

# Restoring The Early Church

Volume 1

*Christianity Has Departed  
From Our Lord's Purposes*



by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz



**Restoration Ministries International**

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# Preface

Our heavenly Father has permitted my wife Sue and me to observe “Christianity” in ways few people have had opportunity. From 1983 to 1993 Sue and I administered a retreat ministry that touched the lives of over five thousand people from just about every Christian denomination and sect. For eight years I counseled pastors and church leaders, primarily in Connecticut but also in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine and New York. Before that I was Controller at a highly regarded Christian college. I am a graduate of a respected seminary. Using the current church vernacular, Sue and I are “lay people,” and this book is written for “lay people” so they may know what our heavenly Father is restoring today. For a video understanding of how we received what our heavenly Father is restoring today, see [How We Got This Prophetic Message](#)

**“I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece,  
and make you like a warrior’s sword” (Zechariah 9:13).**

We first heard an explanation of this verse at a prayer conference in Jerusalem. In the months following the conference our Father took us aside, and through revelation and resources, gave us the basis for this book. Two broad facets of the message He gave us will be developed more fully throughout the book:

**1. The Holy Spirit is restoring a biblically Hebraic understanding of your relationship with our heavenly Father and Lord Jesus, as well as with the significant people in your life.**

A Hebraic understanding not only affects the depth of your relationship with your Lord, but is inseparably linked with how you relate to others. For instance, a descriptive essence of Hebraic understanding of marriage in the early Church would perhaps be: **“If you want to know the extent of my relationship with Jesus Christ, look for it in my love for my spouse.”** Our Father planned for husbands and wives to put their marriage above all other relationships or activities: **“A man will be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).** Their mutual love should be a visible representation of their relationship with their Lord Jesus. Those who have suffered broken marriages and relationships are able to receive the healing intimacy of restoration with God by exploring and applying the Hebraic principles of the Bible.

The Holy Spirit is turning the hearts of fathers toward their families (see Malachi 4:6). The Hebraic home was the basic building block of spiritual development in the early Church. It is the foundational starting point for the growth of healthy home fellowships and congregations. The older men, the shepherd/teachers, have traditionally been recognized as respected repositories of wisdom and insight. God is once again raising them up to guide and to counsel husbands and wives, and men and women in general. The return to Hebraic mentoring through shepherd/teachers, along with their wives teaching the younger women, is an indispensable factor that’s being restored by our heavenly Father.

**2. The Holy Spirit is alerting Christians to the reconciliation now taking place with the Jewish People.**

God has promised great blessing to those who bless the seed of Abraham, the Jewish people. He is regathering the Jewish people to the land of Israel in fulfillment of His promise to them: **“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you” (Ezekiel 36:24-26).



## You Need To Know What Our Father Is Restoring

In a sense we are writing with concern for those to whom we ministered at the retreat center. We wish that we had known years earlier the Hebraic foundations our heavenly Father gave us to share. Many people came to mind as we absorbed these truths. We often thought, “If only they could hear this, they could more readily trust Him and be resolutely determined to do His will.”

Although the medium of the written word lacks the informal and interactive dynamics of a retreat, our goal is to furnish something insightful that will revolutionize your spiritual walk. Through this material we hope you will be able to discern the appropriate steps of action in your faith to strengthen your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and revitalize your relationships of marriage, family, and intimate friends.

We have documented events that occurred over the centuries, developments that have removed the vitality of the Hebraic early Church of the first century. It was important to us to have confirmation that what we were writing was both biblical and needful. This was a concern of the apostle Paul as well in his own endeavors:

“Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain” (Galatians 2:1,2).

With that in mind, the first draft of this book (1995) was sent to several men and women who are recognized as theologically sound in their respective areas of Christianity. Our thinking at that time was, “If these respected individuals examined what our heavenly Father commanded us to share, would they come to the same conclusions?” The feedback was an overwhelming endorsement of our work. Two frequent comments surfaced in their feedback. The first, “I know that what you have written is true, but I’d be afraid to implement the changes that are needed to help get my congregation back to the foundations of the early Church.” The other often repeated comment was, “You don’t have to prove your case; instead, show people how to bring it about.”

In light of these responses, Restoring the Early Church is a synthesis of both historical research and practical suggestions. And, the equipping lessons in [Discussing How To Restore the Early Church](#), or the parallel video series, [Jesus In Your Home](#), are helpful in personally restoring the relational intimacy and spiritual power of our Lord’s first followers.

**Think of the Hebraic Restoration which our heavenly Father is bringing about as a large oak tree, with the foundations fitting in right above the roots at the base of the trunk. The Root is of course our Lord Jesus.**



Due to the comprehensive breadth of what we're sharing, we've organized the book into four distinct volumes:

**Volume 1: Christianity Has Departed From Our Lord's Purposes**

Christianity today, with its over 38,000 competing denominations and sects, does not represent the unity which our Lord Jesus intended. His followers were to be love-motivated and equipped for service by the combined input of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers. Working in synergy, these gifts would achieve unity in the faith.

“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherd/teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

**Volume 2: The Mainstay Of Christianity Was Its Hebraic Roots**

This volume presents the historic backdrop and influences of the God-fearing Hebraic community that accepted the Messiah during the first century. Their relational practices and teachings both preceded and were foundational for the Newer Testament writers.

**Volume 3: Christianity's Loss Of Its Hebraic Roots**

This brief overview highlights the events that brought about the exchange of Hebraic roots for an alien ungodly culture and an unbiblical organizational structure. Because of the extensive research and writings of others in this area, we have compressed our presentation of the incursion of Hellenist philosophy and Roman government into the church.

