

During the Quarter

A Rule of Life: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation

We are blessed with inner rhythms that tell us where we are, and where we are going. No matter, then, our fifty- and sixty- hour work weeks, the refusing to stop for lunch, the bypassing sleep and working deep into the darkness. It we stop, if we return to rest, our natural state reasserts itself. Our natural wisdom and balance come to our aid, and we find our way to what is good, necessary and true.

WAYNE MULLER, *Sabbath*

SOLITUDE AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

The focus of your solitude time this quarter is to continue reflecting on and exploring your own sacred rhythms—both for yourself personally and the community you lead. Continue to work with the process of developing a rule of life as described in the solitude exercise you were given on retreat and outlined more fully in Chapter 9 of *Sacred Rhythms*. Continue to clarify your deepest spiritual desires, as well as reading about, reflecting on and practicing the spiritual disciplines that have been most fruitful for you. Then experiment with how to fit these practices into the specific time frames that comprise your life—days, weeks, months, quarters, and years. Ask God to show you the rhythms you need to have in place to sustain your life in ministry for the long haul of leadership—including Sabbath-keeping and spiritual direction.

Relax into the disciplines. Feel free to explore, experiment, and learn about what is good for your soul and your life as it exists right now. Pay special attention to the sins related to your growing understanding of your false self patterns and make sure that you are incorporating disciplines that correspond to these areas of needed transformation. Remember that an effective rule of life will be personal, balanced, realistic, and flexible.

SPIRITUAL READING AND REFLECTION

REQUIRED READINGS

REQUIRED – TRANSFORMING RESOURCES (CONTAINS TEACHINGS FROM THIS RETREAT)

- *Sacred Rhythms* (Chap. 8,9), Barton
- *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (Chap. 7,8), Barton
- *Life Together in Christ* (please review), Barton

REQUIRED – OTHER AUTHORS

- *Power of Full Engagement*, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz
- *Spirituality for Everyday Living*, Brian C. Taylor
(*St. Benedict's Rule* is strongly recommended along with Taylor's book)
- #1 Choose either:
 - *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*, Ruth Haley Barton
 - *Sabbath*, Wayne Mueller
- #2 Choose either:
 - *Practicing Our Faith*, Dorothy Bass
 - *Soul Feast*, Marjorie Thompson



FOR RECOMMENDED READINGS

- visit Transforming Resources while on retreat
- or go to www.transformingcenter.org/tc17/

WITH YOUR SPIRITUAL FRIEND

As you clarify your own rule of life, take time with your spiritual friend or spiritual director and significant others to share your spiritual desire and the rule of life/sacred rhythms you believe God is inviting you into on the basis of that desire. Be specific and concrete. Enlist their prayer and also their practical help and support. Also, invite them to periodically ask you how you are doing with living your life in ways that are congruent with what you say you really want.

WRITTEN REFLECTION

This paper is your final reflection on the main objective of the *Transforming Community*® experience—developing your own rule of life—so it will be longer (6-8 pages). It is an opportunity for you to reflect on the rhythms we have explored and experienced during the last two years and to clearly articulate a way of life in God that will sustain you and allow you to be fruitful for the long haul of your life in ministry. Your paper will be divided into five sections as described below. **Please email to TC17papers@transformingcenter.org by Friday, July 14, 2023.**

Begin prayerfully, taking time to listen once again to your heart's desire for a way of life that works, your body's need for a way of life that honors your humanity, your soul's longing for spiritual rhythms that keep you open you to Christ's transforming presence. Resist the urge to turn this paper into a self-help project or an academic exercise. Instead, acknowledge God's presence with you, rest in that Presence you have come to know so well, and ask God to guide the process of committing your rule of life to paper. It will be helpful to have your Community Binder and your journals to complete this project; you may also want to refer to Scripture or any of the spiritual readings that have helped and challenged you in this process.

I. **Desire.** What was the desire or need that drew you into the *Transforming Community* experience? How did you articulate your desire on the first retreat? Has your desire remained constant or has it changed at all? How has God met you in the midst of your desire? What words, phrases, prayers seem to most consistently capture your longing for God right now as you sit down to write this paper?

II. **Invitation to Spiritual Transformation.** In what areas of your life are you most aware of your need for transformation—personally and in your leadership—and a way of life that works? Include your awareness of false-self patterns that need transformation as well as reflections on what's working and what's not working in your patterns of living. What shifts or changes have you noticed in yourself over the last two years as you brought more focus and intentionality to your own spiritual growth? What are the practices or rhythms you know God is inviting you into in order to open to transformation in the areas you need it most and also to usher you into a way of life that enables you to be healthy in body, mind, and soul?

III. **Rule of Life.** In this section of your paper, articulate your own personal plan for continuing spiritual transformation *as concretely as possible*. You can do this in paragraph form, make a chart or in some other way draw a visual representation of your rule of life. This should include



the increments of time that make up your life (days, weeks, months, years) and your intentions regarding your use of these increments of time. It could also be arranged in the categories that make up your life: spiritual life, marriage and family, friendship and dating, work and vocation, intellectual growth and development, physical health and well-being, etc. Review the disciplines we have experienced together (and others you might be familiar with) so that you can include the disciplines you have found most beneficial.

