

## THE MANDATE OF THE LAITY III

## Mandate of the Laity

Ford Madison

## Ordinary People

While traveling to several parts of the world for the Lausanne movement, I conducted a survey to see who God was using in different countries. I wonder what this same survey might reveal at this Congress.

How did you come to Jesus Christ? Sometimes God uses famous celebrities on TV or radio to bring people to Christ. He also uses mass evangelism as a method of conversion.

Many people meet Jesus through an ordinary person: their mother, father, brother or sister, or maybe some other relative or friend. Perhaps the lay person was a teacher, co-worker, neighbor, or Sunday-school teacher.

Through this survey, we've discovered that just as in the Bible times and every year since Pentecost most often God uses common people.

But this truth raises some important questions. First, what about the everyday, ordinary women and men in our own churches? Do we believe Christ really lives in them? Do we see each one of them as a minister of Jesus Christ? It's hard to believe, especially if the church has members like Bob Griffin.

Bob Griffin is a small man, and he is handicapped. It's impossible for him to speak clearly. I first met Bob after a seminar which challenged us to get a vision that God could use lay people. At the end of the meeting, a woman and I were Bob's prayer partners. We were to tell each other what we'd learned, and then pray for one another.

Bob spoke first. In broken English he said, "I'b guttun uh visun that God cun ooze evn me."

My heart sunk into my shoes because I could not imagine *how* God could use him. But, by God's grace, I said, "Oh good! How did you get this vision and what is it?"

In broken words, he explained his hearing and speaking impairments, and that he worked in a department for the government for handicapped people where he had developed special communication skills. Bob's local church had asked him to consider teaching a Bible study for their handicapped members. Bob met Christ at a university where he learned to study the Bible through InterVarsity. We affirmed his vision and prayed for him. We told him "Go for it!"

Months later, the woman from our prayer group sent a newspaper with several

photographs of Bob Griffin using an overhead projector to teach a Bible study to more people each week than had attended that whole seminar.

"Ooze evn me." God will—with "faith-vision"! But that kind of "faith-vision" is hard to develop, especially if we haven't thought it through.

For example, we heard of a pastor with two Ph.D.s and a Th.D. from a world-renowned seminary, telling how wonderful the people in his church were to give money and to help *him* in *his* ministry. When asked, "What are you doing to help these ordinary members in *their* ministry," this theologically degreed man said, "It's never occurred to me!"

If you believe everyone in Christ is in the ministry, then the second big question is: *What can you do to help mobilize them?*

Leighton Ford said, "If our goal is penetration of the whole world, we must aim at nothing less than the mobilization of the whole church." This takes leadership. It requires the kind of servant leadership that not only trusts, but also equips others.

A great example of a servant leader is Frank Butler, the head of a manufacturing division of the Kodak company, who said of his employees, "I don't fill the boxes we sell, but I'm here to serve those who do by providing them with whatever it takes for them to get the job done!"

Whatever it takes! We need a servant attitude that helps provide whatever it takes for us to get the job done.

## An Appeal to Work Together

Let me appeal to you as an ordinary lay person on behalf of millions of lay people—that big 90 percent—many of whom are potential laborers. We don't want your job, nor your pulpit! But neither do we want to be stuck on the sidelines, limited to cheering from the spiritual grandstand. We want to be full partners with you on Christ's team: everyday women and men working wholeheartedly for Christ in the world. That's full-time Christian service and we are all called to it!

But to accomplish this we need you, the church leaders. We need your encouragement to use our God-given ministries out in the world, not just in church buildings, budgets, and meetings. The battleground between Sundays is with people, lost people, out in the real world.

If you support this and will commit to it, then as leaders you need to help provide whatever it takes to support your people out in their world as they serve Christ.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if out of Lausanne II grew a new challenge of serving one another instead of looking after our own self-interests? We'd be full partners—no clergy/laity barriers—who are one in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, with the oneness Jesus prayed for to let the world know that the Father sent him and loves them—even as God loved Jesus. Together, let's love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

The old adage says, "The journey of one thousand miles begins with the first step." For any group, this needs the first step of a leader. Will you, as leaders, step out for your lay people? Maybe God wants you to change your vision of where the battleground is for lost people; or your perception and attitude toward the laity and their ministries. Perhaps he wants you to trust the Holy Spirit to use them, or maybe you need to make a commitment to do whatever it takes to equip them. Whatever you need, may God help us to cooperate with each other so the whole church can reach the whole world.