**Volume 4: Our Father Is Restoring His Relational Priorities**

The last volume focuses on the primary relational arenas for Christlike development and growth. All other dimensions of life, including a viable congregation that worships the Lord and serves the interests of His Kingdom, are spawned from these central areas.



# About Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz



Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz became followers of our Lord Jesus in 1977 while Mike was a career officer in the navy, having served three deployments during the Vietnam Conflict as a helicopter pilot. After being born again he realized that following Jesus was a response of overwhelming love toward his Lord, and he wanted to learn how he could more adequately present the life-changing work of His Savior to others.

Resigning from the navy in 1978, he attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to study the roots of the many various denominations and sects throughout Christendom. There he was made painfully aware of both the division and the competition among the segmented religious establishment. Through his own ministry track, however, he learned how important interpersonal connection with one another is in discipling others to walk in Jesus' steps through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Sue attended the seminary as well, focusing on studies in New Testament Greek and on effective ways to reach others from different cultures. In a way that only our Father could work out, both of these pursuits would feature heavily in their various ministries over the course of their lives together.

After seminary Mike and Sue administrated and taught at a Christian retreat center where they interacted with over 5,000 people. They were able to come alongside those who were hurting relationally within their families and experiencing frustration in their own faith walk. While at the center, Mike was a counselor to religious leaders throughout southern New England. He was able to use the skills he'd acquired from his graduate studies in interpersonal relationships to encourage these leaders to develop a unified concern among their congregations for the lost in their communities to encounter Jesus. Sue found her heart's desire to work among people of other cultures by teaching conversational English to international students at a nearby university for six years. Through their time together these students became dear friends, and a number of them heard about Jesus for the first time.

Mike and Sue's combined ministry was recognized by the Associated Press in an article that was published nationally. Mike also was featured in an article in New England Church Life, "Who Pastors the Pastor? Following their retreat ministry they lived in Israel, where our Father revealed the Hebraic foundations to them. Restoration Ministries International has its basis in research and revelation they did while living in Israel, and Mike and Sue are sharing our Father's re-establishment of the Hebraic foundations that both communally strengthened the early followers of our Lord Jesus and spiritually empowered them. Their present ministry through the internet is reaching people from 105 countries with a call to a life of loving and obedient trust in Jesus as their Lord.

Mike holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Connecticut, an MBA from California Lutheran College, and a Master of Religious Education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Sue holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Connecticut as well as having taken several graduate courses at GCTS.

For a video introduction, see [Introducing Mike & Sue](#)

## Father's Purpose For Restoration Ministries International

Restoration Ministries has its basis in revelation and research they did while living in Israel. For the past 27 years through Restoration Ministries International Mike and Sue have been sharing our Father's re-establishment of the relational priorities that strengthened the early followers of Christ to boldly reach and disciple others.

The core of the Hebraic Foundations is based upon prioritizing relationships, beginning from the center of the diagram below outward. Restoration Ministries International was given by our Heavenly Father the responsibility to focus on the center three priorities.



- [For further information on our Father and Jesus.](#)
- [For further information on Your Home.](#)
- [For further information on Fellowship In Homes.](#)

Each of the materials produced by Restoration Ministries International is interconnected with a family of information related to what our Father told us to call "The Hebraic Restoration". Each item is designed to stand alone to equip you to apply these foundational truths and principles to your life. Yet the real strength of each is found in its interrelationship to the other facets of the Hebraic Restoration.

Through these truths our Father is revealing the trust-based, obedient lifestyle of our father Abraham:

“The promise comes by trust, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’” (Romans 4:16,17; see also Galatians 3:29).

Followers of our Lord Jesus are children of Abraham, the first Hebrew. Abraham trusted God in love-grounded obedience, willing even to sacrifice his son at God’s command. Therefore, God called him into covenant union with Himself, and through him poured out precious promises for all his children to come.

**THAT MEANS YOU!**

## Chapter 1

# Face It! Christian Families Today Are A Mess

Today we need “Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do”  
(1 Chronicles 12:32).

When the tribes of Israel gathered to make David king, all of them journeyed to Hebron with thousands of troops. One tribe in particular, the tribe of Issachar, came with two hundred men “who **understood the times** and knew what Israel should do.” If we are ever to see the powerful first century early Church restored, we must become a people who understands the current times. Then, if we have faith and courage, we can be part of the restoration of the Church as Jesus founded it: His Body of followers who are consumed with love for Him, for our families, for other believers, and for the lost.

Before we consider what our Father is requiring of men today as He restores the Hebraic foundations of early Christianity, let’s assess the current status of the family and “The Church” in the US. Carle Zimmerman, in his book Family and Civilization, provides unique insight into the disintegration of the modern family and church. Zimmerman traces the typical development and eventual disintegration of the family in a variety of cultures.

In most great civilizations, including Greece, Rome, and now the United States, the shifts in family relationships and in societal attitudes toward the family follow a similar course. Initially there is great respect for the family, and individual desires are subordinated to family needs. Eventually this attitude gives way to its opposite: a deification of individual rights and a deprecation of family commitments. This is accompanied by a disintegration of society. This was the pattern, he believes, that took place among the Greeks and Romans, and the same pattern that is currently operating in the US.

Zimmerman identifies three types of families, each of which predominates at various times in the life cycle of a civilization: the trustee family, the domestic family, and the atomistic family.

The **trustee family** is the most stable family form. Great value is placed on the resources and truths that ancestors have passed along from generation to generation. The governing authority is normally a patriarchal structure ruled by the oldest males. The input of all the relatives, however, is sought when typical problems arise in each family unit. Because family loyalty is held in such high regard, senior members can function as the recognized disciplinary agents. They can demand obedience in a way that those who are outside the family or clan might not respond to.

