

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

"Come As You Are ... Leave Changed!"

Burning Question #25

What Is The Restoration Movement? (2)

Matthew 16:13-19; John 17:1-26

July 16, 2017

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Saturday 7/15 Clean Up: Carol Hill

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Matthew 16:13-19 (NASB)

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." **15** He *said* to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **19** "I will give you the

keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

John 17:1-26 (NASB)

¹ Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, ² even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. ³ "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

⁶ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; ⁸ for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. ⁹ "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; ¹⁰ and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ "I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We *are*. ¹² "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³

"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴ "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the

world. ¹⁵ "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

One of the Egyptian pharaohs was in heavy debt.

So he called in his advisers, wizards, and court officials to give his economic recovery plan.

He told them, "I've got this great pyramid scheme!"

Well, you know that a pyramid scheme is financial fraud.

The restoration principle is not some scheme by which we build empires by unscrupulous means.

The restoration principle is a noble and honest appeal to take the Word of God as our only rule of faith and practice, and be Christians only.

Our problem has not been in duping others with it.

Rather, our problem has been deceiving ourselves into thinking no one today is interested in restoring simple New Testament Christianity.

P.H. Welshimer was one of the leading Christian Church ministers, serving the First Christian Church in Canton, OH from 1902 until 1957.

An Episcopalian priest once chided P. H. Welshimer, “You people have the greatest plea on earth. But you are the stingiest with it!”

The restoration plea is being affirmed and validated by both the Christian community and the seeking society.

If you know who Francis Chan is, his video's are beginning to sound more and more like the early restoration leaders.

New Testament Christianity is being embraced and validated.

Why?

Because it is being recognized for what it is—light for our age.

I. Back to the Bible

Restoring New Testament Christianity has been the noble plea of the American Restoration Movement for more than two hundred years.

The core value of any Christian church should include restoring New Testament Christianity.

Let me be clear in my terms.

By “restoration” I mean the process of bringing back to a former position or condition.

I believe the restoration principle is a biblical one.

I also believe it is practical.

Any congregation of believers existing today has the right to practice unity on the part of its members by declaring in word and practice that it wants to be that one church, no more and no less—the church of the New Testament.

Old Testament Examples of Restoration

A. Josiah's Restoration

The principle of restoration is first found in the Old Testament scriptures.

2 Kings 22

Josiah was a young king of Judah who was greatly influenced by Hilkiah, a godly priest.

Judah as a nation had drifted far from the Lord.

During the repair of the temple, Hilkiah discovered the lost Book of the Law.

He gave it to Shaphan the scribe, who then read it to Josiah.

When the young king realized how far the nation had drifted from God, he said,

2 Kings 22:13 (NASB)

¹³ our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.

Josiah then led a movement to restore the word of God in the lives of the people. Long-neglected practices like the observance of the Passover were restored (**2 Kings 23:1–25**).

B. Nehemiah's Restoration

Another account of the restoration principle at work is found in **Nehemiah 8:1–9:38**.

This Restoration Movement was actually the desire of the entire nation of Israel.

Nehemiah 8:1 (NASB)

¹ And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.

They repented of their sins, re-instituted the Feast of Tabernacles, and lived their lives according to the teachings of the word of God. The dream of a living restoration is that people anywhere can search the Scripture, rediscover and obey its teaching, and then be added to the body of Christ. The seed of the kingdom can be planted anywhere.

II. The Church Jesus Said He Would Build

In the New Testament scriptures we find the church that Jesus promised he would build.

It's a church built upon what we sometimes call the Good Confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The church Jesus said he would build was planted on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 30, in the city of Jerusalem.

Acts 2:37–41 tells us that some three *thousand souls believed the Christ-centered preaching of Peter, repented* of their sins, and were immersed for the forgiveness of their sins, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and were added to their number.

From that day unto this day, untold millions have been added to the church Jesus said he would build by simply obeying the teachings of God's word, complying with the terms of pardon, and seeking to follow the Christ they confessed at their baptism.

What kind of church was the church at Jerusalem?

Those who are serious in their desire to be simple, New Testament Christians will surely want to take a close look at the first century Christians.

I would think *every* church would want to emulate the very first church.

It is our divine model, our spiritual template, our living ideal.

A. The Jerusalem church was a penitent, forgiven, Spirit-filled church.

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The restoration principle calls for us to require of sinners what Scripture requires, which is faith in The Christ, repentance of sin,

and immersion for the forgiveness of sin, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

As someone said, “We are simply to deliver the mail, not rewrite the message.”

