

RULE OF LIFE

A COMPANION GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

If you go to some of the most beautiful gardens in the winter, you likely won't see beautiful flowers. What you will see are lots of supporting structures—all kinds of trellises that were hidden under the plants growing in every direction. Similarly, though you probably don't think about your skeleton much, it makes your life work. You definitely won't do well without it.

One of the most fundamental truths about our lives is that the more functional and beautiful something is, the more likely it is to have some supporting structure beneath it—whether it's showing or not.

This is true in almost everything about our lives. The opposite of discipline and structure is not spontaneity; it is chaos. Just as God spoke order into the “chaos and void” of primordial creation, he told humans to multiply in fruitfulness and to take dominion over creation—to bring about order from chaos. These two go together to bring God's blessing on life and to live in the way of truth. Fruitfulness and dominion. Life and structure. Passion and discipline.

It is easy to neglect the Biblical teaching about discipline, training, and pursuing holiness because of the Bible's bias to drive home the truths of grace: the good news of God's free and generous favor. We are so prone to try to earn God's favor and justify ourselves that God's gracious gifts of love, merciful forgiveness, and divine life are easily misunderstood and made into a new legalism.

Yet, discipline is part of the grace of God, once you have eyes to see it. It is a gift. Not only that, it is precisely the support we need, the trellis, that helps us walk in all the promises of grace. Think about what you become when you believe in God's free grace through Christ: a disciple. The word disciple is literally built on the word “discipline”. A disciple walks in the way of his master's discipline; it's a structured apprenticeship.

Once you have eyes to see and a structured pursuit of God that is rooted in his grace and the power of his Spirit, you will see discipline, training, and the pursuit of godliness everywhere, and not at all in conflict with the Gospel.

You'll see spiritual discipline as the way of Jesus that is in line with his truth and that yields life. There will come a recognition that discipline is not the road to rigidity and boredom but rather the road to mastery and dominion, a path of liberty and creativity.

Discipline doesn't just lead to a mature mind and body but to a buoyant heart, too. Like a buoy, we are grounded yet able to weather any storm with a weightlessness and freedom that can only come from the firm foundation that we are rooted in. Worldliness makes us cynical, hard hearted, and emotionally despondent. Godliness fills us with joy and passion; a disciplined disciple of Jesus is raptured with the passions of God and all that He sees as good, pleasing, and perfect.

God's path does not end with getting things right (the truth) or doing things right (the good); it leads to glory, majesty, and wonder (the beautiful). Worship is not just rightly expressed devotion. It is meant to be an aesthetic, heart-growing experience of wonder. The duty ultimately becomes the delight. The trellised plant produces the most delightful fruit.

This should be an immense encouragement to us. Change is a process—oftentimes a difficult one. Yet God in His grace and generosity, gives us a structure to support us in the process of being shaped into His likeness. The more you want Jesus to rule your life, the more you will see that you need a Rule Of Life. That is the means by which we learn His ways. As you see the value and appreciate the structure of a Rule of Life, and put in the work to implement it in your life, you will see change. Slow at first, but real and hopeful change.

- Nicola Gibson, *Senior Pastor of High Point Church*

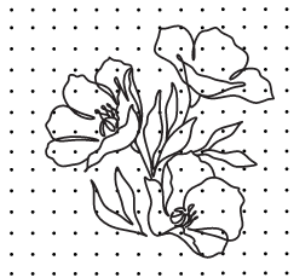


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WELCOME!

It is our hope that this companion guide will be a useful tool for you during this 12-week series to spur you into action. This is not a “come and learn” series. It is a “learn to do” series. We are not focusing on doctrines but on disciplines. This booklet isn’t about learning more; it’s about doing something with what you are learning. Because of this, you’ll find we’ve included places to write and questions for you to consider on your journey.

STRUCTURE

The goal of this series is to make space in our lives for God, and with that space, craft a set of habits and rhythms patterned after Jesus’ life: a Rule of Life. Building a Rule of Life involves pruning away distractions and intentionally rebuilding our lives with practices that lead to godly living.

The spiritual environments, disciplines, and obediences that we discuss within this study are great elements to use as building blocks as we construct our own Rule of Life. Although this process of pruning and rebuilding can be difficult, it is imperative that we undergo this process to reach greater levels of spiritual maturity and sanctification.

As we walk through this series and build a Rule of Life together, commit to the following practices in community:

1. Attend church and listen to the weekly sermon

Make it a priority for the full 12-week series to come to the Sunday worship service each week. Listen to the sermon. Ask the Lord in prayer what He wants you to take away from the sermon each week. Take notes to reflect on later in the week.

2. Read the weekly Scripture passage

Meditate on the weekly scripture passage provided. Each passage was selected to help you thoughtfully examine your life and evaluate the state of your apprenticeship with Jesus.

3. Work through the reflection questions

There are eight questions to ponder each week. Reflect on these in light of the sermon. They are designed to be reviewed before

diving into the homework.

4. Discuss this content with someone

Join a small group, find an accountability partner, talk with your spouse, or commit to discussions as a family. Whoever you talk with, make sure to follow these practices in community. The community you work through this series with will be critical to help you put aside any failures and celebrate any successes you may experience as you create new habits in your life.

5. Follow through on the homework

Spend time working through the exercises. You may start some practices and fail to continue in them. Don't quit; it's okay. Revise anything that needs to change and restart again. The follow through of repetition is more important than the specific practices themselves. Accept the slow nature of progress, knowing that God's promise of help and growth will not fail.

6. Memorize the memory verse

The memory verse for this series that we'll be coming back to each week is 1 John 2:6. Commit to memorizing this passage. It is a helpful reminder that all that we are doing is to live as Jesus did. If we make claims that Jesus is our Lord, we must walk the walk and talk the talk, and live as He did.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT

Even if the Rule of Life you adopt is very modest, you stand to gain and grow much. You may start some practices and fail to keep your schedule. Don't worry. Just start again. Pride and discouragement offer a thousand reasons why you don't need to listen to the Scriptures regarding practicing the way of Jesus. Courageous humility does not acknowledge failure and quit, but does so and tries again. Each time we try to obey Jesus, we profess that pursuing his likeness is more important to us than the hurt pride of our failure. Every repentance or restart is worship. As Paul encourages, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13b-14).

RESOURCES

At the end of this companion guide, there are three appendices. The content of these appendices will be an aid to you in the various steps in our journey over the next 12 weeks.

Appendix I: Measurement

This appendix will be critical to help you develop a measurement plan in Week 1. It will help you identify key habits to measure and contains examples of what some measurement tools look like. As you measure your habits, try to understand why you do what you do and why it's hard to change. To help with this process, lists of questions are provided to help you think through what to measure from key aspects of your life: mind, relationships, body, general, and technology.

Appendix II: Formational Habits

This section walks through examples of habits and spiritual disciplines that help form us into God's likeness. There are habits to make room for God, give direct attention to God, welcome the ordinary, and belong to formational community. Embracing some habits in each of these sections will help us on our journey to live as Jesus did.

Appendix III: Building a Rule of Life

This section walks through the steps to actually build a Rule of Life along with some general advice for doing so once we have the building blocks from the first part of the series.

Further Reading

As we work through these weeks together, you may want to delve deeper into the subject matter than what we cover. If you are looking for more, we have some book suggestions to read alongside the sermons and homework.

Weeks 1-6: *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer

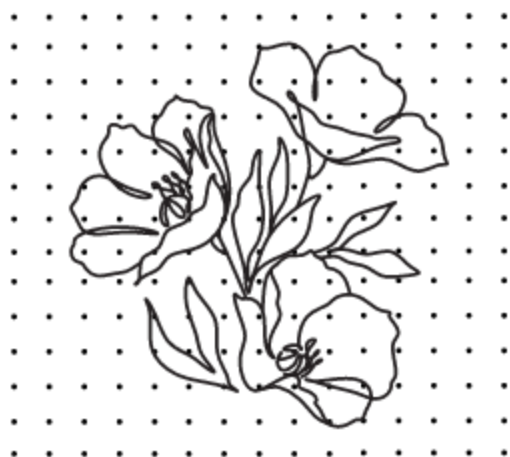
Weeks 7-12: one of the following books:

Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer

The Common Rule by Justin Whitmel Earley

Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton

Further resources are also available online at highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.



