



CAN THE PASTOR DO IT ALONE?

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INTRODUCTION: The text in question "*Can the Pastor do it alone*" by Melvin J. Steinbron and forwarded by a renowned scholar—Lylee Schaller, is a fourteen chapters book, covering 213 pages. The main subject matter has to do with the possibility that the laity if 'called' and are 'equipped' 'commissioned' and correctly 'motivated' can Pastor effectively and that people can accept pasturing from them. This is against the backdrop that only ordained pastors can do it. Schaller sees the text as representing three distinctive ideas regarding the business of equipping the saints. *First*, it recognizes that equipping the saints requires an active leadership role by the ordained ministry.

Second, the author spells out in helpful details how to go about the process of equipping the laity for ministry.

Third, the main focus on enabling the laity to serve as Pastors and no other roles such as administration. In all of this, he sees the author as intrinsically impressing on readers the distinctive role of the church as "existing for ministry and not administration.

In my attempt to review this text, I will endeavor to work around these three major divisions as Schaller has pointed out, and evaluate the "How to do" in the light of the church in the third world – (Africa most specifically). In other words, how universally can the "How to do" work in the church around the globe regarding the subject under review. I will endeavor to see whether the principles tabulated in the text, in all their specifics can be used in the church universally. This is because, the African church for example stand in desperate need of growth which the ordained ministry alone cannot bring to being. If the Principles of Lay equipping works for the church in the west, can it work for the church in Africa for example? If yes how, and if no, what more need be added or adjustment need to be done to the present work under review.

I. EQUIPPING THE LAITY TO PASTOR REQUIRES ACTIVE LEADERSHIP

By the testimony of the very author, it takes courage in the face of disappointment, hard work and struggles to bring the ministry to fruition. For he says "The excitement has not been without problems in developing the ministry, disappointments, struggles and a lot of hard work" is a must.

I will want to add that, in addition to what constitutes active leadership in developing Lay Pastors training at the level Melvin has described is the aspect of "Strong Motivation" on the part of the ordained minister. The trainer must be highly motivated to survive the obstacles he or she may find on the way. Motivation as a factor in active

leadership to develop Lay Pastors Ministry comes from various sources. For example, it may come about as a result of a strong burden for church growth, a call of God on the leadership of the church to such ministry. The availability of Committed and hard working lay members of the church, who show signs of the ministry as was and is the case of Melvin's church. This belief that, Melvin had a strong motivation which set him on and kept him on to the level he attained in the project.

Next the author emphasized on the part of the ordained minister or the trainer is what he described as a "demanding responsibility which requires Vision, Work, Planning, Persistence and Confidence". This is all the more the reason why I considered Motivation as a major contributing factor. That internal drive which ignites a strong interest will produce the vision to do the Work, Planning, Persist and do so with Confidence. That it works or it will work.

The clergy he said resist because they find it threatening ("I am the Pastor"). If this is a problem in the west, where the ordained clergy have several options or alternatives to livelihood, how much more threatening it may be for the African clergy whose situation demands even the basics. The question is what will give confidence to the African Pastor that Lay Pastors Ministry will benefit his ministry as clergy and Pastor in charge. This is an aspect which Melvin did not provide adequate answer for. He had simply stated that "we have found, however that this resistance (especially the clergy) is not strong enough to hold out against the pastoral care given faithfully by gifted, equipped and commissioned Lay people. I will say that this may be true for the clergy in the west but doubt for the clergy in Africa. Much more need to be said, so to convince the African Pastor to believe that Lay Pastors Ministry will rather enhance his own ministry and not make him redundant.

Another demonstration of active leadership in Lay Pastor ministry by the ordained clergy as mentioned by the author is the area of developing structures to facilitate the functioning of the lay pastors.

The author talks about four phases to his journey from where he was and where he is right now, and in phases two and three he mentioned that he did a lot of preaching and teaching of the theology of lay ministry (calling people to discover their gifts), but did not provide the necessary structures for them to be able to minister.

He continued further in phase three to state that he realized it was a major blunder on his side, so he began to create equipping opportunities and developed structures to follow (P. 22). My follow up reading of the text did not expatiate what structures meant, and how to develop them. My contention is that, the text being described as a

"How to do" text, should have emphasized or thoroughly explain this aspect. It is an important aspect in the provision of active leadership for lay pastor's ministry. Those of us expecting to develop lay pastor's ministry need to learn from Melvin how to develop the right structures for the trainees to be able to minister.

