

Learning From Jesus

Week 19

Rule of Life 1: Habits that Place You Before God

Key Verse

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV)

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (RSV)

Thoughts

We long to see our lives whole, to know they matter. We wonder whether our many activities might ever come together in a way of life that is good for ourselves and others. Lacking a vision of a life-giving way of life, we turn from one task to another, doing as well as we can, but increasingly uncertain about what doing things well would look like. We yearn for a deeper understanding of how to order human life in accord with what is true and good.

Craig Dystra and Dorothy Bass, "Practicing Our Faith"

Quoted in Ruth Haley Barton's "Sacred Rhythms", p.146

A Rule of Life seeks to respond to two questions: Who do I want to be? How do I want to live? Actually, it seeks to address the interplay between these two questions: How do I want to live so I can be who I want to be?

Ruth Haley Barton, "Sacred Rhythms", p.147

The “Golden Triangle” of Spiritual Growth

Dallas Willard, “The Divine Conspiracy”, p.347ff

The Action of the Holy Spirit

John 3:5 • Romans 8:10-13 • Galatians 5:22-26



**Ordinary Events of Life:
“Temptations, Trials, Tests”**

James 1:2-4 • Romans 5:1-5

**Planned Discipline to
Put on a New Heart**

Colossians 3:12-17 • 2 Peter 1:5-10

Top: The Action of the Holy Spirit

John 3.5; Rom 8.10-13; Gal 5.22-26

“The function of the Holy Spirit is, first, to move within our souls, and especially our minds, to present the person of Jesus and the reality of his kingdom.” (348)

“The Spirit continues to move upon us and within us to enable us to do the kinds of work Jesus did (through ‘gifts’ of the Spirit) and to grow the kind of inward character that manifests itself in the ‘fruit’ or outcome of the Spirit...” (Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

Lower Left: Ordinary Events of Life: ‘Tests’, ‘Trials’ and ‘Temptations

James 1.2-4; Rom 5.1-5

"We must accept the circumstances we constantly find ourselves in as the place of God's kingdom and blessing. God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are, and if we faithlessly discard situation after situation...as not being 'right,' we will simply have no place to receive his kingdom into our life.... We are not to try to get in a position avoid trials...We are to see every event as an occasion in which the competence and faithfulness of God will be confirmed to us." (Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

Lower Right: Planned Disciplines to Put on a New Heart

Col 3.12-17; 2 Peter 1.5-10; 1 Cor 9.24-27

"The main task is, by engaging in ways of using the body differently, to disrupt and conquer habits of thought, feeling, and action that govern our lives as if we or someone other than God were God and as if his kingdom were irrelevant or inaccessible to us... Appropriate disciplines for developing new habits, kingdom habits, are practiced. A further help in understanding what spiritual disciplines are for the disciples of Jesus is to recognize them as simply a matter of following him into his own practices, appropriately modified to suit our own condition." (Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

Some Disciplines of Abstinence

<u>Solitude</u>	<u>Silence</u>
Fasting	Frugality
Chastity	Secrecy
Sacrifice	Confession

Some Disciplines of Engagement

<u>Study</u>	<u>Worship</u>
Service	Celebration
Prayer Fellowship	
Submission	Extra Giving

See Richard Foster, The Celebration of Discipline or Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines for much helpful information on these. For further reading on Spiritual Formation, see Willard's books, Renovation of the Heart and The Divine Conspiracy. Slow reading, but rewarding! See also John Ortberg's The Life You've Always Wanted or Willard and Simpson's Revolution of Character for a more accessible but identical treatment of the issues.

Below are some of the 'Spiritual Tools' we have used over these past weeks.

Memorize Psalm 16; Keeping God Before Your Mind
 Counting Your Blessings One By One; Sleep & Holy Leisure
 Slowing Down—eliminating hurry; Fasting from Media
 Practicing God's Presence; Memorize Colossians 3:1-17
 Study; Keep a Sabbath Day; Fasting; Silence
 Solitude; Secrecy; Simplicity & De-accumulation
 Prayer; Service; Writing a "Rule of Life," first draft

My Spiritual Interests (check three or four you are most interested in)

CONNECT: You were formed for God and His family

I would like to live more of my life by faith _____

I would like my relationship with Christ to grow stronger _____

I would like to love people more deeply _____

I would like to resolve conflict constructively and learn to forgive _____

GROW: You were created to become like Christ

I would like to read the Bible more and know how to talk to God _____

I would like to become more like Jesus Christ in my character _____

I would like to be free of addictive behaviors _____

I would like to be free of the love of money and live generously _____

SERVE: You were shaped for serving God

I would like to develop my unique God-given shape for ministry _____

I would like God to open up opportunities to serve Him _____

I would like my home/family to be a place where I serve God and know his love _____

I would like to know how to help someone else become a follower of Christ _____

SHARE: You were made for a mission

I would like to build relationships with non-Christians and share God's love _____

I would like to invite unchurched or unconnected friends to my church _____

I would like to reach out to people across cultural barriers _____

I would like to make my workplace a place of service and ministry _____

WORSHIP: You were planned for God's pleasure

I would like to experience more of the presence and power of God in my everyday life _____

I would like to please God by surrendering to Him every area of my life _____

I would like to accept the things I cannot change and become more grateful for all God has given me _____

I would like to spend more time telling God how great and wonderful He is! _____

Rule of Life Draft

List a series of activities that you **already do** with some regularity ('rule' comes from Latin *regula*, 'regular') that feed your spirit with God's life. Think large, across all the fabric of your life in developing this list, not just of the 'devotional' exercises and tools we have been practicing, but also include some of the 'tools' we have been experimenting with if they have been life-giving to you and more regular in your own life. Please list up to 10 of them under these two headings, and in this order:

A list of 10 things in your life that bless you, esp including 'fun things'

A list of 10 'spiritual tools' or devotional habits that bless you.
