

LEGOS & BARNES  
POINT TO UNITY  
IN CHRIST

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# I LOVE THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

by Ozark Christian College's  
President, Matt Proctor

## Lego Theology

I have three boys, which means I have lots of Legos in my house, and Legos remind me of this: I love the Restoration Movement.

Several years ago, two of my nephews accompanied their mom on a visit to a friend's house. Ben was 8, Brian was 6. Their mother's friend was a very neat lady, to the point of being obsessive-compulsive. (I have a friend who says, "I have OCD, only I like to call it CDO because then it's in alphabetical order.") This woman had a place for everything and everything in its place. Though childless, she did have a few toys and handed Ben and Brian a bucket of Legos: "Here boys, you can play with these."

What's the first thing they did with that bucket? Like all red-blooded American boys, they dumped it out. Their mother's uptight friend immediately went into full clean-freak mode. She dropped to her knees and started scooping the Lego pieces back into the bucket with these words: "*No, no, no, boys. What I meant was, you can play with these . . . one at a time.*"

What? You can't play with Legos one at a time! A Lego piece's whole purpose is to be combined with other pieces. A Lego piece is created to be part of a group, something bigger than itself. A solitary Lego can never fulfill its destiny. *Legos were made to be connected.* You don't have to read far into your Bible to discover human beings were created to be combined with other human beings. In Genesis 1, God makes the world and declares, "It is good." But after creating a man, God says, "It is not good." Why? Because the man is alone.

So God decides to split the Adam. (I know, bad joke.) He makes Eve from Adam's rib to be his life-partner, and

**2** only then can God say, “It is very good.” Why? Because we were created for community. Call it Lego theology: human beings were made to be connected.

## The New Testament Churches Connected

That’s why God invented the church. Some today believe they can be a Christian without being part of the church—“just me and Jesus.”

But the Christian life is meant to be a life lived together. Jesus didn’t begin the Lord’s Prayer, “My Father who art in heaven.” He taught us to pray “Our Father.” While the gospel is certainly personal, it is never individual. A solitary Christian will never fulfill his destiny, because you were made to be part of something bigger than yourself. The church is part of the package. Christians are made to be connected.

What is true of individuals is also true of congregations: churches are made to be connected to other churches. A local church is created to be part of something bigger than itself, and if we are called to “make disciples of all nations,” then a solitary congregation will not fulfill that destiny all on its own.

As churches, we need each other. Throughout the New Testament, examples abound of local congregations working together to accomplish God’s purposes:

- Local churches listened to the stories of other congregations and learned from one another’s example (1 Thessalonians 1:7,8).
- Local churches associated enough with other churches in their geographical region that they could be addressed as a group (2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:2, Revelation 2-3).
- Local churches shared Bible teachers and Bible teaching resources with one another (Acts 8:14, Acts 16:2, Colossians 4:16).

- Local churches joined their offerings together in benevolence efforts, jointly choosing a representative to accompany their finances (Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8,9).
- Local churches communicated with each other to discuss issues that threatened their doctrinal unity and their evangelistic message (Acts 15:1-35).
- Local churches cooperated in missionary efforts, agreeing on a mission strategy (Galatians 2:1-10) and even forming a mission team with folks from at least five different congregations (Acts 20:5).

So while we don't see the New Testament churches forming a multi-congregational leadership structure—no denominational hierarchy—we do see these congregations coming together to carry out ministry, start new works, give money to those in need, discuss important issues, share teaching resources and even commend individuals for ministry in other congregations. They were clearly and closely connected. Legos indeed.

## The Genius of the Restoration Movement

Which brings me back to this: *I love the Restoration Movement*. I grew up in the “Christian church,” and my parents explained that we were a non-denominational church, autonomous and independent. But I also learned that we were part of a fellowship of other like-minded congregations—something called the “Restoration Movement.” While I didn't learn until later about the history of this group, I did see the evidence of our partnership together:

- Every summer I went to a Christian camp supported by several regional Christian churches.
- Every Sunday in our church lobby, I picked up a copy of the Christian Standard magazine and read about other churches in our fellowship. (Yes, as a

fifth grader, I was reading the Christian Standard. I was kind of a geeky kid.)

