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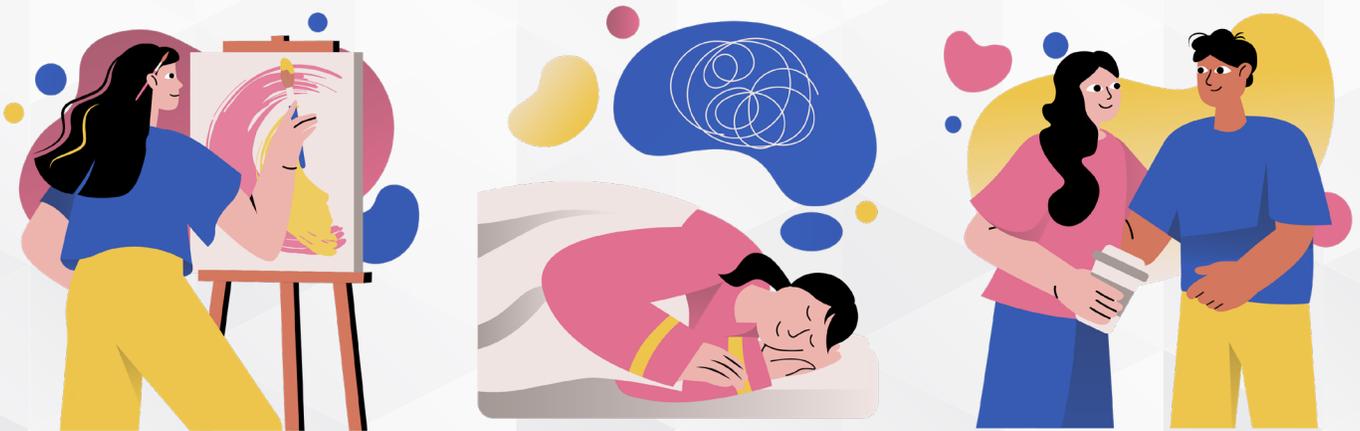
RULE OF LIFE / REGULA

WHAT IS A RULE OF LIFE?

The expression “rule of life” comes from the Latin word *regula* meaning “rule” or “something done regularly.” It describes a rhythm of practices designed to orient us towards Christ and his transforming presence.

Consider this description written by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*:

“A rule for life is a simple statement of the regular rhythms we choose in order to present our bodies to God as our ‘spiritual act of worship’ (Romans 12:1). Each rule, or rhythm, is a way we partner with God for the transformation only he can bring. Rules keep our lives from devolving into unintended chaos. They aren’t a burdensome list of do’s and don’ts, enumerating everything you might do in a day. Life-giving rules are a brief and realistic scaffold of disciplines that support your heart’s desire to grow in loving God and others.”



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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A RULE OF LIFE?

Rule of life has been used since the early church as a personal and communal spiritual formation practice.

Living out a rule of life shapes our lives for intentional commitment to spiritual formation and regular transformational encounter with Jesus. Experience and wisdom tell us that if we have a plan, we are more likely to follow through with our intentions than if we leave it to chance or haphazard attempts. This is why we make plans for our finances, education, fitness, vocation, business, and more. How beautiful to live out our highest calling—life in Christ—with such purpose.



The thoughtful creation of a rule of life can breathe new life into our practice of spiritual disciplines in several ways. Here are three:

1. Personal rules of life can incorporate spiritual practices that are particular to your personality, season of growth, situation, gifting, ministry calling, etc. We are challenged to move beyond a generic practice of spiritual disciplines to a personal responsiveness to God's work in our lives.
2. Communal rules of life can incorporate practices that honor the body of Christ and ground us in relationships. We are challenged to move beyond an individual conception of faith to a communal practice of faith.
3. Both personal and communal rules of life can build rhythms that extend beyond the weekly Sunday service. This challenges us to be disciples in even the most ordinary and boring moments of our daily lives. This then challenges us to give up the false dichotomy of "sacred vs. secular." Jesus cares about all aspects of our lives and is present in all things.

The purpose of a rule of life is to practically order our lives around Christ, personally and communally. We can think of a rule of life as a "scaffolding" that helps us to recognize Jesus even in the chaos of our daily lives. It is a surrendering of our ordinary days and activities to the presence and transformation of Jesus.



DEVELOPING A RULE OF LIFE:

Developing a rule of life is best done reflectively rather than as a one-size-fits-all process. Consider the reflection questions below as a starting point:

- » What spiritual disciplines help me become most aware of God's presence and love for me?
- » What are my main responsibilities in this season of life? How do I want to make space for Jesus to shape how I carry these responsibilities?
- » What are my deepest longings in this season of life? How can I regularly bring this longing before God?
- » What are my realistic limitations in this season of life? How will my rule of life fit within my limitations?
- » Where is God inviting me into rest? Where is God inviting me into growth and challenge?
- » What rhythms or practices is God inviting you to decrease or increase?
- » What relationships do you want to invest in during this season of life?
- » When will I return to review and recalibrate my rule of life?

Below is an example of a personal rule of life:

1. Read a daily devotion during lunch break. Choose daily devotions from books that follow the seasons of the worship calendar.
2. Don't watch TV on Tuesdays – use this time to join Tuesday intergenerational connect group.
3. Attend a school/extracurricular activity of the youth members of our church community/neighborhood once a month.
4. Practice daily examen prayer. (It's a new practice for me – ask _____ for advice)
5. Practice weekly Lectio Divina reading of sermon passage.

--Review and recalibrate as necessary in six months--



DEVELOPING A COMMUNAL RULE OF LIFE:

A communal rule of life can be developed with any group that has made a meaningful commitment to one another for a season. Consider developing a rule of life with your leadership team, connect group, volunteer team, congregation, etc. Consider the following reflection questions as a starting point:

- » What rhythms of discernment can this group practice together?
- » How does this group want to reflect the body of Christ?
- » How will this group invest in relationships with one another?
- » Where is God inviting this group into challenge and growth?
- » Where is God inviting this group into rest and decrease?

Below is an *example* of a communal rule of life:

Love Avenue Team Rule of Life:

1. Assign rotating prayer partners each week.
2. Dedicate the meeting to team examen practice every six weeks.
3. Replace the meeting with a team building outing once a quarter.
4. Gather for an annual team retreat to invest in spiritual formation of team.
5. Hold an annual ministry planning meeting to discern and plan ministry activity for the year

The team Rule of Life will be re-evaluated at the annual ministry planning meeting.



REVIEWING A RULE OF LIFE:

A rule of life is not meant to be a static to-do list. It is a dynamic rhythm of practices developed in discernment and agreement with the present workings of the Holy Spirit. We do not want to constantly change a rule of life on every whim—spiritual formation takes time—but we do want to be intentional about reviewing our rule of life and recalibrating as necessary.

Consider the following reflection questions as a starting point:

- » What rhythms helped to increase my awareness of Jesus in my life?
- » What rhythms were distracting to my awareness of and relationship with Jesus?
- » What growth have I experienced? What challenges have I experienced?
- » How has my life changed? How have my longings, responsibilities, limitations changed? In what ways does my rule of life need to change in response?

THE ESSENTIALS:

A rule of life is a practice that can be used to build rhythms that order our lives around Jesus. We can think of it as a “plan” for how we will regularly live out certain spiritual practices in a season of life. This can be used to shape both our personal and communal lives of spiritual formation.

RESOURCES:

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, IL) 2005.

John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Zondervan (Grand Rapids, MI) 1997.