

2025 RULE OF LIFE

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK
&
MOVE
FORWARD

GRATITUDE

RULE OF LIFE

CONFESSION & REPENTANCE



GOD IS INVITING US INTO HIS PRESENCE.

INTRODUCTION

Another year has passed. A new year begins. The days have been full—holidays, work demands, family events, unexpected challenges—and somehow 2024 has flown by. In the whirlwind of it all, it's easy to lose sight of where we've been and where we're headed.

Whatever this year held for you, we know one thing has been true: God has been present in the midst of it. He is Immanuel.

As we step into 2025, we believe God is still inviting us into His presence. He is calling us to pause, to reflect, and to respond. He invites us to lay our struggles before Him, to give thanks for the blessings we've received (even the small ones), and to entrust the year ahead into His hands.

To help us answer this invitation, we've crafted a simple tool grounded in time-tested practices of reflection, gratitude, and intentional living. This tool is not about setting resolutions you can't keep—it's about creating space for God to work in your life and for His grace to shape your rhythms in the year ahead.

We hope you'll take some time to work through this with your family, friends, or small group. Pause. Reflect. Pray. And as you do, may you step into 2025 with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper awareness of God's presence.



**GOD WANTS US TO
SEE WHERE HE'S
BEEN WORKING IN
OUR LIVES IN THIS
LAST YEAR.**

YEARLY REFLECTION

Taking time to review where you've been the past twelve months is an important step before moving forward. So much of the time we move so fast through life that we don't even know where we've been or what God has really done. In a season like this, we may just want to skip the review altogether. But we believe God wants us to see where he's been working in our lives in this last year.

We want to slow down a bit and take a longer look at 2024, inviting God to show us where we've been.

For centuries, Christians have made it a practice to look back over their lives to consider where God might call them to grow.

In the reflection exercise, we will slow down and spend a few moments reflecting on how we've loved God and how we've loved others.

In this exercise, we'll look over the last year through four major lenses: physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

There isn't a right or wrong way to do it. The important thing is that you do it. The other important thing is to remember is that God loves you.

REFLECTION CONT.

There is nothing you've done or experienced that he's not aware of. He's been present for it all. Regardless of what your year held, He's still loving you and He's still with you.

Shame has no place in this prayer. It is the language of the enemy, not of our God. There may be some conviction and a reminder of the ways God wants us to live, but shame won't be a part of that equation.

Find a quiet place where you can sit with each category, working through the questions slowly. This is not an exercise where the "first response is the right response"—slow is the key. In fact, thinking deeply about each question, you will probably find that a longer look and lingering reflection will allow issues and concerns to rise that a quick response will simply overlook. Take your time and let God's grace surround you as you begin.

SECTION 1: BE STILL AND INVITE GOD TO HELP

Find a quiet place where you can be alone with God. Remove as many distractions as possible (i.e. silence or turn off your cell phone, turn down the noise, remove yourself from crowded spaces, etc.). Before you begin, take a few moments to BE STILL before God. Quiet your heart, mind, and body.

Read through Psalm 139 as you begin.

Say an honest prayer to God, voicing any fears you have. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts as you reflect on your year. Invite God's love to lead you.

SECTION 2: GRATITUDE

Gratitude cultivates our hearts and minds, orienting them toward the good things of God. When we spend time saying, "thank you," it really does change us.

Take a moment to reflect on the things that make you grateful from this past year. Make a list in the space below of the things that make gratitude to God well up from within you. Be specific. What good things from the last 365 days do you want to thank God for?

REFLECTION CONT.

SECTION 3: GENERAL EXAMINATION

In the past year:

- What were the most important events that happened to you or in you?
- What were the greatest breakthroughs in any of the following categories: physical, emotional, relational, vocational, spiritual, interpersonal, etc.?
- What was your greatest struggle?
- What was your greatest and deepest loss?
- What was the area that consumed your thinking and attention?
- Where did you feel most vulnerable? Most alive?
- If married, what was your biggest win in your marriage? If unmarried, what was the biggest win in your singleness?
- Where and when did you experience the greatest sense of closeness to God?
- Where and when did you experience the greatest sense of feeling distanced from God?
- What is ONE word that might sum up this past year?
- What are the things that stir the deepest gratitude in your heart from this past year?

REFLECTION CONT.

SECTION 4: GENERAL CATEGORIES OF YOUR LIFE

1. Your Physical Health

What three words describe your physical condition and well-being this past year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How did you value rest? How did you sleep, engage in restorative recreation, or practice Sabbath?

