

## Restoration Revisited (12): Conclusion of the Whole Matter

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### I. Introduction

- A. On one of my trips to Ukraine, we did a training seminar for church leaders
1. People came from all over Ukraine, some riding a train for 20 hours
    - a. My role was to teach on the church (“*Church is not a building*”)
    - b. Afterward, my translator Pavil and I did a question/answer session
    - c. Pavil didn’t translate one question, “*I said church is not building*”
  2. Right before a presentation, missionary from Kiev shows up to argue
    - a. Don’t argue with preacher before sermon (after is annoying enough)
    - b. He had driven several hours to accuse me/us of false doctrine
      - 1) **Communion**: He’d heard Zhitomir used only one cup... of wine
      - 2) **Women**: We were using female translators in our meetings
    - c. He challenged me and when I wouldn’t engage, he left in a huff
    - d. He was there to confront the false teachers and that’s what he did
  3. His view of truth? He had it and anyone who differed didn’t have it.
- B. Today we conclude “*Restoration Revisited: Being the NT Church Today*”
1. We’ve been looking at what it means to be the NT church today
  2. Before we look ahead, let’s look back to how we got to where we are
    - a. Our roots are in a series of frontier revivals that began around 1800
    - b. It was during a time of religious fervor, *Second Great Awakening*
      - 1) Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians attended revivals together
      - 2) Once meetings ended, church traditions again kept them apart
  3. Movement began to unite believers into one church (Stone-Campbell)
    - a. Traditions and creeds kept Christians apart, so let’s get rid of them
    - b. There were two important points—one our **goal**; other our **method**
      - 1) The **goal** of movement was Christian unity (“*polar star*,” Stone)
      - 2) The method of was “*restoration of the ancient order*” (Campbell)
    - c. We were a back-to-the-Bible unity movement—some old slogans  
*In essentials—UNITY. In non-essentials—LIBERTY. In all things-- CHARITY*  
*We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent*  
*We do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names.*

- C. The problem was that it never worked. Can't agree on what is essential
1. There was never-ending list of potential essential issues to argue about *Bible Societies and Stained Glass. Cups and Classes. Pianos and Paid Preacher*
    - a. Where did we get those issues? We disagreed on what Bible said
    - b. Quest for unity was lost in tussles over truth & became uniformity
      - 1) Dozens of divisions of unity movement claim to be **THE** church
      - 2) Professor, "*Some views need only to be explained to be refuted*"
  2. I'm not ready to give up on Restoration, but we do need to refocus it
    - a. I think we got some things right; many community churches think so
      - 1) **Autonomy**: Nothing between the local and universal church
      - 2) **Baptism**: Stress believer baptism as part of a faith response
      - 3) **Communion**: The importance of a regular, weekly communion
      - 4) **Shepherds**: The church led locally by a plurality of church elders
    - b. Denominational affiliation has never mattered less... except to us!
- D. We've stressed restoration as work of God (**Psa 14:7, 51:12, 80:2, 85:4**)
1. We don't restore the church system; God restores us through his grace
    - a. Our best efforts are filthy rags; we'll get many things messed up
    - b. God restores us! We don't figure out the way—Jesus is the way
  2. Wes McAdams: Bible as kids listening to Dad and Mom on phone
    - a. They all get different ideas about what the conversation is about
      - 1) They are hearing only one side of the conversation (like us)
      - 2) They are different ages with different life issues (like us)
    - b. Would it be surprising that they had different ideas of conversation?
    - c. **Point**: Dad is still Dad; flaws/differences doesn't impact relationship
      - 1) Aren't we all flawed in how we understand Bible? And obey it?
      - 2) Same for church; there is no restored NT church (*even in NT*)
    - d. Restoration is what God does **above** us, Christ **for** us, Spirit **in** us
  3. **Point**: Church that thinks it has restored the NT pattern WON'T change
    - a. Church following Jesus routinely tears up tradition to follow better
    - b. That is uncomfortable and unsettling, but it's absolutely necessary
    - c. What specifically might we need to rethink and tear up to follow?

