

RHYTHM OF LIFE

"IF YOU WANT TO IDENTIFY ME, ASK ME NOT WHERE I LIVE OR WHAT I LIKE TO EAT, OR HOW I COMB MY HAIR BUT ASK ME WHAT I AM LIVING FOR, IN DETAIL AND ASK ME, WHAT I THINK IS KEEPING ME FROM LIVING FULLY FOR THE THING I WANT TO LIVE FOR?"

Thomas Merton



RHYTHM OF LIFE

Putting together of Rhythm or Rule of Life

A Rhythm of Life simply gives structure, patterns, and practices that are a regular routine and enable one to welcome and respond to Jesus as he seeks to form and shape our life both in quality and character.

I've changed the word "rule" to "rhythm" because "rule" can seem strict and constraining. When monastics used the word in Latin, the reference was "trellis" or the idea of regular rhythm. A trellis is used on a vine to lift it off the ground so it could bear more fruit. A rule or rhythm of life then refers to the structural support that helps us organize our life around growing in Christ. John 15:1-8 provides a beautiful picture of us as the vine growing in Christ.

KEN SHIGEMATSU

"Those who flourish in their lives with God have a Spirit-initiated rule of life, a rhythm of practices that enables them to welcome and respond to Jesus." (God in My Everything: How Ancient Rhythms Helps Busy People Enjoy God.)

A Rhythm of Life is a means to an end, not the end itself.

Dallas Willard talks about how we need a "curriculum for Christ-likeness." His VIM model can be a helpful framework as you start to develop your own. It's Vision, Intention, and Means.

Vision:

- God and who he is
- The Kingdom of God and your life in it
- For growing in character

Intention:

- To actually fulfill the vision
- We fall because we never intend to
- To be Jesus' student, disciple, apprentice
- You have to believe it is the most important thing in the world for you
- Decision - not willpower

Means:

- For realizing the vision
- For following through with the intention
- Spiritual disciplines

A Rhythm of Life seeks to answer two questions:

- a. Whom do I want to be?
- b. How do I want to live?

Synthesized

How do I want to live so I can be whom I want to be?

(Ruth Haley Barton, Sacred Rhythms)

RHYTHM OF LIFE

It's really important when crafting your rule or rhythm that you do a couple of things.

Be Holistic - Pay attention to all the areas of formation:

- Spiritual
- Missional
- Relational
- Mental
- Physical
- Emotional

It takes time

You should explore a variety of disciplines so that you can get a sense of their meaning for your life and how you might incorporate them realistically into your life. This takes time and experimentation so that you can arrange them in a way that fits your life.

Don't just practice them once but at least 6 weeks.

It's Personal

Your rule/rhythm is very personal. Taking into account your:

- Your Personality
- Spiritual Pathways
- Season of Life
- Sin
- Work and Homelife
- Where God is trying to stretch you

This means it needs to be realistic based on your stage of life. We are not monks and nuns. It also needs to take into account whether you are in a place of giving or are you in need of receiving so you can fill up to give back out.



Balanced with disciplines that come naturally and stretch us.
Look at your Timeline and ask, "What are the easiest ways for you?"

Flexible and it's a living document.

Don't become rigid and legalistic
Reflect and evaluate every 6 months.

It's all a gift from God, God's Grace.

Dallas Willard said,
"Saints burn way more grace than sinners ever could."

Grace is God doing for us what we cannot do on our own.

RHYTHM OF LIFE

Writing a Rule of Life

What are your minimum daily/weekly/monthly/yearly requirements for ongoing spiritual transformation?

Questions to work through:

- What do you want from God? Where do you want to change? Where do you feel powerless to change? Ask for grace, for God to help you with what you cannot do through effort alone.
- What practices will I engage in on a daily basis? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly?
- Where will I practice these disciplines?
- What time of the day/week/month/year?
- What disciplines will I practice in community and how will I practice them?
- When and where do you feel most connected to God? What disciplines do you connect with based on your personality type and spiritual pathway? Pay attention to the experiences, practices, and relationships that draw you towards God. Incorporate these in your rhythm.
- What practices are more difficult but you sense God inviting you to practice for growth?
- Are there any particular practices needed for a specific need, sin in your life, or negative pattern?
- What are you currently doing to realize your goals and longings? Which of these things help and hinder your spiritual transformation?

Vision						
Holistic Formation	Spiritual	Emotional	Relational	Mental	Physical	Missional
Daily						
Weekly						
Monthly						
Annually						

HOLISTIC FORMATION ASSESSMENT

Directions: Read the following questions and answer each one as it relates to you personally using the following scale:

0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = sometimes; 3 = usually; 4 = frequently; 5 = always

Spiritual Formation

- ___ 1. I feel close, connected, and loved by God.
- ___ 2. I experience God's grace touching all areas of my life.
- ___ 3. I spend time in solitude and silence to be with God.
- ___ 4. I read the Bible and in it find practical wisdom and insights for life.
- ___ 5. I participate in spiritual disciplines/practices/habits (e.g., fasting, meditation, etc.)
- ___ 6. I desire to live my life as Jesus would live my life if he were I.
- ___ 7. I spend time with a spiritual director (a person trained to help me see where God is at work in my life).
- ___ 8. I intentionally make space in my life and schedule for God.
- ___ 9. I spend time in prayer both talking and listening to God.
- ___ 10. I live my life with confidence that the "spiritual" touches every area or dimension.

