

# 2023.02.12 - Resting - A Rule Of Life

**So What?** A Rule of Life enables us to participate in Jesus' unforced rhythms of grace.

**Feel What?** Curious

**Now What?** Read through our workbook and consider practicing our Rule of Life.

## VISION CASTING

The mission of Mosaic Church is to unite people in the Way of Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, we begin a new message series about the importance of rest and how to incorporate it into our lives. And to start the series, and before we talk about the importance of rest, I'm going to lay some of the groundwork for what will most likely be a multi-year plan for our church centering on what's known as a Rule of Life. If you were present last week for our Vision Sunday, Ben and I talked a bit about the Rule of Life for Mosaic Church and how we want to invite everyone who calls our church their home into it with us. I'd like to begin with a quote that has stuck with me ever since I read it, almost 20 years ago:

**Richard Foster, Celebration Of Discipline: "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world. ...Psalm 42:7 reads 'Deep calls to deep.' Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chambers of your life you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. You have become weary of frothy experiences and shallow teaching. Every now and then you have caught glimpses, hints of something more than you have known. Inwardly you long to launch out into the deep."**

Foster wrote that 45 years ago, before the rise of the Internet, before you could team up on Fortnite or take down King Koopa, before there was any hope of making a video of a

funny dance that you hoped could go viral, before you could post pictures of your food (guilty), before some creep could slide into your DMs, you could be canceled by the Twitter mob for a hot take, or you could find out your being catfished for a little Venmo coin. Foster wrote this 2 years before the start of the 24-7 news cycle that laid the foundation for 24-7 binge watching on Netflix or Hulu or Disney+ or Paramount+ or HBO+.

A month ago we addressed the danger of digital culture, so I don't want to belabor that now, but I want to point out how Foster's invitation to way attention to the "subterranean chambers of your life" to a "deeper, fuller" way of being calls to us, even amongst the technological revolution we're experiencing. Some moments, the call is quieter. I can be drowned out by the rush and bustle of life. But in other times, it surfaces as we ask questions like, "Is this it? Is this all there is to life? Is this all there is to God?" It could be a moment of crisis. It could be a moment of boredom. But, often, it's living constantly with an awareness that we're bored *and* we're in crisis—and it is eroding our souls.

First, there's the actual pace of life. "A research project in 1999 compared the pace of life in 31 major cities across the world, basing its analysis on three main indicators: the average walking speed in downtown areas, how quickly postal clerks completed basic tasks, and the accuracy of clock in public places. They found the pace of life was faster in economically-developed countries, colder climates, and individualistic cultures. In another study released in 2007, they found that around the world, people are walking about 10% faster than they used to. Researchers identified that those who walk quickly are also more likely to speak fast and eat fast. They become impatient when waiting in lines or traffic, and they're more likely to wear a watch. Faster doesn't always equal better, as researchers found correlations between subjects with faster walking speeds and several negative health effects, like heart disease."

Second, is the feeling of higher and higher anxiety, which leads to burnout. In a New York Times article, Adam Grant warns of the consequences of languishing:

**Adam Grant, "There's A Name For The Blah You're Feeling: It's Called Languishing": "Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield. ...As scientists and physicians work to treat and cure the physical symptoms of long-haul Covid, many people are struggling with the emotional long-haul of the pandemic. It hit some of us unprepared as the intense fear and grief of last year faded. ...In psychology, we think about mental health on a**

**spectrum from depression to flourishing. Flourishing is the peak of well-being: You have a strong sense of meaning, mastery and mattering to others. Depression is the valley of ill-being: You feel despondent, drained and worthless. Languishing is the neglected middle child of mental health. It's the void between depression and flourishing—the absence of well-being.”**

The speed of digital innovation, the increasing pace of life, and languishing are but three problems alerting us to the crises in life we're all facing. It seems the speed at which problems are arising are outpacing our ability to even name them all, let alone possibly bring solutions to them.

**Transition:** My point is this: Perhaps instead of keeping up, we may need to slow down and take a step back.

## **SOLUTION**

**Matthew 11:28-30, MSG: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”**

In the 6th Century, an older monk, after decades of devotion to God, completed his list of recommended guidelines for communities of faith to remain steady in a hostile world. For years, Benedict of Nursia had been quietly reforming the ways of the Church which had begun to drift into cultural accommodation and immorality. Through seasons of living as a desert hermit to overseeing disciples in a monastery, St. Benedict gained the experience to steward both an individual belief to seeing how faith shapes a broader network of people. In fact, the Rule of St. Benedict was so effective in centering the faithful on the worship of God and serving in community that it became basis of other monastic movements throughout history.

