

Developing a Rule of Life

What is a Rule of Life?

Simply put, a Rule of Life (or personal rule) is an arranged set of practices and relational rhythms that help us partner with the Spirit to create space in our busy lives for the work of spiritual transformation in the way of Jesus, and in alignment with our deepest passions and priorities.

While the word “rule” may sound a little harsh, 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 flourish, we need a rule as a kind of support scaffolding to organize our life around “abiding in the vine,” (John 15:1-8) in the way Jesus imagined.

Integrity is when our stated values and beliefs match our actual practices and habits and so a rule of life is simply a tool to that end. Rather than a rigid, binding set of demands, it’s a life-giving structure for freedom, growth, and joy.

How do I develop my own?

There’s no one way to design your own rule. The most important step is to pray and ask God to reveal to you how and where you can partner with the Spirit. Where do you feel restlessness and longing, or where have you identified patterns of negativity and spiritual bondage from which you desire freedom? Here are some possible steps:

Step 1: Pray for clarity, courage, and the conviction to follow through.

Step 2: Take a look at the questions below and write or think through your responses:

- Which spiritual practices and relationships have been the most powerful in both shaping my desires and in causing me to long for the Kingdom?
- What are the realistic boundaries on my time?
- What do I need in terms of community resources, time, and space to keep my commitment?
- What have I learned during the course of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* about the importance of community for my formation? Which of these disciplines can I share with friends or my Community Group?
- What am I beginning to understand about myself and my limits?
- Which disciplines do I know that I need to engage in regularly as a means of offering myself to God? Where am I resistant and why is that?
- Do I really want spiritual transformation? It seems hard.
- What are the sins and negative patterns that I’m aware of in my life?
- Where will I engage in these disciplines and what kinds of activities will I need to cut out of my life to make room for this?

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Step 3: Write out some of the different habits or practice categories in your life. Here are some examples: dwelling in God’s presence through scripture and prayer, engaging God through study and meditation, caring for your body (sleep, diet, etc), relational connection with others who encourage your faith, rest and sabbath, work and finances, practicing justice and mercy, etc.

(For some sample practices, see the **Baseline Practices** at the end of this document.)

Step 4: Look over the **Rule of Life Chart** below and reflect upon it. How does it relate to the various habits and practices above? What habits and practices are already in place?

Step 5: Draft a **Rule For Life** using the chart below:

Rule of Life Chart

Disciplines	Personal	Corporate	Other
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Quarterly			
Semi-Annually			
Yearly			

Step 6: Test Drive. Give it a few weeks. Kick the tires, see how it corners the various aspects of your life. Are you finding more joy? What’s working? What’s boring? What gives life and what drains it? Talk about it with a friend or community group. Now, take a look at the earlier questions (**Step 2, above**) again. Be ruthlessly honest.

Step 7: Revise, and prayerfully commit. Based on what you’ve found from revisiting those questions in step six, what seems best? Give it a go for three months to a year and keep an open line of communication with God about the process. Journal about it (if you’re into that) so you can have a record of how the Spirit is growing and shaping you. After you’ve answered these questions, prayerfully bring your longings to God.

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Baseline Practices:

Solitude

Silence

Prayer

Meditation

Study

Worship

Sabbath

Generosity (tithing)

Hospitality

Fasting

Digital Sabbath

Exercise

Community

Connecting with others over a meal

Confession

Sleeping 8 Hours

Caring for the poor and vulnerable