

3. How to Create a Rule of Life

Here are some practical steps to creating a Rule of Life. Remember, each of us is unique and should take that into account.

- Where are you now? If you regularly spend no time, start small with a few minutes daily. Let the first moments in your morning and your last moments at night be a time to pray or give thanks. Are you already spending time, you may be ready to increase that.
- Be specific- not “I’ll read the bible” but “I’ll read 15 minutes each morning”, or “one chapter daily.” Then schedule it when you know you will do it. Not a morning person? Don’t schedule 5 am.
- Account for your stage of life – the routine of a young single mom and a retired couple are very different. Invite God into the spaces of your life, wherever they are.
- Your practice should be a natural reflection of your personality. If you love to worship, then worship time is essential in your Rule of Life, love to study, then reading scripture will be a part.
- Be wholistic- We are to love our God with all our heart, soul and strength. Let your whole life be a living sacrifice to the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:5 NLT - 5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

WRAP-UP

If we want to grow in our faith journey and our relationship with Jesus, we need to follow rhythms and practices that create space for the Holy Spirit to touch and transform us. Jesus wants us to remain in Him and that means integrating our time together into our whole lives, not just Sunday mornings and mid-week studies. A Rule of Life will give us the structure and support we need to grow and be fruitful for God’s Kingdom, and it is the gift of a relationship with the living God that is our reward.

MEMORY VERSE

John 15:4a NLT – 4a Remain in me, and I will remain in you...

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge- This week write up a plan for your Rule of Life.

“Rule of Life” Rhythms and Revival #6

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few weeks, we have studied some of the practices that help us to grow in our faith and our relationship with God. We want them to be more than informational or inspirational, we want them to be transformational in our lives. How does that happen? We need to incorporate them into our regular schedules so that we remain connected to Jesus throughout our days. Not because they are the laws we must follow, but because they can be our rule of life, or the structure that supports our spiritual growth.

Ice Breaker

What is one part of your daily routine that you do the same way every day?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Abide, Remain, Dwell with Jesus

John 15:4-8 NLT - 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

Jesus' parting words to his disciples were recorded in the upper room discourse in the Gospel of John. Seven times in the four verses above he uses the word *Meno*, which can be translated as abide, remain or dwell.

What does Jesus describe as the differences found between those who remain in him and those who don't remain in him?

One important point that Jesus makes is that our fruitfulness, or lack of it, is based on our remaining in Him.

In the letter to the Galatians Paul summarizes the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 NLT - 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Consider this list and share which of these you most quickly lose when you are not abiding in Jesus. Which do you think is most compelling as a witness to non-believers?

Jesus says apart from Him we can do nothing, so we need to position ourselves by our regular practices, to remain connected to Jesus. And we do that through our "Rule of Life".

2. A Rule, not a Law

You still may be wondering just what you must do to remain in Jesus. Developing your Rule of Life does not equate to "the Golden Rule" or following the Ten Commandments. When your Rule of Life is working well, you will have a deeper relationship with the Lord. That doesn't necessarily happen because you follow the Law, but rather by making space in your life for the Holy Spirit to touch and shape you. Using spiritual rhythms and practices like prayer, sabbath, worship, and fasting, you draw near and open yourself to God's presence in your daily life.

Many people find it easier to follow the laws than to develop a relationship with Jesus. This was the case of the older son in the story found in Luke 15. The younger brother is known as the prodigal. He took the inheritance and left town, and his hunger pangs brought him back. But the older son stayed behind "doing what he should do". It appears his motivation in what he did was to earn the father's approval. We don't want to fall into that trap as we develop our own Rule of Life.

Luke 15:28-30 NLT - 28 "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

You already have a Rule of Life. The way you live shapes you towards something. Do you know what your rhythms are and how they shape you?

How would you complete this sentence for the spiritual practices you observe, "I engage in this practice because _____." What motivates you and what do you expect? Is it because you expect to encounter the living God, fulfill an obligation, earn God's approval, or something else?

If you find you are following spiritual practices out of duty or to earn God's approval, stop and consider what God wants you to get out of these practices. He desires a more intimate relationship, and He wants to touch your life in a way that transforms you more into the image of Jesus. The next time you enter into prayer, fasting, worship or reading scripture take a moment to reflect on the opportunity you have to draw near to God and allow that to be your motivation and expectation.