



REGULA VITAE PRAXIS

developing a personal “Rule of Life”

What is a “Rule of Life” and why should I develop one?

A rule of life is simply an intentional rhythm of habits and relationships that can support us as we seek to cultivate a life of abundance and fruitfulness as we follow Jesus and become more like him. We all have certain habits and relationships, unexamined patterns of life that give shape to our days and weeks. Crafting a personal rule of life allows us to be intentional about some of these habits and relationships, replacing habits and relationships that might malform us with ones that will allow the Spirit to form Christ in us over the long, slow march of our lives.

Threads’ Shared Practices: (SPADE)

Story-Formed Obedience
Presence
Abundance
Discipleship
Extended Community

At Threads, we commit to living out five shared practices, which we believe to be essential elements of a healthy and fruitful life following Jesus. Each practice represents a broad category and can be lived out in many different specific ways. As you craft a personal rule of life, you are encouraged to determine how you are going to live out these shared practices in your unique life, given your personality, season of life and the opportunities and constraints with which you live.

Reviewing Your Rule of Life

A rule of life should support growth, not be seen as rigid and unyielding. We should regularly examine our rule with the intention to revise where necessary to bring about greater growth and fruitfulness. While habits form over time and we don’t want to abandon things too quickly, it is good to revisit this exercise at least once a year – or when facing major life changes.

“A good rule can set us free to be our true and best selves. It is a working document, a kind of spiritual budget, not carved in stone but subject to regular review and revision. It should support us, but never constrict us.”

~ Margaret Guenther, Wife,
Mother, & Anglican Priest



Story-Formed Obedience – *hear & obey*

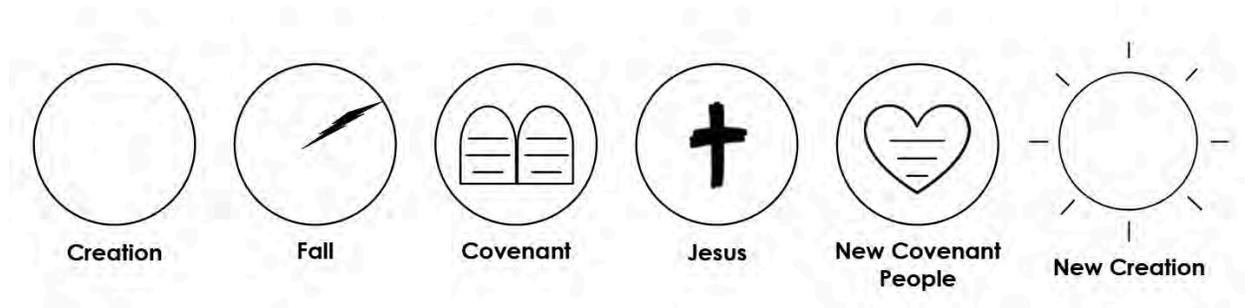
In a culture where we want to define ourselves as the heroes of our own stories, God is calling us to discover and embrace our role in the true Story of the world where Jesus is the Hero. We seek to hear God's voice through the Scriptures and obey His direction for our lives.

Fuller description

God the Father is the Creator, who spoke all of creation into being. Jesus is the Word of God and the hero of the Story. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who leads us into all truth.

In light of this, we commit ourselves to studying and understanding the Story in which we find ourselves. We want to live out of this story and find our identity and purpose in it, not in any of the competing stories of our culture or of our own design.

Because God longs to be known and for us to know His will, He has revealed Himself in this Story and given us the Bible as the trustworthy and authoritative word of God. We summarize the grand Story recorded and preserved in the Bible with six circles:



At the core of the Bible's message is the gospel – the good news of how in Jesus' life, death and resurrection God has brought His story to its decisive point. Jesus has defeated the forces of evil in the world and in each of us, forgiven and reconciled us to himself, and adopted us into the family of God as beloved children and heirs, fully loved and accepted. He is in the process of bringing restoration to all of God's creation and will bring the Story to its intended end when Jesus returns.

