

Rule of Life Workbook

A guide for creating a personal rule of life, as a part of New Cultures shared rule of life. Resources listed below are created by New Culture Church or adapted from Practicingtheway.org, and Emotionallyhealthy.org.

What is a Rule of Life?

While the word “rule” may strike you as a strict or binding constraint, the Latin word we translate “rule” was originally the word for a *trellis* in a vineyard. In the same way a vine needs a trellis to lift it off the ground so it can bear the maximum amount of fruit, and keep free of predators and diseases, we need a rule as a kind of support structure to organize our life around “abiding in the vine,” (John 15:1–8) as Jesus imagined. A rule of life helps us create space to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

John 15:5 *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

How to use this workbook

This workbook was designed as a simple guide for you to develop a personal rule of life, not a one-size-fits-all list of “rules” to follow. Please adapt, change, and improvise as seems best to you and your community.

First Steps

Step 1: Look over the Rule of Life Chart and spend a little time contemplating it, considering how it relates to different areas of your life.

Step 2: On the following pages, prayerfully work through each life category one at a time, giving yourself a little time to list out your current practices, and to imagine what a more intentional rule of life could look like for you in this season.

Step 3: Draft your rule of life. Come back to the chart and fill in each category as you see fit.

Step 4: Try it out. Spend a few weeks living into your rule, and see how it feels. If it feels burdensome or boring, pay attention to that without judgment, and consider what you need to change. What’s working and what’s not working? What’s bringing you life? What’s draining you? Talk about it with a partner, close friend, or community member.

Step 5: Revise and commit. Based on step 4, adjust your rule to what seems best, and commit to it for an extended season of time (we recommend a minimum of three months, and maximum of a year). Over that time period, create space for reflection via journaling, talking to a friend, or just taking a walk and thinking about it, to see what effect a life organized around “abiding” is doing for your transformation into a person of love, joy, and peace in the kingdom of God.

(Adapted from practicingtheway.org)

Life Categories

Contrary to popular usage, in biblical theology, your “soul” (hebrew: nephesh) isn’t the invisible part of you that flies off to heaven when you die. Rather, “soul” is your whole person: the integrating center of your humanity, material and immaterial. Your will, mind, emotions, body, and relationships. The following categories are an attempt to apply a rule of life to your whole person, so that all of us can experience all of God. (practicingtheway.org)

The categories we have listed will coincide with some of the areas of life and practices that are in our churches rule of life. You may find that they are more for you. That is good! Make this as personal as you would like.

Things To Remember

(Adapted from practicingtheway.org)

WHEN YOU START

Start small: As with creating any new set of goals, it’s tempting to over-reach and attempt to live like a monk from day one. That is a strategy bound to fail! Start where you *are*, not where you feel you should be. Unrealistic goals just leave us discouraged and disillusioned. Doable, enjoyable goals move us forward in our spiritual formation. We’ve included a “baseline practice” for each of the seven categories, but you may need to work toward that as an eventual goal. If that means “daily prayer” is ten minutes to read one psalm and offer one prayer, great. Just start where you’re at and move forward at a deliberate, but relaxed pace.

Be specific: Look for practices that are *practical*, concrete, and embodied, not vague and ideological. I.e., “Sabbath on Sundays” not “be more relaxed.”

Consider your personality: If you’re introverted, carve out plenty of time to be alone in the quiet. If you’re more extroverted, make sure you get a lot of time with friends. But also do your best to architect a balance that works for you.

Consider your season of life and stage of discipleship: If you have little kids, start *very small*, go really easy on yourself, and remember children can be your “monastic bells” to remind you that your time is not your own, and shape you into a person of love. If you’re new to following Jesus and just beginning to learn about practices like silence and solitude or sabbath, don’t copy someone who is twenty years down the road. Just take the next step in *your* journey.

AFTER YOU START

Keep a healthy balance of upstream and downstream practices: By upstream, we mean practices that may feel hard for you, but really move your soul toward growth. And by downstream, we mean those practices that you find fun, living giving, easy and joyful. As a general rule, we need just a few upstream practices, and *lots* of downstream practices.

Keep a healthy balance of structure and spontaneity: Don't let your rule become rigid, boring, or a legalistic, dull obligation. And *never* let it override the Spirit's frequently unscheduled interruptions in our days. A good rule should *feel like freedom*, not slavery.

Remember that a good rule is a working document: Like us, it's dynamic, not static. Life is a bit of a moving target, so we have to regularly review our rule and make sure it's still bringing us life with God and others. If you are sacrificing healthy relationship (with God or others) in order to accomplish your "rule," this version of your rule has ceased to aid you in the goal of drawing closer to God and becoming a person of love.

