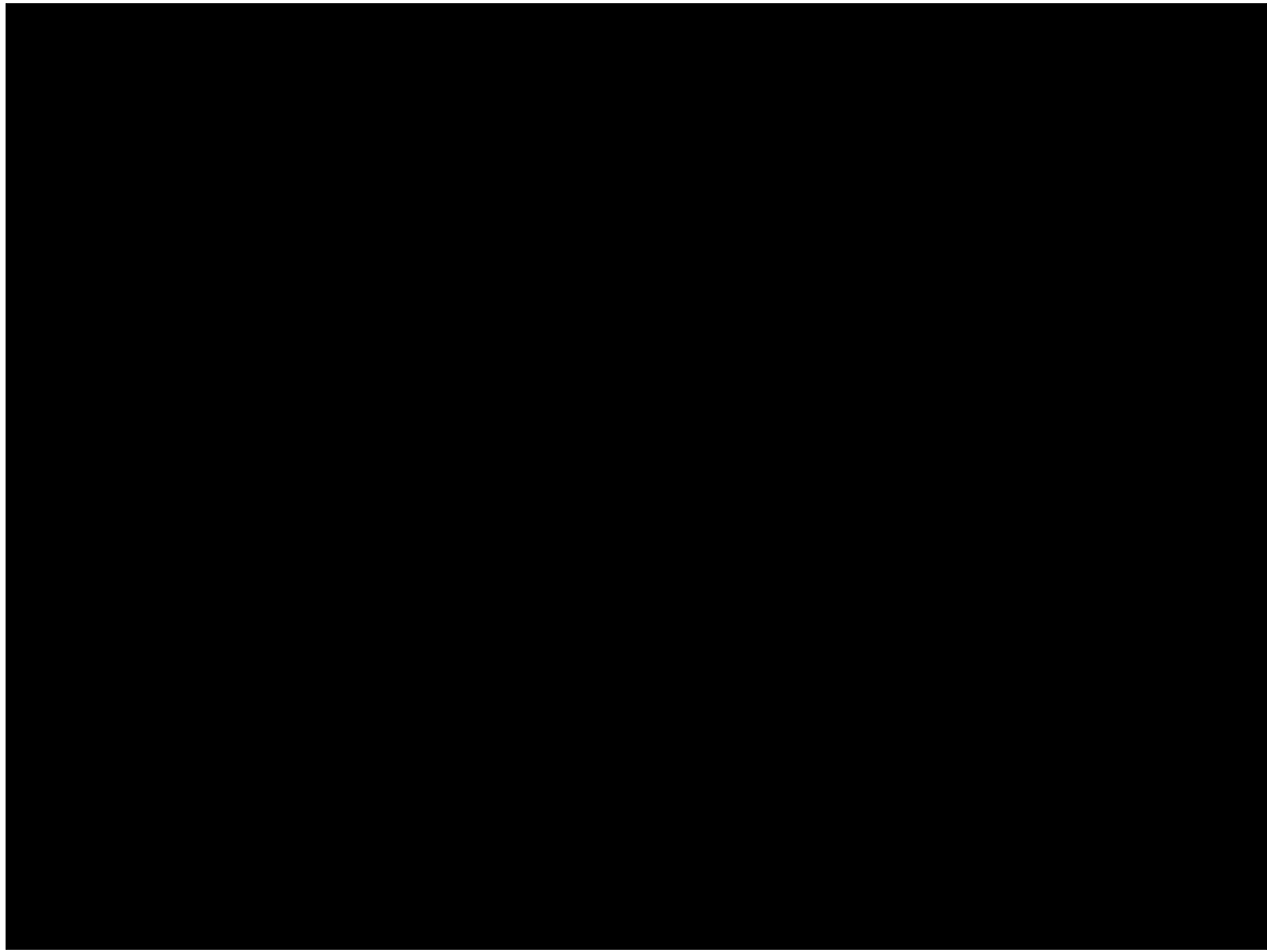






Our Spiritual DNA: The Restoration

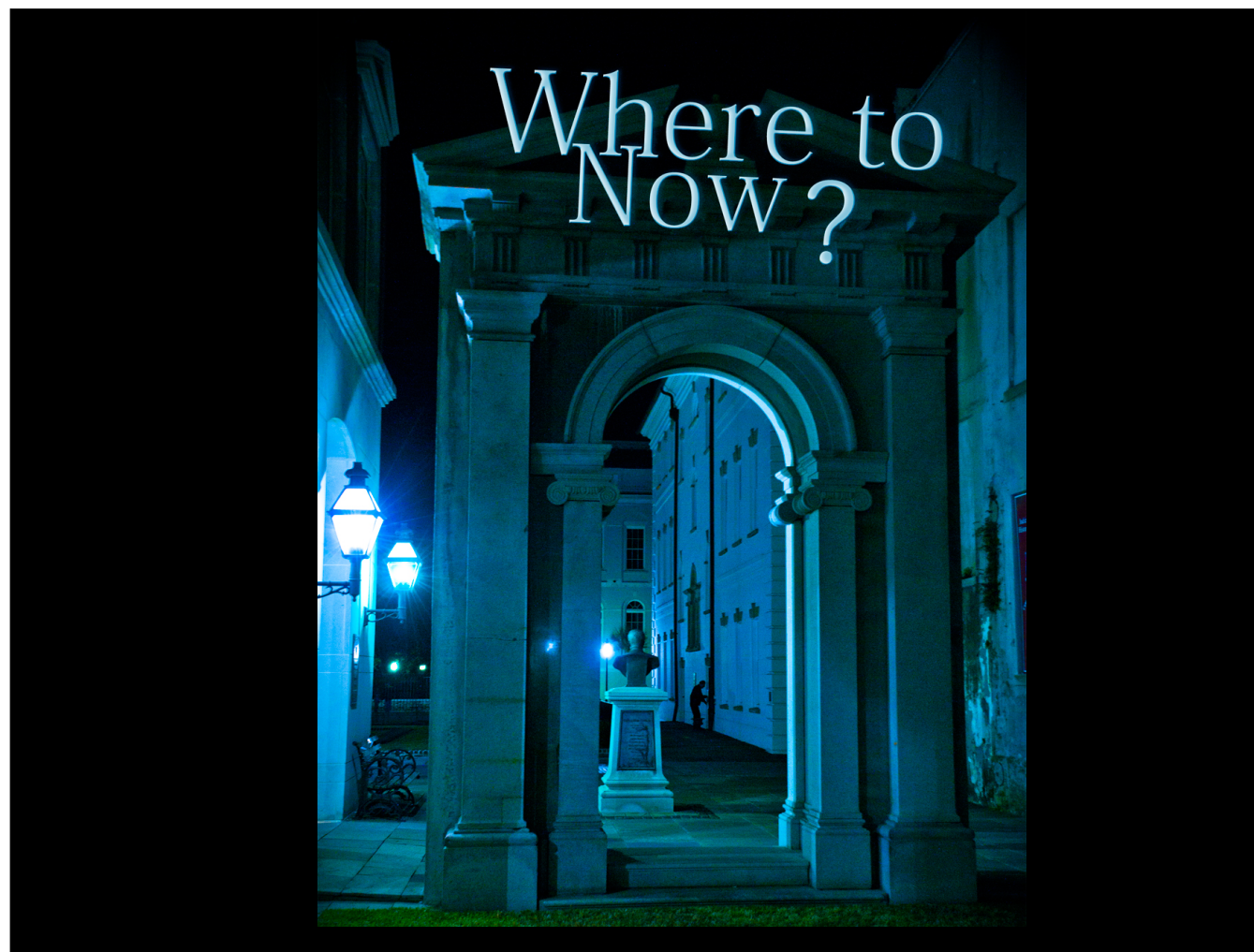
Lesson 12



The Amish are an interesting group of people. Each year, they go to Pennsylvania, watch them churn butter, work with animals and have manual tools. Without electricity, they seem to make do.