Because God has revealed Himself and His will in clear and authoritative ways, we must seek to understand, wrestle with and apply this truth to our lives. We submit to the Bible's authority, trusting that the Holy Spirit who inspired and preserved the text will lead us into all truth through the living and active Word of God. We also continually speak the gospel into each other's lives as both comfort and challenge. We proclaim to all who God is and who we are in Christ, calling for all to repent, believe the good news and live into its truth.

Disciplines of Story-Formed Obedience:

- daily Bible reading and meditation (following a plan, practicing *Lectio Divina*)

- intentional Bible study – alone or with others, regular or when wanting to find out what the Bible says about a particular topic or decision
- memorizing passages of Scripture
- listening to spiritual talks in worship gatherings or throughout the week
- practicing and growing in gospel fluency – knowing, believing, living out and proclaiming the good news
- CPR – meeting regularly with a group of 2-4 people who commit to speaking the gospel into each other's lives, helping each other to live according to it
- other creative ways to interact with and submit to the Bible

Evaluation – *consider the following questions, invite a trusted friend or mentor to give you feedback and ask questions before making a final commitment.*

How are you currently practicing Story-Formed Obedience?

Daily

Weekly

Of these practices, what is bringing you life (over time, even if not every day), helping you to hear from God and obey Him more fully?

What might need to change – abandoned, tweaked or recommitted to?

What disciplines would you like to try for a period of time? (be specific)

Commitment – *moving forward, how will you practice Story-Formed Obedience?*

Daily

Weekly



Presence – *recognize & respond*

In a culture that focuses on the surface, God is calling us to cultivate an awareness of His presence in all times and places. We seek to recognize God's presence and respond by engaging in authentic relationship with God.

Fuller description

God is community, existing in the eternal relationship of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit all pour into each other in perfect, self-giving love.

Made in God's image, we were created for relationship with God. Like all relationships, our relationship with God requires us to be present with each other and share our lives. Relationships involve listening and speaking, receiving and sharing.

God is present in all times and places, filling everything in every way. He is always available and always seeking to relate to us. The practice of presence calls us to cultivate a responsiveness to God's presence.

First, we learn to recognize God's presence in each moment and each place as He seeks to speak to us, guide us and work in and through us. This involves disciplines that help us create space to listen and attend to God's presence.

We also commit ourselves to respond to God, sharing our lives, our hopes and hurts, fears and dreams. This involves disciplines that allow us to express ourselves to God, bringing our entire lives to God – good and bad, faith and doubt, confession and praise.

Disciplines of Presence:

- Spiritual disciplines that help us to recognize God's presence

silence

solitude

fasting from food or from something else

listening prayer

centering prayer – breath prayers, the Jesus prayer

being in Creation

- Spiritual disciplines that help us respond to God

prayer – including having set times of prayer, using written prayers or spontaneous journaling

worship

celebration

confession

art/creativity

Evaluation – consider the following questions, invite a trusted friend or mentor to give you feedback and ask questions before making a final commitment.

How are you currently practicing Presence?

Daily

Weekly

Of these practices, what is bringing you life (over time, even if not every day), helping you to recognize God’s presence in your life and respond in authentic relationship?

What might need to change – abandoned, tweaked or recommitted to?

What disciplines would you like to try for a period of time? (be specific)

Commitment – moving forward, how will you practice Presence?

Daily

Weekly



Abundance – receive & offer

In a culture of scarcity and competition, God is calling us to trust in His abundant grace for all things. We gratefully receive and enjoy God's gifts to us and generously offer what we have to God and to others.

Fuller description

God is the source of all good things. All is gift: all we are, all we experience, all we have.

Every good and perfect gift comes from our Father above, who faithfully provides all we need for us to live and to flourish. We are invited to receive God's gracious gifts with gratitude and to enjoy them with Him.

Recognizing that all we have has been entrusted to us by God, we also are invited to follow His example and give graciously, generously and sacrificially of our time and resources (including our talents and experience, as well as our finances and belongings). We give the first and best portion back to God and we look for opportunities to joyfully give to others in need.