Give yourself a lot of grace; to experiment, engage in trial and error, and discover the yoke that fits you and your season of life. This "trellis" is meant to free you not enslave you. Reject perfectionism and a heavy yoke that crushes.

Share with community: Invite your community, spouse, or close friend into your rule. Find times to check in with each other and encourage one another as you work your rule out.

Creating a Personal Rule of Life

Step 1

Write down everything you currently do (or hope to do) that nurtures your spirit and fills you with delight (e.g. people, places, activities).

We ask that you think more broadly beyond such activities as prayer, going to church, worship, and Bible reading. Your list may include gardening, walking the dog, being in nature, talking with close friends, cooking, painting, hobbies, or any number of other possibilities. List them all!

Step 2

Write down the activities you need to avoid, limit, or eliminate that pull you away from remaining anchored in Christ.

This refers to avoiding certain things that impact your spirit negatively such as violent movies, excessive social media involvement, commitments that take you beyond your limits.

Step 3

What are the challenging “have to’s” in the next 3-6 months of your life that will impact your rhythms?

(e.g. caring for aging parents, adjusting to kids schedule, a demanding season at work, moving, health issues, school)

Rule Of Life

Purpose	Be With Jesus	Become Like Jesus	Do What Jesus Did
Place	Personal,	Relationships, Community, Church, Body	Work, Neighborhood, City
Practices	<i>Prayer, Scripture</i>	<i>Fasting, Sabbath, Worship, Community</i>	<i>Generosity, Contributing, Seeking Renewal, Hospitality</i>
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Quarterly			
Annually			

A Rule of Life is a trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful spiritually. It is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do. - Pete Scazzero

Instead of asking "is this a sin?" Ask, "who am I becoming when I do this?" "How is this forming me?" - Abbie Sawczak

Rule Of Life (Sample)

Purpose	Be With Jesus	Become Like Jesus	Do What Jesus Did
Place	Personal	Community / Church	Work, Neighborhood, City
Practices	<i>Prayer, Scripture</i>	<i>Fasting, Sabbath, Worship, Community</i>	<i>Generosity, Contributing, Seeking Renewal, Hospitality</i>
Daily	<p>Ex: Start morning with prayer & Scripture</p> <p>End the day writing down three things i'm grateful for</p>	<p>Set timer to take a 10 minute break throughout the day & rest/ delight</p>	<p>Pray for my co workers before walking into work</p>
Weekly	<p>Practice examine on Saturday morning</p>	<p>Go to Sunday Service</p> <p>Attend communities</p> <p>Sabbath</p> <p>Do something fun! game night, movie with friends, dinner</p>	<p>Tithe</p> <p>Prayer walk neighborhood</p> <p>Ask intentional questions to coworkers</p>
Monthly	<p>Memorize a verse</p> <p>Practice lament</p>	<p>Fast from food for a day</p>	<p>Buy someones lunch or coffee</p> <p>Contribute at church</p> <p>Spend an hr in the prayer room</p>
Quarterly	<p>Extended time of examine & gratitude at coffee shop or prayer room</p>	<p>Have a reflective conversation with a friend about rule of life, struggles, and celebration</p>	<p>Volunteer in community</p> <p>Invite a neighbor or friend who doesn't know Jesus to share a meal</p>
Annually	<p>Read through Psalms, Proverbs, and a gospel</p>	<p>Fast for extended time</p> <p>Take a 24 hr period of time away to practice silence & solitude</p>	<p>Give to a missions initiative</p> <p>Invite a friend to Alpha</p>

Counter Formative Practice Guide

Negative Patterns	Counter formative practices
Gossip	silence/ self examination
Worry	Breath prayer, Scripture reflection
Envy/ competitiveness	Solitude,, self examination
Discontentment	Attend to heart desire
Self- reliance	Silence, prayer, community
Avoidance patterns	Community, spiritual friendship
Hurry/ over busyness	Solitude, discernment, sabbath
Anger and bitterness	Silence, confession
Insecure/ feeling inadequate	Celebration, scripture meditation
Lust	Scripture meditation, generosity
Stress	Breath prayer, solitude, silence
Laziness	Exercise, community
Lack of faith	Scripture, prayer
Isolation	Community, scripture meditation
Selfishness and self centeredness	Prayer, community, generosity
Lack of direction	Listening prayer, scripture, community
**Adapted from Sacred Rhythms (Ruth Haley Barton)	