MEMORY VERSE

1 John 2:6

*“Whoever claims
must*



*to live in him
live as Jesus did.”*



WEEK 1: THE LIFE PROMISED AND A LIFE PURSUED

John 15:1-8

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Abide in me, as I also abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must abide in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not abide in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read John 15:1–8. What is significant about the author’s use of the word “abide” as opposed to other translations or other verbs that could have been chosen?
2. In Hebrews 3:11, we are reminded that God made an oath that the Israelites would never enter into His rest because of the rebellion they had in their hearts. Take a moment to reflect on that. What does that part of Israel’s story reveal to you? What feelings does it evoke?
3. What does spiritual maturity look like? What are the external and internal traits that reveal spiritual maturity?
4. Jesus offers “liberty” and “life abundant.” What have you believed those offerings should look like in your life? What do “liberty” and “life abundant” actually look like, according to Jesus?
5. How would you finish this sentence: “God is glorified when...?”
6. Identify a time that you “reset” a habit in your life. What did it entail? What made you successful? Contrast that experience with times that you did not succeed in changing a habit. What can you learn from the differences between the two experiences?
7. How would you describe the look and make-up of your trellis as it stands right now? Take a minute to jot down the first few thoughts that come to mind before sharing with others.
8. The pursuit of measuring, clearing out, and building a rule is going to ask a lot of us. What about this are you looking forward to, and what about this are you dreading? What are the barriers you anticipate?

Instructions for the Week

Decide what to measure for Weeks 2–3. For help in deciding what and how to measure, see Appendix I or visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

WEEK 2: HONEST MEASURES

Proverbs 11:1–6

The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him. When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Proverbs 11:1–6. Which of the contrasting statements resonate the most with you? Which bring personal illustrations to mind?
2. Why do you think that “disgrace” is juxtaposed with “wisdom” in verse 2?
3. In just three verses, the word “righteousness” is used three times. Why is this significant following the statement about God’s character in verse 1?
4. What is it to be “righteous?” Discuss why our society has shied away from the term and in what ways a true understanding of righteousness can help us grow spiritually.
5. Read through the Measurement Ideas on page 40. Which of these questions prick your heart and mind the most? What additional questions could you ask yourself as you measure?
6. Beginning this process might feel overwhelming. Is your instinct to lift your face to the light and embrace what might be revealed or to scurry away from it and seek comfort in the shadows? How can you prevent feelings of anxiety, defeat, or comparison from derailing you? What truths about the Father can you embrace to help you tackle this task?
7. Technology is entwined in our lives, yet most of us know that it has damaging effects. Where can you improve your use of technology? Would those close to you identify other areas you should work on?
8. **Measure:** Set an alarm on your phone to go off every 45 minutes each day for the week, and every time it goes off, ask yourself, “Right now, am I more in the peace of God or in the anxiety of the pagan world?” Try setting a timer, determine where you are going to record your reflections in that moment, and then record your findings. Depending on when you start your timer, you may be able to capture between 10 and 20 “data points” in just one day.

Instructions for the Week

Start measuring! It’s okay to iterate and change as you go. The important part is to start somewhere.

WEEK 3: HONEST STRUCTURES, CONTENT, AND COMPANIONS

Philippians 3:13–21

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Philippians 3:13–21. In your own words, how do structures, content, and companions naturally feed “the god of our stomach” if not measured and adjusted to pursue maturity in Christ?
2. What structures do you currently have in place that provide the foundation for how you carry out your life? Think about where and in what ways you spend the majority of your time, energy, and resources.
3. What material or content do you consume to “decompress” or “turn off your mind?” How could these so-called mindless activities be shaping you?
4. What are your “itches,” cravings, and impulses that lead you around by your senses? What “itches” do you just habitually scratch?
5. Take a few minutes to consider what you crave. What is the source of this itch? Where is this impulse or itch coming from in you? The answer will likely be unsophisticated and feel humiliating to realize.
6. What breach of faith, or triumph of fear, is evident in the cravings that you’ve identified?
7. If you could imagine a group of companions, what traits would you want them to embody? What would men and women of good character look like? Think not just about what you *would* want, but what you *ought to* want. Do you exemplify those traits yourself? In other words, are you someone that others should seek out?
8. **Measure:** Set a time for two minutes and write down the cravings or instinctual impulses you find yourself turning toward. What helps facilitate that “itch?” Discuss the struggles that you have and how they manifest themselves, or in what ways you feel entrapped by them.

Instructions for the Week

Consider the measurements you’ve started based on your plan from Week

1. Do you need to change any?

WEEK 4: EVALUATE, A PARCHED & FRUITLESS BUSH OR A VERDANT & PURPOSED TREE?

Jeremiah 17:5-8

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Jeremiah 17:5–8. What of this imagery is the most striking to you?
2. Take a few minutes to evaluate how your measuring is going. What have you succeeded in mapping out? What have you struggled to record? What do your measurements reveal about the environment you dwell in?
3. Our understanding of who God is will inevitably affect how and why we pursue a life of godliness. What shapes your image of God? What analogies or illustrations resonate with you? How has life—and the influence of the Holy Spirit—helped reshape your picture of God so that you have a deeper understanding of who He is?
4. What do your habits tell you about yourself? What do you think needs to change to facilitate your spiritual flourishing? What barriers do you think you'll face (internal, relational, etc.) as you begin to reset these habits?
5. Read Colossians 2:16–23. How do you see the forms of misdirected worship described here manifest in your own life? Are you pulled more toward one or the other? What do you need to understand and embody to avoid these pitfalls?
6. How does thinking of yourself as a spiritual athlete help you envision the goals you want to reach? In what way does it encourage you to be more disciplined in your approach?
7. As you consider what these next few weeks of “clearing out” will entail, what will you have to let go of? What are you afraid of losing in this process?
8. In what ways are you currently living as Christ's disciple—his apprentice? How do you hope your life will look in a month from now? In a year from now?

Instructions for the Week

Evaluate: what have you learned about your habits from measuring for a few weeks? What could you eliminate or prune from your life?

WEEK 5: ESCAPING DIVERSION AND ELIMINATING POISON— HABITS OF FASTING, SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

Ephesians 4:17–5:16

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin.” Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity,

foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 20 rows and 40 columns, intended for writing notes.

WEEK 5: CONTINUED

Reflection Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:17–5:16. What is transformation supposed to look like in both a person’s heart as well as their way of living?
2. What are spiritual disciplines, and what is your level of awareness, comfort, or bewilderment with them?
3. How does the practice of temporary minimalism, or “strategic deprivation,” potentially benefit our spiritual lives? What challenges do you anticipate will arise when attempting it?
4. Consider the four categories of spiritual ordinances: spaces, rituals, disciplines, and obediences. Which of these do you find most challenging to incorporate into your life, and why?
5. What aspect of gracious striving, personal effort or God’s grace, comes most naturally? Which causes the most strain? How might this impact your approach to pursuing spiritual disciplines?
6. How do spiritual disciplines differ from secular self-help strategies? What unique elements do a Biblical approach bring?
7. Many spiritual disciplines are misunderstood, or seen as archaic, and we tend to dismiss what we don’t fully understand. What is the root of these disciplines, and why do they matter to our spiritual growth?
8. One potential danger of this activity is to let guilt and shame derail your progress and participation. Talk about how you can set yourself up for success with your accountability partner or small group. The goal here is to honestly disrupt your life in a dramatic way and be defiant in the face of a society that tells us we need these distractions when we know otherwise. Discuss what traits (honesty, perseverance, vulnerability, etc.) you need to commit to in order to make this work.

Instructions for the Week

The goal for the next month is strategic minimalism. Based on your measurements and evaluation from the past weeks, what can you eliminate from your life that is not essential?

Where can you find times to carve out silence and solitude? Refer to Appendix II: Formational Habits, page 44, for more information and resources.

WEEK 6: GIVING DIRECT ATTENTION TO GOD—HABITS OF PRAYER, BIBLE READING & STUDY, MEDITATION, AND WORSHIP

Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,

it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,

to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble

he will keep me safe in his dwelling;

he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

Then my head will be exalted

above the enemies who surround me;

at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Hear my voice when I call, Lord;

be merciful to me and answer me.

My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”

Your face, Lord, I will seek.

Do not hide your face from me,

do not turn your servant away in anger;

you have been my helper.

