

DEVELOPING A RULE OF LIFE

What is a Rule of Life?

John 15:5 says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."*

When a vine grows to produce its fruit, it reaches to the sun growing up out of the ground. A trellis is essential to the growth of the vine. You never see a grapevine grow wildly on the ground. The soul of a disciple of Jesus is like a branch on a vine. And we too need a trellis in order to grow. In the Christian tradition, this is called a Rule of Life.

We all have a plan for the things we most value. Most of us have a plan for our money or what we call a budget. We have a plan for our time or what we call a schedule. Many of us have a plan for our career or summer vacation or our diet or exercise routine, but not for our apprenticeship to Jesus. Many of us have a plan for our kids' pathway to professional sports rather than for their discipleship to Jesus. The question is, how do we make a plan to be spiritually formed?

The first followers of Jesus came up with this plan and called it a rule of life. A rule of life is a schedule and set of practices and relational rhythms that create space for us to be with and be formed by Jesus.

The question is not, do you have a rule of life? It's, do you know what your rule of life is? And is it giving you the life you most deeply desire? Is it working for you or against you? Many of us feel far from God so much of the time, always in a hurry, stuck in our spiritual formation, still living in wounding from our past or dysfunctional patterns in our present. The problem is not that our rule of life isn't working. It's that it is. We are being formed, for better or worse, by the choice architecture of our lives, by all the habits, relationships, environments, and decisions that fill our days, by our rule of life. This is why we need to craft a rule of life for ourselves and our family that draws us closer to Jesus.

A rule of life is a way to live with greater intentionality, to line up our schedule with the deepest desires of our heart, to be with and be changed by Jesus. But it must be said, following Jesus is not a formula. It is a friendship. A rule of life is not a regimen of spiritual disciplines by which we habit stack our way to spiritual maturity. A rule of life is just a way to put friendship with Jesus at the center of our life, not off to the side.

Through the practices that make up our rule, we offer up our whole life, the good, the bad, and even the ugly, all that we are up to God in love. Transformation is God's work, not ours. We are not in control of our spiritual formation. God does it his way at his pace.

Tips before you begin

1. *Start Small* - It's easy to get overexcited and overreach, but this is a strategy doomed to fail. When it comes to the spiritual life, as a general rule, start where you are, not where you should be.
2. *Think Subtraction, not Addition* - It may be just as important for you to make a list of the things you're not going to do. A rule of life is not about doing more, but doing less.
3. *There is no Formation without Repetition* - Formation is slow and at times monotonous work. In the moment, it often doesn't feel like it's doing anything to us at all. It is.
4. *Do this in Community* - historically, a rule of life was for a community. It was designed to hold a community together around shared rhythms of spiritual formation. And following a rule in community can change everything.



Making Your Rule of Life

You can fill out your Rule of Life by writing in options for practices under each category. This is your Rule of Life, so it can be filled out how you like. However, there are options for practices available on our website at www.heath.church/practices. Or scan the QR code here:



Practice	Daily	Weekly	Monthly, Annually, Seasonally
<p>Scripture We become a community of <i>fidelity to God</i> in a culture of <i>ideological compromise</i> through the practice of Scripture.</p>			
<p>Prayer We become a community centered around a <i>relationship with the Father</i> in a culture of <i>distraction and escapism</i> through the practice of Prayer.</p>			
<p>Generosity We become a community of <i>contentment</i> in a culture of <i>consumerism</i> through the practice of Generosity.</p>			
<p>Community We become a community of <i>love and depth</i> in a culture of <i>individualism and superficiality</i> through the practice of Community.</p>			
<p>Service We become a community of <i>justice, mercy, humility, and reconciliation</i> in a culture of <i>injustice, pride, and division</i> through the practice of Service.</p>			
<p>Rest We become a community of <i>intentionality and calm</i> in a culture of <i>hurry and exhaustion</i> through the practice of Rest.</p>			
<p>Sharing We become a community of <i>hospitality</i> in a culture of <i>hostility</i> through the practice of Sharing.</p>			

