

The Rule of **LIFE** Parent Edition

You've got this great idea to create the perfect Rule of Life, but then you remember you have uncontrollable variables, aka kids, and you lose any hope of being able to set yourself up for success. The key is to include your children into your rule of life process. This is important for two reasons, their involvement and ideas will give it more value to them, and since they are a huge part of your life, your rule must in many ways revolve around them. There are two sections in this document:

1. Discussion guide to teach your kids about the Rule of Life and talk through ideas together (most beneficial for parents with kids 7&up)
2. Specific ideas for you to plan your Rule of Life with your family in mind, including a quick-start guide to jump right in!

Oh, and here's an encouraging word from Justin Whitmel Earley, from his book "The Common Rule,"

Parenting may be one of the most difficult jobs out there, and full-time parents can attest to that. However, it's also one of the most blessed and important jobs! If we become our habits, and our kids become us, then our kids become our habits. For parents, attentiveness to your own habits is the beginning of teaching your kids how to live, not to mention how to use technology wisely.

Some Resources were taken from -
<https://www.thecommonrule.org/>
<http://alastairsterne.com/rhythms/>
https://ssje.org/2016_growruleresources/GrowRule_Kids.pdf

Part 1: DISCUSSION GUIDE

What is a Rule of Life? Take time to discuss with your kids. Here are a few key talking points and questions to help you get started.

We all have a rule of life, whether it's on purpose or not.

The word 'rule' comes from the same word as regulate. Think of it the same way a refrigerator or A/C regulates temperature to keep things cool or the way your heart regulates your heartbeat and blood flow to keep you alive! Keeping a rule of life is a way to regulate our lives, to stay on an intentionally-chosen path, and to live on-purpose.

RULES

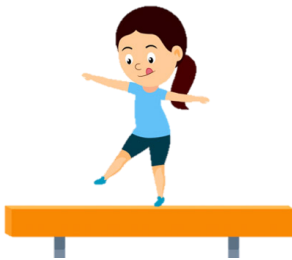
Discuss - Why are rules valuable? What's good about them, and what's bad or hard about them?

A rule of life is not merely a set of rules, rather, it's a guide to gently direct us on our way.

Discuss - Why is that an important difference? (ie. a guided tour vs just signs telling you what to do or don't do or a good teacher vs a substitute who just makes sure you're not talking)



Life is a balancing act - church and prayer, work or chores and school, friends and recreation, self-care, spiritual development, home and family, the list goes on!



Discuss - What happens when things are well-balanced? What about when things are thrown off balance?(ie. Walking on a balance beam or tightrope, or balancing a tray on one hand)

Questions each family member should answer before creating a family Rule of Life.

Who are you, really? Try to describe yourself.

Who does God want you to become? Who are you called to be?

What does God want you to do? What is your purpose? Think small things that God wants you to do regularly and think BIG things you couldn't do without God's help!

What do you love about yourself? What do you want to change?

What are you balancing? Are you dropping any balls? How can you prioritize so you're not dropping the most important ones?

Seasonal Practices

Up <i>Upward to God</i>	In <i>Inward to Self</i>
With <i>Withward in Community</i>	Out <i>Outward in Mission</i>

Growth *Write down a few growth areas to focus on during this season*

Fill in the following charts with some ideas!

Name:	Daily	Weekly
Inward		
Outward		
Upward		
Withward		

Name:	Daily	Weekly
Inward		
Outward		
Upward		
Withward		

Name:	Daily	Weekly
Inward		
Outward		
Upward		
Withward		

Name:	Daily	Weekly
Inward		
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Upward		
Withward		

Part 2: Quick-Start Guide and Ideas for Families

DAILY HABITS - from "The Common Rule"

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE - I don't know how to parent outside of being parented by Jesus. It's useful to my body and soul to be in the Word - however briefly - before my kids wake up. My wife is not like this. She prefers to read the Bible in the afternoon. But in no case does using a smartphone first thing in the morning set up parents for a healthy day. Try to get it out of your morning routine.

3X PRAYER - Writing a short prayer for your children with your spouse is a good way for both of you to focus on praying for the same things for your kids. Try a couple of sentences and pray them three times a day.

HOUR PHONE OFF - The phone off hour should be paired with engaging your kids - whether it's wrestling, building, dressing up, talking or board games. An undistracted hour of engaging with them is worth its weight in gold!

MEAL WITH OTHERS - Cultivating a habit of family breakfast or family dinner is an amazing way to grow together. Pick which meal is best for you - and don't imagine it's going to be easy! It will be messy and loud and there will be tons of prep and cleanup. Don't allow electronics at the table, and no one leaves until excused. This is hard, but all good things are. The table is where you learn to know and love each other.

