add a potato to the backpack and wear it while doing the hopscotch.

When the pack gets too heavy, discuss how bad choices add up. Talk about how Jesus' sacrifice frees us from the heavy burden and how his love helps us make good choices.

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Freedom in Jesus

To your kids, being a Christian might on the surface feel like a burden of rules—a list of things they can't do and fun they can't have, especially as they grow older and face even more worldly temptations. There are movies they can't watch, Web sites they can't visit, and constant reminders not to do many things. So how do we show kids that the freedom Jesus gives us is different from—and infinitely better than—the type of freedom the world has to offer? Here are ideas:

Kids start to learn about consequences at a very young age. So you can use many situations to make the point that God gave us rules to live by because he made us, understands what's best for us, and loves us. He wants us to live our best lives.

Food Choices: Our food choices affect how we feel for the day. As kids choose their snacks or meals, think through with them which foods are the best choices and why. As kids get older, they'll learn there are other consequences for making bad food choices, too, such as cavities and lack of energy to participate in fun things such as sports.

Secrets: Ask kids to think about a time they kept a secret about something they did wrong, a bad choice they made. Tell them to think about how they might have had to lie to someone they loved to keep that secret. Ask:

- Explain how you felt when you didn't tell the truth about the secret.
- How did that compare to telling the truth about something, even when it was difficult to do so?

Pets: If you have a pet, talk with your child about what would happen if you didn't have rules for your pet. Ask:

- Why do we put Tigger on a leash when we go for a walk?
- What might happen if we never told Tigger "no"?
- Explain why you think rules are good for our pet.

TV Characters: Use the choices of characters in movies and on television as a learning tool. Ask:

- What choices led to the outcome? How might different choices have changed things?
- What would you tell that person about how to make good choices?

Also look for ways to illustrate the difference between fixing one bad choice versus the effects of ongoing bad choices. Does the character redeem himself from a bad choice? How is the damage worse when a bad habit forms?

Use these ideas to point out positive consequences of good decisions, too, such as good grades, healthy bodies, and trustworthy friendships. Discuss how what feels like freedom in the moment can actually harm us if it's not part of God's plan for us.

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." —John 8:32

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Planes: Fire & Rescue*

Genre: Adventure, Animation, Comedy

Rating: PG (for adventure action and some peril)

Cast: character voices by Dane Cook, Julie Bowen, Corri English, Ed Harris

Synopsis: Dusty is a world-famous air racer who learns that his racing days may soon be over. When he joins forces with an elite firefighting team including a veteran rescue helicopter and some brave all-terrain vehicles to battle a massive wildfire, he learns what it means to be a true hero.

Our Take: This sequel to *Planes* from last year does a respectable job in teaching kids that success isn't about fame but using your gifts to help others.



MUSIC

Artist: Taylor Franklyn

Album: *Breathe In*

Artist Info: From Denver, CO, this 23-year-old fearlessly combines electronic dance music with Christian lyrics.

Summary: Taylor has reached the Top 100 Electro and Trance singles on Beatport with this release.

Our Take: While electronic dance music has a hint of a negative reputation, its popularity is undeniable among kids. Taylor Franklyn's *Breathe In* release has a bright, relaxing beat and features positive lyrics such as this: "If you're fallen and have nowhere to go...breathe in my lungs and have life everlasting."



CULTURE & TRENDS

Doing Vs. Watching—Active tasks such as singing or arts and crafts make children happier, according to Oxford University researchers. Tests show that passive activities such as looking at picture books or watching television, don't contribute to kids' happiness. (*660news.com*)

QUICK STATS

@#&*!—New research reveals that boys are more likely to say bad words than girls. That is, except between ages 3 and 4, when girls outpaced the boys not only in frequency but also in the depth of their bad-word vocabulary. (*mcla.edu*)

7.5%—Approximately 1 out of every 13 children is taking at least one medication for emotional or behavioral problems. Doctors are more likely to prescribe these drugs to low-income kids than their peers in higher-income levels. Over half (55 percent) of parents report that these psychiatric medications help their children "a lot." (*foxnews.com*; *nbcnews.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Mario Kart 8

Players can drive on almost any surface and even upside-down with the new anti-gravity feature in this version, which debuts a marketing partnership with Mercedes. Kids will love the reliable action in Mario's world. **Rating:** E; *Wii U*

Faithgirlz.com

"Being a Faithgirl isn't about rules and people who lived thousands of years ago," says the site publisher. "It's about knowing you're loved, sharing with others, and resting in God's promises." Find crafts, recipes, devotions, blogs, and resources for parents.

Word Creativity Kit App

This \$2.99 iPhone and iPad app encourages creativity with words and pictures. Kids can make virtual books to share with their friends. The app provides random words on the page to jumpstart the creative process. Available in the App Store.

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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.



July

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4 US Independence Day	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Hammock Day	23	24	25	26
27  6-8pm	28  6-8pm	29  6-8pm	30  6-8pm	31  6-8pm		

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