**Rule of Life Workshop**

**Ice breaker:** How has being disciplined affected your life?

**Definition**

“…train/discipline yourself to be godly.” 1 Timothy 4:7

* A Rule of Life offers unique and regular rhythms that free and open each person to the will and presence of Christ. The spiritual practices of a Rule provide a way to partner with the Holy Spirit for personal transformation.
* Scaffold of disciplines supporting your heart’s desire to grow in loving God and others.
* Trellis: intentionally growing instead of devolving into unintended chaos.
* Ruler to measure how we are becoming what we know God wants us to be.

**Scripture**

This commandment that I’m commanding you today isn’t too much for you, it’s not out of your reach…

Look at what I’ve done for you today: I’ve placed in front of you

 Life and Good

 Death and Evil.

And I command you today: Love God, your God. Walk in his ways. Keep his commandments, regulations, and Rules so that you will live, really live, live exuberantly, blessed by God, your God, in the land you are about to enter and possess…

Choose life so that you and your children will live. And love God, your God, listening obediently to him, firmly embracing him. Oh yes, he is life itself, a long life settled on the soil that God, your God, promised to give. Deuteronomy 30:11, 15,16, 19-20 (The Message)

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener…Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me…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…This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples…I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. Selections from John 15

**History**

* Third century to the fifth century. Deserts of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Arabia.
* Climaxed with Benedict (AD 480-547)

**What does it include?**

* Nurturing disciplines that draw you more deeply into loving God
* Creating rhythms that honor your desires and limits
* Periodically assessing your spiritual journey not by comparison to others but through your unique Rule
* Developing a spiritual growth pathway that perfectly suits your stage of life and personality
* Developing regular, repeated relationships, experiences, and practices that make space for God in our busy lives

**What fruit can I expect?**

* Deep-down change
* Keeping the chaotic “whatever” life at bay
* Resting and freedom to not “do it all”
* God-accessible and obedience-centered life

**Goal Today**:

* get you started
* make sure you are on track
* point you to some tools

**Before you Start**

1. What gets in the way of you having and/or implementing an intentional, conscious plan for spiritual transformation?
2. In each box, write one or more specific things are you doing now to nurture your relationship with Jesus:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Prayer** | **Rest** |
| **Work/Activity** | **Relationships** |

**Getting Started**

* Find a companion for this journey.
* Experiment. It may take trial and error.
* You need to learn as much about yourself as possible to form an effective Rule.
* Give yourself lots of time for the slow development of what works best for you.
* How we get there will vary, depending on our personality, gift mix, temperament, sin patterns, areas where God wants to stretch us, and our particular calling from God. In addition, God will prompt us to different practices and emphases at different seasons and phases of our lives.

**Start your Rule**

1. How bad do you want it? Am I willing to rearrange my life for what my heart most wants?
2. What spiritual practices and relationships have seemed to be the most powerful in meeting the desires of my heart?
3. What am I beginning to understand about my minimum daily/weekly/monthly/yearly requirements for ongoing spiritual formation?
4. What disciplines do I know I need to engage in regularly as a way of offering myself to God steadily and consistently?
5. Are there certain practices particularly needed based on sins and negative patterns that I am aware of?
6. Is my plan balanced with disciplines practiced in solitude, disciplines related to life with other Christians, and disciplines related to life in my local community?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Solitude | Life with Christians | Life in my local community |

1. What schedule changes will I need to make in order to consistently choose these life-giving disciplines?
2. What arrangements do I need to make with those I live with in order to make this possible?
3. Are there any questions or conversations I need to have with those I work with in order to make this possible?

**Working Your Rule**

* Work on only one or two elements at a time.
* Settle into the Rule so it has time to shape your life.
* It is a work in progress…change it, revise it if needed (but not on a whim).
* Reread or rethink your Rule of Life regularly. St. Augustine wanted his read once a week! Minimally, you will want to review and revisit your Rule of Life every year. Try a “gentle noticing” rather than a critique.
* Don’t be too hard on yourself.
* Scrap it if it becomes a legalistic way of “earning points” with God.
* Be willing to make mistakes, try again, and learn new things.

Remember, as Benedict wrote 1500 years ago, “Your way of acting should be different from the world’s way. The love of Christ must come before all else.” Keep that before you and you won’t go too far off.

**Acknowledgements**. Most of this material has been gleaned from the following books:

* *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, Adele Calhoun
* *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Peter Scazzero
* *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Burton

**Other Resources on a Rule of Life**

* *Creating a Rule of Life,* Stephen Macchia
* *Living with Contradiction*, Esther de Wall
* The Rule of St. Benedict
* *Soul Feast*, Marjorie Thompson
* Sermons on the Rule of Life… [http://www.CrossroadsFramingham.com/sermons/topics/Rule-of-life](http://www.CrossroadsFramingham.com/sermons/topics/rule-of-life)

**Other Resources**

* Bible App and Devotional Guide | youversion.com
* Abide: Christian Meditation App | www.abide.is
* Audio Daily Office (scripture and prayer) | thetrinitymission.org
* Devotional Guide | hereadstruth.com and shereadstruth.com
* Sacred Space: Daily Prayer | sacredspace.ie