- As a child, I had a little blue fish bank that collected money for IDES—International Disaster Emergency Services, a disaster benevolence ministry started by our group of churches.
- In grade school, I went with my parents to a huge gathering of these churches called the North American Christian Convention.
- As a teen, I was blown away at a conference I went to with hundreds of kids from other Christian churches—something called a Christ In Youth conference. In all of these, I saw a group of independent churches that were also interdependent.

That, to me, is part of the genius of the Restoration Movement. Don't get me wrong: I love the simple doctrinal emphases of our group of churches. I love our desire to be faithful to God's Word above all—to do Bible things in Bible ways. I resonate with slogans like “No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible” and “not the only Christians, but Christians only” and “where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent” and “in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.”

But what I especially love about our movement is our strong relational commitment. We talk about our group of churches as a “brotherhood,” and that's really true. There are roughly 1.5 million folks in the 5,000 or so independent Christian churches/Churches of Christ. But our large group feels more like a small town, where everybody is somehow related to everybody else.

I travel a lot and have the privilege of being in many of our churches. No matter which congregation I'm visiting, one thing I've learned: somebody always knows somebody I know. I can't prove that the “six degrees of separation” theory is true worldwide, but I'm pretty sure it's true in our movement. We're all connected. That's why we're able to do what we do.

My friend Paul Williams was talking with some of the guest speakers at last summer's North American Christian Convention. These well known evangelical leaders knew little about the independent Christian churches and were intrigued. Paul said, "One asked me to explain the governance model of our churches. I told him every church is completely independent. There are no denominational offices, no national corporate structure.

They asked about the president of the North American Christian Convention. I told them the president serves for one year, and has control over nothing but the convention program for that single event. One of the speakers said, "This thing sounds about as democratic as it can be—no, wait—actually it sounds more like a big, giant family." I told him that was about right. We are a big, giant family."

That's a great description: the "culture" in our group of churches is less like a business and more like a family. Things like accountability and encouragement and idea-sharing and strategic partnerships happen because of organic connections, not because of an organizational flow chart. They don't flow along lines of authority, as they might in a denominational structure, but along relational lines, like in a family. Like most families, we can be a little messy and disorganized. We're surely not perfect. But the "culture" in our group is more healthy than not, and like the New Testament churches, we've shown that we can work together fairly well.

## **A Very Busy Family**

In fact, we've been a pretty busy kingdom family. Years ago, we saw a need to send missionary teams to lost people groups, so together we started agencies like Christian Missionary Fellowship and Team Expansion. We started a convention to not only encourage the missionaries, but also to encourage those who send them, and today the International Conference on Missions (formerly National Missionary Convention) is a four-day event that impacts the other 361 days of the year around the world.

**6** We saw a need for church planting, and so together we started organizations like Orchard Group and Stadia that are seeing thousands come to Christ through new church plants. In fact, we started a church planting conference, and now the Exponential conference reaches thousands of church planters across denominational lines.

We saw a need to challenge the next generation to greater depth in Christ, so together we started Christian service camps and organizations like Christ in Youth. Literally hundreds of thousands of young people have experienced transformed lives because of these ministries. We saw a need to prepare the next generation of kingdom leaders to serve as preachers, missionaries, youth ministers, and church planters. So together, we started Bible colleges across the nation. Read through the Christian Standard list of our megachurch ministers or the Directory of the Ministry list of our missionaries, and my guess is that 90% of those names were trained in one of our colleges.

When we saw a need for cross-cultural teaching tools, Good News Productions, International was born. When we saw a need for affordable church loans, Church Development Fund was born. When we saw a need to reach university students with the gospel, dozens of campus ministries were born. When we saw a need to rescue victims of human trafficking, Rapha House was born. When we saw a need for God's Word in unreached languages, Pioneer Bible Translators was born. When we saw a need to minister in the wake of natural disasters, IDES was born.

How did all this happen in a group of churches with no denominational structure, no formal organization? It happened because someone saw a need and had the freedom in our independent group to act on it. It happened because someone took the initiative and gathered churches around that need. It happened because someone knew someone else who knew someone else who knew someone else, and they all picked up the phone and



called each other. It happened because congregations with similar passions and commitments got together to support a common kingdom work. It happened because we were connected.

