



# Rhythm

by **OneBodyOneFaith**

Our Rule of **Life**



# Our Rule of Life

Before we get hung up on terminology it is helpful to remember that rule comes from the Latin Regula – rule, pattern, example, model or even routine. A Rule of Life then, is simply a way that we intentionally set out to live out our faith and discipleship within our own context. Before you sit down with a blank piece of paper, here are some things to hold as the foundation of a Rule of Life.

## **A Rule is ‘embraced’ not promised.**

These are not vows (though there is a place for those), you are not promising to live according to the rule you draw up 24/7 365. What we are doing is embracing a way of living, leaning into a rhythm of life. So, although the language of rule might jar us, this is not legalism. Indeed it is freedom, if you set a Rule that you will read your Bible for 15 minutes on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday, you don't then have to spend the rest of the time worrying about when you're going to find the time to do it. Accountability for your Rule isn't judging if you've lived up to it, it's to discern whether you are both being nourished and growing.

## **A Rule is a rhythm not a burden.**

A Rule is basically the rhythm of your life, the tune you want your life to dance to. It is not a checklist, it is not a to do list, it is definitely not a terror list! Like any rhythm, it can falter, fail and be broken, but it can be picked up again. It's not a sin if the rhythm falters, if it constantly falters then it might be an indication that you need to talk to someone or that at this point in time this is not the rhythm that will nourish you and you need to change the record.

## **A Rule must always be flexible.**

This will be your Rule of Life, it therefore needs to suit you, your temperament and your context. If you are not a morning person there's no point saying you will get up at 5 a.m. to spend 3 hours storming the gates of heaven in prayer. If a Rule is to be your rhythm it needs to be flexible enough to be able to adapt to changes in your life so that it isn't entirely dispensed with when work goes crazy or illness hits.



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## **A Rule should demand creative discipline.**

Hang on a minute, that was all nice stuff and now we're talking discipline! Jesus didn't say, "come to me and I'll get rid of all your yokes." He did say "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," so there is an expectation that commitment should cost. A Rule is not a goal to attain when you're spiritually perfect, but the things you need now that will nourish and stretch you. So, it's best to start small and work up, but in conversation with others so that you can be creative and challenged to grow. Simply put, a Rule shouldn't be too easy or too difficult.

## **A Rule is personal ... and communal.**

Although this will be your Rule, you are saying to this community, "this is how I want to live in community with you." To make the most of that it is best to talk a Rule of Life through with someone, be that a Spiritual Director, a soul friend, or a cell group partner. And it will definitely be something to talk through with someone from "Rhythm" as you discern together your contribution to the life of the community. A Rule will be a struggle for all of us. If you're a perfectionist, you'll probably fill a ream of paper with every single detail you can think of. If you're naturally laid back, you might just about manage to put one thing on. That's why it's essential to involve someone else!



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## What might a Rule of Life cover?

As we said, a Rule isn't a to do list or a checklist, so this list is a suggestion. If this is completely new to you then you might want to focus on a few things. But don't leave things off because they're hard, anyone you're working with on forming this will probably be just as interested in what you've left off as in what you've included!

## Community Prayer.

A commitment to whatever regular form of community prayer is adopted.

## Daily Prayer.

A commitment to some form of daily prayer (either using formal liturgy such as Daily Prayer, or the Divine Office, or a personal quiet time) and where possible, to be part of a local physical rhythm.

## Regular worship.

The breadth of our traditions will mean this might be very different for many of us. Preferably this would be centred around the Eucharist/Communion/Mass and somewhere local where we are part of a physical community. However, we know that not every denomination approaches communal worship in the same way, and that it might be difficult to attend a safe space regularly. But this would be a good element to discuss to see if there are other options that could nourish you.

## Study.

Primarily focused on Bible study, this might be anything from using daily notes, to reading through a book of the Bible or to a more detailed course of study, either personally or in a group. It could also include study of wider theological ideas or specifically queer issues relating to faith, justice or mission.

## Retreat.

Every rhythm needs a pause to breathe and pick up again. Intentionally setting space and time aside is vital for everyone's faith and life. Options range from a quiet day, to a weekend, to a full-on month long Ignatian retreat. You can choose to go it alone or have a guided retreat. Ideally, the annual retreat organised for the community should be a priority in your calendar.



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## **Spiritual Direction.**

This might be formal, or you could have a soul friend or even a cell group where you are each accountable to each other. Direction is another opportunity to work with someone you trust to discern together where God is active in your life and how you are responding to that. Some people might want to make Sacramental Confession, or the Ministry of Reconciliation, a part of this or hold it separately.

## **Giving.**

You know you're committed when it hits your pocket! Again, each denomination and tradition may differ slightly in expectations, and you might want to choose an entirely different approach, but financially giving to the work of God is one way of expressing our thanks for God's overwhelming generosity to us. This can be giving to a charity, like OneBodyOneFaith, or to a local church, or a mixture of both.

## **Fasting.**

Yep, this old chestnut. Before you hide the chocolate don't panic, fasting simply helps us keep a balance in our lives ... and it doesn't have to be food, indeed for some of us it probably shouldn't be. Fasting reveals the things that control us, from food, drink, or social media to exercise, television or clubbing, and can be a powerful way of rebalancing our lives.

## **Service.**

Each of us are uniquely made. Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, "what I do is me, for this I came." You have something of immense worth to offer this community and a local physical community. We don't always hear that affirmation so using a Rule to explore that is a healthy way back to discovering who God has created us to be.

## **Justice.**

When Mary realised what her act of service was her response was not only yes to that, but the proclamation of a God of justice and equity. Many of us have felt the sting of discrimination and of hate and have found shelter. From that shelter of loving community, we too must sing the song of justice in word and deed.



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Suggestions for further reading if that's what you like:

Martin Thornton, **Christian Proficiency**

A classic from the more Catholic end of the spectrum. Written in the late 1950s its language is overwhelmingly masculine and middle class, but if you can dig beneath that there are some gems to be found.

John Gaskell, **Making A Rule of Life**

Very short and readable and although for the more Anglo-Catholic has some good questions at the end to help you think through what your Rule of Life might look like.

Richard Foster, **Celebration of Discipline**

A classic from the more Evangelical end of the spectrum but very broad in its coverage. Written in the late 1970s it has been republished and re-edited for a more contemporary audience. Includes a study section that can be used individually or with a group.



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**What next?**

**Pray.**

How is this exercise going to help you develop your faith and witness?

**Space.**

Allocate some time and a physical space. Turn off the phone, apple watch, TV ...

**Listen.**

The Rule of St Benedict begins with that word. Listen to what you're feeling, both positive and negative, note it down. Listen to what God might be saying through prayer and Bible reading. Listen to what others you trust might be saying.

**Talk.**

Find someone to discern how this is going to nourish and challenge you.

**Write.**

Go for it! Then go back to pray...

