

EXPLORE “PREQUEL” | Living with a “Rule of Life” | Week -1 | January 6, 2019

John 10:10, Phil 3:12-16

Opening: Over the coming months we will explore some of the deep questions of faith, inviting others to experience the hospitality and grace of community with us, while addressing those questions. This week, perhaps as a “prequel” to that, we consider the tradition of this particular season—*RESOLUTIONS!*

Context: St. Benedict (circa 500 AD) wrote a discourse with the broad intent of "arming oneself with the strong and noble weapons of obedience". We can also draw on a contemporary source, David Brooks, who has defined character as “a long obedience in the same direction” (or was that Nietzsche?). Discipline, consistency, endurance are all admirable traits; particularly as we pursue a difficult challenge. But do we think of OBEDIENCE in those terms? Obedience to who, or to what? And if the “what” is a rule, or a system of rules, we say “NO!”, that’s legalistic or that’s un-American. *How do you respond to the phrase “Rule of Life”?*

Resolutions: *What resolutions did you make this year? Why did you make them? We talked last week about journaling ways to seek the PRESENCE in the days ahead—were you able to do that? What ways did you come up with?*

Physical and Spiritual: Humans thrive with structure. Job definitions, roles, objectives, accountabilities—these are all ways that help us successfully define our actions and responsibilities. *Choose an example in your life and talk about what success looks like. How is it measured?*

Many times, there are quantitative (or physical) outcomes that we use to define success—profit, sales volume, % correct answers, # who attended... What is the spiritual analogue? *How can we measure our spiritual “success” or “growth”?*

Creating a Trellis for growth: Pastor Eric Camfield spoke of the trellis that his Grandfather used to train the grapevines in his backyard. Think of an experience in your life where a structure, a guide, a set of rules was applied consistently. *What was the result? How did you experience it as it happened? How do you regard it now?*

A “Rule of Life”: John 10:10 speaks of “abundant life”. A rule of life seeks to help you escape the “tyranny of the immediate” so that you can aim actions at what you value, “abundant life”, instead of just doing what must get done. We need help keeping this straight. *What’s your response to this idea so far? What are you open to? What are you skeptical of? Be honest with each other.*

The pursuit of Character and Value: Read Phil 3:12-16. Character and values cannot be objectively measured or quantitatively defined—they are inferred by the actions we take and the life we live. Paul calls it our goal, our upward call. It is our process of discipleship leading to God’s transformation within us. *What can you do to “aim” your life at actions of character? What “long obedience in the same direction” is God opening up to you? What ways is God asking you to “press on”?*

A format: The book referenced below shows the following categories to consider. There is no “right” way to do this. It is a prayerful activity leading to a structure (a rule) that will help you take the next step in your discipleship, whatever that might be. Consider these areas:

- Time: the scarce resource of life; rhythms, priorities and routines (habits in the good sense), spiritual practices, scripture reading, prayer
- Trust: the relational “who”; who do you seek out and initiate with, who do you give yourself to, what intentionality is called for in each case
- Temple: the physical; body (diet, exercise, rest), mind (education, new ideas), heart & soul (emotions, stress, perspective)
- Treasure: fiscal responsibility (debt, budget, awareness), generosity
- Talent: vocational attitude, talents to give, talents to learn

As you look at this what comes up in you? Is there something that comes to mind that you believe you could do and are willing to commit to try? Share it with the group.

Practice of the Week: Write the First Draft

Often, the most important line of a book or a paper is the first line. It means the page is started. Consider your schedule (time) and ask God what He wants to re-prioritize. Maybe it’s time in the morning for prayer and reflection before the day starts, or maybe it’s getting home for dinner together. Write down three practical things that come to mind. Can you do them? Are you willing to do them? Write down how you feel about it. Do it for a month and re-visit.

Family Formation: Starting a New Year

Talk about the New Year and the sense of “re-start” that many people feel. Ask the kids if they feel it at school. What do they want to be different this year vs. last year? What needs to happen for that to occur? What is their part in the change they want to see? Teach them: “Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today.”⁽¹⁾

Additional Resources: [Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way](#)

by Steve Macchia

We’d love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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⁽¹⁾ [Twelve Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos](#) by Jordan B. Peterson