

A Good Life

Benedict's Guide to Everyday Joy

by Robert Benson

Study Guide

Chapter 1 *Longing*

1. The author draws the following questions from the Rule of Benedict: "Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?" How would you answer that question? List the things that you yearn for.
2. In this chapter the author writes about how our lives should be balanced between prayer, work, community, and rest. Make a list under each of the four categories and write down at least three activities that would fit under each category. Prioritize these categories in terms of their importance to you. What do you learn about yourself as you look at your priorities?

Chapter 2 *Prayer*

1. On page 27, the author writes, "One of the lessons of the Rule is that prayer is not meant to be an attachment to the life that you live; it is meant to be the center of the life that you live." Reflect on the truth of this statement. How do you react to it? How would you respond to this statement?
2. The author reflects on our saying the Divine Office, "this Work of God offers us the chance to make our lives of prayer larger than our own lives."(p. 22) Reflect on the place that prayer has in your life. How do you pray? How do you react to the challenge of making "our lives of prayer larger than our own lives?"

Chapter 3 *Rest*

1. In Psalm 46:10 we are told, "Be still, and know that I am God; . . ." Where in your life do you cultivate stillness or silence? What is your attitude toward times and places where quietness prevails?
2. The author notes that even the idea of being silent makes most of us nervous or fidgety. He observes on page 39, "We fidget because we know that in order to say yes to our need for silence and rest, we are going to have to say no to some other stuff." How is this true

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for you? What one choice could you make in order to bring silence more into the rhythm of your life?

Chapter 4 *Community*

1. It is important to consider who is in your community. Benson relates on page 50 that, “there are people outside that immediate circle (spouse, children) who count on us to try and say and be something helpful to them from time to time on their journey.” List the names of those people who are in your community of relationships.
2. In talking about community, Benedict stated that, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ. Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly is Christ received.” (p. 45) What is Benedict saying here? What about this statement enlightens you? Disturbs you?

Chapter 5 *Work*

1. Describe the work that you typically do. What is your attitude toward your work? Benedict said, “Every time you begin a good work, you must pray to Him most earnestly to bring it to perfection.” (P. 59) How can this statement help you mature in your attitude toward work?
2. Benson concludes this chapter on page 68 by saying “The work that we do—whatever it is, whatever hat we are wearing, however great or small it may seem to us or to anyone else at the time—is to be done in the service of the Center of the Universe.” Discuss the meaning of this statement. How does it challenge you? How does it describe how you work?

Chapter 6 *Living*

1. On page 73, the author invites the reader to “search the Rule, looking for the principles and the notions and the truths. . .to fashion a way of living...that is ordered and focused by and on the things that really matter.” Take a moment to do that. Once you have a preliminary list, ask God to help you pick one item from that list to make a part of your own personal Rule of Life.
2. Meditate on the page 78 quote from Kazantzakis. “Only he who obeys a rhythm that is superior to his own is free.” What truth do you see in this? How does this truth challenge you? How can it help you move forward?

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