The meaning of “rule” originates from the Greek word for “trellis.” Consider the art and craft of growing grapes: A trellis is required for the vine to continue growing to fulfill its potential and grow the most grapes. The trellis enables the grapevine to grow in maximum fruitfulness. Similarly, a rule of life can be a trellis that helps us stay connected to Jesus and grow to maximum fruitfulness.

I believe that there is something both powerful and intriguing in this concept of a Rule of Life. Not so we can retreat to desert enclaves, but rather to **live faithfully among** our

culture.

**Ken Shigematsu, God in My Everything: “Like a trellis, a rule of life supports and guides our growth. It supports our friendship with Christ so that we bear the fruit of his character and are able to offer his nourishing life to others. The purpose of the rule, in this sense, is not to be harsh or confining. It is to cultivate fruit. It serves as a pattern for life that enables us to experience the presence of Jesus in each moment of our lives, empowering us to become people who embody his love to others.”**

Does a Rule of Life appear in the Bible? Well, no and yes. Specifically, the words aren't used, as they were created by St. Benedict. But, yes, there were rhythms and practices embraced by God's people all throughout biblical history. Jesus, as a Jewish rabbi, observed the sabbath, fasted regularly, prayed at the requisite times, and celebrated the feast and holy days. As we examine the life of Jesus, we see him participating in spiritual disciplines in order to center himself in his relationship with the Father, and then teach his apprentices to do the same.

**Luke 5:15-16, NIV: The news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.**

**Mark 6:31-32, NIV: Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”**

**So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.**

We see these rhythms scattered all throughout the Scripture as practiced by God's people. Most of us are familiar with the story of Daniel and the lions' den. What you may not realize is that the catalyst for the situation was Daniel's own regular practices:

**Daniel 6:3-4, 7, 10-12, NIV: Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. ...“The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall**

be thrown into the lions' den." ...Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree....

This should also serve as a warning for us that as we endeavor to follow Jesus more deeply, there will be pushback against developing these spiritual muscles. On the day you plan for a sabbath, you'll get a last minute call to help someone move. When you set aside time to fast, someone at the office will bring in a box of Varsity Donuts. Decide to increase your giving, and you'll start having car trouble. This isn't to talk you out of keeping a rule, but to help you be vigilant and aware of things—even good things!—that will call us away, steal our attention, and keep us stuck in spiritual apathy.

**Pete Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*: “A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God as the center of everything we do. It includes our unique combination of spiritual practices that provide structure and direction for us to pay attention to and remember God in everything we do. It is a powerful tool dating back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers in the third to fifth centuries, and enables us to regulate our entire lives in such a way that we prefer the love of Jesus above all things.”**

**Transition:** Allow me, for a moment, to give you the bigger picture of where we're going for this series.

## **APPLICATION**

Our Rule of Life workbook is our attempt to capture the habits and practices that will point our church together towards Jesus. You can find hardcopies in the seats around you, and we also have it available digitally at [mosaicmhk.com/ruleoflife](https://mosaicmhk.com/ruleoflife). On our website, we will continue to update it with resources, recommendations, and material that will help you apprentice Jesus to you can be with him, be like him, and do the things he does.

As you look through the workbook, you'll see a few things. First, it's mean to be intuitive enough that you can begin working through it immediately. It is, ultimately, mean to be done in community, so there are encouragements to find a trusted friend to share it with, or even walk it out together in your group.

Second, there are five categories of practices, known as **Marks of Formation**. We believe that a healthy disciple of Jesus at Mosaic Church will demonstrate and be continuing to grow in each of these areas. They are:

1. **Resting**, pausing to enjoy God and his creation
2. **Praying**, a life of conversational connection with God
3. **Learning**, a commitment to be a wholehearted student of Jesus
4. **Gathering**, practices of relationships and hospitality
5. **Contributing**, graciously sharing as you continue on God's mission

These form the backbone of following the Way of Jesus here at Mosaic Church. If someone were to ask you, What is it like to be a Christian and what do you do?, you could say to them, "Come and see for yourself. At Mosaic, together we Rest, Pray, Learn, Gather, and Contribute, and we get a little better at it as time goes on."

As I said, we are beginning a series through Resting today, and for the next four weeks we'll look at one spiritual discipline that will form a baseline practice that we want to move towards as a church. Each of these Marks of Formation have four suggested practices each. So, there are 20 practices altogether.

To some, that may seem like a lot to digest. And, I get it. To others, you're ready for a challenge, so you're ready to sign up and you want to know how. Here's the deal: Right now, there's no sign-on-the-dotted-line spiel. You sign up by doing. And we'll keep checking in with other to see how it's going. In two weeks, two months, two years. We'll be asking, how are you practicing the Way of Jesus together in community with others? And if you're hesitant, all I ask today is that you study with us about Resting. You can dip your toe in the water with that, and see how to incorporate it into your life, and that's fine.

