



PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

LAITY AND PASTORS WORKING TOGETHER

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Book Title: "Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors working together"

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Jim Garlow's book entitled "*Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors working together*" is a valuable resource material and a great treasure of wisdom and insight to the clergy and laity alike regarding the important place, Lay Ministry occupies in the body of Christ and the prominent role Lay people plays in the advancement of the body of Christ. It is a noble attempt to deal with a critical and sensitive ecclesiological subject on how clergy and laity can clearly understand their true roles in the body of Christ and strive to become true partners in ministry and meaningfully work together in the body of Christ to help further the cause of the eternal kingdom of God.

In his book introduction, Garlow clearly re-emphasize and reckon the great importance Lay Ministry is to the body of Christ in this 21st century Christianity, as he vehemently maintained that proper knowledge and application of sound theology of Lay Ministry and effective practice of Lay Ministry in the body of Christ can enhance the overall health and growth of a any given church.

In his book, Garlow observed that the prime task of a professional clergy in the body of Christ is to equip, train, mobilize and enlist the Laity for a meaningful and fruitful ministry service in the body of Christ, rather than the clergy or those in representative ministry doing the whole ministry of the body of Christ alone by themselves. He further stressed that proper understanding of the perfect will of God for Laypeople in the body of Christ is very important to having success in any Lay Pastors Ministry program in the body of Christ. He further stressed that Laity are meant to be equipped and trained for ministry by the clergy, rather than laity being merely passive recipient of ministry from the clergy in the body of Christ. In order to clearly and better state the level of importance, Lay Ministry is to the church, Garlow uses the example of Wesley's utilization of Laity in his ministry to illustrate and underscore how important and helpful practicing effective Lay Ministry in the body of Christ is to any given Church. According to him, Wesley's utilization of Laity in his ministry contributed immensely to the progress and expansion of his ministry both in England, Overseas (America) and around the world. He stressed that Wesley noted that as the clergy are called and gifted for ministry, likewise the laity are also called and gifted for ministry. Thus both are meant to co-exist side by side with each other and work together as partners in ministry in the body of Christ. And that the Laity is supposed to be trained for ministry and sent into ministry in body of Christ by the Clergy. He stressed further that mobilizing, empowering and equipping the Laity for ministry by the clergy was the divine will and

purpose of God for the Laity in the body of Christ. And in order to impact our world effectively for Jesus Christ the way God is expected of us, all God's people in the body of Christ must be properly mobilized, equipped, trained and sent into a meaningful ministry or allowed them to participate in any given ministry of their choice in the body of Christ without any hindrance. And by so doing, all believers in Christ can fulfill the great commission given by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by participating in the ministry of their interest in the body of Christ (Matt.28:18-20). And it is when the whole people of God are being trained, equipped, mobilized and unleashed into ministry, that God's perfect will for His Church is fulfilled and accomplished according to God's word.

In Chapter 1 of his book, James Garlow noted that Lay people are very special people and thus are a major contributing factor to the overall growth of the Church and expansion of the eternal kingdom of God. And that their contribution to the work of the Church is very crucial and essential to the general health and growth of the body of Christ to be enhanced and achieved, because in any given church setting, the Laypeople outnumbered the clergy or pastors. He argued further that Pastors, Evangelists, Prophets, Teachers and Apostles have an equally important contribution to make in the body of Christ by fulfilling their prime task of equipping, training and mobilizing the people of God for the work of the ministry according to the scriptures. (Ephesians 4:11-12). He maintained vehemently that those in the representative ministry have been called by God to fulfill three major tasks in the body of Christ, thus equipping the saints, perfecting the saints and edifying the body of Christ. That these listed three tasks are major tasks given to those in the representative ministry by God to do in the body of Christ. They are to serve primarily as enablers who equip God's people for the ministry they were called to do or perform in the body of Christ. The clergy are to strengthen and stir the body of Christ to qualitative growth. It is this crucial involvement of all believers, both clergy and laity in the ministry of the body of Christ, that ignites rapid growth in the body of Christ as there will be more workers to oversee and jointly work for the progress of the body of Christ.

According to Garlow, believers are part of the on-going kingdom building. As believers are Living Stones, Holy Priest, Chosen Race, King's Priest, Holy Nation and God's Own People, this confirms laity inclusion on the contribution to the on-going construction project underway greater than what humankind can possibly fathom. That is the kingdom of God of which every believer is instructed in this ongoing building and important to its completion. He stresses that no one in the body of Christ should be excluded in this ongoing building project and that all believers are now priest to God and all must offer themselves as a living sacrifice to God that are acceptable and pleasing to God through their service in the body of Christ. It is for this background and reason that all believers should be accepted as true ministers to God and his people. And this confirms the authenticity of the priesthood of all believers in

Christianity. Furthermore, Garlow stressed that every believer is a minister in the real sense of the word, which is as long as a person is baptized, that person is a minister to God. He further made it clear in his argument that there is no difference between the clergy and the layperson, because biblically both are ministers to the same God. That God has called both the clergy and laypeople to serve him and share His love with others. It is when the laity and clergy is sharing God's love and ministering together in the body of Christ, that Churches flourishes in growth and health according to God's word.

