

## Develop a “Rule of Life” (Life Vision)

**Introduction:** A Rule of Life is a structure or rhythm for our lives that enables us to pay attention to God in everything we do - individually, within our communities and in the wider world. It serves our desire to abide in and experience God's love all day long, not compartmentalizing our spirituality. Our goal is to live our lives in communion with Jesus, i.e. "to pray without ceasing." Awareness, attentiveness to Him in all we do is our goal.

“RULE” of LIFE comes from Greek word “TRELIS”. It is a framework or structure to help enable us continually pay attention to God

All of us have a Rule (Way) of Life but it is mostly unconscious. Often we find ourselves unfocused, distracted, and spiritually adrift. Few of us have a conscious plan for intentionally developing our spiritual lives. The purpose of crafting a conscious Rule in this exercise is to more effectively structure our time in order to be open to God in all aspects of our daily lives. It is not a set of rules to restrict or deny life but a framework to help us deliberately and intentionally grow deeper in our relationships with God, each other and our communities and networks. In the words of St Benedict, it is *'simply a handbook to make the very radical demands of the gospel a practical reality in daily life.'* It is about taking responsibility for the pattern of our spiritual lives and developing good habits and routines.

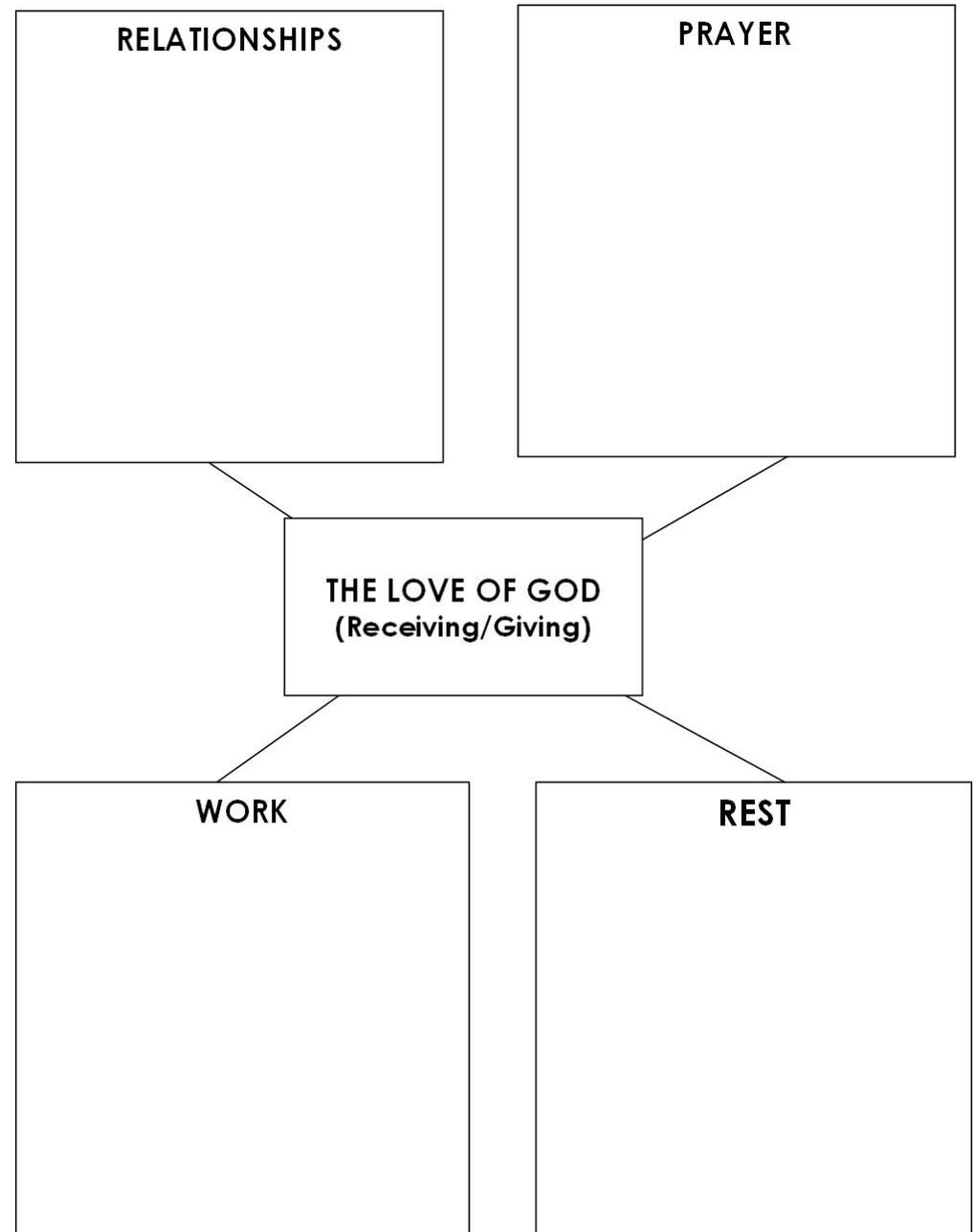
The following are a few simple steps to begin:

