

A Family Rule of Life

“Our parenting goal should be to have a purpose that is bigger than our [immediate] problem.”¹

Have you ever thought about what your family might look like in ten years? Ten minutes?

Sometimes it is hard for us to stop and think about where God may be leading us. The purpose of this tool is to provide a space for you as a family to stop and think about how God is leading you in this season of life and preparing you for His Kingdom. This should not be a chore to complete but it is encouraged to take some intentional time as a family to pray through this in a minimally distracted environment.

Creating a Family Mission Statement²

- What do you envision your family to be in 5, 10, 25, 50 years from now?
- What are some things that currently define your family?
- When people hear your family name, what do they think of?
- (Separately) how would you define a successful family?
- What is the role of God in your family?
- What are the 5 most important things for your family?
- What things would you want to have passed on to the next generations?
- What is your family’s top priority/purpose?
- What are the principles you would like for your children to have learned from you before they reach adulthood?
- What examples of family do you look up to? What would you like to emulate from them in your family?

¹ Trevecca Okholm, *Kingdom Family: Re-Envisioning God’s Plan for Marriage and Family*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 112.

² Adapted from from: Trevecca Okholm, *Kingdom Family: Re-Envisioning God’s Plan for Marriage and Family*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 115-116.

- What does it mean to serve God (individually; as a family)?
- What draws you closer to God as a family?
- What pulls you away from God or distracts you from God as a family?

From your answers above, try to come up with one sentence that most clearly and succinctly defines your family's mission:

Now put your family rule in a place where everyone in your family can review it regularly. You could also add to it some verses, prayers, or quotes that help make up or further describe your family's mission.

Verses:

Prayers:

Quotes:

Living in the Ordinary

- If a stranger walked into your house while you were gone, what would they see as the most important space in your house? What would hold, draw, and captivate their attention?
- What space in your house holds, draws, and captivates your family's attention
- Where does your family spend the most time together?
- How is your family caring for itself physically?
- How is your family caring for itself mentally?
- How is your family caring for itself emotionally?
- Where does your family need more borders?
- As a family each of the following areas of life from 1 (lowest) to 10 (well done).
 - Nutrition:
 - Fitness:
 - Rest:
 - Financial:
 - Spending time on something as a family that brings each member joy:
 - Living out your family's mission:
 - Relationships (within and without of the family):
 - Spiritual health - relationship with God:
 - Finding Gratitude:

List below any additional comments or thoughts:

Family Spiritual Disciplines

- In your current family season, what is a realistic pattern of family prayer?
- What is a realistic goal you can set to grow your family in this season?

Choose from the following family spiritual disciplines that you would like to include in your family routine:

- *Family Prayer*: This is a wonderful practice included in the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. It provides a simple structure to organize the prayers of a family around the prayers of the Church. (choose any or all of the four times of family prayer found in the 2019 BCP: <http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/index.php/downloads/> - The full offices of morning and evening prayer can also be found on dailyoffice2019.com).
- *Sabbath*: Intentionally set aside a day of the week to rest from work/school/etc. to be as a family and delight in God and all that He has given to us
- *Service*: Plan an activity together as a family to serve those around you. It could be volunteering in a soup kitchen once a month, preparing a meal for someone else, cleaning up your elderly neighbor's yard, etc.
- *Worship*: Commit to worship together as a family in weekly services at your church. Maybe you are already doing this; do you worship in the same space? If you do, what does it look like for your family to worship intentionally *together* in that space?
- *Bible Reading*: Read through the Bible together as a family. Could be a specific book of the Bible, a children's Bible, or the whole thing!
- *Creativity*: Spend time together creating something for God. It could be a family prayer quilt, making a scrapbook of memories of how God has led your family in the past, or setting aside a meaningful space in your home for family devotions. Be creative!
- *Simplicity*: What are some things that you could give up as a family and in their place use as a time for family prayer?
- *Fasting*: Commit to giving something up for a season as a family. It could be replacing family time in front of the tv with evening prayer.
- *Practicing Gratitude*: Each member of the family can share one thing at the dinner table that they are grateful to God for on that day.
- *Telling the Story*: Take time as a family to tell the Story of Scripture to each other. Share your own family story and how you have been called into the Story by Jesus.

Of the ones you have selected, list below (or on a separate sheet as needed) the frequency in which you would like to practice them in this season:

Holidays, Feast Days, and Family Celebrations: A Family Church Kalendar

We are all shaped by the calendar of our lives. Whether it is our work, extended family, or national calendars, these things all shape who we are and what we practice. The Church too has a Kalendar that it celebrates every year, drawing us into the Story of God. How might you incorporate this Kalendar into your family life?

Advent

Once Thanksgiving is over, it is often difficult not to dive straight into Christmastide. But there is a very important season in the Church Kalendar that beckons us to wait with anticipation. Advent is the season where we remember Christ's first coming in his birth and look ahead in preparation for His second coming. It is traditionally a time of light fasting and penance, similar to lent, as we prepare our hearts for the return of our Lord. Below, are some suggested family practices in the season of Advent:

- *Advent Wreath:* There are candles representing each week in advent. Use this time around the family dinner table to read scripture, and pray. There are traditional scriptures and prayers which accompany this.
- *Advent Calendar:* Count off the days together as you wait with anticipation of the celebration of Christ's coming at His birth. There are traditional scriptures which accompany this.
- *The Jesse Tree:* This follows the story of Scripture leading up to the time of Jesus's birth. There are traditional scriptures, prayers, and hymns which accompany this.
- *The Christmas Creche:* Anticipate the coming of Jesus as the manger is slowly filled in anticipation of His birth. This practice goes through to epiphany in the coming of the Magi.

