

Resources

- Daily prayer from CofE <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>
- Lectio 365 <https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>
- Sacred Space an Ignatian guide <https://www.sacredspace.ie/>
- Northumbria Community Prayer <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices>
- Prayer Mate (a way of ordering your prayers) <https://www.prayermate.net/app>

- Bible notes for all ages can be found at Scripture Union and the Good Book Company
- Sam Corley Bishop of Stockport has a wonderful set of videos that introduce every book of the Bible <https://bit.ly/3RIY5Vy>
- The Bible Project has lots of helpful videos <https://bibleproject.com/explore/>
- Bible in one year is an app you can read or listen to <https://bibleinoneyear.org/en/>

More resources and book suggestions are available on our website:
www.hts.church/rule-of-life



Rule of Life

WORKBOOK





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Next Steps

We hope this workbook aids you in forming specific habits that will help you become more like Jesus. Please see this as a blessing and guide and not as a burden. Doing it or not doing it will not change God’s mind about us. He loves us as much today as he ever will regardless. And if you slip or fail, don’t worry or beat yourself up, the important thing is to get up and start again. Romans 8 tells us there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

We encourage you to visit our website www.hts.church/ruleoflife which be updated throughout the coming year. You can find additional resources to help you along in your journey.

Be blessed!





Community

*Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2*

As we cultivate the habits of a disciple of Jesus, we need partners for the journey, a community to help us along the way. Jesus invites all who follow him to be a part of a new, diverse family. God's family is not a social club that looks, thinks, and talks similarly. Rather, it is a community of apprentices following the way of Jesus together. As a diverse group of people who gather around Jesus' table, we will naturally disagree, and it will require effort, learning and growing together, just as it did for Jesus' first disciples. This is the true gift of community around Jesus' table.

A few suggested habits:

- Invite someone from outside your family for dinner once a week.
- Reach out to a member of a different age or backgrounds and intentionally develop a friendship with them.
- Get a coffee with someone who holds different opinions and perspectives on life and listen to their story.
- Join a small group or cluster.



What is a rule of life?

A Rule of Life is a framework by which a community can engage in the same habits together.

Our habits are the foundation of our life. If we do something for long enough it becomes part of who we are and changes us, forming our character over time. A Rule of Life is an intentional set of habits and spiritual disciplines that provide structure and direction for disciples of Jesus Christ to look more like him.

Famous Rules include those designed by St. Francis and St. Benedict. In those instances, a novice would join a community and engage in the same set of habits as everyone else in the community. Versions of these rules still exist today, and they have been used to form Disciples of Christ for centuries.

However, the Rules of Life can often be a one-size-fits-all approach that is not necessarily conducive to the needs of a diverse community in 21st Century Stalybridge. We hope each member of our community might be able to create their own Rule of Life around the broad range of Christian experiences and diversity that works for them.

We recognize that within Holy Trinity there are many who have never done a Rule of Life before and those who may have practiced a Rule of Life for decades. Our aim is to create something that works for mature and new Christians.





How to use this booklet

This workbook is for you to use as you see fit. Given there is not a one-size fits all Rule of Life, we hope this might give some suggestions and guidance as you craft your own Rule of Life. We recommend that you have some paper or a journal to record thoughts, prayers, and doodles along the way. Below are a few suggestions:

Snag a journal and pen. Record your thoughts and notes as you think and pray through these habits. Listen for how God might be speaking to you in this time.

Meditate and reflect on the scripture of each habit. As you read scripture, see if you notice other places where these habits show up.

Notice and examine what comes up for you after doing a habit audit. Where are you experiencing life and growth, and where might you notice apathy and stagnation? How might these places bring you to God in prayer?

Write out a Rule of Life and commit to it. Really give it a go! Feel free to revise it along the way if need be.

Experiment and have fun trying new habits! Find the ones that work best for you, wherever you are in life.

Find a prayer partner or spiritual friend to hold you accountable.



Acts of Service

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

It is a natural temptation to want to be served instead of to serve. We love going to a nice restaurant or hotel and being waited on. We enjoy when our friends and family do nice things for us. However, as disciples of Jesus we are called to love our neighbours as ourselves. We do this because of Jesus' example of service, exemplified in his cross, death, and resurrection. We want to try to resist the temptation of having the world revolve around us by serving those around us. In this way, serving others will be a light, shining brightly in the dark places of this world, making God's love known.

A few suggested habits:

- Sign up to volunteer with CAP, Foodbank or Street Pastors.
- Engage in neighbourhood acts of kindness (bake for your neighbour, rake their leaves etc.)
- Offer up your time for someone who might need a phone call from you.





Fasting

When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do...But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen... Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is the willing abstinence from food, certain drinks, or practices for a particular period. It is one of the underrated and underutilized spiritual formation habits available to Christians. For hundreds of years Christians have fasted as a core habit in their discipleship. We live in a culture not only of food, but also of excess, luxury, and addiction. If we are to resist the world and our own flesh, as it constantly tempts us away from God's will for our lives, then fasting is a key habit that we must cultivate.