WEEK 6: CONTINUED

Psalm 27 Continued

Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.
Teach me your way, Lord;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.
I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Psalm 27. What do you notice about the way the psalmist addresses God from beginning to end of this psalm?
2. A.W. Tozer said, “What you give your attention to is the most important thing about you.” Do you agree? How does this perspective impact your understanding of spiritual formation?
3. What has been your experience in hearing God’s voice? What do you think has either inhibited or enhanced your ability to hear Him when He speaks to you?
4. When do you feel most attuned to God? When are you giving Him your direct attention?
5. In what ways do the practices in this week’s content help you build a foundation that moves beyond emotional and situational focus to a continual awareness and awe of the Father?
6. Of the ordinances discussed, which do you thrive in? Which do you struggle to embrace?
7. How can moving beyond your personality preferences (e.g., an extrovert may thrive in fellowship but may not gravitate toward silence and solitude) help you grow deeper roots and contribute to your spiritual flourishing? Do you have an example of this in your own life that you can share?
8. How has your personal history with church or religion influenced the way you think about the ordinances and practices discussed in this week’s content? How can you graciously and intentionally weigh those influences against God’s own descriptions in Biblical texts?

Instructions for the Week

With the time that you have gained by eliminating the unnecessary, start experimenting with where, when, and how to give direction attention to God.

Focus on the practices that are clearly shown in the Bible: prayer, fasting, corporate worship, spiritual fellowship, and intake and study of Scripture. For ideas on different ways to approach some of these practices and disciplines, see Appendix II: Formational Habits starting on page 44, or visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

WEEK 7: WELCOMING THE ORDINARY—HABITS OF SERVICE AND AVOCATION

Ecclesiastes 3:10–14

I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Ecclesiastes 3:10–14. Why might this passage bring about fear or anxiety to the reader? Conversely, how does it inspire hope?
2. Discuss the relationship between temperance, justice, and liberality in regard to our use of resources, especially wealth, talents, and time.
3. When your illusions of life, God, or the church community are challenged, how do you react? How might God be using disillusionment to push you toward better understanding? How can it be a blessing?
4. Take stock of the way that you pursue the extraordinary and the pleasurable rather than the ordinary. What shaped that approach to life, work, or relationships? What motivates those desires?
5. How do you make people your avocation? How do you make love and service more central than entertainment and consumption?
6. Where do you have a good simplicity operating in your life and where don't you? What is the practical difference between spiritual frugality and an ungracious "poverty doctrine?"
7. Have you had meaningful productive spiritual conversations recently? If not, what are the blocks to you participating in evangelism or being naturally public about your faith in the presence of non-Christians?
8. *Contemplate*: "a life of simplicity is not synonymous with a boring life." Do you believe this? What assumptions about the world, and your place in it, impacts your reaction to a simple, ordinary life?

Instructions for the Week

With the time that you have gained by eliminating the unnecessary, keep experimenting with where, when, and how to give direction attention to God. Focus on the practices that are shown in the Bible: prayer, fasting, corporate worship, spiritual fellowship, and intake and study of Scripture.

Serve—consider starting this week! The Serve Booth is always in the lobby, but today is the day to explore opportunities to serve both inside and outside the church. Small groups will be serving together this week instead of meeting.

For ideas on different ways to approach some of these practices and disciplines, see Appendix II: Formational Habits starting on page 44, or visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

WEEK 8: BELONGING TO THE FORMATIONAL COMMUNITY— FELLOWSHIP, RECEIVING SHEPHERDING, AND WITNESSING

Colossians 3:1–17

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Col. 3:1–17. Make a list of what Paul tells us to put off and on.
2. Has your experience been that the church functions as a counter-environment to the one that the world provides? If not, how has it been similar to the world? If so, how has it been different from the spaces outside of its walls?
3. Why does worshipping on your own, listening to sermons and podcasts online, or individual bible study serve as a poor substitute for corporate worship and fellowship? What is God asking us to give through this social component of our Christian life? How do we benefit?
4. In what specific ways has the church played a role in your spiritual formation as a child? Teen? Young adult? Later in life? How are you actively involved in spiritual environments today?
5. Both corporate and private worship have necessary parts to play when it comes to fostering spiritual health. How do you balance these two aspects of worship in your own life? What challenges do you face in either realm or in maintaining this balance between the two?
6. The church is “both spiritually divine and humanly difficult.” How do we both lovingly address the disappointment and disillusionment we may feel toward the church and continue to keep showing up, despite the imperfections and failings of the church body?
7. What are the excuses you make when it comes to embracing spiritual disciplines and church involvement? What is a step to fixing them?
8. The church should be “God’s invitation on display to the world.” How can we, as individuals or corporately, contribute to making our local church a more attractive and authentic display of God’s kingdom?

Instructions for the Week

With the time that you have gained by eliminating the unnecessary, keep experimenting with where, when, and how to give direction attention to God. Try new practices, focusing on those shown in the Bible. Think through how life stage and formational community might play a role in which practices work well for you.

For ideas on different ways to approach some of these practices and disciplines, see Appendix II: Formational Habits starting on page 44, or visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

WEEK 9: HOW TO BUILD A RULE OF LIFE

2 Peter 1:3–9

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

1 John 2:6

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read 2 Peter 1:3–9. As you build out your Rule of Life, consider how you are going to embrace the good of other people in hospitality, mutual affection, and support. How will you love others?
2. God’s directives need to be at the center of your Rule of Life. What tendencies do you have that might nudge you away from that as your center? Jot down the patterns, personality traits, or areas of weakness that you noticed in the measurement phase of this series. Be aware of them as you shape your plan. Your plan ought to include your strengths, but perhaps more importantly, you ought to carefully consider your weaknesses.
3. How does thinking about spiritual discipline as a “means of grace” change your approach to this task? Read Colossians 2:9–16. What is the danger of turning this into a form of self-imposed worship?
4. What is something you can feel you don’t want to do but that you are beginning to recognize you really need to do?
5. Are there any key components of discipleship that don’t have a place in your life that need to find one? What is a modest starting place? Don’t be too idealistic. What is something you would *actually* do that you know would be good for you and please God?
6. Planning your Rule of Life includes a lot of balance. Challenge yourself, but don’t be inhumane. What extremes do you think you’ll gravitate toward? What steps can you implement to achieve a balanced approach in your planning?
7. In what ways is Christ a normative model for our practice? What limitations are there to modeling our Rule of Life on Christ’s life? What other examples does the New Testament offer?
8. What are the potential benefits and challenges of sharing your Rule of Life with someone else? How does the idea of “exposure” in a Rule of Life help address personal anxieties and promote growth?

WEEK 9: CONTINUED

Instructions for the Week

Write a first draft of your Rule of Life this week:

Step 1: Spend some time looking at the resources in Appendix III, starting on page 54. Evaluate the tools available to aid you in building your Rule of Life, and choose the template that best fits you and your life.

Step 2: Prayerfully reflect upon all you have done so far with measuring your current life and experimenting with disciplines. You can find links to help guide this reflection on our website at highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife or in Appendix II on page 44.

Step 3: Draft your Rule of Life. Fill in each category on the chart of your choosing. *Tip:* Forcing yourself to fit your Rule of Life onto a single page will help ensure that you've constructed something that's both realistic and doable for you.

