

How to Weather the Storms of Life

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Intro: We all want a piece of the rock to hold on to during times of trial when the waves of adversity crash on our beach. [Most of us have built sand castles, some of us are good at it and spend much time creating this elaborate architecturally sound structures,](#)

(Picture of Sandcastle)

but most simply pile up some sand and stick a flag on it. But whatever type you have built, eventually the waves begin to come. When they do, no amount of yelling or attempting to block the waves will stop them.

The same with life. Waves of trouble will come, and you simply must know how to hold up through them. We usually pray that God would stop the trials but we all know how well that works.

The reason that praying trials away doesn't work is simple. God knows that it is through trials that we have an opportunity to grow stronger. I use the word opportunity on purpose since you can grow stronger through a trial or weaker. It completely depends on your reaction to them. One reaction in our sandcastle illustration is that you simply rebuilt a bigger sandcastle with a larger wall around it and muscle through the storms all the while getting mad at the waves and start complaining that God does stop them.

But this morning I want to talk about a better reaction and that would be to start building with different materials all together and all the while asking the Lord for the lessons that you can learn as you go through the trial. This morning I want to take a few minutes to share about the second option, which is usually the road less traveled and that is building with some different materials and trusting the Lord to teach you lessons as you go through trials.

The best way to help prepare for a trial is to get ready ahead. (Fire Extinguishers). If you live in an area prone to hurricanes, the best time to prepare is not in the middle of one. So, let's look at some ways that you can prepare yourself to be unshakeable when these storms come. There are two things to remember and one thing to do.

1. Remember these storms are the very things that Jesus promised would come to his followers in John 16:33.
2. Also remember that God will never leave you. Isaiah 54:10 "Though the mountains be shaken, and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD.
3. Prioritize your life now by putting the first things first.

I believe that the first thing as a Follower of Jesus Christ is to actually follow Him by making that relationship important by giving it priority over other things.

We all know that relationships require time. The way that you spend time with the Lord is through spiritual disciplines. That includes reading the bible, praying, fasting, journaling, etc. How many of us have ever said that we are too busy for those kinds of things? OK, well I have a suggestion for you. Allow me to illustrate:

The following story is one that's been circulating for a while. I believe it holds a very important message regarding appropriately setting priorities in our lives. Time Jar.

Stones are most the important things: Loving God, loving family, loving friends and neighbors, loving yourself

Pebbles: Education, career, money

Sand: Watching TV, playing video games, Facebook, and recreational sports

Wow it is the end of May already. Time seems to be moving faster all the time. But the thing I like best about time is that it is fair to everyone. The poor, the rich, the happy, the sad, the old, and the young all have the same amount. You cannot buy it, save it, give it away, make it go faster (work), make it go slower (vacation). Paul talks about the importance of time in **Ephesians 5:16 Redeeming the times because the days are evil**. The best thing that you can do with time is redeem it or to put it more simply, "Do good with it".

The word redeem in the Greek actually means *to buy up, ransom, to rescue from loss*: - making the most of.

Old Methodist saying was,

"Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can."

Salvation Army's theme: "Doing the most good."

But the best use of your time is using it on things that will last forever, like your soul...

Galatians 4:19 "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, (Form...in Gk. Is Morph.... Metamorphosis)

This message has at its starting point a Biblical principle and that principle is giving God priority in every area of your life. Also, in this message I am not trying to convince you the truth of this statement, but rather I am going by the assumption that most of us already believe that we need to make God our top priority. So, this morning I have decided to jump right into how to apply the principle of making God your top priority. OK. An easy way to remember this is to look at your index or pointer finger and point up to God.

Today I want to talk to you about one of the ancient practices of the early church and it is called, "A Rule of Life" before you turn me off. You need to give this topic a hearing out especially if any of these statements fits you.

I feel spiritual dry. I would like to pray more.

I desire to share my faith with others more often.

I would like to feel closer to the Lord.

Sometimes I feel like I have no purpose.

If any of these statements sound a bit like you or you have heard yourself saying them to yourself, then this topic is for you.