In order to live into this life of abundance, we need to cultivate margin in our lives. We need to make sure that our calendars and our budgets are not filled to the brim, but have room for us to take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

We also need to develop a strong sense of the common good, recognizing our place in the family of God and as God's people in the world. We recognize that what God has given to us needs to be available for others who are experiencing need. And we acknowledge that our needs must also be shared with others, giving them opportunities to give joyfully to meet our needs.

Disciplines of Abundance:

- disciplines of time
 - daily and weekly rhythms of rest
 - serving others according to our gifts
 - maintaining margin in our calendars
- disciplines of resources
 - giving back to God financially
 - sharing with others in need
 - maintaining margin in our finances

Evaluation – consider the following questions, invite a trusted friend or mentor to give you feedback and ask questions before making a final commitment.

How are you currently practicing Abundance?

Daily

Weekly

Of these practices, what is bringing you life (over time, even if not every day), helping you to receive God’s gifts and offer yourself to Him and others in return?

What might need to change – abandoned, tweaked or recommitted to?

What disciplines would you like to try for a period of time? (be specific)

Commitment – moving forward, how will you practice Abundance?

Daily

Weekly



Discipleship – grow & guide

In a culture of self-help and quick fixes, God is calling us to the long path of maturity in Christ. We commit to grow to be more like Jesus and guide others, helping them begin to follow Jesus and become more like him.

Fuller description

God has revealed Himself fully in Jesus, who calls us to be his disciples, following him and seeking to become like him. The Holy Spirit is working to form us into the image of Christ.

Just as human development is a process with several stages, our spiritual development as disciples also goes through a maturation process. People are at different stages on this process, though our value is not dependent on how far along we are in this process. All are called to become disciples who can make other disciples.

Everyone begins the journey as a spiritual infant, dependent on God and others to provide for our needs. Spiritual infants need to learn what it means to follow Jesus and how to provide for their own needs. This involves learning how to feed ourselves by reading God's word and talking to God in prayer and worshipping as part of the family of God.

As spiritual children are not as dependent as spiritual infants, but we remain largely self-centered. There is a lot of growth at this stage, but also a lot of inconsistency as we become more knowledgeable and are challenged to find their place in the family and begin to contribute according to their own gifts.

Spiritual young adults have become more God-centered and others-oriented. We continue to grow in gospel fluency and mature, healthy expression of our faith in all of life.

The goal for all believers is to become spiritual parents who are coming alongside others and helping them to begin following Jesus and grow through their own process of maturing towards becoming a healthy, reproducing disciple of Jesus.

Disciplines of Discipleship:

- meeting with a mentor or with trusted friends who are seeking to support each others' growth as followers of Jesus
 - regularly assessing where we are in our development as Christ followers
 - developing and implementing an intentional growth plan
- guiding others to maturity as followers of Jesus
 - maintaining and developing relationships with those who are not yet disciples
 - inviting people to follow Jesus
 - investing in others as they grow towards maturity
- investing in family relationships – as spouses, parents, siblings and children
- Kids Community and FUEL – age specific discipleship ministries
 - participating (if you are in that age range)
 - investing in younger disciples as a teacher, leader or helper

Evaluation – consider the following questions, invite a trusted friend or mentor to give you feedback and ask questions before making a final commitment.*

Where are you at in your own growth towards maturity as a follower of Jesus (infant follower, child follower, young adult follower, parent follower)?

What milestones do you need to reach and what steps are you taking to reach them?

Who is investing in you – as a mentor or trusted friend?

What does this investment look like? (how often you meet, what you do)

Who are you guiding?

- **Those who are not yet following Jesus**

Where do you build and maintain relationships with those who are not yet following Jesus?

How are you inviting them to consider who Jesus is and what it would look like to follow him?

- **Other followers of Jesus**

Who are you investing in?

What does this investment look like? (how often you meet, what you do)

Commitment – moving forward, how will you be growing as a disciple and guiding others to follow Jesus and grow to maturity? What changes do you need make?

