

**Redeemer Bible Church**  
*Lay Leadership Principles & Practice*  
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## **THE TERM “LAY”**

The word “Lay” is a shortened form of the Greek word *Laikos*, which simply means “of the people”. The term *lay leader* (interchangeable with layman, laity, lay persons) is not found in Scripture, but the role description certainly is. This descriptive term begins to appear in literature around the 15<sup>th</sup> century to describe those who were not formal clergymen but still significantly served the church.

## **THE ROLE OF A LAYPERSON**

Ephesians 4:12 states that saints are equipped by pastors “for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.” The word “work” (*Greek: ergon*) literally refers to the work that Jesus was sent to fulfill during His time on earth. The word “service” (*Greek: diakonia*) is the same word used for Deacons in the church and is synonymous with a table waiter. This means that the role of a layperson is to faithfully do the work of ministry as a humble servant, requiring no compensation of any kind in return.

God used many people in the Bible who were not formally titled as priests, apostles, prophets, elders, or teachers. Nehemiah is one of the most prominent examples of untitled spiritual leadership in the Old Testament. Nehemiah held a job as the king’s cupbearer (Neh. 1:11), and used his position of influence to carry out God’s agenda. As a servant leader he was a prayerful (Neh. 1:4-11), bold (Neh. 2:1-8), encouraged people to work (Neh. 2:17-20), a good delegator (Neh. 3:1-32), handled opposition well (Neh. 4:1-6:14), gave God glory (Neh. 6:15-19), knew God’s word (Neh. 8:1-18) and was obedient (Neh. 10:1-11:36).

A New Testament example can be seen through the lives of Aquila and Priscilla. This husband and wife team was an extraordinary support to the Apostle Paul and did not expect power, titles, or compensation in return for their service. They worked together as tent makers (Acts 18:3), were willing to travel with Paul (Acts 18:18-22), risked their lives for Paul (Romans 16:3-5), and they grew as faithful disciples so they could lovingly teach and disciple others as well. In fact, when Paul left them in Ephesus they heard Apollos preaching in a synagogue. They quickly saw he was a gifted preacher but needed some tips for accuracy. After helping him (Acts 18:25-28), he went on to become a powerful preacher of the Gospel!

The role of a layperson within the church – though not called lay – is simple to understand, but a great challenge to fulfill. As both the Old and New Testament examples conclude, at the heart of a layperson is a desire to both labor and serve for the purpose of strengthening the body of Christ. The true layperson will accomplish this with a high level of excellence and should God call them into full-time ministry, they will have already proven to be a faithful steward.

## **THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A LAYPERSON**

Based on the characteristics found in both Old and New Testament leaders, a qualified layperson will first be a servant of all. When Jesus taught His own disciples on true greatness in God’s kingdom, He explained that whoever wishes to be great, must be a servant, and whoever wishes to be first will be slave of all (Mark 10:44). Even Jesus Himself came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

Second, a layperson will possess an exemplary character as evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in his life. A layperson will be an example to others, not by what he says, but by what he does (James 1:22-25). Furthermore, a qualified layperson will exhibit the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Finally, as exemplified by both the Old and New Testament, a true layperson will be a person of integrity; able to be trusted with both spiritual and practical duties.

Third, a layperson will possess spiritual discipline. In order to effectively serve and strengthen the kingdom of God, one must first have a strong relationship with the King. Qualified servant leaders will have an active prayer life, a clear understanding of the Word for themselves and to help others, and live committed lives of spiritual worship (Romans 12:1-3).

## **THE CALL OF A LAYPERSON**

The following checklist provides a chronological process for a person to both assess their calling and willingness to serve RBC in the capacity of lay leader/layperson.

\_\_\_\_\_ Has he/she been a growing Christian for at least 2 years?

\_\_\_\_\_ Has he/she been a committed member (attitude, attendance, giving) of RBC for 6-12 months?\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Does he/she fulfill the qualifications as exemplified by biblical servant leaders?

\_\_\_\_ A desire to be a humble servant

\_\_\_\_ Obedience to spiritual authority

\_\_\_\_ Possesses the ability to handle conflict and opposition biblically

\_\_\_\_ A person who is trustworthy and living with integrity

\_\_\_\_ Exercises daily prayer in submission to God's will

\_\_\_\_ Daily use and faithful interpretation of Scripture

\_\_\_\_ Is morally pure and not accused of habitual sexual or financial sin

\_\_\_\_ A husband who is a sacrificial leader and/or wife who is submissive and respectful

\_\_\_\_ Has already proven faithful in a volunteer ministry capacity\*

\_\_\_\_ Agrees wholeheartedly with the teaching and doctrine of RBC

\_\_\_\_ A good work ethic that can be affirmed by others

\_\_\_\_\_ Has a church member or leader nominated him/her for the role of lay leader?

\_\_\_\_\_ Has a pastor-elder affirmed his/her nomination?

\_\_\_\_\_ Committed to serving as a layperson in an assigned ministry role for at least 1 year?

*\* There may be circumstances in which a faithful individual is relocated to RBC and comes with a strong resume of faithfulness at their previous church. Based on the reference of the "sending church," an RBC pastor may place someone in leadership sooner than the timelines stated in this document. Our standards for lay leadership are meant to protect and build up the body, not blockade proven, endorsed, faithful servant-leaders.*

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*Key Word Study Bible, AMG, New Testament Dictionary  
Equipped for Service - Nehemiah, Regular Baptist Press, Gary L. Hauck*

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Lay Leader Signature

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Date

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Overseeing Pastor Signature

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Date