

# The New City Regula

*community pathways for abiding in Jesus*



*I am the vine; you are the branches.  
Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,  
for apart from me you can do nothing.  
- Jesus, John 15:5*

## “What is a “regula”?”

“Regula” is a Latin word associated with the concept of a “trellis,” for holding up branches of a vine and promoting growth. It is a word used in ancient times by Christians to describe a structured framework (like a



on which life with Jesus can grow organically. A “regula” is an aid to help us graciously receive what Jesus has for us. “Regula” can also be translated “rule” and these same ancient Christians incorporated this into what was historically called a “rule of life.” This was not referring to “keeping rules” but to a way of life that is intentionally measured in its abiding in Jesus. The fruit of this abiding is deepening joy, honesty, strength, and freedom. **In the New City community, we want this deepening joy, honesty, strength, and freedom in Christ for everyone.**

We all continually need grace and a “regula” or “rule” is a cluster of simple pathways for receiving grace. To that end, we invite you to consider adopting some or all of the pathways in this “Regula” with the goal of increasing flourishing at the personal and community level.

## **The good news of the Gospel**

New City Church is a community defined by the good news that God has taken loving initiative in Jesus Christ to bring salvation to sinners and a sin-marred world. Through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, the restoration of all things has begun, starting with those who admit their need and trust his gracious provision. This is the good news of the gospel!

This has radical implications for Jesus’s followers. The Scripture teaches that through trust in Christ we become “united” to Jesus in his death, resurrection, and current life. This union is accomplished by God, preserved by God, and delighted in by God. In Jesus we get ... everything! The Apostle Paul captured this with these words:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ...” (Ephesians 1:3)*

This “blessing” is a current reality anchored in heaven by God for us. As part of this blessing, Paul goes on to mention things like “adoption ... redemption... forgiveness ... an inheritance...and the [gift of the] Holy Spirit.” These are all things we already have because of union with Christ.

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***In Jesus we get everything  
and there is always more to enjoy!***

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Even though we possess all this richness, our experience of it waxes and wanes in the midst of sin, normal busyness, and neglect. Even without these distractions, the grandeur of what we have in union with Christ is much bigger than our capacity to take it in. This means there is always more of Jesus to enjoy than we have already enjoyed! This is why Paul prays for these same Christians who are already “blessed” by union with Christ:

*... that ... God...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe...(Ephesians 1:17-19)*

He is praying that, by the power of the Holy Spirit:

- we come to know more of what we already know,
- we come to see more of what we already see,
- we come to grasp more of what we already grasp, and that
- we come to hope more in that which we already hope.

Since the greatness of Jesus is “immeasurable,” there is always more to bring into our lives and every circumstance is an opportunity to do so. Because the Ephesian Christians already “had” Jesus, the Apostle wants them to *have more* of the practical experience of his presence in their lives! The Apostle Paul longs for them to understand and practically enjoy more of this loving union with Jesus, which will bring joy to them and glory to God. The same offer extends to us!

How do we pursue this? Perhaps Jesus himself said it most clearly when issued this simple invitation in John 15:

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing...As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

This could be described as “passive activity.” The Holy Spirit empowers us to actively “abide” or dwell in Christ, and particularly in his love for us. The result is the fruit of love being born in and through our life. This is activity on our part but is not activity that

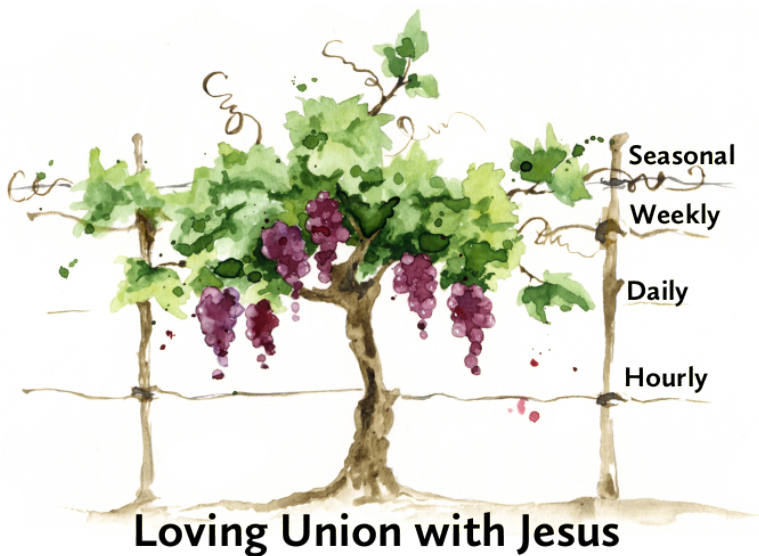
**Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort.**

-Dallas Willard

earns anything. This is an activity of trust that places us before God so that he may change us.