Spiritual Formation Total _____

Emotional Formation

- ___ 1. I am aware how my family of origin has a significant impact on my thoughts and behaviors.
- ___ 2. I would see a counselor/therapist when a crisis or issue arises in which I need emotional/mental help.
- ___ 3. I have a clear understanding of my identity or who I am as a person.
- ___ 4. I do what is necessary to keep from being controlled by addictions.
- ___ 5. I am cautious not to "use" other people to accomplish my own purposes.
- ___ 6. I am aware when I feel emotions such as depression, anxiety, fear, or anger and know how to handle them.
- ___ 7. I believe that insight into the deep parts of my heart and soul helps me to live a full and meaningful life.
- ___ 8. I express my feelings and convictions balanced with consideration for the thoughts and feelings of others.
- ___ 9. I am involved in play and leisure as essential to my overall health and well-being.
- ___ 10. I believe that failure might be a method God can use for my success.

Emotional Formation Total _____

HOLISTIC FORMATION ASSESSMENT

Relational Formation

- ___ 1. I have one or more friends who know everything about me.
- ___ 2. I have friends who would do whatever it takes to spend time with me when needed.
- ___ 3. I talk with friends about important matters and deeply personal issues in my life.
- ___ 4. I spend time with a person I would consider a "spiritual friend/companion" discussing spiritual matters.
- ___ 5. I believe that God's attributes (e.g., love, mercy, forgiveness) are communicated to us through people.
- ___ 6. I confess wrong things I have done, failures, weaknesses, and so on to a friend or other safe person.
- ___ 7. I am an active part of a church/faith community.
- ___ 8. I have opinions, perspectives, goals, values, and so on that are unique from the people around me.
- ___ 9. I go directly to the person to deal with an issue whenever I have a conflict.
- ___ 10. I have experienced growth and change in my life because of the relationships I have.

Relational Formation Total _____

Physical Formation

- ___ 1 I exercise regularly (e.g. at least 3-4 times a week).
- ___ 2. I practice a day of Sabbath rest once a week.
- ___ 3. I sleep at least 8-9 hours a night.
- ___ 4. I examine my life and work load to monitor the amount of stress I'm experiencing.
- ___ 5. I know and am able to perform relaxation exercises (e.g., deep breathing, meditation, stretching).
- ___ 6. I eat nutrient dense foods and a balance of lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats.
- ___ 7. I am the proper weight for someone of my age and stature.
- ___ 8. I have a hobby, sport, or recreational pursuit in which I participate.
- ___ 9. I desire to have a body that is healthy and strong so that I can fulfill the purpose/calling God has for me.
- ___ 10. I exercise with a friend, workout partner, or personal trainer.

Physical Formation Total _____

HOLISTIC FORMATION ASSESSMENT

Mental Formation

- ___ 1. I can see how my thinking can actually change my brain for health or un-health.
- ___ 2. I am aware that what I am like is based on what is on my mind.
- ___ 3. I am always open to “repenting” of wrong thoughts (i.e., changing my thinking about my thinking)
- ___ 4. I memorize Scripture so that I have God’s wisdom readily available to me.
- ___ 5. I feel effective at dealing with temptations because of my ability to “put my mind on things above.”
- ___ 6. I am aware how my thinking governs my feelings.
- ___ 7. I am careful to ensure that no thought in my mind goes unchecked.
- ___ 8. It is enjoyable for me to “practice the presence of God” by putting my mind on God as much as I can.
- ___ 9. I can see how what I think about others is determined by what I think about God.
- ___ 10. I have a mentor or sage who helps me be reflective about my thinking.

Mental Formation Total _____

Missional/Vocational Formation

- ___ 1. I intentionally look for opportunities to bring the gospel of God’s kingdom to others in words and actions.
- ___ 2. I am aware that I am actively living in the kingdom of God in my daily life.
- ___ 3. I practice hospitality in my home and life.
- ___ 4. I see myself as someone who is sent by God to the people I live and work with each day.
- ___ 5. I seek the wisdom and insight of a personal/life coach to refine my vocational passions, skills, and abilities.
- ___ 6. I read, study, or observe to understand the changes shaping the culture and community in which I live.
- ___ 7. I live the mission Jesus gave his followers in Matthew 28:18-20 to make disciples.
- ___ 8. I am involved in some form of compassion-based ministry (e.g., helping the poor, social justice, etc.).
- ___ 9. I am attempting to discern and participate in God’s mission in my local context (e.g., neighborhood, school).
- ___ 10. I have a desire to be both biblically, theologically, and culturally informed.

Missional Formation Total _____

Scoring Suggestions

- 40-50** This is probably an area of strength or one where you have extensive experience
- 30-40** You are doing pretty well in this area and have some experience here
- 20-30** You have some focused work you can do in this area
- Below 20** This is an area of weakness that needs your immediate attention