

6 Easy Family Devotions to Teach Kids Healthy Independence

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Check out these six Bible-based family devotions for parents to teach kids healthy independence.

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.

The Stages of Independence

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 ages 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.

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.

Family Devotion 1: 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.

Family Devotion 2: 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.

Family Devotion 3: 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!

Family Devotion 4: Follow the Leader

Place several coins in a bag, and have each person take one out without looking. 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.

Family Devotion 5: 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.

Family Devotion 6: 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.

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