



## Preface

Looking back in history, we discover that the church's existence has been like treading on ice, embracing the uncertainty and uneasiness of the times in which it lives. When the church has lost its influence, it has not been able to avoid self-reproach and suffering due to the tension of the era. Yet in times of revival, the church has been more concerned about the decay and secularization of the world.

We are now living in an age of instability. In order for it to function as salt and light in this evil world, I believe the Holy Spirit initiates a certain amount of unrest and turmoil within the church. As long as the church is alert to these things, there will be no danger of falling asleep.

There has been in recent years a growing number of those who have asserted the importance of recovering the proper role and position of the laity. This seems to show the uneasiness that pervades many contemporary churches, and could serve to warn the church against falling into complacency and maintaining the *status quo*. In order to transform contemporary society into the kingdom of God where God's name can be hallowed, the church must be willing to face the challenge and embrace the necessary changes.

In fact, the laity are emerging as a serious issue in the contemporary church. To put it positively, lay people are the best and the greatest potential the church has. To put negatively, lay people are a serious challenge for the church. The issue of which perspective will prevail – the positive or the negative – lies entirely in the hands



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of the church leaders. Rediscovering the biblical role of the laity demands a radical remodeling of the old framework of ministry. This can place a heavy burden on a church leader. Although many clergy have a great interest in the role of the laity they find it difficult to put their beliefs into practice because this issue cuts to the heart of pastoral ministry.

As we all know, reformation is not an easy process to initiate or complete. The reformation of the clergy prior to that of the entire church is required in order to break away from the prejudice and ingrown thinking deeply embedded in many churches today, and to gain insight into the importance of the laity. In fact, throughout history, this has often been the case. It is almost impossible for reformation to take place in the church unless it first takes place in the heart of the clergy.

Hendrik Kraemer correctly points out the need for the reformation of the church as a perennial imperative that is always directly related to the life of the church:

*In this sense the imperative is equally imperious for every kind of Church; the flourishing and the decadent ones, the self-complacent and the despondent. In the light of this rule of the perennial, constantly valid law of renewal, the laity, as said already, gets its essential place and meaning, because the whole Church is constantly called to renewal.<sup>1</sup>*

**Part 1** of this present work focuses on the current issues facing the church. As all of us probably know, an accurate understanding of a problem is essential to solving the problem. For this reason, it is important that we honestly search for and acknowledge the problems existing in the church. In addition, we will briefly consider the concept of the laity in relation to the clergy.

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1. Hendrick Crammer, *Theology of Laymen*, p. 92.



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**Part 2** explains why we should not view the church merely as a worshipping community. The church is also a witnessing community in which the lay people serve one another as those who have received a calling from God. For our purpose, it is necessary to discuss the apostolic nature of the church, the priesthood of all believers, and the concept of the body of Christ. We must verify that reclaiming the role of the laity is not a merely temporary theological trend, but a fundamental task that corresponds to the essence and calling of the church revealed in the Scriptures.

Why does the church exist in the world? What are the roles of the laity in the church and in the world? To answer these questions, we must turn to the Scriptures. Our ministry philosophy will depend on how we answer these questions. Our ministry philosophy is none other than a pastor's ministry conviction that has been shaped by his doctrine of the church.

Unfortunately, many of us have been brought up in an atmosphere that neglects the concepts of the apostolicity of the church and the laity. In order for us to become responsible leaders of the church, we must break out of the shell in which we have been unwittingly confined.

**Part 3** is about discipleship. Discipleship is a fundamental biblical strategy that is essential for reconstructing the laity's self-image congruent with the essence of the church. Discipleship offers an ideal image of the laity. Discipleship is Jesus' answer to the question of the standard by which we must train and teach the laity. In this sense, discipleship provides a clear direction for re-discovering the lay people in the church.

**Part 4** summarizes practical principles and methods of discipleship training for developing the laity. Once we establish a clear ministry philosophy and strategy, finding the most ideal method will not be difficult. We



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would say that discipleship training is the answer. The setting of the small group, as used by Jesus Himself, has been demonstrated as one of the most effective methods of education. It will indeed be helpful to examine the important features of His method and apply them to current ministry.

**Part 5** visits a ministry scene at a local church where actual discipleship training takes place in order to develop the lay leaders. We will be able to observe what takes place and how it is done, and analyse both the strengths and weaknesses. It will be an opportunity to get a feel for the possibility of making lay disciples in the local church.