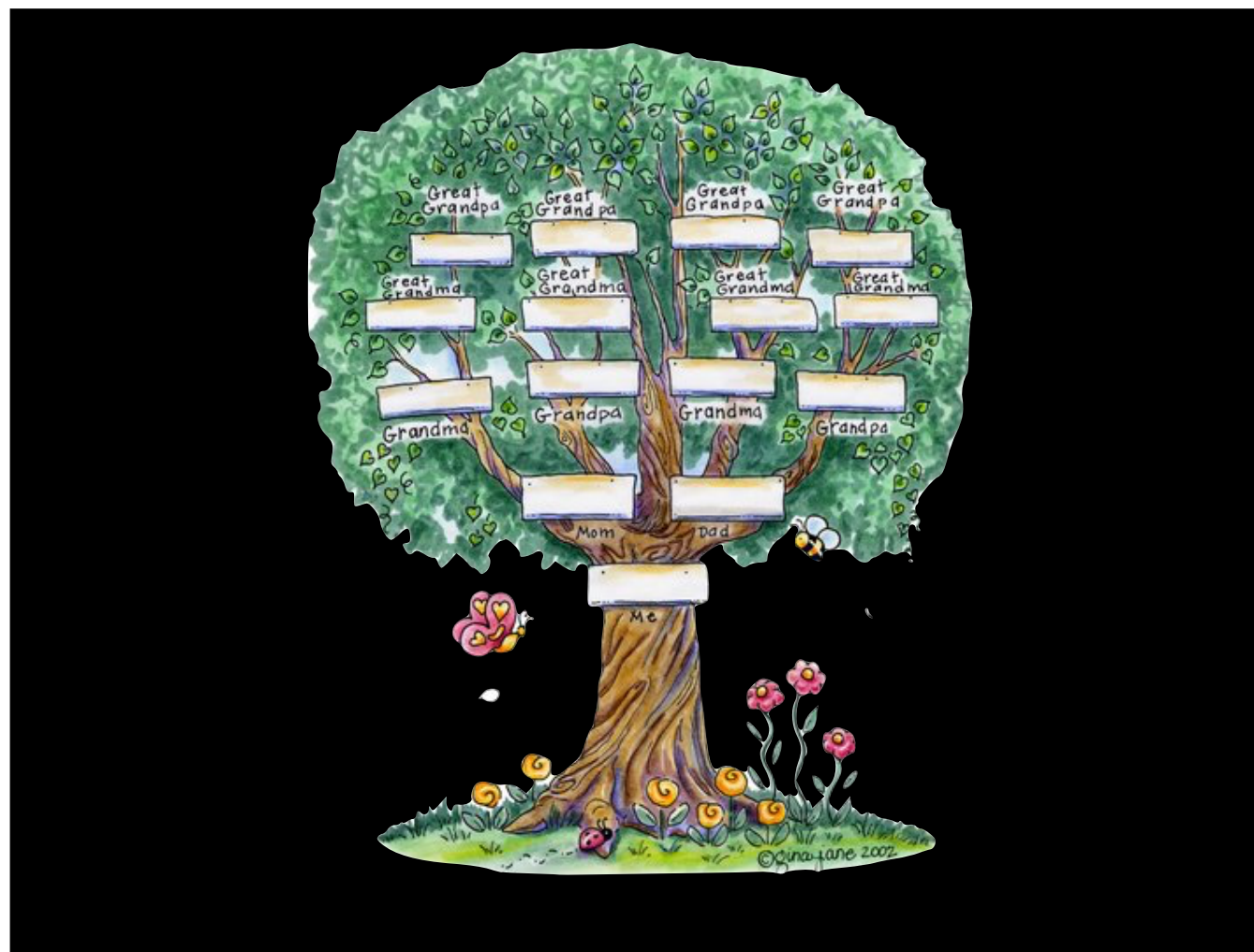
But people leave charmed. "How quaint." But they go back home and would never want to live that way.

For many, they see Restoration like that. It was a great idea anchored in the past but it's been outdated and has become old-fashioned in a new world we live in. So it is easily dispensed with under the guise of "irrelevant."



Up until now, we have looked at where we have been. We've seen the roots of restoration long before Columbus discovered the New World. We saw the idea grab hold of Elias Smith, Abner Jones, James O'Kelley, Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campell. We've watched them come together, work together and then witnessed the tragedy of the wedges driven into their oneness in the form of the missionary society, the Civil War, the use of an instrument in worship, and the rise of liberal thought. Finally, the pressures were too great and the river parted, leaving the Disciples giving scant lip service to Scripture, the Christian Church trying to find a way, and the Churches of Christ small, poor, but growing.

But that's all in the past. Where to now? What does the future hold?



Some will look at Restoration like a family tree. It is the annals of the past. The roots of our present. But that's distant. Interesting but not useful for my life. (I am related in some way to Zachary Taylor and Mary Todd Lincoln but I don't dress up in old uniforms and go crazy—at least not by intent).

Is the restoration just a story of our roots, a description of our heritage as the Disciples treats it.



Or is it the compass and map to navigate the waters of a new age with similar problems and even new ones. Does it guide us forward?

Tonight, we want to look at 2 questions affecting
our future.



Is the Restoration Still Valid in the 21st Century?

The Disciples of Christ have come to the conclusion that Restoration is untenable and embarrassing. Tragically, some of our brethren give homage to the past but believe, like the slide rule of the 1960's, it is a useless tool in the modern age.



