



Lay Pastors have a God-given assignment

My name is Susan Caulder and I am a lay person. I was involved in the Lay Pastor Ministry for many years at my local church and served on the Lay Pastors Ministry Board of Directors for 5 years as well as being a long time friend of Mel Steinbron, the founder of Lay Pastors Ministry.

I have since moved to a new church and am no longer a Lay Pastor, but the things I learned about pastoral care during that time, are with me today. They help me see the church, my pastors and fellow congregants through the eyes of Christ and not my own.

Certainly, the start of any ministry is for God to do the calling. If you desire to serve the Lord as a pastor or lay pastor you must be called by God. We are all called to lead in the cause for Christ, but we all have different gifts and different callings to use those gifts.

If God has called you as a lay pastor, He promises to equip you. As you respond to this call, you will experience the Holy Spirit to lead you through all the ups and downs, joys and challenges that come with living in a fallen world.

In God's sovereign plan, He has called you to lead people to Christ and shepherd them where they are. As a pastor, your job is to train your flock. As a lay pastor, your job is to support your pastor, submit to his/her authority and learn how to care for the congregation.

Lay Pastors have a God-given assignment to be "love with skin on". As we know, this is easier said than done, but we must trust God's grace for the courage and humility needed as you provide pastoral care and remain fully dependent on God and His faithfulness as He equips you for this calling. Can the 'Pastor do it alone?' Is a question that is easily answered. A big NO. Pastors cannot be everything to everyone. And he/she cannot possibly know all the people in their congregation. Lay Pastors Ministry creates a culture so that the congregation does not expect a visit from their Pastor, but their Lay Pastor. It prevents those inevitable problems of people thinking that they must not be important enough for the Pastor to visit when they are sick. And hopefully prevents Pastor burnout as pastors try to carry the weight of an entire congregation on their own. Most of us get overwhelmed with having a sick child or spouse at home, can you imagine if you were expected to carry the weight of 100's or 1000's peoples burdens? It's too much.

A Pastor of a church must be keen to discern who might make a good Lay Pastor. They must choose wisely. Certainly 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is a good list of qualifications for Lay Pastors as much as for Pastors (for that matter anybody in church leadership). A Lay Pastor is representing the church but is also a reflection of the Pastor. The Pastor

must choose wisely based on prayer and discernment from the Holy Spirit. You want seasoned Christians, strong in their faith, practiced testimony, excellent reputation and with a heart for people. They must also be humble, teachable and trust God.

Ultimately, the Lay Pastor is answerable to God. If they are not called to serve, its best not to have them in the ministry. But if they are called to serve, God has a way of getting people's attention. There was one person years ago that was asked to be a Lay Pastor. She declined stating she was just too busy. One by one, her "busy" schedule opened up. A weekly meeting was changed to monthly. A commitment to watch her grandkids was no longer needed as a spot opened up for the kids to get into a preschool. The elderly neighbor she cared for died. And with much time on her hands, she gladly accepted the calling and absolutely loved being a Lay Pastor. She already had the gifts, but now, those gifts were being intentionally utilized through the Lay Pastor's Ministry.

Lay Pastors Ministry is a Biblically based ministry. Done correctly, can have a positive impact on a congregation. It provides those who have pastoral gifts to pastor and lessens the burden of pastoring on the Pastor!