



Life
groups
Leader's Playbook

Life Group Playbook

Table of Contents

• Overview of Life Groups	2
• Rule of Life Introduction	3
• Sample Rules of Life	4
• Planning Calendar	5
• Leading Your Life Group	6
• Weeks 1-17 Discussion Guides	7-16
• Weeks 21-35 and next steps after your Life Group	17
• Appendix 1: Activity and Challenge Ideas	18
• Appendix 2: Annotated Bibliography of Books for after <i>God in My Everything</i>	19-24
• Appendix 3: Member Covenants	25-26

Overview of Life Groups

Life Groups will take place over a 35 week period. They will spend 18 weeks meeting together for prayer, study, and fellowship (every other week), and the 17 intervening weeks engaging in challenges to strengthen their fellowship and put their faith to work (See Leader Planning Calendar on page 5, and Appendix 1 on page 18 for activity and challenge ideas). Along the way, each participant will develop a personal **Rule of Life** (see below), adopting habits that facilitate spiritual growth and holistic living as God's image-bearing creation. This exercise will require the support of an *intentional community* engaged in *mutual discipleship* over an extended period of time. The goal of Life Groups is for participants to go deeper in their spiritual journey, developing a vital and active faith in the context of a robust Christian community.

Intentional Community - Participants will consciously choose to engage in fellowship together. In most cases, Group members will already know each other through Connect Groups, serving, or other relationships. Groups will form out of a desire to build on such relationships and grow together in Christ. Participants will enter into a covenant relationship with one another (see Appendix 3 for Member Covenant), committing to walk alongside each other for the duration of the Life Group. Others wishing to join a Life Group will be thoughtfully, prayerfully placed in conversation with the Teaching Pastor and Group Leaders.

Mutual Discipleship - Participants will seek to forge relationships marked by encouragement, accountability, and self-giving love for the good of others. Through prayer, study, fellowship, and spiritual friendship, participants will seek to build each other up and spur each other on to Christlikeness. Participants will support one another as each person develops a personal Rule of Life.

An Extended Period of Time - Whereas Connect Groups take place over 10-12 weeks, Life Groups will take place over a 35 week period, allowing time to build meaningful spiritual friendships. Generally, we recommend Life Groups begin in September and run through May/June; however, a Life Group could be organized and launched any time of year.

Rule of Life Introduction

In his book, *God in My Everything*, Ken Shigematsu defines a Rule of Life as “a *rhythm of practices that empowers us to live well and grow more like Jesus by helping us experience God in everything.*” Developing a Rule of Life involves identifying and adopting a set of practices or habits that encompass the various aspects of life. A Rule of Life frees us to pursue the life we truly long for, marked by deeper fellowship with Jesus and one another, a growing sense of wholeness, and fruitful service that glorifies God. A common image used to describe a Rule of Life is a *trellis*, which acts as a support for a vine or plant so it can grow correctly, flourish, and bear fruit. In the same way, a Rule of Life is a meant to help us grow into the people God has created us to be.

Life Groups will begin their journey together by working through the book *God in My Everything*. In conversation with the book and one another, each participant will develop a personal Rule of Life. Each chapter will help participants think through an aspect of life and develop a rule around it. Typically a rule includes a habit to adopt and the intended frequency for that habit (e.g., *I will jog for 30 minutes four times a week*). By the end of the book, participants will have developed a set of rules that will help them flourish in a holistic way. The Life Group will act as a support and encouragement as participants experiment with different rules and commit to living out their completed Rules of Life. Below are two sample Rules, built around the categories from *God in My Everything*.

Sample Rules of Life

Spiritual Friendship - I will meet Steve for breakfast at the Filling Station every Tuesday morning, to check in on how things are going spiritually with each of us.	Spiritual Friendship - I will meet Mike at Shank park on Wednesday mornings, to walk and talk about family and spiritual health.
Sabbath - My family and I will keep Fridays free of any work or social commitments, and spend that time resting and being together.	Sabbath - I will set aside Saturdays for rest and family, taking a break from work and other commitments.
Prayer - Before I start my work day I will spend 20 minutes prayer journaling, and will pray with my wife for 5 minutes before going to sleep at night.	Prayer - I will pray through the Lord's Prayer each morning before starting my day, using each line as a prayer prompt.
Technology Use - I'll limit my non-essential phone usage to 1 hour a day, using an App to track and limit it.	Technology Use - When at home, I will keep my phone on the kitchen counter unless I need it for a specific reason.
Bible Reading - Along with morning prayer, I will read one chapter in the Bible each day.	Bible Reading - I will read one chapter of the OT and NT each day.
Diet - I will keep track of my daily calorie intake and limit myself to 1500 calories.	Diet - I will drink no more than one non-water beverage a day and limit dessert to twice a week.
Exercise - I will get 10,000 steps on my Fitbit each day.	Exercise - I will shoot basketball for 30 minutes three times a week.
Sleep - I will aim to be in bed by 10pm each night, so that I can get between 8-9 hours of sleep.	Sleep - I will be in bed by 10:30pm each night.
Play - Each evening I will spend one hour doing leisure reading. Each weekend I will do something outdoors.	Play - I will get together with friends to play board games twice a month. I will go mountain biking once a week.
Money - My wife and I will make a simple budget, and I'll begin keeping receipts for minor purchases.	Money - I will make a budget and keep track of spending throughout each month. I will prayerfully reevaluate giving every other month.
Vocation - I will take a 10 minute prayer break at lunchtime each day while at work.	Vocation - During my morning commute, I will pray for guidance on how to glorify God through the day's work.
Justice - Each month I will do something to raise awareness about human trafficking.	Justice - I will volunteer at The Caring Cupboard twice a month.
Witness - I will seek to have at least one spiritual conversation with somebody at work each week.	Witness - I will invite a co-worker or neighbor to dinner at least once a month. I will invite a co-worker or neighbor to church at least once a month.

Planning Calendar

Use this calendar to plan out your Life Group year. The odd-numbered weeks are set aside as weeks for book discussion and fellowship. The even-numbered weeks will be spent doing a variety of different activities and challenges. You don't necessarily need to do these activities on your normal meeting; in other words, if your fellowship meetings happen every other Tuesday at 7pm, you don't need to also do your activity Tuesday at 7pm - though it might be wise for the sake of consistency.

For your first "Fun Activity" we recommend that the Leaders plan it in advance, and ask the Group to put it on their calendar in advance.

Likewise, for the Service Activities on Weeks 10, 18, and 26 you will likely want to plan those well in advance, especially if it is something like serving at a local non-profit.

For other activities and challenges, we encourage you to develop ideas in conversation with the rest of your Life Group, to decide on things that the whole Group can feel a sense of ownership of.