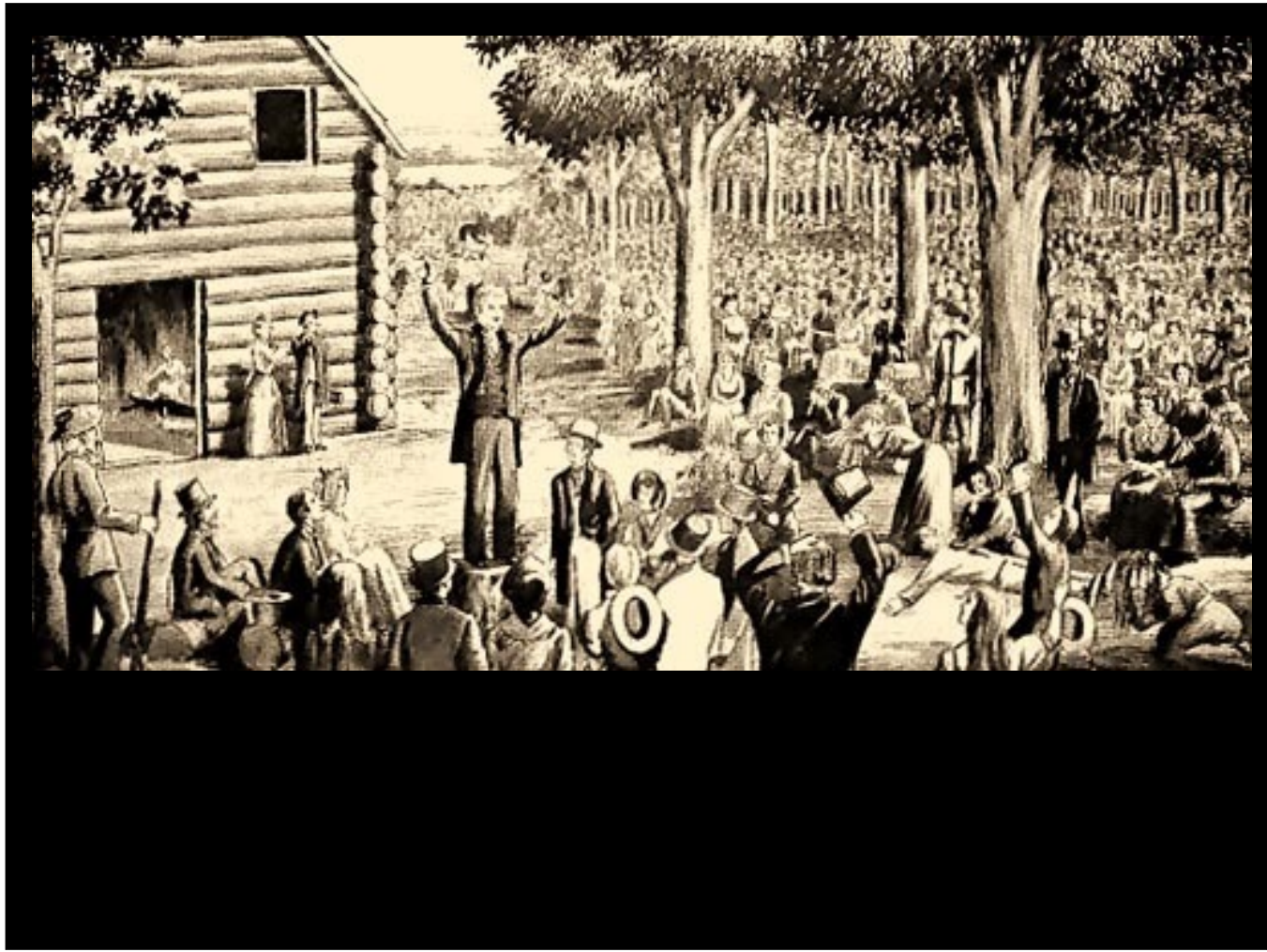
Unity?

Splintered!



