



Rule of Life

Organizing our rhythms and routines for spiritual formation and maturity.

What is a Rule of Life?

As a means of living an intentional life with God, pastors and theologians throughout the years have taught and developed what are often called “rules of life”. It has been taken and adapted from monastic living, where men and women would withdraw from society as hermits, creating entire societies based around a common monastic rule - or way of life - they would all adhere to. It was a system of organized daily rhythms and routines intentionally designed to help them live life with God under His rule and reign.

A rule of life is a schedule and set of practices and relational rhythms that help us create space in our busy world for us to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what He did.

If you were to plant a vine that you want to grow fruit and be out of harm’s way from disease or predators, you would build it on a trellis. A trellis gives structure to the growth and fruit bearing of a vine. A rule of life is creating a trellis for our lives. It is bringing structure to our lives so that we may bear fruit - the calling of all followers of Jesus.

A rule of life is not designed to be a strict, legalistic set of to-do’s you place on yourself, but rather a structure of rhythm and routine that allows you to align your schedule with the ways of Jesus. To put it simply, a rule of life is putting the practices of spiritual formation onto your calendar and sticking to it.

Helpful Tools and Tips

START SMALL AND GO SLOW:

Nothing is a more sure guarantee of failure than doing too much, too quick. The goal behind a rule of life is to learn to live into the sacred pace of Jesus. Start where you are, not where you feel you should be. It is better to read the Bible for five minutes and continue that practice for months than to reach for thirty minutes and burn out and quit after three days. The goal is sustainability and growth by keeping our eyes on the long term goal of maturity in Christ.

BE SPECIFIC:

When crafting a rule of life (and with any goals in life for that matter), the more specific and concrete, the more likely you are to accomplish them. For example, it is better to say “read my Bible for ten minutes Monday through Friday” than “get in God’s Word more.” Be specific, practical, concrete, and embodied, not vague and ideological.

CONSIDER YOUR SEASON OF LIFE AND STAGE OF DISCIPLESHIP:

The amount of time you can give to spiritual practices will vary depending on your season of life. If you’re an entrepreneur who gets all of their work done in twenty hours every week, you might have more time to spend in the practices than a stay at home mom of three kids under five. Don’t allow your season of life to be an excuse you use against your discipleship, but be honest about the season you’re in and what the rule should look like for you during that time.

Similarly, consider how long you’ve been following Jesus or doing these practices. If you are new to your faith, don’t compare yourself to someone who has been following Jesus for twenty or thirty years. We are all on a journey and we all have to start somewhere.

DO BOTH UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM PRACTICES:

Our nature always tells us to take the path of least resistance. The same can be true in our spiritual practices as well. We tend to run towards the practices that feel the easiest, or are the most fun or life giving for us to do - the *downstream* practices. But for our own maturity, we cannot neglect practices that make us swim *upstream* - those that are more difficult or challenging for us but also have great potential to stretch our faith.

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR RULE:

Your rule of life is a tool, not a law. We recommend crafting a rule of life, trying it out for a month (don't quit after two days!) and then spending time evaluating what is working and what is not. The rule of life is the trellis, not the vine itself. The goal is to create a structure that helps you flourish with God. If a part of your rule is unrealistic or not helping towards that, consider changing or shifting it.

PRACTICES

Practice #1 - CRAFTING A RULE OF LIFE:

Follow this step by step guide for crafting your own rule of life:

Step 1: Create space in your calendar for intentional time and thought.

We recommend taking 6-8 hours over the course of one day or broken up into chunks to develop your rule.

Step 2: Make a list of the categories in your life.

Here is what we would recommend as categories:

- Abiding with Christ (spiritual practices, Bible, prayer, church gathered)
- Rest (silence and solitude, sabbath, phone usage)
- Community and Relationship (Community Group, Marriage, kids, friendship)
- Generosity (giving, budgeting)
- Mission (serving, hospitality, prayer)
- Health (sleep, diet, exercise)

Step 3: Prayerfully work through the categories and prompts below one at a time.

Step 4: Based on those categories, fill out the chart for what practices you want to implement daily, weekly, monthly, etc.

Ask your community for help. Consider the various spiritual practices we discussed in the “Rhythms and Formation” sermon series. Pray and seek God through His Word for wisdom and insight.

Step 4: Once you have those practices on the chart, pull out your calendar and schedule them.

If you are married, loop your spouse in on this step and work to create a calendar together that fits both of your rules of life.

Step 5: Practice the rule for one month, then evaluate and see what needs to change or shift.

ABIDING:

Examples: Morning prayer, Bible reading, examen, fasting, sabbath, etc.

Recommended baseline practices:

- Daily time spend in God's Word and prayer (10 min)
- Weekly Church gathering

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

REST:

Examples: Sabbath, silence and solitude, hobbies and leisure

Recommended baseline practices:

- Daily quiet time away from phone (at least 30 min)
- Weekly Sabbath

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

COMMUNITY:

Examples: Community Group, marriage, kids, friendships

Recommended baseline practices:

- Weekly meeting with your Community Group
- Daily and weekly touch points with spouse, children, and closest friends

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

GENEROSITY:

Examples: Giving to the local church, blessing someone in need, sponsoring a child, etc.

Recommended baseline practices:

- Commit to giving away 10% of your income to the local church
- Set aside a portion of your budget to care for the poor in the city

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

MISSION:

Examples: Hospitality, neighbors and neighborhood, intentional time in conversation

Recommended baseline practices:

- Commit to inviting a friend who doesn't follow Jesus over for dinner once a month
- Begin prayer walking once a week in your neighborhood

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

Health:

Examples: Healthy eating, exercise, sleep

Recommended baseline practices:

- No less than seven hours per night asleep
- Some form of exercise 3-4 times a week (as you are able)

Questions:

- 1) What practices make up your current rule of life (official or unofficial)?
- 2) What practices would you like to add in, cut out, or change?

Practices	Abide	Rest	Community	Generosity	Mission	Health
Daily						
Weekly						
Monthly						
Annually						

RESOURCES

The following are recommended resources if you would like to journey further into reading the Bible:

- [Rule of Life Workbook](#) by Bridgetown Church
- [The Common Rule](#) by Justin Earley
- [Crafting a Rule of Life](#) by Stephen Macchia
- [You Are What You Love](#) by James K.A. Smith