Divorce is rarely practiced in this type of family structure. Individuals are expected to subordinate their own interests to the greater interest of the family as a whole. Family members accumulate wealth and provisions through a spirit of selflessness and hard work. The solidarity of this family type can be seen in the era of the Pilgrims and Puritans of early America.

The **domestic family** occupies a middle ground between individualism on the one hand and absolute authority of the family on the other. The government structure in this family type values the strength of family ties and stability but leaves room for individual expression and a certain creative autonomy to present new ideas. Clan power is subordinated to church and state agencies.

Divorce is infrequent but does occur occasionally. A husband and a wife are seen as a family unit that assumes major responsibility for raising their children according to the values that they believe are right. Parents are willing to undergo the pain of childbirth and the trials of childrearing because they view their children as an extension of themselves. At times this means that some parental desires have to be sacrificed in order to focus on the needs and training of the next generation. Generally mothers and fathers of this family type are willing to forego, if necessary, luxury cars, upscale homes, and even time-consuming hobbies in order to have energy, time, and resources for their kids.

This type of family structure epitomized Greece and Rome at their height of trade and commerce. The subsequent decline of these civilizations occurred when the state took over the responsibilities that up until then had been assumed by the families and religious institutions. Up until the 1950’s, this structure characterized the majority of American households.



When the ties within the family unit disintegrate, an obsession with individualism develops. This marks the **atomistic family stage**. Each person is viewed as a distinct unit, disconnected from the rest of the family. Individual rights are emphasized rather than family responsibilities. A fixation on individualism develops. Selfishness and self-absorption abound as individuals become obsessed with their own desires and concerns, and disregard the needs or suffering of others. Commitments and responsibilities are perceived as infringements on personal freedom, so human life is devalued.

Whereas self-sacrifice was the norm under the trustee and domestic families, complete and unabashed selfishness becomes the norm under the atomistic family. Cultures of this type experiment with childless liaisons and suffer increased divorce rates. Because the majority of people are unwilling to sacrifice for the future, fewer children are born.

A civilization in the throes of the atomistic period resembles a swarm of antagonistic insects engaged in mortal combat.



Religious and moral customs have little effect on protecting the sanctity of the family. As one writer says, “The individual, having no guiding morals, changes the meaning of freedom from opportunity to license. Having no internal or external guides to discipline him, he becomes a gambler with life, always seeking greener pastures. When he comes to inevitable difficulty, he is alone in his misery.” Not content to suffer in silence, the atomistic individual seeks out others with similar difficulties to establish a political “voice.” His special-interest group can then gain power and influence in order to coerce social institutions to remedy their misery.

**Note the contrast between the ethic of personal responsibility in the domestic family and the development of social victimization (“It’s not my fault”) in the atomistic structure. Individuals become obsessed with their own desires and concerns, disregarding the needs or suffering of others. Commitments and responsibilities infringe on personal freedom.**



Consider the characteristics of an atomistic society.

- **Marriage loses its sanctity** as a stable, committed institution. The inviolability of marriage as a covenant is lost. The relationship is often broken by relatively easy, “no-fault” divorce.

- **Feminist movements abound** as women lose their inclination to bear children and personally raise them. The birth rate decreases. Daycare facilities replace intimate parenting as mothers are no longer motivated or encouraged to raise their own children in the security of the home.

- **Public disrespect for parents, parenthood, and authority in general rises.** Parenthood becomes more difficult for those still trying to raise children with biblical values. The media mock and malign time-honored values and traditions.

- **Young people are increasingly disrespectful** of their parents and others in authority. Juvenile delinquency escalates, as do promiscuity and rebellion. Neither the legal system nor educational institutions are able to deter unrighteous or criminal behavior.

- **Adultery is accepted** and even promoted in many circles. Alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation, are increasingly accepted.

- **Sexual perversions of all kinds** (homosexuality, rape, incest, pedophilia) **move from toleration to proliferation.**

In 1986, when we first began to share Zimmerman’s thoughts with pastors and others on retreats, there was unanimous consensus that the United States had entered the atomistic stage, the period when social disintegration was occurring. Many of us began to seek ways that we as Christians could be “salt” and “light” no matter what happened to our country. This became our purpose in writing this book.

#### **Authors’ Note**

In 2005 Christian pollster George Barna published his insightful book, Revolution. His organization had researched the spiritual lives of 77 million adults who are churched and are self-identified as born-again Christians. The results of his research uncovered widespread failure among those who claim to belong to Jesus to effectively serve our Lord in proclaiming His work of redeeming mankind.

As Barna has reported, there is no moral difference between Christians and unbelievers in this nation. Those who call themselves Christian embrace the same worldly values as non-Christians, and their moral standards are as lax and culturally dictated as those of people who make no claim to follow Jesus.

More recent statistics from Barna reveal that there is no difference in the rate of abortion among the churched and the unchurched. Just as telling, the rate of divorce among churchgoers is perhaps 50% higher than among those who make no claims to a relationship with God.

# Christianity in the Atomistic Culture of the USA

“Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’S altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because **you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.** Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because **He was seeking godly offspring.** So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ‘**I hate divorce,**’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,’ says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith” (Malachi 2:13-16).

In this culture, the decline of strong supportive parental ties with their children has produced a detrimental side effect. During the 1960’s, the period of adolescence spanned ages thirteen to nineteen. By the late 1980’s, however, sociologists had extended adolescence from age twelve to age thirty. More recent studies have extended adolescence to age 36. This assumes that the beginning of adolescence is marked by the onset of puberty and ends when an individual takes complete responsibility for his or her actions and decisions in life.

Our culture has, in effect, produced a generation of “adult adolescents” who are ill-equipped to assume the roles of responsible adulthood and leadership.

