



COMMUNITY
RULE OF LIFE

winter
Advent
Christmas
Epiphany

What is a Rule of Life?

A rule of life is a set of Spirit-empowered practices that help disciples abide in Jesus more deeply (John 15). For a given time, we commit to these core practices, perhaps lived out individually, but experienced within a body of Christ that is pursuing them together. Our goal is to find a deeper sense of unity, joy, and flourishing in Jesus.

A rule of life helps us to live into healthy spiritual rhythms.

We mark time with practices and “signposts” that remind us who God is and who we are in him. This guide introduces some ancient seasonal, monthly, weekly, and daily rhythms observed by our spiritual mothers and fathers that can deeply enrich our life in Christ.

The suggested disciplines and readings are not tasks to slave over or items to check off a list. Rather, they are offered like a trellis for cultivating a vine, a structure that invites you to start where you are, and do what you can, to enjoy the fruit and beauty that come. Hear them as an invitation, not a command. We encourage you to invite a group of trusted friends to journey with you, not just for accountability, but for deepening joy in Jesus together.

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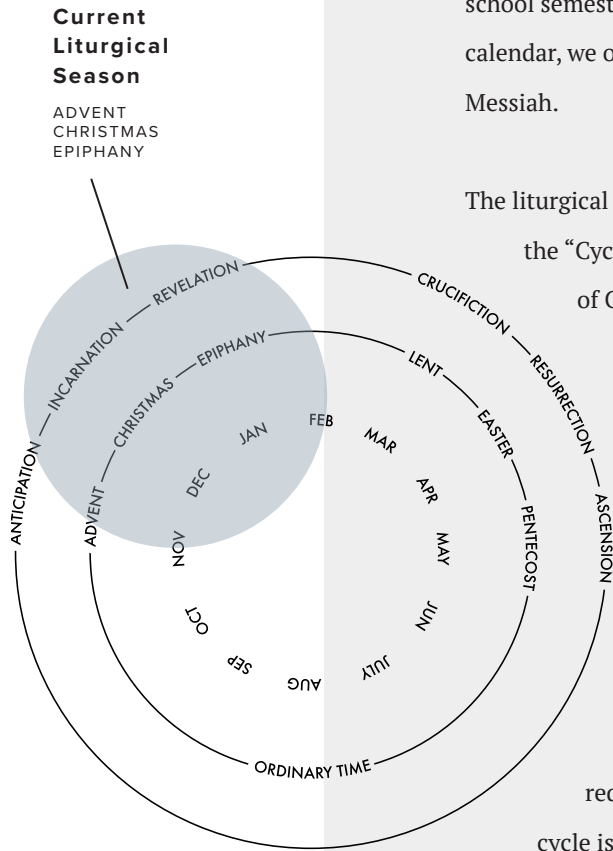
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Invitation to Seasonal Rhythms

Ordering Our Time by the Story of the Messiah

The “liturgical calendar” is a way to learn and live out the story of Jesus through the year. Instead of structuring our lives according to the rhythms of school semesters, fiscal years, or even the normal calendar, we order our time by the story of the Messiah.

The liturgical year is made up of two cycles of time: the “Cycle of Light,” focusing on the light of Christ breaking into our darkness (the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany); and the “Cycle of Life,” focusing on the death and resurrection of Jesus bringing life to the world (the seasons of Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). We could also add a third cycle, the “Cycle of Love,” focusing on our Spirit-empowered living out of God’s redeeming love for the world. Usually, this cycle is simply called “Ordinary Time.”



The Cycles of Light and Life are what we call “Extraordinary Time.” They help us live in the real world with our identities rooted in the story of Jesus. Each cycle walks us through seasons of expectation, fulfillment, and proclamation that shape how we live:

EXPECTATION	> FULFILLMENT	> PROCLAMATION
<p>Advent ANTICIPATION</p> <p>Waiting in the dark for the Messiah’s coming</p>	<p>Christmas INCARNATION</p> <p>Rejoicing in the Messiah’s arrival, the light of the world</p>	<p>Epiphany REVELATION</p> <p>Revealing the light of the Messiah to the world</p>
<p>Lent CRUCIFIXION</p> <p>Walking with the Messiah through suffering & death</p>	<p>Easter RESURRECTION</p> <p>Rising with the Messiah in resurrection life & victory</p>	<p>Pentecost ASCENSION</p> <p>Revealing the Messiah’s reign through a Spirit-empowered life</p>