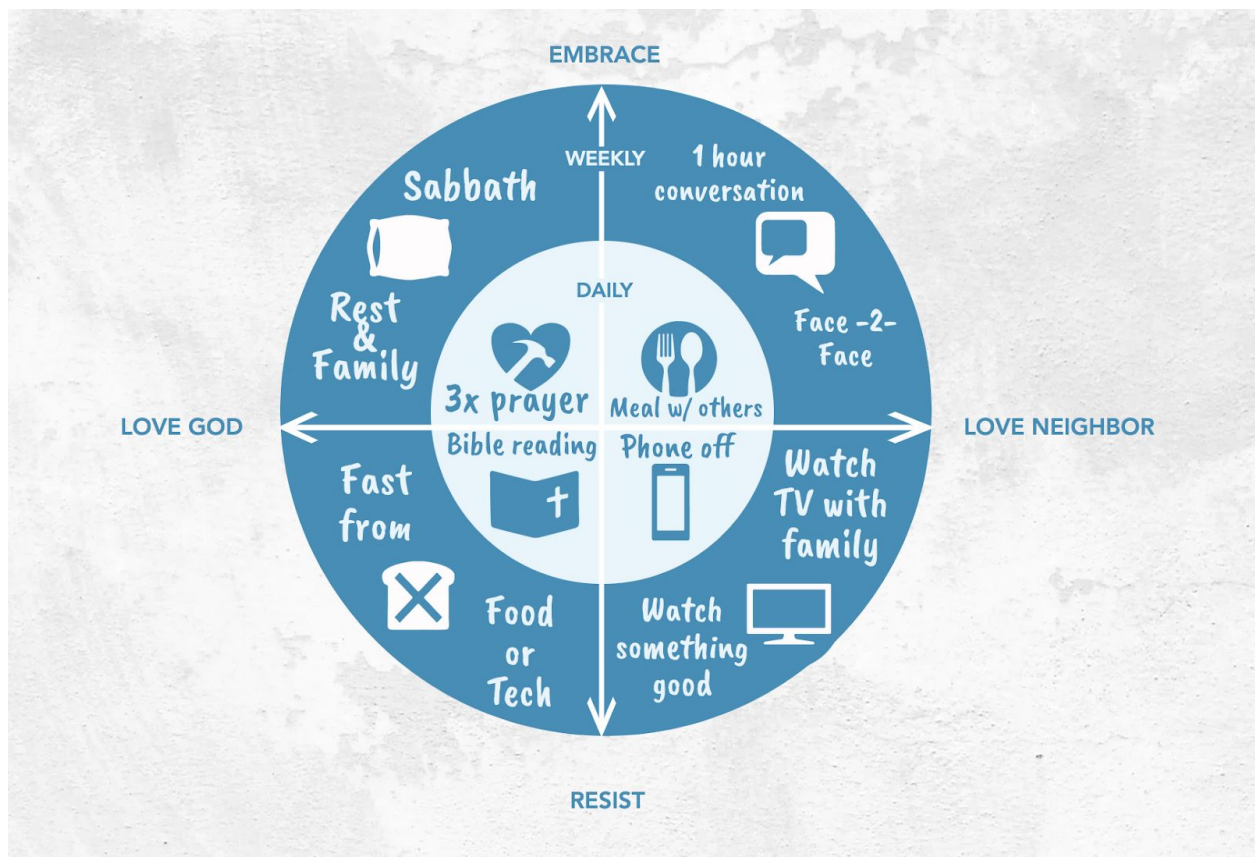
WEEKLY HABITS - from "The Common Rule"

SABBATH - If the non-lead parent during weekdays can carry the brunt of the (house and family) work on the sabbaths, that's ideal. But not everyone can. If not, consider trying a month of communal gatherings with other friends or family where the load is lighter. This is often specific to each family, so you'll need to practice a lot together and measure the success in the long run, not the short term.

FAST - Often a twenty-four hour fast from food is inadvisable for parents - and especially for nursing or pregnant mothers. Fasting from sugar or dessert works well. Sometimes fasting from social media or sports does too. The goal is to pick something that will make you feel a lack and to lean into Christ's abundance when you do.

CURATE 4 HOURS OF MEDIA - Watch something together as a family - that is, make your watching communal. Having a canon of shared movies or TV shows is an incredible family bonding mechanism. Also, I find that even the most “appropriate” movies require explanation for my children. Discuss where you are seeing virtue worth imitating and where there is a vice worth avoiding.

ONE HOUR OF CONVERSATION - Adult conversation is a precious commodity to a full-time parent. This should happen when the kids aren’t around. Talking at the park while the kids play just doesn’t cut it. Sometimes it’s great to have another parent to talk to, but I also find it helpful to talk to someone who is not in the same parenting stage.



Some simple tips as you get started.

1. You can try it out for one week and see it in action! Discuss and adjust.
2. Maybe do it together as a family to keep each other motivated and accountable.
3. Start small and get some quick wins, don't try to change everything all at once!