Week 1 - Intro to Life Groups, Rule of Life, Summarize Shig. chs. 1-3	Week 19 - Justice & Witness (Shig. chs. 14-15)
Week 2 - Fun Activity	Week 20 - Fun Activity
Week 3 - Spiritual Friendship (Shig. ch. 7)	Week 21 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 4 - Meet with Spiritual Friend	Week 22 - Generosity Challenge
Week 5 - Sabbath (Shig. ch. 4)	Week 23 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 6 - Practice Sabbath w/ other Group member(s) :	Week 24 - Prayer night (same format as week 8, or new format as chosen by Leaders)
Week 7 - Prayer (Shig. ch. 5)	Week 25 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 8 - Meet together for an hour of focused prayer:	Week 26 - Service Activity
Week 9 - Technology Use	Week 27 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 10 - Service Activity	Week 28 - Fun Activity
Week 11 - Bible Reading (Shig. ch. 6)	Week 29 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 12 - Fun Activity	Week 30 - Generosity Challenge
Week 13 - Life Rhythms - Exercise, Diet, Sleep, Play (Shig. chs. 10-11)	Week 31 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 14 - Generosity Challenge	Week 32 - Prayer Night (same format as week 8, or new format as chosen by Leaders)
Week 15 - Money (Shig. ch. 12)	Week 33 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 16 - Prayer night (same format as week 8, or new format as chosen by Leaders)	Week 34 - Service Activity
Week 17 - Vocation (Shig. ch. 13)	Week 35 - Book discussion and fellowship
Week 18 - Service Activity	

Leading Your Life Group

You've invited your participants and set your calendar. Now it's time to start leading your Life Group! On each of the odd-numbered weeks, beginning with Week 1, you will meet together for book discussion and fellowship. These gatherings should be half discussion time, half fellowship time (e.g., food, lawn games...whatever you think would help warm up your group.)

As for the discussion time: don't stress too much! What follows are guides to help you lead the group session for the first half of your Life Group. For weeks 1-19, you'll mostly discuss the Rule of Life concept, the different rules you are developing, and how that process is going. Don't feel pressure to lead awesome, super-insightful discussions. Don't feel pressure to have all the answers. This is a time for you as a Group to be real with each other, to be vulnerable and sincere in how you are dealing with (or struggling with) the different rules you'll be working through. And beyond all that, this is a time for you to get to know each other and grow in trusting relationship.

With that in mind, use the discussion guides that follow in whatever way is most useful to your Group. Definitely make sure to check-in about how practicing the rules are going, especially after introducing new ones. And make sure to keep members updated on what is on the upcoming schedule. But as for the discussion questions provided: use what seems useful, and adapt as you see fit!

A special note: We have not set aside weeks for discussing God in My Everything chapters 8 and 9 on Sexuality and Family respectively. We strongly encourage individuals to read chapter 8 and discuss it with their Spiritual Friend (see Week 3 below), and to develop a sexuality-related rule for themselves if they think they should. As for the Family week, we recognize that not everybody is part of a nuclear family - or at least not a nuclear family who is in the position to practice a Rule of life together. If you do want to read that chapter and adapt a family-related rule, go for it! We simply didn't include it below because it is not widely applicable.

Week 1: Introduction / Rule of Life

- If your group doesn't know each other well, begin with an ice breaker game. For icebreaker ideas, check out: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90393951/8-office-icebreakers-that-wont-make-you-cringe>
- Introduce to participants the Life Group concept, what it will entail. (See above)
- Introduce the "Rule of Life" concept, using this YouTube Video: "Ken Shigematsu - God in My Everything: Live Giving Rhythms". (This is a chapel talk originally presented to undergraduate college students, so some of the presentation speaks directly to that audience.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M6TclvHDuE>
- Questions for Discussion (adapted from *God in My Everything's* chapters 1-3)
 - What connotations, positive or negative, does the word *rule* have for you?
 - What role, if any, have spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation, Bible-reading) played in growing your faith?
 - If we assume every person lives by a conscious or unconscious rule, how would you describe your current rule?
- Describe how for the first half of your Life Group, you will together be building week-by-week your personal Rules, and will be holding each other accountable to those Rules throughout the course of the Life Group.
- Things your group should be keeping in mind as they begin this process (based on pages 34-39 in *God in My Everything*):
 - We are going to start small, start simply, and build slowly, so that these Rules are life-giving and sustainable.
 - Even as we add in these Rules, we need to think about what we are pruning/removing from our lives. Getting rid of non-essential stuff to choose what's better. This will apply especially to our time management.
 - Adapt your Rule to fit who you are and the life stage you're in!
 - And stay flexible - don't be afraid to change up the Rule mid-way through if need be (in conversation w/ the Group and/or your Spiritual Friend.) As Shigematsu says, "We don't exist for the rule. The rule exists for us."
 - We are in this together! The reason we are doing the Rule of Life in the Life Group context is so that we have a group of people supporting each other through the process, that can help reinforce this change and make it sustainable for the long-term!
- For next meeting: Read chapter 7 of *God in My Everything*, "Friendship: Companions for the Journey." In two weeks we are going to talk about that and will figure out how to divide the group up into pairs, groups of three, or sets of couples. Send me an email in advance if you'd have a specific request for who to be paired with; we will make sure we figure out a way that works for everybody.
- Fun Activity: Share details about the Fun Activity you have planned for the Group to happen between now and your Week 3 meeting.
- Read Member Covenant and have participants sign (see Appendix 3 on pages 25-26)
- End in prayer.

Week 3: **Spiritual Friendship** (God in My Everything - Ch. 7)

- Revisit the “Rule of Life” concept.
 - Are there any lingering questions about what a Rule of Life is?
 - Has anyone already started to reorder their life based on our first discussion and what we’ve read so far? Any pruning of non-essential stuff? Any new habits?
- Optional YouTube Video: “Ken Shigematsu - Friends for the Journey” (The content overlaps with or elaborates on chapter 7 of the book. This is a chapel talk originally presented to undergraduate college students, so some of the presentation speaks directly to that audience.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJkgQRa2v5Y>
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from God in My Everything Ch. 7):
 - How does the internet help friendships? How does the internet hinder friendships?
 - In what ways do friendships foster our overall well-being?
 - Why are life-giving friendships important to our spiritual flourishing?
 - What characteristics of David and Jonathan’s friendship struck you most deeply in this chapter? What other friendships-biblical or otherwise-have inspired or instructed you?
 - What are your greatest fears in friendship? What are your greatest hopes?
 - How are spiritual friendships formed? What does this kind of friendship require of the people involved?
 - Optional deep theological question: Shigematsu writes, “God is one, yet God exists in a community of three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Scripture teaches men and women are created in God’s image (see Genesis 1:26-27). As God’s image-bearing creation, what does it mean to reflect the God who exists as a perfect community?
- **New Rule:** Draft a rule to begin building spiritual friendships within the Group (whether in pairs, groups of three, or sets of couples). Commit to actively engaging in these friendships throughout the duration of the Life Group, and decide together what regular habits to adopt to support, encourage, and challenge one another moving forward.
- Weekly Challenge: Meet with your spiritual friends from the Group to practice your new rule. Some suggestions: Discuss your hopes and fears about friendship; Practice vulnerability by sharing part of your story or testimony (This doesn’t have to be a comprehensive “tell all.” Try to think of something you would want a close friend to know about you in order to love/support you better); Discuss your hopes for the remainder of the Group and spend time praying for each other.
- For next meeting: Read chapter 4 of God in My Everything, “Sabbath: Oasis for Body and Soul.”
- End in prayer.

