

Creating a Rule of Life

In 2016, I was beatdown, overwhelmed, overworked, and ready to quit.

I was five years into pastoral ministry in the church I planted. My inability to say no stretched me beyond my boundaries. Also, my limits dwindled as personal grief over the death of my wife's brother compounded with sadness over difficult church situations.

I loved my job, but I wasn't sure I could shoulder the weight. Buckling knees and straining muscles told me something needed to change.

That's when I discovered a rule of life.

What is a rule of life?

"The term Rule of Life has its linguistic roots in an ancient Greek word that means 'trellis'... it is a support structure that helps us to grow up and abide in Christ. This, in turn, enables our lives to thrive spiritually and our leadership to be abundantly fruitful."- Pete Scazzero (The Emotionally Healthy Leader, pg.135)

A rule of life helps us wrestle with the chaos of demands, determine what's important, and live a life of flourishing.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. - John 15:5

How to create a rule of life?

First, write these four categories on a piece of paper.

1. Communion - This encompasses anything that allows you to connect relationally with Jesus. Typically, spiritual practices associated with Scripture and prayer.
2. Rest - Enjoyment best sums up this category. What helps you enjoy God and His good gifts? Sabbath is essential here.
3. Community - Your commitment to friends, family, and church.
4. Work - Your paid-work goals, non-paid work goals, and service at church go here.

Second, consider the rhythms of various practices.

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Monthly
4. Quarterly
5. Yearly

Third, choose essential practices for this season.

1. What do I need right now to experience Jesus?
2. What activities put a smile on my face and energize me?
3. What does love for neighbor look like right now?

Fourth, keep it simple; be intentional.

Start small, pray, and prioritize. Pick rhythms of life that will counterbalance your unhealthy propensities.

For example, my back chronically aches from scoliosis. If I do specific stretches, I feel good. Neglect them; I hurt. A rule of life is similar. Do what helps you become spiritually and emotionally healthy.

Here's a rule of life that will not help you in your journey:

An example of a **cluttered, unrealistic** rule of life

<p style="text-align: center;">Communion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study Bible 7 days/week - Pray 1 hour 7 days/week - Fast 2x/month - Journal 7 days/week - Memorize Philippians this year - Take 4 retreats this year between 4-6 hours - Pray for friends/family 7 days/week 	<p style="text-align: center;">Rest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice sabbath Weekly - Get 8 hours of sleep per night - Sit in silence for 20 minutes a day - Read more fiction - Play basketball once a week - Create more than I consume - Turn my phone off one day a week
<p style="text-align: center;">Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend church & small group weekly - Coach my kid's baseball team - Spend 3 nights a week at home with my family - Talk on the phone with extended family once a week - Plan one family vacation per year - Feast weekly with friends - Make at least one meaningful connection in person with a close friend per week 	<p style="text-align: center;">Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with supervisor 4x/month - Finish all work on time - Address rather than avoid conflict - Do bills, chores and house projects on Saturdays - Complete fence project this year - Serve in kid's ministry at my church 2x/month - Serve at community kitchen 2x/month <p style="text-align: right;">rustymckie.com</p>

This rule is too cluttered and only creates stress. Remember, simple and intentional. Always ask — what will benefit me most in this season?

An example of a **helpful, realistic** rule of life

<p style="text-align: center;">Communion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study Bible 5 days/week - Pray/Journal 5 days/week - Take 4 Retreats (4-6 hours) for silence and solitude this year 	<p style="text-align: center;">Rest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice sabbath weekly on Sunday - Sit in silence for 20 minutes a day (all at once or spread throughout day) - Turn my phone off 1 hour a day/1 day a week/1 week a year
<p style="text-align: center;">Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend church & small group weekly - Date significant other 2x/month - Feast 1x/month with friends 	<p style="text-align: center;">Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop professionally in 1 area this year - Do non-paid work on Saturday around house - Serve in kid's ministry at my church 2x/month - Increase charitable giving to 15% of income <p style="text-align: right;">rustymckie.com</p>

A rule of life is a trellis to help you do the essential work of abiding in Jesus so that you flourish in life.

Create one. Set aside a day and time to review it weekly. Intentionally shape the rhythms of your life. Talk about it with your Life Group.