PREPARING A RULE OF LIFE

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12

A Rule of Life involves unique practices and regular rhythms that open us to the will and the presence of Christ. Through these, we partner with the Holy Spirit for spiritual transformation as we present our bodies as living sacrifices. **The Rule of Life provides a way to arrange our lives for what our hearts most want**. In *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton invites readers to consider these questions as they prepare a Rule of Life (p. 147):

- Who do I want to be?
- How do I want to live?
- How do I want to live so I can be who I want to be?

"A 'rule' penetrates and restructures restlessness into orderliness and guides us into a deeper walk with God. As Christians, particularly as leaders in the Church, we must ponder this issue and work towards a counter-cultural lifestyle that feeds our souls and leads us into humility, obedience, and prayerfulness.

Having a Rule of Life encourages us to set attainable goals and realistic practices for our spiritual growth. It calls for us to create an intentional pattern for our everyday life that opens us to experiencing God's presence and activity, makes the common holy by calling attention to the spiritual nature of the every-day, those myriad 'outward and visible signs' of God's grace in action. It creates a structure for opening our hearts to the experience of God, to the gift of life, to God's grace, and to our call in community."

- What will bring LIFE to my heart?
- God, what do you want me to do?

Stephen Macchia, "Creating a Personal Rule of Life: Lessons from St. Benedict," RENOVARÉ

Key passages:
Deuteronomy 30:11-20 Love the LORD your God and choose life.
Philippians 2:12, 13 Work out your salvation, for it is God who works in you.
1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24 May God sanctify you completely; faithful is he who called you who will also bring it to pass.
2 Peter 1:3-11 God grants to us what we need for life and godliness; make every effort to add to your faith goodness, etc.

1 John 5:1-3 We love God by keeping his commandments, which are not burdensome.

Includes:

Spiritual disciplines
Scripture. Prayer. Reflection.
Rhythms that honor desires and limits.
Practical attention to "faith stage," personality, and temperament.
Regular and repeated relationships, experiences, and practices that make space for God.
Periodic, realistic, and gentle assessment of spiritual journey.
Intentionality and accountability.
Everyday sacrament.

Fruit:

Partnering and cooperating with the Holy Spirit for change in our lives.
Nurturing order over chaos.
Loving God, intentionally and practically, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
Practicing disciplines that arise from and lead to responsiveness to God.
Growing awareness of God's desires.
Increasing rest and trust.
Cultivating a God-accessible and obedience-centered life.

Principles:

Honor both limits and longings.
Attend to desire: How badly do I want this?
Express willingness to God directly, realizing even a discipline is received as a pure gift.
Prepare for who you are, not who you are not.
Consider the need to be stretched and the need to rest.
Experiment, change, or adapt freely, yet not at a whim.
Remember this is not to impress God or others.
Make your Rule of Life personal, realistic, balanced, and flexible.
Know that God's work in and through our lives is not limited to our disciplines. God also works through "unchosen" disciplines.
Include body, soul, and spirit, as well as solitude, community, and ministry.

Examples:

Acts 2:42-47
Rule of Benedict (prayer, study, and work; community and contemplation)
Psalm 16
Great commandments and great commission.

Sources and resources:

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

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Earley, Justin Whitmer. *A Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019

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Prentiss, Demi. "Developing Your Rule of Life." Located at www.episcopal-dwtx.org/spiritlife/iferules.htm.

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