What health choices did you give attention to?

What specific changes do you desire to make during this upcoming year that will help you honor God with your body?

2. Your Emotional Health

What three FEELINGS (positive or negative) dominated your life this past year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When were you the MOST JOYFUL this past year? What were you doing, who were you with, and where were you?

When were you the MOST SAD this past year? What were you doing, who were you with, and where were you?

What area of your life gave you the greatest sense of internal stress? Internal joy?

How did your emotions impact those you love this past year (positively or negatively)?

What specific changes do you desire to make during this upcoming year to honor God in your emotions?

REFLECTION CONT.

3. Your Relational Health

List the people who have been life-giving to you this past year:

What letter grade do I give for my over-all sense of having community?

A-Excellent B-Very good C-Average D-Really lacking in friends

How have you felt isolated? How have you felt connected?

Is your life style, work schedule, and present reality conducive to having the relationships you want and desire? If not, what needs to be different?

In what ways does your relational life need to change for the upcoming year?

4. Your Spiritual Health

What three words describe your spiritual health over the past year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How has your relationship with God grown over the last year?

The three most important spiritual take-a-ways from this past year that you never want to forget are:

What was your deepest spiritual struggle—the place of wrestling with God or the place of my deep lament?

What Scriptures or prayers have played an important role in this past year? How have they shaped you?

What does growing in your faith look like for this upcoming year? Is there a Scripture you can attach to that?



IF WE CONFESS
OUR SINS, HE IS
FAITHFUL AND
WILL FORGIVE US
(1 JOHN 1:9)

SECTION 5: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

Scripture says all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's best for us (Rom. 3:23). Scripture also says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and will forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Confession simply means that we would "agree with God." We agree that what we've chosen isn't in line with his best for us. Maybe you've struggled with pride or selfishness. Maybe you've struggled with a stronghold that you need God's help to break. Maybe you've just not made time for Him the way you want. Whatever it is, take some time to tell God about it.

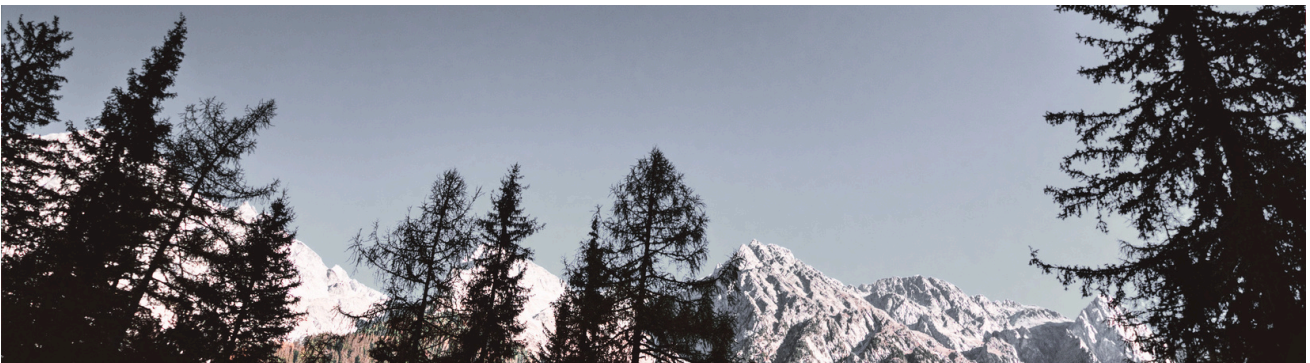
Pray, asking what repentance ("turning away from or changing your mind") looks like in the coming year. Step into God's forgiveness, receiving his grace, mercy, and love.

***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9***

SECTION 6:LOOKING TOWARD TOMORROW

As you enter into the new year, spend a few moments asking for God's blessing on the future twelve months. Read through the beautiful prayer of Thomas Merton below. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you.

