

We Really Need Another Reformation

Five hundred years ago this week, Martin Luther staged the most important protest movement in history. He was upset because Roman Catholic officials were promising people forgiveness of sins or early escape from purgatory in exchange for money. So on October 31, 1517, Luther nailed a long list of complaints on the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther's famous 95 Theses were translated from Latin into German and spread abroad. Like a medieval Jeremiah, Luther dared to ask questions that had never been asked, and he challenged a powerful pope who was supposedly infallible. Through this brave monk, the Holy Spirit sparked the Protestant Reformation and restored the doctrine of grace to a church that had become corrupt, religious, dysfunctional, political and spiritually dead.

I'm no Luther, but I've grown increasingly aware that the so-called "Spirit-filled" church of today struggles with many of the same things the Catholic church faced in 1517. We don't have "indulgences"—we have telethons. We don't have popes—we have super-apostles. We don't support an untouchable priesthood—we throw our money at celebrity evangelists who insist on flying in private jets.

In honor the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I'm offering my own list of needed reforms in the modern charismatic/Pentecostal movement. And since I can't hammer these on the Wittenberg door, I'll post them online. Feel free to nail them everywhere.

1. **Let's reform our theology.** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is God and He is holy. He is not an "it." He is not a blob, a force or an innate

power. We must stop manipulating Him, commanding Him and throwing Him around. (And we should also stop ignoring Him, as if He is an optional “add-on” to our scripted agendas.)

2. **Let's return to the Bible.** The Word of God is the foundation for the Christian experience. Any exotic experience must be tested by the Word and the Holy Spirit's discernment. Visions, dreams, prophecies and encounters with angels must be in line with Scripture. If we don't measure them against Scripture, we could end up spreading deception.
3. **It's time for personal responsibility.** We charismatics must stop blaming everything on demons. People are usually the problem.
4. **Stop playing charismatic games.** Spiritual warfare is a reality, but we are not going to win the world to Jesus just by shouting at demonic principalities. We must pray, preach and persevere to see ultimate victory.
5. **Stop the foolishness.** People who hit, slap or push others during prayer should be asked to sit down until they learn that gentleness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
6. **End all spiritual extortion now.** Christian television ministries must cease and desist from all manipulative fundraising tactics. We must stop giving platforms to prosperity preachers who make outlandish claims of supernatural financial returns, especially when Scripture is twisted, deadlines are imposed and the poor are exploited.
7. **No more Lone Rangers.** Those who claim to be ministers of God—whether they are traveling evangelists, local pastors or heads of ministries—must be accountable to other leaders. Any who refuse to submit their lives to

godly discipline should be corrected.

8. **Expose the creeps.** Preachers who have been hiding criminal records, lying about their past marriages, preying on women or refusing to pay child support should be exposed as charlatans and shunned if they do not repent.
9. **Stop faking the anointing.** God is God, and He does not need our “help” to manifest Himself. That means we don’t sprinkle glitter on ourselves to suggest God’s glory is with us, hide fake jewels on the floor to prove we are anointed or pull feathers out of our sleeves to pretend angels are in the room. This is lying to the Holy Spirit.
10. **Let’s return to purity.** We’ve had enough scandals. The charismatic church must develop a system for the restoration of fallen ministers. Those who fall morally can be restored, but they must be willing to submit to a process of healing rather than rushing immediately back into the pulpit to cause more damage.
11. **We need humility.** Ministers who demand celebrity treatment, require lavish salaries, insist on titles or exhibit aloofness from others are guilty of spiritual pride. Christians should avoid prideful leaders instead of rewarding them with applause.
12. **No more big shots.** Apostles are the bondslaves of Christ and should be the most impeccable models of humility. True apostles do not wield top-down, hierarchical authority over the church. They serve the church from the bottom up as true servants.
13. **Never promote gifts at the expense of character.** Those who operate in prophecy, healing and miracles must also exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And while we continue to encourage the gift of tongues, let’s make

sure we don't treat it like some kind of badge of superiority. The world needs to see our love, not our glossolalia.

14. **Hold the prophets accountable.** Those who refuse to take responsibility for inaccurate statements should not be given platforms. And "prophets" who live immoral lives don't deserve a public voice.
15. **Stop the politics.** Our deadly mixing of nationalism and party politics with the gospel has diluted our message and ruined our credibility. We are not Democrats or Republicans first—we are followers of the Lamb. Our allegiance is to Jesus, not Trump or Obama. Christ's kingdom transcends presidents.
16. **Quit trying to be so cool.** Our desire to be popular has ruined our witness. Today we care more about our giant LED screens, our coffee bars and our stage lighting than whether people have an experience with the Holy Spirit.
17. **No more racial division.** Let's get rid of the idea of a "black church" or a "white church." There is only one body of Christ, yet we pretend we are integrated if one person of color serves on our greeter team. True Pentecost is multicultural. The Holy Spirit builds bridges, not walls.
18. **Let's make the main thing the main thing.** The purpose of the Holy Spirit's anointing is to empower us to reach others. We are at a crossroads today: Either we continue entertaining people with our charismatic sideshows or we throw ourselves into evangelism, church planting, missions, discipleship, and compassionate ministry that helps the poor and fights injustice. Churches that embrace this New Reformation will stop trying to please the crowd so they can focus on God's priorities.