

john 15:4
Abide in ME



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

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The week of January 6, 2019

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*
Strategies for the New Year
1 John 2:24-29

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Skip Resolutions in 2019—Make a Rule of Life¹

by Jeremy Linneman

I used to love making New Year's resolutions—in fact, I loved making them far more than I enjoyed keeping them. But about eight years ago, I was introduced to the old tradition of creating a Rule of Life, and since then, it has proved to be a much better use of time and energy. A Rule of Life contains spiritual, relational, and vocational rhythms needed to sustain the life in Christ we've been called to, and it doesn't change much year in and year out. For anyone who is unfamiliar with the Rule or hasn't created one, January 1 provides the perfect time to establish your own Rule of Life. This year, skip resolutions—make a Rule of Life instead.

Why Create a Rule of Life?

Every Christian has a well-established pattern of living, whether it's an intentionally developed set of commitments or an unstated set of values and practices, like praying before meals and going to church twice a month. But many of us aren't as deliberate with our spiritual development as we are with our time and priority management at work, and our lives and relationships suffer as a result.

Amid our busy schedules, we're constantly juggling relationships and responsibilities and often feel like we're dropping more balls than we're keeping in the air. When we lack a consistent and thoughtful way of doing life well, we will end up distracted and overwhelmed by life, and our spiritual and emotional growth will plateau. Few of us want to take this approach to life, but it just seems to happen. We wind up:

- *Scattered*: Our schedule is full but doesn't reflect our purpose and priorities.
- *Hurried*: We're busier than we want to be, but don't know what to change.
- *Reactive*: It seems we're never in charge, always responding to demands.
- *Exhausted*: We end each day weary and discouraged, unsure if we've spent it well.

My experience as a pastor has shown me that many of my friends and church members aren't undone by poor theology or a lack of biblical information. ***Instead, we often fail to grow spiritually because we haven't planned and made space for a deep, abiding fellowship with God*** (bold italics added).

The lack of spiritual planning may be rooted in a lukewarm heart toward Christ, but at other times, we genuinely want to go deeper with God but don't know how to make time and space to simply be with him and gain spiritual strength for each day's challenges.

What Is a Rule of Life?

A Rule of Life is “an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do. . . . The starting point and foundation of any Rule is a desire to be with God and to love him” (Scazzero, p. 196). The Rule is a way to “begin with the end in mind”—to envision a sustainable, thriving walk with the Lord, in his Word, in prayer, in community, in our family, and in our work, then work backward to a set of commitments. It’s not about detailed to-do lists that must be maintained. A Rule of Life instead gives you the opportunity to prayerfully discern what roles and responsibilities the Lord has given you, and to organize your life in the manner most conducive to spiritual growth and depth in him.

The Rule of Life has a rich history in Christian Tradition. The Rule has been traced back to the early monastic movement in the fourth century, and the most well-known Rule was written by Benedict in the sixth century. The Rule of Saint Benedict has influenced Eastern and Western Christians for roughly 1,500 years, and many Reformers and evangelical patriarchs have practiced similar spiritual routines without the title. Lately, many Christian traditions have returned to the Rule as an antidote to our Western culture’s lonely and fragmented lives.

Five Basic Elements of a Rule

When helping others create a Rule of Life, I suggest five basic elements: Relationship with God, Personal Life/Health, Relationships, Church, and Work. The goal of life is to dwell in deep communion with Christ and to be firmly anchored in our union with him. But how and when and where we practice these blessed realities will depend greatly on many factors, including our life stage, work, and physical capacity. If you have multiple jobs or small children, your Rule should reflect those responsibilities. Here are a few subcategories, and you’ll certainly want to prayerfully think of your own components.

