

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

CRAFTING AND SHAPING YOUR RULE OF LIFE

What is the Rule of Life?

“For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”
Colossians 2:5-7

Why Do This?

When we lack a consistent and thoughtful way of doing life well, we will end up distracted and overwhelmed by life, and our spiritual and emotional growth will plateau. Few of us want to take this approach to life, but it just seems to happen. We wind up:

- *Scattered*: Our schedule is full but doesn't reflect our purpose and priorities.
- *Hurried*: We're busier than we want to be, but don't know what to change.
- *Reactive*: It seems we're never in charge, always responding to demands.
- *Exhausted*: We end each day as weary and discouraged, unsure if we've spent it well

Believers aren't undone by poor theology or a lack of biblical information. Instead, we often fail to grow spiritually because we haven't planned and made space for a deep, abiding fellowship with God.

The lack of spiritual planning may be rooted in a lukewarm heart toward Christ, but at other times, we genuinely want to go deeper with God, but don't know how to make time and space to simply be with him and gain spiritual strength for each day's challenges.

The “Rule of Life” is designed to be life-giving, dynamic, and not a burden.

How to Craft and Shape Your Rule of Life

1. Plan Ahead

You can do this in a lot of ways, but we recommend you do this by spending a day away. Get out your calendar and plan 2 to 4 hours to focus entirely on writing a Rule of Life. If you're married, coordinate with your spouse to trade off days away.

2. Get Away

Go somewhere that isn't distracting and is life-giving!

3. Be Prepared

I suggest taking with you only a Bible and a blank notebook. Don't bring your laptop or smartphone. Type up your notes later and resist listening to music, if possible.

4. Start with God's Word

Start by simply reading through passages of Scripture that help quiet and center your heart.

Let these passages become your prayer

Here are a few suggestions:

Colossians 2:1-7, John 15:1-5, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:, Galatians 2:20, Psalm 27:4

Take some time to pick a key verse for each of your five main categories. You're not in a hurry!

5. Write down everything you currently do (or hope to do) that nurtures your spirit and fills you with delight (e.g. people, places, activities)

Try to think more broadly beyond activities such as prayer, going to church, worship, and reading your bible. Your list may include gardening, walking the dog, being in nature, talking with close friends, cooking, painting, any any number of hobbies. List them all!

6. Write down the things or activities you need to avoid, limit, or eliminate that pull you away from remaining anchored in Christ.

This refers to avoiding certain things that impact your spirit negatively such as violent movies, excessive social media use, and gaming. Stop binge watching TV. Avoid habits that take you beyond your limits.

7. Consider what Spiritual Disciplines you want to include in your rule of life

- Solitude & Silence: Creating Space for God
- Transformed by scripture
 - Reading through the Bible
 - Lectio Divina reading and meditation
- Intimacy with God through Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Lectio 365
 - The Daily Office
 - Centering and Breath prayers (Psalm 46:10)
 - Scripture prayer
- Solo Retreats
- Honoring Your Body: Flesh & Blood Spirituality
- The Prayer of Examen: Listening to God in your Life
- Battling Prayer
- Sabbath: Establishing Rhythms of Rest
- Rule of Life: Cultivating your own sacred rhythms
- Discernment: Recognizing and Responding to the Presence of God
- Self-Examination: Bringing my whole self before God
- Gratitude
- Visio Divina
- Worship
- Day or half a day away with the Lord
- Committed to practice CTR, Ladder of Integrity, Clean fighting, Stop Mind reading, Incarnational Listening

Helpful reference tool: “Spiritual Disciplines Handbook” by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

8. What are the challenging “have to’s” in the next 3-6 months of your life that will impact your rhythms? (e.g. caring for aging parents, having a baby, a special needs child, a demanding season at work, moving, health issues)

9. Write Out Your Commitments Based on the Next 3-6 Months

This is where you take the time to complete your Rule of Life Worksheet.

There is a big difference between goals and commitments. A goal is something you want to achieve, such as running a marathon. A commitment is a rhythm of life that puts you in a place to get there, such as running 4 miles five days a week.