I do want to give you some practical direction to help you as you journey through this workbook:

### 1. **Consider Your Personality and Stage of Life**

Even though there are suggested baseline practices, not every iteration is going to work for everyone the same. Or even for you as you enter and exit different seasons of your life. Time set aside for prayer is going to look different for a family with young kids than it is going to be for empty nesters. If you're more introverted, you'll be drawn more toward

contemplative practices and need to stretch out toward community. If you're extroverted, the opposite is true. Generosity is different when you're single than when you're married. Be kind to yourself and gracious towards others as we work this out together.

## **2. Include Upstream & Downstream Practices**

There will be practices that will seem easier to maintain than others. Make sure you stuff your Rule with joyous, Downstream practices that you can relax into where you find joyful and fun. And have just a few Upstream practices that move you towards growth.

## **3. Build In Structure & Spontaneity**

A Rule of Life isn't supposed to be rigid, boring, or legalistic. Remember, it's a trellis that's point is to enable spiritual growth. Often, the Spirit will bring unscheduled interruptions into our days to prompt us for further growth.

## **4. Approach It As A Working Document**

Write it in pencil (figuratively or literally, if that helps). Because life is dynamic, your personal Rule should reflect that. Try it out for a short season, and then discern if it's helping you become a person of love. Adjust as necessary.

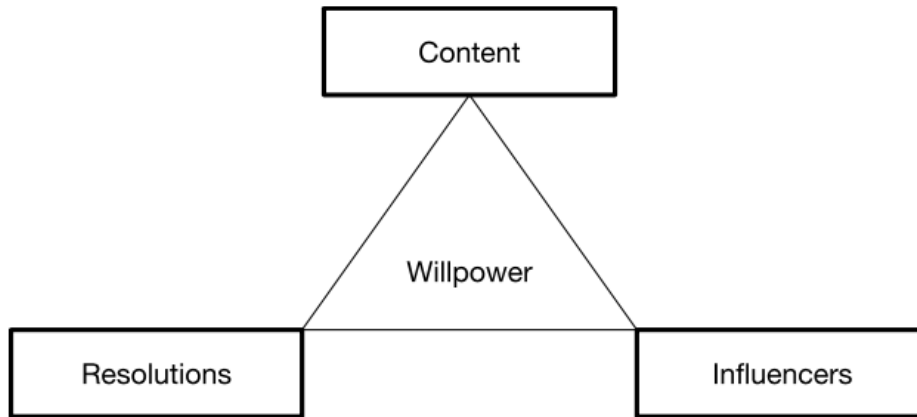
One thing a Rule of Life is not is a quick-fix solution to bringing an out of control life into balance. In fact, balance is often an elusive and impossible goal. But what a Rule of Life does if offer us the chance at a centered life—to live with Jesus at the center of everything, even when it all feels like it's falling apart and out of control. But, what you will often find is, that when you live with Christ as the center, there is a sorting and a prioritizing. And life feels more fully purposeful, which is what Jesus promises (John 10:10).

**Transition:** But there are often a couple objections when a Rule of Life is proposed:

## **OBJECTIONS**

You might be saying to yourself, "Wait, this seems unnecessary and complicated. We don't need all this to become better and more fulfilled people." There are scores of authors lined up to sell you a quick method or hack to getting ahead. Here is what personal growth usually looks like in our world is this:

### **Unintentional Formation**



There's some desire to see growth, usually to avoid pain or find greater comfort. We turn to influencers and gurus to solve our problems, and we make bold resolutions to achieve our goals. And what we have to fuel our passion is usually the strength of our willpower. But where does that get us? Usually, with our Peleton in the corner covered in semi-clean clothes because we couldn't take our instructor screaming at us to just pedal harder.