This series of questions might be helpful as you write this section of your paper:

- What rhythms/practices will I seek to engage in on a daily/weekly/monthly/yearly basis in order to be consistently strengthened at the soul level?
- Are there practices that are particularly needed, based on my awareness of the false self and my desire to live as an authentic self in God?
- Which rhythms and patterns do I need more of in order to honor my personality type and ways of relating to God that come naturally? (You may want to revisit the chapters in *Invitation to a Journey* on wholistic spirituality and Myers-Briggs.)
- Which rhythms would stretch me in ways I need to be stretched?
- What changes will I need to make in my schedule/priorities in order to live consistently in these life-giving rhythms?

IV. Acknowledge the challenges. Write briefly about the challenges you face in living into the rhythms you have described so that your reader can pray for you and also so you can be realistic about facing these challenges head-on. As you reflect prayerfully on these challenges, what do you sense God saying to you? Is there any guidance God is giving you about how you can be more intentional about facing these challenges head on?

What conversations have you had or do you need to have, what arrangements have you made with those you live and work with in order to make this possible?

V. Community. The spiritual journey is not meant to be taken alone. As you read and interact with *Life Together in Christ*, consider: With whom are you sharing your desire and intent to cultivate a way of life that is grounded in God and strengthens the soul of your leadership? Explore how you might walk together with at least one other person who is being drawn to a similar journey.

Also, reflect on the role of the Transforming Center in your ongoing commitment to spiritual formation and strengthening the soul of your leadership. Do you feel drawn to continue the journey with us in some way? Do you have the kind of support you need in order to keep moving in this direction or do you need this regular rhythm of retreats with a spiritual community that is separate from your work/ministry setting. Is there anything else we can do to support you on your journey?

VI. For the Sake of Others. Conclude your paper with some reflection on how you have experienced your transformation as being "for the sake of others." How has it affected your ability to love others, to be present with them and their needs, and to respond in a God-guided way? As you conclude your *Transforming Community* experience, what do you feel God is leading



you to bring to the congregation/organization you serve, just as he led and commissioned the Emmaus Road disciples? In what way is God leading you to be in God for the world? How have you experienced the truth that the best thing you bring to leadership is your own transforming self?

RECOMMENDED READING RELATED TO

Rule of Life

- *At Home in the World: A Rule of Life for the Rest of Us*, Margaret Gunther
- *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, St. Gregory the Great
- *The Common Rule*, Justin Whitmel Earley
- *Fulfilled: Living and Leading with Unusual Wisdom, Peace and Joy*, Kirk Byron Jones
- *The Intentional Year: Simple Rhythms for Finding Freedom, Peace, and Purpose*, Holly & Glenn Packiam
- *The Making of An Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustration to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines*, Nathan Foster
- *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*, Dorothy Bass
- *The Rule of Benedict*, Joan Chittister
- *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove
- *The Rule of Taizé*, Brother Roger

Finding God in the Ordinary

- *Against an Infinite Horizon*, Ronald Rolheiser
- *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor
- *The Attentive Life*, Leighton Ford
- *Being Home: Discovering the Spiritual in Everyday Life*, Gunilla Norris
- *The Cup of Our Life*, Joyce Rupp
- *Letters by a Modern Mystic*, Frank Laubach
- *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, Tish Harrison Warren
- *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Our Lives to the Awareness of God*, Tilden Edwards
- *Presence and Encounter: The Sacramental Possibilities of Everyday Life*, David Benner
- *The Quotidian Mysteries*, Kathleen Norris
- *The Spiritual Life*, Evelyn Underhill
- *Spiritual Literacy*, Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat
- *A Tree Full of Angels*, Macrina Wederkehr
- *When Faith Becomes Sight*, Beth and David Booram

Sabbath

- *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week*, Tiffany Shlain
- *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, Marva Dawn
- *Rest is Resistance*, Tricia Hersey
- *The Rest of God*, Mark Buchanan
- *Sabbath as Resistance*, Walter Brueggemann
- *Sabbath in the Suburbs*, MaryAnn McKibben-Dana
- *Sabbath Keeping*, Lynne Babb
- *Subversive Sabbath*, A.J. Swoboda



Sacred Rhythms in Community

- *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*, Jay Kim
- *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook*, David Janzen
- *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us*, Christine Pohl
- *Sacred Rhythms Curriculum (DVD & Participant Guide)*, Ruth Haley Barton
- *Slow Church*, C. Christopher Smith
- *Spiritual Rhythms in Community*, Keith Meyer

Technology

- *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week*, Tiffany Shlain
- *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*, Jay Kim
- *Reconnect: Spiritual Restoration from Digital Distraction*, Ed Cyzewski
- *Stolen Focus*, Johann Hari

The TC does not endorse every idea in every author's body of work. Books are chosen based on their ability to spur us on to deeper thinking about the retreat's topic. The TC trusts that everyone in the Community will strive to be like the Bereans, searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

