

Developing a Personal RULE OF LIFE

Prepared by Mark Adams

All important parts of life require **planning**. A lack of planning almost guarantees a lack of good development. This is true of **sports, child development, education, and retirement**. It is also true of our **growth in Christ**. Paul said as much in I Corinthians 9:27:

“But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Rules of Life

The word *rule* derives from the Latin word *regula*, from which we get words like “regular” and “regulate.” Having a Rule of Life is a way to organize your life to ensure that you are doing what is necessary to keep your faith growing and your character strengthening.



A Rule of Life really centers around two questions, which it combines into a third question:

1. Who do I want to be?
- + 2. How do I want to live?

3. How do I want to live so I can be who I want to be?

Developing your own Rule of Life

Every person’s Rule of Life will be a bit different, as each of us have our own life situations, schedules, strengths, and weaknesses; all of which should be considered as we lay out a plan for how we want to live. A good Rule of Life is thoughtful about life rhythms **daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly**. Here are some questions you should ponder in thinking about what elements you want to include and how often.

1. When I want to be closer to God, what do I typically find most helpful?



When you put a plant near a window, you have to rotate it fairly regularly to keep the plant from becoming lopsided. Why? Because plants grow towards what give them life. We are no different.

Begin by thinking about what for you is **life-giving**.

A typical list of *personal* spiritual disciplines would include: **Solitude and silence, prayer, contemplative reading of Scripture, examination of your conscience, confession, honoring your physical body (health & exercise), sabbath and fasting, journaling and time in Christian community.**

2. What are problem areas in my life, and how can I change them or redeem them?

All of us struggle with sin, and with tendencies that make us weaker in our faith. Most of us are painfully aware of what sins we struggle with. In addition to allowing time to pray about and repent of our shortcomings, it can be helpful to search for disciplines that **move us to do the opposite of what weakens us**.

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”
Psalm 51:3

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For example, if you struggle deeply with gossip, it would be worth having deliberate time set aside to be silent in God's presence, practicing the virtue of holding your tongue. If you spend a great deal of time fretting over relationships and how other people bother you, it would be good to have time set aside for regular self-examination where you focus more on what needs to be kept in order within your own life, and how you might affect others.

Another approach is to think about how we can learn to **harness what is affecting us negatively in a way that helps us to grow**. For example, a young parent might have very little opportunity for solitude or silence. The constant activity of young children could be a hindrance to spiritual growth, if the parent is seeking to grow primarily through silence and solitude. But if instead, the parent re-imagines time spent with children, it can be a source of growth. "Children are close to the heart of God, and when I spend time paying attention to how my children's hearts work, it helps me to understand God's heart better."



3. What activities will stretch me as a Christian?

This relates to question 1. Most of us have areas toward which we naturally gravitate. Introverted people find the disciplines of silence, solitude, and reflection very appealing. Extroverted people find fellowship, worship, and acts of service more appealing.

In addition to making time for what you naturally like to do, it is helpful to think about what areas of spiritual growth come *less* naturally to you, and commit to regularly experimenting with one or two of them regularly, as a challenge to yourself.

The introvert may need to have a time each month where he or she experiences deeper fellowship with other Christians, or is involved in acts of service that require being out and about. The extrovert may need to learn how to be alone with God, with times of deeper reflection on Scripture.

4. When in my life can I realistically make more space for God?

Think about what times of the day you can start living differently. Do you greet God when you wake up each morning, or do you head straight for Facebook? How about meal times? Bed time?

What days of the week could be reclaimed as opportunities for growth? Are there other scheduled events in the year around which you should plan to spend more time?

5. Who will hold me accountable for growing in Christ?

As you develop a plan for how you want to live, it is important to have a person or two to whom you will be accountable for living by this plan. This is not to be a rigid, legalistic endeavor, but a flexible one, where you do the best you can, knowing that even if you miss some of your plan some of the time, you are still moving in a better direction because you have done so deliberately. Is there a person you could get with regularly for mutual friendship/sharing/mentoring as you both strive to be better Christians?

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1. What helps me most in growing closer to God?
2. What are problem areas needing to be changed or redeemed?
3. What activities would stretch me as a Christian?
4. When in my life can I realistically make more space for God?
5. Who could help to hold me accountable for growing in Christ?

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My Personal Plan

The goal in this exercise is not to overburden yourself. The goal is to help you take some deliberate baby steps in implementing rhythms into your spiritual life that will help you grow towards your goal of being like Jesus.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” - Luke 6:40

DAILY I need to:

WEEKLY I need to:

MONTHLY I need to:

QUARTERLY I need to:

YEARLY I need to: