

The Purpose of Lay Ministry

The Lay Ministry of Layman's Foundation, Inc. (hereafter referred to as LFI) endeavors to encourage and equip the ordinary lay person to see himself as God's chosen agent to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Believers are encouraged to be strategic about their God-given spheres of influence, especially in the marketplace where they spend most of their time. We believe that our jobs are strategic platforms by which we can reach the world for Christ ("Lay Witness"). LFI believes that we are living in a time of church history when God is calling for a more vital and strategic lay witness, especially in countries closed to traditional missionary outreach. While the "work of ministry" belongs to the layman, clergy play a supporting role in equipping the saints for it (Eph 4:12). Lay Ministry takes on a strategic purpose in China as the government's suspicions against institutional religion necessitates a greater "lay ministry" approach to bringing the Gospel to this great country.

The Functions of Lay Ministry

The three overarching functions of Lay Ministry are Evangelism, Discipleship and Mentoring:

1. *Evangelism* is not optional (Matt 28:18-20) as the "Lay Witness" is God's plan to reach the world. LFI believes that the church is most effective when it is scattered, going forth as Christ commanded, instead of huddled within its own enclaves. We teach that all believers will be held accountable for their efforts in evangelism (Luke 19:11-27). LFI teaches evangelism through preaching and teaching in conferences and Bible studies, as well as one-on-one training.
2. *Discipleship* is part of the Great Commission ("teaching them to observe all things"). As lay people disciple and encourage one another (Heb 3:13), the Body is "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, (Eph 4:16). Discipleship at LFI occurs when both men and women get into the Word and commit to practical application in everyday life. We believe discipleship does not take place apart from the Bible and we conduct Bible studies for both men and women. Another discipleship model of LFI has been our Spiritual Boot Camps, held at private retreat centers for the purpose of intense Bible study, prayer, and accountability.
3. *Mentoring* allows for the cross-pollination and sharing of wisdom and experience across the LFI network. We subscribe to the verse found in Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another", as a model for spiritual growth in an individual. As such, LFI endeavors to give away relationships, connecting older layman from the Leadership Foundation network with young ABC professionals. LFI holds an annual "3-M" conference where we apply the principle of mentoring in 3 partnership themes: Marketplace (Careers), Ministry (Lay Ministry), and Marriage (Lifemates). During our "3-M" conferences we aim for an attendee to mentor ratio of 5:1.

The Practice of Lay Ministry

The creation of a mentoring culture is important to everything we do at LFI. We want people to view all relationships as redemptive. One practice at LFI is to equip lay people through interactive and intentional Bible studies. These studies are interactive in that they employ a "case study" discussion approach and they are intentional in that they focus on relevance, application and accountability.

A second practice at LFI is to participate alongside of people as they do evangelism and discipleship. We believe that "imparting" the Word is best done through modeling and mentoring. We try to maximize contact for spiritual purposes between people in our network. Our spiritual boot camps feature a panel of practitioners of lay ministry. When one practitioner visits a city, we hold fireside chats to get as much "cross-pollination" as possible. We are currently closely associated with a company in China that has been written up in the book, "Great Commission Companies" and they help us train and disciple ABC men.

A third practice at LFI is to influence as many mainland Chinese Scholars as possible while they are temporarily in the States studying. We share Christ with them in neutral settings like our home and over meals. Once they become believers, we teach them skills (Q.T, Bible Study, prayer, sharing their faith) to survive without institutional support when they return back to China. This ministry provides a natural recruiting and training ground for American Born Chinese (ABC's) as they help us do this ministry by either coming to Cambridge to live with us, or taking care of the scholars when they visit their particular city. We want to give the young ABC professional a heart for ministry to the visiting China Scholar.