Week 5: **Sabbath** (God in My Everything - Ch. 4)

- Check in with the Group to see how people are feeling after meeting with their spiritual friends.
 - What are you learning about yourself?
 - What are you most excited about moving forward in the Rule of Life process? What are you nervous about?
- Optional YouTube Video: “Ken Shigematsu - Sabbath: Rest for Body and Soul” (The content overlaps with or elaborates on chapter 4 of the book. This is a chapel talk originally presented to undergraduate college students, so some of the presentation speaks directly to that audience.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH7AHxtNYTU>
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from God in My Everything Ch. 4):
 - Why is it difficult for many of us to take a weekly Sabbath?
 - How is the Sabbath commandment an expression of God’s love for us?
 - How is keeping the Sabbath a subversive, countercultural act?
 - How did this chapter inform your understanding of Sabbath rest? Did anything surprise you?
 - How does honoring the Sabbath help us grow in our trust of God?
 - Why is worship essential to experiencing true spiritual rest?
- **New Rule:** Draft a weekly Sabbath rule to begin practicing this week. Consider what day would best serve as your Sabbath. What “necessary” things will you relinquish on your day of rest? What will choosing life look like for you on the Sabbath? What activities do you find restful? How do you experience rest? Be in conversation with your spiritual friend about your Sabbath rule and hold each other accountable moving forward.
- Weekly Challenge: Practice Sabbath with another Group member (or members). This can take various forms. Perhaps it’ll mean finding a mutual activity that both people find restful (e.g., hiking, reading in a coffee shop, playing a board game, listening to an album from top to bottom). Perhaps it’ll mean worshipping together on Sunday morning. Be creative, but don’t overthink it.
- For next meeting: Read chapter 5 of God in My Everything, “Prayer: Deepening Your Friendship with God.”
- End in prayer.

Week 7: **Prayer** (God in My Everything - Ch. 5)

- Check in with the Group as to how practicing Sabbath went over the past 2 weeks.
 - Did you practice Sabbath?
 - What did you do?
 - What did you find most challenging about it?
 - Did you find it refreshing and life-giving? Or...boring?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from God in My Everything Ch.5):
 - What are your current prayer practices? (When you pray; how frequently; where and in what physical posture; alone or with others?)
 - Would you say your current prayer practices are effective in deepening your spiritual life and relationship with God?
 - Do you think we should use patterns of prayer, or be spontaneous? Why?
 - Is there a pattern of prayer from the chapter that resonates with you? (Praying the Lord's Prayer, using the Lord's Prayer as a template, ACTS, praying the Psalms.)
 - *Optional deep theological question:* Do you believe that our prayers can truly "change" things in the world. In other words, do you believe that God listens to our prayers and sometimes acts in accordance with them? Why or why not?
- **New Rule:** Draft a daily prayer practice, and begin practicing it this week. Be in conversation with your spiritual friend / accountability partner about what your Rule will be, and hold each other accountable to practicing it moving forward.
- Weekly Challenge: Between now and our next meeting, each of us will get together with another person or group of people from the Life Group and **spend one hour in focused prayer**. This time can include sharing prayer requests, but try to limit that portion to 15 minutes. Pray for each other, each other's families and loved ones, and the world at large. An hour may seem like a long time - indeed, this will be a challenge. Don't be afraid to sit in silence for portions of the time; as Shigematsu writes on pages 65-66 there is great value in Silent Prayer, and listening to hear the voice of God. (Also, you're welcome to play music in the background while praying.)
- For next meeting: Watch the YouTube Video: "The Village Church Institute Forum - Tech-Wise Family", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeszZRwtQUg&t=1592s>
- End in Prayer

Week 9: Technology Use

- Check in with the Group:
 - What prayer-related rule did you adopt? What was it like to practice that?
 - How was the experience of meeting together for prayer? Enlivening, encouraging, awkward? Have you seen any fruit in your life or the world around you as a result of that prayer time? Any answered prayers?
- “Tech-Wise Family” Video highlights (for Leader’s use, to refresh your memory.)
 - We are made for satisfaction/happiness, and to do things that are bringing deep and true satisfaction.
 - Example: Learning the violin = increasingly satisfying over time. Listening to Spotify = more satisfying initially, but diminishing returns of satisfaction.
 - Devices vs Tools: Tools are meant to be extensions of human creativity and ability. Devices work by themselves, require less skill and engagement. Prolonged device use makes us less capable, less satisfied, and ultimately...bored.
 - Before the 19th century, there was no word in any language for “bored.” But with industrial revolution and the emergence of the “leisure” class, people started to experience boredom. We are now all a part of the leisure class, and instead of facing our boredom we can constantly distract ourselves with devices.
 - Distraction doesn’t form us as people. We need to be careful with distraction/devices, and choose formative experiences.
 - Technology is not a bad thing, but must be used correctly. For example: technology makes it easy to write a book. But technology will not form you into the type of person with something to say.
 - Andy’s four basic rules for technology use (4 of 10 featured in his book:
 - Space: He keeps the TV in basement, has a craft table in the living room. They “keep devices at the edges” of their life spaces.
 - Time: They go device-free one hour a day, one day a week, one week a year.
 - Bedroom: No phones in the bedroom. Buy an alarm clock! They wake up before their devices and their devices go to sleep before they do.
 - Car: Cars are for conversations, not ear buds.
- Questions for Discussion (based on the “Tech-Wise Family” Video)
 - Do you find the idea of limiting device use appealing? Scary? Unwelcome?
 - Andy Crouch reminds us this isn’t about legalistically policing screen time, but by answering the question: “What do you really want out of life? What type of person and family do you want to be?” How would you answer those questions? And how would your device use change to fit that?
- **New Rule:** Draft a Rule around device use, limiting the use of it in some way, and begin practicing it this week. You can use examples from the “Tech-Wise Family video”, or your own idea. Be in conversation with your spiritual friend about what your Rule will be, and hold each other accountable to practicing it moving forward.
- Weekly Challenge: Serve together as a Group. Ideally you have discussed and arranged a service opportunity prior to this group meeting, that you could undertake together this week. For ideas, you can check out the example Activities and Challenges listed in Appendix 1.
- For next meeting: Read God in my Everything chapter 6, “Nourishing Your Soul Through Sacred Reading.”

