

G.O.S.P.E.L.

RULE OF LIFE



What is a Rule of Life?

Pete Scazzero: "A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do."

Why Rule of Life?

What is the **G.O.S.P.E.L.** Rule of Life?

The **G.O.S.P.E.L.** acronym reminds us that we are to always remember and rejoice in the gospel as we:

- G - Give Blessing
- O - Open in Community
- S - Sabbath
- P - Pray
- E - Engage in God's Mission
- L - Listen to God's Word

(P)ray: The Practice of Prayer and Abiding

Our Culture's Rule of Life: The Practice of Self-Reliance and Self-Focus

What The Gospel Brings About: The Gospel frees us from our preoccupation with self, enabling us to meaningfully engage God and abide in His presence.

(P)RAY

1. What does prayer look like for you?

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2. Why is prayer so challenging and difficult?

"Many people struggle to learn how to pray because they are focusing on praying, not on God."

- Paul Miller

(P)RAY: The Practice of Prayer and Abiding (Pages 10-11 in your Booklet)

1. Understanding Prayer
2. The Dynamics of Prayer
3. The Practice of Prayer: Embrace and Resist

(P)RAY: The Practice of Prayer and Abiding (Pages 10-11 in your Booklet)

1. Understanding Prayer

Westminster Shorter Catechism #98:

Q: What is Prayer?

A: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

Psalm 62:8: Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

1 John 5:14: And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

"True prayer is bound up with a persuasion of our inability and complete dependence on God."

- Iain Murray

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Ephesians 3:11-12: This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

"God not only has spoken clearly and powerfully to us through Christ and the Scriptures. He also has a Very Large Ear continuously open to us. He will hear every prayer of his children, even when our prayers are weaker than a snowflake."

- Donald Whitney

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Psalms 32:5-6: I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

"When you remember your sins, you learn humility, love Jesus, and make much of the gospel."

- Joe Thorn

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

Psalm 103:1-5: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Takeaways (1 of 3):

1. Prayer is an invitation to intimacy with God. (Father/Child - "Our Father in Heaven...")

God invites broken sinners into intimate relationship with Him. Only the cross makes prayer possible. Through Jesus, we experience the forgiveness and the welcoming embrace of God as a Father to His beloved child. We call out to him, "Abba", "Daddy".

Brennan Manning: *"Is your own personal prayer life characterized by the simplicity, childlike candor, boundless trust, and easy familiarity of a little one crawling up in Daddy's lap? An assured knowing that the daddy doesn't care if the child falls asleep, starts playing with toys, or even starts chatting with little friends, because the daddy knows the child (is with him) for that moment? Is that the spirit of your interior prayer life?"*

Key Point:

If our prayers are separated from the intimate, relational reality we have with God in Christ, then we will treat prayer as a transactional experience.

Takeaways (2 of 3):

2. Be watchful of the mindset that prayer is all about "experiencing God", which can ironically make prayer all about YOU and not God!

Paul Miller: *Deep in our psyches we want an experience with God or an experience in prayer. Once we make that our quest, we lose God. You don't experience God, you get to know him. You submit to him. You enjoy him. He is, after all, a person. Consequently, a praying life isn't something you accomplish in a year. It is a journey of a lifetime. The same is true of learning how to love your spouse or a good friend. You never stop learning this side of heaven."*

Before moving on to the final takeaway:

a. Prayer simply as a means to “experience” God will make you frustrated with your prayer life. It will make you think that your prayers are “not effective” because you did not have a “powerful praying moment”, or a “mountain top spiritual experience.”

Before moving on to the final takeaway:

b. Consider the Psalms which is a book of Prayer! In the psalms, we see that prayer includes all the language of the soul - from shouting, to groaning, to speaking, to silence; from excitement, to confession, to fatigue, to anger, to lament, to indifference.

Takeaways (3 of 3):

3. Prayer is a means of grace where we remember and receive God's love so as to live out of His love, not legalism.

Apart from the gospel, everyone (religious or irreligious) naturally defaults to a “prayer liturgy of legalism.”