As will be seen, having the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit is essential for inner spiritual life and the unity and growth of the church.

B. The Jerusalem church was was a learning, interactive, worshiping church.

Acts 2:42 (NASB)

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The restoration principle results in a church that is hungry for God's word, desires fellowship with other believers, and engages in meaningful worship.

C. The Jerusalem church was was a reverent, God-fearing church.

Acts 2:42 (NASB)

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

While the acts of miracles were done by the apostles, the church itself was filled with awe and wonder at the mighty power of God

Acts 5:12 (NASB)

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

The restoration principle calls for us to constantly stand in awe of God.

D. The Jerusalem church was a caring, sharing church.

Acts 2:44-45 (NASB)

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

It has been said, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

When we care, we will share.

The world sat up and took notice that the church took care of its own, even during times of economic hardship.

In the latter part of the second century, the Christian leader Tertullian wrote a defense of Christian practice called the *Apologia*.

After defending the church from false accusations, Tertullian went on to explain what Christians do and why they do it.

In the following excerpt, he begins by talking about the church’s use of money.

I think you’ll be surprised at what he says:

“There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, piety’s deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons . . . See, they say, how they love one another . . .”

E. The Jerusalem church was a united, happy church.

Acts 2:46 (NASB)

46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

What a beautiful picture of oneness, contentment, and happiness!
No wonder David declared,

Psalms 133:1 (NASB)

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!

Unless I am obtuse, this is one of the joys we experience here at Orcutt Christian Church.

F. The Jerusalem church was a jubilant, growing church.

Acts 2:47 (NASB)

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The fruit of the Spirit was evident in their lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

They had a joy that was contagious.

They had the favor of the people and the blessing of God.

What they had was what seekers wanted—true love, joy, and peace.

This is the stuff real life is made of, and if it cannot be found in the church Jesus said he would build, it cannot be found anywhere.

John Wesley said, “Sour godliness is the devil’s religion.”

The restoration principle calls for a restoration of joy, and it will

result in both spiritual and numerical growth.

III. The Shape of the Church

Slowly but surely the church Jesus said he would build took shape. Soon there were new churches in provinces like Judea, Samaria, Cilicia, Galatia, and Syria.

Vibrant local churches sprang up in cities like Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and the “eternal city” herself, Rome.

The Book of Revelation says seven churches in Asia received a special message from Jesus Christ himself.

The church of Christ spread to the uttermost parts of the earth in the then-known world just as Jesus had commissioned his apostles.

These dynamic young churches had no head but Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB)

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

They were autonomous in form, selecting their own leaders like deacons and elders.

They met on the first day of the week to observe the Lord’s Supper. Their simple services consisted of the reading of Scripture (with special emphasis on the teachings of Christ and the apostles’ teaching), prayer, praise, and fellowship.

Scripture was their only rule of faith and practice.

Christ was their only creed.

The Holy Spirit, received at baptism, was their promised helper. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper appear to have been the only ordinances of the church.

They were not perfect because the church is both divine and human.

It is divine in that Christ is its founder and foundation.

It is human in that its membership is made of fallible people like you and me.

Time and time again these young churches had to be warned about such things as division, party spirit, false teachers, heresies, power seekers, lukewarmness, worldliness, their own fleshly desires, and their common enemy, Satan.

We are no different than they; we have to be careful not to give in to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

They also faced tremendous persecution from antagonistic Jewish leaders and powerful Roman emperors.

Jesus encouraged the suffering church in Smyrna,

Revelation 2:10 (NASB)

10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

But even in under persecution, the church continued to grow.

Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

That blood blossoms red to this very day and hour!

Mission experts say the church is in its purest form in lands where persecution has been the most severe, countries like China, North Korea, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and India.

Their faith in the face of suffering is a mirror image of the sufferings of the apostolic churches.

IV. A Sad Departure

Jesus, Paul, Peter, and Jude all warned that there would be those who departed from the pure teaching of the Apostles:

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NASB)

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound

doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

With the passing of the apostles, however, it was not long until simple New Testament Christianity took on a strange new shape and form.

One of the biggest changes was moving from a plurality of elders overseeing local, autonomous churches to a regional bishop ruling over all churches in that province or region.

In the fourth century the papacy emerged, where one bishop, later called the Pope, deemed infallible, ruled over all churches.