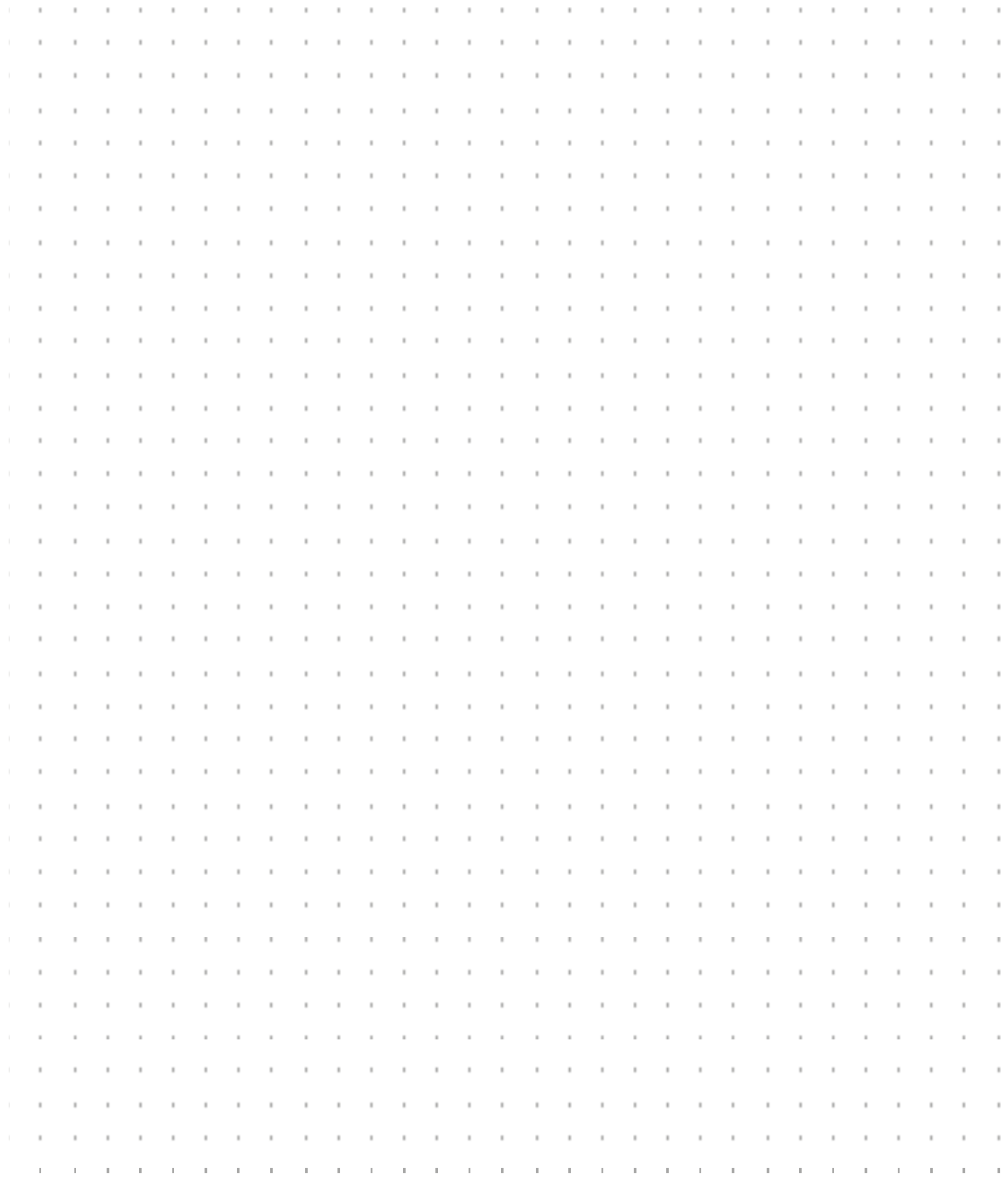
Step 4: Discuss your Rule of Life with your accountability partner, small group, roommate, or spouse. No matter which person it is, make sure to discuss it with someone who knows you well. Invite them to speak into what you've written, prayerfully consider their feedback, and revise your Rule of Life accordingly.

Step 5: Try it out. Spend a few weeks with it, and revise as needed. If you find it to be overwhelming or unrealistic in certain ways, then rework those parts.

If you don't fail at all in applying your Rule, your Rule is probably not stretching you enough. If you never succeed, it is likely too ambitious.

We want to be ambitious at seeking our goal, but gracious in how we treat ourselves. Remember that a Rule of Life is a means to an end and not the end itself. The end is abiding with Jesus—the one who loves you and has given himself for you—and his love for you isn't dependent upon how well you keep your Rule of Life!

RULE OF LIFE DRAFT



WEEK 10: EMBRACING DISCIPLINE —SPIRITUAL BRUTALITY

Matthew 5:29–30

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

A large grid of small dots, intended for taking notes. The grid consists of approximately 30 columns and 30 rows of dots, providing a structured space for writing.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Matthew 5:29–30. How does the concept of “spiritual brutality” contrast with typical approaches to personal growth? When might this approach to change be more harmful than helpful?
2. Why does a discussion of “spiritual brutality” make us uncomfortable? Why does an image of destroying “little foxes” (Sol. 2:15) who threaten flourishing unsettle us more than battling the “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) seeking to devour us? What might be some examples of “little foxes” in your own life?
3. Think of a time when you had to deliberately, dispassionately destroy something seemingly benign, innocent, even “cute,” in the service of protecting something significant. What helped you make that decision? What needs to be the foundation for those choices?
4. The Bible is filled with language of warfare and ferocity while also promoting meekness, gentleness, etc. How does an overemphasis on the latter diminish our potential for spiritual growth?
5. How can one cultivate “spiritual ferocity” without becoming harsh or unkind towards others or oneself?
6. The content from this week talks about breaking down goals into smaller steps while maintaining ferocity. Can you give specific examples of how one balances gradual progress with intense dedication?
7. Both love and hatred can fuel ferocity. How do these motivations differ in their effects on personal change?
8. It is of utmost importance that we know precisely what we are supposed to be taking such a strong stance against. How can we focus our ferocity properly? What guidelines do we need to follow?

Instructions for the Week

Start to implement your Rule of Life. Remember to build your formational habits one at a time—and take as much time as you need to firmly establish the first one before reaching for another.

Building formational habits is not a race! Sanctification takes a lifetime, and we will not fully reach perfection until we meet Christ face to face. Give yourself the same grace that God does, but keep failing in the right direction.

WEEK 11: KEEPING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:1–4

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Sermon and Reflection Notes

A large grid of small dots, intended for taking notes. The grid consists of approximately 25 columns and 30 rows of dots.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Romans 8:1–4. What does it mean to walk “according to the Spirit” or be “in step with the Holy Spirit?” How can we cultivate this in our daily lives?
2. Consider how you have felt the Spirit at work in the last three months. When have you found yourself relying on God’s work in you?
3. Consider the spiritual engagements: environments, obediences, disciplines, virtues, gifts, and habits of the heart. Which of these do you find most challenging or rewarding to engage in when it comes to your spiritual walk?
4. How does focusing on God’s generosity change our striving?
5. This week we are looking at how our desire for growth should be rooted in God’s love rather than an attempt to earn His favor. Does this way of thinking come naturally to you? What might disrupt this truth from taking root in your mind?
6. Reflect on the word “sanctification” for a moment. What comes to mind? How might you intentionally seek sanctification? How does the idea of “pursuing sanctification on the basis of justification” change the way we approach spiritual growth?
7. In what ways can spiritual disciplines become “oppressive or dull,” and how can we prevent this from happening?
8. What habits of the heart have you established? Would these habits be in line with what Jesus would prescribe for you if he were here?

Instructions for the Week

Continue to implement your Rule of Life. Remember to build your formational habits one at a time—and take as much time as you need to firmly establish the first one before reaching for another.

Remember, sanctification takes a lifetime, and we will not fully reach perfection until we meet Christ face to face. Give yourself the same grace that God does, but keep failing in the right direction.

WEEK 12: THE TRELIS IS FOR THE PLANT

Matthew 12:1–13

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

Mark 2:27

Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

Sermon and Reflection Notes

Reflection Questions

1. Read Matthew 12:1–13. In your own words, how did Jesus’ response challenge the Pharisees’ understanding of observing the Sabbath and keeping it holy?
2. In what ways can rest be seen as a “loving limitation” from God? How should this perspective change our approach to work and leisure?
3. What is the relationship between the trellis, the vine, and the master gardener?
4. How does thinking about this relationship help us come into a proper understanding of the Spirit’s work in shaping us?
5. Take two minutes to write down your answer to this question: If Jesus were standing in front of me, and I asked him to put together a Rule of Life for me, knowing me as completely as he does and knowing what he has said, what would he prescribe?
6. Do you think of spiritual discipline as a gift?
7. How have you made space for rest, celebration, and joy in your Rule of Life?
8. Think about the two analogies that we have revisited in this series: the vine and the athlete. Do you relate to one more than the other? How does thinking of the Spirit as a coach, or God as a master gardener, shape the way you conceptualize your approach to discipline and growth?

Instructions for the Week

Continue to implement your Rule of Life. Remember to build your formational habits one at a time, taking time to firmly establish each one before starting on another.

Sanctification takes a lifetime, and we will not fully reach perfection until we meet Christ face to face. Give yourself the same grace that God does, but keep failing in the right direction.