Legos really do remind me of why I love the Restoration Movement.

## A Final Say About Working Together

I'll close with this: barns also remind me of why I love the Restoration Movement. That's because barns remind me of the story of Herman Ostry, a farmer in Bruno, Nebraska. Shortly after buying a piece of land with a barn on it, Herman watched as a nearby creek rose and flooded his barn with over two feet of water. He jokingly said to his family, "I bet if we had enough people, we could pick up that barn and carry it to higher ground."

His son Mike did some calculating. He figured the barn weighed around 19,000 pounds. If each person lifted about 55 pounds, it would only take 344 people to carry the barn to higher ground. So Mike designed a grid of steel tubing which he attached inside the barn. Next he put handles all around the outside of this grid. On July 30, 1988, as 344 people took their places at those handles, thousands more gathered to watch. (Apparently in small town Nebraska, this was a pretty big deal.) Herman Ostry counted to three, and the barn was lifted! The crowd cheered as the lifters carried that nine-ton barn one hundred fifteen feet up a hill in just three minutes.

*It's amazing what you can move when you work together.* I'm grateful for what God has done through the Restoration Movement over the last two hundred years. But how will we as a fellowship of churches keep our "movement" as we seek to advance the kingdom of God? ***By remembering Legos and barns. Stay connected and work together.***

[“Ray” is Ray Downen \* DEDunning” is Dwaine E. Dunning. \*  
“Owens” is Marion Owens. \* “GEmbrey” is Gaylon Embrey \*  
“Stott” is John Stott \* “VK” is Victor Knowles \*  
“SW” is Seth Wilson \* “EB” is Erwin Bishop]

## **DOCTRINES OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH**

- [CD-A01](#) - (tiny) Bible Truths Save Sinners - Tim Woodroof
- [CD-A02](#) - (tiny) Our Faith is Shown by our DEEDS - John Stott
- [CD-A03](#) - (tiny) Big DREAMS in a little town – David Faust
- [CD-A04](#) - (tiny) Is This Earth Habitable by Chance – David Faust
- [CD-A05](#) - (tiny) Read the INSTRUCTIONS – Maxine Fream Gash
- [CD-A06](#) - (tiny) God Is REAL! – Don Fleischman
- [CD-B01](#) - (small) Some Accept 1 or 2 FALSE Teachings – Ray
- [CD-B02](#) - (small) The Story of NAAMAN Reminds - Steven Clark Goad
- [CD-B03](#) - (small) What Does Jesus Say About False Apostles? - John Stott
- [CD-B04](#) - (small) Joy In Serving Jesus – Gene Shelburne
- [CD-B05](#) - (small) We Follow Jesus in TRUTH - Bill Pyle
- [CD-B06](#) - (small) What did JESUS Say About Eternal Security? – Ray
- [CD-B07](#) - (small) Jesus Helps Us Bear Good Fruit - Cecil Hook
- [CD-B08](#) - (small) Does Jesus Speak SILENTLY? - Olan Hicks
- [CD-B09](#) - (small) The baptism commanded by Jesus was NEW! - Ray
- [CD-B10](#) - (small) Anyone can baptize a sinner “into Christ” – Ray
- [CD-B11](#) - (small) What Do YOU Say About Jesus? - David Faust
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- [CD-B13](#) - (small) Jesus is The ONLY WAY – Victor Knowles
- [CD-B14](#) - (small) Do Some Follow a Wrong THEOLOGY? – Jay Guin
- [CD-B15](#) - (small) What Does Jesus Say about His Church? - G Embrey
- [CD-B16](#) - (small) Here’s Help for handling JUNK MAIL - Gaylon Embrey
- [CD-B17](#) - (small) The MARK of the Beast - Curtis Dickinson
- [CD-B18](#) - (small) Who Is Accepted by God? - Leroy Garrett
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- [CD-B22](#) - (small) What About Eternal Security? – Ray
- [CD-C01](#) - Eating CHOCOLATE doesn’t save – Bob Wetzel
- [CD-C02](#) - Sinners Need to REPENT – Ray
- [CD-C03](#) - Jesus Offers NEW LIFE – Marvin Olasky
- [CD-C04](#) - What Did Jesus Say About HIMSELF? - John Stott
- [CD-C05](#) - What Did Jesus Say About True Apostles? - John Stott
- [CD-C06](#) - We Follow Jesus in TRUTH - Bill Pile
- [CD-C07](#) - Concerning MORMON doctrines – Ray
- [CD-C08](#) - Jesus Is The Only Way to LIFE – Victor Knowles
- [CD-C09](#) - Do WE Love Our Enemies? – Jay Guin
- [CD-C10](#) - I Could Never Be A Baptist – Marion Owens
- [CD-D01](#) - Should WE not act in the name of JESUS? – John Stott w/Ray
- [CD-D02](#) - Legalism Is Not “the Way” of Jesus – J. James Albert
- [CD-D03](#) - We do well if we seek to win others to Christ - Ray
- [CD-D04](#) - With PRESBYTERIANS at Princeton – Leroy Garrett
- [CD-D05](#) - Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life – Ray