This led to a host of other changes including new doctrines or practices like original sin, infant baptism, sprinkling and pouring replacing immersion, the worship of Mary, veneration of images and relics, celibacy, purgatory, prayers for the dead, sales of indulgences, and on and on.

V. A Bold Reformation!

On October 31, 1517, a Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

He also wrote a series of tracts condemning the papacy.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther, was asked to recant what he had written.

He courageously responded,

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason-for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves-I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen. ”

From this courageous act the Reformation Movement was born, spreading across Europe like wildfire, and eventually coming to America.

The reformation principle, as applied by Luther and others, sought to reform an existing structure, the corrupted Roman Catholic Church.

On the other hand, the restoration principle, advocated some three hundred years later by men like Thomas Campbell and Barton W. Stone, would seek to restore the original structure, the simple New Testament church.

In both cases, however, a strong appeal was made to Scripture and Scripture alone as the basis of authority for what was being attempted.

VI. The Restoration Principle

Thomas Campbell was a Presbyterian minister who came to America from Ireland in 1807.

He was shocked by the party spirit that he found among the different denominations in western Pennsylvania where he settled. When he attempted to generously serve communion to fellow Presbyterians from synods other than his own, he was censured and later denied the right to preach.

He withdrew from the synod and began preaching in homes of those like himself who wanted to be Christians only.

In the summer of 1809, Campbell was invited to speak in the home of Abraham Altars, located between the towns of Mount Pleasant and Washington, Pennsylvania.

There, Campbell introduced the restoration principle:

“Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

In essence he was saying that the Bible should be our only rule of faith and practice.

He believed that all believers could unite on this simple premise.

For this occasion, he had produced one of the most remarkable documents in history on Christian Unity, and next Lord's Day, I shall plan on us examining Thomas Campbell's "Declaration and Address" of 1809 next Lord's Day.

Written in a loving, fashion, he made a heartfelt appeal for all Christians to unite, taking Scripture alone as an infallible guide. Campbell maintained that unity could only be found in Christ and his simple word.

The way to unity was by returning to and holding fast to the "original standard"—the word of God alone.

He stated that division among Christians was anti-Christian, anti-Scriptural, and even anti-natural as Christians are to love one another, not hate and oppose one another.

He made a passionate plea for Christians to remember that there are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it, for there our divisions must come to an end.

"Would to God that we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here, so that we might leave a blessing behind us, even a happy and united church!"

"Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder."

The movement to restore the simple ideal of the New Testament church, in both spirit and structure, struck a nerve with tens of thousands of people in America.

People from nearly every major denomination gladly united with those who were advocating a return to the Bible, calling themselves by biblical names like "Christians" or "Disciples." Local churches were called Christian Churches or Churches of Christ.

In less than a hundred years there were more than one million adherents following the restoration principle.

Unfortunately, the movement divided in 1906 over how to apply the authority of the Bible to issues like instrumental music in worship and missionary societies.

The movement divided again over a fifty-year period of controversy (1927–1967) over more serious issues: the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, and the practice of open membership.

Open membership is adding as members those who had not complied with the Scriptural terms of pardon.

These tragic divisions among a movement that had set out to unite all believers on a return to the Scriptures have resulted in some abandoning the restoration principle altogether.

Some have sacrificed biblical authority for a watered-down union of sorts, while others have given up any hope of Christian unity, settling for a strict adherence their concept of the truth.

There are still some, such as I, who believe that Christian unity and biblical truth are not incompatible, that neither has to be sacrificed for the other, and that Jesus' prayer for the unity of believers, based upon the authority of God's word, is a living reality today.

VII. Our Savior's Prayer

Let's take a closer look at Jesus' remarkable prayer in John 17. Jesus is Lord of all.

All who claim to be his followers will want to honor this prayer.

It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible.

It is offered to his Father just a scant twelve hours before he went to the cross.

I have it printed so you can see the how it is divided into three parts.

Jesus prayed for himself to be glorified (1–5)

for his disciples to be sanctified (6–19)

and for all believers to be unified (20–26).

The part of this prayer that concerns us today is the last part, especially

John 17:20-21 (NASB)

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who

believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

What a wonderful, marvelous, glorious, eminently doable prayer!

Four objects of Jesus' prayer stand out:

The restoration principle stands firmly on these four essentials.

All who seek to honor our dying Savior's prayer will surely give them serious consideration.

A. The Centrality of Christ.

Jesus prayed "*for those also who believe in Me .*"

Unity must be in Christ. Any other kind of unity is not only hopeless, but worthless.