At the retreat center we were asked in 1985 to conduct a singles ministry representing many different churches in our region. We did this for about two and a half years until individual churches began their own singles ministry. The average age of those who attended our monthly potluck and quarterly retreats was 28-29 years. The size of the group varied from thirty to sixty people. Except for one or two, the participants had never been married. Only a few resided at home with their parents; many lived alone in apartments. Over a several month period we encouraged these individuals to ask their parents, “Is it a joy for you to have me as your child?” The vast majority of the singles were held captive by their fears. They could not get up the courage to ask their folks that question. But seven of the group did inquire. Their testimonies to the others were filled with wonderful love and affirmation on the part of the parents, much to the inquirers’ surprise. Still, the majority could not overcome their fear to approach the very people who had once changed their diapers.

Many of these people were college graduates and had experienced a certain measure of personal freedom due to disposable income and an enormous amount of discretionary time. Many of their options and decisions centered around what “toys” to buy and what activities to occupy those extra hours. Their maturity level was commensurate with that of the 14-17 year-olds we had guided in youth groups during the early 1970s. No matter what counsel or suggestions we presented, little change was effected in the lives of most of them. (At that time, we were still unaware of how crippling the demise of the three-generation family had been as it impacted personal maturation.) We have followed the lives of many of these men and women, observing a disquieting pattern of migration from one singles group to another to yet another.

About a year after we were “relieved of duty” from the singles ministry as various churches developed their own singles groups, a man we’ll call Bill came to us. He had been asked to start a singles group on behalf of his church, the largest congregation in our area. Someone on the church staff had recommended that he talk with us.

After our introduction Mike asked, “Bill, do you know what hell on earth is? It is being forty, single, and wishing you had been married the whole time.” He peered at Mike sadly, replying, “I’m forty, single, and wishing I had been married all that time.” As we conversed, Mike encouraged him to pray for an older grandparent-aged couple to conduct the singles ministry. We had discovered that even in our forties, we were too young to significantly help our single friends. Bill disregarded our advice, and after one or two years of struggling with the group, suffered an emotional collapse.

How often do you labor in your own strength, even for “good” causes, only to discover that what seems good but is outside of Father’s purpose and timing will not bear the lasting fruit of changed lives?

**“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Psalm 127:1).**

Today, many Christians question the meaning of our forms of worship and service. They dutifully attend services and meetings, yet they are burdened by the meaninglessness of so much that is traditionally a part of our churches. They sense a need for a new perspective, a new awareness, and rightly so. Their Sunday-at-eleven culture was timed generations ago to

fall between the two milking hours in the agricultural society — and most of contemporary western society doesn't have to worry about that.

😞 **Sermons remain one of the last forms of public discourse where it is culturally forbidden to interact with the speaker or ask questions.**



Think of a typical congregation at their weekly gathering.

“[Leadership is] surrounded by a cloud of uninvolved and mildly approving witnesses... Basically, we do not want anything to happen on Sunday morning that will upset our daily routine. We want to be ‘inspired,’ to come away with a warm feeling, but we do not want to be disturbed, so subconsciously we structure the service in order to assure safe, predictable, comfortable results...”

“We say that our faith must be lived—that Christ invades us to transform every aspect of daily life. Yet we teach this faith in formalized classes or sermons far out of a life context... We say that every believer is a priest, gifted and responsible for building up others in the Body of Christ. And we bring adults to church, set them down and tell them to listen to a teacher or to the pastor. They have exercised no ministry, held no responsibility but to be quiet and orderly, and have helped no one by their presence... We say that parents are responsible for the Christian nurture of their children. Yet we develop more and more church programs to minister to them and thus promote the idea that parents can turn their children over to the church and the church will do the job of nurturing them.”

“It does not matter what we say. What we do talks most convincingly. And the fact is that our current church patterns and our educational programming intellectualize Christianity, promote parental irresponsibility, prevent believers from ministering to one another, and permit Christians to feel comfortable without any personal ministry.” (emphasis added)

Prophetically penned by Lawrence O. Richards in his book, A New Face For The Church, do these observations correctly describe the present state of the church in the United States? Or more specifically, can you see any similarity to what is happening in your congregation?

The late David Wilkerson, former pastor of the Times Square Church in New York City, wrote in his 6-13-94 Pulpit Series letter,

“The denominational church system appears to be in the throes of death. It has almost no influence in the secular world, no mighty power in Christ. Growing numbers of ministers are falling on all sides—to adultery, covetousness, pride and perversions of all kinds.

Pastors... are bringing in entertainment and showmanship... [and] many pastors today are cowards when it comes to naming sin. They merely go through the motions of the ministry, having a form of godliness but no power. It is because they have grown comfortable in their position. They have lost the touch of God and no longer hear His voice.”

In May, 1994, Wilkerson stated,

“I believe the gospel can't be fully preached unless it is accompanied by the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost—working mighty wonders, proving the gospel is true... The church today has become weak and ineffective. Why? Because it no longer believes in the supernatural! Theologians tell us that at some point God quit performing mighty deeds. Yet, exactly when all of this supernatural activity stopped, no one can say!” (Authors' comment: This theological position reflects revisionism, which means altering Scripture to reconcile its meaning with current cultural beliefs and standards.)

Wilkerson continues,

“The miracles of this last-day church will be genuine, real, indisputable, undeniable—and yet they will not be well-known. Instead, they will issue forth from the hands of ordinary, holy, separated saints who know God and are intimate with Jesus... If you think you're too ordinary for God to use, listen closely: God is not going to do His last-day work through big-name evangelists or pastors... The fact is, God is going to need every housewife, teenager, elderly person and all who love Him to carry out His mighty work!”

