

A Call to Repentance by Clergy

Who Refuse to Release God's Gifted Apostles

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Martin Luther posted a list of 95 discussion points on the Wittenberg church door for a shocked town to read, touching off the Protestant Reformation that transformed civilization. Luther's main thrust was to remove obstacles to the free flow of God's grace, using Scripture and faith to open heaven's floodgates.

Clergy who Frustrate God's Grace

Five centuries later, many pastors and denominational leaders, especially in older churches, by putting man-made church policies first, fail to let God's people obey all of Jesus' commandments. These leaders disallow thousands of new churches and cell groups around the world the joy of baptising or celebrating Communion. Even though new leaders meet all biblical requisites to shepherd God's people, they are not allowed to do so freely, since they are not ordained according their denomination's by-laws.

Those of us who mentor church planters in diverse cultures consistently face this blockage of God's grace. Mixed in among godly, gracious clergy is a selfish elite, jealous of its monopoly of authority to dispense God's grace in the sacraments. These clerics force churches in their jurisdiction to disobey our Lord Jesus Christ, thereby discouraging thousands of godly lay leaders who meet Jesus' and His apostles' requirements for pastoring. Let us face up to the core issue: to block knowingly the free flow of God's grace would prove a form of selfish *unbelief*. Let us challenge such disobedient clergy!

Ordination *as such* is not the problem. Ordination has a biblical basis: shepherding elders should lay hands on new pastors to commission them. The problem comes when churches make *general* requirements for ordination that are not from the New Testament. A congregation retains its right to impose its own requirements. For example, a highly educated congregation might require its pastors to hold certain academic credentials. Jesus said that when two or three believers agreed upon something on earth in His name, His Father would bind it in heaven. However, such binding applies only to that congregation. What God binds for it does not govern another church that meets down the street. Ignoring this limitation has caused oceans of divisive ill will and misery.

Clergy who Liberate God's Grace

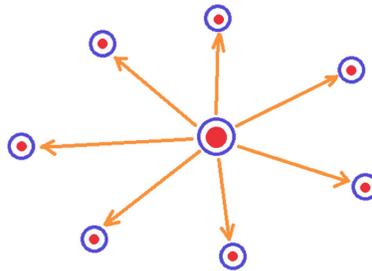
Wise church planters are good plumbers who know how to unstop clogged conduits to let God's grace flow freely. Blocking grace is a core issue wherever churches fail to multiply in a normal, New Testament way. Let those of us, who really care, liberate those who suffer under a cloud of excessive ecclesial control.

An undeniable, basic, truth stands evident for those who look at what is going on in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. There, even new believers learn that they have authority to bind evil spirits and deliver one another from disease and poverty; many do so, and they empower other poor to do likewise. However, traditionalist church clerics often deny them this right of binding and loosing; a privileged few withhold from the poor their free access to the Throne of Heaven. As a deplorable result, the worldwide church-planting movement is not spreading as rapidly as it could! We mentors can help regain momentum by alerting God's people to this issue and troubleshooting it.

Denying godly shepherds and their flocks their right to obey Christ remains undeniably one of the most damaging impediments to movements for Christ. The only solution is a massive shift away from men's rules to those of Christ and His apostles. Let us pray *and act*.

A Structure that Frustrates God's Grace

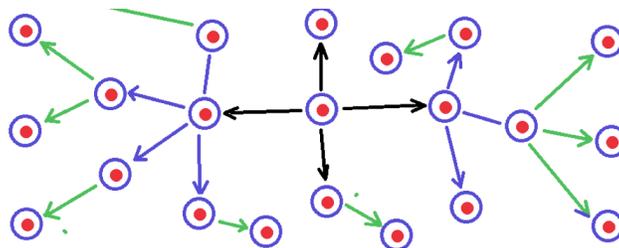
To free up new workers to multiply churches, many pastors must switch from a common, but restrictive "spider web" model to a more New Testament model. The spider web enables an influential pastor to start 'satellite' cells or congregations and put an 'assistant' in charge of each one, retaining for himself sole rights to baptize and serve the Lord's supper. Reproduction stops when he grows too busy to start and to serve more groups. When he dies, the satellites collapse. (See *MentorNet* articles 16 and 43 on other ways to impede God's grace.)



Many clergy impede the flow of God's grace by creating and retaining clerical privileges, which has led to stagnation of the Christian movement in every nation. These leaders disobey, and force others to disobey, Jesus' commands to baptize and to celebrate Communion by imposing non-biblical, man-made rules for ordination of church leaders. By keeping new churches from fully obeying Jesus, those clergy discourage or sideline thousands of godly, willing leaders who meet all biblical requirements for shepherding God's people.

A Structure that Liberates God's Grace

The normal, New Testament way to multiply is continually to raise up new generations of leaders who serve new churches of new believers, empowering them to let God's people obey Jesus' commandments before and above every man-made church policy.



God gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey him (Acts 5:32). Where clergy and non clergy church leaders freely obey Jesus' commandments, empowering others to do the same, the Holy Spirit will always save souls, strengthen disciples, call new leaders, start new churches, give biblical understanding, provide methods and materials, lead to receptive seekers, animate church gatherings, and fill believers with joy.

Let us who are guilty repent! We who gave ourselves to serve Christ's church remain the greatest obstacle to multiplying that church throughout the nations. We can also prove its greatest asset.