Christianity is Christ from beginning to end.

He is the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, the head of the church.

Matthew 22:42 (NASB)

⁴² What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?

The greatest answer to this question was given by Simon Peter:

Matthew 16:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

No other creed or confession of faith should ever be asked of anyone.

Millions of martyrs and hundreds of thousands now living have made that same confession.

We gladly acknowledge that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the head of his church.

B. The authority of Scripture.

In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays:

John 17:20 (NASB)

²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

Their word.

Whose word?

Through the word as taught and preached by his disciples for whom he had been praying in verses 6–19.

That's why he prayed for their sanctification (setting apart) by the truth—which he identified as God's word in verse 17.

He commissioned them in

Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The apostles began this work in Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem, it eventually came to Orcutt.

This is still happening every day somewhere around the world because

Romans 10:17 (NASB)

17 So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

C. There is Urgency of Unity.

Jesus prayed that all those who would come to faith in him through the message of the apostles "**may be one.**"

This unity would be like the unity that exists between the Father and the Son: "**just as you are in me and I am in you.**"

There is no division between the Father and the Son and there should be no divisions between the adopted children of the Father.

Carl Ketcherside said,

"I have no half brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. I accept you where you are and as you are. If you are good enough to be God's son or daughter you are not too bad to

be my brother or sister.”

God has made us one through the blood of his Son

Colossians 1:18-20 (NASB)

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Our common faith in Christ and our baptism into Christ has made us one in Christ

Galatians 3:26-27 (NASB)

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

All Christians are therefore urged,

Ephesians 4:3-4 (NASB)

3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

The unity of the Spirit is a “given”—a gift to be maintained, while unity in the faith is a goal—a goal to be attained.

How can unity in the faith be attained?

A slogan that grew out of the Reformation Movement read, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.” It is imperative that every Christian, and every Christian congregation, make their best efforts to arrive at a consensus on the essentials—those things that are absolutely necessary to salvation (the non-negotiable)—while allowing liberty in things deemed non-essential (sometimes called opinions or secondary matters). Thomas Campbell was once asked a question about a doubtful matter. He replied, “If you can show me how your question relates

to your eternal salvation I shall be glad to reply.”

In *all* things a spirit of love should prevail, even when differences seem insurmountable.

Why is this kind of unity so urgent?

D. That the World May Believe.

Christ’s prayer will answer this question.

John 17:23 (NASB)

23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Unity for unity’s sake is not the goal of this prayer. Unity for the sake of a lost world is the goal!

Unity which helps to ‘make disciples of all the nations’ has Heaven’s approval.

In his Declaration and Address, Thomas Campbell said division among Christians was a "horrid evil, fraught with many evils." He said (Proposition 10 of the Declaration and Address) that division was evil for three reasons – it is anti-Christian, because it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; it is anti-Scriptural, because it is a direct violation of Christ’s express command; and it is anti-natural, in that it causes Christians to condemn, hate, and oppose one another.

Paul writes:

Colossians 3:11-12 (NASB)

11 a renewal in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

What a tremendous testimony was given in the city of Colossae when inquisitive citizens saw even the Scythians (a murderous and marauding tribe from southern Russia) sitting humbly at the table

of the Lord with their newfound brothers and sisters in Christ.

VIII. Light for our Age

Several years ago, Brother Victor Knowls went to Cuba and taught in a new Christian Bible institute for a week.

He writes:

"My interpreter was Edith, a highly educated woman who spoke excellent English. Day after day Edith interpreted for me as I taught from every verse in the two epistles of Peter. The students in the institute were hungry for the Word. During the break times many of them would visit with Edith. Toward the end of my lectures, it was announced that we would be going to the ocean to baptize several of the students. At this point Edith asked if she too could be baptized. She then asked if she could give a testimony. As I recall, it went something like this. "All my life I have lived on this communist island, and because of the color of my black skin all I have ever experienced is hatred and discrimination. But this week I have experienced only love and acceptance. I want to become a Christian!"

The restoration principle offers a simple, biblical way to reach our world for Christ.

It is light for our age.

Let us take the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice, acknowledge no other creed or confession other than "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," and simply and humbly seek to be the church Jesus said he would build—in both spirit and structure.

When you study Campbell's Declaration and Address, you see that his emphasis is on relationships.

In his first proposition, he says the body of Christ is made up of everyone who has faith in Christ and is trying to follow Him in the ways Scripture has told us, and who others can see are being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the way they act.

