

Developing a Rule of Life

(sometimes described in classic Christian literature by the Latin - *regula vitae*.)

Your Rule of Life/Regula Vitae is a rhythm of life-giving practices you observe on a regular basis. It is very important that you keep this simple and sustainable. Think of this first version as a preliminary draft—it can and should be adjusted as time goes on. You might include assignments that you have as part of your seminary requirements.

Note: Included at the end of this guide are some sample Rules of Life to get your juices flowing (taken from Ken Shigematsu's book *God in My Everything*)

Recommendation: Four Steps:

1. **Assessment:** Make a list of your current *regula vitae*—everything you do on a consistently repeating basis (whether that is hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly). Notice the things on this list that give you life. Conversely, notice the things on this list that are NOT giving you life. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything you should remove from your current rhythm, and also whether there is a practice or two you should add.
2. **Vision:** Write down a short statement that encapsulates your vision for your life with God. For example, Ignatius of Loyola's Vision was: "To praise, love, and serve God." Someone else's was "A life pervaded by love."
3. **Curriculum:** In discussion with the Holy Spirit, begin to craft your desired Rule of Life/*regula vitae*.
4. **Evaluate:** Run your new list through these two rubrics:
 - a. Does my new Rule of Life help me (1) **connect** with God and his creation (2) **remove** my autonomic responses against the Kingdom of God.
 - b. Is there any aspect of my humanity (thoughts, feelings, choices, body, relationships) *not* included in my new Rule of Life?

After that, you can present your Rule in whatever format is most helpful for you—a spreadsheet, a short essay, point form, etc.

Additional Pointers

1. Don't attempt to put everything on your Rule of Life that you'd ever want to try. Just start with a handful of things that feel most life-giving right now.
2. Your plan should be realistic and practical, with lots of open spaces for life with God to unfold. Are there elements of freedom and discernment within your plan? Remember, much like the Sabbath, the rule exists for you, not you for the rule. (Mark 2:27)
3. The plan should have enough specific measurability for you to discern if it is working. (Don't confuse flexibility for lack of clarity. Have you considered the what, how, when, where and why?)



KEN'S RULE

Take a 24-hour Sabbath once a week

Begin each day with Scripture and prayer

Pray the *Examen* before going to sleep at night

Run 2–3x a week, swim 2x a week

Aim to be home by 5:15 p.m. each day, and to be home at least 4 evenings a week

Fast on Thursdays

Go on a date with my wife once every 2–3 weeks

Meet with a spiritual director once a month

Host people from different backgrounds in our home about once a month

Take a yearly spiritual retreat with my mentoring group

Take a yearly summer vacation with my family and spend New Year's in Japan with my wife's family

Tithe to my local church and give to impoverished children and missions in the developing world to the point where we feel financially stretched



BRITTANY'S RULE *(graduate student in her 20s)*

On a daily basis I will:

- Spend time with God through Bible study, meditation or memorization, prayer or worship
- Focus on eating as healthy as possible (no wheat or dairy and minimal sugar) and getting at least 7–8 hours of sleep each night

On a weekly basis I will:

- Sabbath each Sunday
- Participate in church at the Sunday evening service and at young adults group on Monday night
- Spend quality time with my boyfriend (both play and recreation, as well as time in prayer)
- Spend quality time with my best friend (play, exercise, and recreation)
- Exercise 3–4 times a week

On a biweekly or monthly basis I will:

- Spend quality time with my parents and brother
- Tithe
- Connect with my peer-mentor/spiritual friend
- Reflect on how I'm meeting my goals/living my rule and where I need to grow



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JONATHAN'S RULE

(in his 30s, married no kids, engineer)

Sleep 10:00 p.m. – 5:50 a.m. daily

Read Bible in mornings 4–5x a week

Pause 5 minutes to reflect with God 2x a day

Church weekly

Bike to work 4–5x a week

Soccer weekly

Small group weekly

Call Dad 5x a week

Date night weekly

Cook dinner 4x a week

Give 15 percent of income away monthly

Camping yearly (1 week)

Retreat 2x a year

Visit wife's family in Colombia yearly



ROB'S RULE

(artist in his 50s)

- *As I can*, I begin each morning by thanking God for all that will happen in the day ahead. Anticipate goodness and the Lord's love in all that will take place.
- *As I can*, I begin each day with 20 minutes of silent prayer.
- *As I can*, practice reading a short passage of Scripture as a *lectio divina* each day—a time of slow spiritual reading that has as its purpose the conversion of my heart more than the accumulation of knowledge.
- *As I can*, I will meet with a “soul friend” monthly to discuss with each other where I have struggled and where I have found encouragement from God in relation to these practices.
- *As I can*, I will meet regularly with a small group of people who know and share my deepest desires for relationship with God.
- *As I can*, I will live a simple and uncluttered life. I will enjoy time for hospitality with people I meet in my day, especially God. Invite others into my life, my home, my journey.
- *As I can*, I will find a regular outlet through which to offer my time, money, and labor for the sake of others.
- *As I can*, I plan dedicated times for spiritual retreat throughout the year—a day, a weekend, or a week away in silence with God.