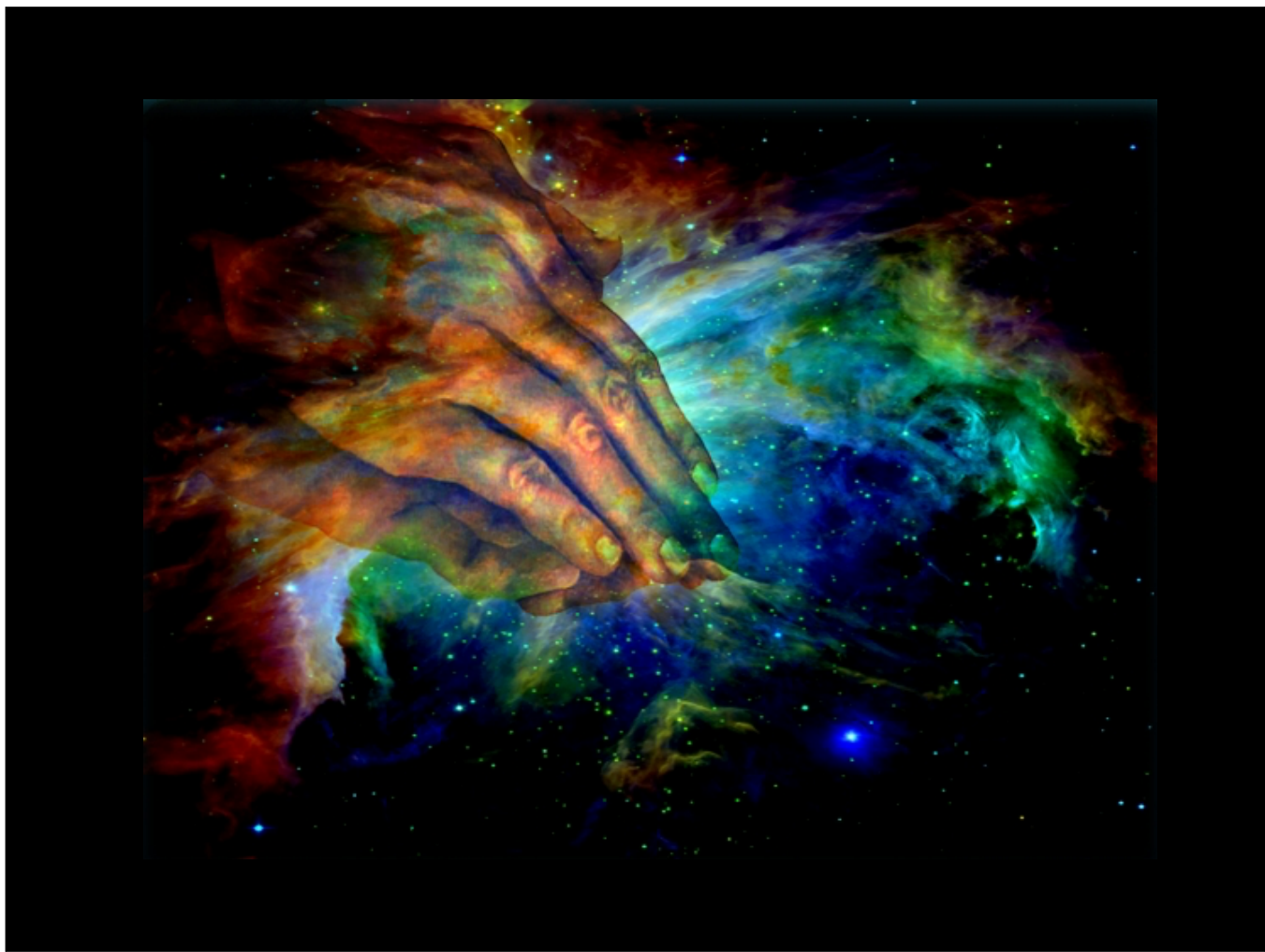
Those who claim Restoration is invalid today point to a single issue. It was supposed to bring unity. If we follow the pattern of the NT, as stated by Thomas Campbell, we would be unified.

But, as we have witnessed, our fellowship has splintered dozens of times. Douglas Foster of ACU wrote a book a few years ago called *With the Cycle Be Unbroken?* describing the destructive divisions that seem to take place over restoration.



But we have to be clear on what the restoration plea is. The plea says the first century church was the only time in human history that the followers of Jesus were one. They believed the same, practiced the same, and moved forward en masse.

