SMALL GROUP GUIDES - NOVEMBER 8, 2026

Abide in Me - Rule of Life

CONTENTS

This document has three resources: (1) a summary of the sermon (2) a series of discussion questions that expand on the sermon (3) a Bible study that supplements the sermon. You do not have to ask every question in this document. Prepare ahead of time and pick the best ones. Do what works for you in the time you have available.

SERMON SUMMARY

Spiritual growth doesn't happen by accident. Just as athletes train with discipline and purpose, becoming more like Jesus requires intentional effort and a plan. In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Paul reminds us of the importance of spiritual training. As we conclude our Abide in Me series, we'll explore how developing a "Rule of Life"—a purposeful pattern of spiritual practices—can help us move beyond good intentions and develop daily habits that shape our hearts, deepen our relationship with God, and transform us into the likeness of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SERMON (ASK THE ONES THAT FIT YOUR GROUP)

1. What habits of Jesus—prayer, fasting, sabbath, simplicity, or others—have you been able to incorporate into your life recently? How is it going: difficult, easy, or surprising? How is it changing you?
2. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul uses the examples of running and boxing. Give an example of something, sports or otherwise, that you have trained for. What was your training like? Did you achieve what you set out to do? What was the prize?
3. Phil is challenging us each to write a Rule of Life. Have you heard of a "Rule of Life" before? Do you have one or something similar? What rules do you already live by?
4. Who or what rules does secular society use to measure us? Are they beneficial or detrimental? What are the earthly prizes?
5. The goal of the "Rule of Life" is to live more like Jesus. How do we measure ourselves against Jesus? What role does the Holy Spirit play? What is the goal or prize we are training for?
6. Without having much time to think or pray on your "Rule" yet, what are some ideas you have for your Rule—daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly? What are some ways you can stick to your rules?

BIBLE STUDY

Phil preached about the importance of intentional spiritual training and developing a "Rule of Life"—a purposeful pattern of spiritual practices that helps us grow in Christlikeness. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 and Galatians 6:15–16, then discuss the following questions.

1. In 1 Corinthians 9:24–25, Paul compares the Christian life to an athlete preparing for competition. What qualities are necessary for an athlete to succeed? How do those same qualities apply to our spiritual lives?
2. Paul points out that athletes train for a crown that will not last, while Christians pursue a crown that lasts forever. How should an eternal perspective influence the way we prioritize our time, energy, and spiritual growth?
3. In verse 26, Paul says he does not run aimlessly or fight like a boxer beating the air. What does this imagery teach us about the importance of having a clear purpose in our spiritual lives? In what ways can our spiritual growth become aimless?
4. Paul emphasizes discipline and training in verse 27. What is the difference between trying to become more like Jesus and training to become more like Him? Why do you think good intentions alone often fail to produce lasting spiritual growth?
5. Phil introduced the concept of a "Rule of Life," describing it as a purposeful pattern of spiritual practices. How is a Rule of Life different from a list of religious rules or obligations? How might it help us develop a deeper relationship with God?
6. In Galatians 6:15–16, Paul emphasizes becoming a new creation rather than simply following external religious requirements. How does this passage help us understand the difference between spiritual formation and legalism? Why is that distinction important when developing spiritual disciplines?
7. Phil shared that his Rule of Life includes intentional spiritual practices on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. What are some practices that have helped you grow closer to God? Are there areas of your spiritual life that would benefit from greater consistency or intentionality?
8. Spiritual disciplines often require us to act regardless of how motivated we feel. Why is consistency important in spiritual formation? How can we maintain discipline while also extending ourselves grace when we fall short?
9. Phil encouraged us to move beyond good intentions by developing a written plan for spiritual growth. Visit *mrcc.org/abide* for tools to help creeate your own Rule of Life.

Heavenly Father, help us move beyond good intentions and be intentional in our spiritual growth. May our daily choices reflect our desire to abide in You, allowing You to transform our hearts and guide our lives.