

The Lay Ministry of Layman's Foundation (LFI)

The Rationale for Lay Ministry - The Lay Ministry of LFI endeavors to encourage and to equip the ordinary lay person to see himself as God's chosen agent to spread the news of Jesus Christ. Just as the First Reformation saw the Bible placed into the hands of the ordinary believer, LFI sees itself as a part of a "Second Reformation", which seeks to place the ministry into the hands of the ordinary believer. Based on passages in Scripture that sees the role of the clergy as that of equipping the saints for the "work of ministry" (Eph 4:12) as well as scriptures on the role and purpose of the spiritual gifts (I Cor 12:7), LFI sees people as wanting to be equipped. We have noticed an unusual reception for our equipping ministry among both young ABC's looking for purpose as well as China Scholars studying in the USA. Robert B. Munger of Fuller Seminary observes:

"Christianity in its beginnings was a lay movement... taking fisherman from their boats and nets, Jesus made them fishers of men. He dared to believe that ordinary people could become extra-ordinary servants of God. In our time it may well be that the greatest single bottleneck to the renewal and outreach of the church is the division of roles between clergy and laity that results in a hesitancy of the clergy to trust the laity, and in turn to a reluctance on the part of the laity to trust themselves as authentic ministers of Christ".

The Relevance of Lay Ministry – People who have an interest in doing China ministry find the techniques of Lay Ministry increasingly relevant. The Chinese government opposes institutional forms of western religion, and this requires new ways to present the Gospel. From our vantage point, we see more and more ordinary believers going to China as "tentmakers" and less and less traditional missionaries or clergymen. The Layman's Foundation teaches businessmen to use their businesses for the Gospel. One example of how a company does this in China is found in chapter 7 of the book, Great Commission Companies. Although profit making, that company also focuses resources on sharing Christ not only with workers but also with the community. Lay Ministry techniques are also used to reach China Scholars while they are in America to study. We try to duplicate what the scholar will encounter when he returns home and teach him things to function in the faith without joining a church. These things include prayer, Bible intake, fellowship, and evangelism. This ministry to Scholars on the campuses of Harvard and MIT is blessed with conversions of people that would otherwise be difficult to reach in China.

The Reality of Lay Ministry – Lay Ministry at Layman's Foundation is driven by three overarching principles – Evangelism, Discipleship and Mentoring, with each principle executed in a de-centralized but strategically intentional manner as follows:

Evangelism – 1) LFI believes that each believer reaching out in his sphere of influence is God's plan to reach the world. We believe that the church is never more ineffective than when it is gathered in its own meeting place and never more effective than when it is scattered, going forth as Christ commanded. 2) LFI believes that Evangelism is not optional (Matt 28:18-20) and each believer will give an account in eternity as to how much he has obeyed this command (Luke 19:11-27). 3) Therefore, LFI teaches evangelism in conferences through preaching and teaching, in Bible studies and by

“doing evangelism” with members who want to learn the layman’s methodology. In Cambridge, every activity has the redemptive purpose of bringing a Scholar to Christ. **Discipleship** – Discipleship is part of the Great Commission, (“teaching them to observe all things”) and the “Body” grows through that which every joint supplies (Eph 4:16). Thus we believe it is done not just in a top-down relationship, but also as one encourages another day after day (Heb 3:13). We have a total of five Bible studies originating in Cambridge and many more around the country and in Hong Kong where people get into the Word together and talk about how Scripture is relevant to practical decisions in every day life. Another specific model that has worked well for us has been our Spiritual Boot Camps where 12-15 men come together for an intense weekend of Bible Study, prayer, recommitment, and holding each other accountable. The important principle of “cross pollination” is employed when men of a certain locale, (usually half of the group) are combined with men from different cities, and mentors come in during the last day.

Mentoring – Following the Biblical model for spiritual growth in an individual, “Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another (Prov 27:17), Layman’s Foundation is a mentoring organization. While discipleship is a relational process involving enablement in the basics of following Christ, mentoring is something broader, involving guiding, coaching and giving counsel on a variety of subjects. LFI is connected to a lay network of senior Christian men who are energized and encouraged by building into the lives of younger men. Young “ABC” professional men often prefer to come to our Bible studies (either telephonically or in person) to gain accountability, direction and advice that would not otherwise be available to them in their local church. LFI holds an annual “3-M” conference that discusses three issues: Marketplace (Careers), Ministry (Lay Ministry) and Marriage (Life partners). We have held 3M conferences in Cambridge, Los Angeles, Colorado, and Hong Kong.

The Rank of Lay Ministry – We believe it is more important for a man to learn how to serve Jesus Christ Monday through Friday in the marketplace than it is to make more money. The weakness of the inner spiritual life of most business people today is well known and increasingly documented in the public media. The Lay Ministry of LFI places priority on the inner spiritual life of the ordinary believer. This is done through getting him into the Word and actually getting involved with him in evangelism and discipleship. While associating with LFI does have value for its networking and gaining of business help, “spiritual help” takes priority over secular help. Leaving behind the kind of ministry meetings that does not touch the inner core of a person; our focus is to develop networks of people who emphasize one to one contact with each other. We want to be alert to providing a creative encounter with Christ that has the ability to transform a life. Every effort is made to facilitate learning from other Christians who have the same struggles, thus, we focus on putting together homogeneous meetings. We believe in developing men who will be able to serve as leaders in the Body of Christ, placing the proper priority on walking a consistent Christian life, managing his own household first, and giving attention to achieving depth in his own personal spiritual life.