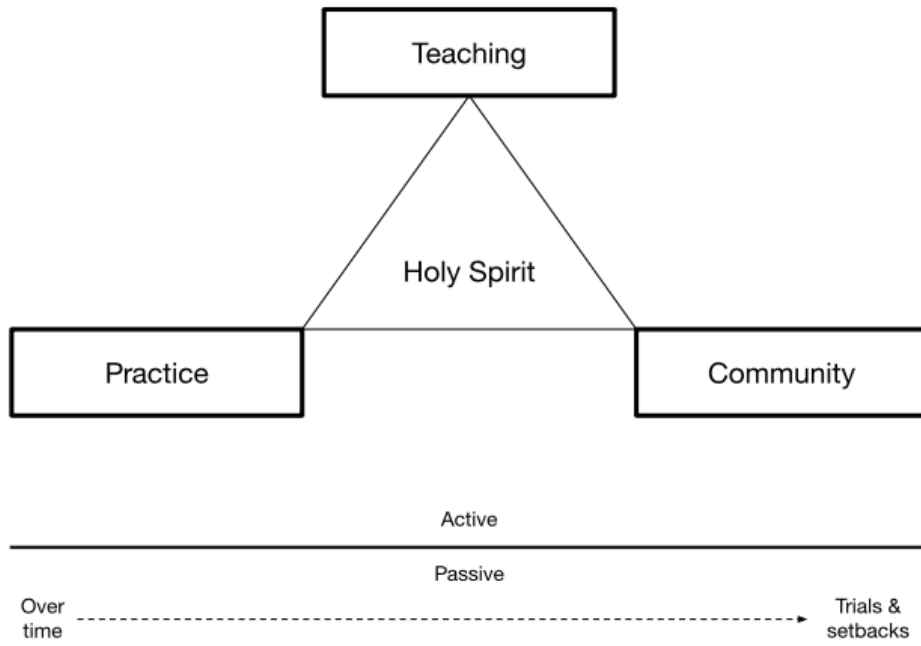
To compound this, often Christians have been taught to believe change happens through reductionistic methods. You'll often hear in church spaces, "Just teach the Bible! That's all we need!" But is it?

**John Ortberg, Christianity Today article: "Neuroscience has shown us in concrete ways a reality of human existence that is crucial for disciples to understand in our struggle with sin. That reality is this: mostly our behavior does not consist of a series of conscious choices. Mostly, our behavior is governed by habit. Most of the time, a change of behavior requires the acquisition of new habits. Willpower and conscious decision have very little power over what we do. A habit is a relatively permanent pattern of behavior that allows you to navigate life. The capacity for habitual behavior is indispensable. ...People in our churches will not be transformed simply by having more exegetical or theological information poured into them—no matter how correct that information may be. The information has to be embodied, has to become habituated into attitudes, patterns of response, and reflexive action. The reason that spiritual disciplines are an important part of change is that they honor the physical nature of human life. Information alone doesn't override bad habits. God uses relationships, experiences, and practices to shape and re-shape the character of our lives that gets embedded at the most physical level."**



To underscore this, here is something Christian philosopher Dallas Willard developed called the Golden Triangle. Here it is, with some updates from John Mark Comer:

### Intentional Spiritual Formation



We see some of the categories as similar to unintentional change, with some significant differences. Teaching, of course, is a big part of change. We want to be lifelong students of Jesus through the Scriptures. We want to be humble and open to correction as needed. And we receive that mainly through local, embodied community. And we apply what we learn in community by committing to spiritual rhythms and practices—which is where our Rule of Life comes in. And the power for change comes not from within, but from God’s Spirit leading us and maturing us into Christ’s image.

The main difference between the two approaches is the expectation of time and what occurs during that time. We live in an InstantPot society that expects results in 30 days or your money back. But transformation often occurs over time and included the hard knocks of life where our character is revealed. Just as it takes multiple seasons for a mature grape vine to produce a vintage product, it takes a lifetime of endurance to offer the fragrant aroma of Christ through the weak human frame.

**Transition:** With that, I want to draw us to a close by envisioning a way forward together. There is a corrective quote that I love and it paints a picture for us:

## INSPIRATION

**Ken Shigematsu, God in My Everything: “Contrary to the popular assumptions about monks and nuns, Celtic monastics did not withdraw from society to spend time alone, isolated from the world. Instead, they built their monasteries close to settlements, on well-known hilltops, or on islands near established sea-lanes so they could practically demonstrate the hospitality of Christ. The Celtic monasteries were not just places of prayer and worship; they also served as hotels, emergency shelters, hospitals, libraries, universities, centers for the arts, and mission-sending bases. These spiritual pilgrims were not just concerned with their own spiritual growth; they were a force for justice and community transformation.”**

**What would it look like for Mosaic Church to become a neo-monastic movement who offered the unforced rhythms of grace to a desperate and languishing world? Not cowering and hunkered down, but sewn into the fabric of our city so every workplace and neighborhood, every nook and cranny has the welcome of Jesus present within?**

**Transition:** As a next step I invite you to **put this into practice** by:

## CONCLUSION

**Put This Into Practice:**

- Reading through the workbook and consider adopting a Rule of Life.

**Next Week:**

- Pastor Sarah will teach us on the practice of sabbath rest.

**Communion**

**Matthew 6:9-13, NIV: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”**