C. Peter Wagner, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, offered this in Ministries Today:

“Rapid change is taking place in the landscape of worldwide Christianity... The form that churches are taking is so different from past eras... By far, the most rapidly growing segment of Christianity on all six continents is a type of church that does not fit traditional categories or classifications... Perhaps one title that would fit is the term ‘post-denominational’. These churches are characterized by indigenous leadership, contemporary worship, concert prayer, power ministries and mutual affiliation based on spiritual rather than legal and bureaucratic ties.”

A trend of thought is evident in these quotations: a movement away from an institutional and hierarchical system toward a daily reliance on the Lord that empowers individual believers to worshipful and trusting obedience.

## Chapter 3

# Be Careful How You Measure Spiritual Success

“As He was leaving the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!’  
‘Do you see all these great buildings?’ replied Jesus. ‘Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down’”

(Mark 13:1,2).

Don’t let the size of your congregation or the beauty of your place of worship deceive you. Massive congregations filled with apathetic spectators are not what our Lord intended. Wayne Jacobsen, in *A Passion For God’s Presence*, illustrates Satan’s plan to make the church big and impersonal:

“In the third century Satan must have called a BIG meeting with his demons. Hades I, he probably called it. Since persecution had failed so miserably, this diabolical council needed to develop a new strategy to undermine the life of the church... The objectives were clear: The plan would have to diffuse the self-sacrificing love that carried the church through conflict, distract it from intimacy with God, and devalue the importance of the individual believer... Someone came up with a very simple idea: ‘Trying to keep it small hasn’t worked—let’s make it big!’

What would happen if the church suddenly became acceptable? Many would come just for social reasons. They would quickly dilute those who are really in God’s clutches. And imagine all the programs and activities they would have to plan to keep those people happy. Nothing chokes out intimacy as well as busyness. The church would eventually become a machine, chewing up individuals instead of loving them. They couldn’t possibly teach all the followers to walk with God personally, so they would soon substitute rules and guidelines for His ever-present voice. The machine would have to be run by professionals. The others would become nothing more than spectators and billpayers.”

Whether or not such a demonic meeting actually occurred is debatable, but the deception of the demonic goal can readily be seen throughout the church today: “Size equals success.”

We were visiting friends in a large Florida city a few years ago. As they drove us around, our host pointed out different church buildings. Many were vacant. His tale sounded something like, “This one once had 5,000 in attendance... This one had 3,000... This one...” Each church we were shown had grown to tremendous size and then destroyed itself from within.



Soon after our visit to Florida we were visiting other friends outside Washington, DC. As we drove down one of the main streets enroute to the Sunday morning worship service, our host Karl remarked that this particular street was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records. It contained more churches than any other street in the world! As we drove along, Karl pointed out which churches had split from others along that same thoroughfare. Interestingly, during the service we attended, a letter of reconciliation from the church leadership was read to the congregation. It was addressed to the congregation from which they had split some years earlier.

### Authors’ Note

When we arrived back to the US from Israel in 1994 there were over 24,000 competing denominations and sects in Christianity. By 2010 there were over 38,000 competing denominations and sects, with more being added every year!

This state of affairs would not be so serious if the examples cited in Florida and DC represented just a few isolated cases in the US. However, we are now talking about the rule, not the exception. Our churches have become human institutions, not living spiritual organisms.

Corroborating this thought is the following from Ernest Wright in The Rule of God:

“God, through the work of the Spirit, has always been at war with human institutionalism, because the institution becomes idolatrous, self-perpetuating, and self-worshipping, because church membership becomes synonymous with the new birth, because man tries to make the Spirit follow law.” How complex we have made the simplicity of the gospel, with our “programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.” (emphasis added)

John Stott, a well-known Christian writer, was asked to explain why Christianity has declined in the West, and how this process can be avoided as more and more of the world becomes Westernized. Stott replied:

“It began with these philosophers who mounted a frontal attack on the Christian church, seeking to replace revelation with reason...And the church was feeble to capitulate to that assault...Another reason why Christianity is declining is that what is declining is pseudo-Christianity. It is not the authentic Christianity described in the Gospels and the Newer Testament...

“Christianity has declined in the West because Christian people who claim to follow Christ don’t look like it... If Christians lived like Jesus Christ, the world would be at our feet today. The greatest hindrance to the spread of the gospel is the church. The church that is intended to be a stepping stone to faith is more often a stumbling block to faith.” (emphasis added)

Probably the biggest reason for the church’s difficulty in breaking its ties with people management systems and programs is that institutionalism, an established and recognized body that performs a particular function, is so prevalent in our culture. The culture, more than God’s Word, now influences the church.

Both Jesus and the early Church kept organized institutionalism to a minimum, preferring the power of the Spirit and the relationships among believers to provide ministry. They could see from the Hebrew Scriptures and from the society around them that the institution of the priestly system had failed to produce an obedient people who loved and served the Lord.

Institutional efforts can look like success even where the vitality of Jesus isn’t real. That’s what is so deceptive about it. You think you’re pleasing our Father for all your activity and its results, yet beneath the programs and entertainment lies an emptiness that few will admit. Institutionalism deceives you into feeling good about yourself even after your responsiveness to God has ceased.

Our dear friend Casey Sabella was preaching in England a few years ago when he asked the congregation this question: “If Jesus Christ were dead, how long would you keep on doing what you are doing?” The people were convicted as they realized and admitted that everything would go on just as it had. The institution provided all that they needed or wanted to meet their social and religious needs.

# Mutated By Vested Interests And Revisionists

 Mutated: **changed in form, nature, or substance**

“You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’... So from that day on they plotted to take His life” (John 11:50,53).

Another hindrance to obedient trust and loving intimacy with our heavenly Father is “vested interest” in the church. Vested interests are found in those people who, because of position and power, try to keep what is to their own advantage.