During the remainder of this message I will answer the why, what, who, and how questions about the rule. We already answered the why question. (Because we need help with our spiritual lives) So now we move into the what, who, and how questions.

What is 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. (Trellis in our Yard.)
Wisteria (**Picture of Grape vine on a trellis**)

A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional plan to keep God at the center of everything we do. It provides guidelines to help us remember Him. Theme of the book of Deuteronomy which is the book most quoted by Jesus.

The purpose of this *Rule* is to help you with your intention to follow Christ, keeping you faithful to your unique grace and calling.

A Rule of Life is not a New Year's Resolution. New Year's resolutions are largely built on a negative image of ourselves and usually only focus on the physical or external things. We decide that we are too heavy, too lazy, too unattractive, and we decide we're going to fix that. We usually drop the resolutions quickly because they continually remind us that we're just not good enough.

A rule of life, however, grows from the positive aspects of our life that we discern in conversation with God. We make God the focus of our rule (rather than our own negative images of ourselves) and we move in the directions in which we feel called. *A rule of life is a response to being loved by God and feeling moved to become more of what God calls us to be.* Consider this verse in **Philippians 3:12-14**

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Notice in verses 12, 14 the word 'press'. The word press in the Greek actually means to *put to flight, pursue, run after* or to seek after. This implies a more active action that our English word press implies.

In this verse we are reaching up taking hold of the hand which is reaching down to us, which is from Jesus himself. At salvation you were called on purpose for a purpose.

He called you to Himself with the idea that you would serve Him. He had your unique calling embedded in your DNA from the time of your creation. The opportunity to access this calling comes to its fullest potential when you are born-again.

Let me illustrate: **(Picture God's finger touching Adam's finger)**

Then as you move on to verse 13 you can very easily see your main blocker from you achieving this goal of becoming what God has called you to is your past.

If you are called as a teacher, Satan will throw everything at you to discourage you from this. Maybe like a learning disability or a problem with speaking. Satan quite naturally will attack you in the area that you have the potential for the greatest good.

Let's look at the Biblical roots of the Rule. Remember Daniel who was taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to exile in Babylon. Cut off from his family, teachers, friends, food, culture, and language, Daniel was brought into the Babylonian court of the king and sent to the best university in the land. He studied a completely foreign and pagan way of viewing the world – history, mathematics, medicine, religion, and literature.

How did Daniel resist the massive power of Babylon? Daniel had a plan. He did not leave the development of his spiritual life to chance. While we know little of the specifics, it is clear that he oriented his entire life around loving God. He renounced certain activities, such as eating the king's contaminated food. Daniel 1:8 states that Daniel determined in his heart not to defile himself but to keep other activities such as praying three times each day (see Daniel 6). He had a rule of life.

Early Church Roots:

From the end of the third century to the fifth century, men and women withdrew from society into the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine to seek God. They wanted to free themselves from any distractions between them and God. A number of these monks later formed communities and organized their daily life around an agreed-upon plan consisting of work, prayer, and study of Scripture. They called this plan a Rule of Life.

The most famous rule was created by St. Benedict around the 5th century AD, called the Rule of St. Benedict. The Rule of Benedict is divided into five practices/habits— prayer, study,

recreation, work, and hospitality. The purpose in any Rule is putting the first things first. As a believer that of course is Jesus.

In the Rule that I have created for me personally I have taken the liberty to adjust the five practices/habits. The parts of my Rule are:

Prayer – spiritual

People – relational

Physical – recreational

Possessions – material

Purpose – vocational

As you begin to write your Rule, reflect upon each of these areas. Sit with them and listen intently. Ask yourself, “How is Christ revealed in each of these areas of my life? What deep part of my being seeks balance and renewal? Where do I need to hear the voice of God?”

FOR REFLECTION

- How is my relationship to God, others, myself, my stuff, and my purpose?
- What would a life of balance look and feel like?
- What area is God calling me to intentionally work on?

For further study on the Topic of “The Rule of Life” see the following books:

Macchia, Stephen. *Crafting a Rule of Life*: Downers Grove, IL, IVP Books, 2012.

Scazzero, Pete. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*: Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2006.

Shigematus, Ken. *God in my Everything*: Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2013.