

# Greasy Grace

At a large church in my city, a recent guest preacher announced that God wanted at least 10 people to give \$400 each in a special offering. Then she added one more request: These generous souls were supposed to charge their gifts to their Visa cards if they didn't have the cash on hand. (I wondered if this woman planned to have cashiers at the altar to approve the transactions.)

Thankfully, no one in the audience responded, and the pastor later praised everyone for having the sense not to give on credit. What's really sad is that this woman will be preaching somewhere else next week. Before you know it, she'll be on Christian television, using the same manipulative tactics on a much larger audience.

Is anything wrong with this picture?

Yes, I'll tell you plainly. We have an integrity crisis, and no one will speak up. The phrase "church discipline" has become an oxymoron. Few leaders have the courage to bring correction, either privately first or publicly when a private rebuke is ignored. Our grace is greasy. And our love is gooey when it needs to be tough.

We don't like to draw lines, challenge weird doctrines or uphold standards. Nobody wants to rock the boat. We don't want to be judgmental, so we look the other way. We figure the church has had enough bad publicity, so we say nothing.

All this silence bothers me. And it grieves the Holy Spirit.

Somebody needs to cry out! If we don't, churches will be overrun by immature leaders who don't belong in the pulpit.

The New Testament offers us clear guidelines for dealing with sin. The apostle Paul understood God's mercy, but he also knew when to use the rod—whether he was dealing with immoral behavior or an outbreak of false teaching. He knew that both would corrupt the church if discipline weren't applied. He named names (2 Tim. 2:17-18), and he rebuked unrepentant church leaders “in the presence of all” (1 Tim. 5:20, NKJV).

Such discipline is a foreign concept to us today. If a pastor divorces his wife

so he can marry another woman, he can trade in his ministerial credentials, start his own denomination, move his church down the street, christen himself a bishop and use television to attract a new crowd.

And no one will challenge him! In fact, he'll find support from the charismatic good-ol'-boys club, where back-patting is the favorite sport and everyone swears they won't tell on one another.

The same attitude has filtered down to the pews. A few months ago we published a report about a renegade minister who is wanted by police in another state for evading child support. We ran the article as a warning because we don't think it's healthy for fugitives to lead revival services. But some readers accused us of “gossiping” or “being judgmental.”

My question is this: If Charisma is not supposed to uphold the standard, then who is? I certainly don't believe this magazine is the policeman in the body of Christ. But greasy grace is

not the solution. We need leadership—and that requires a willingness to bring public correction.

We will continue to sound warnings and expose corruption when necessary. I hope you will support us as we do.