- CD-Do6 - It's JESUS Who Died for Us – Ray  
CD-Do7 - A Bottom-Up Speaker/Teacher – C. Robert Wetzel  
CD-Do8 - About a LAW OF SILENCE – Boyce Mouton, plus  
 Cecil May Jr./Ray  
CD-Do9 - Is Jesus the Only Way to the Father? – Ray  
CD-D10 - Will Eating CHOCOLATE Save Us? – C. Robert Wetzel  
CD-D11 - Are We Saved By Jesus PLUS SOMETHING? – Cecil Hook  
CD-D12 - Some Accept 1 or even 2 FALSE Teachings – Ray  
CD-D13 - Should the Lord's Supper Be A Meal? – Jay Guin/Ray  
CD-D14 - Concerning Women who Love Jesus – Miller/Wilson/Ray  
CD-D15 - Comparing Calvinism & Christianity – Ray  
CD-D16 - Does God Speak by Silence? – Olan Hicks/w Ray  
CD-D17 - Consider Differences between Christian & Baptist Baptism - Ray  
CD-D18 - Who Performs Baptism INTO Christ? - Ray  
CD-D19 - Concerning ISLAM – Ray w/Geert Wilders of the Netherlands  
CD-D20 - We Are Saved By GRACE PLUS – Larry Farthing  
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CD-Eo3 - Will Anyone IN HELL Be Happy? – John Stott/Ray  
CD-Eo4 - Jesus Calls for Us to Love One Another – Vic Knowles/  
 Tom Woody  
CD-Eo5 - Some Say Christians Were Baptized TWICE – Ray  
CD-Eo6 - Should We Be Church Members? – John Stott/Ray  
CD-Fo1 - Should Christians Speak to be Understood? – Ray  
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CD-Ho1 - Restoration in EARLY YEARS in the U.S.A. – Historical Facts  
CD-Ho2 - False Teachers LEAD ASTRAY – John Stott  
CD-Ho3 - Here's Why I Believe there is a GOD – Marion Owens  
CD-Ho4 - Peter Tells How Seekers Can Save Themselves – Ray  
CD-Mo1 - Pioneers Point to Unity In Christ –Alexander Campbell & Others

