

This week we have an idea from Andy.  
Something for us to be working on during this weird time!  
And then a bit of background information.

### **A Rule of Life – not as scary as you might think!**

One of the best pieces of advice I heard at the beginning of lockdown was, “Keep a routine going.” Purely in the interests of scientific research, you will understand, I experimented for a while with not keeping to my normal routine – getting up and going to bed at different times, not keeping to normal mealtimes, and so on. The results were startling! After only a few days I found my energy levels much reduced, and, just as importantly, my mood suffered as a result. I learned my lesson: discipline is vital for wellbeing!

As in the physical and mental spheres, so in the spiritual. Talk of “Spiritual Discipline” may all sound rather formal and forbidding; but can we really expect to grow and flourish in this central dimension of our lives without some basic structures and routines to give shape to our practice?

“Discipline” can have rather negative connotations, but used wisely, they can be life-giving and refreshing. I learned many years ago from Richard Foster’s seminal book *A Celebration of Discipline* that spiritual disciplines are all about putting yourself intentionally and repeatedly in the place where God’s grace can get to work in your life.

Why am I telling you all this? Because I believe there has never been a better opportunity for many of us to review our spiritual practices, and perhaps inject a little bit of much-needed discipline. That may be something as simple as taking a specific time to pray each day, or to read from the Bible. But if you are yearning for something a bit more chunky to get your teeth into, can I commend to you a workbook available online from the Society of St John the Evangelist. It’s called *Living Intentionally - A Workbook for Creating a Personal Rule of Life*, by David Vryhof. (A Rule is

really just a set of practices and attitudes that you intend to build into your daily life.)

Here is the link:

<https://www.ssje.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Living-Intentionally.pdf>

It’s about 20 pages long, but much of that is blank space for you to write your own thoughts and responses. It is a workbook – it requires you to do something (the clue is in the name) – but it is far from intimidating.

In fact, I like it so much that I am using it myself as a tool for reflection. You have my permission to challenge me at any time on how it’s going!”



St Benedict

The Rule of St. Benedict is a timeless document - in so many ways as fresh and relevant as it was when it was written almost fifteen hundred years ago. Although written for monastics, many of the issues addressed in the Rule can be applied to life in the world outside the monastic community. The qualities which make up a valued life - humility, patience, simplicity, solitude, caring for others, and living in community - concern everyone. These specifics of the Rule, and the framework it provides, have great meaning for people who are seeking to live out their faith in the world today.

The Rule of Benedict (RB) constitutes a basic guide for living the Christian life and continues to be followed by every Benedictine monastery and convent in the world today. Just the idea that a guide for living could not only last 1500 years, but continue to be followed by thousands of people makes its study valuable for monks and nuns as well as laypeople.

<http://www.benedictfriend.org/the-rule.html>

Some quotes from The Rule of St Benedict ...

"To you therefore, my words are now addressed, whoever you are, that renouncing your own will, you take up the strong and bright weapons of obedience, in order to fight for the Lord Christ, our true King." (RB Prologue 3-7)

"Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else" (RB 4:20-21).

"Place your hope in God. Attribute any good that you see in yourself to God and not to yourself; but recognize and always impute to yourself the evil that you do" (RB 4:41 - 43).

" Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ ..." (RB 72 11)

"Listen and attend with the ear of your heart."

"Let us take part in the psalmody in such a way that our mind may be in harmony with our voice."



Richard Foster is a Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition. His writings speak to a broad Christian audience. Born in 1942 in New Mexico, Foster has been a professor at Friends University and pastor of Evangelical Friends churches. Foster resides in Denver, Colorado.

Google

Quotes from ... Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth

"God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us."

" From the Westminster Catechism ... The chief end and duty of man is to love God and to enjoy him for ever."

"Leo Tolstoy observes, "Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself."

"Cause every task of your day to be a sacred ministry to the Lord, however mundane your duties, for you they are a sacrament."

"If the Lord is to be *Lord*, worship must have priority in our lives. ... Service flows out of worship ... One grave temptation we all face is to run around answering calls to service without ministering to the Lord himself."

I'm really sorry ... I'm usually good about saying exactly where I find stuff in case you want to read more, but I lost track with the quotes.  
Some of them are from goodreads, some from other websites and some I looked up in the books and then forgot to write down the page number.  
And I'm not sure which were which! Sorry!