

According to the work of researcher Christian Smith, relationships and devotions are the most important contributors to a sustained faith life for teenagers. [Vibrant Faith Ministries](#) identifies four keys to passing faith in the home: caring conversations, rituals and traditions, devotional practices and service. Beginning all of these at one time can be daunting. Begin with one practice. The devotions below are one way to begin. Choose a time and a place you will gather each day. You might choose before or after dinner. If the devotions are too long, begin with the reading and reflections. Add prayers as you feel comfortable.

Invite your teen to try these devotions, or do them together as a family, during the twelve days of Christmas. The devotions lead to the Day of Epiphany when the magi arrive at the manger to adore the baby Jesus and offer him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Note: Simple modifications will make the prayers appropriate to saying them as a family.) If you miss a day, don't be hard on yourself and return to the practice the following day.

Begin by lighting a candle to represent God's presence with you.

Sunday, December 26

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

Reflect: When have you seen God among your family and friends this week?

Pray:

Christ within me,

give me strength to be bold

when I have to make a difficult choice.

Christ before me,

lead me to see the goodness

in all creation.

Christ to win me,

open my heart to feel how much
you love me no matter what.

Christ above me,

help me use my intellect
and abilities to be your hands
and feet in the world.

(Based on "St. Patrick's Breastplate," old Irish poem)

Monday, December 27 (Feast day of St. Stephen)

Read: Acts 6:1-7

Reflect: You have gifts that God has given you to serve the world around you. What gifts might you have? Sometimes other people can identify your gifts. Get together and name those things that others do that bring joy into the world.

Pray:

Here I am Lord. I have heard you call me. You have blessed me in many ways. You have given me eyes to see your dream that all people will have enough, ears to hear the cries of your people, hands to serve, and feet to take me where the needs is great. Help me to see the good things that I can do to return your blessing.

Tuesday, December 28 (Feast of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist)

Read: John 21:19b-24

Reflect: Peter doesn't hold back and asks Jesus questions that all the disciples might want to ask, but are too timid to do so. What questions do you have for God? Pray about them.

Pray:

God of mystery, sometimes I don't understand why things happen in the world. Help me to

understand. Help me to accept. Help me to let go.

Wednesday, December 29 (Feast of the Holy Innocents)

Read: Matthew 2:13-18

Reflect: Malaria is a preventable disease, yet children in Africa die from malaria each minute. What mothers' cry do you hear in your community?

Pray:

God of mercy, tend the children who are sick today. Embrace the sorrow mothers, fathers, and anyone who cares for them. Thank you for your care.

Thursday, December 30 (Feast of Frances Joseph Gaudet)

Read: Matthew 25:34-46

Reflect: Frances Joseph Gaudet, an African American and Native American born in 1861, helped establish a school for children of working mothers. What obstacles do you think she faced in doing her work?

Pray:

God of wisdom, thank you for teachers and schools. Some youth cannot get to school. Some do not have adults who can help them with their homework or a place to do their homework. Soften the hearts of people around them to remove those obstacles. Give me a heart of thanksgiving for the many ways you have blessed me with ways to learn.

Friday, December 31 (Feast of Samuel Ajayi Crowther)

Read: Matthew 9:35-38

Reflect: Read about Samuel Ajayi Crowther [here](#). How is his work a *theophany* (a revelation of God and Christ in the world)?

Pray:

God who has given us eyes to see and ears to hear. Uncover my eyes and unplug my ears to the world around me. Help me see You in every day things. Help me to see your glory.

Saturday, January 1 (Feast of the Holy Name)

Read: Luke 2:15-21

Reflect: Were you named after someone? Who? What does your name mean? (You can Google your name if you do not know.) Does your name reflect who you are?

Pray:

God, you know me by name. When I pray help me to know your names too beginning today, the first day of the year, and all the days that follow.

Sunday, January 2

Read: John 6:41-47

Reflect: What do you think it means to have eternal life?

Pray:

Life-giving God. Help me grow each day. Renew a right spirit within me. Take away all evil that keeps me from you.

Monday, January 3 (Feast of William Passavant)

Read: Luke 13:10-22

Reflect: The mustard seeds that Jesus talks about aren't like the mustard seeds that you can buy in the spice section of the grocery store. They were so small, you could hardly see them. Read about William Passavant [here](#). How was William Passavant like a mustard seed?

Pray:

God, who makes all things possible, give me the faith of a mustard seed. Help me to reach out to others in school especially those who are lonely and shunned so that my circle of friends can grow and continue to welcome new friends.

Tuesday, January 4 (Feast of Elizabeth Seton)

Read: Luke 14:15-23

Reflect: Elizabeth faced discrimination because she was Catholic. What kinds of discrimination exist in the world today? What are its effects?

Pray:

One God, we divide ourselves into many parts by culture, language, skin color, popularity, wealth, and by sex. Help us to see how we are all human and everyone deserves respect and dignity.

Wednesday, January 5

Read: John 15:1-16

Reflect: What branches in your life bear fruit? Which are not? Does that branch need tending or do you need to prune it?

Pray:

God the vine-grower, Thank you for tending me and strengthening my branches so that I can bear fruit. Thank you for the joy that this fruit gives me and other people. Help me to see the ways that I do not bear fruit and guide me to prune it from my day.

Thursday, January 6 (Feast of the Epiphany)

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

Reflect: What person in your life is a star that guides you to the place where new life is

born?

Pray:

God, my guide, thank you for those people in my life who name my gifts. Thank you for those people who help me to tend them. Thank you for those people who help me use them others can see your great light.

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