

RULE *of* LIFE WORKBOOK



A guide for creating a personal rule of life as part of New Culture's shared rule of life.
Resources adapted from practicetheway.org and emotionallyhealthy.org.

What is a Rule of Life?

A Rule of Life is a set of rhythms and practices that help us create space to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what He did. The word “rule” comes from the word “trellis.” Just as a trellis helps a vine grow upward and bear maximum fruit while protecting it from predators and disease, our rule of life helps us grow spiritually and stay rooted in Christ. Through these practices, we create intentional space to abide in Jesus, as He describes in John 15:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain 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 remain in me and my words remain 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.” (John 15:5-8)

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is designed as a flexible guide to help you develop your personal rule of life, not as a rigid set of rules to follow. Adapt and modify these practices to best serve you and your community.

First Steps

1. Review the Rule of Life Chart thoughtfully, considering how each area relates to your daily life.
2. Work through each life category prayerfully, one at a time. Take time to list your current practices and envision what a more intentional rhythm could look like in this season.
3. Create your initial rule of life by filling in the chart categories as feels appropriate.
4. Live into your rule for a few weeks and observe its impact. Notice without judgment if certain aspects feel life-giving or burdensome. What's working? What needs adjustment? Share your experiences with a trusted friend or community member.
5. Revise and commit to your rule for an extended period (we suggest 3-12 months). Create regular space for reflection through journaling, conversation, or contemplative walks to notice how these practices are shaping your life with God.

Life Categories

In Biblical understanding, your “soul” (hebrew: nephesh) encompasses your whole person—the integrating center of your humanity, both material and immaterial. This includes your will, mind, emotions, body, and relationships. The following categories help apply a rule of life to your whole person, allowing you to experience God more fully.

The categories align with practices in our church's shared rule of life, though you may find additional areas that resonate with your journey. Make this as personal as you need.

PERSONAL/SPIRITUAL

- Prayer and Scripture engagement
- Solitude and silence
- Personal worship
- Spiritual disciplines and practices

RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY

- Family time
- Close friendships
- Church community
- Small groups/communities
- Mentoring relationships

PHYSICAL/BODY

- Rest and sleep
- Exercise and movement
- Healthy eating
- Physical self-care

EMOTIONAL/MENTAL

- Emotional awareness
- Mental health practices
- Stress management
- Learning and growth

WORK & VOCATION

- Professional work
- Studies/education
- Kingdom purpose
- Time management

SERVICE & OUTREACH

- Community service
- Neighborhood engagement
- City renewal work
- Hospitality

RECREATION & REST

- Sabbath practices
- Hobbies
- Creative activities
- Life-giving activities

Setting Up For Success

When You Start

- **Start where you are:** Begin with practices that feel doable and life-giving. Rather than trying to live like a monk immediately, take small steps forward. If “daily prayer” means 10 minutes reading a psalm and offering one prayer, that’s perfect. Move forward at a deliberate but gentle pace.
- **Be specific:** Choose concrete, practical practices rather than vague aspirations. For example, “Morning prayer at 7am” rather than “be more spiritual.”
- **Consider your personality:** If you’re introverted, ensure adequate solitude. If extroverted, prioritize community time. Find a balance that supports your natural rhythms.
- **Honor your season:** If you have young children, start very small and be gracious with yourself. If you’re new to following Jesus, take the next right step rather than copying someone decades ahead. Let your children be your “monastic bells,” reminding you that time is not your own.

After You Start

- **Balance upstream and downstream practices:** Include a few challenging practices that stretch you spiritually (“upstream”) alongside many life-giving, joyful practices that come naturally (“downstream”).
- **Maintain flexibility:** Keep your rule dynamic rather than rigid. Never let it override the Spirit’s unscheduled invitations in your day. A good rule should feel like freedom, not constraint.
- **Treat it as a living document:** Like you, your rule should be dynamic. Regularly review whether it’s fostering life with God and others. If following your rule is damaging relationships or becoming legalistic, it’s time to reassess.
- **Embrace grace:** Give yourself permission to experiment and discover what works in your season of life. Remember, this trellis exists to support growth, not restrict it. Reject perfectionism.
- **Share in community:** Invite trusted friends, family, or community members into your journey. Schedule regular check-ins to encourage and support one another.