Christmas

The time has finally come! He is here, the Messiah has been born! Now is the time to celebrate the birth of our Savior! On Christmas Eve, we celebrate with joy in preparation for the birth of Jesus. Now is the time to bring out the decorations and place the most important piece in your creche: the baby Jesus. Christmastide is so important that it actually takes twelve days to celebrate! In this season of gift giving, remember the most important gift you have been given: God with us, who has died for our sins and risen again.

Epiphany

Epiphany is the season of ordinary (growth) time where we examine the gospels concerning the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. The peak of the season comes on the feast of Transfiguration, where Jesus was revealed in His glory to Peter, James, and John. This is a time to wonder and remember our Lord, as He asks us the question, “Who do you say that I am?” This is a great time to read through the gospel of Mark. If you read two to three chapters per week, you will be able to get through the entire book, depending on the year.

Lent

Beginning with ash Wednesday, we now enter into Christ’s journey towards the cross. Lent is the traditional season for the preparation of new believers to be baptized. It is a season of fasting and penance as we look to the cross, remembering that Christ has atoned for our sins and made us clean through His blood. Below, are some suggested family practices in the season of Lent:

- *Ash Wednesday:* Attend an Ash Wednesday service, where Christians are marked with the sign of the cross in ashes to remind us that we are made from the dust and will return to the dust for our transgressions.
- *Practice a family spiritual discipline:* Examine the list above and commit to practicing a spiritual discipline together as a family

Holy Week and Easter

- *Stripping of the Table:* There is a powerful moment in the liturgy of Maundy Thursday, where the table is stripped after the Eucharist and the services is ended in darkness. Recreate the empty table in your home by not using candles, linens, etc. for family meals until Easter.
- *Easter Eggs:* The symbology of the egg in relation to the resurrection is a long-standing tradition in the Church. “Write” (traditional icons were considered to be written prayers, not paintings) your prayers of thanksgiving as you paint your eggs. Additionally, Family Life sells a set of *Resurrection Eggs* which walk through the story of Holy Week.
- *Easter Candle:* Bring a candle with you to church to light from the Paschal candle and place it on your table in remembrance of the light of Christ, bursting forth from the darkness of the tomb at His resurrection. (For safety it is probably best blow it out before you travel home and relight it when you get home).

Pentecost

On Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, uniting us to Christ. The symbols for the Holy Spirit are the dove, wind, and fire. Find a creative way to incorporate these elements into your home, perhaps by hanging hand crafted “flames” above the chairs of your dining room table. Create a list of the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit and pray as a family that God would grant you His good gifts and grow them into good fruits.

Family Sabbath

The Christian Kalendar also follows weekly patterns. We gather on Sundays to worship, as we continually celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, who rose on a Sunday. It is good for us to practice weekly rhythms together as a family and a family sabbath day is a great place to begin.

Daily Office

Monks have practiced daily offices (prayers) at set times of the day and night for centuries. In the prayer book, we have those offices distilled for the practical use of families in the section on family prayer. These moments throughout the day remind of of whose we are and helps us to stop and give thanks to God for what He has done for us.

Baptism Anniversaries

It is common practice to be given a candle when one is baptized. The candle is lit from the Paschal candle and represents the light of Christ dwelling in us at our baptism. On the anniversaries of your baptisms, it is encouraged to light this candle and celebrate your new birth Christ. Make these special days of celebration for your families.

Additional Ideas

- Purchase linens for your dining room table to match the colors of the Christian year to remind your family of the season.
- Decorate your home for each season of the Christian year. Be creative and have fun!
- Incorporate textile materials for telling the Scriptures to one another through the textile materials listed below.

Final Thoughts

This is simply a guide to help get your family started on this journey of living more intentionally as a Christian family. It is not exhaustive and it is not meant to create an environment of legalism. Committing to these practices will not make you a better Christian and will not increase your salvation. We are all saved by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. If this rule helps your family to see this reality more clearly and for you to live more fully in the freedom Christ has one for you from your sins, then its purpose will have been served. Use this template to inspire creativity in your family and to help you think through and live out ways in which you may draw closer to your Savior and to one another.

Additional Resources for Families

Books:

- *Kingdom Family: Re-Envisioning God's Plan for Marriage and Family*, Trevecca Okholm,
- *It's Not Too Late: The Essential Part You Play in Shaping Your Teen's Faith*, Dan Dupee
- *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, Tish Warren
- *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English*
- *The New City Catechism*, Crossway

Children's Books:

- *Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*, Sally Lloyd-Jones and Jago
- *The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden*, Kevin DeYoung
- *Read-N-Grow Picture Bible*, Libby Weed & James Padgett

Elementary Books:

- *The Torchlighters: Heroes of the Faith*, Christian History Institute
- *Little Pilgrim's Progress*, Helen Taylor

Media:

- "Buck Denver Asks: What's in the Bible?", Phil Vischer, Jellyfish Studios
- "Adventures in Odyssey", Focus on the Family
- "The Torchlighters: Heroes of the Faith", Christian History Institute

Textile:

- *Young Children and Worship*, Sonja Stewart and Jerome Berryman
- *Following Jesus*, Sonja Stewart
 - <https://www.worshipwoodworks.com>
- *Resurrection Eggs*, <https://shop.familylife.com/p-3504-resurrection-eggs.aspx>