

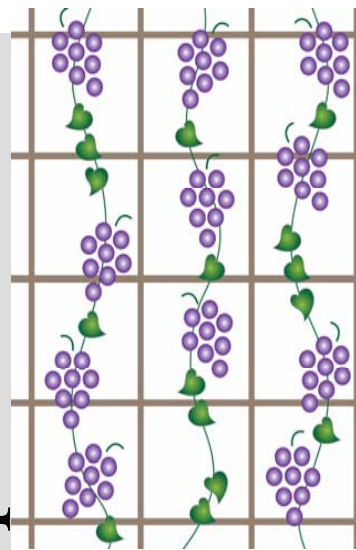
- **Live in truth, asking the hard questions.** John 8:31-32, 44. We ask the hard questions about truth to ourselves first, not depending on others to do it for us. Following Jesus' example—full of grace and truth—we recognize the kingdom of God can only come through truth in love, not pretense, spin, or exaggeration.
- **Bridge racial, cultural, economic and gender barriers for Christ.** Galatians 3:28; Eph.2:11-22. In our community, we recognize the power of the blood of Jesus to dissolve the divisions of race, culture, social class and gender in order to create a new family under His Lordship. We no longer regard anyone from a worldly point of view (2 Cor.5:16). Rather we see people through the gospel where there is no longer anyone who is inferior or superior.

Work/Activity

- **Point others to a deep, personal relationship with Jesus.** Matthew 28:18-20; Gal.4:19. The coming of Jesus is the greatest news in the universe, the longing of every human heart. Our aim is to make Christ known, both inside and outside His church, leading people to a life of loving union with the Lord Jesus Himself.
- **Savor the sacred in all I do—at work, rest or play.** Eph. 6:5-8; I Tim. 4:3-4. The word savor carries the notion of pausing to taste the deliciousness of our work, rest and play. It is the God-like celebration of delighting over His creation, exclaiming that it is "very good".
- **Remember the poor and marginalized.** Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27. Valuing those the world forgets is essential to kingdom living. God remembered the Israelites in their groaning and suffering while in Egypt. His heart is with the poor, the orphans and the widows in a unique way since they cannot speak for or defend themselves. Our aim is a pure heart that reflects the compassion of God, expressed in concrete actions.
- **Share my gifts, talents and resources, in and beyond our community.** Matthew 25:14-30; Ephesians 4:7-13. Jesus transforms our views of possessions, goals, and time. In an age marked by fear, selfishness and greed, we choose to give freely of our time, energy, and resources to others, trusting God to take care of our needs.

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New Life Fellowship 2008



NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP **RULE** *of* **Life**

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Introduction

At New Life we are exploring an ancient practice used by communities of Christians for almost 2000 years called a *Rule of Life*. The meaning of *Rule* comes from the Greek word for "trellis." A trellis is a tool designed to enable a grapevine to get off the ground and grow upward, becoming more fruitful and productive. In the same way, a *Rule of Life* can be the trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful spiritually.

A *Rule of Life*, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do. It provides guidelines to help us intentionally pay attention and remember Him.

The purpose of this *Rule* is to unite us as a local church in our intention to follow Christ, keeping us faithful to our unique grace and calling. This *Rule* serves as an anchor for us, a kind of banister to support us as we move forward in our journey with and for God. It is how we do life together, expressing the longings of our heart for God.

It is meant to be a framework for freedom, providing healthy boundaries while leaving plenty of room for flexibility and individuality. Remember, a good *Rule* works best when it challenges us. A *Rule* cannot be so easy that we are not stretched. At the same time, it cannot be so demanding that we are overwhelmed and discouraged.

This text is meant to be read slowly and reflectively as a devotional and spiritual formation guide that expresses the kind of people we seek to be for Christ in New York City in the 21st century.

