



Rule of Life

The tool we are practicing as we explore abiding with Jesus is called a Rule of Life. It's a guide consisting of boundaries, habits and rhythms. We commit to and explore these to flourish in our discipleship to Jesus.

A Rule of Life is like a trellis in a vineyard - it provides a helpful structure for the vines to grow up.

Saint Benedict from the 6th Century called the Rule of Life *"a framework for freedom."*

This is not a legalistic set of rules that are poor attempts to please God. This is about practice, not about performance, effort or earning. This is a way of stewarding our time, energy, and life well as worship in response to what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives.

"A rule offers creative boundaries within which God's loving presence can be recognised and celebrated. It does not prescribe but invites, it does not force but guides, it does not threaten but warns, it does not rigidly confine but it keeps you moving in the right direction."

-Henri Nouwen

A Rule of Life is a 'measure'; a way to measure what we take on, what we do with our time, energy and attention and of course a way to relentlessly pursue Jesus, allowing us to abide in him and follow him.

A Rule of Life can be incredibly helpful for an individual's formation. However, they can also be powerful tools for small groups to explore. In fact, having a shared Rule of Life with others can be a game-changer.

Group discussion guide for Sunday 18th February 2024

1. How have you been aware of abiding in Jesus in the past week?
2. Read John 15:5-8 together again.
3. What habits, practices, or rhythms of life do you already have that help you abide with Jesus?
4. Discuss this quote from Henri Nouwen's about a Rule of Life.

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What resonates with you about this quote? How can a Rule of Life be a guide rather than a set of rigid rules?

5. Give people time to start developing their own Rule of Life using the steps and guide provided.
6. Share with each other some of your initial thoughts on life categories such as abiding with Jesus, relationships, work, church family, hospitality, health, digital discipleship, creativity, and building.
7. Encourage each other to commit to practicing their drafted Rule of Life for the next few weeks. Discuss potential challenges and ways to support each other in this journey.
8. Spend time praying for each other.

Steps for writing your own Rule of Life

Step 1

Set some time aside, either by yourself or with someone else or with your small group. Invite God into the year ahead and ask him to speak to you about your days/weeks/months/year.

Step 2

Prayerfully think through each of the life categories below. Think about habits or practices that will help you follow Jesus closely and participate in his Kingdom in those areas of your life. Think about personal, family and small group practices and habits. Don't just think about things you should start doing, but also about things you should stop doing.

Step 3

Start to draft your Rule of Life by filling out some sections of each life category and timeframe (daily, weekly/fortnightly, monthly, quarterly/yearly). If you are finding the spreadsheet a bit restrictive you can capture this in another way (e.g. write a paragraph or draw pictures to illustrate your Rule of Life).

Step 4

Give it a go. Spend a few weeks practicing your new Rule of Life and see how it feels. Is it enjoyable? A burden? Boring? Life-giving? Hard but helpful? Consider what's working and what's not working? What is bringing you life? What is draining?

Step 5

Revise your Rule of Life and commit to it for an extended season (a minimum of three months and maximum of one year). During that time period, create space for reflection by journaling or conversation with a mentor or your small group. Ask yourself if your Rule of Life is ultimately helping you abide in Jesus & becoming more like him, extending & participating in his Kingdom.

Life categories

Here are some areas to consider when preparing a Rule of Life. Feel free to add your own categories.

Abiding with Jesus

Jesus invites us to remain in him and he in us. To allow him to shape us, form us, mould us in his ways, truth, and towards a life of purpose and peace.

Examples: Try a different way of reading/listening to/reflecting on the Bible, a Sabbath practice of rest and refreshment, find ways to worship God in private.

Relationships & family

We all have people in our lives that we have a particular responsibility to: close friends, extended family, siblings, children, parents, spouse. How can you keep investing in those relationships?

Examples: a hobby or activity that you do together, meal times together without phones, a regular date night/day.

Work & finance

Listening for God's voice & pursuing his Kingdom in your work life & finances can make all the difference. How does God want you to use your skills & gifts this year? How would he arrange your budget?

Examples: A practice of pre/post work week reflection, creating a generosity account for spontaneous giving or a planned giving.

Church family

Are you simply an attendee of the church or are you a participator? What gifts do you have or what ways can you serve and build up the church?

Examples: Intentionally connect with people in the church and make time for friendship, try a small group, join a serving team for a Sunday service or midweek program.

Hospitality & loving Others

Are you intentional this year about reaching out and loving others? What habits and patterns do you have in your life that mean people will be 'in danger' of meeting Jesus around you?

Examples: How often would you have someone over for a meal or go out with someone for a coffee? How could you bless people in your life? How could you participate in and cultivate a godly culture in your workplace/family/school or neighbourhood?

Health & wellbeing

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This means they are tools for his purpose. Are you looking after your body as if it was this important?

Examples: Are you eating, sleeping, exercising in ways that allow you to be at your best?

Digital discipleship

Technology isn't evil, but it does affect us and form us. What are you spending your time consuming and producing digitally?

Examples: What are you watching? How much time do you spend scrolling?

Creativity & building

What are you creating? What are you building? What are you making? Is it life-giving, Spirit-inspired, for the common good? Not every job or creative endeavour needs to be spectacular or big, but it's worth asking how your creativity and passion contributes to the greater good.

Examples: Community projects, music, volunteering, neighbourhood causes, art, hobbies, sport.

An example of a Rule of Life from Pastor Steve Gray (he created the Transformation Trek)

	Daily	Weekly/Fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly/Yearly
Abiding with Jesus	<i>Invite God & his Spirit into each day. To begin the day with an invitation.</i>	<i>Personalised Bible reading. Not for my work, or my kids, or anyone else but for me and God.</i>		
Relationships & family		<i>Weekly date nights with my wife. Both simple and fancy.</i>	<i>An activity 1-1 with my 3 kids.</i>	<i>Yearly date weekend with my wife.</i>
Work & finance	<i>Cut back on buying snack foods, prepare my meals better. Pray for God to be a part of my day and work.</i>	<i>Follow a to-do list. Schedule my day/week into blocks.</i>	<i>Audit/reflect each fortnight on my work and to-do list, on a Thursday.</i>	
Church family		<i>Weekly/fortnightly small group. Weekly church service.</i>		
Hospitality & loving others		<i>A church or school family over for lunch or dinner each fortnight.</i>		<i>Budget for being hospitable and generous.</i>
Health & wellbeing	<i>Finish each day with a grateful prayer.</i>	<i>A Sabbath practice, discussed and shaped with my family.</i>	<i>Every 2 months have a day or half day retreat away from people and my phone.</i>	<i>See a psychologist for a few sessions in the first half of 2024.</i>
Digital discipleship	<i>Replace all morning and some evening scrolling with apps like Lectio 365 & personal Bible reading.</i>		<i>Listen to a Christian sermon or Christian leadership podcast.</i>	<i>Reduce my phone usage overall. Downgrade my phone to a simpler, less distracting phone to allow for boundaries.</i>
Creativity & building			<i>Spend some real time writing scripts and being creative around media and the arts.</i>	

Now it's your turn. Start preparing your own Rule of Life.

	Daily	Weekly/Fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly/Yearly
Abiding with Jesus				
Relationships & family				
Work & finance				
Church family				
Hospitality & loving others				
Health & wellbeing				
Digital discipleship				
Creativity & building				