Week 11: Bible (God in My Everything - Ch. 6)

- Check in with the Group.
 - Would anyone like to share their rule regarding technology?
 - What has it been like to change your technology habits? How does it impact your daily life?
 - As we build on our Rules of Life, how is the process of forming new habits going for you? Is it challenging? Burdensome? Life-giving?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from God in My Everything Ch.6):
 - Why is reading the Bible regularly important?

- A. W. Tozer writes that the ultimate goal of Scripture is a personal encounter with the Living God. Do you agree? Has this been your experience?
- What are your current Bible-reading habits? What habits have you found helpful in the past?
- Has anyone tried any of the practices mentioned in the book (*lectio divina*, imagining a scene in Scripture, memorizing the Word)? What was your experience?
- Is there a Scripture passage that you are currently being called to live into?
- *Optional deep theological question:* What is the relationship between prayer and Scripture? How might reading Scripture enrich your prayer life? How might a habit of prayer make you a more attentive reader of Scripture? For this question, consider the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Scripture teaches that the Spirit both inspired Scripture (see 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21) and indwells believers as a guiding presence (see 1 Corinthians 3:16, John 16:13).
- **New Rule:** Draft a daily Scripture habit, and start practicing it this week. Be in conversation with your spiritual friend about what your Rule will be, and hold each other accountable to practicing it moving forward.
- **Weekly Challenge:** Do something fun with your Group to enjoy each other's company and deepen your fellowship. See fun activity ideas under Appendix 1.
- **For next meeting:** Read chapters 10 and 11 of *God in My Everything*, "Eat, Sleep, Swim" and "Play Like a Child."
- End in Prayer.

Week 13: Life Rhythms: Exercise, Diet, Sleep, and Play (*God in My Everything* - Ch. 10 & 11)

- Check in with the Group about their new Bible habits.
 - Would anyone like to share their rule regarding Scripture?
 - How has your Bible habit impacted your life over the past two weeks?
 - What have you been learning about God and yourself through engaging with Scripture?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from *God in My Everything* Chs. 10 & 11):
 - How do we know from Scripture that our physical bodies are honored by God?
 - In what way is care for your body foundational for your entire Rule of Life?
 - How can we honor our Maker through our eating habits? Sleeping habits? Fitness habits?
 - Why is play an important part of a healthy spirituality?
 - Does God play in Scripture? Can you think of an example of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit playing?
 - Ken described how he felt great delight when his young son played with a dog in the park. Have you ever sensed God's delight in you as you played?
 - In chapter 11, Ken defines play as "something we do for its own sake." What is something you enjoy doing for its own sake, not for attention or achievement?
- **New Rule:** Develop a rule, or rules, that promote healthy life rhythms. Take stock of your eating, sleeping, and fitness habits. Is there anything unhealthy about your current habits? What is a good first step toward healthier living? What about play? Think about what you enjoy doing for its own sake. If you're having trouble, think back to the kinds of play you enjoyed as a child. Share your rule(s) with your spiritual friend and begin putting it into practice.
- Weekly Challenge: Practice generosity as a Group. Discuss possibilities with the Group and decide on a plan for showing generosity over the next two weeks (see ideas for Generosity Challenges under Appendix 1).
- For next meeting: Read chapter 12 of *God in My Everything*, "Money: Master or Servant?"
- End in prayer.

Week 15: **Money** (God in My Everything - Ch. 12)

- Check in with the Group about Life Rhythm rules.
 - Would anyone like to share their new rule for healthier life habits? How is your rule affecting the rest of your life?
 - What are you doing to play more? Are you finding it easy or difficult to find time to play? Why?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from God in My Everything Ch. 12):
 - What was your first memory of money as a child?
 - Ken asserts one of the most concrete indicators that a person is experiencing the converting work of the Holy Spirit is that their relationship toward money is changing. Has this been true for you? How?
 - Recall the story of Sakiko's chipmunk Forte. How does "grace giving" enable us to express our trust and gratitude toward God?
 - Have you ever experienced a special material provision from God? What was your response?
 - Do you feel called to simplify your life in some way? Why?
 - Describe a time when you experienced joy in giving something away. What might help you grow in generosity?
 - *Optional deep theological question:* Prosperity theology teaches that God always rewards faithfulness with material blessing and physical well-being (health and wealth). Why is this position biblically problematic? Contrast prosperity theology with what Ken writes about God's provision and spiritual blessings.
- **New Rule:** Develop a rule (or rules) about money. Look back at the discussion questions from chapter 12. Consider how to better keep track of where your money is going? What does that say about your heart/priorities? Prayerfully consider how God might be calling you to change your relationship with money? How is God calling you to grow in generosity? Share your rule with your spiritual friend and begin putting it into practice.
- **Weekly Challenge:** Have a prayer night together as a Group OR with your spiritual friends from the Group. This can take any number of forms. Perhaps you could go on a prayer walk around town to pray for the people who live and work there. Perhaps you could go on a prayer walk around the church building, praying for church leadership and the ministry that occurs in various spaces around the building. Perhaps you could practice silent prayer or postured prayer (kneeling) together as a Group. Perhaps you could pray together through a passage of Scripture like the Lord's Prayer or Psalm 23, using each verse as a prayer prompt. Be creative and do what works for your Group.
- *For next meeting:* Read chapter 13 of God in My Everything, "Thank God It's Monday."
- End in prayer.

Week 17: **Vocation** (God in My Everything - Ch. 13)

- Check in with the Group about their money rules.
 - How is God changing your relationship with money?
 - What steps have you taken to better honor God through your financial habits?
 - Has anyone felt led to simplify their life in some way? How?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from *God in My Everything* Ch. 13):
 - Ken's stockbroker friend yearned for early retirement. Why do many people view work as a kind of prison sentence from which they are seeking early escape?
 - Work life looks different from person to person. For example, people work in various settings, at different times, in and out of the home, and in paid or unpaid capacities. In your work, do you see yourself as co-creating with God in some way? If so, how?
 - How can your rhythm of prayer make you more conscious of God as you work at your company, school, or home?
 - How does offering our work to God shape the quality of our work? How does it affect our contentment in our work?
 - Has anyone ever experienced a mundane, everyday task (e.g., washing dishes, changing a diaper, filing a report) as a means for glorifying God? Share what that was like.
 - Have you ever had an experience where praying helped you discern God's will for your work? Share what that was like.
- **New Rule:** Draft a rule that would enable you to honor God and experience greater contentment in your work. Consider especially how you might become more prayerful in your work. Share your rule with your spiritual friend and begin putting it into practice.
- **Next book:** Discuss with the Group what type of book they would like to begin discussing in Week 21, after *God in My Everything*. (See Appendix 2 for book ideas and summaries.) Decide on the book this week so that Group members will have time to order/purchase it.
- **Weekly Challenge:** Serve together as a Group. Ideally you have discussed and arranged a service opportunity prior to this group meeting, that you could undertake together this week. For ideas, you can check out the example Activities and Challenges listed in Appendix 1.
- **For next meeting:** Read chapters 14 and 15 of *God in My Everything*, "Sending a Ripple Through Eternity" and "Sharing the Presence."
- End in prayer.

