

Ecology of soul

The Greek word *askeo* means “to take care of something.” An *ascetic* person is one who cares for something. *Ascesis* is a pattern or discipline of caring for something we value deeply. Throughout the Christian tradition the “ascetic life” (in a variety of forms) has been valued as a discipline that guides our life with God and reveals God’s desires for us and the world. Asceticism is not only for monks; it can be an essential part of every follower of Jesus. It is the way we care for our whole being, that wonderful gift of God. It is caring for and being a steward of: thoughts, words, body, mind and spirit, actions, neighbor, and the earth.

It is possible to live on the surface of life in such a way that we lose touch with the deep-structure of life. A *rule of life* will help us be good stewards of our life with God. What is a rule of life and why is it important? A rule of life is like the Torah that Jesus followed as a devout first-century Jew. It is a teacher helping us walk a path in our life with God. It is freely chosen, not coerced. It is a constant reminder of what is most fundamental in life and helps us be single-minded in our desire to love God and our neighbor. A rule of life provides a combination of prayer, study, meditation, and work. It is a discipline that helps us care for our soul (body, mind, and spirit) and make God’s presence tangible in our daily lives. Without a rule of life it is possible that our life with God will get lost or fade in the fast pace, noise, and multiple demands of modern society. If you do not have a rule of life begin with a daily or weekly pattern of two or three practices that you consider basic in caring for your soul. Remember that these practices are not ends in themselves. The purpose is remaining in the company of God, not perfection!

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