Justin Earley: *“Every day of my life, I have woken with a kind of prayer. Depending on my stage of life, however, my prayers have been of radically different kinds. In high school, it was, ‘Oh why, oh why, does first period start so early?’ In college, my prayers became inarticulate groans. Something like, ‘Oh please let it not matter that I’m missing that class.’ ...*

In my recent life, these have made up my Book of Common Groans:

*‘I really should have gone to bed earlier.’
‘I really should have woken earlier.’
‘What the (insert choice expletive) are the boys doing up so early?’
‘Why am I always so tired?’
‘I seriously- seriously this time- have got to get that project done today.’
‘I shouldn’t have watched that.’*

This is all to say that for my whole life, my day has begun with a profound sense of wishing something was different. Usually it revolves around what I’ve done or what I need to do. In this way, every day begins in a sort of prayer, no matter how articulate. When I wake up thinking of what I’ve done, I often feel guilt over the day before. When I wake up thinking about what I need to do, I often feel anxiety over the day to come. Notice that in all these cases, my sense of things hangs on my performance. For most of my life, I’ve been framing the day with a sense of what you may call legalism. ...

Legalism is the belief that the world hangs on what I do and that God and people love me based on how I perform...Legalism seems to be the default setting for human beings. So we will always wake up to some kind of prayer that makes the world about us – unless we create new habits of gospel prayers. These are prayers that make the world less about us and more about the love of God for us.”

- Justin Earley

(P)RAY: The Practice of Prayer and Abiding
(Pages 10-11 in your Booklet)

1. Understanding Prayer
2. The Dynamics of Prayer

The Dynamics of Prayer

- 1) Talking **TO** God (Psalm 17:6, Philippians 4:6)

Talking **TO** God (Not Ourselves)

Psalm 17:6: I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words.

Philippians 4:6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Stormie Omartian:

“Talking to God should be part of every aspect of life, in times of peace as well as in every battle.”

The Dynamics of Prayer

- 1) Talking **TO** God
- 2) Talking **WITH** God (Psalm 27:8, Exodus 33:11)

Talking WITH God (From Monologue to Dialogue)

Psalm 27:8: "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming'"

Exodus 33:11: "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend."

The Dynamics of Prayer

- 1) Talking **TO** God
- 2) Talking **WITH** God
- 3) **LISTENING** to God (Psalm 62:1, 1 Samuel 3:9)

LISTENING to God (Removing Distractions to Hear from God)

Psalm 62:1: For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.

1 Samuel 3:9: Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Dynamics of Prayer

- 1) Talking **TO** God
- 2) Talking **WITH** God
- 3) **LISTENING** to God
- 4) **BEING** with God (Psalm 27:4)

BEING with God (From Conversation to Communion with God)

Psalm 27:4: One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

"Abba Father, I'm looking at you, and you're looking at me, and my heart is happy."

- Drawn from Anthony Bloom (Bishop in the Russian Orthodox Church)

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The Practice of Prayer: Embrace and Resist

1. **Daily Embracing:** Frame your morning in LOVE not LEGALISM.

Justin Earley (How morning prayer is a keystone gospel habit): *"A keystone habit is a super-habit. It's the first domino in the line; by changing one habit, we simultaneously change ten other habits. Beginning the day in prayer is such a keystone habit. In morning prayer, we frame the first words of the day in God's love for us, which is to say we uproot the weeds of legalism that grow if we simply do nothing, and we lay the first piece of the day's trellis on which love can grow."*

The Practice of Prayer:

1. Daily Embracing: Frame your morning in LOVE not LEGALISM.
2. **Daily Resisting:** PRAYER and SCRIPTURE before PHONE.

Justin Earley: *"Our phones...are happy to set our habits for us. They would love to speak the first words of the day, and they usually do. Our phones – and whatever has come through them – thus shape the first desires of the morning and order our first prayers before us."*

The Practice of Prayer:

1. Daily Embracing: Frame your morning in LOVE not LEGALISM.
2. Daily Resisting: PRAYER and SCRIPTURE before PHONE.
3. **Weekly Embracing and Resisting:** Prayer and Fasting (Talking to God, Talking with God, Listening to God, Being with God)



Wrapping up:

“Abba Father, I’m looking at you, and you’re looking at me, and my heart is happy.”