Relationship with God

- Scripture reading
- Prayer
- Silence and solitude
- Study and reflection

Personal Life/Health

- Sleep
- Rest and Sabbath
- Physical health and fitness
- Recreation and hobbies
- Money and possessions

Relationships

- Friendships
- Neighbors and coworkers
- Marriage
- Children and parenting
- Extended family

Church

- Participation and worship
- Friendships and community
- Service and mission
- Generosity

Work

- Calling/vocation
- Current position and responsibilities
- Workplace relationships
- Education, personal development, and coaching

In each of these five areas of life, I write out one key verse, a vision statement, and four to eight commitments. For example, under Personal Life/Health, I might write:

Verse: “Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life” (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Vision: I am a human being, created in the image of God, with limits and needs; I am a steward of the health and life God has given me, and I honor him by refreshing myself spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Commitments:

- I sleep an average of eight hours every night (9:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m.).
- I work no more than 50 hours weekly, including only two evenings each week.
- I exercise five days each week (Mon—Fri from 4 to 5 p.m.).
- I review our expenses each Friday and discuss our finances with my wife at the end of each month.
- I reflect on my past week and plan the week ahead each Sunday (1 to 3 p.m.).

How to Create Your First Rule of Life

When writing a rule of life for the first time, I recommend a certain way of doing things.

1. Plan Ahead. Ideally, set aside an entire eight- to ten-hour day to focus entirely on writing a Rule of Life. The best thing you can do right now, if you're interested in writing a Rule, is to get out your calendar and pick an entire day away for this. If you're married, coordinate with your spouse to trade off days away.

2. Get Away. My family has a small cabin in the woods about an hour away—one of the benefits of moving back home. When I lived in Louisville, I'd spend a day at the nearby Abbey of Gethsemane. You could also spend the day at a public library or park, or even at home if it's not too distracting. Go somewhere life-giving!

3. Be Prepared. I suggest taking with you only a Bible and a blank notebook. Don't bring your laptop or smartphone. Type up your notes later and resist listening to music, if possible.

4. Start with God's Word. Consider spending the first few hours of your day simply reading through passages of Scripture that help quiet and center your heart. When re-writing or reviewing my own Rule, I usually read a few dozen Psalms and pick another book of the Bible to read in its entirety. Also, take some time to pick a key verse for each of your five main categories. You're not in a hurry!

5. Pray through Your Five Areas. Prayerfully reflect on the five main areas of your life, and you may get a good sense of which area to focus your attention. I have found it easy to ignore the area of my life that needs the most attention. Often, our family finances are the last thing I want to spend time thinking and praying about, but it's an area where my heart is easily moved to sin, and I need to practice regular submission to God with our money and possessions.

6. Write Out Your Commitments. There is a big difference between goals and commitments. A goal is something you want to achieve, such as running a marathon. A commitment is a rhythm of life that puts you in a place to get there, such as running four miles five days a week. Goals are overrated; commitments are underrated. When your retreat day is complete, and you are back in the world of technology, translate each of your commitments into your calendar.

¹For full article please see ... <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/skip-resolutions-make-rule-life/>

STEP ONE . . .

Observation

What does the text say?

1 John 2:24-29

²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. ²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

- Circle each time the word *abide(s)* occurs in this passage.
- Above the word *beginning* in verse 24 write the words: *when I believed*.
- In the left margin, next to verse 26, write: *Purpose for writing*.
- In the right margin, beside verse 27 write: *Anointing is essential for abiding*.
- Place brackets around the two benefits our anointing provides in verse 27.
- At the end of verse 27, write: *a command*.
- Underline and number the two incentives for having abided in Christ when He returns in verse 28.

STEP TWO . . .

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. The first strategy John urges us to embrace as our protection against falsehood is to hold onto the message we have heard from the beginning. It is a call to steadfastness through constant exposure to the truth. Some form of the word abide occurs six times in this passage. It's one of John's favorite terms [*menein*]. The Word abides in us and we abide in it. In either way, it is our faithfulness to the message that is intended.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. Here is the first benefit of abiding or remaining in the truth. Those who abide in God have God abiding in them. Those who abandon the foundation of their faith in the testimony of the Apostles have severed themselves from God.

25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. The second benefit of abiding is eternal life. The noun promise [*epangelia*] occurs 52 times in the NTR but only here in all of John's writings. Eternal life not only refers to the life of the age to come but the promise of eternal life to be enjoyed now. "If eternal life consists in the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, then it cannot be dissociated from the message which conveys that knowledge" (F.F. Bruce). A lot of people today think similarly to people of classical antiquity: We came into this world out of nothingness and will return to nothingness. For the Christian, there is hope now and for the infinite ages that lie ahead.