Week 19: **Justice and Witness** (God in My Everything - Chs.14 & 15)

- Check in with the Group:
 - Would anyone be willing to share the Rule they integrated into their “work” day?
 - Did practicing the Rule change your experience of God and how you related to others around you during your work day?
- Questions for Discussion (based on and adapted from *God in My Everything* chapters 14 and 15)
 - Have you ever experienced a desire to make a lasting difference? When did you experience that, and how did it change your life (if at all)?
 - Did Shigematsu’s description in chapter 14 of “justice” as things we can do now to “build the kingdom” make sense to you?
 - If you had to commit to “one thing” - one societal problem or justice issue - to focus on, what would that one thing be?
 - Have you ever felt awkwardness (or pushback) when sharing your faith with someone else? If so, how did you deal with the awkwardness?
 - Could you think of a way that your “one thing” could be integrated with sharing your faith? (In other words, putting justice/service and witness together.)
- **New Rule(s):** Determine for yourself your “one thing” - something justice-related (as defined by Shigematsu) that you could regularly commit yourself to. Draft a rule regarding how frequently you would practice this one thing (weekly, monthly, quarterly.) Share your “one thing” and your rule with your spiritual friend and begin putting it into practice. Likewise, determine one way that you could commit to regularly sharing your faith with someone in your life, and share this rule with your spiritual friend as well. (It’s possible that these two rules might be interconnected; the rule you draft for justice might be a means of witnessing to others.)
- Weekly Challenge: Do something fun with your Group to enjoy each other’s company and deepen your fellowship. See fun activity ideas under Appendix 1.
- For next meeting: Begin reading from your Group’s next book (chapters/reading assignment determined by Group Leaders.)
- End in Prayer.

Weeks 21-35:

In week 17 you should have begun discussion about what book your group would be using after *God in My Everything*. With your last 8 discussion/fellowship meetings in weeks 21-35, you will spend time working through your chosen book at whatever pace seems best for your group!

You've probably noticed that there are no more discussion guides. At this point, we are confident you have the hang of what it takes to lead a group discussion with your specific Life Group. We believe in you! If you are still feeling uncertain about discussion leading, reach out to Pastor Ryan at ryan@encounterchurchofpalmyra.org, and he or a Life Group Coach would be more than happy to assist you with resources and guidance for discussion leading.

As you continue on, you won't be drafting any new Rules for yourselves, but your Group should plan to continue practicing the Rule of Life throughout the duration of the 35 weeks. By now, you will have begun to settle into some semblance of a rhythm with the Rules (the older ones at least), and it's vital that your Group continues their commitment to those, as they form holy habits that will be transformative in their lives for a lifetime!

Potential next steps after your Life Group is finished:

- Keep using your individual Rules of life!
- Keep meeting with your Life Group, but invite some new people into the fellowship!
- If continuing with this Life Group, pick another book from Appendix 2 for use in your discussions.
- Split your group into 2 or 3 groups, and start 2-3 new Life Groups
- Members of the group break off into 3s and 4s to do a Discipleship Group

Appendix 1:

Activity and Challenge Ideas

What follows are lists of potential Fun Activities, Service Activities and Generosity Challenges your Life Group could choose to undertake. These lists are best used as prompts to start the brainstorming process for Leaders or Groups; the ideal would be for Groups to determine among themselves the types of activities and challenges that best fit the specific makeup of their group.

Fun Activities

- Group Dinner
- Board Game Night
- Bowling
- Movie Night
- Escape Room Hershey
- Hiking
- Adventures Sports Hershey

Service Activities

- Volunteer with Caring Cupboard, Jubilee Ministries, or another local missions partner (contact Pastor Ryan at ryan@encounterchurchofpalmyra.org for more info)
- Plan and host a fun activity for children, youth or Young Adults in the community
- Help a member of your Life Group with a household project or task
- Help someone connected with a member of your Life Group with a household project or task
- Serve as greeters, ushers and parking attendants on a summer morning to give the normal volunteers a break.

Generosity Challenges

- Clothing or food drive to bless the Caring Cupboard, Jubilee Ministries
- Raising money to donate to a non-profit organization
- Pooling resources to bless someone connected with the Life Group who is in material need

Appendix 2:

Annotated Bibliography of Books (for after *God in My Everything*)

Christianity Overviews

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (HarperOne)

In the classic *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis, the most important writer of the 20th century, explores the common ground upon which all of those of Christian faith stand together. Bringing together Lewis' legendary broadcast talks during World War Two from his three previous books *The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*, *Mere Christianity* provides an unequalled opportunity for believers and nonbelievers alike to hear this powerful apologetic for the Christian faith.

Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense by N. T. Wright (HarperOne)

Not since C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* has such a wise and informed leader taken the time to explain what Christianity is and how it is practiced. In *Simply Christian*, renowned biblical scholar and Anglican bishop N.T. Wright makes a case for Christianity from the ground up. Walking the reader through the Christian faith step-by-step and question by question, Wright's *Simply Christian* offers explanations for even the toughest doubt-filled skeptics, leaving believers with a reason for renewed faith.

The Knowledge of the Holy by A. W. Tozer (HarperOne)

What is the nature of God? How can we recapture a real sense of God's majesty and truly live in the Spirit? This beloved book, a modern classic of Christian testimony and devotion, addresses these and other vital questions, showing us how we can rejuvenate our prayer life, meditate more reverently, understand God more deeply, and experience God's presence in our daily lives. Informative and inspiring, *The Knowledge of the Holy* illuminates God's attributes; from wisdom, to grace, to mercy; and shows through prayerful and insightful discussion, how we can more fully recognize and appreciate each of these divine aspects. This book will be treasured by anyone committed to the Christian faith. It bears eloquent witness to God's majesty and shows us new ways to experience and understand the wonder and the power of God's spirit in our daily lives.

Christian Community

Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (HarperOne)

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, renowned Christian minister, professor, and author of *The Cost of Discipleship* recounts his unique fellowship in an underground seminary during the Nazi years in Germany. Giving practical advice on how life together in Christ can be sustained in families and groups, *Life Together* is bread for all who are hungry for the real life of Christian fellowship.

Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community by Ruth Haley Barton (IVP)

Life Together in Christ offers a model that is designed to take you into a deeper life with Christ in the company of others. Reflecting on the story of the two disciples who met Christ on the Emmaus Road, Ruth Haley Barton offers substantive teaching and direction for small groups of spiritual companions who are ready to encounter Christ--right where they are on the road of real life.

Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction by David G. Benner (IVP Formatio)

We need companions on our spiritual journey. The modern world has taught us to value autonomy and individualism. Our churches often see spirituality as personal and private. But we cannot go long in our Christian pilgrimage before realizing that isolation leads to spiritual barrenness. We soon discover that our souls long for accompaniment, intimacy and spiritual friendship. As a result, many Christians today are rediscovering the ancient practice of spiritual direction. In this inviting guide, David G. Benner introduces readers to the riches of spiritual friendship and direction, explaining what they are and how they are practiced. Spiritual direction moves beyond mere moral lifestyle accountability and goes deeper than popular notions of mentoring or discipling. Through prayerful, guided attunement to God's activity, sacred companions provide care for the soul. If we are to experience significant spiritual formation and growth, our souls must be nurtured through spiritual companions. Benner, well-accustomed to God's work through relationships, models the kind of traveling companion who can move us toward deeper intimacy with God.

Spiritual Rhythms in Community: Being Together in the Presence of God by Keith Meyer (IVP Formatio)

Jesus had rhythm. His regular patterns of withdrawing from life to have intimate time with his Father and then embracing and entering into rich relationships with others allowed him to carry out his enormous mission with wisdom, grace and authentic love. In the midst of busy, full lives, with demands for our time and attention coming from every direction, we need rhythm--life-giving patterns in our days and weeks that deepen our connection with God and strengthen our relationships with others. Jesus' rhythm can be yours with this participatory guide to growth in God and mission in the context of community. "We learn from Jesus' example," Keith Meyer writes, "that spiritual disciplines are best done in some degree or expression of community where they are experienced and reflected on together. . . . We [also] learn from Jesus that the disciplines are to work as a baseline for a life rhythm of formation and community and result in a powerful mission that begins to sweep others into the ever growing number of those in the dance of the trinitarian life." In light of Jesus' model, then, Meyer helps you intentionally adopt a new pattern for our life, one that facilitates ongoing growth and transformation, through

- formational spiritual practices designed for groups to experience together
- meditations on the Psalms
- group discussion questions

Together with a small group or a staff team, your family or your friends, find your rhythm in the life of the One who came that we might have life to the full.

The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love by James Bryan Smith (IVP)

In this third book in the Apprentice Series, James Bryan Smith helps us know how to live in relationship with others as apprentices of Jesus. "Apprentices of Jesus are not part-time do-gooders," he writes. "They live in continuous contact with the kingdom of God, and are constantly men and women in whom Christ dwells. They do not sometimes tell the truth, sometimes live sacrificially or sometimes forgive. There are myriad opportunities for us to impact the world in which we live." Yet many times we've gotten it wrong, tending to emphasize personal faith over social justice or vice versa. In these pages Jim Smith shows us how to bring spiritual formation and community engagement together, and then once again offers spiritual practices that root new, true narratives about God and the world in our souls. His insight and humility as a fellow learner with us will lead us to live in authentic ways as a good and beautiful community of Christ-followers, shining the light of the Spirit into every relationship.

Cultural Engagement

Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel by Russell Moore (B & H)

As the culture changes all around us, it is no longer possible to pretend that we are a Moral Majority. That may be bad news for America, but it can be good news for the church. What's needed now, in shifting times, is neither a doubling-down on the status quo nor a pullback into isolation. Instead, we need a church that speaks to social and political issues with a bigger vision in mind: that of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Christianity seems increasingly strange, and even subversive, to our culture, we have the opportunity to reclaim the freakishness of the gospel, which is what gives it its power in the first place. We seek the kingdom of God, before everything else. We connect that kingdom agenda to the culture around us, both by speaking it to the world and by showing it in our churches. As we do so, we remember our mission to oppose demons, not to demonize opponents. As we advocate for human dignity, for religious liberty, for family stability, let's do so as those with a prophetic word that turns everything upside down. The signs of the times tell us we are in for days our parents and grandparents *never knew*. But that's no call for panic or surrender or outrage. Jesus is alive. Let's act like it. Let's follow him, onward to the future.

The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism by Timothy Keller (Penguin)

Timothy Keller, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, addresses the frequent doubts that skeptics, and even ardent believers, have about religion. Using literature, philosophy, real-life conversations, and potent reasoning, Keller explains how the belief in a Christian God is, in fact, a sound and rational one. To true believers he offers a solid platform on which to stand their ground against the backlash to religion created by the Age of Skepticism. And to skeptics, atheists, and agnostics, he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God.

Uncommon Ground: Living Faithfully in a World of Difference by Timothy Keller and John Inazu (Thomas Nelson)

How can Christians today interact with those around them in a way that shows respect to those whose beliefs are radically different but that also remains faithful to the gospel? Timothy Keller and John Inazu bring together illuminating stories--their own and from others--to answer this vital question. *Uncommon Ground* gathers an array of

perspectives from people thinking deeply and working daily to live with humility, patience, and tolerance in our time. Contributors include: Lecrae, Tish Harrison Warren, Kristen Deede Johnson, Claude Richard Alexander, Shirley Hoogstra, Sara Groves, Rudy Carrasco, Trillia Newbell, Tom Lin, Warren Kinghorn. Providing varied and enlightening approaches to reaching faithfully across deep and often painful differences, *Uncommon Ground* shows us how to live with confidence, joy, and hope in a complex and fragmented age.

Christian Witness

Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women by Carolyn Custis James (Zondervan)

Women comprise at least half the world and usually more than half the church. But so often Christian teaching for women either fails to move beyond a discussion of roles or assumes a particular economic situation or stage of life. This shuts a lot of women out from contributing to God's kingdom as they were designed to do. Furthermore, the plight of women in the Majority World demands a Christian response, a holistic embrace of all that God calls women and men to be in his world. The strongest voices speaking into women's lives in the twenty-first century are Islam and Feminism--systems that reside at opposite ends of the spectrum. Does the church's message for women stake out the middle ground or lead the way to something much better? Is that message strong enough to withstand the worst realities women suffer in this broken world? Carolyn Custis James unpacks three transformative themes the Bible presents that invest the lives of every woman and girl with cosmic significance that nothing can destroy. These new images of what can be in Christ come with a blazing call for them to join their brothers in advancing God's gracious kingdom on earth. Carolyn offers readers a positive, kingdom approach to the changes, challenges, and opportunities facing women throughout the world today.

