

“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.”

John 15:5, NIV

grow

deeper
in Christ

Developing a Rule of Life...

“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” —Luke 10:27 (TNIV)

Most of us desire to live a well-ordered life that reflects what we truly believe about ourselves, the world and God. Yet it is not uncommon for us to move through our minutes, days, months and years with one or two areas consuming most of our energy, leaving little time for the things that matter, and causing us to feel off-kilter and depleted. In an attempt to reconcile our beliefs with our lifestyle, we figure out ways to squeeze in church or devotional activities. Yet, we still don't find that sense of well-being and fulfillment we are looking for.

It seems that if we want a life in relationship to Jesus, it matters immensely how we spend our days.

We can be intentional about our life in Christ through a beautiful gift of the Christian tradition—rule of life.

Rule of life is a structure that

facilitates spiritual growth.

Practice and Pray

- Spend a few moments basking in the love God has for you and the knowledge that God cares about every aspect of your life.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through this process.
- Ask the Spirit to reveal to you everything you do that nurtures your connection to God. Write it down. Don't leave anything out.
- Add to the list throughout the next few days as other habits or practices are noticed.

Reflect

The work the farmer does is like the work we are invited to do in our own lives, the same kind of tending. Jesus says, “Remain in me.” The question we each need to ask ourselves is, “What enables me to be most fully alive as a child of God or how do I ‘remain’ connected to the Vine?” All

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the practices and disciplines that draw you into a place of freedom, love, health and generosity make up your rule of life. So today, look at your list and notice the practices that nurture your life in Christ. Don't be surprised if some of those that make the cut are creative pursuits like painting, poetry, gardening, or building. Maybe running, or hiking in the woods are ways your spirit is nurtured. Don't censor. Just notice, like the farmer, what you see making your life most fruitful.

Practice and Pray

- Draw a grid with four columns. Label the columns with Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Annually.
- Sort the practices to which you feel drawn into the categories. Perhaps you will commit to daily prayer, Scripture reading, and keeping a journal. On a weekly basis, you might commit to corporate worship

and rest, extended prayer and study, sharing a meal with someone who is otherwise alone, and exercise three times a week. Perhaps monthly you will commit to seeing a spiritual director, meeting with friends who care about your spiritual life, completing a poem or working at a shelter with your family. Yearly, you may decide to take an extended retreat or a mission trip.

- These are examples only. You need to construct a rule that suits you and then approach it playfully. Live with it for a time, continue to shape it, and work with it until it fits like a soft glove.

Prayer

Bless the rules. Ask for God's grace to flow in and through our practice of the spiritual life and that, through our rule of life, we might hear God's voice and follow wherever he leads.



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