



Step 1: Identify Your Number 1 Enemy



Your Number 1 Enemy

I'm a Pastor and I Feel Stuck!

To be honest, you probably should feel stuck! Isn't it the nature of what we do? We love people and want everyone to experience God's grace and redemption. The problem is, you probably want people to be healed and whole more than they do! You feel stuck! The disciples asked Jesus a great question.

His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you always tell stories when you talk to the people?"

Then he explained to them, "You have been permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others have not. To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them. That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don't really see. They hear what I say, but they don't really hear, and they don't understand. This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, which says:

'You will hear my words, but you will not understand; you will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes - so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

NLT Matthew 13:10-15

Did you catch that? I tell stories because very few people get it. They will hear what I say but not get it. Their hearts are so hard they can not hear or understand. Why is this? They simply won't allow me to heal them. Ugh! I so don't want this to be true.

What's worse than sharing God's grace with people and they don't get it? Having people on your board or your leadership team who haven't been impacted by God's grace. We call it Religion. That way of living that says, "I have not been wrecked by God's grace but I know what church is supposed to look like!" And they may not say it but this is what is in their minds, "I want control, so do church my way or I will not give, I might even leave your church." Talk about being stuck.

When you are surrounded by religious people, or worse, if religious people are on your board or leadership team, you will feel tired and confused. You are constantly criticized. People have over the top expectations of you. People just don't follow your leadership. And over time, the weight of Religion becomes so heavy, you begin to think, "I would be better off if I quit." And that is the point of Religion. It rises within people to stop God's work. It wants you to quit. Stop talking about God's grace. Stop making it easy for people to be healed and whole by Jesus. Just stop. That's exactly what happened to Paul. Remember? He went city to city talking about God's grace. Who hunted him down to kill him? The religious people.

I talk to Pastors. Many Pastors are shepherds. They love people. They care about people. And when confronted with Religion in people, they make a **huge mistake**. They think, ...*next page*

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"Something is wrong with me. If I was nicer, if I could build a relationship, if we could just connect better with the person, we would be on the same page." Can I just love you enough to tell you the truth? You will probably never be on the same page. You both have two completely different agendas. Your agenda is the love and grace of God. Their agenda is Religion, to have control. These agendas don't play nice together. Paul wrote about his frustration with Religion.

Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is that the Jewish people might be saved. I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Instead, they are clinging to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. They won't go along with God's way. For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. All who believe in him are made right with God. NLT Romans 10:1-4

Paul loves his family. He loves the Jewish people but they are jacked up on everything but God's grace. Do you feel that way? You love your church family and it's leaders. But maybe they seem to do everything but focus on God's grace and how to impact the community with God's grace.

I've said all of this because if you feel stuck maybe it's because you have an enemy. Maybe your number 1 Enemy is Religion. It has left you feel tired, confused, people pushing in with unreasonable expectations. You feel the reality of making people happy to keep them around. Maybe in your quiet moments you close your eyes and dream about walking away from it all.

I'm not going to give you a Bible lesson. But I have to share with you something that rocked my world.

You can see that I am not trying to please you by sweet talk and flattery; no, I am trying to please God. **If I were still trying to please men I could not be Christ's servant.** TLB Galatians 1:10

Paul believed if he tried to please people, it would eliminate him from being a disciple of Jesus.

My challenge for you is to decide who you are trying to please. Your enemy might be Religion but you defeat that enemy by deciding to please God, not people. Isn't that every story in scripture? Ordinary people called into God's bigger story. They are confronted with living for themselves or for God. Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Esther, Joseph, every prophet, every King, the disciples, Mary, Paul, etc. When they decide to please God, the story goes crazy. We use those stories to inspire people to have courage. We tell them, "Look how God was with them."

Hear me, that's your story too. God has anointed you to do something special. Religion will rise up within people to stop you. Recognize it; don't try to play nice with it. Focus on pleasing God.