



Rhythm Church's Rule of Life

We believe that God calls us to commit ourselves not only to Christ, but also to a local expression of Christ's body, the church. Our community is one expression of the body of Christ in our city. When someone asks how they can "be a part of Rhythm," our first response is simply to say, Come have a seat at the table. We'd love for you to take part in everything we do. If you want in, you're in. However, if the question they're asking is "How do I commit myself to this community and its way of life?" - then we encourage them to consider taking on our Rule of Life.

In 2012 a group of about 20 leaders in Rhythm gathered to discuss and discern what it could mean for us to have a robust community life centered around Jesus. Rhythm chose to develop a Rule of Life to express the shape of our life together. We believe the church is not a club bound by exclusive membership - instead, it is a community in mission bound together by the good news of Jesus and his kingdom. We are to be "partners in the gospel" (Philippians 1:5), called to a shared life and a shared mission.

The Rule of Life is not a binding set of "rules", nor does it in any way create an exclusive club. Instead it is our attempt to articulate the core elements of following Jesus and growing together. Confirmed annually (and throughout the year for new friends joining us), it is a commitment to anchor one's life in the concrete practices of loving God and loving others (the rhythm of worship and mission), to follow Jesus Christ in the core issues of practical living (money, sex, power), and to do all of this together (not simply as individuals but as a community). This is a commitment of grace that we hope you will receive freely and joyfully. We've attached a Rule of Life guide which gives a fuller context and explanation, as well as a list of FAQs.

The Rule

- ✘ Because God is to be worshipped and treasured above all things, we commit to loving God in all aspects of our life, and pursuing Him individually and communally through spiritual practices and holy habits including prayer, scripture, and sabbath rest.
- ✘ Because God's desire is to bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we commit to being on mission with God through approaching our work in the world as sacred, loving and blessing our neighbors, and sharing the good news of the gospel with others.
- ✘ Because Jesus is Lord, we commit to following Him in all areas of life including our money, our sexuality, and our power, and to showing our city how money, sex, and power can be used in life-giving ways.
- ✘ Because the Trinity binds us together in community, we commit to doing life together, pursuing spiritual friendship with one another, and reconciling in a way that honors Christ and each other.



Rule of Life Guide

Below is a fuller explanation of the Rule of Life, along with descriptions of the basic practices and rhythms that we're committing to as a community. We've also listed the biblical passages that inform each of the four vows. This is meant to be a framework for freedom, providing healthy boundaries while leaving plenty of room for flexibility and individuality.

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(Psalm 29:2; Deuteronomy 8:1-3; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; Ephesians 5:19-20; Exodus 31:12-13)

Prayer. Prayer is our communication with God. That means it's the most important part of our life. We set aside time daily to meet with God in prayer and to dwell in His presence. We embrace many forms of prayer including spontaneous prayer, fixed-hour prayer (the Divine Hours), journaling, prayer walks, and centering prayer.

Scripture. God's Word is sweeter than honey and a lamp unto our feet. In other words, it is our food and primary means of revelation from Him. We spend time each day in Scripture, seeking God's face and listening to His voice. Maturing in Christ requires a life where we read, memorize, meditate, enjoy, study, and obey God's Word.

Sabbath. Each week we set aside a 24-hour period for sabbath rest, structuring our time around prayer and play. This is a day to slow down, contemplate God's goodness, and be reminded that God is the one who cares and provides for us. If our schedule allows, we practice this on Sundays so we can gather with others to be refreshed through worship and built up as the body of Christ.

✠ **Because God's desire is to bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we commit to being on mission with God through approaching our work in the world as sacred, loving and blessing our neighbors, and sharing the good news of the gospel with others.**

(Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:25-37; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 2:9; Jeremiah 29:7)

Work. We use our gifts and talents to build for God's kingdom, rather than just for our own personal advancement. We approach our work in the world as sacred, whether that is as a teacher, plumber, lawyer, retail worker, student, or stay-at-home parent. We seek to bring God glory in all that we do, not just in those things thought to be more "spiritual."

Bless. We look for tangible ways to love the people we come across in our day-to-day lives, and strive to bless at least one person's life (big or small) in any given 24-hour period of time. We do not gravitate only toward people who are attractive, connected, and powerful, but rather see people through the Gospel where every person is valued as someone created in the image of God and someone whom Christ Jesus died for.