Creating a Personal Rule of Life

Step 1: Map Your Current Practices

Write down everything that currently nurtures your spirit and fills you with delight. Think beyond traditional spiritual practices like prayer and Bible reading. Consider:

- Time in nature
- Creative activities
- Physical movement
- Meaningful conversations
- Hobbies that bring joy
- Places that restore you
- People who encourage growth

Step 2: Identify Growth Edges

List activities or habits that tend to pull you away from remaining anchored in Christ, such as:

- Media consumption patterns that drain rather than fill
- Commitments that stretch you beyond healthy limits
- Relationships that need better boundaries
- Activities that trigger anxiety or spiritual disconnection

Step 3: Consider Current Life Demands

What unavoidable responsibilities will shape your rhythms in the next 3-6 months?

- Work or school schedules
- Family care responsibilities
- Health considerations
- Major life transitions
- Community commitments

Step 4: Design Your Daily Rhythms

MORNING

- Begin with prayer and Scripture before engaging with digital content
- Start with 5-50 minutes; quality matters more than quantity
- Consider practices like breath prayers (e.g., Inhale “Still my soul,” exhale “You are God”)

MIDDAY

- Take intentional breaks to reset and reconnect
- Step outside, move your body, or find moments of silence
- Use transition times (commute, lunch break) for presence with God

EVENING

- End with reflection and gratitude using the Prayer of Examen:
 - Replay: Review your day as a movie, noticing what stands out
 - Rejoice: Thank God for obvious and subtle gifts
 - Repent: Acknowledge moments of disconnection
 - Reboot: Commit to walking with Jesus tomorrow

Weekly and Monthly Rhythms

SABBATH

- Aim for a 24-hour period of rest from work
- If a full day isn't possible, find extended rest periods throughout your week
- Focus on activities that bring life and delight
- Spend quality time with loved ones and with God
- Disconnect from productivity and digital demands

CONTRIBUTION & SERVICE:

- Find ways to add value to both church and local community
- Join a contributor team at New Culture or volunteer regularly
- Look for opportunities to be present with neighbors and coworkers
- Participate in local service projects or initiatives

WORSHIP & COMMUNITY

- Gather for Sunday worship as a core weekly practice
- Participate regularly in smaller community groups
- If unable to attend community gatherings, connect intentionally with another believer for mutual support and prayer
- Make these gatherings a non-negotiable part of your rhythm

CITY RENEWAL

- Pray regularly for your neighborhood and city
- Use tools like the pray297 campaign guide
- Volunteer with local organizations
- Participate in donation drives and community projects
- Build relationships with neighbors

FASTING & SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

- Set aside regular times for fasting (from food or other activities)
- Let physical hunger remind you of spiritual hunger for God
- Start with one meal if you're new to fasting
- Ensure any fasting practices are medically appropriate for you

Implementing Your Rule

Use this template to structure your practices:

PURPOSE:

- Be With Jesus
- Become Like Jesus
- Do What Jesus Did

PLACES:

- Personal
- Relationships/Community
- Work/Neighborhood/City

FREQUENCY:

- Daily Practices
- Weekly Rhythms
- Monthly Commitments
- Quarterly Reviews
- Annual Traditions

Counter-Formative Practices

When you notice these patterns, consider implementing these specific practices:

Negative Pattern

Hurry/Busyness

Worry/Anxiety

Digital Overload

Isolation

Self-Reliance

Discontentment

Anger/Bitterness

Lack of Direction

Counter-Formative Practice

Solitude, silence, sabbath

Breath prayer, Scripture meditation

Regular tech fasts, nature time

Intentional community, spiritual friendship

Prayer, asking for help, community

Gratitude practice, serving others

Silence, confession, forgiveness work

Listening prayer, spiritual direction

Remember

- Start with 1-2 practices and build slowly
 - Focus on progress, not perfection
 - Review and adjust quarterly
- Share your journey with trusted friends
 - Let your rule evolve as you grow

Your rule of life should ultimately help you create space to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did. If at any point it feels more burdensome than life-giving, pause and reassess with your community.

For each time period (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually), consider how you can incorporate practices across the three purposes:

	BE WITH JESUS (Personal Practices)	BECOME LIKE JESUS (Community Focus)	DO WHAT JESUS DID (Outward Action)
	<i>When and how will you spend time in personal devotions?</i>	<i>How will you grow through relationships and spiritual disciplines?</i>	<i>How will you serve and impact your workplace, neighborhood, and city?</i>
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Quarterly			
Annually			