Current Liturgical Season

The liturgical season covered by this edition of the Community Rule of Life is the latter part of Ordinary Time. Each liturgical season invites us to different priorities and practices. After Pentecost, we are invited into the rhythms of Ordinary Time, when the Holy Spirit guides the ebb and flow of our work and rest, our love of neighbor and self, and our service to the church and the world.

(You can learn more about the liturgical calendar through books like Living the Christian Year by Bobby Gross.)

Invitations to Monthly & Weekly Rhythms

Monthly Rhythms



SIMPLICITY & GENEROSITY

The Cycle of Light (Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) is particularly suited to the twin practices of Simplicity & Generosity. A key theme of Advent is repentance, heard in John the Baptist's message, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near." Repentance invites us to practices of restraint, especially in our doing and our buying, so that we can give more freely and lovingly to others. Likewise, in both Christmas and Epiphany, we're invited to give generously out of what we have first received. We train our attention on the beautiful mystery of the incarnation, the gift of God's own Son, which leads us to become little "incarnations" ourselves. As faith simplifies the priorities and practices of our lives, we become the generosity of God to the world, sharing his love and speaking his good news.

This Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, what might it look like for you to practice intentional Simplicity and Generosity? What events or activities might you say "no" to in order to be more fully present to a few? How might your spending habits change to give more freely to others? What burdens can realistically be laid down so that you're freed for more generous compassion toward others?

Weekly Rhythms



FASTING

Abstain from lunch one day a week, if you are able. Don't just work through lunch or fill the time. Take the opportunity to pray (alone or with others), or to spend time in solitude and silence. If fasting from food isn't possible, what other good thing could you refrain from for a short time, in order to become more aware of your desire for God?



SABBATH

Sabbath is a time to stop, rest, delight, and worship the Lord. We invite everyone to take a block of time, ideally 24 hours, to set aside work, technology, and other distractions to focus on relationship with God and others. You could observe the usual Sunday Sabbath of Christians, the traditional Jewish Sabbath from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, or a timeframe that works for your season of life and your household.

To learn more about the why, what, and how of these historic Christian practices, check out our practice guides and other resources at somamidthtown.com/spiritual-formation.



Invitations to Daily Rhythms

We invite you to four key disciplines that form the backbone of a daily spiritual rhythm. These are often practiced in solitude, but strengthened by a supporting community.

SILENCE

Get in a comfortable but alert posture. Practice two minutes of silence & stillness to become aware of the Lord's presence and love for you. Inhale and exhale deeply, noticing what's going on in your body. Set your restful attention on God by repeating a short centering prayer like "Come, Holy Spirit," or "Here I am, Lord," or simply "Jesus."

SELF-EXAMINATION

Ask God to search you (Ps. 139) as you mentally review the day you're beginning (or ending, if you do this at night). Where were you most aware of God's presence? When did you experience the most joy or fullness of life? Where did it feel like God was absent? When were you the most drained? Bring those things to God in prayer.

SCRIPTURE

Ask God to speak to you in his Word by the Holy Spirit. Read your selected text without rushing, taking note of what jumps out at you or stirs within you. (Reading guides are offered on the following pages.)

PRAYER

Speak or write a short prayer, responding to what God has been revealing. You could use the "ACTS" model: adoration of God; confession of sin; thanksgiving; and supplication (requests for needs). Close with the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13).

Reading Calendar

To engage in a daily rhythm of reading Scripture, set aside even 10-15 minutes of prayerful, reflective Scripture reading. (Choose a time you'll realistically keep!) Two different reading plans are offered below. While both are beneficial, choosing one might be best.

THE LECTIONARY CYCLE (YEAR B)

"Short Text" Plan

Shorter passages of Scripture are ideal for contemplative reading. We can slow down and be present to God in his Word, not just learn about him. This short text plan follows the Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year reading cycle used by Christians around the world, in sync with the liturgical year. Instead of reading new long passages each day, we stay with a few short passages for a week at a time, starting on Sunday. (Some liturgical days may use different passages than the Sunday readings.)