Barton W. Stone here. “The Scriptures will never keep together in union and fellowship members not in the spirit of the Scriptures.” We need to actively act on the principle of love and forbearance.

Today, I call on all of us to live out the principles of love exemplified in the Restoration Movement.

Prayer and Invitation

July 16 Lesson 7 Jeremiah

Devotional Reading: [Psalm 75](#)

Background Scripture: [Jeremiah 1](#)

JEREMIAH 1:4-10

4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

5 **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,**

before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

6 “Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

7 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Key Verse

“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.—[Jeremiah 1:8](#)

Introduction

A. When I Grow Up ...

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

When children are asked that question, their answers are remarkably consistent. Occupations such as doctor, athlete, teacher, dancer, police officer, firefighter, scientist, musician, actor, and nurse are common responses.

Regional differences also affect the choices. A child growing up in Silicon Valley might want to be a video-game designer while a child from rural Wisconsin may aspire to be a dairy farmer. Of course, childhood fantasy becomes a consideration with the appearance of such goals as becoming a princess, a superhero, a dinosaur, a mermaid, etc. As people grow older, we expect the answers to that question to become more realistic and not grounded in fantasy. We would look with more than a little surprise at a 19-year-old who still wants to be a superhero!

We probably can recall being asked this same question many times as children, and our responses became more realistic as the years passed. But how many who are reading this now were ever told specifically and

honestly, “When you reach adulthood, your career will be that of a _____”? As far-fetched as this may sound, something of the sort *did* happen to a young man named Jeremiah. He was not asked what he wanted to be; he was *told!* Jeremiah came from a priestly background ([Jeremiah 1:1](#)), but God had other plans for him.

B. Lesson Background

The prophet Jeremiah began his ministry “in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah” ([Jeremiah 1:2](#)). By modern reckoning, that was about 626 BC. These times were increasingly chaotic in the southern kingdom of Judah. Although the Assyrian threat—which resulted in the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:18](#))—no longer existed, it was being replaced by Babylonian aggression.

Godliness and holiness on the part of the Judeans, not military might, was the key to staving off disaster. Only reliance on and dedication to the true God would turn aside the threat of foreign invasion. In that regard, things may have looked hopeful for a time because of godly King Josiah’s dedication to the Lord ([2 Chronicles 34:1-35:19](#)). But the spiritual condition of Judah took a quick and fatal turn for the worse after he died in 609 BC.

Four ungodly kings followed him, the final one being his son Zedekiah. It was he who was on the throne when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed Solomon’s great temple in 586 BC ([2 Kings 24:18-25:7](#); [Jeremiah 1:3](#)).

Another issue of background is Jeremiah’s hometown of Anathoth ([Jeremiah 1:1](#)). This village was located in the tribal territory of Benjamin, about three miles north-northeast of Jerusalem. Anathoth was a Levite town, a convenient residence for workers in the Jerusalem temple. As a resident of this town, Jeremiah undoubtedly thought he would follow in his father’s footsteps in terms of career. But God had other plans.

I. God’s Plan

([Jeremiah 1:4, 5](#))

A. Jeremiah Foreknown ([vv. 4, 5a](#))

4. The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

The first three verses of the book are written in the third person; now the text switches to first person (*me*). Although we’re only four verses into the book at this point, this is not the first mention of *the word of the Lord* coming to Jeremiah. The previous two verses indicate that *the word of the Lord* begins to come to him during the reign of Josiah and

continues to do so through the reign of Zedekiah (see the Lesson Background). This is a total of about 40 years (626-586 BC).

How to Say It

Anathoth *An-uh-thoth*.

Assyrian *Uh-sear-e-un*.

Babylonian *Bab-ih-low-nee-un*.

Goliath *Go-lye-uth*.

Hananiah *Han-uh-nye-uh*.

Jehoiakim *Jeh-hoy-uh-kim*.

Josiah *Jo-sigh-uh*.

Leviticus *Leh-vit-ih-kus*.

seraphim *sair-uh-fim*.

Zedekiah *Zed-uh-kye-uh*.

5a. **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,**

The Lord has been active on Jeremiah’s behalf long before this moment. The four verbs used of the Lord in the three segments of [verse 5](#) reveal the intimacy of his care for Jeremiah.

First, we note that the word *formed* translates a Hebrew verb that is similarly rendered in [Isaiah 29:16](#). There it refers to a potter’s creative activity in making functional and decorative objects from clay.