****For a fuller treatment of this practice, including more definition to the different stages of maturity and milestones to reach to move to the next stage, see the Threads Discipleship Guide***



Extended Community – *gather & go*

In a culture of isolation and independence, God is calling us to three dimensional community where we belong to God, to the family of faith and to the places we inhabit. We live lives of worship and witness as a gathered community and as representatives of Christ in the world.

Fuller description

God is a God of missionary community. The Father sent the Son into the world. After Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower all who believe in Jesus. Now the church is the sent people of God, the on-going presence of Jesus in the world.

The community of God exists to worship God and to witness to Jesus as Lord. Our experience of community is anchored in the gathered community and extended into every aspect of our lives. Even when we gather, there is a sent quality as we hear the gospel proclaimed. And when we are sent, we go together, not just as individuals.

Biblical community has three dimensions. We belong to God (UP), to the church as God's family (IN) and to the world we've been sent to as Christ's representatives (OUT). The triangle reminds us of these three dynamics that must be kept in balance.



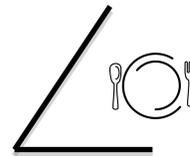
centered
God hosts us

worship gathering



open triangle
*we host believers
and nonbelievers*

Missional Communities



angle
*we go as guest
open to God & others*

all are ambassadors

The three triangles represent this anchored and extended quality of community. The centered triangle, with solid lines, represents the gathered community. The Spirit gathers us as God's family at Christ's invitation. Here we most clearly see and participate in life in the Kingdom of God with Jesus fully recognized as Lord. We gather regularly for worship, to be addressed by God and to offer ourselves to Him in return. We also participate in gathered witness as we serve together as a whole church in Milwood.

The open triangle, with dotted lines, represents our shared life in mission. This is most clearly experienced in our missional communities, where we gather in each others' homes and serve on mission together. It can also be experienced in our own families. Here we host one another, point to Jesus as Lord, but invite others who haven't yet accepted Jesus as Lord to see how we follow Jesus and experience life together following Jesus.

The angle represents how we are all sent as Jesus' representatives no matter where we go – including our neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. We go as guests, but we remain open to God and to others, pointing towards the reality of Jesus as Lord. Even as individuals, we are always connected to God, who goes with us and before us, and to the church as members of Jesus' body in the world.

Disciplines of Extended Community:

- *worship gatherings – communion, hearing God's word, responding in worship*
- *missional communities – serving together, supporting one another, learning and applying God's word*
- *living as ambassadors – serving and loving others after the example of Christ, sharing the gospel naturally and graciously*

Evaluation – consider the following questions, invite a trusted friend or mentor to give you feedback and ask questions before making a final commitment.

How are you currently practicing Extended Community?

Centered Triangle

- *how often do you attend worship gatherings? How engaged are you when you are gathered with the church?*

Open Triangle

- *are you connected with a missional community? How strong and healthy is that connection?*
- *How do you practice extended community in your home (i.e. hospitality, intentional practices as a family)?*

Angle

- *What opportunities do you have to be Jesus' representative in your everyday life (i.e. work, school, neighborhood, hobbies, places you frequent)*

What is one change you can make to grow in your engagement with extended community (a new engagement or a way to re-engage)?

Commitment – moving forward, how will you practice Extended Community?

- *Centered Triangle*
- *Open Triangle*
- *Angle*

My personal *Rule of Life* for this season:



Story-Formed Obedience – I will seek to *hear & obey* God by...

daily

weekly



Presence – I will seek to *recognize & respond* to God by...

daily

weekly



Abundance – I will gratefully *receive & offer* myself to God by...

daily

weekly



Discipleship – I will seek to *grow & guide* others by...

growing as a disciple (how and who is helping me?)

guiding others toward maturity (who and how?)



Extended Community – I will *gather & go* with others by...

Connection to the church family

Connection to a smaller family on mission (i.e. MC, family)

How am I living as a sent representative of Christ?