

2022

ADVENT  
WINTER

rule  
of  
life

SOMA MIDTOWN

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## INTRODUCTION

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.

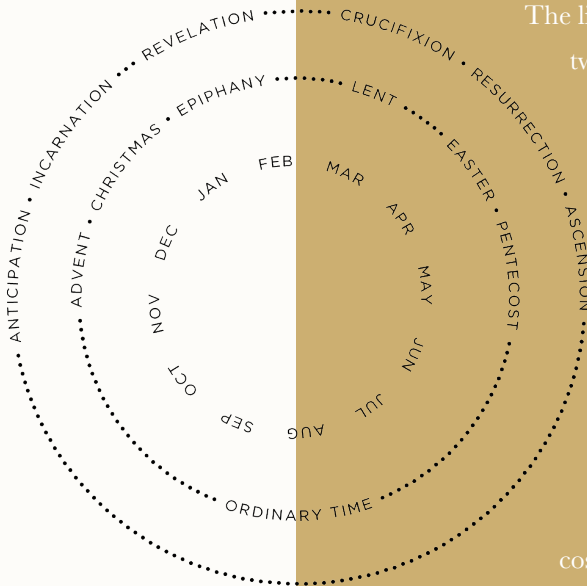
The suggested disciplines and readings are not tasks to slave over or items to check off a list. Rather, they are offered like a trellis for cultivating a vine, a structure that invites you to start where you are, and do what you can, to enjoy the fruit and beauty that come. Hear them as an invitation, 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.

# INVITATION TO SEASONAL RHYTHMS:

ORDERING OUR TIME BY  
THE STORY OF THE MESSIAH

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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:



The liturgical seasons with which this Community Rule of Life overlaps are Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Each season invites us to different priorities and practices. Advent invites us to an attitude of repentance and a posture of expectant longing; we confess our sin, and we groan with all creation in awaiting the renewal of all things. Christmas invites us to embrace a joyful hope in God’s faithfulness to his promises, so we practice self-giving love toward others. And Epiphany invites us to encounter Jesus by seeking him with all our heart and to exhibit Jesus in our acts of love.

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



## INVITATIONS TO WEEKLY & MONTHLY RHYTHMS

### MONTHLY RHYTHMS

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#### CONFESSION

In reality, confession and repentance are things we're called to daily. But these twin practices, and their consummation in joyful gratitude for God's forgiveness, play a special role in Advent spirituality.

Advent is a season of expectation as we wait for the Lord's coming. We remember Israel's centuries of groaning for the Messiah to come. We look ahead in hope for his promised return. And in the present, we watch for his drawing near in the circumstances of our lives. In all this waiting, John the Baptist's message is the theme of Advent: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... Prepare the way for the Lord" (Mt. 3:1-2). This is a preparation of our hearts for the Lord's arrival: recognizing our sin, and turning back to God in the assurance of his forgiveness.

This Advent, we're invited together into a regular practice of confession. While you might do this individually and silently before God, how could you practice it corporately? We encourage you to engage in the Sunday liturgy of confession with renewed purpose. Consider asking a close friend if they'd be willing to hear your confession on a regular basis, also offering you the Lord's assurance of pardon. (Perhaps they'll invite you to do the same.) As we experience freedom that comes through confession, repentance, and forgiveness, we'll learn to trust the goodness and love of God even more – preparing the way of the Lord in our hearts and in the world.

## WEEKLY RHYTHMS

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### 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. Typically, Sabbath is practiced from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.

*To learn more about the why, what, and how of these historic Christian practices, check out our practice guides and other resources at [www.somamidtown.com/spiritual-formation](http://www.somamidtown.com/spiritual-formation).*

## 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.



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## 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."

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## 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.)

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## 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.

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## 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 SCHEDULE

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 in the following pages. While both are beneficial, choosing one might be best. The "short text" plan focuses on four shorter passages each week, thematically tied to the liturgical year, and is ideal for slower contemplative reading. The "long text" plan invites you to read bigger chunks of Scripture to cover more ground and to gain an expansive view of God's Word. A balanced diet of both kinds of reading is good for our spiritual health.

## “SHORT TEXT” PLAN: THE LECTIONARY CYCLE (YEAR C)

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.)

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 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.

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### 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?

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### 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
11/27/22	Advent I	122	Isa. 2:1-5	Rom. 13:11-14	Mt. 24:36-44
12/4/22	Advent II	72:1-7, 18-19	Isa. 11:1-10	Rom. 15:4-13	Mt. 3:1-12
12/11/22	Advent III	146:4-9	Isa. 35:1-10	Jas. 5:7-10	Mt. 11:2-11
12/18/22	Advent IV	80:1-7, 16-18	Isa. 7:10-16	Rom. 1:1-7	Mt. 1:18-25
12/25/22	Christmas Day	96	Isa. 9:2-7	Heb. 1:1-4	Lk. 2:1-20
1/1/23	Holy Name of Jesus	147	Isa. 61:10 - 62:3	Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-7	Jn. 1:1-18
1/8/23	Baptism of the Lord	29	Isa. 42:1-9	Acts. 10:34-43	Mt. 3:13-17
1/15/23	Epiphany II	40:1-12	Isa. 49:1-7	1 Cor. 1:1-9	Jn. 1:29-42
1/22/23	Epiphany III	27:1, 5-13	Isa. 9:1-4	1 Cor. 1:10-18	Mt. 4:12-23
1/29/23	Epiphany IV	15	Mic. 6:1-8	1 Cor. 1:18-31	Mt. 5:1-12
2/5/23	Epiphany V	112	Isa. 58:1-12	1 Cor. 2:1-12	Mt. 5:13-20
2/12/23	Epiphany VI	119:1-8	Dt. 30:15-20	1 Cor. 3:1-9	Mt. 5:21-37
2/19/23	Transfiguration Sunday	Ps. 2	Ex. 24:12-18	2 Pet. 1:16-21	Mt. 17:1-9