Reading Calendar

“Short Text” Plan

Lectio divina is an ancient approach to Bible reading that helps us read contemplatively. We read a short passage slowly several times, learning to recognize and respond to God’s voice to us in particular. This can be practiced individually or in a group. There are four “movements” to *lectio divina*:

01 : READ

After beginning with a few moments of silence, read the text slowly. Listen for a word or phrase that seems to stand out to you or to hold a special weight. Don’t try to interpret it. Simply notice what God is drawing your attention to.

02 : REFLECT

Read the passage a second time slowly, tuning in to what that word or phrase is doing inside you. What emotions do you feel? How are your desires or imagination stirred? Don’t rush to the next step. Allow yourself to notice what the Scriptures are prompting inside you.

03 : RESPOND

Read the passage a third time slowly, letting the word or phrase become a prayer that you lift up to God in response. Is there an invitation or challenge to accept? Is there grief to lament? Is it leading you to praise God? To confess sin? To intercede for someone or request something?

04 : REST

Read the passage a final time slowly, not to produce anything, but simply to rest in God’s presence with what he has said to you. This rest is the foundation of how you’ll carry God’s Word out into the world.

DATE	SUNDAY	PSALM	OT (or Acts)	EPISTLE	GOSPEL	PLAN WEEK
12/3	ADVENT I	80:1-7, 17-19	ISA. 64:1-9	1 COR. 1:3-9	MK. 13:24-37	1
12/10	ADVENT II	85: 1-2, 8-13	ISA. 40:1-11	2 PET. 3:8-15A	MK. 1:1-8	2
12/17	ADVENT III	126	ISA. 61:1-4, 8-11	1 TH. 5:16-24	JN. 1:6-8, 19-28	3
12/24	ADVENT IV / CHRISTMAS EVE	89:1-4, 19-26	2 SAM. 7:1-11, 16	ROM. 16:25-27	LK. 1:26-38	4
12/25	CHRISTMAS DAY	96	ISA. 9:2-7	TIT. 2:11-14	LK. 2:1-20	
12/31	CHRISTMAS II	148	ISA. 61:10 - 62:3	GAL. 4:4-7	LK. 2:22-40	5
1/6	EPIPHANY	721-7, 10-14	ISA. 60:1-6	EPH. 3:1-12	MT. 2:1-12	
1/7	BAPTISM OF THE LORD	29	GEN. 1:1-5	ACTS 19:1-7	MK. 1:4-11	6
1/14	EPIPHANY II	138:1-6, 13-18	1 SAM. 3:1-10	1 COR. 6:12-20	JN. 1:43-51	7
1/21	EPIPHANY III	62:5-12	JON. 3:1-5, 10	1 COR. 7:29-31	MK. 1:14-20	8
1/28	EPIPHANY IV	111	DT. 18:15-20	1 COR. 8:1-13	MK. 1:21-28	9
2/4	EPIPHANY V	147:1-11, 20C	ISA. 40:21-31	1 COR. 9:16-23	MK. 1:29-39	10
2/11	TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY	50:1-6	2 KGS. 2:1-12	2 COR. 4:3-6	MK. 9:2-9	11

The standard lectionary contains many more readings for certain days, as well as each day of Easter week. For a complete listing, see the lectionary in the Book of Common Prayer at bcponline.org.

THROUGH THE BIBLE

“Long Text” Plan

Longer chunks of Scripture can be good for understanding books or sections of the Bible as a whole, possibly in more of a “study” mode. This long text plan will take you through the Psalms every 60 days, the OT every two years, and the NT every year. Even though the passages are long, don’t read them simply for information. The Lord wants to meet you in these pages. Listen for his specific invitations for you to know and follow him in faith.

Video overviews of each biblical book can be found at thebibleproject.com.

