



CRAFTING YOUR OWN

RULE  
OF  
LIFE

Episcopal Student Fellowship

Adapted from the *Rule of St. Benedict* & Rule of Life process materials  
from CREDO (Church Pension Group) of the Episcopal Church

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# Introduction

“Life needs balance” sounds like the slogan for a probiotic. Honestly, talk of balance is crap. There is no such thing as balance as we think about it. The balanced life on social media accounts looks like the bliss of living in your sprinter van replete with your hetero partner, dog, and photos of you at sunset doing yoga on a cliff. We think of balance as a placid existence where there is no tension. However, the balanced life, “if it is to embrace the paradox of truth, is one which *is* in tension: not destructive and stressful but healthy and dynamic.”<sup>1</sup> Where most systems in which we take part, view balance as a full embrace of one side or another, divine balance is non-duality because it holds the two in tension.

Enter Saint Benedict of Nursia. He was an Italian monk in the 6th century. He founded 12 monasteries, each with 12 monks, and to keep these communities grounded and connected, he introduced the concept of “the Rule of Life”. Apparently, monks struggled with discipline, moderation, grounding, and centeredness in Christ. Who knew? It raises a few concerns, not the least among them being that: how are we to find grounding and centeredness now, if these dudes couldn’t achieve it

AT. A. MONASTERY!?! (In the 6th century! - these guys didn’t even have tiktok!)

But that’s actually good news for us. We don’t need the walls of the convent. We can take the lessons they learned, which are now more applicable and vital than ever before, and adapt them to campus. And when you think about it, campus is not that different from the cloister: you’re living in cloistered community, you eat meals in community, life is fairly ordered, you spend long hours with your noses in books, and you have strange superstitions, liturgies, and customs.

These areas of your life represent the balance of mind, body, and spirit. In other words, wholeness. Prayer and spirituality, academics/study, and work all done with moderation, can bring us to wholeness. Non-duality and living from the centeredness of unity with God is not bland or rote. It is an invitation to action. It is an invitation to live from equilibrium at the center of all things: the love of God for us. Which takes fierce action out of love and deep respect for another’s dignity.

Yeah, but “rules” sound rigid and controlling (or worse, manipulative.) Not following your rule of life does *not* mean that you’ve failed and the pearly gates are shut. It has nothing to do with salvation. It has everything to do with living into your God-given, belovedness.

Does my life need more rules right now? Short answer: yes it does. And they’re not meant to be static. They’re meant to be grounding: holding together in tension the crap and the joy.

You can do this. You don’t have to know Gregorian chant or wear long brown robes or share underwear. (<—actually true. Some monastic communities hold all things in community.) Moving on. All you need is a little time and an open heart and three simple steps.

Ready to dive in?

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<sup>1</sup> Brian C. Taylor, *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 16.

# Step One: Identity & Priorities

(Pro tip: Take some time to answer the following questions. Carve out the time free from distractions. Put the phone on dnd. These are your values and will take introspection.)

## Pt. 1 - Love

**“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. AND A SECOND IS LIKE IT: YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” ~MATTHEW 22:37-39**

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How do I care for myself? (Ex. exercise, prayer, sleeping, eating, etc.)

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How do I express my own sense of creativity? (Ex. writing, music, art, reading, social media, research, etc.)

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How do I practice sabbath? (Ex. rest, recreation, retreat, renewal)

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How do create or preserve balance or holy rhythm in my life?

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Which relationships in my life need special attention?

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What do the insights from these answers reflect about my values of love for myself, others, creation, and God?

**Now, reflecting on these insights, identify 2-3 practices, which may help mirror your values and help you grow:**

1.

2.

3.

## Pt. 2 - God, the Church, and my spiritual journey

**“I PRAY THAT YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER TO COMPREHEND, WITH ALL THE SAINTS, WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, SO THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD.” ~EPHESIANS 3:18-19**

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The relationship I yearn to have with God could be described as:

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My current spiritual practices which deepen this relationship include:

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What habits/practices might help strengthen this relationship?

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The relationship I yearn to have with the Church could be described as:

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What habits and practices might strengthen my relationship with the church?

**Now, reflecting on these insights, identify 2-3 practices, which may help mirror your values and help you grow:**

1.

2.

3.

## Pt. 3 - Action

**“WILL YOU STRIVE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE AMONG ALL PEOPLE, AND RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING?” ~BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, 305**

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How do I and how might I see Christ in others?

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How do I and how might I be a good steward of the gifts God has given me?

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How do I and how might I use these gifts to create beloved community?

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How do I care for God's creation?

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What organizations, causes, and/or movements do I actively or might I support as an expression of my care for God's creation and my care for my neighbor?

**Now, reflecting on these insights, identify 2-3 practices, which may help mirror your values and help you grow:**

1.

2.

3.



## Step Two: Practices

Discern and identify 3-5 practices below. St. Benedict urged moderation, simplicity, relevance, adaptability, and practicality in order for these practices to stick. In other words, pick *reasonable* practices for you to implement! (Don't: "I will read the whole bible this semester" Do: "I will spend more time in scripture." OR Don't: "I will work out every day" Do: "I will take better care of this one body I've been given.")

Practice One:

Practice Two:

Practice Three:

Practice Four:

Practice Five:

## Step **Three**: Implementation

From these practices you've discerned, describing *how* you will implement, *who* will support you, and *why* it is important to you, will help you think more deeply about these practices as a re-order to the rhythm that aligns with and mirrors your core values and principles.

### Practice One

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Name the practice:

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How will you do this and how often?

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Who will support you in this practice?

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Why is this practice important to you?

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How might this practice relationship with God, my neighbor, creation or myself?

## Practice Two

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Name the practice:

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How will you do this and how often?

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Who will support you in this practice?

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Why is this practice important to you?

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How might this practice relationship with God, my neighbor, creation or myself?

## Practice Three

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Name the practice:

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How will you do this and how often?

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Who will support you in this practice?

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Why is this practice important to you?

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How might this practice relationship with God, my neighbor, creation or myself?

## Practice Four

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Name the practice:

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How will you do this and how often?

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Who will support you in this practice?

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Why is this practice important to you?

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How might this practice relationship with God, my neighbor, creation or myself?

## Practice Five

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Name the practice:

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How will you do this and how often?

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Who will support you in this practice?

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Why is this practice important to you?

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How might this practice relationship with God, my neighbor, creation or myself?

**Congrats. You're human! You're fearfully and wonderfully made! You're beloved. You're imperfect. And yet, God still thinks you're fabulous (even if you suck and fail miserably at these practices.)**

(The beauty is that you can adapt them as needed and as life changes. Hopefully you set attainable yet challenging practices and they'll become habit!)

**2 more Q's:**

**Would you be comfortable sharing some or all of your rule with the community?**

(It might help someone else and you might find an accountability-buddy!)

**Do you need help further processing these practices?**

(If so, reach out to James, Audrey or Patrick!)



Nick Cage sez: "Practice Christian non-dualism!"