

Restate or Restory?

William J. Salyards Copyright 2009 All Rights Reserved

Restory refers to replacing a group's founding story of lore. Primarily this done for one of two reasons: First, the founding story of lore is not consistent with the reason the group purports to exist. In terms of a church, the group exists to spread the Gospel. If the founding story is something else then that story is not consistent with the reason the group purports to exist. Second, the product of the group is no longer accepted or supported by the culture the group serves. Again, thinking of a church, if the message that is communicated by the group's actions is not accepted or supported by the culture the group serves then its founding story may need to change. An example of this is the group that identifies some specific cultural item as a distinctive and retains that item regardless that the culture has shifted or that it isn't a Biblical imperative.

Not every group will need to be restoried. If the founding story is still consistent with both the group's reason for existing and supported by the

culture it serves, often the matter is one of its restating. This becomes necessary when the group retains its founding story as history but not an operative principle. It is most often seen when groups replace the founding story with its corollaries. Here's an example: The founding story contains elements of three families binding together and doing intense personal evangelism among the poor with the stated goal of "reaching the unreached of this city for Christ." Now, instead of personal outreach to the city's poor, the congregation sends monetary support to social service agencies. In this case, the founding story needs to be restated if that original idea is still the passion of the leadership or group.

The difference between restating or restorying an organization is not that significant in terms of its impact upon people. Either course can be taken as an abrupt change from the status quo and both require the admission that where we are now misses the point

of why we exist. In itself this can be sobering; as an exercise it may encounter serious resistance. This is so because the group has become adjusted to a fixed way of doing. It can be complicated when a strong counter-voice is present (a counter-voice is that of another person or entity by which all initiatives must be approved). If this person or entity opposes the initiative then the work of restating or restorying becomes not one of rediscovering mission but that of the leader "taking over" the group.

At its heart, restating and restorying have to do with mission. Both are a process of rediscovering "why" the group exists. In either case it should be noted that the group in its present form can be highly effective just not effective as to its original mission and particularly so in the engagement of personal sacrifice for its accomplishment.