

It's (Past) Time for a Charismatic Reformation

In

honor of Reformation Day, here are some complaints I'm nailing on the Wittenberg door.

Long before there was an Occupy Wall Street, Martin Luther staged the most important protest in history. He was upset because Roman Catholic officials were promising people forgiveness 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 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.

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I am 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 the 1500s. 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 own fleets of private jets.

In honor of Reformation Day, I’m offering my own list of needed reforms in our 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.

2. **Let’s return to the Bible.** The Word of God is the foundation for the Christian experience. Any dramatic experience, no matter how spiritual it seems, 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 test them 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 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 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 ministers 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. Churches should start doing background checks on traveling ministers. 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 chicken 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.

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.

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 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. 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 off-course, entertained by 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 focus on God's priorities.

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