## II. Suggestions

A. **First**, we must rethink the ways we exclude half of our membership

1. There are two different theories on selecting people for worship
  - a. **Giftedness**: Only people who have a gift should get near a mic
    - 1) In some churches, preacher and worship have all speaking parts
    - 2) Church in Memphis: Radio announcer did all announcements
  - b. **Participation**: More people participate, more people feel a part
    - 1) That's what we do; we want as many to participate as will
    - 2) The more someone is active, the more likely they will feel a part
    - 3) Exceptions are singing and preaching; a bit of gift there is nice
2. We come down on side of participation... but only for men! Why
  - a. *"We just go by the Bible and Bible says only men speak in church"*
    - 1) Women prayed (**1 Cor 11:5**). Don't be disruptive (**1 Cor 14:35**)
    - 2) Bible say women can't teach but can comment? (**1 Tim 2:11-12**).
    - 3) We need to follow the Bible on spiritual authority; this isn't that!
  - b. This is about who gets to participate... and an unchallenged tradition
    - 1) No one thinks they're under authority of one who passes tray
    - 2) No one is under the authority of song leader—I'm certainly not
    - 3) Are you under the authority of scripture or one reading it
    - 4) We have women doing PowerPoint—that controls whole service
3. We're not talking about leadership; we are talking about participation
  - a. That would be a study—what's spiritual authority and who has it?
  - b. Do only elders have spiritual authority? Do I (preacher) have any?
    - 1) Years ago, sister would pull out a songbook if she disagreed
    - 2) Some have mentally done that today! Disagree and stop listen?
    - 3) Do I have authority? If not, then why can't sister do what I do?
  - c. But the question I'm asking is NOT about spiritual authority—  
*Will we continue to deny women a role in public worship based on tradition?*
    - 1) Does denying women a visible role in worship reflect Jesus?
    - 2) Denying women a visible role keeps some from seeing him
4. Is our comfortable tradition really uplifting Christ (**Gal 3:27-28**)

B. **Second**, we need to rethink what it means to be the church today

1. As a kid, I loved book and movie *Born Free* (*can still sing theme song*)
  - a. Elsa was orphaned lioness, destined to live behind bars in a zoo
  - b. Lions in a zoo are powerful, majestic but not equipped for wild
  - c. Adamson's taught Elsa how live free in the wild—hunt and survive
2. Have we become Elsa in the zoo? Are we no longer able to be in wild?
  - a. Church life revolves this building. Here we're safe. And we're fed.
  - b. Outsiders can come to the zoo and observe church... in a cage
    - 1) But the cage makes us ill-equipped to live out in the wild
    - 2) Church is supposed to equip us to serve in wild (**Eph 4:11-12**)
  - c. Do we need Pavil to remind us all, "*Church is not building.*"
3. The ministry of Jesus was done mostly done out there in the wild.
  - a. His miracles were done out in the wild when he met people in need
  - b. His teaching was also done in wild (*Nicodemus/Samaritan woman*)
    - 1) Sure, there are many times that Jesus taught in the synagogue
    - 2) That was also in the wild, surround by the hyenas (Pharisees)
  - c. If we're to follow Jesus, it must be in the wild, outside these walls
4. What might that mean exactly? Let me suggest a few things—
  - a. **Intentional Gatherings**: What is the purpose of our gatherings?
    - 1) Are our gatherings meeting a purpose or continuing a tradition?
    - 2) Bailey: If not there not 18 kids from outside Denbigh at VBS...
  - b. **Personal Connections**: We need to ramp up service in community
    - 1) We've transitioned there (Thrive, 5 Loaves, Menchville House)
    - 2) We need to be out in the wild, not just sending our money there
  - c. **Faith Outside the Box**: Must take our faith out into the wild
    - 1) This may take some real thinking outside the box... like Jesus
    - 2) What about a group study (4-6) meeting at Starbucks? Or a bar?
      - a) Or families hosting a study in their neighborhood for neighbors
      - b) Maybe not a study; maybe a block party! Jesus was a party guy!
    - 3) That's not how to do church! It may be how we follow Jesus!

### III. Conclusion

- A. Can we live the “Restoration Movement” today? That depends
  - 1. Restoration is always an act of God; he is the one who restores
    - a. Restoration is not uncovering a code and finding hidden way
    - b. Restoration is fixing our eyes on Jesus as the way, truth, life
  - 2. One other thing is essential to be a Restoration Movement
    - a. We must MOVE! We can’t camp on where the past brought us
    - b. We can’t be settlers who camp on positions/practices of part
    - c. We must be pilgrims, traveling to the undiscovered country
  - 3. That often not popular; pilgrims are the ones with arrows in back
- B. Do we want restoration? Are we willing for God to restore us?
  - 1. If we do, then there is one thing we must give up... CONTROL
  - 2. Are you willing to go wherever it is that God leads you today?