In the New City community we believe there are simple pathways that can aid us in abiding in our loving union with Jesus. There is no “merit” in engaging these pathways. God will not love you more if you do these, though your appreciation of his love may grow. This is also not a competition between followers of Jesus. In fact, we hope other followers of Jesus will be encouragers and cheerleaders to you in these pathways—as you are for them. These pathways are simply structured ways we intentionally bring ourselves before God so that he can change us by his grace. This does not require any sort of superhuman effort – only the grace already given to us where we are. We only do what we can do.

We encourage you to consider four types of paths to aid in your deepening delight of loving union with Jesus. These paths are hourly, daily, weekly, and seasonal. Engage one, some, or all and in the order that is most helpful. These paths are both inflexible (we need these) and flexible (structured to be able to adapt to your situation). Specific examples are given but we encourage you to experiment to see what is most fruitful in your own life. Further, we encourage you to share your journey with others. This will help mutual encouragement as we journey together in community and give us common language for doing so.



Consider adopting or adapting any or all of the following pathways (pages 6-10). Once you have begun, feel free to experiment with them to find what both challenges you AND fits with your life.

Remember, the goal is not “perfection” or winning or competing. The goal is abiding in our loving union with Jesus Christ right where you are.

# Hourly Pathway

We pause to acknowledge our loving union with Jesus approximately once per hour or at some frequent interval through the day.

The process:

Pause for a few seconds each hour, then

Thoughtfully engage **ONE** of the following:

1. A Bible verse:
  - a) Gal 2:20
  - b) Rom 8:1
  - c) 2 Cor 5:17
  - d) A Scripture of your choice
  
2. A short prayer or confession:
  - a) "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner. You are merciful to me!"
  - b) "I am not alone. By your Spirit, I am in you and you are in me. My Heavenly Father is generous, and I do not have to grasp or strive."
  - c) A redemptive phrase of your choice that leads back to loving union with Christ.
  
3. A question to ask ourselves:
  - a) What story am I in right now?
  - b) How am I tempted to live like an orphan right now?
  - c) Another redemptive question of your choice that leads to loving union with Christ.

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**How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.  
What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are  
doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for  
catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand  
and labor with both hands at sections of time.**

*~ Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life* ~*

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# Daily Pathways

These are pathways developed daily which lead to natural experiences of grace. Here we “do only what we can do” rather than attempting heroic feats of discipline. This is a simple habit cluster of silence, word, prayer, and blessing practiced daily.

Best practice: For anything in the morning, do this *before* checking your phone (this alone will set you apart from 2/3 of Americans who check their phones within 5 minutes of waking!). This allows God’s thoughts to be your first thoughts in the day rather than the world and schedule chaos.

## Silence (a few moments of calm)

1. Remove all technology and distraction from your environment
2. Pause for at least 2 minutes
3. Focus on your own breathing and recognize any internal “noise”
4. Notice any place in your body you are feeling or carrying stress
5. Acknowledge that God is present with you

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*All of humanity's problems stem from man's  
inability to sit quietly in a room alone.*

~ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* ~

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## Scripture (listen to God)

Pause for a moment and intentionally make your heart receptive to what you are about to hear. Then, engage the speaking voice of God in His Scripture in **ONE** of the following ways:

- Reflectively read a portion of Scripture (1-3 times/day)  
This can be following any number of reading plans, slowly reading through a book of the Bible, or practicing a form of meditative Scripture reading. Or,
- Reflectively listen to a portion of Scripture (1-3 times/day)  
Most Bible apps have an option for listening to the Bible read. Or,
- Listen to the Daily Liturgy Podcast  
If you choose this, resist the temptation of getting distracted by your phone.