## EVANGELISM BY CHRISTIANS

- CE-Bo1 - (small) Is the Bible True? IS JESUS GOD? – Gene Barron  
CE-Bo2 - (small) Sinners are invited to SAVE OURSELVES – James Baird  
CE-Bo3 - (small) Mysteries Are UNVEILED—Now We Can KNOW! – Ray  
CE-Bo4 - (small) HELL IS REAL – Tim Keller  
CE-Bo5 - (small) IF He Repents, FORGIVE HIM – Rubel Shelly  
CE-Bo6 - (small) We MUST Choose—It's LIFE OR Eternal DEATH – John Stott  
CE-Bo7 - (small) Here's How to BECOME A CHRISTIAN – Bill Pile  
CE-Bo8 - (small) Paul tells How Sinners Become Christians – John Stott  
CE-Bo9 - (small) Here's Why One Turned to Jesus – Marvin Olasky  
CE-B10 - (small) Some Turned from IDOLS to the Living God – John Stott  
CE-B11 - (small) Sinners CAN turn away from sin and BE SAVED! – Ray  
CE-B12 - (small) Here's How One FOUND GOD—John Powell  
CE-B13 - (small) Will Eating CHOCOLATE Save Us? – C. Robert Wetzel  
CE-B14 - (small) Today's Truth—Tim Woodroof  
CE-B15 - (small) When the World TILTED Again, 1959—Edward Kosner  
CE-Co1 - Reading the Bible ENLIGHTENS – Tim Woodroof  
CE-Co2 - Will We Answer Christ's Call? – Rubel Shelly  
CE-Do1 - Jesus Speaks of NEW BIRTH – Ray  
CE-Eo2 - 1. Reading the Bible ENCOURAGES – Tim Woodroof, plus others ; 2.  
 About Love and Romance – Sherm Nichols; 3. In the Blink of An Eye + Hateful

**10** Lovers – Gene Shelburne; 4. Is the Bible True? Is Jesus GOD? – Gene Barron; 5. Tommy With the Long Hair – John Powell

[CE-G01](#) - Christians Act in the name of JESUS–Boyce Mouton

## UNITY IN CHRIST

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Boyce Mouton

[CU-C01](#) - Paul Writes About UNITY in Christ - Jay Guin

[CU-C02](#) - (small) Campbell Calls for Restoration to UNITY–Jay Guin

[CU-C03](#) - (small) Acknowledging Need for Restoration – Gary Weedman

[CU-D01](#) - About UNITY in Christ – Ray

[CU-D02](#) - BARTON W. STONE to churches of Christ – Stone

[CU-D03](#) - Robert Richardson and REFORMATION - J James Albert

[CU-D04](#) - Being “Filled With” God’s Spirit - Jay Guin

[CU-E02](#) - About a Melodious LIBERAL from Midway - Al Maxey

[CU-E03](#) - REAL UNITY is urged for churches of Christ - Owens

[CU-E04](#) - Wise Words About Walking With Jesus – G Embrey/Seth Wilson

[CU-F01](#) – Restoring Christians to UNITY in Jesus Christ – Ray

[CU-F02](#) – About A Movement to Restore Christians  
to UNITY in Jesus Christ – J James Albert

[CU-F03](#) - Moving Back to Unity in Christ - Rick Atchley, Steever & Knowles

[CU-G01](#) - Legos & Barns & UNITY IN CHRIST – Matt Proctor – PLUS  
+ List of Viewpoint Booklets – Ray

[CU-G02](#) - AL MAXEY Pleads For UNITY “In Christ” – Al Maxey

[CU-K01](#) - JAMES HARDING – The Gracious Separatist – John Mark Hicks

[CU-L50](#) - Fifty Years of DIGRESSION & DISTURBANCE –  
Edwin Hayden

## WORSHIP OF CHRIST IS BY SERVING

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[CW-A02](#) - (tiny) Should We go to Church to WORSHIP? - Ray

[CW-A03](#) - (tiny) What does God consider “acceptable worship”? - Ray

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David Faust (LOOKOUT)

[CW-A05](#) - (tiny) Did You SMELL That? - Maxine Fream Gash

[CW-A06](#) - (tiny) Should We Appreciate BEAUTY Wherever Found? –  
Maxine Fream Gash

[CW-A07](#) - (tiny) Have We Lost The Wonder? - Rob Wilson

[CW-B01](#) - (Small) By Serving Him Daily We Honor Our Lord - Ray

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[CW-B05](#) - (small) When Should Christians Worship? - Dallas Burdette