Reading Calendar

“Long Text” Plan

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
SUN 12/3	68	GENESIS 50	
MON 12/4	69	EXODUS 1	ACTS 21
TUES 12/5	66, 70, 72	EXODUS 2	ACTS 22
WED 12/6	71, 73	EXODUS 3	ACTS 23
THURS 12/7	74-76	EXODUS 4	ACTS 24
FRI 12/8	77, 79, 82	EXODUS 5	ACTS 25
SAT 12/9	78:1-39	EXODUS 6	
SUN 12/10	78:40-72, 80	EXODUS 7	
MON 12/11	81, 83	EXODUS 8	ACTS 26
TUES 12/12	84-85	EXODUS 9	ACTS 27
WED 12/13	86-88	EXODUS 10	ACTS 28
THURS 12/14	89	EXODUS 11	ROMANS 1
FRI 12/15	90-91	EXODUS 12	ROMANS 2
SAT 12/16	92-94	EXODUS 13	
SUN 12/17	95-98	EXODUS 14	
MON 12/18	99-102	EXODUS 15	ROMANS 3
TUES 12/19	103-104	EXODUS 16	ROMANS 4
WED 12/20	105	EXODUS 17	ROMANS 5
THURS 12/21	106	EXODUS 18	ROMANS 6
FRI 12/22	107	EXODUS 19	ROMANS 7
SAT 12/23	108-110	EXODUS 20	