A few suggested habits:

- One day a week fast from food and all liquids except water (do this under advisement from your doctor if you have particular health concerns).
- Fast from all TV and social media for a 24-hour period each week.
- Spend time in silence and solitude. This might look like getting out of Stalybridge for a few days. Plan a retreat!



The Habits

DAILY HABITS

PRAYER

SCRIPTURE

CONFESSION
&
REPENTANCE

HUMBLE
GENEROSITY

WEEKLY HABITS

SABBATH

FASTING

ACTS OF
SERVICE

COMMUNITY





Habit Audit

Try starting with some basic questions. Look at your life and ask:

- What are your habits currently?
- How are you spending your time?
- How do your habits reflect your priorities?

Write them down in your journal. For example, how many hours a day do you spend on social media or watching TV? What do you do in your down time? What is the first thing you do in the morning?

After you have an accurate sense of your daily and weekly routines, ask yourself:

- Who are you going to become if you do these habits for the rest of your life? Do you have some habits that you should stop doing because they are
- hindering your walk with Jesus?
- What rituals and habits are shaping you?
- What has been shaping you without your knowing?
- Are the things to which you dedicate your time leading you to Jesus?

The framework for a habit audit is a simple set of boxes, nothing fancy. However, the work required to fill it out can take a lot of time and is best done with a community or a spiritual friend. Start writing down your habits and then take it to your prayer partner or house church, allowing them to speak into your life. They might see habits in your life that you had not noticed. A habit audit is about slowing down and examining your current habits and priorities.



Sabbath

But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work...For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. Exodus 20:10-11

The Sabbath is a day set aside for rest and worship. One of the most important practices of Jesus was finding rest and making time for Sabbath. Unfortunately, the human condition is prone to restlessness, and our digital age and consumerist culture only exacerbates that problem. We must model the restfulness of Jesus, which is more than just one day a week; rather it is a spirit by which we live all week long.

A few suggested habits:

- Set aside time for extended prayer and quiet time, resting in God's presence (for example, a Saturday morning).
- Turn off your emails so that you will not be interrupted by work for a full 24-hour period.
- Develop a ritual for Friday afternoons once you have finished work at the end of the week to signal to the brain and body that you are done (for example, take a moment to pray as you close your laptop for the weekend).





THE WEEKLY HABITS

For a weekly habit, we recommend you build in each of these habits as part of your weekly pattern of life in a way that works for you.

Some weeks will of course look different to others, please find these suggestions a help and not a hindrance in your weekly life.



Habit Audit Worksheet

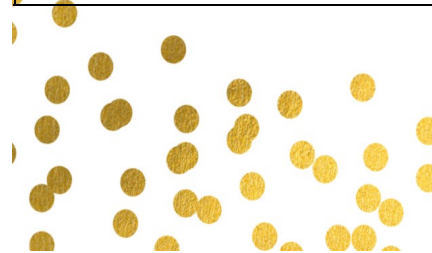
Fill out the boxes or write in your journal the regular habits and routines for a normal week.

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

What habits are you already doing?

Take a moment and use the chart below to add in the Christian habits that you are already doing. After, examine where there are gaps and think creatively about how you could fill them. Spend time praying through this process.

PRAYER	
SCRIPTURE	
CONFESSION & REPENTANCE	
HUMBLE GENEROSITY	
SABBATH	
FASTING	
ACTS OF SERVICE	
COMMUNITY	





Start, Rethink, Renew

We recognize that not everyone is coming at a Rule of Life from the same place. Before diving into these habits, we should be aiming for three different types of potential responses to this work for focusing on a rule of life:

Start

If this is your first time hearing about a Rule of Life, discern if you are already cultivating Christian habits and add these to your Rule. Once you have filled out the habits you are currently doing, which habit buckets are still empty? Begin where there are gaps in your habits and supplement them by creating a holistic set of Christian practices.

ReThink

When our circumstances change in our life, we need to rethink our Rule to accommodate new changes and consider the next steps in our discipleship. Consider which habits need to change and which need to remain. Remember to be gentle with yourself, as these are trying times. Sometimes less is more. In our culture, it is not easy to cut back, but this is a great moment to rethink your habits and ask, “Am I doing too much?”

ReNew

You may have a developed Rule of Life that you have been using for years. Now is still a good time to reflect on that Rule: How does it need to change as a result of the last year? Is it working as a discipleship tool, bringing you closer to Jesus and conforming you into the image of the Son? Renew your commitment to your Rule of Life and re-up on having these habits inform your character over time



Humble Generosity


And being found in human form, Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Philippians 2:7-9

At the very centre of the Christian faith is Jesus on the cross giving his life as an act of humble generosity. Years later, as Paul is encouraging the Philippian Church to live humbly and generously, he quotes a hymn about Jesus giving his life as a ransom for many by humbling himself to the point of death. When Christians today live humbly and generously, we are embracing the Kingdom life, which Jesus modelled for us. It is only through humble and generous living that we can love our neighbour as ourselves.