For example, while Mike was in the Navy he read a dramatic account of vested interest that had required an Act of Congress to overcome. During the early decades of the 20th century, airplanes were introduced aboard ships. The pilots of these aircraft were in control of the missions of the planes, free from the direct decision making of the ship’s captain. Throughout the Navy’s history, a ship’s captain had always exercised total dominion over everything that was aboard his vessel. The captains perceived the pilots’ autonomy as a threat to their own vested interest of absolute authority.

A number of ship captains tried to jeopardize the success of aircraft missions aboard ships. Some actually endangered pilots’ lives by putting their ship into a turning maneuver just as a plane was attempting to land onboard. Therefore Congress stepped in and enacted a law that any ship with aircraft stationed onboard was required to have a captain who was also a qualified aviator. Today over half the people in the Navy are connected to aviation in some way. Once vested interests are exposed and challenged, changes can occur.

In A Passion For God’s Presence, Wayne Jacobsen wonderfully exposes the power of vested interests in churches today. Jacobsen illustrates his point with the story of The Emperor’s New Clothes in which a group of royal advisors seeks to keep their jobs by lying about the emperor’s nudity. As the king parades through the town in his “new clothes,” a little boy with no vested interest at stake shouts the obvious: “He’s naked!”

Jacobsen correlates the fable with the history of the church:

“It’s easy for us now to look back at those generations, not sharing their vested interests, and see how believers sold out to political and personal corruption during the Middle Ages; to high finance prior to the Reformation; to terror and murder during the Inquisition; to natural reason during the Enlightenment; and to liberalism early in this century... We stay captive to deception by the same appeal of personal interest... So it is with the church today: many people are making Christianity just what they want it to be, whatever fits their interest... It doesn’t take great wisdom to unmask deceit—only a desire to look at things the way they really are, not the way we want to see them.”

A growing number of observers are now pointing to the church in the United States and crying, “We are spiritually naked!”

A tale from The New England Church Resource Handbook further illustrates the concept of vested interests.

“Henry Cabot Lodge, a [former] senator from Massachusetts, was convinced that many bureaucrats have little else on their minds than maintaining their power and position (a problem sometimes encountered in churches as well as government). ‘They are a lot like old Si Haskins,’ he said. One day we came upon Si sitting on the dam up above the town. ‘What are you doing, Si?’ we asked. ‘I’m paid to shoot the muskrats,’ he replied. ‘They’re diggin’ under the dam.’ ‘Well, there’s one over there right now.’ We pointed to a big one with his eyes just above water. ‘Why don’t you shoot him?’ ‘You don’t think I want to lose my job, do you?’ he replied.”

The Pharisees of Israel had their own vested interests. Many people had put their faith in Jesus following the raising of Lazarus from the dead:

“The chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him’... Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’... So from that day on they plotted to take His life” (John 11:47-50,53).

Think about how far the vested interest people would go to protect their positions: “So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him” (John



12:10,11). Do you wonder if Lazarus, having been brought back to life, ever found out that the priests were planning to kill him?

At what point does a vested interest so thoroughly blind a person (who thinks he or she is doing God's will!) from discerning the truth?

# Did You Know That God's Word Was Lost?

**“Be eager to present yourself approved to God as a workman, unashamed, cutting straight the word of truth”  
(2Timothy 2:15).**

Very few non-Jewish Christians recognize that they are “Gentiles.” Before our trip to Israel, if someone had called us Gentiles, we would have responded, “So what!” According to Romans 3:9, “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin”, and, speaking of salvation, Paul writes that “there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles—the same Lord is Lord is all and richly blesses all who call on Him” (Romans 10:12).

At the same time, however, Romans 11 delineates a difference between Jews and Gentiles: “Because of [Israel’s] transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious” (11:11), and, “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:25,26).

We didn’t recognize that our reading and understanding of the Bible had been derived from the patterns and methods of the Hellenist philosophers who had come into the church in the centuries after Christ. We had not considered noteworthy the Hebraic thought patterns and relational practices of the God-fearing Jewish authors of the Newer Testament.

Our understanding of the early Church had been based on a theological exposition of the Greek words in the Newer Testament manuscripts. It had never occurred to us until our study and research in Israel that many of the early Church practices and understanding of their faith had been adapted from practices already taking place among the God-fearing Jews. We had always connoted all of Judaism at the time of Christ to be as rigid and unyielding as the Gospel representation of the priests, the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin.

**Volume 1 introduces you to the foundations and practices of the Hebraic early Church. It is our belief that to a large extent these Hebraic foundations and practices formed the basis for the Newer Testament writers’ understanding of the foundations and practices of the collective Church as a whole.**

For example:

- Did you know that many rabbis at the time of Jesus were already teaching that “you must be born from above”, that is, experience spiritual birth?
- Are you aware that men in the synagogues already served as apostles, evangelists, elders, and deacons?
- Do you understand the purification that baptism represented to Jewish believers?

If you can remove the anti-Semitic veil that has covered the eyes of much of the church for so many centuries, you will relish a study of what the Jewish writers of the Newer Testament understood these practices to signify. We are espousing a return to the Hebraic thought and relational practices of the Jewish people who feared God and trusted Jesus for their salvation. Men and women such as these were present to hear and respond to Peter’s message on Pentecost: “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).

Much philosophical conjecture and oral division has led believers to argue over the meaning of Greek words. “Correctly [handling] the word of truth” as an approved workman (see 2 Timothy 2:15) should include the study and application of the Hebraic teachings and practices at the time of Christ. Think of the vitality that could flow in and through the church if believers expended as much effort in living what they have already learned as seeking after more knowledge. Applying our full biblical heritage could unify the church today to live in the power that was so evident in the Hebraic early Church.