## “LONG TEXT” PLAN: THROUGH THE BIBLE

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](http://thebibleproject.com).

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
11/27/22	66, 70, 72	Job 29	
11/28/22	71, 73	Job 30	Romans 6
11/29/22	74-76	Job 31	Romans 7
11/30/22	77, 79, 82	Job 32	Romans 8
12/1/22	78:1-39	Job 33	Romans 9
12/2/22	78:40-72, 80	Job 34	Romans 10
12/3/22	81, 83	Job 35	
12/4/22	84-85	Job 36	
12/5/22	86-88	Job 37	Romans 11
12/6/22	89	Job 38	Romans 12
12/7/22	90-91	Job 39	Romans 13
12/8/22	92-94	Job 40	Romans 14
12/9/22	95-98	Job 41	Romans 15

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
12/10/22	99-102	Job 42	
12/11/22	103-104	Proverbs 1	
12/12/22	105	Proverbs 2	Romans 16
12/13/22	106	Proverbs 3	1 Corinthians 1
12/14/22	107	Proverbs 4	1 Corinthians 2
12/15/22	108-110	Proverbs 5	1 Corinthians 3
12/16/22	111-114	Proverbs 6	1 Corinthians 4
12/17/22	115-117	Proverbs 7	
12/18/22	119:1-48	Proverbs 8	
12/19/22	119:49-88	Proverbs 9	1 Corinthians 5
12/20/22	119:89-128	Proverbs 10	1 Corinthians 6
12/21/22	119:129-176	Proverbs 11	1 Corinthians 7
12/22/22	118, 120-121	Proverbs 12	1 Corinthians 8
12/23/22	122-126	Proverbs 13	1 Corinthians 9
12/24/22	127-131	Proverbs 14	
12/25/22	132-135	Proverbs 15	
12/26/22	136-138	Proverbs 16	1 Corinthians 10
12/27/22	139, 141-142	Proverbs 17	1 Corinthians 11
12/28/22	140, 143	Proverbs 18	1 Corinthians 12
12/29/22	144-145	Proverbs 19	1 Corinthians 13
12/30/22	146-147	Proverbs 20	1 Corinthians 14
12/31/22	148-150	Proverbs 21	