Jeremiah will later be commanded by the Lord to go to a potter’s house and learn a lesson from watching the potter work with clay (compare [Jeremiah 18:1-11](#)).

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated *womb* is used of a person’s belly ([Judges 3:21, 22](#)), the stomach of a person or an animal ([Job 20:15; 40:15, 16](#)), as well as of a woman’s womb, as here (also [Genesis 25:23, 24; 38:27](#)). The intent is clear: God’s creative activity includes the life in the womb, a point underlined by David in [Psalm 139:13](#).

The verb in the phrase *I knew you* conveys a sense of intimacy. It is often used to portray sexual intimacy between a husband and his wife ([Genesis 4:1, 17; 1 Samuel 1:19](#)), but that is not the case here, of course. David conveys in [Psalm 139:1, 2](#) a similar message about God’s knowledge of the present (“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar”), connecting it with God’s foreknowledge in [139:16](#).

OWNERSHIP

Pottery making is a very old art, still practiced around the world. In developed countries it tends to be done for artistic reasons more than practical ones.

In few places is this more evident than in the one-stoplight town of Seagrove, North Carolina. More than 100 potters call it home, and Seagrove is one of the oldest and largest pottery-making centers in the nation. The town's pottery businesses are housed in old homes, log cabins, and former stores and gas stations.

Deposits of natural clay in the region make the abundance of pottery possible. Even so, no tourist thinks, *I have a right to take any pottery with me for free because the stuff it's made from is little more than abundant dirt*. The potters' work in forming and shaping creates the value!

God used the language of forming pottery in calling Jeremiah to be a prophet. This reminded Jeremiah of the divine claim on him that existed before his birth. It is the same claim that God has on us today ([Romans 9:20, 21](#)). *He formed us, not we him* ([Acts 17:29](#)). —C. R. B.

B. Jeremiah Foreordained ([vv. 5b, c](#))

5b. “before you were born I set you apart;

To be set apart is to be sanctified or consecrated. It applies in the Old Testament to both people (such as the Israelites in [Leviticus 20:26](#)) and objects (such as altars and their accessories in [Exodus 40:10](#)).

For Jeremiah this setting apart will become much more than just ritual or ceremony. It will also define the (sometimes harsh) reality of his prophetic ministry.

Jeremiah's uncompromising message of judgment will set him apart from rebellious kings (like Zedekiah), fraudulent priests (like Pashhur in [Jeremiah 20:1, 2](#)), false prophets (like Hananiah in chapter 28), and those of the general populace who believe that the mere presence of the temple will guarantee safety from any foreign oppressor ([7:1-15](#)). Even the people of Jeremiah's hometown will command him to stop prophesying or face death ([11:21-23](#)).

What Do You Think?

How does the fact that God knows people even before their birth affect your worldview?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Concerning life-purpose

Concerning sanctity of life

Concerning personal accountability

Other

5c. “I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

The Lord reaches the climax of his initial message to Jeremiah and gets specific as to what the man is being set apart to do. The fact that he is

to be *a prophet to the nations* implies a ministry that extends beyond the borders of Judah (see [Jeremiah 1:10](#); [25:15-26](#)). The particular construction of the Hebrew phrase translated *I appointed you* is also used in describing roles given by God to Abraham ([Genesis 17:5](#)), Moses ([Exodus 7:1](#)), the servant of the Lord ([Isaiah 49:6](#)), and Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 3:17](#)).

Does God set us apart in a similar way—even before birth? One should be cautious in expecting a “call” similar to that of Jeremiah. His call is recorded not so much to give us a specific example to follow, but to tell us why we need to heed the words that we are about to read in the text at hand. The primary call that we are to answer today is that of the gospel to call on the Lord and be saved ([Acts 2:21](#); [Romans 10:13](#)). After that we are to pursue the Lord’s will and use our talents and spiritual gifts in his service. For some, that may involve full-time service in the church; for others, it may entail ministry in a more secular setting.

II. God’s Corrective

([Jeremiah 1:6, 7](#))

A. Human Self-Doubt ([v. 6](#))

6. “Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

Jeremiah’s initial response to the Lord’s call is as hesitant as Moses’ was ([Exodus 3:11](#), [lesson 5](#)). Jeremiah claims a weakness in the area of his speech due to lack of age. One may find it somewhat ironic that Jeremiah is speaking while claiming an inability to speak. But he is likely thinking in terms of lacking the more polished or trained speaking ability that comes with the experience of years. Perhaps like Amos ([lesson 9](#)), Jeremiah is concluding that he is “neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet” ([Amos 7:14](#)).