“What is this Restoration all about?” has been one of the most common questions we have been asked. “We have the Bible, God’s Word—what is it that we need to have restored?” These questions must be partly answered with two more questions:

- “Has God’s Word ever been lost to His people?”
- “What has occurred to restore His Word and His understanding of it?”

“God’s Word couldn’t ever be lost!”



The Bible lists at least three occasions in which God’s Word was lost. In some cases the Law had been misplaced or hidden. In other instances the interpretation of the Word had been marred by men who had tried to put their own laws and writings on par with God’s. Let’s examine some of these situations and note how the past restorations took place.

### Loss #1

After the death of King David, a series of kings ruled. Some followed the way of the Lord while others worshiped Baal and Ashtoreth. At one point following a spiritually low era for Judah, King Josiah, whose heart was for the Lord, came to power: “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kings 22:2). Josiah ordered the priests to set about rebuilding and purifying the temple, which had become a mess of decay from lack of use.

“Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes... He gave these orders: “Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord’s anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: **“Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people..., I have heard you,** declares the Lord”... Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem... “He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep His commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant” (2 Kings 22:10-23:3, emphasis added).

When the righteous king recognized the disobedience of his people and repented, he called the elders, who represented the family leaders of the people, to hear the Word and renew the covenant. Restoration led to repentance and rededication, a profound lesson for us today.

### Loss #2

Some of the Israelites with Nehemiah and Ezra returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity of Israel. After rebuilding the temple and walls of the city, the people wanted to renew their covenant with God:

“All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel... They read from the Book of the Law of God, **making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read**” (Nehemiah 8:1,8, emphasis added).

### Loss #3

Prior to the time of Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes attempted to keep the Jewish people from violating God’s law by establishing other laws and traditions as “fences”. Their original intent was noble. Yet over time, tradition, which has a hallowedness all its own, enabled these manmade laws and practices to be treated as if God had given them.

Their own laws and traditions actually blinded the Pharisees from seeing the Messiah as the fulfillment of the very Scriptures that they thought they were upholding. Confronting this third “loss of God’s Word”, Jesus chastised the Pharisees:

“And He said to them: ‘You have a fine way of **setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!** For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.” But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: “Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban” (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus **you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.** And you do many things like that’ (vv. 9-13, emphasis added).

The Pharisees indeed upheld their laws and traditions but missed the most basic and vital of God’s commands: to love the Lord wholeheartedly and to love your neighbor as yourself.

#### **Loss #4**

Roman Catholicism was able to control most people’s perspective of God because so few during those centuries could read or write. The religious and political power of Roman Catholicism went relatively unchallenged for over a millennium. Corporate worship services were conducted only in Latin, a language understood by just an educated few and the clergy. The Bible remained hidden in Hebrew, Greek and Latin for over 1,100 years. Church authorities forbade it to be translated into any other language on penalty of death.

Not until Martin Luther’s influence during the Reformation was there any concern for educating the lower classes so they could read the Bible for themselves. And, not until 1963 were priests permitted by the Vatican to conduct the Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass in the language of the people.

## Chapter 6

# It's Time to Apply God's Word As He Intended!

**“Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not take pride in one man over against another”**  
(1 Corinthians 4:6).

**Revisionism.** Does that word mean anything to you? Most of us are so subtly influenced by its effects that we don't even notice. The Random House Dictionary defines revisionism as “attempting to reevaluate and restate the past based on newly acquired standards.”(emphasis added)

Many school textbooks are now being written with gross distortions of history or with omission of formerly significant facts and data with the express purpose of appeasing particular political or social agendas. For example, most references to the spiritual heritage of our founding fathers have been revised to reflect instead a desire for greater economic prosperity in the New World. In order to appease the Arab countries that provide them oil, several European universities are teaching from revised history books which claim that the Jewish Holocaust never took place. (An ancient proverb says, “Lies written in ink can never replace facts written in blood.”)

Not even the Bible is safe from revisionism. One version contains a genderless God to accommodate the feminist movement. Another has had all verses pertaining to the miraculous and supernatural events removed to accommodate the rationalistic and scientific community. We are reminded of Frank Peretti's novel, Piercing the Darkness. Although fiction, the book deals with the conscious demonic effort to undermine people's confidence in the reality that absolute truth exists. The Bible tells us,

**“The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent, called **the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.** He was **hurled to the earth, and his angels with him**”** (Revelation 12:9).

Jesus tells us that lies are Satan's native tongue: “You belong to **your father, the devil,** and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks his native language, for **he is a liar and the father of lies**” (John 8:44).

Lies and distortions have been with the church since its earliest years. Paul dealt with a serious deception regarding the return of the Lord. The deceiver has been at work since the Garden of Eden and it is no surprise that his work continues unabated.

**“Concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter **supposed to have come from us,** saying that the day of the Lord has already come”** (2 Thessalonians 2:1,2).

Revisionism within the church has had a profound effect throughout the centuries. Many today think that the customs, practices, even the organization of the church date from the time of Jesus and the apostles. But history proves that prejudice and vested interests over the centuries “revised” the operation and function of the early Church, handing down to believers something far different than what was intended by the Lord. In fact, much of what you consider to be key elements of church practice may even violate 1 Corinthians 4:6, quoted earlier. We will explore these factors in subsequent chapters.

**“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true”** (Acts 17:11).

The opposite of revisionism is apperception, interpreting new information according to an older truth or by what you already know beyond doubt to be true. In other words, a newer teaching or practice is evaluated in light of older, proven truths.



Jesus relied on apperception in His teachings by often quoting the Older Testament and then applying that truth to a situation He was addressing. For instance, while speaking in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read aloud from the scrolls the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and recovery of sight for the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (vv. 1,2).

His listeners already believed this prophecy to be true, so He used these verses as the basis for understanding Himself, telling them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21).

