

Hebrews 12:1-2

Following Jesus Together

Introduction: For a few months we've been discussing what Basic Christian Living looks like. We covered The Gospel, the Church, the Scriptures, the Christian standard of living, Discipleship and discipline, Service and mission, Making Jesus our king, Prayer, and Stewardship of our resources.

As we close this series I want to bring us back to the why of all of this. Sometimes we forget what it's all about -we get confused or bogged down in our present journey as Christians because we have begun again to center our lives around ourselves, to live for ourselves. Maybe we are serving God in many practical ways but like Lewis puts it - maybe we're like an honest man paying our taxes but secretly hoping their will be some left over for ourselves. God is calling us to a full devotion to him. I think this confusion happens because we have forgotten why we are here -

remember Paul the Apostle says, **“One has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” -2 Corinthians 5:15**

If we are living any other way as Christians we are going to be miserable, confused, unfulfilled and disillusioned. But as we live out this calling, as we simply follow Jesus, we find Joy, peace, and hope for our lives..

For some this series has been a reminder, a wake up call as to why you are here now, alive and breathing. Follow Jesus, he is not just your savior and Lord - He is the way, the truth, the life!

We did this series because we constantly need to be reminded of who God is and what he has done and to live in response to that. We believe that these beliefs and practices we covered when practiced consistently with the right heart, will bring us into the flourishing that God intends for his people.

We want Refuge Christian Fellowship to be all the Church is meant to be, for the sake of Jesus and the reputation of the Gospel, for our growth and blessing, for our neighbors, community and city. We want you to become all that God intends you to be as his new creation, as a citizen of heaven. As I said in an earlier study - The Scriptures invite us not to simply be our

authentic selves but to become, by God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit upon our will, what he has called us to be; to become what we were created to be.

But this takes all of us to grow up into what God has called us to be -This is a communal effort! (Cannot emphasize enough the importance of being immersed in both the scripture and strong Jesus centered community)

At RCF we practice membership. Meaning we faithfully teach what it means to live in response to God's grace and we seek to hold accountable those who have committed themselves first to Jesus then to our church community.

This is what our commitment to one another looks like:

1. The Elders of Refuge Christian Fellowship Covenant -As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures. We Covenant:

1. To live our lives as examples of Jesus, the great shepherd, by imitating his self sacrificial life and love and by continually pointing you to him.
2. To appoint Elders and Deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
3. To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
4. To care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16 Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

5. To provide sound teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
6. To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
7. To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
8. To lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
9. To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).
 - 9.1. We will strive to fulfill these responsibilities with humility, courage and faithfulness, knowing that **“We are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” -Hebrews 13:17** Following the example of that great shepherd of the sheep - The Lord Jesus Christ

2. **Biblical Obligations of the Members to Refuge Christian**

Fellowship -As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Romans 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith in Jesus Christ produces-

- 2.1. I covenant: To submit to the Scripture as God's truthful word and the final authority for life and Godliness (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- 2.2. To Follow Jesus Christ, to submit to him as my true King and to pursue a deeper commitment to him through regular Bible reading/study, prayer, fellowship and the practice of spiritual disciplines (Matthew 5-7; Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- 2.3. To follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church: by being baptized after my conversion and by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper.
- 2.4. To regularly participate in the life of Refuge Christian Fellowship by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those inside and outside of this church community (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23- 25; Titus 3:14).
- 2.5. To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- 2.6. By God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
- 2.7. I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex

and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1- 8; Hebrews 13:4).

- 2.8. I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation before pursuing a biblically grounded divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1- 12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
- 2.9. I will refrain from sinful behavior and lifestyles as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- 2.10. I will refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23). And to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present an occasion for another to sin (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- 2.11. To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by: following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
- 2.12. To receive righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- 2.13. To do the following when I sin: confess my sin to God and to fellow believers, repent, and seek help to put my sin to death. (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- 2.14. To submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).

2.15. To do the following should I leave the church for the right reasons: to speak with an elder or church leader and to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a follower of Jesus.

Conclusion: What God commands, He commands because it is how life works best, and this is what brings the most blessing and wholeness, growth and maturity to our lives both communally and personally. When we trust him and obey we give him the honor and worship that he deserves as our great God and King.

At the same time Counter Formation is the hardest thing a human being will ever set out to do and that's why it takes the Spirit of the Living God working on us from the inside out and a community of people surrounding us by faithfully loving us and telling us the truth. It's a lifetime project. We believe God has called us to follow Jesus in deep community with one another.

I hope that from this series you walk away with a deep conviction to

- 1. Follow in the way of Jesus**
- 2. Practice the Spiritual Disciplines (talked about in this series)**
- 3. To do both in deep community with one another**

“I wonder if anything is more urgent today, for the honor of Christ and for the spread of the gospel, than that the church should be, and should be seen to be, what by God's purpose and Christ's achievement it already is- a single new humanity, a model of human community, a family of reconciled brothers and sisters who love their Father and love each other, the evident dwelling place of God by His Spirit. Only then will the world believe in Christ as peacemaker. Only then will God receive the glory due to His name. - John Stott, The Living Church