

WHYZMEN · REFERENCE · GO DEEPER

Rule of Life & Atomic Habits

A reading guide for the man who wants more

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.”

— Psalm 127:1

HOW TO USE THIS READING

This is a **WhyzMen Going Deeper reference**. It is optional, never assigned, and no one is behind for leaving it on the shelf. You met the Rule of Life and the habit tools in Session 4, and the short version lives in **From Knowing to Doing** in your notebook. This guide is for the man who wants the books behind them.

There are three paths. Pick the one that calls to you, read a chapter a week, and try one idea in your own Rule before you read the next. Reading about habits is not the same as building one.

ABOUT THE SOURCES

Stephen Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life* · **St. Benedict**, *The Rule* · **James Clear**, *Atomic Habits* · **BJ Fogg**, *Tiny Habits* · **Dan McAdams** · **Bill Burnett & Dave Evans** · **Leidy Klotz** · **Greg McKeown** · **Laura Carstensen**

PATH 1

Deepening Your Rule of Life

Crafting a Rule of Life — Stephen A. Macchia

Macchia, Stephen A. *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

What it is. A workbook-style guide to writing your own Rule of Life, with reflection exercises along the way. It works alone, and better in a small group.

Where it meets your Charter. Macchia begins with knowing yourself, which is the ground you covered in Part One of your Charter (§1.1 My Story, §1.2 My Core Values). He then moves from values to daily rhythms, which is the work of your Rule of Life (§3.1c) and Appendix F, Weekly Rhythms & Habits. He ends with community, which your triad already carries.

How to read it. One chapter a week. Do the reflection questions on paper. Notice where your Charter already says what he asks for, and where it is thin.

More from Macchia. His ministry, Leadership Transformations (leadershiptransformations.org), offers free articles and tools on spiritual rhythms.

The Rule of St. Benedict — the source

Kardong, Terrence G. *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.

Macchia's idea of a rule comes from Benedict's sixth-century guide for monastic life. Benedict called it “a little rule for beginners.” It is short, 73 brief chapters, but it was written for monks, and parts of it read that way.

Honestly: start with Macchia. Come to Benedict when you want to see the trellis your own Rule is copied from.

PATH 2

Mastering Atomic Habits

Atomic Habits — James Clear

Clear, James. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. New York: Avery, 2018.

What it is. A practical guide to building habits, drawn from behavioral research and written for the ordinary reader. Small changes, repeated, compound like interest.

Where it meets your Charter:

Part of the book	What it gives you	In your Charter
The Fundamentals (ch. 1–3)	Why small habits compound; habits as votes for the man you are becoming	The guiding sentence of your Rule
1st Law: Make It Obvious (ch. 4–7)	The cue: a time and a place for each practice	The cue for each practice in your Rule
2nd Law: Make It Attractive (ch. 8–10)	Tie the habit to something you want	Your values (§1.2)
3rd Law: Make It Easy (ch. 11–14)	The two-minute rule	The two-minute version of each practice
4th Law: Make It Satisfying (ch. 15–17)	Tracking and the reward of seeing progress	Your Practice of the Week tracker and the 90-Day Checkpoints

How to read it. One chapter a week. Each chapter ends with a short summary; try one idea in your Rule before moving on.

More from Clear. jamesclear.com offers free weekly essays and printable habit-tracking tools.

PATH 3

The Behavioral Science Underneath

Tiny Habits — BJ Fogg

Fogg, BJ. *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019.

What it is. Fogg founded the Behavior Design Lab at Stanford. This book is twenty years of his research made practical.

The key idea. His model, B = MAP: a behavior happens when **Motivation**, **Ability** and a **Prompt** come together at the same moment. When a practice fails, the fix is rarely more willpower. Make it smaller, or give it a better prompt. Clear and Fogg reach many of the same conclusions from different directions.

Three ideas to take from it: anchor each new habit to something you already do (“after I pour my coffee...”); start absurdly small; and celebrate the moment you do it, because the good feeling is what wires it in.

Honestly: Fogg is more technical than Clear. If Clear was enough, you have what you need. The core ideas are already in your Rule.

OPTIONAL BUT EXCELLENT

Supporting Research

Your Charter draws on several streams of research. If you are curious where an idea came from:

Theme	The source	Where it shows up
Your life as a story	McAdams, Dan P. <i>The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self</i> . William Morrow, 1993.	§1.1 My Story; Sessions 5–6
Designing and testing a life	Burnett, Bill, and Dave Evans. <i>Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life</i> . Knopf, 2016.	§2.1 your mission; experiments and the 90-Day Checkpoints
The power of less	Klotz, Leidy. <i>Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less</i> . Flatiron, 2021. · McKeown, Greg. <i>Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less</i> . Crown Business, 2014.	§3.0 My Subtractions
Why the second half narrows toward what matters	Carstensen, Laura L. “The Influence of a Sense of Time on Human Development.” <i>Science</i> 312, no. 5782 (2006): 1913–15.	Session 4 (Being Mortal); the whole second half

Carstensen is academic but short. It explains why, as time horizons shorten, people turn toward fewer, closer relationships and toward meaning.

IF YOU WANT AN ORDER

A Reading Path

Step	Book	How long	Why this order
1	<i>Atomic Habits</i> — Clear	3–4 weeks	Easy, practical, useful the same day
2	<i>Crafting a Rule of Life</i> — Macchia	3–4 months, alongside other reading	The faith frame for the habits
3	<i>Tiny Habits</i> — Fogg	3–4 weeks	The science, once Clear has given you the shape
4	Supporting research	As interest permits	For the man who wants the roots

QUESTIONS TO HOLD WHILE YOU READ

- How does this author define success? Clear stresses progress; Macchia stresses alignment with what God values.
- What is the framework built on: science, faith, or both?
- Where does your Charter already agree with this author? Where would you push back?
- Is there one idea here you have not yet tried in your own Rule?

Wise Men Seek, Knowing Their Why's

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