## Prayer (talk to God)

**Conversational Prayer:** Pause in a specific bodily position 1-3 times/day (kneeling, standing with lifted hands, lying face down on the floor – really, anything but sitting). For at least 60-90 seconds engage the following pattern. If this seems too packed, choose a different one of these each time. If you have another established form of prayer, feel free to substitute it as well.

1. **Adoration** - Identify an attribute of God and give him praise
2. **Confession** - Confess any sin, temptation, or weakness that you are struggling with or anticipate struggling with in the near future
3. **Thanksgiving** – Sincerely give thanks for at least one person or circumstance
4. **Supplication** - Ask for help for yourself or another person(s)

**Prayer of Examen:** Practice an end-of-day prayer of examination by either:

- Simply confessing any known sin and be assured of forgiveness in Jesus. Or,
- More in depth - think through your interactions with persons and situations in the day in light of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), or the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), or the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-24). Confess any sin that was exposed, ask for forgiveness, ask for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit moving forward, and be assured of God's forgiveness.

## Bless (encourage another)

Everyone around you is made in the image of God and, if a follower of Jesus, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is shaping them ever so slowly to be like Jesus. While it is easy to focus on the negative, it is biblical to intentionally identify and encourage that which is redemptive and good. Intentionally bless or encourage another person through **one** of the following means:

**Encourage one another daily...that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

~Hebrews 3:13~

- Identify evidence of God's grace in their life and encourage them in it by telling them you are thankful for it. Be as specific as possible.
- Tell someone of your appreciation of something they have done or a quality they embody.
- Pray for a person in a specific way and tell them about it.
- Express your affection to someone with specific words.
- Take genuine interest in someone by asking questions and offering to pray for them.
- Share with someone about the good news of the gospel (review page 2).



## Weekly Pathways

These are a few life-giving practices that occur every week. Here, because of the length between repetition, we must make intentional effort and often plan ahead to engage them most fruitfully.

### Weekly Worship (attend Sunday worship)

- Get adequate sleep the night before.
- Wake in time to not be hurried getting to worship.
- Pray before arriving and ask the Lord to prepare your heart for Christ-exalting worship.
- Arrive a bit early and peruse the worship booklet.
- Give yourself to singing, responsive reading, and active listening in the sermon.
- If serving in the nursery, choose to attend the alternate service time. If you are elsewhere, make it a priority to join an in-person service at a church in the town you are visiting.
- Plan travel and activity around weekly worship.

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*You have made us for Yourself, O Lord,  
and our heart is restless until it rests in You.*

*~ Augustine of Hippo, Confessions ~*

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### Sabbath (embrace the creational rhythm)

- Intentionally rest and worship for one 24-hour period (for many this will include Sunday worship).

### Fellowship (share life with another outside your own household)

- Intentional fellowship beyond Sunday morning worship. This could be in Community Group, a meal with others, or coffee where you take a genuine interest in another and allow them to ask questions of you.

# Seasonal Pathways

These are seasons of the year or annual events where we give special attention to particular desires or focus.

## **Advent** (the 4 weeks before Christmas)

Focus on intentional generosity of time, words, prayer, and gifts with special attentiveness to an unhurried pace. Consider adopting some advent reading guide for you and/or your family.

## **Lent** (the 40 days before Easter)

Consider fasting for 40 days from something. This is usually something good and deepens our appreciation, sense of dependence on God, and delight in his good gifts. Ideas: food (bread, alcohol, sweets); practices (watching tv, listening to news, checking phone after work); technology (internet, social media, television, your favorite podcast).

## **Retreat** (extended time with God)

Take a one-day (at least) personal retreat to simply spend time with God. This is not a time for career development or strategic planning. It is simply a time for fellowship with God. If you have a spouse, work to make sure he or she can do this as well.

## **Vacation** (extended time with others)

If possible, take a real vacation (no work, no social media) with friends or family at least once per year. Use this time to focus on thankfulness and attentive listening to others.

## **Fasting** (extended time of self-denial)

In addition to Lent, consider one or multiple seasons in the year where you intentionally do without something good. Many have found fasting from food one day per month (or more) or one day per week for the purpose of prayer to be a beneficial practice.

Find more information and a  
growing list of resources at  
[www.newcity.org/regula](http://www.newcity.org/regula).