Gospel. We point others to a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. The coming of Christ is both the culmination of Israel's story and the greatest news in the world. Our aim is to make this good news known, always with humility and love, in the places we live, work, and dwell. A couple of ways we're intentional about this is by weekly having a meal or coffee with at least one person outside of the faith and daily praying for our non-Christian friends.

✘ **Because Jesus is Lord, we commit to following Him in all areas of life including our money, our sexuality, and our power, and to showing our city how money, sex, and power can be used in life-giving ways.**

(Mark 10:6-12, 21-27, 42-44; Philippians 1:27; Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31)

Money. We manage our material resources in a manner that honors God (e.g. giving a percentage of our income to the mission and ministry of Rhythm, sharing with others who have needs, etc) and avoids the traps and enticements of Western culture (e.g. bad debt, conspicuous consumption, gambling, etc). We want our lifestyle to show that we serve God and not money.

Sexuality. We avoid both secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We pursue purity in our relationships and private life, and reserve sexual expression for the covenant relationship of marriage. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life patterns are different from ours.

Power. We are committed to power sharing and to dissolving the divisions of race, culture, social class, and gender among us. We see people as ends in themselves, never as means to ends. We go about our daily life remembering we are in Miami not to be served but to serve.

✘ **Because the Trinity binds us together in community, we commit to doing life together, pursuing spiritual friendship with one another, and reconciling in a way that honors Christ and each other.**

(Ephesians 4:2-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 4:32-35; James 5:16; Matthew 18:15; 1 Peter 4:9)

Togetherness. God intends for us to live deeply with one another, to not merely attend Rhythm but to belong. We do this by making room for each other in our lives and striving to walk together in intimacy and authenticity. Our goal is to see ourselves as a family, and to be connected in such a way that we feel the joys and sorrows of one another.

Friendship. We seek out a spiritual friend in the community that we can regularly share and pray with about the details of our life. This relationship is built on mutual encouragement, and we invite this person to hold us accountable to living the way of Jesus and give them permission to speak truth into our life. When we do this for them, we do it with lots of grace.

Reconcile. We resolve the inevitable relational conflicts that arise within community life in a way that honors Christ and one another. This involves listening well, clarifying assumptions and expectations, admitting our own brokenness, and moving toward forgiveness and reconciliation. Whether someone has wronged us or we've wronged them, we go to that person rather than going to others.



Rule of Life FAQ's

What exactly is a Rule of Life?

Following the example of many older Christian communities (particularly monastic ones), a Rule of Life is a set of shared affirmations and concrete practices that give tangible shape to the kind of life we will live together. This tradition goes back to early missionary communities like St. Patrick and the Celtic Christians, but was made famous by *The Rule of St. Benedict* around 529 A.D. Community members would first be initiated into the community through baptism and then would subscribe to a shared Rule of Life. Obviously Rhythm is not a monastery or a convent, but we do think there is something to this idea of a community committing themselves to a certain way of living together in a place.

Why a "Rule of Life" instead of membership?

From our experience, our ideas of "membership" are often weak and more like joining the country club or an online group than giving yourself to know and be known, to love and serve among a community of people. We're hoping that the language and concept of a Rule of Life will reshape our understanding of what it means to belong to a local church and share a common life. Like the early Christians in Acts 2:42-47, we desire to live the way of Jesus together, with all our mess and all our hope. We have a hunch that something like a Rule of Life has a better chance at helping us be that sort of community rather than merely an organization.

Will this create a "Varsity" and "JV" at Rhythm, where some are "better" or where there is a lot of emphasis on who is in and who is out?

There is no "in" or "out" at Rhythm. Our Rule of Life is not some guide for who's more spiritual and who's not, but rather a practicable means for people to commit themselves to one another and to pursuing a life centered around worship and mission (because, as we know, the things we leave entirely to good intentions rarely actually happen). Taking on this Rule of Life doesn't gain you power (it calls you to be a servant), and it certainly doesn't make you more spiritual. Rather, it is a way of practicing humility and submitting yourself to the shared life of the broader community.

What about the word rule - isn't that rigid and legalistic?

It can be, you're right. But we like to renew old words that have (for some) been misused and breathe new life into them. The word "rule" actually comes from the Latin word for "trellis." A trellis is a support structure that gives direction for something to grow. Think of this Rule of Life as a trellis that we use to give direction and focus to our lives so we can grow. It is not intended to be a legislative code, but a way of taking theories and putting them into action in the way we live and love. A Rule of Life is something like a solemn oath or vow, like ones we take at our wedding or, in the Bible, the promise that friends (like David and Jonathan) would make to one another - or that communities or individuals would make to God. This Rule of Life is our way of saying that the foundational realities of God's glory, God's kingdom, Christ's lordship, and the Trinity ought to rearrange our life rather than remain theoretical ideas.