II. THE PROCESS OF EQUIPPING THE LAITY FOR MINISTRY

This second category of the text address the actual process of how to do the equipping itself of the laity to enable them to minister. As L. E. Schaller mentioned, the author delved in detail. I see that the author was writing out of experience, which is the best prove of his authority on the subject. In other wards, I see the author as the 'expert' in this field of equipping lay people to pastor. The amazing thing is that, he is talking out of experience, he is sharing with the rest of us what he has tried and proved works and so he is saying to us – try it, because it will surely work.

The principles he is using and the way he is applying them is quite explicit. The stages he moves through to the point of evaluation also quite simple to follow. For example, from the first stage "The conception of the need" – he said "The beginning of our lay pastor ministry goes back to the time when we first became aware of the need for pasturing" (P. 33). From this awareness of the need for pasturing, to the stage of evaluation of the programme the author had done a remarkable job. He took a systematic approach which he recommends to churches as follows: He Said every church needs to assess its own needs, inventory its own people resources, set its own goals for pasturing and design its own structure to reach the goals". (P. 90)

He closed that chapter with an important issue which he titled "The Pay – Offs". It is important because it serves as a motivation. There should be a benefit derived in most of what one engages in if he should continue in it with all diligence. I also learnt something new from the "Helper-therapy principle" he quoted from Dr. Gary Collins. Sometimes one does not see gains in giving to others. Now I know that the giver ends up gaining the most. It is quite motivational.

The author also did a masterly work on the concept of concepts of "Being" and "Doing". It is better for God to make me a loving person than do help me to love people, to make me a patient person than to enable me to show patience, to make me a compassionate person rather than to have compassion etc. Often we pray that God should help us to do instead of for him to make us better in what we are. The reason is that, we naturally live out what we are, than to try to do what we are. "We do what we do because we really are what we are". When God makes us pastor – then we will pastor in reality.

The author emphasized the 'being' aspect of the pastor when he mentioned that, another way of talking about the importance of 'being' is the use of the word *integrity*. Lay pasturing *requires one* to be a person of integrity. For the author, integrity is the transcendent element in pastoral care. There is no way a pasturing can be effective without the person pasturing having integrity, whether lay or clergy.

This truth runs through the Bible. The prophets were called by God, so they were made as such (transformed). They prophesized not at their will but at Gods will. Jesus is the perfect model, Paul, Peter etc. They all lived out what they were in their "being". The author made his point very clear in this relating it to the subject under review – "Lay Pastoring", one who Pastor he said is to be warm, sensitive, understanding and concerned.

III. THE MAIN FOCUS IS ON ENABLING THE LAITY TO SERVE AS PASTORS AND NOT SIMPLY IN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES.

Here the author emphasized in various ways that the focus of the lay pastor's ministry is to empower the laity to pastor and no other roles such as administration. According to the author, "the Church exists for ministry, not administration." (p. 9). There are other ministries such as Evangelism, Missions, Worship, *Koinonia* and Nurture. These are all very important ministries, but the concern here is basically that of the Pastoring ministry and by called, equipped and commissioned Laypeople. The author has listed qualities such as *empathy, warmth, genuineness, integrity, caring attitude, listening, availability, bearing with and the ability to encourage* as essentials for pasturing. The question is can lay people really pastor?" the answer is categorically YES! They are doing it authentically and efficiently! The author has said in this book almost all it takes to get laypeople to really pastor.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The basic problem I have with this "how to do" text in all its worth and applicability, is its 'universality'. I am looking at it with an 'African eye' The Church in Africa which is plagued with high level of illiterate membership, cultural biases that favor authority in those it is vested with. I am only wondering how to recruit such lay people as specified in the text. And whether they will be accepted as pastors other than the professional clergy.

The other concern I have is the requirement of 'active leadership role' by the ordained ministry, can it work all over or in the African Church? For instance, do the ordained ministry in Africa, see lay Pastoring ministry as a need, and therefore want to invest time, commitment, hard work, persistence or even want to develop a vision for it? Does it have the motivation to engage in such a ministry? Especially so as lay pastor's ministry seemingly competes with their own ministry. Won't the African Church Pastor see lay pastor's ministry as a programme that will render him redundant? Reducing or

watering down his value and subsequently render him redundant? The author in the first chapter, made mention of this aspect as an act of stubborn resistance.

CONCLUSION

Apart from the observations have made in my brief reflection above, the text is a fantastic work book for the subject of Lay Pastoring Ministry. The author out of experience has presented an in-depth study on the subject.