

LET US KEEP THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT GOING

The Restoration Movement is an effort to restore and maintain Biblical authority. Through it we have a collection of guiding principles and mottoes designed to keep us close to God through his Word. Many leaders of Restoration Movement congregations and perhaps most members of Restoration Movement churches are unaware of the history and the guiding principles that brought them where they are today in their relationship with God.

INTRODUCTION

I was baptized on April 10, 1956 at the young age of ten. I was a member of a Restoration Movement church. My preacher immediately taught me how to study the Bible and how to live the Christian life. He challenged me to become a preacher. His challenge led me to attend a Bible college and serve God full-time.

When I was a teenager, my home church abandoned the principles of the Restoration Movement. The results were very bad. That was when I understood the importance of respecting Biblical authority which is the main principle behind the Restoration Movement.

My home church adopted a liberal view of the Bible, dismissed my Bible believing preacher and became part of a denominational government organization called the *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. The things I observed taught me a good lesson about church government. The higher authorities in this new denomination replaced our Bible believing preacher with a preacher who had a very liberal view of the Bible. This new preacher believed all miracles in the Bible were myths. When I understood the effects of liberalism on church doctrine and its disrespect of the Bible, I left my home congregation and went to a different Restoration Movement congregation six miles away that still believed in the authority of the Bible.

The Disciples of Christ organization managed to turn a Restoration Movement convention into a denomination that controlled the churches which attended it. They took control of several Restoration Movement mission sending organizations and instituted liberal practices on the mission field. They took control of Bible colleges and trained preachers to disrespect the authority of the Bible.

Individuals, missionaries and congregations who believed in the authority of the Bible fled from the organization. They replaced the institutions controlled by the Disciples of Christ with new Bible colleges, new mission sending organizations and new conventions. These new para-church organizations were limited to promoting fellowship, encouraging one another and facilitating evangelism. They were carefully organized in a way that would not take away the autonomy of the local congregation.

I have struggled to understand how leaders within the Restoration Movement can bring about division and stray away from clear Biblical teachings. *It seems that all believe the Bible is inspired by God through the work of the Holy Spirit.* However, within the Restoration Movement, there are two different ways to interpret this simple statement. Some say that the Bible **is** the Word of God. Others say that the Bible **contains** the Word of God. These two statements may sound as if they say the same thing, but they do not. The first one says that everything recorded in the Bible is the Word of God. The second statement says that the Bible is a record of man's experience with God and it contains some things that are the Word of God.

Let me explain the difference in another way. I recently learned that there is a motto (guiding principle) circulating in the Restoration Movement that did not originate from those who started the movement. This motto was started in the 1600's (about two hundred years before the Restoration Movement). It was never one of the mottos of those who started the Restoration Movement. I am guilty of using it out of ignorance since I did not know its true meaning. The motto says, *"In essentials unity, in opinions liberty, and in all things love."* It came about through an effort to bring peace between followers of Martin Luther, followers of John Calvin, Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc. in the 1600's.

The purpose of this motto was to bring peace between denominations that were condemning each other over doctrinal differences. All denominations could agree on a few essentials such as the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior.

Beyond those basic truths, few could agree on other issues because of their prejudices and their view of Biblical authority.

The problem with this motto is that someone has to decide what is essential and what is not essential in the Bible. When someone believes that "*the Bible contains the Word of God*" but is not totally the Word of God, that gives him the authority to decide which teachings in the Bible are the Word of God (which teachings are essential), and which teachings are the ideas of the men who wrote the Bible (not essential). This liberal attitude toward Biblical authority opens up all kinds of possibilities for disagreement and false teachings.

This 40 page booklet is an effort to briefly explain the following:

- (1) The circumstances that brought about the Restoration Movement in America.
- (2) The authority of the Bible and how different views of this issue are directly related to the circumstances that brought about the Restoration Movement and the three divisions within the movement.
- (3) How a leader's view point on the authority of the Bible will directly impact the doctrine of the church and the government of the church.
- (4) How history has repeated itself and continues to repeat itself as leaders make the same mistakes over and over again causing division that often involves false teachings.
- (5) That the mistake often made by leaders is to ignore the authority of the Bible through neglect and human reasoning.
- (6) How an ongoing, faithful, careful and thoughtful following of the principles of the Restoration Movement can avoid these problems.

Please note that the information presented in this booklet will not be organized in the order listed above. However, these issues will be observed in history, documented occasionally and explained as the information is presented.

I have read several books that document and explain the Restoration Movement. The facts presented in this booklet are taken from two books which I read as I prepared to write this booklet. They are listed below:

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON RESTORATION HISTORY, Morris Wormack, College Press, 1988. *(Morris Wormack has taught and written about the Restoration Movement for many years)*

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RESTORATION MOVEMENT, Michael Hines, self-published, 2014. *(Michael Hines taught Church History and Restoration History on the college and seminary level for 40 years)*