

What if we neglect unity for the sake of following the pattern? This is what many believe churches of Christ have done and view the brethren as legalists, Pharisees, and those who cause division. Today, if we strive to be careful to follow the pattern God has left for us, we are seen as divisive. The same thing happened with men like Daniel Sommer who opposed instrumental music and missionary societies. I suppose it will happen to faithful brethren until the

Lord returns. But as we noticed, striving for unity and following the New Testament pattern go hand in hand. What kind of unity is sacrificed if we strive to follow the pattern? Unity with those in sin and error (the "unity in diversity" I mentioned in the last paragraph). This is not the unity we should desire. We must be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). It is impossible to neglect the "unity of the Spir-

it" when we zealously follow the New Testament pattern.

God desires unity. But it must be on His terms. We must give up the teachings of men, whether they are written in formal creeds or not, and go back to the Bible and live by the pattern that God has given us. ~

# NAVARRE MESSENGER

December 11, 2016

## The RESTORATION Plea

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

### Assembly Schedule

#### Sunday

Bible Class for all ages\_9:00 AM

Morning Worship Service\_10:00 AM

Evening Worship Service\_6:00 PM

#### Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages\_7:00 PM

This entire publication and previous issues are available online at

[navarrechurchofchrist.net](http://navarrechurchofchrist.net)

along with some more useful information

### Navarre church of Christ

8490 James M Harvell Rd  
Navarre, FL 32566

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**VISITORS ARE WELCOME!**

**The Restoration Plea** by Andy Sochor from his book *Plain Bible Teaching: The First Ten Years*.

Via [PlainBibleTeaching.com](http://PlainBibleTeaching.com)

In the first century, after the Lord's church was established, there were no denominations like we have today. Of course, there were some who departed

from the faith while still holding to a form of religion. A notable example is Diotrophes (3 John 9-11) who took control of a congregation and expelled those who wanted to follow the apostles' doctrine. But generally, the churches in the first century could be accurately called "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16) because they submitted to

Christ's authority and not to that of any man.

While the early church generally enjoyed unity by submitting to the authority of Christ alone, Paul warned of a movement that would change all of this. He wrote to the church at Thessalonica about "the apostasy" that was coming. He personified this great apostasy

by calling it “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This “man of lawlessness” was described as one who “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This apostasy would be characterized by certain men exalting themselves among God’s people, claiming to speak for God and exercise authority over their brethren. It is called an apostasy because it would begin with some who were faithful Christians, but they would depart from the faith to follow their own doctrines and practices. This is exactly what denominationalism is. Denominationalism, beginning with the Catholic church, is the great apostasy.

As the Catholic church moved further away from the Lord’s church, a movement began to try to reform the Catholic church.

This has been called the Reformation Movement. However, this did not correct the problem. Instead of attacking “the man of lawlessness,” the reformers attacked certain abuses. They did not attempt to return to the simplicity of the New Testament church. They wanted to fix the Catholic church. This did not work and ultimately resulted in thousands of denominations in the world today.

In the 1800’s, a movement began in this country which is commonly called the Restoration Movement. Unlike the Reformation, the Restoration Movement sought to restore the doctrines and practices of the New Testament church. It began with men like Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone leaving their denominations in order to be part of the church that Jesus built. The Restoration plea was two-fold. The first was unity instead of the divisions of denominationalism. The second was to use the New

Testament as our only rule of faith and practice.

Both aspects of this plea are certainly taught in the Bible. We must follow them because they are divinely given, not because some men in generations past taught them. Regarding unity, Jesus prayed for his followers to be united (John 17:20-21). Paul wrote about the “unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3-7). God’s people should not be divided (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The Restoration Movement was an attack on denominationalism.

The need to take the New Testament as our only rule of faith and practice is also taught in God’s word. The call to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent” is based upon Peter’s words – “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11, NKJV). When we preach, we are to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). We have no right to alter the message

(Galatians 1:6-9), either by adding to it, taking away from it, or changing various parts of it. The Restoration plea should be ours today – give up the churches and teachings of men and follow the Bible exclusively and thereby have unity.

As the movement progressed, a division arose among those of this movement. Eventually, a split occurred between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the churches of Christ. The major issues that divided these groups were over the missionary society and instrumental music in worship. Faithful gospel preachers like Daniel Sommer zealously opposed the innovations that some tried to promote. Because men would not give up their innovations, division was inevitable.

Some have looked back at this split that occurred 100 years ago and have suggested that these two groups divided because

they followed/emphasized different aspects of the Restoration plea. It is asserted that the Christian Church focused on unity and the churches of Christ focused on the New Testament pattern. While this might sound like a simple summary of the division, it is really not accurate.

The two parts of the Restoration plea actually compliment one another. Jesus prayed for unity based on His word (John 17:20). Part of the “platform for unity” was the “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5). This is the body of doctrine – “the faith” (Jude 3) – that produces faith in us (Romans 10:17). Following the same rule/pattern naturally results in unity. The Restoration plea harmonized with this. It was a call for unity among all professed Christians. But there was a condition. They had to give up the creeds and traditions of men and follow the New Testament exclusively.

What if we neglect the pattern for the sake of unity? Some believe you cannot both strive to keep the New Testament pattern and maintain unity. Some say the Christian Church chose to strive for unity rather than keeping the pattern, which would have prohibited their missionary societies and instruments in worship. The result of forsaking the pattern for unity is “unity in diversity.” This is unity in spite of sin and error. But the New Testament explicitly forbids us to have fellowship with brethren who are living in sin (1 Corinthians 5:13), practicing error (Ephesians 5:11), and teaching false doctrine (2 John 10:11). It is a dangerous position to say we must ignore or loosely interpret the Bible in order to have unity. If striving to follow the pattern leads to division – and this is the accusation that many make – then they indict God as being the “author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). After all, He gave us the pattern.