In Chapter 2 of his book, Garlow observes that all believers are "Theologians" of some sort. He stressed that the true meaning of the word "Theology" comes from two Greek words "Theos" meaning "God" and "Logia" meaning "the study of" and combining the two words, Theology then means the "study of God". He stressed that Theology has many scope and areas of which the most related are ecclesiology which is the study of the church and it is under this last important branch of theology that the ministry of the laity is fitted. He maintained that it is highly expedient that a sound theology about Lay Ministry be developed and formed in order to give Lay Ministry its due and important place in the body of Christ. He stressed that the true theology of Lay Ministry is that which gives proper place to the important ministry of lay people in the body of Christ and in order to have a meaningful theology of the Laity; it is highly pertinent to first understand the true meaning of the word "church" in its proper and wider ramifications. According to Garlow, the early church fathers defined the word "Church" as a place where the word is preached, sacrament is administered, discipline is properly maintained and presences of God is practiced and experienced in its entirety. He further argued that this serves as true marks of a true church. The church involved the laity and the clergy alike and both must work together as partners in ministry, for the church to function properly as God expects. He further stressed that understanding the true meaning of the laity is pertinent to having the zeal to mobilizing the laity for ministry in the body of Christ. He observes that the Greek language has two words from which the term "laity" is derived. One is "laikos" and the other is "laos". The word "Laikos" means "Layperson" in the sense of uneducated mass. A person who is not a specialist who knows little about the subject matter". In contrast to that "laos" means "people". In the New Testament understanding, it means "the people of God", Meaning that we who are followers of Christ are part of the "laos" the people of God.

No one is excluded not even the laypeople nor the clergy. That a proper understanding of the ministry must begin with the ministry of all believers, thus ministry of Laos, all of God's people. He stressed further that all of us followers of Christ has been called to service in the name of Christ. He argued responsibly that clergy is those within the total body of Christ who has been called and trained for specialized area of services in the body of Christ. These are the people we refer to as our pastors or clergy. Those

specialized ministers have major roles to teach or preach the word of God; administer the sacrament and administration of church order. They enable believers in doing their respective ministries. This last function is the most important function of the clergy is the ministry of enablement and equipping. He further stressed that ministry in the church is derived from the ministry of Christ. That any discussion about ministry should begin with the ministry of the laity, if it is to be biblically grounded and valid. He argued that though some would view the clergy and laity as two different things, but we all are called to be ministers in the body of Christ. That the ministry of the laity is called to service to every believer in the body of Christ. Every follower of Jesus Christ is called to ministry and that out of that group of people, there are certain people who will be part of the representative ministry i.e the clergy. That the clergy or pastors are directed to be equippers and enablers in the body of Christ. This is known as representative or specialized ministry. The Pastor has a unique function in the ministry of the total body of Christ. He stressed that sometimes we conceive of ministry as that which is done by the clergy, but that is not true, because all believers are also ministers. We should not assign the title "minister" to only small percentage of God's people, but to the whole people of God in general. The high doctrine of the ministry of the laity assumes an equally high doctrine of the ministry of the Pastor or clergy. All believers (Laity and clergy) are called by God to service in the body of Christ. The nature of service varies and it includes the particular work of the ordained ministry. According to Garlow, the general priesthood of all believers and the ordination of the laity do not obviate the fact that there is also a particular ministry of the clergy in the body of Christ. Thus ordained minister is called upon to be equipper of many ministers in the body of Christ. The term "ministry" should not be reserved only for those who are ordained, it belongs to the "Laos" the people of God. He vehemently underscored that our vocation is important to God whether we are doctors, lawyers or carpenters; we are still ministers in our field. Vocation is called to be a servant of God in whichever work that we are engaged in while "occupation" is the specific track or profession in which one works. The laity doing the work of the ministry where much evident in the ministry of John Wesley and Martin Luther during their era. The priesthood of all believers was encouraged and the laity were even allowed to preach and serve in the body of Christ during this period. Because Wesley utilization of the laity much in his ministry, his work progress and spread over all America in an unprecedented and unparalleled pace, and as a result Francis Asbury used many Lay Preachers extensively in his days and ministry to further cause of the gospel in his time.

In Chapter 3, Garlow tried to bridge the gap between the laity and the clergy by stressing clearly the true nature and concept of the ministry of the laity. He maintained that originally and biblically, all Christians are considered as ministers and that there is a disparity of status that has remained until date, because the clergy has been regarded as the trained and enlightened while the laity has been regarded as untrained and

unlearned. As a result of this disparity, the clergy was accorded an increasingly privileged position and respect and they grew into a new sociological class of its own, with its own privileges, immunities, dress, titles, duties and its own Latin culture and its own Latin liturgy. As the writer reflects on the existing dichotomy between the clergy and laity, he argued that in the early church there was no difference in status, spiritual gifts and task to fulfill in the body of Christ, but was no distinction between a group called clergy and a group called the laity. And likewise in these later days, the clergy and laity should exist together without any distinction between them. The distinction that should exist between clergy and laity should merely be based on their different functions of ministry, but not in essence. He maintained that the only difference between clergy and laity is functional i.e. is based upon what one does and not what one is believed to be. These differences are based upon functions and not essence.