APPENDIX I

MEASUREMENT

What Do I Measure?

The main goal of Week 1 is to choose what you are going to measure. You can't and shouldn't measure everything. Athletic coaches can often see 50 things their players are doing wrong, but a player can usually only hold a maximum of three things in the mind at most. So a coach asks herself, "Up to what three things should I tell this player right now that will make the biggest difference in building their confidence (faith) and help their performance?" Charles Duhigg, in *The Power of Habit* called this isolating the "Golden Habit." What thing tends to lead to the other key things? Focus on that.

For many Christians, faithfully showing up to key Christian environments is a Golden Habit. If you come to worship, you will pray, hear Scripture and teaching, see other believers, be called on to give in service and finances, have people to minister to, and so on.

For others, appointments with a place for silence and solitude in which you are going to meet with God through Scripture and prayer is a Golden Habit because it is structured at a certain time, is in a repetitive place, and incorporates four key spiritual disciplines: Silence, taking in and meditating on Scripture, and prayer. This is often called a "devotional time" or "quiet time." It helps build devotion in a place of quiet and prepares us for the rest of the day. A Golden Habit.

You can also take a negative approach to this—the Acidic or Corrosive Habit. What tendency do you have that is bad that just tends to lead to other bad things? A certain place or people's company (Psalm 1)? A type of media or digital tool? A time of day? A place your mind goes? A repetitive mental rehearsal that has become ingrained? How can you interrupt these things?

Examples:

- Some people at school are really negative or are scoffers of God. Recognize this and how it affects you. Read Psalm 1. How much time are you around folks that are positive about Jesus and trusting and following God vs. people who think making fun of devotion to God and righteousness makes one sophisticated and free? How is this affecting you? Why do you do it? Should you decrease it or do more to counteract it?
- What spiritual environments do you put yourself in regularly? Do you have time for personal worship in quiet time and devotional pursuits? Do you meet with small groups and fellowship with other believers who are pursuing God? Do you attend worship on the Lord's Day? What about offering hospitality? Are these impacting you enough? Can people see your progress, and can you see it?
- What time do you go to bed to be ready to sleep? This is THE biggest one for me (Nic). I have to go to bed at 9-9:20. I do not read, think, feel or write well after 9:00 pm. I can still watch things and eat, but I do almost nothing productive. If I go to bed, then I'm up at 5:00 am to work out, pray, do an hour of writing, or spending an hour with my kids. I can hit the office on time, and I'm headed in the right direction. If I don't go to bed early, everything falls behind. I sometimes miss the "decompression time," but I've realized decompression is an emotional escape, while good sleep before midnight recharges and regenerates everything in me. The screens make it harder to sleep. Sleep makes it easier to move, love, and think. What is your bedtime and waking time? What else does that set in motion for you?

These are examples of key areas to consider measuring and attempting to understand. Remember, don't try to change anything yet. Just try to measure reality and start trying to gain some insight as to why you do what you do.

For a fuller list of things you might measure, look at the next page. On our website, highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife, is a simple template you can print off and fill in. Remember, you can't and shouldn't try to measure everything. Most people need to pick three to five things; some can do as many as 20. So look for Golden Habits and Corrosive Habits. Measure them, and try to understand why you do what you do and why it is hard to change.

Measurement Ideas

MIND

1. What are you paying attention to? Why? For how long?
2. How much time are you focused on yourself and controlling your surroundings, and how much time are you serving others?
3. What are your intrusive interests—the things that come into your mind uninvited and will not leave when you mentally excuse them?
4. What are your triggers? What are you reflexively avoiding?
Homework, talking to family, praying?
5. Set a 25–45-minute timer and ask yourself the following questions whenever it goes off:
 - a. What were you thinking about when the timer went off? Is there repetition? Is it positive or negative?
 - b. How much are you in an anxious vs. a peaceful frame of mind and heart? You can monitor this one by setting a timer and taking stock each time it goes off, logging from 1–10 how peaceful/anxious you are at that moment.

RELATIONSHIPS

1. Who do you spend time with and in what way?
2. Think about everyone you talked to today. On a scale of 1–10, how cheerful and genuinely interested in them were you? 1–5, how much did they have your undivided attention?
3. What time is spent in public/corporate worship, study, or prayer?
4. Do you have any scheduled or ritual time to spend time as a family? A shared dinner time?
5. Do you have any daily times of prayer alone or with anyone else? First thing when you get up, or right before bed?

BODY

1. When and what do you eat?
2. When and how do you exercise?
3. What and when do you use stimulants or self-medication?
 - a. *Example: caffeine, alcohol, sugar, tobacco, vapes, etc.*
 - b. *The idea is not that these are bad; it is that if we are borrowing from rest or we don't have peace, we may be using these to fill in the gaps*
4. How well are you sleeping?

GENERAL

1. What are you spending your time doing?
2. What do you do automatically without really intending it? *Pay particular attention to distractions and anxious repetitions. Usual suspects are eating, turning on music or other sounds, going to the bathroom when unnecessary, clicking on links that waste time or are defiling of your attention often for vanity or sensuality.*
3. What time is spent in private worship, study, or prayer?
4. What are your habits? When do you do them? Are they good or bad?
5. Are you watching or looking at sexually explicit material (i.e., pornography)?
 - a. Not just IF, but when? And why then?
6. How much money have you spent, and in what categories, over the last 3 months?

TECHNOLOGY

1. Technological usage is the most immersive and controlling ecosystems of forming us in worldliness. See the “Technopoly” sermon series from High Point, or review it if you have not considered its effects recently.
2. How much time do you spend on screens each day?
3. When do you spend more time than you intend to on a screen?
4. When and why do you take out your phone? When is it intentional? When is it reflexive?
5. What is the ratio of screen activity to silence and solitude in your free moments?
6. How would you describe the difference between solitude and isolation?
7. What is the ratio between in person interaction and digital interaction?
8. Do you allow people who are not present (by use of your phone) to take precedence over people that are present? Like family?

Sample Measurement Tools

On the next page are a few examples of what a measurement tool might look like and include. Be creative and make one that works for you! Go to highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife to find a simple template you can print off and fill in.

MEASUREMENT

Date	Sleep	Weight	Exercise	Bible	Pray	Shop	Screen	Spouse	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
9/1	9:30	170	Y	N	Y	Y	2hr	Y	Y	Y	N

MEASUREMENT

Date	Sleep	Weight	Exercise	Bible	Pray	Shop	Screen	Study	Friends	Volunteer	Work
9/1	7.5 hr	+/-0	30 min	30 min	30 min	1 hr	90 min	Y	Y	Y	9 hr

APPENDIX II

FORMATIONAL HABITS

In the next few pages you will find brief descriptions of some of the formational habits referenced in the booklet and sermons. For more information, resources to dive deeper into each type of habit, and other helpful links, visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

Habits to Make Room for God (Escaping Diversion/ Eliminating Poison)

The first step in learning a new skill or habit is setting aside the time to practice that habit. The first formational habits listed are disciplines of creating space to make room to meet with God. Like Martha, we are often very busy, often doing good things. However, it was Mary who was commended when she *intentionally* chose to sit at Jesus' feet, to spend time with Him and listen to His teaching (Luke 10:38-42). Below are habits we need to put into place to make room for other habits and practices.

Fasting is a temporary renunciation of something that is in itself good, like food, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater—namely, God and his work in our lives. If you have never fasted before,

Matthew 6:16-18 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

If you are unable to fast from food, try fasting from:

- Tech/phone use
- Social media
- Sugar
- Alcohol

Practicing Sabbath is a way of ordering one's life around a pattern of working six days and then resting on the seventh. It is a way of arranging our life to honor the rhythm of things—work and rest, fruitfulness and dormancy, giving and receiving, being and doing, activism and surrender... the heart of Sabbath is that we cease our work so that we can rest and delight in God and God's good gifts. (*Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton)

The Discipline of Silence is the voluntary and temporary abstention from speaking so that certain spiritual goals might be sought. Sometimes silence is observed in order to read, write, pray and so on... Other times silence is maintained not only outwardly but also inwardly so that God's voice might be heard more clearly. (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney)

The Discipline of Solitude is voluntarily and temporarily withdrawing to privacy for spiritual purposes. The period of solitude may last only a few minutes or for days. As with silence, solitude may be sought in order to participate without interruption in other spiritual disciplines, or simply to be alone with God. (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney)

Matthew 14:23 “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.”