Prayer

- **Be a lover of God, seeking to live in the love of Christ above all else.** *Psalm 27:1-4; Matthew 22:36-38. Deut.6:4-9* Jesus identified loving God as the greatest commandment, a summation of all Scripture. We want to be a people who know God in our experience (heart and soul) as well as with our minds.
- **Befriend silence.** *Ps. 37:7; 1Kings19:11-13;Ps.62:1-2.* Our tendency is to fear and avoid silence, not befriend it. Yet silence is one of God's great gifts, especially in our noisy culture. What makes our silence unique is its quality of being "before the Lord."
- **Allow Holy Scripture to shape and form Christ in me.** *2 Tim. 3:16-7; Ps.19:7-11;Matt.4:4.* We love the Word of God, affirming that maturing in Christ requires a life where we read, memorize, meditate, enjoy, study, and obey Scripture. Our focus is that Christ be formed in us, not simply the accumulation of more information about him.
- **Integrate contemplative practices and rhythms (e.g. Daily Office, Sabbath-keeping) to slow down my life.** *Luke 5:15-16; Ps.119:164; Deut.5:12-15.* A great problem in Western culture today is our crammed schedules, endless to-do lists, and general busyness. Powerful, often demonic forces, keep us distracted and adrift spiritually. We affirm God's call to order our entire lives in such a way that the love of Christ comes before all else. Recognizing our humanity and our limits, we choose to observe contemplative practices in order to slow down to be with God, ourselves, and others.

Rest

- **Value my own dignity as a human being made in God's image through self-respect and self-care.** *Genesis 1:27, Luke15:17-24, Galatians4:4-7.* An accurate, whole grasp of the gospel leads us to an acceptance of ourselves that enables us to love others well. We are image-bearers of God; there is no greater compliment that could be given regarding our value and worth. According to the gospel, we are no longer slaves or orphans, but adopted sons and daughters. Jesus took our sin record, taking our death on the cross. At the same time, we are legally declared righteous in Christ and treated as if our record were perfect before God.
- **Ruthlessly eliminate hurry.** *Luke10:38-42;Ps.46:10;Prov.19:2,22:3.* The word ruthlessly was chosen intentionally because that is what it takes to eliminate hurry from our lives. It captures one of the great challenges before us as we seek to live authentic spiritual lives in our 24/7, multi-tasking world.

- **Remember God's history of faithfulness with each new challenge.** *Exodus 14:10-14; 1 Samuel 17:34-37.* We each face "Goliaths" and "Red Seas" during our lives as we journey with Christ. God invites us to remember His powerful acts through history and the specific ways He has delivered us from the "lion and the bear" (as with David). Forgetting leads to unbelief while remembering fills us with courage to follow Him wherever He leads.
- **Receive God's limits as a gift.** *Matt. 4:1-11; John 3:27; Eccles. 3:1-8.* God is God; we are not. God is perfect; we are not. While our culture resists the idea of limits, we embrace them. Limits are gifts and expressions of God's love and goodness to us. We recognize them as a friend, keeping us grounded so that we don't hurt ourselves, others, or God's work.

Relationships

- **Love my neighbor as I love myself—embracing my singleness as I bond with others, or in marriage, giving first priority to my spouse and children.** *Genesis 2:24-5; 1 Cor. 7:25-38.* We recognize both marriage and singleness as vocations in God's kingdom, with deep significance for our walk with Christ. For those married, bonding with and serving our spouse comes before all else but Christ. For those single, we affirm our call to be the bride of Christ, bond in healthy ways to others, and serve as mothers and fathers who bear fruit for Christ.
- **Walk in community while respecting each person's uniqueness.** *1 Cor.12:17-31; Hebrews 10:24-5; Prov. 27:17.* We place a high value on community, walking out our faith together as a local church family. At the same time, we affirm the biblical emphasis on the uniqueness of each person's individuality, gifts, and calling.
- **Apply emotionally healthy practices in order to love well.** *1 Cor.13:1-3; Luke 10:25-37.* Jesus made it clear that the second greatest commandment is to love others. Part of our discipleship includes learning new skills—peaking, listening, clarifying assumptions and expectations, and clean fighting, among others. These "practices" are easy to learn but difficult to implement consistently, especially under stress.
- **Listen more than I speak.** *Proverbs 18:7-8; James 1:19, 26; James 3:1-12.* Scripture is clear that we are to be slow to speak and quick to listen; real maturity is reflected in our ability to control our speech. James states that if we are able to manage our tongues, we will be able to keep all our unhealthy passions in check.