He argued that any perception of clergy and laity that separates them by status is a misunderstanding of the universal call to ministry of all who are God's people. He maintained that the clergy was trained to define and sustained the faith, while the laity was equipped to spread the goodnews and do the work of the ministry. The laity's doing the work of the ministry was much evident in the ministry of John Wesley and Martin Luther. The priesthood of all believers was encouraged and the laity was even allowed to preach and serve in the body of Christ. Because Wesley utilized the laity much in his ministry, his work progress and spread over all America in an unparalleled pace as a result, Francis Asbury also used Lay preachers extensively to further his work in America as well.

In Chapter 4, Garlow observes that spiritual gifts are given to believers by God to enable believers serve Him and fellow human beings. But the most discouraging part of it has been that many believers do not know their spiritual gift or how to exercise their gift in the body of Christ. That the fundamental ministry of cultivation of the believers is to uncover these spiritual gifts and train believers on how to use their spiritual gifts effectively in the body of Christ. That the basis of expressing and using this gift should be agape love. That without expressing this gift in love, we shall not accomplish much in ministry in the body of Christ. He stressed that gifts are given to be used for His honour and service and this special gift given to the believer are to be exercised and used in ministry for the common good of all the members of the body of Christ and to the glory of God. The believer is charged to faithfully utilize their gifts in a meaningful area of ministry in the body of Christ. The lay person major concern should be how to discover their spiritual gift and use it in the ministry in the body of Christ. According to Garlow, there are ways to discover a person's spiritual gift; prominent among the ways are opening oneself to God as a channel to be used and examining one's aspirations for Christian service in ministry and identifying the needs you believe to be most crucial in the life of the body of Christ. Evaluating the results of one's effort to serve and minister in the body of Christ, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit as

he leads you to obedience and remaining alert to the responses of other Christians towards the believer.

In Chapter 5, Garlow underscores that the training and equipping of the laypeople is essential for Lay Ministry to strive well in the body of Christ. He maintained that if laypeople are to be involved in meaningful and fruitful ministry, their training is very important and necessary. He stressed that it will be catastrophe to enlist the laypeople into ministry without giving them the requisite training that can enhance their success in the working of the ministry in which they are engaged in the body of Christ. He stressed that any person who takes the ministry of the laity seriously must give adequate attention to training of the laity for success to occur. It is the prime task of the clergy to help the laypeople to better understand their calling to ministry, discover their spiritual gift for ministry and help them learn how to select that ministry which suits their gift and provide them some kind of training for that ministry, so that they can be proficient in performing that ministry in the body of Christ. The pastor or clergy is the one who guide the laity to understand the biblical call to ministry of all believers and helps them to understand and discover their spiritual gifts and leads them through the steps of finding their gifts for ministry in the body of Christ. Furthermore, it is the pastor who instructs the training by which they can become effective minister in the body of Christ. The pastor or clergy should equip and enable the laypeople and help them to understand their call to the ministry, their gift for ministry, be familiar with the volunteer ministry positions in the body of Christ, and learn how to manage their time in such a way that they could be involved in the ministry, know the director of various ministries of the church and enlist them in at least one area of ministry, so that they could begin to experiment in the use of their gift.

Garlow concludes his book by maintaining that as Jesus was sent into the world by God, Jesus in turn has sent us his followers into ministry John 20:21 and this includes both the clergy and laity alike, there should not be any discrimination between the clergy and laity in performing the respective functions in the body of Christ, thus as the clergy will be equipping and training the laity for the ministry, the laity will be doing the ministry thereby helping all people of God to attain the unity of faith and grow to the full stature of Christ. This book is indeed a valuable guide and practical way of how to mobilize and equip the laity for the work of ministry. It will also be useful for pastors or clergy striving to understand better how to equip and mobilize their laypeople for a meaningful and fruitful ministry in the body of Christ. The clergy and laity should embrace this invaluable manual for their spiritual growth in the field of Lay Ministry. Therefore I highly recommend this invaluable book to clergy and laypeople alike and any other people that may want to understand the true meaning, theology, concept, structure, practice, adaptation and importance of Lay Ministry to the body of Christ. This is one of the most resourceful and important leadership training manual on

Lay ministry and its development ever written. It is a good resource guide for anyone seeking to deepen his or her knowledge and understanding on the important subject of laity and clergy partnership in ministry of the body of Christ. I highly recommend this book to clergy, laity and those in the theological circles like theological professors, lecturers and seminarians who are seeking a way to better understand the true meaning, theology and practical guide on how to do effective Lay Ministry in the body of Christ.