Practical ideas to implement solitude:

- Turn off the music/podcasts in the car
- Take a walk—leave the earbuds at home
- Conversely, turn noise-canceling headphones on in a noisy environment
- Get up 15 minutes before everyone else
- Stay up 15 minutes later than everyone else

Habits to Give Direct Attention to God

Once you have carved out the space to attend to God, these are the habits you will use to direct your attention to Him: Prayer, Bible Intake (reading and/or listening), Bible Study, Meditation, and Worship.

Prayer is all the ways in which we communicate and commune with God. The fundamental purpose of prayer is to deepen our intimacy with God. (*Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton)

Luke 11:1b “Lord, teach us to pray.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

We need to direct our attention to God, acknowledge him, and seek his presence and help. Prayer is a fundamental part of faith. It is done both individually and with others. Prayer is best when we both pray spontaneously at certain times and when we have set times for giving private, calm attention directly to God.

Some people find praying prayers prepared by others very helpful. Spontaneity is good, but sincerity and truthfulness are critical. Praying the prayers of other mature believers can help immensely. (*Book of Common Prayer*, Daily Office—Morning and Evening Prayers). Praying at scheduled times (e.g., upon waking or before bed, at meals, etc.) can also help.

Bible Intake is simply taking in God’s Word in some fashion, whether reading or listening.

Luke 11:28 “He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’”

Here are some practical suggestions for helping to build a habit of consistent Bible reading:

- Find the time
- Find a Bible-reading plan
- Find at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate on each time you read (see below for more on meditation)

Bible Study is diving deeper into Scripture. As author Jerry Bridges put it, “Reading gives us breadth, but study gives us depth.”

Ezra 7:10 “For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”

Bible Study Ideas:

- Take an Adult Christian Education (ACE) class at High Point.
- Read through a major book of the Bible straight through. Notice the structure and flow. Note the areas of difficulty. Jot down your thoughts and impressions. Then read through it again.
- Take a shorter book of the Bible (Ephesians, 1 John, etc.) and read through it once each day for a month. Keep a journal of what you see.
- Choose a book of the Bible and read the same chapter each day for a week (e.g., read John 15 every day). Keep a journal of your thoughts. What does the Holy Spirit highlight for you each day?

As you are reading in your Bible finish the sentences:

- I notice...
- I wonder...
- It reminds me of...

Study of other books can augment your Bible study times and help you understand scripture better. Study can extend to other Christian theological and devotional writings. If there is a particular area or subject you are interested in, ask a pastor, mentor, small group leader, or ACE leader for recommendations.

Study of Non-Verbal “Books” can be particularly helpful in drawing our attention back to God. This type of study involves observing God’s creation with wonder and gratitude.

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

- Pay Attention: the first step is reverent observation
 - a. A leaf can speak of order and variety, complexity and symmetry.” (*Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster)
 - b. Become attentive to the ordinary relationships we encounter throughout the day: at home, work, school
 - c. To yourself and your own moods throughout the day

- Make Friends:
 - a. In nature with plants, animals, insects, birds, etc.
 - b. With the people you encounter every day: at the grocery store, the bank, the library, at work, at the gym...

Meditation is thinking deeply on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer. Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, or even memorizing as a means of taking in God's Word. (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney)

Joshua 1:8 "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Study isn't the same as thinking about what things mean for you in the deeper sense. C.S. Lewis said the work of devils was to keep our attention on the "stream of immediate sense experience," while God wants to lead us to a consideration of ultimate and meaningful things. The longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119, is a long celebration of how a life of meditation and contemplation on God's Word is so transforming and fulfilling.

To Worship God is to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, and to approach and address God as He is worthy (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney). In contrast to the religions of the East, the Christian faith has strongly emphasized corporate worship (*Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster).

Revelation 4:8 "Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'"

Mark 12:30 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Gathered worship has been a key part of God's people's lives since the tabernacle in the desert. It is a place where God's followers rally to each other regularly and feed off each other's faith. It is a place where we worship God, embrace humility, learn from his Word, and rehearse and remember his promises through key rituals of faith—the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

Our weekly worship service at church incorporates many of the other formational habits listed here. We give direct attention to God in prayer, Bible reading, and study (through the sermon). It is a place where we can practice fellowship with one another, and give of ourselves both of our time and talents, and of our finances. These are just a few reasons why we are encouraged to meet regularly to worship God.

Habits to Welcome the Ordinary

Living our lives for God rarely requires stepping into the limelight. More likely it will require a day-in, day-out ordinary effort. We need to welcome the ordinary into our lives, knowing that these are the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Serving/Financial Generosity: God gives to us so that we can give to others, both of our time and our finances.

John 13:14-16 “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.”

1 Timothy 6:18-19 “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

To put serving into practice:

- Go to the Serve Booth in the lobby. Sign up for a service event or activity.
- Talk with your small group and find a service activity that you can participate in together.
- Take a spiritual gifts inventory and find ways to serve with those gifts
- Find a service group or charity you are interested in—join them!
 - a. This can be as simple as a park clean-up day or as involved as volunteering in a local Scout troop or Boys & Girls Club.

Some points about Biblical Financial Giving (from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney):

- God owns everything you own (Psalm 24:1)
- Giving is an act of worship (Philippians 4:18)
- Giving reflects faith in God's provision (Mark 12:41-44)
- Giving should be sacrificial and generous (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)
- Giving reflects spiritual trustworthiness (Luke 16:10-13)
- Giving come from love, not legalism (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- Give willingly, thankfully, and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- Giving should be made as an appropriate response to real needs (Acts 4:32-35)
- Giving should be planned and systematic (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
- Generous giving results in bountiful blessing (but not necessarily financially!) (Luke 6:38)

Avocation: a subordinate occupation pursued in addition to one's vocation especially for enjoyment; a hobby

Ecclesiastes 8:15 “So I commend the enjoyment of life because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.”

What can you do with the time you have carved out from eliminating unneeded activities? Ask yourself:

- What “non-screen” hobbies do you enjoy?
- What activities could you do with family and friends?
- What are the things you used to do that your phone and computer's time demands have stolen away? Reclaim them!

- What are the things that you may have thought “I wish I could...?”
 - a. Pick up a book from the library and learn how
 - b. Or find someone who knows that skill and ask them to teach you
 - c. Or find someplace to take lessons
- Read a book
 - d. Find a biography of someone interesting (either historical or current)
 - e. Pick up a literary classic you never got around to reading
 - f. Ask a friend what their favorite is and discuss it together afterward
 - g. Explore a new genre of literature
- Take a walk around the neighborhood
 - h. Or take a bike ride
 - i. Or a hike in a local park
 - j. Or rent a kayak or a canoe

Habits for Belonging to the Formational Community

We do not live the Christian life alone but in a community. The next few habits are about living with and loving one another in an intentional way.

Fellowship is shared community that involves deep, close-knit participation: a divinely intimate, holy unity among believers—and between believers and the Lord (Crosswalk.com).

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Hebrews 3:12-13 “See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

When we make vows and promises to each other in covenanting together in a local church as “members” or “partners” or whatever term a particular church uses, we don’t inhibit the true life of the church but give the truest conditions for its growth and flourishing.

Consider the following questions in your own life:

- How often do I meet with fellow believers?
- How deep are those relationships?
- Have I made a covenant commitment to a local church body? If no, why not?

Receiving Shepherding/Guidance is seeking spiritual direction from mature believers and intentionally putting yourself under the leadership of elders in the local church.

Hebrews 13:17 “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”

Ephesians 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

If you are interested in either becoming a mentor, or in getting a mentor, go to the men’s, women’s, or student ministry page on the High Point Church website and fill out the appropriate form.

Witness/Evangelizing is to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to people in order that they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to receive Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of their church; communicating the Gospel.

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Success is measured by the careful and accurate delivery of the message, not by the response of the recipient. Whenever we share the gospel, which includes the call to repent and believe, we have succeeded. In the truest sense, all biblical evangelism is successful evangelism, regardless of the results (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney).

Application from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney:

- Since evangelism is expected, will you obey the Lord and witness intentionally?
- Since evangelism is empowered, will you believe God can use your words in the salvation of others?
- Since evangelism is a Discipline, will you plan for it?