To justify His disciples plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:1-8), Jesus reminded His critics of the commonly known fact of “sanctified Sabbath breaking”. David and his hungry troops had entered the tabernacle and eaten the consecrated bread that by law was relegated solely to the priests (see 1 Samuel 21:3-6). On the Sabbath, the priests regularly broke the commandment that demanded no work on that day in order to offer sacrifices and circumcise babies (see Matthew 12:6, from Hosea 6:6). So important were the Hebrew Scriptures as a basis for the Gospel message that they were quoted, or apperceived, throughout the gospels, epistles, and the Revelation.

The Bereans were commended for studying the Scriptures, **apperceiving** Paul’s new teachings in light of Hebraic scriptural truths (see Acts 17:11). Due to the extraordinary amount of revisionism which has entered the church over the centuries and the consequent loss of the early Church vitality, the authors are writing with apperception in mind. We are trying to clearly discern our Father’s intent at the time the Scriptures were written.

In order to be true to God’s Word, you must be willing to depart from today’s church structure and traditions that may seem “sacred” yet have no biblical foundation. Take on the nobleness of the Bereans and investigate the Bible to apply what God has said. Like the Bereans, you also may have a burning desire to reach the point in your faith experience in which the practices of that faith “do not go beyond what is written” (see 1 Corinthians 4:6). If we are honest with ourselves, the Christianity that revisionism and institutionalism have produced bears little of Christ’s image. Our Father is seeking a people who long to be touched by Him personally with the intensity of David: “O my Strength, I watch for You; You, O God, are my fortress, my loving God” (Psalm 59:9,10).

Our Lord penetrates hearts, not programs. That’s what intimacy is all about, and that is what you are called to pass on to others. You cannot expect to impact prisoners of the spiritual forces of darkness throughout the world—or even your family, neighbors, and coworkers—if you hold out a formula of steps to them but withhold your heart. Many of the past

church reforms stemmed from arguments over revisionist writings. You are experiencing the results even today: tens of thousands of denominations and sects have been established because of doctrinal divisions.

Today's doctrinal differences have distracted God's people from personal intimacy both with Jesus and with each other. Individual congregations keep people occupied with programs and meetings but generally fail to lead them to the fullness of loving obedience in Christ. In fact, church busyness often lures people away from intimacy. Instead of a source of edification and mutual support, "church life" is all too often a wellspring of pettiness, gossip, and manipulation.

It appears that there are two possible options open to the church. If you use the same processes of reforming the church that your forefathers used, you will find yourself still clinging to non-biblical or extra-biblical forms and patterns that have, over time, become hallowed because of tradition. Just possibly, this generation can be honest with itself and recognize that the whole edifice is crumbling. A whole generation may reject empty form that lacks living substance.

Your second option is to accept the challenge of restoring the true biblical foundations of the early Church. If you understand that Jesus is the only Head and Builder of His Church, you must search the Bible for what He and the apostles presented in terms of the Hebraic framework in which it was initially addressed. Those who are willing to do this can work together in agreement with the Holy Spirit, and in our time see a true expression of the collective Church of Jesus Christ.

**Will it be popular? Probably not.  
Will it be powerful? Yes, exceedingly so!**

# Glossary

## **Apperception**

Interpreting new information based on previous facts you already know to be true. In other words, a newer teaching or practice is evaluated in light of older, proven truths. If the newer teaching or practice doesn't match up to the older true teaching, then it's skewed and unreliable. Jesus often apperceived the Hebrew Scriptures by basing His teachings on passages His hearers were familiar with and knew were true.

## **Covenant**

From a biblical point of view, a relationship of permanent commitment, whether between God and His people (Israel in the Older Testament and followers of Jesus in the Newer Testament), or between a man and a woman in marriage. Each covenant of God carries with it His promises and man's responsibilities if he accepts God's terms.

## **Elders**

Older men of wisdom, compassion and experience who guide, safeguard, shepherd, counsel and disciple others in an extended spiritual family. The term literally means "gray-bearded" and is a role worthy of respect because they fulfill God's plans for leadership within a faith family. These are the shepherd/teacher spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 to equip the followers of Jesus for service and unity.

## **Hebraic**

The foundational motivation of love-grounded obedient trust in the God of the Bible as He has made Himself known through the inerrant written text and through the Living Word, the Lord Jesus. In the pattern of the first Hebrew, Abraham, Hebraic understanding of an ongoing walk of obedient trust expects a follower of Jesus to adopt and put into practice in their everyday lives the truths that are pleasing to God and are empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This calls for relational priorities which are marked by personal holiness and a moment-by-moment awareness of His presence which filters through all other relationships.

## **Hellenist**

A philosophical worldview fostered by ancient Greek culture in which the material body is evil and only the spiritual is good. Through this influence, spiritual expression became institutionalized. Thus a holy clergy class were intermediaries between God and man, and the "laity" of commoners were confined to silence in the pews. Worship could take place only in "God's house."

## **Institutionalism**

Adherence to or strong belief in established forms, rituals, and traditions, especially belief in organized religion. The unquestioning belief or policies that a congregation maintains for standardization on behalf of its members.

## **Revisionism**

A widely used practice of rewording historical truth and facts by manipulating them to fit current social agendas or cultural standards. For example, revisionist writings and councils convinced the Church to adopt the autocratic system of the Roman government with which it became enmeshed. Hellenist-influenced revisionists severed the continuity of the Hebrew Scriptures with the Newer Testament so that God's Laws were discarded and His grace was perverted into lawlessness.

## **Vested interests**

A strong personal attraction to something because you could gain an advantage from it. A person or group having a personal stake or involvement. A personal stake or involvement in an undertaking or state of affairs, especially one with an expectation of financial gain.