

FAITH @ HOME

Way of Love

Week 1: What is a Rule of Life?

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Mark 12:30-31

REFLECT: There are so many rules in your life and different places have different sets of rules. Maybe you are allowed to eat pop tarts for breakfast at grandma's house, but not at your house. Maybe you get to sleep with mom and dad when you are at a hotel but when you are at home, you sleep in your own bed. Different places and people have different rules. Sometimes it is really hard to keep them all straight. Jesus teaches us rules, too.

But this rule is the same wherever we go: "love your neighbor as yourself". This can be a hard rule to follow sometimes. It is about how we treat each other with kindness. This way of life is always with us no matter where we are. You can add other rules too. Maybe you try to be kind and a good listener wherever you are. Perhaps there are certain things you do every day that makes you feel closer to God. Maybe you pray before bed or before dinner. Maybe you play outside as much as you can to be with God's creation. Maybe you go to Sunday school to learn the stories of God's people. All of these things can help you feel close to God every day.

RESPOND: Make a kindness jar. Place an empty jar of container on the table. Then, at the end of the day, talk about where you saw kindness that day. Adults can focus on where they saw the child being kind, towards themselves, siblings and friends. Add a small token to the jar for every kind act. This can be a decorated piece of paper, a Lego, a stone, or anything you have an abundance of.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served Episcopal parish communities in a variety of Christian Formation roles. As a gifted Godly Play storyteller and youth mentor, Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development not only in the classroom, but also in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. Hannah has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor for 4 years, and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. She is recognized for her innovated use of social media to integrate liturgical seasons, parish programs, music, faith at home activities and outreach. In addition to the spiritual formation of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 4:18-22

REFLECT: Jesus was a rabbi, or a leader and teacher within the Jewish tradition. To become a rabbi, students had to go to school for years, reading and studying the Torah, or Jewish Scriptures. They also had to spend time in prayer to God, and try as hard as they could to live and become like the rabbis that came before them. If the students were good enough, they would become disciples and follow in the footsteps of their rabbi, and they would learn to become leaders and guardians of the faith.

As we read in the passage from Matthew, Jesus called ordinary people to follow him. These people weren't good enough to become disciples in the traditional way, so they returned to their families to learn the family trade. Jesus, however, called them anyway. He brought a new way of love that was for all people, not just those who were smart enough or good enough in the temple. He believed that they could learn to go forth into the world with the loving, liberating, and life-giving news of the Gospel, and as we learn more about The Way of Love, we will be reminded that we can go share God's love, too!

RESPOND: A Rule of Life is a set of practices that help us live a life more like Jesus every day. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry introduced The Way of Love as a suggested rule of life for Episcopalians to adopt and follow. Through it, we are called to turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest. Take a few minutes with your family to watch The Way of Love introduction, narrated by Presiding Bishop Curry. Which part or parts of this new Rule of Life stand out to you? Which do you already do? How? The Way of Love introduction video is found here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her ministry focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Psalm 19:7-14

REFLECT: This week we are looking at the spiritual practice of creating a rule of life. As a past summer camp director, I love rules. I believe that rules give us a framework to share what our values are as a community or as an individual. They help us to live into our call as Christians to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. However, I realize that I am outside of the norm for my love of rules, because in many cases rules are used to keep people in line or to create division. These are not the kind of rules we are talking about when creating a rule of life.

The rule of life we create can be made with Psalm 19:14 in mind. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you." We need to integrate our inner thoughts to our outer deeds, and ensure that our posture in the world is something God sees and smiles. We can take our hopes and dreams for the world, our deepest passions, and create a structure to give guidance in how to achieve those desires.

RESPOND: *"I can't stand....so I stand for."* Discuss something in this world that you cannot stand. Your answer may vary from an -ism, such as racism or sexism; to interpersonal conflicts you don't like; or ways that you might not be respecting the dignity of every human being. Then take this thing that you cannot stand, and turn it into a value statement, something that you stand for. For example, "I cannot stand people feeling alone and isolated due to their mental illness, so I stand for educating and advocating for people who experience a mental illness." This can be done once, twice, or however many times you feel until you think you have addressed those big things that bother you. These can be a first step in creating a rule of life, so that you can define the people that you are for, rather than the people you are against. Write them down on a notecard and keep them with you as a reminder of the way you want to love those around you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MEREDITH ROGERS



Meredith serves as the Director of Youth Ministries at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas. She is a strong advocate of mental health in ministry and the benefits youth can gain from a summer camping or retreat program. While she feels incredibly underqualified to be a writer on behalf of Forma & Faith @ Home, Meredith trusts that her voice might be one that you need to hear and knows your voice is one that the world needs to hear.

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Week 1: What is a Rule of Life?

ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Romans 12:1-21

REFLECT: Why do you need a Rule of Life? It doesn't sound very exciting – in fact, it sounds like a list of rules to follow. We already have lots of rules in our lives, why should we sit down and create more? Thankfully, that's not what a Rule of Life is. A Rule is a way for us to identify a path that we want to follow as individuals, and the Rule provides us support as we walk in our way so that if we get lost, turned around, or detoured, we have a route to follow to get us back on our path. You are in control of your Rule, and you invite God, Jesus, and Spirit into your Rule for insight and guidance. Who do you want to be? A Rule of Life can help you be your best self.

As we practice the Way of Love, a Rule of Life offers the necessary support for success. When I considered Bishop Curry's call to seven daily practices, I felt overwhelmed. Do I need a checklist to make sure I'm doing each one every day? How can I truly keep track and achieve everything else I need to do? I began to see how important a Rule can be to help me identify the areas I need to watch versus the ones that I have a handle on.

The best news is that you already have everything you need in our heart to get started, and the rest is a click away on the Way of Love website. As you consider creating your Rule of Life, ask God to open your heart so that you can hear the Spirit within whisper the song of your soul that plays within you. As you hear your heart melody, know that while it is your unique song, you are never alone on your journey following Jesus.

RESPOND: Download the Rule of Life document created by the Brothers of SSJE. (You can find it at <http://bit.ly/living-intentionally>.) Schedule some time – an hour or two, as a start – to read and respond to the questions in the booklet. Take as much time as you need to answer the questions as you begin to create your Rule of Life.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MIRIAM MCKENNEY



Miriam is a child of God who finds extreme joy parenting her three girls: Nia, Kaia, and Jaiya. She met her husband, David, at the Union of Black Episcopalians conference in 1981. Miriam works as Forward Movement's Development Director, and writes for their family blog, Grow Christians. She was a children's librarian and school media specialist for 20 years before joining Forward Movement's staff. She has recently discovered a love of outdoor fitness in extreme temperatures, as there is no bad weather, just incorrect clothing choices.

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