

## Rule of Life

St. Benedict was the founder of a monastery at Monte Cassino, between Rome and Naples. He encouraged everyone in the monastery to order their life by a rule of life. A rule of life is a routine of regular practices which help cultivate faithfulness in every area of life. Below you will see a list of different areas of life and habits to cultivate faithfulness in those areas.

Notice in the diagram that these practices are all centered on the triune God of love (the trinita symbol). These practices enable us to ultimately delight more deeply in the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These are not habits to earn God's love, but to embrace God's love and direct our love to God and neighbor. As St. Augustine said in the beginning of His rule of life, "Before all things, most dear brothers, we must love God and our neighbor; for these are the principal commands which have been given to us." As we cultivate faithfulness in all these areas, we do so before the face of God and in the presence of God.

**Devotional:** Cultivating habits of intimacy with God (Word, prayer, worship, sacrament, & Sabbath).

**Social:** Cultivating habits of intimacy with people (family, friendships, neighbors, & coworkers).

**Financial:** Cultivating habits of financial stewardship (budgeting, tithing, spending, saving).

**Emotional:** Cultivating habits of emotional awareness (self-reflection, self-expression, & empathy-feeling other people's emotions).

**Physical:** Cultivating habits of physical health (exercising, eating, resting/Sabbath)

**Missional:** Cultivating habits of outreach (evangelism & service).

**Vocational:** Cultivating habits of work achievement (goal setting, time management, work relationships).



Develop your own plan as to what practices you can pursue in order to grow in faithfulness in the specific area of life listed. This also could be used as a tool for evaluating your present practices of growth and help you to grow more faithfully in the future.

## **Rule of Life Monthly Evaluation**

- 1. Devotional:** Cultivating habits of intimacy with God (Word, prayer, worship, sacrament, & Sabbath).
  - a. Word
    - i. What am I reading at this point? How do I hope this book will develop my relationship toward God, my character, my relationships with people, and my relationship to the world?
    - ii. How has reading this particular section of scripture given me a greater joy in the Gospel and the finished work of Jesus?
    - iii. Have I made a priority of beholding God in the scripture through worship and becoming like Him in life? What changes have I seen in my life as a result?
  - b. Prayer
    - i. What are my main prayer topics per each day? Do they cover my main obligations and interactions? Should I adapt any of these?
    - ii. How have I been praying for God's mission in the world (specific missionaries, specific places in the world, specific people I am evangelizing)?
    - iii. How have I seen God answer prayers this past month?
    - iv. Am I seeking God's face before asking from His hand?
  - c. Worship/Sacrament
    - i. What have been some key takeaways from the church service this month?
    - ii. What songs have deepened my awareness of God's glory and my dependency? Copy any lyrics that have specifically helped in this.
    - iii. Was there any particular confession of sin that made me more aware of my own ongoing struggle with sin and need of God's mercy?
- 2. Social:** Cultivating habits of intimacy with people (family, friendships, neighbors, & coworkers).
  - a. Are my family members pleased with the amount of time given, attention and depth of our relationships?
  - b. How have I intentionally pursued each family member to connect with them emotionally, encourage/affirm them, and spend quality time based on their interests?
  - c. What have I learned regarding the fears, doubts, hopes, interest and design of each family member this month?
  - d. What friends, neighbors and coworkers have I connected with this past month and should I connect with next month?
- 3. Financial:** Cultivating habits of financial stewardship (budgeting, tithing, spending, saving).
  - a. Looking at the budget, where is the majority of our money going and should this be top priority?
  - b. How have we been generous with our money this past month?
  - c. Should we adjust any budget goals based on future or present dreams, desires and needs?

- 4. Emotional:** Cultivating habits of emotional awareness (self-reflection, self-expression, & empathy-feeling other people's emotions).
  - a. Did I process my day with the workplace shutdown at the end of the day?
  - b. Have there been any emotional extremes this past month and what have I learned about what I value, devalue or idolize through that?
  - c. Have I intentionally engaged the emotions of those dear to me (my family, friends, and neighbors)?
  
- 5. Physical:** Cultivating habits of physical health (exercising, eating, resting/Sabbath)
  - a. What ways have I intentionally pursued physical fitness this past month (working out at gym, walking/running, etc.)?
  - b. Have I eaten realistic portions of food and had leftovers? Am I drinking water, eating vegetables and limited junk food?
  - c. How has the quality of my sleep been this past month? Any weeks that I have gotten less than 7 hours of sleep?
  
- 6. Missional:** Cultivating habits of outreach (evangelism & service).
  - a. Who are the main people I am engaging in evangelistic relationships at this point? What can I do to help them take one more step toward the Gospel?
  - b. What ways can I serve my community and neighbors this next month?
  - c. How can I expose other members of the church to God's mission together?
  
- 7. Vocational:** Cultivating habits of work achievement (goal setting, time management, work relationships)
  - a. Pull out a calendar and write down all the different commitments for the month ahead. Are there any bigger task that will require preparation?
  - b. Write out SMART goals for the month including major commitments and bigger task? Review small steps to accomplishing the bigger quarterly goals.
  - c. How have I managed my time based on priorities and what distractions have taken time away that should be spent elsewhere?
  - d. Who do I need to regularly communicate with for vocational success and how have I listened to them, given them direction, equipped them, supported them, and let them lead?

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