

## YOU'RE A MINISTER TOO

### I. The clergy/laity system.

- A. In the denominational world, the term layman is used to describe a person who is not been to a theological or preacher training school.
  - 1. This person has not been religiously trained in any certain area of work.
  - 2. You might hear, "He's a layman pastor" or something like that.
- B. On the other end of the bar is the clergyman.
  - 1. This person has been trained and is viewed as a "real minister".
  - 2. You must have training to be a clergyman and have been approved by some board.
- C. In this type system, not every Christian can be a minister.
- D. As you can probably tell, this is in no way biblical.
- E. Historically, the Lord's church has fought against such distinctions and this clergy/laity system, as we should.
  - 1. However, if you look at how we do things in many congregation, this is exactly what we have.
  - 2. It's the "he's the minister and I'm a member" concept.
  - 3. In reality, the result is the same as the denominational concept.
- F. This approach is robbing the church of growth because it limits the manpower available to make disciples.
- G. The Bible plainly teaches that the clergy and laity are the same people/
  - 1. The word "clergy" comes from a Greek word that was used to describe a person chosen by the casting of lots to serve in a position.
  - 2. It is related to the verb translated "call" in the New Testament and refers to a the summons a person receives to be part of a group.
  - 3. All men have been called by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), and those that answer the call are to serve.
- H. Notice these verses:
  - 1. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 26.
  - 2. Ephesians 4:1.
  - 3. 2 Timothy 1:9.
- I. In these verses, some form of the Greek word translated "to call" is used.
  - 1. All Christians are called by God through the gospel.
  - 2. Thus, all Christians are clergymen.
- J. Notice 1 Peter 5:3.
  - 1. We are part of God's heritage.
  - 2. The word "heritage" is the Greek word we are talking about.
  - 3. We are clergy if the word is to be used correctly.
- K. Notice Colossians 1:12.
  - 1. Christians are inheritors of God.
  - 2. The word "inheritance is the Greek word we are talking about.
  - 3. We are clergy if the word is used biblically.

## **II. The laity.**

- A. Laity is derived from another Greek word that means people.
  - 1. If used in a biblical manner, it refers to God's people.
  - 2. Every Christian is one of God's people.
- B. Notice some verses with me:
  - 1. Acts 15:14;
  - 2. Titus 2:14;
  - 3. Hebrews 4:9;
  - 4. 1 Peter 2:9.
- C. The Bible is clear that all Christians are God's people or laity.
- D. It is equally clear that all Christians are God's clergy.
  - 1. There is absolutely no difference found in scripture between the two.
  - 2. They are two descriptive terms used for the same person.
- E. I know you can't even find the words in English, but they are there in the Greek and they always refer to the exact same group of people or the exact same individual.
- F. Each member of the Lord's church is a minister of God and called to do the Lord's work.

## **III. Creating the biblical concept.**

- A. In order to create proper thinking about this, we must return to studying what the Bible has to say about the position of each member in the body.
  - 1. This is where the work of evangelists and elders come in (Ephesians 4:11-16).
  - 2. It is our job, that of elders and preachers, to equip every member to do the work God has called them to do.
  - 3. In reality, this is part of the work involved in carrying out the Great Commission.
- B. We aren't questioning the position of elder, deacon, or preacher.
  - 1. God has placed those positions in the church.
  - 2. Those have been ordained by Him and we are not wanting at all to change that.
  - 3. What we need is for each member to understand his/her work and place in the church.
- C. A long time ago, J.B. Lightfoot, in his commentary on Philippians, wrote, "The only priests under the gospel designated as such in the New Testament are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood".
  - 1. This concept has to be restored in the Lord's church.
  - 2. This concept of the priesthood of all believers is vital to church growth.
- D. New and old converts cannot get lost in the programs of the church.
- E. They must understand who they are now and what God has called them to do.