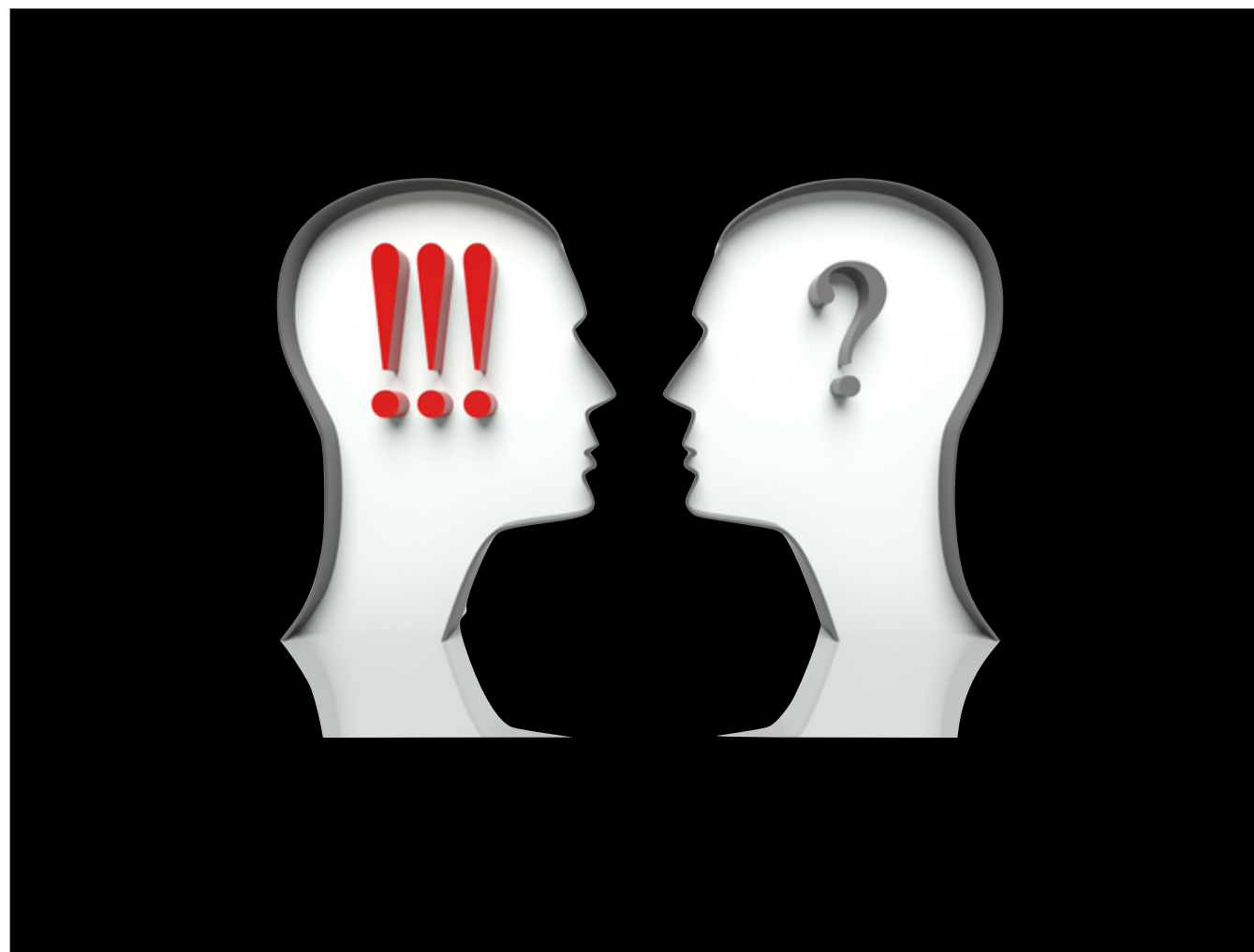
So the plea of the restoration was that unity was to be achieved by doing what they did in the New Testament. As we have seen, departure from the pattern created disunity, not the pattern itself.



It is based on two basic premises. The first is that God knew what he wanted to do and make. He knew what kind of in creation. He made man in his image, placed him in the position he wanted him to be.

The same is true about the Kingdom of God. He had a clear idea of how a man would be saved from his sin, how he would related to his fellow Christians and what they would be like.

If God was confused about what he wanted or he made mistakes and corrected them, he could not be God.



The second premise is that God is a clear enough communicator that he could make his will know to mankind. He could put it into words. He could convey his thoughts. He did not stutter or stammer or search for the right word and get a malaprop. His voice was clear.

If misunderstandings developed it was on the part of the receiver, not the sender. We did not listen well (has that ever happened). We listened for what we wanted to do, not what God wanted us to do.



So what went wrong?

We always face being wrapped in the mantle of culture. NT—the Greek culture run under Roman rule. Times of Campbell and Stone—the Great Awakenings with much of John Locke's philosophy . Today—technological and more secular. But we always go wrong when we let the culture determine our life rather than the Bible determine our life.