A few suggested habits:

- For creatives, view your acts of creation as products of humility and generosity. Try and make something each week to give to someone.
- Make a habit of considering other people as better than yourself through small consistent acts like opening the door for other people.
- Be mindful of your language when speaking about other people. Notice when you are tempted to gossip or speak behind someone’s back.
- Try to ask questions before offering opinions about a person, problem or situation.





Confession & Repentance


If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Everything in our culture encourages us to stand proud and refuse to admit wrongdoing and vulnerability. Additionally, in a social media culture, we pretend that our lives are picture-perfect, only showing the good bits. As disciples of Jesus, we must resist that temptation to only show our best selves and hide away the parts that are not perfect. Christians should be quick to confess their sins, mistakes, and errors. Because of God's forgiveness, followers of Jesus can repent and tell one another of the sin in their lives without shame.

You may wish to end the day with this prayer:

- Be still and become aware of God. Breathe in deeply and silently pray, "You are here." Then breathe out praying "And I am with You."
- Look over the last day and give thanks for all you can remember. See the past few hours through the lens of thankfulness – every gift and every difficulty.
- Become aware of your emotions and the state of your heart. Name the emotions you are feeling and give them to God. Reflect on your actions – did you choose Jesus' way in the past few hours?
- Choose one joy or sorrow and turn your heart towards prayer. Pray with boldness and confidence in the Father to hear and respond as he desires.
- Look with hope towards the next day, committing it to God with trust and hope.

A few suggested habits:

- Tell a trusted friend, spouse, or small group member about the sin you committed today.
 - Try modelling your authentic self on social media, instead of trying to perfectly or curate each moment.
 - Be quick to say you are sorry when you get something wrong today.
- 



THE DAILY HABITS

For a daily habit, we would like to commend a practice called 15 minutes a day. This does what it says on the tin – we suggest you spend 15 minutes a day with God to pray and read the Bible. This is a practice endorsed by James Lawrence from CPAS who comments that there are very few people who cannot make 15 minutes a day. It is therefore both doable and a stretch.

As we draw near to God, he draws near to us. When this happens, we are changed and our outlook, attitudes and spirits shift to become more and more Christ like.

This is a suggestion and in no way a command. For some 15 minutes isn't the right length of time. No problem! Whether it is 5 or 55, the key is being intentional! Do not feel guilty about this, our time with God comes from intimacy and relationship with Him. He loves us!





Prayer

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Romans 12:12

Prayer is a central feature of our lives as Christians. It should be woven into the fabric of our daily routine and our weekly schedule. Prayer is our opportunity to interact with the Creator of the universe as we come in humility, listen intently and speak honestly. As we align our heart with his, we start seeing the world the way he does and are naturally led to participate in his work of building his Kingdom in the world. As we spend time with God our heart starts to beat in time with his, and this will lead us into intercession, lament, repentance, and joy.

A Centring Prayer:

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Invite God to come.
- Let go of your thoughts and worries and begin to rest in the love of God who dwells within.
- Choose a word or phrase. This is a symbol of your intention to surrender to God's presence, e.g. 'You are here, I am with you', or 'I receive your love.' Repeat the word as you breathe.
- Let go of your word or phrase. Just be in the stillness with God. When you become aware of your thoughts, simply return to the phrase and your intention to let go and rest in God's presence.
- At the end of your prayer time, thank God for being with you and in you.

A few suggested habits:

- Download an app on your phone to help daily prayer.
- Pray Morning Prayer from Daily Office.
- Write out a daily prayer and stick it to your mirror; pray it as you brush your teeth each morning.
- Start a journal of your prayers. Keep a list of the people for whom you are praying.
- Try kneeling as you pray to focus your mind.



Scripture

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

The scriptures are the primary way God communicates to us. They teach us how to think as God thinks and live as God lives by having our minds daily renewed by his word.

To dwell in the word (Also known as lectio divina)

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Choose a passage of scripture and ask God to be with you in this time.
- Read the passage slowly, letting your awareness rest on each word. And listening for the still small voice of God. Be aware of any word or phrase that catches your attention.
- Meditate on the word or phrase that caught your attention. Use your mind to analyse the word/phrase. Be aware of any emotion or memories the word may stir up.
- Ask God why this word caught your attention. What is he trying to say to you? Dialogue with God about what you are hearing or feeling. Maybe journal your prayer. Take time to listen.
- Rest in God's presence.
- In the hours that follow, keep returning to the passage and reflections with the intention of integrating the word into your life.

A few suggested habits:

- Read a verse from scripture before you look at your phone each morning
- Listen to The Bible in a Year podcast on your way to work.
- Read the lectionary readings for the day while eating breakfast.
- Memorize scripture and recite it to yourself as you put on shoes to leave the house in the morning.