What if this sounds heavy, and I'm not sure I can add a single more thing "to do"?

Maybe you don't need to take on this Rule – or maybe wait for another time. Or maybe dig into why it feels burdensome or why you're hesitant to commit yourself to a community. Talk it out with someone else to see if there couldn't be a way that this might be freeing and rich for you. If this whole thing strikes you as just more work or some added moralistic duty to add to your already overtaxed life, then don't do it. That's not the spirit or intention, and we applaud you for refusing to load yourself up with guilt or life-draining duty.

In all this, we've struggled with the tension of having this process seem burdensome or complex or (in reaction) acting as though joining a community really doesn't ask much of us. We're trying to restore some of the integrity of what it means to belong to a local church. We think the Gospel calls us out of ourselves and past our comfort zones. At the same time, God invites us to the "unforced rhythms of grace" (Matthew 11:30). That means our life in God should never be forced nor motivated by guilt, but instead led by the Spirit and saturated in God's grace.

It just seems like a lot.

At the core we are asking you to commit to following Jesus with Rhythm in some specific ways: (1) worshipping God through consistent and concrete practices (2) loving your neighbors in tangible ways (3) submitting yourself to Jesus' authority (4) and doing all this within the context of Christian community. These are core ideas to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Do I need to take on this Rule of Life to be a part of Rhythm?

No. If you want to be a part, you are a part. Our shared Rule of Life is for those who feel called to take a deeper level of commitment to our shared values and to putting these values into concrete practice alongside others in our community.

What if I'm a college student and will be away for the summer?

If you feel called to take our Rule of Life, then we want you to, even if you'll be away for the summer. Our community has people in all stages and seasons of life. So we want the Rule of Life to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their work or school situation. If you're a college student and will be gone for the summer (or have a job that requires a lot of travel), we hope the Rule of Life serves as a guide for faithful living while you're away. We also encourage you to find a local church there so you can continue to live the way of Jesus with others. Know that you have a community in Miami praying for you while you're gone and waiting to welcome you when you return.

Do I need to be baptized before I take on the Rule of Life?

Baptism is a rite of passage that we cherish because not only is it a way of “going public” with your faith, it’s also the way we initiate new followers of Christ into our family. So it would be a bit out of order for someone to take on our Rule of Life (which is a firm commitment to our community’s way of life) if they have not yet been initiated into the Christian family by baptism. However, we think these things can happen together. If you desire to take on the Rule of Life and have never been baptized, we encourage you to do both. Come talk to Matt or one of our Guidance Team members about how this can happen. We’ll walk with you every step of the way.

Why is this something we renew every year?

Renewing the Rule of Life annually gives us an opportunity to reflect on how we’re doing with living out the commitments we’ve made to God, one another, and our city. It also allows us to pray about, think through, and consider what we’re committing ourselves to for the next year. In short, renewing this every year helps us to take it seriously.

What’s the process for committing to the Rule of Life?

Each year our community publicly affirms and commits to the Rule at the beginning of the fall. This year, we will publicly take on the Rule on Sunday, September 17, 2017 as part of our weekly worship gathering. If you will be reaffirming the Rule or taking it on for the first time, please email Chelsea (info@rhythmmiami.com) so we have your information. You will receive more information about affirming the Rule in our worship gathering soon.

If you begin participating in Rhythm later in the year and are interesting in taking the Rule, we see that happening through a progression of relationships that looks something like this:

- Hang around us a bit, get to know us - and see if who we are resonates with you
- Participate in one of our Supper Clubs or Community Groups, seeing how we do life together
- Enjoy a round of meals and stories with other folks already part of Rhythm
- Affirm your faith in Jesus and commitment to following Him by being baptized if you have not done so before
- Take on the Rule of Life at the next Agape Meal, which happens each semester

At any point in this process our group leaders (Supper Clubs and Community Groups), members of the Guidance Team, and staff are available for conversation and to help you discern.

What if I’m not ready to take on this Rule right now?

No problem. Come be part of us. Roll up your sleeves and join in wherever you want. And if at some point along the way you want to reconsider taking the Rule, let us know because we would love to have that conversation with you.