

# Searching for Oz in All the Wrong Places

by  
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“Toto, I have the feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy spoke these words to her dog, Toto, after looking around at her surroundings and realizing things did not appear the way they were supposed to. To get back to Kansas she was told to seek out the great Wizard who would tell her how to get back home. In order to find the Wizard she had to follow the Yellow Brick Road.

As I look around and see my surroundings in the Restoration Movement, I notice that things do not appear the way they’re supposed to. When one compares the Scriptural Church to the modern Church, many things are noticeably lost. Certainly, not all is lost, but just as certainly, not all is well. Our Movement doesn’t seem to know where it’s at or how to get back where she belongs.

While glancing through a national church directory it comes as a disappointment to see just how many men who preach that are calling themselves “The Pastor.” In years gone by in our great movement, this has rightly been a term used to describe the Elder, or wrongfully used by denominationalists for the evangelist. Men such as Moses Lard and J.W. McGarvey, et al., worked out the Scriptural terminology from the quagmire of denominational verbiage. Yet it now seems as though our movement is coming around in a big circle, feeling the need to try and alleviate the words (and their doctrines) from their Scriptural usage. Our movement used to be a people of the Book, “calling Bible things by Bible names.” That slogan is not heard ringing in the halls as it once was. It brings to mind what Roger Chambers said, speaking in 1985 at the Florida Christian/National Missionary Convention on the topic of Doctrinal Trends in the Restoration Movement:

In the current urge to "repent and be Baptist," it is common to find congregations that have adopted the second-century model of church polity: the monarchical bishop. Preachers are declaring themselves the Pastor of the Church, as if the biblical doctrine of leadership has somehow become irrelevant. It harmonizes with culture to give ecclesiastical authority to a winning and competent personality, but it defies the authority of Scripture, and it ignores the lessons of history.

It seems as though every time you turn around, this “harmonizing with culture” is taking place. A spirit of ecumenism abounds. It has even been touted by some of the most popular men in our brotherhood that the great spiritual leaders of our time are faith-only Calvinists, who, although men of sincerity, deny the New Testament plan of salvation. How can someone, anyone, be a great spiritual leader if they cannot, yea will not, show a lost sinner the Scriptural plan of salvation?

Dorothy’s search was for the Wizard of Oz and she followed the Yellow Brick Road to get there. Our Movements’ search is one for unity yet the road it is traveling is one we’ve traveled before. It’s become a big circle, traveling ground that has been covered before; all in the quest for unity.

Working within the denominational realm was tried long ago. Alexander Campbell was a Baptist for seventeen years before they kicked him out. The reason for his expulsion was the fact that he was determined to go where the Scriptures led. You see, he sought unity based upon the only ground that true unity can be found; the Word. That Word, the Bible, has within it a set of propositions commonly known as doctrine. Yet doctrine has become a four

letter word in the modern church. In the modern quest for unity, an abandonment of doctrine is requested. Unity must be based upon Jesus, we're told, not doctrine. The problem with that is that we do not know anything about Jesus except by knowing the doctrine of Jesus. A false doctrine of Jesus creates a belief in someone other than the actual Jesus found clothed in the apostle's doctrine. And the warnings against following after a false Jesus are numerous (I Jn. 2:3-6, Mt. 7:21-23). There can be no true unity without an acknowledgement of the true Jesus. Anything else is as fictional as the story of the Wizard of Oz itself.

The irony is that Jesus has already given us the unity that so many in our Movement are looking for. Our job is not in finding it, but in preserving it. In Ephesians 4:3 we are told to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (NASB). How are we to preserve that unity in which Christ gives us? We are told in the next few verses: We must teach and uphold "one body and one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

Unity is not something we look for by travelling down some fictional road of our own invention. Unity is ours to preserve. It can be found by adhering to the doctrines of the Word of God. Lest we forget, it is the Word of God that is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. Let us not forget that faith comes from hearing the Word. Let us not forget that the Word is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. Let us not forget to know the Word well enough that we can present ourselves approved unto God as a workman with no cause for shame, handling accurately the Word of truth. Let us not forget to preserve that which our Lord has already given to us: the truth and doctrine of His Word.

Our generation of the church seems to be looking for the great Wizard named "Unity" and they have taken the wrong road. The golden road that leads, not to the great Wizard but instead to the true Lord, true life and true unity, is and always has been found in the truth and doctrines of the written Word of God.