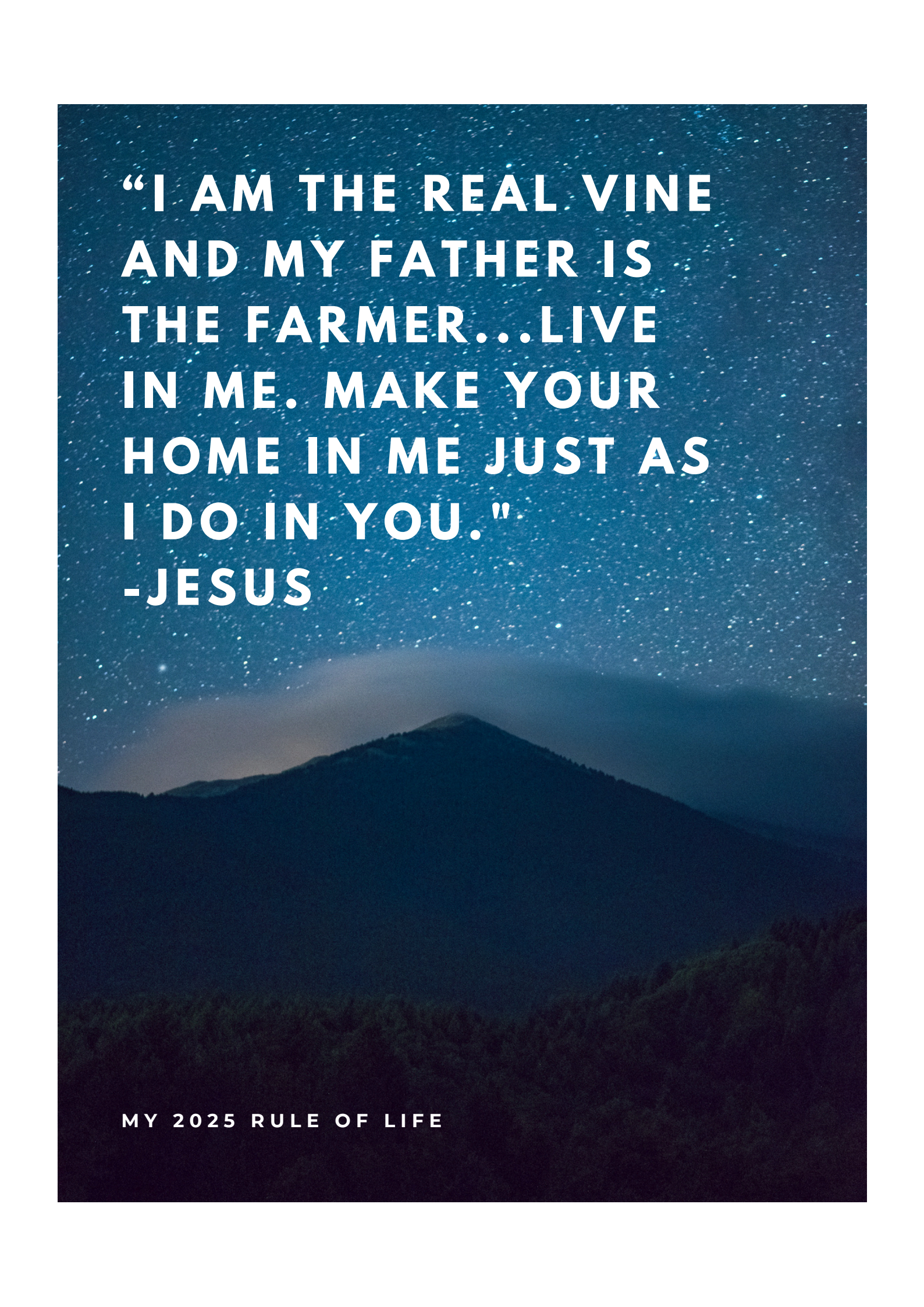
My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.



TAKE A MOMENT TO PRAY THROUGH YOUR UPCOMING YEAR.

- Where do you need God to fortify your spirit?
- Where are you needing God to take the lead?
- What is God calling you to do in 2025?

Write your own prayer for the coming year.



**“I AM THE REAL VINE
AND MY FATHER IS
THE FARMER...LIVE
IN ME. MAKE YOUR
HOME IN ME JUST AS
I DO IN YOU.”
-JESUS**

MY 2025 RULE OF LIFE



A RULE OF LIFE IS LIKE A SPIRITUAL BUDGET FOR OUR LIVES...

RULE OF LIFE

In the first section of this exercise, we took time to prayerfully look back at our past year. We took time to be still, to be thankful, and to assess where we were physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

These next several questions are here to help you form a general plan to answer the question, “OK, after ALL of that reflection I just did...what now?”