26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. One of John's main reasons for writing this letter is because there were those who were trying to confuse and subvert their faith.

27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. The greatest protection we have against deception is the anointing we have received from the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 2:20). This anointing enables us to discern truth from error.

John's statement that we do not need anyone to teach us is to be understood in context. Our anointing doesn't eliminate the need for teaching in the church. If we did not need further instruction than even John's letter itself is unnecessary.

But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. John assures his readers and us that the Spirit's anointing teaches them about all things. This anointing is sufficient and trustworthy (see 1 Corinthians 1:21). The phrase **abide in him** is a command. Nearly half of the imperatives John uses in this entire letter occur in verses 27-29. The second strategy John urges upon us is to live out the reality of abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ has three dimensions: doctrinal, relational, and ethical.

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. Once again, John calls his readers little children [*teknia*]. Immediately, John picks up the command at the end of verse 27 and repeats it: **abide in him**. Since he is addressing the entire church, the command to abide is both personal and corporate. As individual believers and as a believing community, we are to abide in Christ. Here, John also introduces a new thought: the incentive for abiding. This is the third strategy set down in this passage. Those who abide in Christ can look forward to His return with joy. This is the only place in John where the word *parousia* is used for Christ's appearing. Jesus appeared the first time to take away our sin. He will appear again to consummate our salvation.

29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. Between 2:29-5:21 John will use the phrase born of him [*gennao*] ten times. Those who abide in Christ have been born of God. Membership in God's family is recognized by family likeness. If anyone claims to be in God's family but doesn't practice righteousness cannot claim to be a family member.

Complementary Passage

~John 15:1-11~

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

Questions

1. *Icebreaker*: What fills you with hope as the new year has begun? What causes you to be anxious or even fearful?
2. In Sunday's message, Pastor Paul spoke of adopting three strategies for the new year. Take a moment to list and review all three.
3. The key word that occurs throughout this passage is *abide*. What does it mean to abide in Christ? Feel free to read the complementary passage this week in John 15:1-11.
4. One of the ways we abide is by continually being exposed to the truth (v. 24). Do you wonder if you have the ability to understand the Bible for yourself? How does understanding the anointing we have received from the Holy Spirit an incentive for you to read and study the Bible on your own? What is the place of teachers in the life of the church? (see verse 27).
5. What steps are you willing to take this year to ensure that you will fill your mind with God's Word? Why does this matter? What has caused this commitment in the past to break down for you? What will help in making a difference for sticking to it?
6. Abiding has not only a doctrinal component but also relational and ethical (moral) components. Review the article by Jeremy Linneman at the beginning of this edition of the *Abide*, especially the five elements or categories of a well-lived life. In what area(s) would you like to make progress this year?
7. The final strategy is to look with joy to the return of Christ. According to verse 28, what are the alternatives to looking at His return with joy?
8. Honestly, how much does the return of Christ effect your daily life and the choices you make? How can anticipating His return become a healthy pattern for you every day?
9. Review the application questions in the next section of this *Abide* and write down the ways God is impressing upon you to abide more deeply in Him this year?

STEP FOUR . . .

APPLYING

How is the text lived out?

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

A Prayer for the New Year

by Billy Graham

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future. We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love. In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need. In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost. And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end" (Psalm 119:33).

We pray for our nation and its leaders during these difficult times, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for Your protection on all those who serve in our armed forces, and we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also, and assure them of Your love and concern for them. Bring our divided nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come. Amen.

This prayer from Billy Graham, written for The Saturday Evening Post in 2008, is just as relevant today, more than a decade later.

A Bible Reading Plan for 2019

(on LCC website)

Sunday, January 6 thru Saturday, December 12, 2019
Genesis 18-20; Genesis 21-23; Genesis 24-26; Genesis 27-29;
Genesis 30-32; Genesis 33-35; Genesis 36-38

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

Memory Verse

~1 John 2:28~

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.