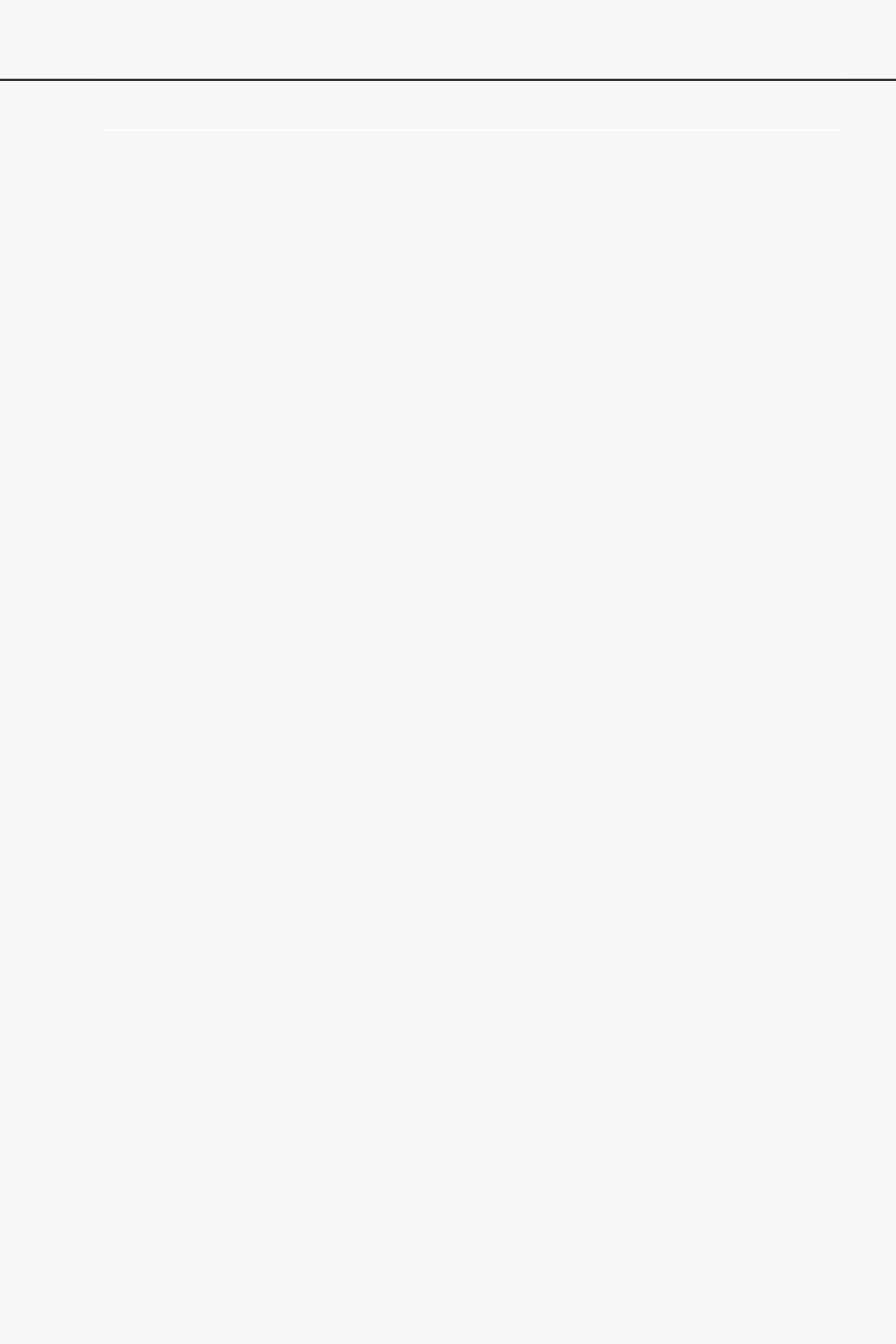
DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
1/1/23	2-4	Proverbs 22	
1/2/23	1, 15, 34	Proverbs 23	1 Corinthians 15
1/3/23	5-7	Proverbs 24	1 Corinthians 16
1/4/23	9-10	Proverbs 25	2 Corinthians 1
1/5/23	8, 11, 15, 16	Proverbs 26	2 Corinthians 2
1/6/23	12-14, 17	Proverbs 27	2 Corinthians 3
1/7/23	18	Proverbs 28	
1/8/23	20-22	Proverbs 29	
1/9/23	19, 23, 25	Proverbs 30	2 Corinthians 4
1/10/23	24, 26-27	Proverbs 31	2 Corinthians 5
1/11/23	28-29, 31	Ecclesiastes 1	2 Corinthians 6
1/12/23	30, 32-33	Ecclesiastes 2	2 Corinthians 7
1/13/23	34-35	Ecclesiastes 3	2 Corinthians 8
1/14/23	36-38	Ecclesiastes 4	
1/15/23	37	Ecclesiastes 5	
1/16/23	39-41	Ecclesiastes 6	2 Corinthians 9
1/17/23	42-44	Ecclesiastes 7	2 Corinthians 10
1/18/23	45-46	Ecclesiastes 8	2 Corinthians 11
1/19/23	47-49	Ecclesiastes 9	2 Corinthians 12
1/20/23	50-51	Ecclesiastes 10	2 Corinthians 13
1/21/23	52-55	Ecclesiastes 11	
1/22/23	56-58, 60	Ecclesiastes 12	

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
1/23/23	59, 63-64	Song 1	Galatians 1
1/24/23	61-62, 65, 67	Song 2	Galatians 2
1/25/23	68	Song 3	Galatians 3
1/26/23	69	Song 4	Galatians 4
1/27/23	66, 70, 72	Song 5	Galatians 5
1/28/23	71, 73	Song 6	
1/29/23	74-76	Song 7	
1/30/23	77, 79, 82	Song 8	Galatians 6
1/31/23	78:1-39	Isaiah 1	Ephesians 1
2/1/23	78:40-72, 80	Isaiah 2	Ephesians 2
2/2/23	81, 83	Isaiah 3	Ephesians 3
2/3/23	84-85	Isaiah 4	Ephesians 4
2/4/23	86-88	Isaiah 5	
2/5/23	89	Isaiah 6	
2/6/23	90-91	Isaiah 7	Ephesians 5
2/7/23	92-94	Isaiah 8	Ephesians 6
2/8/23	95-98	Isaiah 9	Philippians 1
2/9/23	99-102	Isaiah 10	Philippians 2
2/10/23	103-104	Isaiah 11	Philippians 3
2/11/23	105	Isaiah 12	
2/12/23	106	Isaiah 13	
2/13/23	107	Isaiah 14	Philippians 4



DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
2/14/23	108-110	Isaiah 15	Colossians 1
2/15/23	111-114	Isaiah 16	Colossians 2
2/16/23	115-117	Isaiah 17	Colossians 3
2/17/23	119:1-48	Isaiah 18	Colossians 4
2/18/23	119:49-88	Isaiah 19	
2/19/23	119:89-128	Isaiah 20	
2/20/23	119:129-176	Isaiah 21	1 Thessalonians 1
2/21/23	118, 120-121	Isaiah 22	1 Thessalonians 2







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