### Step 1

**Write down everything you currently do that nurtures your spirit and fills you with delight (e.g. people, places, activities).** Normally, when we think of spiritual activities, we limit ourselves to things such as prayer, going to church, worship, and Bible reading. Don't censor yourself. Your list may include gardening, walking the dog, being in nature, talking with close friends, cooking, painting, jumping out of airplanes, or any number of other possibilities. List them all!

### Step 2

**Write down the activities you need to avoid, that pull you away from remaining anchored in Christ.** This refers to avoiding certain things that impact your spirit negatively - such as violent movies, being harried, and going beyond your limits. The list that you create, whether you know it or not, is your unconscious way of life.



### Step 3

What are the "have to's" in this season of your life that impact on your rhythms? E.g. caring for aging parents, children, a demanding season at work, study, a period of ill health

### Step 4

Fill in the Rule of Life worksheet (above) under the four following headings. Write one specific thing you are doing in each area to nurture your relationship with Jesus. Do you need to add anything?

#### PRAYER

- Scripture
- Silence and Solitude
- Daily Office
- Study

#### REST

- Sabbath
- Simplicity
- Play and Recreation

#### WORK/ ACTIVITY

- Service and Mission
- Care for the Physical Body

#### RELATIONSHIPS

- Emotional Health
- Family
- Community (Companions for your journey)

Take a step back and examine your Personal Rule of Life.

- What do you think will be your biggest challenge?
- What is the one thing you must do now!
- What might be one "stretch goal" you may want to consider?

#### 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. You're going to have trouble keeping a Rule sometimes. Recognize that you're human and try again. Unexpected things come into our lives that we can't help. We take on projects that are bigger than we expected. It takes experimentation to discern what form your Rule should take.

5. Figure out how much structure you need - a lot or a little.

Debra Farrington in her book, *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, established types of 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"*

Again remember the goal as you enter this journey of utilizing this powerful tool called "A rule of life" - to receive the love of God and to offer His love to those around you.

"Your personal "Rule of Life" is a constantly changing document, a "live" work in progress - always. Give yourself lots of time for the slow development of what works best for you. As you examine your life, you may notice many areas that need work. The best approach is to start with only one or two elements for the first few months. Then, after you experience some success with those (you will soon notice that each element in itself is bottomless), you will want to add another building block to your "Rule." Or you may want to stay with the same element to work on over a long period of time."

Benedict's Rule - *"Your way of acting should be different than the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else."*

*Adapted from Debra Darrington's Living Faith Day by Day with additional material by Pete and Gerry Scazzero*

#### Further reading:

God in My Everything by Ken Shigematsu

The life you've always wanted by John Ortberg

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Pete Scazzero

[www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/strategic-priorities/rule-of-life/](http://www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/strategic-priorities/rule-of-life/)