



Session 8: Going the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life”

Introduction

Be open to yourself, to God, and to the people in your group. It is ok if you feel a little bit uncomfortable. Just know you are invited to be as vulnerable as you would like to be.

As a group let’s remind ourselves of these guidelines:

1. Speak only for yourself, use “I” statements
2. Keep your sharing to 2-3 minutes, give room for others to share
3. No fixing, saving, or setting other people straight
4. Trust and learn from silence, there is no pressure to share
5. Observe confidentiality

If we are to nurture a heart that treats every person, ourselves included, as a “Thou” instead of “It,” we need to be intentional about our lives. By ordering our lives to contemplate the love of Christ and to receive the love of Christ, we will be able to give the love of Christ away to others. In this way, he transforms our lives into a gift to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

The problem again, however, is our busyness and lack of intentionality. Often, we find ourselves unfocused, distracted, and spiritually adrift. Few of us have a conscious plan for intentionally developing our spiritual lives. Nurturing a growing spirituality in our present-day culture calls for a thoughtful, conscious, purposeful plan. To do this well requires us to uncover another ancient buried treasure —a “Rule of Life.”

The Rule of Life is not about creating legalistic “rules” that we must follow. Rather it’s about creating habits for formation into Christ-likeness. Pete mentions 12 elements for the Rule of Life including:

- Scripture
- Silence/solitude
- Daily Office (prayer)
- Study
- Sabbath
- Simplicity
- Play and recreation
- Service/mission
- Care for our physical body
- Emotional health
- Family
- Community

For starters

Take about 5 minutes to write one specific thing you are currently doing in each of the following four areas to nurture your relationship with Jesus. Be ready to share some of these with your group.

Prayer	Rest
Work/Activity	Relationships

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

The Rule of Life will be introduced as we study the first Christian community in the book of Acts. The word *rule* comes from the Greek word for “trellis.” A trellis is a tool that enables a grapevine to get off the ground and grow upward, becoming more fruitful and productive. In the same way, a Rule of Life is a trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful spiritually.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

1. In the book of Acts, we are given a window into the life of the first community of believers soon after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when three thousand people came to faith in Christ. What speaks to you from this passage?

2. Based on this one passage, how would you describe this community’s Rule of Life? Describe the activities/disciplines they used to grow and mature in Christ.

Now it is time for you to begin developing your own personal Rule of Life. The following story and questions are meant to help you discern what may be getting in the way of developing a way of life that keeps you closely connected to God.

In his book *A Hidden Wholeness*, Parker Palmer relates a story about farmers in the Midwest who would prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn as a guide to ensure they could return safely home. These blizzards came quickly and fiercely and were highly dangerous. When their full force was blowing, a farmer could not see the end of his or her hand. Many froze to death in those blizzards, disoriented by their inability to see. They wandered in circles, lost sometimes in their own backyards. If they lost their grip on the rope, it became impossible for them to find their way home. Some froze within feet of their own back door, never realizing how close they were to safety. Many of us are wandering amidst the blizzards of life and have lost our way spiritually.

3. Take 5-10 minutes to prayerfully answer the following questions.

- What is the nature of your blizzard at this time?

- What contributes to your blizzard? What does it look like? Feel like?

- What does that blizzard obscure? What gets “lost”?

- We each need a rope to keep us connected to God. Notice that every rope is actually made up of a series of smaller, intertwined threads. In light of your life at this time, what “threads” do you want to make up your rope, your Rule of Life? (*Look back to the 12 elements*)

4. Share with your group some of your responses.

5. What steps do you need to take to complete and entire Rule of Life?