The Hebrew word rendered *too young* can describe a wide range of ages from an infant ([Exodus 2:6](#)) to a man old enough to marry ([Genesis 34:19](#)). Thus it is difficult to know Jeremiah’s age at this point. He seems to fear that his age could be a hindrance to addressing others, since youths are generally expected to remain quiet and respect those who are older ([Job 32:6, 7](#)).

What Do You Think?

How can we overcome the habit of making excuses for not serving God more fully?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding age-related excuses

Regarding time-related excuses
Regarding ability-related excuses
Other

B. Divine Reassurance ([v. 7](#))

7. But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

The Lord does not deny that Jeremiah is *young* (whatever age he may be). Rather, the Lord is telling him that he must not allow that to be an excuse for why he cannot answer the Lord’s call. The key to Jeremiah’s fulfillment of his ministry will not lie in who he is but in who the Lord is and in Jeremiah’s obedience to the Lord’s directions. Both audience and message are to be determined by the Lord: *You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.*

Given the hostile responses Jeremiah will receive to his message, he may be tempted to give in to fear or intimidation, altering his message to avoid conflict. But the prophet must remember who is calling him and to whom he is accountable. To use Paul’s words, Jeremiah must “fix [his] eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen” ([2 Corinthians 4:18](#)).

III. God’s Provision

([Jeremiah 1:8-10](#))

A. Deliverance ([v. 8](#))

8. “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

Ezekiel will also be told during the Lord’s call to him not to *be afraid* of those who are in his audience ([Ezekiel 3:9](#)). Those people will be in Babylon, where the prophet is among those taken captive ([1:1](#)). The ones who threaten Jeremiah, on the other hand, are in Jerusalem. They will also include those in his hometown of Anathoth, who will threaten him with death if he does not cease prophesying ([Jeremiah 11:21](#)).

I am with you is one of the most frequent assurances from the Lord in Scripture. It is the same assurance that was offered to timid Moses ([Exodus 3:12](#), [lesson 5](#)). It is the same assurance given to followers of Jesus today as they carry his gospel to the nations ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). The Hebrew word translated *rescue* is used of the Israelites’ deliverance from their oppression in Egypt ([Exodus 3:8](#); [18:10](#)) and of David’s rescue from the lion, the bear, and Goliath ([1 Samuel 17:37](#)). Jeremiah will require such divine rescue from the enemies that oppress and harass him throughout his ministry.

What Do You Think?

In what ways should others see in us fearlessness (but not recklessness) in service to God?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding personal safety

Regarding economic security

Regarding emotional safety (ridicule, etc.)

Other

B. Message (v. 9)

9. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth.

Now comes a visual aid intended to offer additional support to Jeremiah. The Lord’s action is reminiscent of what happens to Isaiah, only with Isaiah one of the seraphim comes to him and touches his lips with a live coal taken from an altar ([Isaiah 6:5-7](#), [lesson 6](#)). Here it is the Lord who reaches *out his hand* and touches Jeremiah’s *mouth*.

By adding *I have put my words in your mouth* to this action, the Lord specifically addresses Jeremiah’s earlier objection that he does “not know how to speak” ([v. 6](#), above). Now, having received the Lord’s words, he must speak! Or as Amos puts it, “The Sovereign Lord has spoken—who can but prophesy?” ([Amos 3:8](#)).

The Lord’s declaration of putting his words in Jeremiah’s mouth calls to mind the Lord’s promise to Moses in [Deuteronomy 18:18](#): “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.” While this prophecy is said to be fulfilled in Jesus ([Acts 3:22, 23](#)), perhaps it can also be applied to God’s provision of the prophetic ministry to his people, as illustrated by Jeremiah.

God also says through Moses that God himself “will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name” ([Deuteronomy 18:19](#)). This too comes to pass through Jeremiah; when the people of Judah fail to heed his words, they pay the price through their country being conquered and the citizens taken captive.

What Do You Think?

What are some specific steps to take to ensure that the words we utter are consistent with God’s Word ([Psalm 39:1](#); [119:13](#))?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In steps of personal devotion ([Psalm 119:148](#); [Matthew 6:6-15](#); etc.)

In steps to seeking godly counsel and teaching ([2 Chronicles 25:16](#); [Hebrews 13:7](#); etc.)

