

PARTNERING HOME & CONGREGATION

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The Youth and Family Institute states that the Four Keys of ↻caring conversation, ↻devotional life, ↻service, and ↻rituals and traditions are tools for the work of the Holy Spirit, avenues to create faith and build the church, the body of Christ. The congregation of Bethlehem recognizes this and adds that the Four Keys can nurture healthy relationships and faith at the same time, both in the home and in the congregation. For the next four months I'll offer a more in-depth look at these Four Keys and offer suggestions on how these might be used in your home.

↻ Devotions

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:15-17

What are devotions?

Simply put, devotions are a way to practice the presence of God in your life through the word of God. A devotional life is way of living in the world as a child of God connected to the saving work and message of Jesus Christ. Reading the Bible is part of a devotional life but that is not all of it. A devotional life includes, but is not limited to, worship, prayers, Bible reading and study, meditation and singing. It is deliberately carving time in your day to let the Word of God, in various forms, be at work in you.

Where to begin?

Start (or continue) devotions with simple steps.

Are you praying? Mealtime prayers, bedtime prayers, prayers in the car or in the shopping line. If the answer is yes, you are already practicing devotions. If you aren't praying yet, this is the place to start. A simple "Thank you, God, for this food. Amen" is an awesome way to begin a devotional life.

Add another component – How else can you let the "peace of Christ rule in your hearts"?

- ✚ Light a candle as a visual reminder of God's presence.
- ✚ Be a part of a public worship service regularly.
- ✚ Sing songs – Hymns, songs from Wednesday or Sunday school, sing along with a Christian radio station.
- ✚ Read the Bible alone or with a family member.
- ✚ Read Bible story books.
- ✚ Build a photo album of pictures from Bible stories to talk about or pictures of family members to include in your prayers.
- ✚ Read books from various authors on various topics of faith.
- ✚ Set aside a place in your home to be a worship center. Include a small table to hold a Bible, candles, a cross or other items to assist you in practicing the presence of God in your home.
- ✚ Borrow or purchase one of the various devotion resources available and use it.
- ✚ Talk to God (pray) at anytime throughout your day – when you first wake up, in the car, as you wash your face.
- ✚ Pray as you are walking or exercising. Spend some time listening as well.

There is not one 'right way' to do devotions. People experience God in many different ways therefore you can practice the presence of God in different ways. Try a new devotional component for awhile. If it is not working, don't give up. Try something else. Visit with friends and family members. Try something new together. Give each other support. Pray for each other. God is with you!