The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World by Rosaria Butterfield (Crossway)

What did God use to draw a radical, committed unbeliever to himself? Did God take her to an evangelistic rally? Or, since she had her doctorate in literature, did he use something in print? No, God used an invitation to dinner in a modest home, from a humble couple who lived out the gospel daily, simply, and authentically. With this story of her conversion as a backdrop, Rosaria Butterfield invites us into her home to show us how God can use this same "radical, ordinary hospitality" to bring the gospel to our lost friends and neighbors. Such hospitality sees our homes as not our own, but as God's tools for the furtherance of his kingdom as we welcome those who look, think, believe, and act differently from us into our everyday, sometimes messy lives—helping them see what true Christian faith really looks like.

The Sacrament of Evangelism by Jerry Root and Stan Guthrie (Moody)

A recent statistic suggests that 15% of the churches in America are growing but only 2.2% are growing evangelistically. Much of the church in America has lost its evangelistic zeal and forgotten how to re-ignite it; this book is an attempt to light the fuse of the powder keg so that the church, long-distracted by so many things, might return to its primary mission in the world. We do not take Christ to anyone; He is already there. We go to make explicit what we see Him doing implicitly. It is not a question of whether God is at work in His world . . . Our hope is to see more of God's people at work with Him! Learn about why we share our faith, Christ's role in our evangelism, the deep longings in all our hearts, and how to effectively live a sacramentally evangelistic lifestyle. We are offering a way of looking at life and the world that is open to God's presence everywhere. This approach is called sacramental. And where better to experience God's presence than in His workplace? This is the Sacrament of Evangelism.

Neighbor Love

Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just by Timothy Keller (Penguin)

It is commonly thought in secular society that the Bible is one of the greatest hindrances to doing justice. Isn't it full of regressive views? Didn't it condone slavery? Why look to the Bible for guidance on how to have a more just society? But Timothy Keller challenges these preconceived beliefs and presents the Bible as a fundamental source for promoting justice and compassion for those in need. In *Generous Justice*, he explores a life of justice empowered by an experience of grace: a generous, gracious justice. This book offers readers a new understanding of modern justice and human rights that will resonate with both the faithful and the skeptical.

The Economics of Neighborly Love: Investing in Your Community's Compassion and Capacity by Tom Nelson (IVP)

What does the good news of Jesus mean for economics? Too often, Christian teaching and ministry have focused only on the gospel's spiritual significance and ignored its physical, real-world ramifications. But loving our neighbor well has direct economic implications, and in our diverse and stratified society we need to grapple with them now more than ever. In *The Economics of Neighborly Love* pastor Tom Nelson sets out to address this problem. Marrying biblical study, economic theory, and practical advice, he presents a vision for church ministry that works toward the flourishing of the local community, beginning with its poorest and most marginalized members. Nelson resists oversimplification and pushes us toward more complex and nuanced understandings of wealth and poverty. If we confess the gospel of Jesus, he insists, we must contend anew with its implications for the well-being of our local communities. Together we can grow in both compassion and capacity.

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (Moody)

Poverty is much more than simply a lack of material resources, and it takes much more than donations and handouts to solve it. *When Helping Hurts* shows how some alleviation efforts, failing to consider the complexities of poverty, have actually (and unintentionally) done more harm than good. But it looks ahead. It encourages us to see the dignity in everyone, to empower the materially poor, and to know that we are all uniquely needy—and that God in the gospel is reconciling all things to himself. Focusing on both North American and Majority World contexts, *When Helping Hurts* provides proven strategies for effective poverty alleviation, catalyzing the idea that sustainable change comes not from the outside in, but from the inside out.

Spiritual Formation

Becoming a Healthy Disciple: 10 Traits of a Vital Christian by Stephen A. Macchia (LTI Publications)

In *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, Macchia explores the ten traits of a healthy disciple, including a vital prayer life, evangelistic outreach, worship, servanthood, and stewardship. He applies to individual Christians the ten characteristics of a healthy church outlined in his previous book, *Becoming a Healthy Church*. Discipleship is a lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus Christ, the master teacher. Using the Book of John, Macchia looks to the beloved disciple as an example of a life lived close to Christ. Personal experiences as well as the experiences of others bring the traits of discipleship into modern context. Each chapter ends with a prayer and questions for reflection and renewal. *Becoming a Healthy Disciple* is excellent for lay people who want to grow in discipleship, as well as pastors, church leaders, adult classes, and small groups.

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard Foster (HarperOne)

Hailed by many as the best modern book on Christian spirituality, *Celebration of Discipline* explores the "classic Disciplines," or central spiritual practices, of the Christian faith. Along the way, Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that the true path to spiritual growth can be found. Dividing the Disciplines into three movements of the Spirit, Foster shows how each of these areas contribute to a balanced spiritual life. The inward Disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study offer avenues of personal examination and change. The outward Disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service help prepare us to make the world a better place. The corporate Disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration bring us nearer to one another and to God. Foster provides a wealth of examples demonstrating how these Disciplines can become part of our daily activities—and how they can help us shed our superficial habits and "bring the abundance of God into our lives." He offers crucial new insights on simplicity, demonstrating how the biblical view of simplicity, properly understood and applied, brings joy and balance to our inward and outward lives and "sets us free to enjoy the provision of God as a gift that can be shared with others." The discussion of celebration, often the most neglected of the Disciplines, shows its critical importance, for it stands at the heart of the way to Christ. *Celebration of Discipline* will help Christians everywhere to embark on a journey of prayer and spiritual growth.

Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way by Stephen A. Macchia (IVP)

Your personal rule of life is a holistic description of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain and transform the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ's glory. All of us have an unwritten personal rule of life. We wake at certain times, get ready for our days in particular ways, use our free time for assorted purposes and practice rhythms of work, hobbies, and worship. There is already a rule in place that you are following. Isn't it time to give up your unwritten rule and prayerfully write one that more closely matches the

heartbeat of God? In this practical workbook Stephen A. Macchia looks to St. Benedict as a guide for discovering your own rule of life in community. It is a process that takes time and concerted effort; you must listen to God and discern what he wants you to be and do for his glory. But through the basic disciplines of Scripture, prayer and reflection in a small group context you will be lead forward in a journey toward Christlikeness. The invitation is transformational, so brace yourself for sweet release. By letting go and trusting God, you will receive the gift of life in its fullest and richest form.

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life by Tish Harrison Warren (IVP)

In the overlooked moments and routines of our day, we can become aware of God's presence in surprising ways.

How do we embrace the sacred in the ordinary and the ordinary in the sacred?

Framed around one ordinary day, this book explores daily life through the lens of liturgy, small practices, and habits that form us. Each chapter looks at something—making the bed, brushing her teeth, losing her keys—that the author does every day. Drawing from the diversity of her life as a campus minister, Anglican priest, friend, wife, and mother, Tish Harrison Warren opens up a practical theology of the everyday. Each activity is related to a spiritual practice as well as an aspect of our Sunday worship.