In steps to gain understanding of the times ([1 Chronicles 12:32](#); [Matthew 16:3](#); etc.)

C. Mission (v. 10)

10. “See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Jeremiah will spend most of his life in Judah (chapters 41-44 of the book of Jeremiah record his journey to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem). But his prophetic ministry will have an impact far beyond Judah. God appoints him *over nations and kingdoms*, but not due to any of Jeremiah’s own achievements or merit. This occurs only because the Lord has placed his words in Jeremiah’s mouth. The authority is from the Lord alone. Chapters 46-51 of the book of Jeremiah include the prophet’s oracles directed against various nations and kingdoms of his day. It includes a particularly lengthy one against Babylon (chapters 50 and 51).

The nature of Jeremiah’s ministry to the nations is then pictured through a series of verbs: *to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant*. The first four are negative; the final two are more hopeful and promising. This may indicate that Jeremiah’s ministry will be more negative than positive, but it will conclude on a positive note: hope will prevail beyond the current tragic circumstances in Judah that will culminate in divine judgment. Jeremiah does offer hope—of a future king who will “do what is just and right in the land” ([Jeremiah 23:5, 6](#)) and of a new covenant ([31:31-34](#)).

The language of the verse before us is used elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah to highlight God’s activity in fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophetic words ([Jeremiah 18:7-10](#); [24:6](#); [31:28](#); [32:41](#); [42:10](#); [45:4](#)). This is a way of affirming that the Lord makes certain that Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry will accomplish no less than what the Lord intends.

WORD POWER

The source of the adage “The pen is mightier than the sword”—the wording if not the concept itself—is the 1839 play *Richelieu*, by English playwright Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The idea is that communication gets things done more effectively than does the violence of armed confrontation.

But it’s not always a simple either-or choice, since written and spoken communication can lead and has led to use of the sword. The twisted words of Adolf Hitler persuaded his country and its allies to launch a world war; the candid words of Winston Churchill galvanized his country and its allies to meet violence with violence to defeat that

threat.

Twisted communication seems almost to be an art form these days, designed to influence behavior rather than to communicate truth.

George Orwell, writing in 1949, predicted as much (and worse) in his novel *1984*: “If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” Since the year he wrote that, the world has seen no fewer than 17 countries include the wording or idea of *Democratic Republic* in their designations; yet the citizens in the majority of these countries enjoy few of the freedoms available in Western democracies.

None of this should come as a surprise to readers of the Bible. The Scriptures record numerous instances in which human communication results in violence being avoided, as well as violence being initiated or intensified. (Contrast the results of Gideon’s tactful response to the angry Ephraimites in [Judges 8:1-3](#) with those of Jephthah’s confrontational response in [12:1-6](#).)

Given how much power human words have to incite violence and to quell it, to hurt and to heal, to depress and to encourage, how much more must the same be true of the Word of the living God! He still seeks those who will take his Word to build so that he does not have to destroy (compare [Ezekiel 22:30](#)). What will be your response to his invitation? —C. R. B.

What Do You Think?

What is God calling you to do on a daily basis?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding things “to destroy”

Regarding things “to build and to plant”

Conclusion

A. No Solos

With certain tasks, one’s ability to go it alone without any assistance is the measure of success. A would-be pilot must fly his or her plane solo. A young driver takes great pride in being able to drive to and from school or work without Mom or Dad riding along. From youth, it seems, to do something “all by myself” becomes the standard of success in many areas of life.

In contrast, God said that his presence, his words, and his purpose were to identify Jeremiah’s ministry. Never would there be a time when he would have to go solo, even as he suffered perhaps more persecution and harassment than any other prophet in the Old Testament. “No solos” can be a difficult concept to accept and apply in many areas of one’s life, but it is absolutely vital to apply in our service for the Lord.

Let us remember that there was never a self-made prophet or a self-made apostle. And there are no self-made servants of Jesus in the twenty-first century. We must draw our strength from the Lord! A go-it-alone philosophy led humanity into the tragedy of sin in the Garden of Eden, the consequences of which still reverberate. If the temptation to “fly solo” spiritually grows as you gain skills and knowledge with the passing years, remember: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty” ([Zechariah 4:6](#)).

B. Prayer

Father, help us avoid the extremes of fearful silence and go-it-alone arrogance! Let us rather be always and only your instruments to speak the words of confrontation and comfort as you enable us. Grant us wisdom to know when and how to speak your Word. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

A child of God is no mere child!

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