To help us answer that question, we are going to craft a “rule of life.” A rule of life is like a spiritual budget for our lives. Just like we plan out where our money goes in a budget, we want to design our lives around certain things that will help mold us into becoming more like Jesus in the midst of our crazy world. A rule of life is a schedule and set of practices and relational rhythms that help us create space in our busy world for us to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what he did.

The word “rule” has all kinds of weird connotations in our culture, but as one author writes, “The Latin word we translate ‘rule’ was originally the word for a trellis in a vineyard. In the same way a vine needs a trellis to lift it off the ground, so it can bear the maximum amount of fruit, and keep free of predators and diseases, we need a rule as a kind of support structure to organize our life around “abiding in the vine,” (John 15:1-8) as Jesus imagined.

We want to produce fruit, so crafting a “rule of life” will help us be intentional about connecting with Jesus in the coming year. This exercise isn’t meant to be a “goal setting” practice, but is meant to help you find rhythm and space so you can stay connected to God even when trials come.

MY 2025 RULE OF LIFE

There is no one “right” way to design a rule of life, but here are a few tips to keep in mind before you get started:

1. Take small steps – It’s very easy to want to jump right in and overload yourself with all kinds of different spiritual practices that will help you live and love like Jesus, but the error of jumping into this pool instead of wading in is that you might end up drowning. By this I mean that if you try and do too much at once, you might end up not doing any of it. Small steps are better than no steps at all.

2. Be specific – When creating your rule, be concrete. Get practical. For example, instead of saying “I will read the Bible,” try instead, “I will spend 15 minutes every morning in the bible.”

3. Think holistically – As humans, we consist of a mental side, an emotional side, a spiritual side, a relational side, and a physical side. We are holistic. We are more than just our feelings. We are more than just our thoughts. We are more than just matter. When crafting your rule of life, be sure to include practices that will impact all of you, not just your spiritual life or not just your emotional life, etc.

4. Remember that this is a working document – Just as a budget can be adjusted dependent on your needs or the season or outside circumstances, so too, can your rule of life be flexible and change as necessary.

5. Focus on the goal – The goal of designing a rule of life is not to burden you with a bunch of stuff to do. The goal of crafting a rule of life is to help you align your life with the way of Jesus in order to help love God, love people, and make disciples.

Ok, are you ready? Let’s jump in. Reflect on the questions on the next page and use the allotted space to jot down your answers.

MY 2025 RULE OF LIFE CONT.

When/where do you feel closest to God? What practices naturally draw you towards God (i.e. daily devotion, prayer, sharing your story, community, Sabbath, silence and solitude, fasting, generosity, simplicity, etc.)?

What is most important to you? Who do you want to become? Based on your looking back at 2024, what has (realistically) received most of your attention?

Where do you want to change?

Based on your 2024 reflections...

- What daily, monthly, and/or yearly physical rhythms or disciplines do you desire to cultivate in 2025?
- What daily, monthly, and/or yearly emotional rhythms or disciplines do you need to cultivate in 2025?
- What daily, monthly, and/or yearly relational rhythms or disciplines do you need to cultivate in 2025?
- What daily, monthly, and/or yearly spiritual rhythms or disciplines do you need to cultivate in 2025?

Based on your answers use the chart below to start filling in your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms. Choose some categories where you want to focus that allow for a holistic approach and write them across the top as you begin.

RULE OF LIFE EXAMPLE

In the box below, write down what daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms you want to pursue to help you look, live, and love like Jesus.

Daily rhythms:

- 15 minutes reading the Bible every morning before work
- Prayer each morning
- Pray for and with my kids before school
- Exercise at the gym at least 50 minutes 5x per week
- Limit phone usage/social media to 30 minutes per day

Weekly rhythms:

- Worship in Church every Sunday with my family
- Take communion every Sunday
- Attend my life group fully engaged every Wednesday
- Participate in Sabbath for a 24-hour period once a week
- Serve at church in children's ministry

Monthly rhythms

- Read 1 book for personal growth
- Invite a neighbor or friend over for dinner
- Serve with my church in an area of need
- Go over budget with my spouse
- Spend time in nature
- Date night with spouse 2x per month

Yearly rhythms:

- Go on a weekend retreat 2x to be with the Lord
- Read through the entire Bible
- Go on vacation to rest
- Assess my rule of life for adjustments

MY 2025 RULE OF LIFE

In the box below, write down what daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms you want to pursue to help you look, live, and love like Jesus.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for the user to write their 2025 Rule of Life. The box is currently blank.