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Make 2011 Better. A Teenager's Guide to Crafting a New Year's Resolution

By [Matt Smith](#) | DECEMBER 28, 2010

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First of all, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas! I know that the rest of the world is done with Christmas after December 25th, but we as Christians are just getting started.

Now that all the gifting is finished, we are left to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas with no distractions.



This is the perfect setting to ask yourself questions about where you've been and where you're going. After all, 2011 is just around the corner and everyone will be talking about their New Year's resolutions. But did you know there is a right and a wrong way to craft a New Year's resolution? It's all about being S.M.A.R.T. Let me explain...

Let's say your resolution is to "Grow closer to God." It's a cool, noble resolution. But is it really going to work? Let's try to make it better.

S – Specific. Goals need to be clear and without ambiguity. How do you plan on growing closer to God? Let's make this more specific. A better resolution:

Grow closer to God by praying more.

M – Measurable. You'll never accomplish a goal if you can't measure your success. A better resolution:

Grow closer to God by praying the rosary every day.

A – Attainable. Goals have to be challenging but not unattainable. Having an unrealistic goal will make you frustrated and discouraged. Is it realistic to expect that you can pray a rosary every day? Maybe for some people it's doable, but if you have two school days each week that are insanely busy, then change your resolution to make it more realistic. A better resolution:

Grow closer to God by praying the rosary on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

R – Relevant. Your resolution has to relate to what is important to you. This can be hard,

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because a lot of times you set a goal because you need to improve on a part of your life that you've ignored. So if you're just saying "grow closer to God" because your youth minister told you that it would be a good resolution, then it's not going to work. You have to connect that goal to what is important to you. If you have daily anxiety because you don't know where you are going to college, then you need to connect this to your resolution. A better resolution:

Grow closer to God by praying the rosary on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday... so that I can better discern which college God wants me to go to.

T – Timely. There is nothing more exhausting than a never-ending goal. It's okay to make a New Year's resolution that doesn't last 365 days. I mean, what if you want to change things up and start praying the Stations of the Cross this spring during Lent? A better resolution:

Grow closer to God by praying the rosary on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week in January and February... so that I can better discern which college God wants me to go to.

Get Support

A secret resolution is a worthless resolution. So let somebody know about your goal and give them permission to hold you accountable. So if you're going to pray the rosary like we've been talking about here, then tell a friend at Life Teen what you're trying to do, and tell them that you want them to hold you accountable. Give your friend permission to ask you each Sunday about your resolution. Since these things can be awkward, tell your friend that it's okay to be real with you.

So what if you have a resolution that is more embarrassing and you don't want to talk about it? Don't let your pride get in the way of you accomplishing something you really want. Find a trusted friend and plan a time where the two of you can sit down and talk and pray about your resolution. Or ask your parish priest to be your spiritual advisor and make a schedule to meet with him often. If you have support, you'll have a better shot at success.

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