**Different; How then should the Church Live?**

**Matthew 5:17-20; Shaped by the Word**

As a part of the Evangelical Covenant Denomination, we embrace the affirmation that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament is the Word of God and is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.

It is essential, then, to the life of the church that we are shaped by the powerful and living word of God.

However, if we are not shaped by the Word, we will be shaped by the world.

While we say that our lives our centered around the Word, we don’t really live this way.

* Only 11% of all adults read their Bible each day.
* Over 60% of all adults read their Bible less than a few times a year to none at all.
* Less than half of all worship attendees actually read their Bible. For the majority, the only time American adults hear from Scripture is when someone else is reading it to them.

**Matthew 5:17-20**

Jesus’ purpose was to fulfill the Scriptures, not diminish them. However, Jesus teaches us that we have to be shaped by the *ENTIRITY* of the Word.

* We don’t get to throw out parts that you don’t like or make you feel uncomfortable.
* We are not the defining voice to decide what parts of Scripture are valid and what isn’t relevant.

As God speaks through Scripture we discover, it is all necessary to reveal God’s purpose and overarching mission to bring redemption and restoration to all.

While Jesus does fulfill *ALL* Scriptures; God’s Word doesn’t need to be supplemented.

**Matthew 11:28-30**

Jesus is addressing the Pharisees and the teachers of the Laws who have created additional boundaries and barriers for what it looks like to be in a relationship with God. Jesus is providing us an invitation to take off all the excess, to remove all these additional expectations and requirements and just find rest in Him.

As a church, when we begin with behavior as a requirement, we have created a MORE theology.

We unintentionally create the narrative that we do not believe that Jesus is enough. We don’t believe that Jesus, the living Word, will set them free (Galatians 5:1) The Church should be a place where we find rest and find healing through Jesus.

Responses:

1. Are you shaped by the word or the world? Do you need to commit and prioritize God’s word daily in your life?
2. Do you need to embrace the fullness and entirety of Scripture (and not pick and choose which passages to validate or toss out)?
3. Do you need to let go of some of your expectations and requirements that you have placed on others? Will you allow God’s word to shape someone, not your own agenda or expectations?