- The Missionary Society
- The Instrument
- The Civil War
- Classical Liberalism

In short, we moved away from scripture and toward accommodation with the world around us. This is the history of the church from the first century forward.

But then another thing is as human beings we have our faults and foibles. It is easy for us to miss the mark. Do it enough and you start to find ways to justify what you do. We use an instrument under the guise of an evangelistic tool or the missionary society under the guise of the desire to spread the gospel to the world. Our humanness is sometimes our great undoing.



If we don't choose restoration, what are the options for finding God's will?



- ▼ Option 1 —power rules
 - This is how religious structures operate.
 - The church, the pope, the synod, the presbytery, the convention decides what the church will believe
 - In churches of Christ, editors and Bible school curriculum publishers determine it.



Option 2—Popular Vote rules

- Different form of power but the power is in the many
- We ask people to vote—what do you want to do?
- Majority rules.
- What happens if it is 100% in opposition to the Bible? Look at the issue of gay marriage. That's what has happened.
- Where does God get a vote and how much does it count?



Option 3—Personal Preference rules

- This is where Christendom is today
- We have all kinds of churches (community, Bible, evangelical)—find your flavor
- Christianity has become a 31 flavors with a new flavor a month.
- Large “Christian” church in the area whose “pastor” proclaimed the Lord Supper is unimportant. You can commune with the Lord in your home on Monday night at halftime of the football game. It’s up to you.
- Sadly, Christianity has become private piety—what works for you is what God will allow. He has no wishes, will or demands—just that you be happy. (Then why are there so many miserable people in this world!!!)
- Church is de-emphasized for a “personal relationship” with God. Faith is person and private and the church is irrelevant and any discussions about worship, organization, etc. are by extension irrelevant.



- ▼ The truth be told, if you take the pattern of the New Testament away, there is no right way or wrong way, just different way.
 - Atheism is perfectly allowable as is human sacrifice.
 - Worship is an irrelevant experience so we ought to hit the golf course on Sunday mornings. (Why that does happen)
- ▼ Restoration is the only alternative for those who believe in a God who has revealed himself through an inspired Bible.
 - Jettison and we become like the Disciples—they are the natural extension of deeming restoration untenable.



Is the Restoration Finished?

- Is the Restoration a thing of the past? Is it completed?



We've
Restored
It!

Sometimes we think so!

- ▼ Bible discusses many things
 - Necessity of immersion for the remission of sins
 - How the church is setup and organized
 - Worship according to a pattern
 - For the most part, we practice all of those things.
 - Therefore, we have "restored" the church of the New Testament.



**“What do I
still lack?”**

16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

18 “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, **19** honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

20 “All these I have kept,” the young man said.

- ▼ But we have only done the “hardware” and not the “software.”
 - ▼ Matt 19—the rich young ruler
 - Had done many things right
 - Question—what more do I lack?
 - Answer of Jesus was not of external observance but inward attitude.
 - Inner Christianity needs to be as much a priority as outer Christianity



The individual responsibility for evangelism

- ▼ The same kind of emphasis on sharing the gospel
 - ▼ Acts 8
 - People scattered
 - Took the message wherever
 - It was harder than today!
 - Built church buildings and assume that will “draw”
 - No one converted by a building

They devoted themselves to ***the apostles' teaching*** and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.



▼ Emphasis on “the apostles’ teaching”

- Danger today is to wander away from the text.
- One of the strengths of this church is taking just a text and you study that in the context in which it sits
- Many have hooked onto “topical” which could be best translated “what I like.”
- Listen to preachers who preach “bullet sermons” or those who read a text and the rest of the sermon has nothing to do with the text.
- The core of restoration thinking is “going back to the Bible.”



Keeping Out of Extremes

The history of the last 100 years has been one of extremes and it is becoming more common. With Daniel Sommer, he was one extreme. When it comes to liberal thought, we don't reason, we respond. Part of the restoration plea is to do what God wants, not what is the extreme.

Isaiah 1:18 English Standard Version (ESV)

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

- Time when the church was based on the concept of “come, let us reason together.” We talked faith and Bible.