Come and discover the holiness of your every day.

Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ by Dallas Willard (NavPress)

As Christians, we know that we are new creations in Jesus. So we try to act differently, hoping this will make us more like Him. But changing our outward behavior doesn't change our hearts. Only by God's grace can we be transformed internally. *Renovation of the Heart* lays a biblical foundation for understanding what best-selling author Dallas Willard calls the "transformation of the spirit"—a divine process that "brings every element in our being, working from inside out, into harmony with the will of God." This fresh approach to spiritual growth explains the biblical reasons why Christians need to undergo change in six aspects of life: thought, feeling, will, body, social context, and soul. Willard also outlines a general pattern of transformation in each area, not as a sterile formula but as a practical process that you can follow without the guilt or perfectionism so many Christians wrestle with. Don't settle for complacency. Accept the challenge *Renovation of the Heart* offers to become an intentional apprentice of Jesus Christ, changing daily as you walk with Him.

Survival Guide for the Soul: How to Flourish Spiritually in a World that Pressures Us to Achieve by Ken Shigematsu (Zondervan)

What keeps us from flourishing in our spiritual lives is a neglect of the inner life of the soul. And more and more today, this neglect is driven by our ambition to accomplish something big outside ourselves. We live in a society that pressures us to achieve professionally, socially, and through the constant acquisition of material possessions. Drawing on a wide range of sources including scripture, church history, psychology, and neuroscience, as well as a rich variety of stories from his own life, Ken Shigematsu demonstrates how the gospel redeems our desires and reorders our lives. He offers fresh perspective on how certain spiritual practices help orient our lives so that our souls can flourish in the midst of a demanding, competitive society. And he concludes with a liberating and counter-cultural definition of true greatness. This book will appeal to anyone who longs to experience a deeper relationship with Christ in the midst of the daily pressures to succeed, as well as to those on the borderlands of faith seeking to transcend the human tendency to define ourselves by our production and success.

The Attentive Life: Discerning God's Presence in All Things by Leighton Ford (IVP)

Your attention, please. That's what God wants, Leighton Ford discovered. It's the path to becoming like Christ.

Distractions, fear and busyness were keeping Ford from seeing God's work in and around him. He was missing God.

So he began a journey of longing and looking for God. And it started with paying attention. In these pages, he invites you to journey with him. Using the rich monastic tradition of praying the hours, Ford will walk with you, helping you pay attention to God's work in you and around you throughout each day and in different seasons of your life. If you're busy, distracted, rushing through each day, you might be feeling disconnected from God, unable to see how he's working. You might be missing him. But the way toward him starts with a pause and a prayer—with intention and attention—and becomes a way of life, awake and alive to the peaceful, powerful presence of God.

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction by Justin Whitmel Earley (IVP)

The modern world is a machine of a thousand invisible habits, forming us into anxious, busy, and depressed people. We yearn for the freedom and peace of the gospel, but remain addicted to our technology, shackled by our screens, and exhausted by our routines. But because our habits are the water we swim in, they are almost invisible to us.

What can we do about it? The answer to our contemporary chaos is to practice a rule of life that aligns our habits to our beliefs. *The Common Rule* offers four daily and four weekly habits, designed to help us create new routines and transform frazzled days into lives of love for God and neighbor. Justin Earley provides concrete, doable practices, such as a daily hour of phoneless presence or a weekly conversation with a friend. These habits are "common" not

only because they are ordinary, but also because they can be practiced in community. They have been lived out by people across all walks of life—businesspeople, professionals, parents, students, retirees—who have discovered new hope and purpose. As you embark on these life-giving practices, you will find the freedom and rest for your soul that comes from aligning belief in Jesus with the practices of Jesus.

The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People by John Ortberg (Zondervan)

In *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg guides you and your group through the spiritual disciplines and teaches you how they can transform your spiritual life. What does true spiritual life really look like? And what keeps you from living it? What can you do to pursue it? If you're tired of the status quo—if you suspect there's more to Christianity than what you've experienced—John Ortberg invites you to join him on a road to transformation and spiritual vigor that anyone can take. Cultivate new intimacy and confidence in prayer. Discover the freedom of secrecy. Taste the benefits of slowing life's frenetic pace. Learn how to be guided by the Holy Spirit ... and much more. As in a marathon, the secret lies not in trying hard, but in training consistently. Proven by followers of Jesus over the centuries, the spiritual disciplines are exercises that strengthen your endurance race on the road to growth.

With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God by Skye Jethani (Thomas Nelson)

Stop living your life under, over, from and for God and start living in communion with Him. "Made of the stuff of spiritual classics and presented in simple, contemporary terms, Skye Jethani does each of us a great service in calling us to reimagine the way we relate to God. We so readily fall prey to living out distortions and reductions to our Christian faith with disastrous consequences. You and I are far more than sinners, consumers, managers, and servants. We are dearly loved by God and made for eternal communion with him. Everything looks different when we live life in response to God's love." -Paul Louis Metzger, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Theology & Theology of Culture, Multnomah Biblical Seminary and author of *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Appendix 3:

Member Covenants

God created people to thrive in the context of a loving community and established the Church as one body with many members, dependent on one another for *mutual discipleship* and growth. Christians serve the same Lord, Jesus Christ, and possess the same Holy Spirit. Each person is equipped to build up the life of the community in some way (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). As brothers and sisters in Christ, believers are meant to walk together on the journey of faith, encouraging one another and spurring each other on to good works (see Hebrews 10:24-25). Recognizing God's intention for the Church, my own need for fellowship, and my calling to build up other believers, I am committed to living out my faith through *intentional community* with a Life Group over the next 35 weeks. As part of a Life Group, I will do the following:

1. I will develop a personal Rule of Life in conversation with my Life Group, and commit to practicing it through the duration of the Life Group.
2. I will have another member of the Life Group (besides my spouse, if I have one) be a "Spiritual Friend" who will hold me accountable and give me the support I need to live out my personal Rule of Life. I will meet and/or speak with this person at least once a week through the duration of the Life Group. (This will be sorted out in Weeks 3-4; see above.)
3. I will commit to meeting biweekly with my Life Group for study and fellowship; I will miss no more than 2 of these biweekly sessions, and will make my Group Leader(s) aware of my absence in advance.
4. I will commit to participating in Fun and Service Activities, Generosity Challenges, and Prayer Meetings with my Life Group; I will miss no more than 2 of these events, and will make my Group Leader aware of my absence in advance.
5. I will complete all reading assignments prior to biweekly fellowship nights.
6. I will treat others in my Life Group with a spirit of grace, patience and understanding, so that everyone might feel comfortable being honest and vulnerable with the Group.
7. I will be willing to receive correction and admonishment from my members of my Life Group should I fail to keep any of these commitments, or falter in the practicing of my Rule of Life.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____