- [CW-B06](#) - (small) Worship Changes in the Christian Era - Bruce Campbell  
[CW-B07](#) - (small) Coming BACK to the Heart of Worship – Jack R. Reese  
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- [CW-Co1](#) - Is Salvation at “a point of faith”? – Ray
- [CW-Do1](#) - Where/When/How Should We Worship? – DEDunning  
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[CW-Do4](#) - Must We Shout Loudly So God Can Hear? – DEDunning/Ray
- [CW-Eo1](#) - Concerning Christian Worship Services” – DEDunning  
[CW-Eo2](#) - Pondering PATTERNISM - Al Maxey  
[CW-Eo3](#) - Must We “go to church” to Worship God Acceptably? - DEDunning  
[CW-Eo4](#) - Is Christian Worship “Acts of Worship”? - Ray/ DEDunning  
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[CW-Eo6](#) - Principle, Precedent, & Precept - Kurt Simmons  
[CW-Eo7](#) - Do We Worship In the Name of JESUS? - Dwight E. Dunning/Ray
- [CW-Go1](#) - Christians Assemble to EDIFY One Another” – Erwin Bishop  
[CW-Go2](#) - Light on Christian Worship From Two TEXAS  
 Campbell-ites - Bruce & Don Campbell
- [CW-Go3](#) - Concerning Christian Worship Patterns – Carl Ketcherside
- [CW-Ho1](#) - Looking at Worship by Christians – Dwaine E Dunning,  
 Mandy Smith, Thomas Langford and others
- [CW-Jo1](#) - Christians Assemble. Why? - Erwin Bishop  
[CW-Jo2](#) - What Is Christian Worship? – DEDunning, Knofel Staton,  
 Kurt Simmons/Ray
- [CW-Lo1](#) - Should Churches Meet for Worship Services? – Ray  
[CW-Lo2](#) - Why Should Christians Assemble? - Erwin Bishop/Ray  
[CW-Lo3](#) - This Music Tree Bears Bitter Fruit – Dwaine E Dunning

## DAILY LIVING FOR CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

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[DL-Ao2](#) – (tiny) King’s Dream – Charles Colson  
[DL-Ao3](#) – (tiny) A Nichol’s Worth of Good Advice - Sherm Nichols  
[DL-Ao4](#) – (tiny) REFLECTIONS for a New Year – Charles Colson  
[DL-Ao5](#) – (tiny) AFTER THAT, by David Faust in The Lookout  
[DL-Ao6](#) – (tiny) Blackberry Cobbler, by David Faust in The Lookout  
[DL-Ao7](#) – (tiny) Hand-Delivered Bouquets – Max Lucado  
[DL-Ao8](#) – (tiny) Taking Holiness Seriously – Charles Colson  
[DL-Ao9](#) – (tiny) Wondering About Going Home – Gene Shelburne  
[DL-A10](#) – (tiny) Stars & Stripes Forever – Rob Wilson, Victor Knowles  
[DL-A11](#) – (tiny) How Gullible Are We? – Alan Smith  
[DL-A12](#) – (tiny) When We NEED It! – Gene Shelburne  
[DL-A13](#) – (tiny) Is this earth habitable by chance? – David Faust  
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[DL-B24](#) – (small) We Should Give Honor to Whom It Is Due –  
 Tim Woodroof  
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YOU ARE INVITED to read on the internet, or to buy, the book RAISED INTO NEW LIFE with Christ, by Ray Downen. 220 pages. \$10. It can't be denied that God wants all His people united in ONE body. He calls for us to love one another and to work together in ONE mind and in ONE spirit. We all want to please God. Yet we persist in sectarianism. Does God create Christian doctrine by silence? He who sent His WORD to the world speaks openly to all who will listen to Jesus.

At my [web site](#) you can read a study on [baptism into Christ](#) as taught by the apostles, and also [HS-Jo3](#) about the Holy Spirit. [Raised Into New Life, Part 1](#) particularly addresses conversion into Christ.

**I host also an e-mail list** to which I'm the only one who can send notes even if they are written for all the list to read. I set it up that way to limit the number of notes sent to the list since I had belonged to lists where dozens of notes were received daily. That was too many. Please subscribe to the list. From your e-mail address which should be added to the list, you can send your name and comments in a note with the subject, "*Subscribe Viewpoint Discussions,*" to [outreach@sofnet.com](mailto:<outreach@sofnet.com>). – Ray Downen.

On 9/30/14 I learned of another sermon EVERY CHRISTIAN should hear:

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A Viewpoint Brief Bible Study from Ray Downen

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