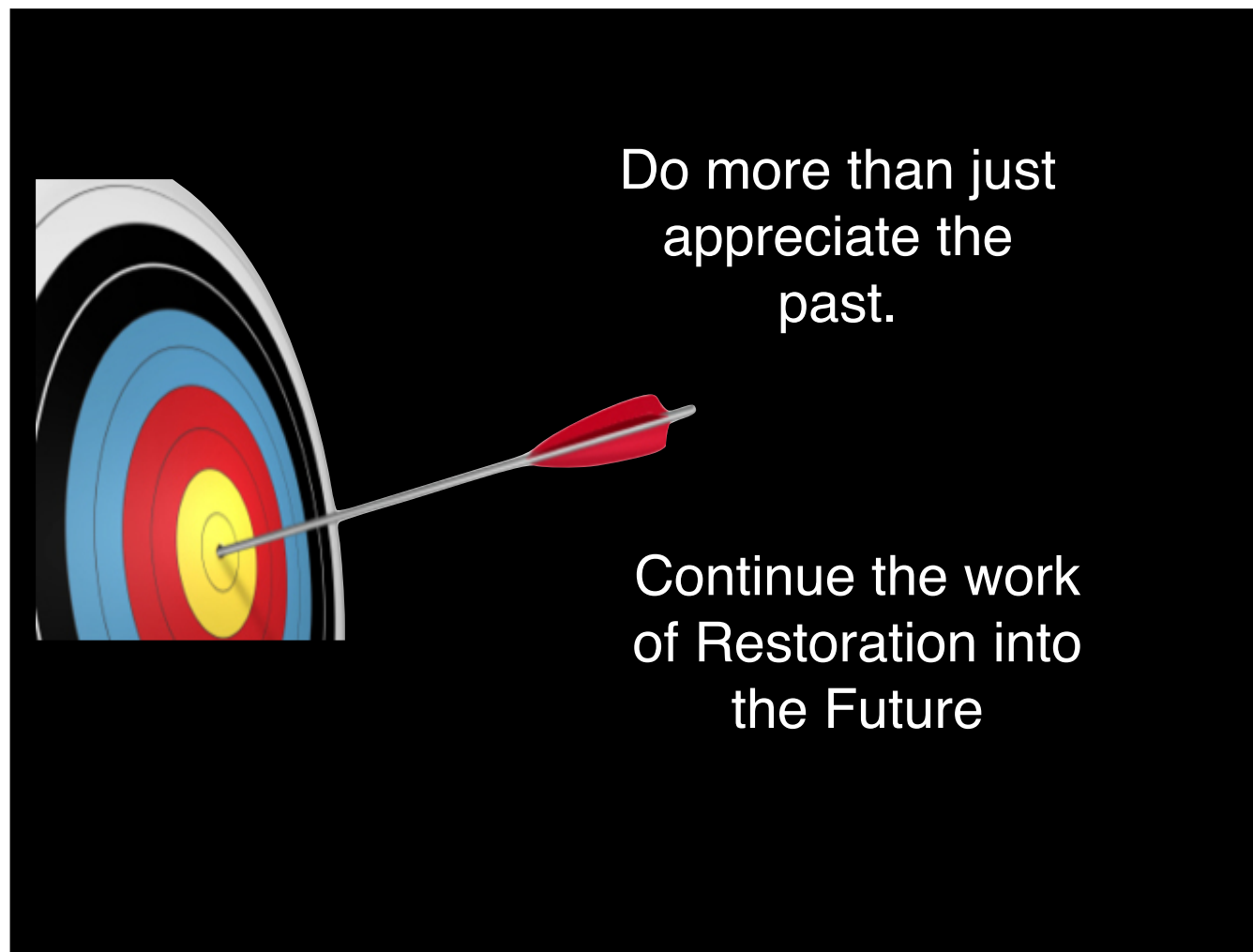
- ▼ Danger—polarization in the church
 - ▼ Those on both sides get ugly and personal.
 - Contending for the Faith mentality
 - Blogs on the internet have made it worse
 - No longer talk about differences and come to a conclusion based on the text but by how many followers a certain preacher, elder, etc. has.



- ▼ Standing for Christ in the midst of an antagonistic culture
 - Enjoyed things so long
 - But our world today is much like the brutality, immorality, and heathenism of Paul's day.



- ▼ The One danger we always face—the drift.
 - Second century church started looking more like the Roman government
 - Fourth century adapted pagan customs to be palatable to the pagans who faced an official Christianity.
 - ▼ Restoration
 - Started out well
 - Slowly drifted away from the simple pattern in worship, work, and organization.



- My goal—give you a greater appreciation of the bedrock on which we in Churches of Christ have approached Christianity. Our goal is still the same. Achieve the same unity through the same means—following the pattern laid down by the apostles who listened to the words of Jesus himself.