APPENDIX III

BUILDING A RULE OF LIFE

How to Build a Rule of Life

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor and with both hands at sections of time.” - Annie Dillard

There’s no single “correct” way to do a Rule of Life. Your Rule will depend on your age, your stage of life, your personality, your work schedule, how long you’ve walked with Jesus, what drains you and what gives you life, whether you’re a morning person or a night owl. It will shift and adjust as these things change in your life. The important part is to implement something God honoring.

Let’s walk through the steps to forming a Rule of Life:

1. Relax: you are going to adjust this Rule and change it throughout your life.
2. Spiritual vision: what do you want to happen in your life in the areas of pursuing and abiding in Jesus in the next [amount of time- 2 yrs or less]?
 - a. If you are a fairly undisciplined person, make it short—a couple of weeks or months.
3. Elimination: determine what you need to eliminate.
 - a. Eliminate as much distraction and diversion as you can
4. Intentionalism: what tools will you use, but need to regulate heavily to make sure you are using them and they are not using you?
5. Accept the ordinary measures: accept and place the means of grace God prescribes for everyone to the level of obedience to Scripture.
6. View the general advice listed after these steps; however, don’t assume how much these mean. To “commit to pray” isn’t a commitment to pray daily or 47 minutes every day.

7. Start with natural rhythms of time to plan around.
 - a. Years, seasons, holidays/celebrations, work schedules, etc.
 - b. Some families will need to include sports, school, and other rhythms that are part of their lives in their planning.
8. Identify key moments (like holidays) and repetitive cycles (like weeks) that you can shape.
9. Focus on the year and the week first: what special times of year will you plan to make special? What will be the rhythm of your week?
10. For many people you'll need 2–5 different week-cycles depending on the time of year. That's fine. Don't be afraid to plan a semester at a time.
11. Start small: insert key actions that you think you can do that will make a real difference if you would do them.
 - a. Example: If you don't normally pray, pick a couple times a day you can pray for 2-3 minutes. Immediately upon rising and at bedtime have worked for humans for a couple thousand years as a good starting point.
 - b. Example: Commit to pray immediately upon hearing about something you want to pray for. Stop when you get a text, or say "let's pray right now" when someone asks you in person.
12. Write it down. There's space on page 31 in Week 9 for your first draft. There are also blank pages at the end of the book for revisions.
13. Share it with someone that you look up to: a mentor, someone a life stage or two ahead of you that you know to be godly.
14. Run it for a few weeks.
15. Finalize it for a period of time.
16. Have at least one purposeful hardship: There should be at least one thing in your Rule you really don't want to do. They should not be inhuman things, but purposeful hardships that you need to grow in to overcome your weaknesses and idols.

There are things we are afraid of that can limit and control us. There are obediences that make us anxious just to think about. If you grew up poor, maybe it's financial giving. Maybe it's sharing your faith with someone. Maybe it's taking responsibility for something, fearing no one will show up to help you. Maybe it's prayer, because you feel too exposed before God. Maybe you don't want to express yourself in worship because you feel embarrassed to express emotion or devotion in the presence of others.

There could be hundreds of subtle examples of opportunities for obedience that we feel inhibited or anxious about. If you know it is a good obedience and a bad anxiety or inhibition, the treatment is usually faith-filled exposure. That may sound scary, but oftentimes you can break it down into more manageable steps. By starting smaller, you can work your way toward the confidence and courage you need to live out what God's loving purpose is calling you to.

General Advice:

- Start small and simple
- Take your life-stage into account
- Be flexible, but not too flexible—hold to it in time but adjust it in premeditated ways
- Be specific. Practices should be concrete, embodied, and practical, not vague or ideological. They are for your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - Not: “I’m going to follow Jesus with all my heart.”
 - Do: “I’m going to read the Bible in quiet for 10 minutes, at least six days a week.”
- Include the basics:
 - Scripture
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Sabbath and worship
- Including the environments of:
 - Silence and solitude
- Fellowship

For more information, samples, templates, resources, ideas, and helpful links on how to build your own Rule of Life, visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

Rule of Life Builder

This tool is designed to help you build a Rule of Life for yourself.

Definition: A Rule of Life is a tactical plan for our spiritual intentions. It is your practical plan to live an intentional life. It is a schedule or a structure you are using to live according to your deepest convictions. The goal is to experience the Life of Jesus as we walk and do as he did. A Rule of life is a plan to shape our lives around becoming what God has called us to in Christ.

To use John 15's vine metaphor: How can we abide in Jesus' life and the Father's pruning to maximize our spiritual fruitfulness? How do we incorporate the spiritual practices taught in Scripture to emulate the Way of Jesus so that we can really be his disciple and learn to do as he did?

In this series, when we say "Rule of Life," we are referring to a written plan we are seeking to follow so that we are really using Jesus' way to apply his truth and experience his life as the whole body of Christ.

Normative: something that is intended to be the norm followed by all who are not a principled exception to the rule. Normative expectations are for virtually everyone and allow for cooperation, order, and the learning that comes from stable examples, among other reasons. In addition to what might be explicitly commanded, Jesus, his apostles and the New Testament church taught, practiced, and assumed a number of spiritual norms we are intended to follow. These things are normative for the church and should be the starting point of how we approach biblical and Christ-centered spirituality. The key, normative New Testament practices are: Worship, Ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper), Prayer, Fasting, and Scripture (learning it).

Translation to "normal" life: The original Rule of Life was for monks in monasteries. The first Rules were for people seeking to live lives separated from "normal life" in remote places or in dedicated communities. For us to use this model, we must translate it into lives that are not lived in monasteries. Thus, none of the ancient medieval Rules will fit us completely.

However, the outline of *the spiritual life in the New Testament was not written for monks*. It was written for ordinary believers living typical lives in the world. Consequently, God's revealed way of spiritual life was not

designed for the monastery, but for living in the world. Therefore, we'll take the environments, practices and obediences laid out in the New Testament as the building blocks of our Rule.

Procedure

We will lay out three procedures for building a Rule of Life. It doesn't matter all that much how you do it as long as you do it, write it down, and begin doing it. The three options are:

1. Use the HPC Rule of Life model
2. Use a Rule of Life tool or model
3. Walk through a custom process we'll lay out for you

Option 1: HPC Model

Part of being in a local church is the opportunity to pursue spiritual life together. Churches seek to incorporate the key spiritual practices in shared spiritual environments and encourage spiritual obedience. This is often called “discipleship;” it's helping people grow as Jesus' disciples.

High Point uses a series of spiritual environments we call “ministries” to help you pursue the Way of Jesus. Consequently, **a substantial part of your Rule of Life can be straightforward church involvement.** The key, normative New Testament practices are: *Worship, Ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper), Prayer, Fasting, and Scripture (learning it).*

Embedding ourselves in the church also naturally involves us in beneficial scriptural dynamics like accountability, church discipline, mentoring, spiritual friendship, service opportunities, generosity, collaboration, and other benefits of seeking spiritual life together. **Remember, all the spiritual practices of the New Testament seem to assume *corporate*, rather than *individual* practice. Doing them together is more “Biblical” than doing them alone—even prayer, fasting, and Scripture reading.**

A Rule of Life that is not embedded in the local church is not shaped by the teachings of Jesus, his apostles, or the New Testament church.

HPC Rule of Life

- Attend worship weekly
 - Worship, pray
 - Hear Scripture read and scriptural preaching
 - Fellowship: spend spiritual time with other believers.
 - Go over children's ministry materials with kids
 - Volunteer in a ministry or attend a class
 - Give your time, expertise, and money toward the shared mission of the church
- Attend a smaller group- Small group, study, volunteer group, etc.
 - Spiritual friendship and fellowship
 - Application-based Scripture and teaching discussion
 - Prayer focused on Jesus' prayer request for us and prayer requests in the room
 - Service together
 - Participation in missions
- Appointed times of private and family worship
 - Private Bible reading, meditation, and prayer
 - Family worship/devotions
- Pursue God's will and good works in ordinary life
 - Vocation: your work
 - Avocation/leisure: things you do out of love, like hobbies
 - Neighborliness/hospitality
 - Generosity and sharing the Gospel

If you choose the HPC model, all you have to do is schedule these things and start practicing it. The only parts you have to figure out on your own are steps 3 and 4 from pg. 54, what to eliminate and what tools to use.