## **IV. The identity of every member.**

- A. We need to know what our true identity is before God.
  - 1. We can then answer the question “Who am I”?
  - 2. When I know who I am I will know what my work in the church is.
- B. Notice these descriptive terms:
  - 1. Every member is a Christian (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).
    - a. This means one belonging to Christ.
    - b. We are striving to be like Him and have His mind in us.
  - 2. Every member is a priest (1 Peter 2:4-10).
    - a. This is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 61:6).
    - b. We have the right to approach God with the appropriate spiritual sacrifices through our High Priest, Who is Jesus.
    - c. Revelation 1:6.
  - 3. Every member is a clergyman as we have noticed, which stresses the fact that we have been called by the gospel.
  - 4. Also as we’ve noticed, each is layman, which stresses that we are God’s people.
  - 5. Every member is a saint (Romans 1:7).
    - a. This is a word that means separated or different.
    - b. It describes the person who has been separated from the world by the blood of Jesus being applied to them in baptism.
  - 6. Every member is a minister (Matthew 20:26).
    - a. This word means to serve or attend to something.
    - b. We are to serve God and one another.
    - c. When you read through the New Testament epistles you see that there are many areas in which Christians can serve.
  - 7. Every member is a workman (2 Timothy 2:15).
    - a. We are to be workers in God’s kingdom.
    - b. We are to be busy in the vineyard.
  - 8. Every member is a disciple (Matthew 28:19-20).
    - a. Disciple means learner.
    - b. This, as we noticed before, is the major force of the Great Commission.
  - 9. Every member is a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).
    - a. The Greek word for particular stresses the uniqueness of each Christian and his place in the body of Christ.
    - b. Every member is important and has something to add to the growth of the entire body of Christ.
  - 10. Every member is a contributor.
    - a. Ephesians 4:16.
    - b. The church won’t properly grow if every member doesn’t supply that of which he capable.
  - 11. Every member is a living stone (1 Peter 2:5).
    - a. Every Christian is to support the church.
    - b. Each stone must do his part or the whole structure is

weakened.

- C. These are all individual designations that apply to every member of the church.
  - 1. Elder, deacon, preacher, these don't apply to everyone.
  - 2. That is not the role that everyone has to play or can play.
  - 3. But each does have a part to play so the church can grow and we need to know what we are so we can be what we've been called to be by God.

## V. The results.

- A. Each of us has a self-concept, how we see ourselves.
  - 1. This is important to think about because everything we do, say, feel or perceive is filtered through how we view ourselves.
  - 2. We are what our self-image allows us to be.
- B. I say that to say this: we will not do the work of ministry and help the church grow until we see ourselves as ministers of Christ who must be involved in His work.
- C. What will happen if each of us realizes who we are and what we've been called to do and we begin to do it?
  - 1. There will be a positive sense of purpose.
    - a. The man or woman in the pew who doesn't have a special title will still see him or herself as important and a contributor to the growth of the body of Christ.
    - b. There is no greater work or purpose on earth and we are to be a part of it.
  - 2. There will be a sense of importance.
    - a. No one here is not important and we each need to realize that.
    - b. Your work is needed and valuable.
  - 3. There will be a sense of challenge.
    - a. This helps motivate us to be prepared.
    - b. God uses prepared people.
  - 4. There will be the satisfaction of accomplishment.
    - a. God has promised to bless our efforts for good (1 Corinthians 15:58).
    - b. There is no greater satisfaction than knowing you are doing God's will.
  - 5. There will be church growth.
  - 6. There will be a sense of joy and happiness.
    - a. As you do God's will, lives will be eternally influenced.
    - b. There is no greater happiness.
  - 7. The church will be stronger in all areas of service.
    - a. There will be more ministers therefore more manpower.
    - b. It is the Bible way of multiplying workers.
  - 8. There will be an enlisting of unused abilities.
    - a. We have people here who are not being used for different

- reasons.
- b. One reason is self-concept - some don't see themselves as ministers.
- c. When they do, they will become more active.
- 9. There will be fewer problems and complaints.
  - a. We will be too busy working.
  - b. Activity breeds calm and peace in the church.
- 10. God is going to be glorified.
  - a. There is no greater reason than this.
  - b. He is worthy of this glory and honor and deserves it.

From a book entitled "How To Have Biblical Church Growth" by J.J. Turner.