Goals are overrated; commitments are underrated.

In each of these five areas of life (Prayer, Rest, Relationships, Church/Service, and Work), I write out one key verse, a vision statement, and 4-8 commitments.

For example, under "Rest", I might write:

Verse: "Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life" (Deut. 4:9).

(Optional) Vision: I am a human being, created in the image of God, with limits and needs; I am a steward of the health and life God has given me, and I honor him by refreshing myself spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Commitments:

- I sleep an average of eight hours every night (9:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m.).
- I work no more than 50 hours weekly, including only two evenings each week.
- I exercise five days each week (Mon—Fri from 4 to 5 p.m.).
- I review our expenses each Friday and discuss our finances with my wife at the end of each month.
- I reflect on my past week and plan the week ahead each Sunday (1 to 3 p.m.).

When your retreat day is complete, and you are back in the world of technology, translate each of your commitments into your calendar.

Ask God what He is inviting you to focus on as you consider the next 3-6 months

RULE OF LIFE WORKSHEET

**PRAYER
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

**REST
PERSONAL LIFE/HEALTH**

**LOVE OF GOD
WALKING IN HIM
col. 2:5-7**

RELATIONSHIPS

CHURCH/SERVICE

WORK

*discipline ideas/options on the next page

Five Basic Elements and possible disciplines:

A. Prayer (Relationship with God)

Scripture reading
Silence and solitude
Study and reflection

B. Rest (Personal Life/Health)

Sleep
Sabbath
Physical health and fitness
Recreation and hobbies
Money and possessions

C. Relationships

Friendships
Neighbors and coworkers
Marriage
Children and parenting
Extended family

D. Church/Service

Participation and worship
Friendships and community
Service and mission
Generosity

E. Work

Calling/vocation
Current position and responsibilities
Workplace relationships
Education, personal development, and coaching

10. Take a step back and consider the following questions:

What do you think will be your biggest challenge?

What is the one thing you sense the Holy Spirit directing you to start doing now?

What might be one thing you want to stop doing?

Is there someone you can invite to encourage you in making these changes?

Email Sherry@providencewc.org for more coaching and resources on RULE OF LIFE.

REMEMBER:

1. **Listen** to your heart's desires when discerning your Rule. God often speaks to us through them.
2. Make sure your Rule includes some **joy, play, and fun**.
3. Take **baby steps**. Don't make your rule impossible to follow.
4. Give yourself a lot of **grace** to experiment, engage in trial and error, and discover the yoke that fits you and your season of life. This "trellis" is meant to free you, not enslave you. Reject perfectionism and a heavy yoke that crushes.
5. Figure out how much **structure** you need. Debra Farrington in her book quote, *Living Faith Day by Day* writes: "Over the years I've also struggled with the amount of structure to build into a rule. People I respect deeply have detailed rules with set times for prayer, and so on. They tell me that if they don't get up at 6:30 each morning and take a half hour of prayer time that they will never get to it during the day. But that doesn't work for me. It makes my spiritual life into something to add to my to-do list, and it becomes a chore and not a blessing. Over the years I have found that my rule for prayer needs to be more open-ended. I am committed to praying daily, but how and when I do that varies from day-to-day."
6. This is a living document. Assess and adjust every six months. You can use a part of your day away to do this.

Deep Living

In the words of General George S. Patton, "A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan next week." You don't have to get it right. In everything, remember the purpose of the Rule of Life: **to intentionally create time and space to enjoy deep fellowship with God, so that he can reorient and direct your days to increasingly glorify Him along the way.**

Creating and living by a Rule of Life may not be for everyone, but in our busy and fragmented world, it's a helpful, time-honored resource for deep, wise living.

Personal / Small Group Application

What are some things you feel an invitation into? Is it related to the rule?

Where do you feel some resistance?

Resources from: Jeremy Linneman - "Skip Resolutions, Make a Rule of Life" & New Life Church - NYC