



E N J O Y I N G G O D

In January, *Live* magazine sat down with **Ken Shigematsu** to talk about why having a rule of life matters.

Q

Did you always consider yourself to be contemplative?

A: I'm not a naturally contemplative person – my mind defaults to a busy state...I was a 7/11 man in Tokyo working from 7 a.m.–11 p.m. in the corporate world – so things were pretty crazy. I eventually became a pastor in Vancouver, but I found myself keeping almost as busy and felt like I was constantly treading water.

One day my mentor Leighton Ford invited me to join him on a pilgrimage in Ireland. While there I learned about this way of life that the monks described as a rule of life and enabled them to experience God in all their lives – not just while praying in the chapel. Through this rule of life, they were able to experience God in their everyday work, their relationships, their rest – their everything. Learning about this rule of life paved the long path to a contemplative life.

Q: In the book, you talk about how there's a contemplative (a nun) in each of us. How do we discover her?

A: You don't need to go on a pilgrimage to Ireland or experience a crisis to have a spiritual awakening. Anything that gets us out of our self-absorption can help to awaken the contemplative in us. Worshipping in community, becoming more fully present to God by exposing ourselves to beauty – art, music, nature – can help foster a sense of being part of something larger than ourselves.

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Q: What is a rule of life and why is having a rule of life so important?

A: The root meaning of the word *rule* in this context— is *trellis*. A trellis is a structure that supports a grapevine so that it receives more sunlight, can be pruned and guided in its growth so that it ultimately produces better grapes and wines.

A rule of life is a structure or rhythm that supports our relationship with Jesus, enabling us to experience more of Him – His character, His life, His fruit. The rule of life also protects our most important priorities and relationships.

Q: Why does a rule of life matter?

A: It's essential because all of us have so many good ideas [and important values], yet it's hard to live out those ideas week to week. What a rule of life does is arrange our lives so that our most important values are lived out. For example, if you value your relationship with God, you will have something in your rhythm of life that supports that. You won't be thinking and saying one thing and living something else.



**God In My Everything:
How An Ancient Rhythm
Helps Busy People Enjoy
God** by Ken Shigematsu
launches our book club
program for 2022.

Q: What are some of the barriers to setting up and sustaining a rule of life?

A: A huge barrier is trying to cram too much into your rule of life and feeling like your life is heavier, more burdensome.

If you see having this rule of life as a competition, a status symbol or a way of boosting yourself in the eyes of God, it will feel burdensome. But if you see it as an invitation – to do what, deep down, you want to do – then it becomes a joy. It will be transformational and sustainable.

There's a direct connection between being exposed to the love and beauty of Jesus and bringing that love and beauty and justice to our homes, work, church and the world.

The key to sustainability is to make sure that your rule is a Spirit-inspired rhythm that will make your life feel lighter. So, start small and keep it simple. Find one practice that will fill you with joy and contentment in God. Then find another practice that connects you to others in relationship or service. Experiment and be gentle with yourself.

Q: What can we “do” to dismantle these barriers?

A: The goal is not to have a “balanced life” (which is often impossible) but to have a deeply centred life in the love of Christ and in response to God's call for us. Sometimes our calling will involve sacrificial service

on behalf of our family. There may be other times when we'll be called to serve the larger world on mission. The key is responding to how God, the Father, is leading us.

So, let's pray that our life isn't driven out of a misguided need to be heroic but lived as a response to God's call.

Q: What were (are) some of the barriers for you and how did (do) you dismantle them?

A: I can feel like there are 126 monkeys in my head at any one time. So, I have two practices that help me to tame my busy thoughts. When I practice centering prayer, I consciously breathe in and out and repeat a passage or a word from Scripture to quiet myself before the Lord. I also do an early morning run through my neighbourhood or swim a local pool. The rhythmic motion of running or swimming help me feel more in synch with God and serve to still my mind.

Q: You say that having a rule of life – that trellis – helps us to reach out in the areas of justice and witness. Tell us more.

A: There's a direct connection between being exposed to the love and beauty of Jesus and bringing that love and beauty and justice to our homes, work, church and the world. The more that we are in tune with God, the more we will have to offer others. Compassion, joy, love will flow out from us. As we are *with* God – we will be *for* others.

Q: What do you want Baptist women to take away as we read and discuss *God In My Everything*

A: I hope that women will discover the joy and the wonder of being able to experience God not just in their times of formal prayer but in their work, family life, friendships, resting and sleep and play. I hope that they will know the confidence, joy and contentment that come from knowing God in their everything. ①