As you move along, ask yourself if you are growing as you hoped. If not, get some help from a spiritual leader to figure out why. Don't just quit.

- Schedule and plan to be at church each week
- Schedule and plan to be at small group each time it meets
- Schedule and plan appointed times of private or family worship
- Figure out how to love and serve others in the environments of ordinary life

Option 2: Use a Rule of Life Tool or Model

A number of authors have attempted to put together a template for forming a personal Rule of Life.

There is no perfect Biblical model for a Rule of Life. However, some of the tools others have made are simple enough to use and have significant strengths. There are three I'll recommend:

Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become like Him, Do as He Did by John Mark Comer

<https://www.practicingtheway.org/>

Rule of Life Builder: <https://launch.practicingtheway.org/rule-of-life>

Practicing the way is a very well done and very cool website. John Mark Comer seems faithful to Biblical and Christ-centered spirituality. Pastor Nic has read his two books on the subject thinks he is a faithful follower of Jesus. The website has a Rule of Life builder and you can get a login and register. It has LOTS of options of what to include in your Rule of Life, and you can custom-make your own. It also has learning modules for several of the nine key practices they promote. They have exercises for learning the practices, videos, and podcasts. Their material is multi-cultural and the body of work is growing.

The main downside with this tool is that it puts clear Biblically-commanded practices alongside other practices that are less normative or not in Scripture at all. If you aren't careful, it's hard to know what is biblical and what is extension of biblical teaching. If you use this tool, it is best to have clear what Jesus and his apostles taught, and what the New Testament church practiced BEFORE you go to use it. Also, Practicing the Way doesn't distinguish between spiritual practices and spiritual obediences, and still narrows things down to 9.

On one hand, this is a great summary of New Testament Spirituality. On the other, there are many spiritual practices and obediences that are left out. New Testament spirituality is hard to simplify. Every manageable tool is going to be incomplete. You just need to keep straight that "schedule a session with your therapist" isn't as normative or biblical as "spending time in prayer," even though some of us need to do both.

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose in an age of Distraction by Justin Whitmel Early

Habits of the Household: Practicing the story of God in everyday Family Rhythms by Justin Whitmel Early and Troy and Ruth Simons

Early's work is simple and has a "do-ability" to it. The Common Rule has a simple graphic approach to four daily and four weekly practices. It includes key Biblical disciplines like Sabbath, prayer, fasting, reading Scripture, and meals and conversations that seem to assume fellowship. If you assume Sabbath includes worship, then the main Biblical disciplines are all there. It is also designed to include key subtractions, especially related to technology and media use, by including Scripture before phone daily, times of day when the phone is off, and intentional curation of all the weekly media we consume. This would be a good plan to do with teenagers.

For some, it might work to do Early's plan to start while learning about the practices from the Practicing the Way site.

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation by Ruth Hayley Barton

Barton's older work spends chapters two through eight on different spiritual practices, and a ninth chapter on building a Rule of Life. She is very well regarded as a spiritual theology writer, and most people will find her accessible. Her plan is straightforward, and most people could walk through it well and form a helpful Rule of Life plan.

Option 3: DIY—Customize your Rule

Key Question: "Based on Jesus' example, how do I need to live to be who I want to be?"

For those who want to work on this without a tool, here are instructions to build your own: the DIY approach. You can do this as a series of family devotions, with a small group, with a couple friends, or by yourself.

Step one of the DIY approach: First, create a list of disciplines or practices you believe are taught and practiced in a normative way in the New Testament. It is worth noting here that in the New Testament, it is almost always assumed that these are done in community. Private spiritual practices are known, but almost all contexts are corporate. The following are a compiled list of these normative practices:

Key New Testament normative practices:

1. Prayer and fasting: thanksgiving, confession, intercession, praying psalms
2. Corporate worship and church belonging: where the Word is rightly preached, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper are truly practiced, and church discipline is rightly administered (accountability)
3. Spiritual fellowship: belonging to Christ's body
4. Learning scripture and deeply understanding the Gospel

Key practice of Jesus:

1. Solitude/spiritual retreat: this practice comes up repeatedly in Jesus' ministry but is not commanded in Scripture nor is it presumed to be a normative spiritual practice. It may have been key to Jesus because of the extreme public nature of his ministry. Writers really only reference the gospels to appeal to this spiritual practice. It is true that many spiritual writers in the history of the church claimed that silence and solitude is the most important spiritual practice. However, its absence from the teaching of the apostles or as a key practice in the New Testament church seems to suggest that we need to use this practice but be careful to not make primary what Jesus' apostles did not.

Key obediences listed in spiritual writings:

1. Service
2. Witness
3. Generosity and benevolence
4. Hospitality and visiting
5. Bodily stewardship and work: seeking fruitful health for service, chastity, work-rest rhythm
6. Time and financial stewardship: simplicity, frugality
7. Verbal stewardship: taming the tongue, rejecting evil speech, encouragement and edification of others, noble speech
8. Submission: right relationship with authorities, especially

- spiritual authorities, elders, pastors, mentors, overseers
9. Any virtue or good work mentioned in Scripture could be added here

Modes of doing spiritual practices:

1. Journaling
2. Scripture reading practices:
 - Meditation
 - Reading long portions in one sitting
 - Study
 - Lectio Divina: reading for emotional and intuition responses, non-analytical approach to reading
3. Spiritual Rituals:
 - Sign of the cross (very big in ancient church)
 - Lord's prayer (3x daily in ancient church)

Step two of the DIY approach:

Once you have made a list of spiritual inputs, select some spiritual environments that are conducive to these practices, and perhaps where several happen together.

Key environments:

1. Gathered worship
2. Spiritual gatherings for fellowship, learning, service or spiritual practices.
3. Family times or intimate community (five people or less)
4. Solitary times
5. Evenings and weekends, or groups you are in: as contexts to love others, share Christ or do good works.

Selecting key times and places to engage in spiritual practices and obediences will help to create a written schedule that will lay out a spiritual rhythm.

We encourage everyone to start with the Sabbath, a time of fellowship, and a daily retreat “moment”.

Sabbath Day: the Sabbath is one of the most central and enduring spiritual practices that runs through all of Scripture. Though it is not technically commanded in the New Testament, weekly worship is presumed, and salvation is often compared to the Sabbath. A majority of the early Christians were women and slaves that did not have enough control of their bodies to keep the Sabbath in a pagan society. Sometimes evening worship was all they had the freedom to attend, after a long day's work (see 1 Corinthians 11:20-22). But for those of us that can keep the Sabbath, we should remember that it was commanded as a gift for us. This demand on our time was given for our life. By keeping the Sabbath with worship, fellowship, shared prayer, Biblical teaching and study, the Lord's supper, and shared service, we do a number of the spiritual practices together in this one day.

Time of fellowship: We often use small groups for this, but there are many spaces for shared fellowship: Bible studies, breakfast meetings, family meals, roommate time, etc. Planning a time of less structured spiritual fellowship is integral to Biblical spiritual practice.

Daily moment of solitude: a “devotional time,” in that it is meant to build devotion, to stoke the fire of devotion in you. In some life stages, you may be able to reserve an hour each day for this practice. In other stages, you may have to get creative with various arrangements to find time for solitude. For example, pray in the morning in the quietest and most secluded place in your house.

1. Pray a short prayer to order your heart and invite God into the moment.
2. Read a passage of Scripture.
3. Meditate on the meaning of that Scripture and its implications in your life. Write a little in a journal—just a couple sentences in most cases.
4. Pray the Scripture for yourself and others, focusing on God's revealed will so that you know that you're praying something He wants to answer.

Step three of the DIY approach:

- Work this into a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual rhythm.
- Make a written plan.

Step Four of the DIY approach:

- Share it with someone whom you trust to help guide your spiritual life.
- Do it for 6 weeks.
- Consider making some adjustments.
- Re-look annually, or every 6 months.

Step Five of the DIY approach: Advanced actions

- Get a spiritual advisor or spiritual director—someone that can help you figure out what God is doing and how to respond in faith.
- Identify your weaknesses that need attention and select spiritual practices to seek strengthening, learning, or healing in areas of weakness.
- Make this plan part of your Rule. This is especially important if you are feeling stuck.

For more information, samples, templates, resources, ideas, and helpful links on how to build your own Rule of Life, visit highpointchurch.org/ruleoflife.