Week One

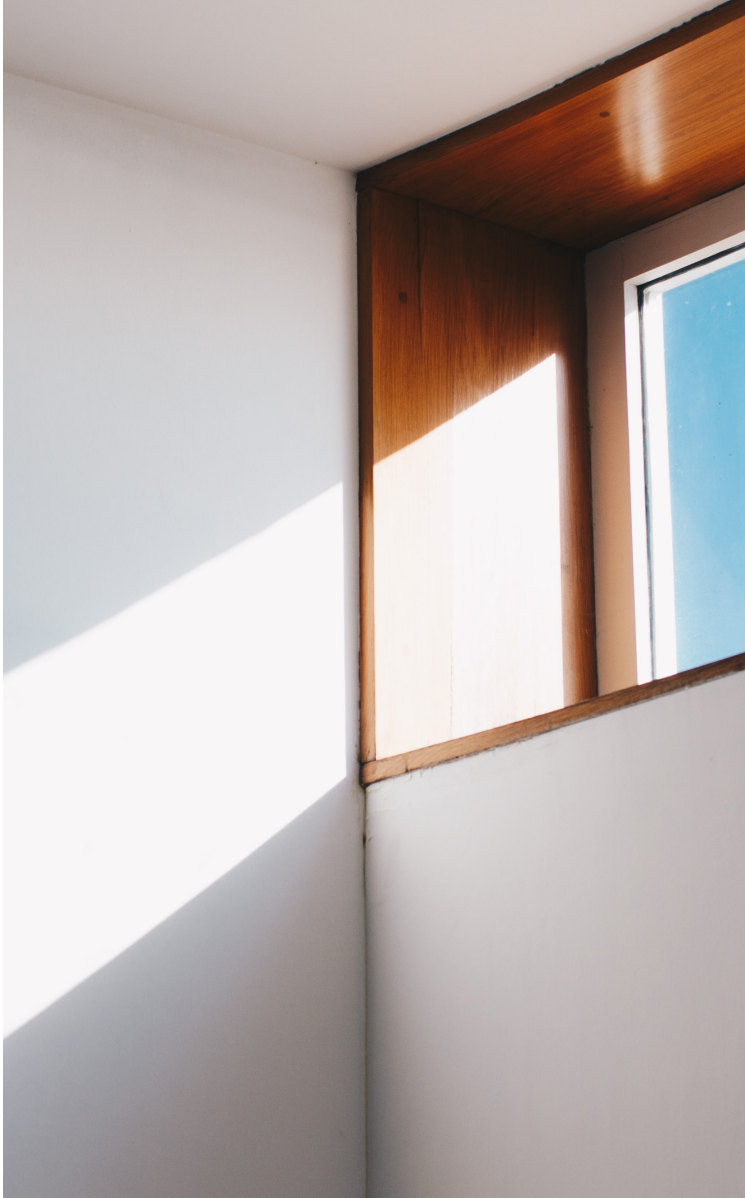
Week Two

Week Three

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
SUN 12/24	111-114	EXODUS 21	
MON 12/25	115-117	EXODUS 22	ROMANS 8
TUES 12/26	119:1-48	EXODUS 23	ROMANS 9
WED 12/27	119:49-88	EXODUS 24	ROMANS 10
THURS 12/28	119:89-128	EXODUS 25	ROMANS 11
FRI 12/29	119:129-176	EXODUS 26	ROMANS 12
SAT 12/30	118, 120-121	EXODUS 27	
SUN 12/31	122-126	EXODUS 28	
MON 1/1	127-131	EXODUS 29	ROMANS 13
TUES 1/2	132-135	EXODUS 30	ROMANS 14
WED 1/3	136-138	EXODUS 31	ROMANS 15
THURS 1/4	139, 141-142	EXODUS 32	ROMANS 16
FRI 1/5	140, 143	EXODUS 33	1 CORINTHIANS 1
SAT 1/6	144-145	EXODUS 34	
SUN 1/7	146-147	EXODUS 35	
MON 1/8	148-150	EXODUS 36	1 CORINTHIANS 2
TUES 1/9	2-4	EXODUS 37	1 CORINTHIANS 3
WED 1/10	1, 15, 34	EXODUS 38	1 CORINTHIANS 4
THURS 1/11	5-7	EXODUS 39	1 CORINTHIANS 5
FRI 1/12	9-10	EXODUS 40	1 CORINTHIANS 6
SAT 1/13	8, 11, 15, 16	LEVITICUS 1	
SUN 1/14	12-14, 17	LEVITICUS 2	
MON 1/15	18	LEVITICUS 3	1 CORINTHIANS 7
TUES 1/16	20-22	LEVITICUS 4	1 CORINTHIANS 8
WED 1/17	19, 23, 25	LEVITICUS 5	1 CORINTHIANS 9
THURS 1/18	24, 26-27	LEVITICUS 6	1 CORINTHIANS 10
FRI 1/19	28-29, 31	LEVITICUS 7	1 CORINTHIANS 11
SAT 1/20	30, 32-33	LEVITICUS 8	

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
SUN 1/21	34-35	LEVITICUS 9	
MON 1/22	36-38	LEVITICUS 10	1 CORINTHIANS 12
TUES 1/23	37	LEVITICUS 11	1 CORINTHIANS 13
WED 1/24	39-41	LEVITICUS 12	1 CORINTHIANS 14
THURS 1/25	42-44	LEVITICUS 13	1 CORINTHIANS 15
FRI 1/26	45-46	LEVITICUS 14	1 CORINTHIANS 16
SAT 1/27	47-49	LEVITICUS 15	
SUN 1/28	50-51	LEVITICUS 16	
MON 1/29	52-55	LEVITICUS 17	2 CORINTHIANS 1
TUES 1/30	56-58, 60	LEVITICUS 18	2 CORINTHIANS 2
WED 1/31	59, 63-64	LEVITICUS 19	2 CORINTHIANS 3
THURS 2/1	61-62, 65, 67	LEVITICUS 20	2 CORINTHIANS 4
FRI 2/2	68	LEVITICUS 21	2 CORINTHIANS 5
SAT 2/3	69	LEVITICUS 22	
SUN 2/4	66, 70, 72	LEVITICUS 23	
MON 2/5	71, 73	LEVITICUS 24	2 CORINTHIANS 6
TUES 2/6	74-76	LEVITICUS 25	2 CORINTHIANS 7
WED 2/7	77, 79, 82	LEVITICUS 26	2 CORINTHIANS 8
THURS 2/8	78:1-39	LEVITICUS 27	2 CORINTHIANS 9
FRI 2/9	78:40-72, 80	NUMBERS 1	2 CORINTHIANS 10
SAT 2/10	81, 83	NUMBERS 2	
SUN 2/11	84-85	NUMBERS 3	
MON 2/12	86-88	NUMBERS 4	2 CORINTHIANS 11
TUES 2/13	89	NUMBERS 5	2 CORINTHIANS 12





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SOMA MIDTOWN 2023**