

# CLERGY OR LAITY?

Joe Slater

Are you in the clergy? Or are you a lay person? If you are a Christian, you should answer both questions the same: “Yes!”

Our word clergy goes back through the English and French languages to a Latin word meaning priest. Laity, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *laos* (people). In the Old Testament, Israel distinguished between its priesthood and “the people” in general. Only certain Levites who were male descendants of Moses’ brother, Aaron, were priests.

The New Testament, however, recognizes no such difference among Christians. In fact, Peter tells the Christians to whom he is writing that they are “built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). To the same people he writes, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9).

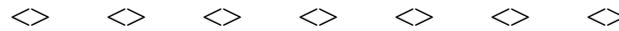
Every Christian, then, serves God as a priest under the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Thus the Hebrews writer exhorts: “Therefore by Him (i.e. by Jesus Christ) let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

Since there is no distinction in the Lord’s church between priests and non-priests, all Christians are also the laity (the common people). Our Lord has instructed that no one seek self-exaltation. “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi,’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren” (Matthew 23:8). The next two verses continue the same prohibition against religious titles such as Father and Teacher (Master). In principle, these are no different than Reverend, Doctor, Pastor, or

any other title men might invent to elevate themselves above their brethren. All such titles are divisive and violate the teaching that Christ’s disciples are brethren.

Titles are not the only means of making such artificial distinctions. Robes, collars, and other special items of clothing are commonly used in the religious world to make certain individuals stand apart from the common people. God’s word sanctions none of it.

What higher station could we desire than simply to be faithful Christians? Let us be thankful and humbled to be priests of God under the High Priesthood of Christ. And let us seek not to exalt ourselves, but to exalt Him who is worthy of the highest praise of earth and heaven!



## A Typical Devil’s Lie

To entice Eve to eat what God had forbidden, Satan said, “*For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:5). The tree’s very name, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (2:17), gave credence to Satan’s promise. But his promise was a half-truth, and half-truths deceive just like a whole lie.

When they ate, “*their eyes were opened,*” and they knew they were naked. They knew evil as they had not known it before – by doing evil. However, their knowledge of good and evil was not like God’s. He does not know evil by participating in it. He is “*of purer eyes than to see evil, and cannot look at wrong*” (Habakkuk 1:13).

Participating in evil, disobeying God, did not make them like God; it brought death.

Never believe the devil! His half-truths are always destructive lies.

--Cecil May, Jr. (Montgomery, AL) via Preacher Talk

# Ask And You Will Receive

*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matthew 21:22).*

I backed my little red convertible out of the driveway and proceeded down the street. About a block from the house the engine died. Even with my limited knowledge, in the field of mechanics, I managed to determine that I had a bad fuel pump. I removed the pump and proceeded to the nearest auto parts store.

Bear in mind that this was a fourteen year old car which was not really that popular, almost a rarity you might say. Also I was in a tiny town on the Canadian border, away from any big cities.

Nevertheless, with all odds against me, I walked into the parts store and placed the pump on the counter and, cockily, told the man, “I need a fuel pump”, knowing all the while that he would not have it and would have to order it and it would take weeks to get it. His response was, “Just a minute.” Sure enough, in just a minute he returned and slapped a fuel pump down on the counter and said, “There you are.” You can’t possibly imagine my surprise that he would have that part for a fourteen year old Corvair! “O ye of little faith” (Matthew 8:26).

How about life in general. How much do we miss out on, spiritually, because of a weak faith? Or because we fail to ask? Or lack the proper motives?

Jesus said, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*” (Matthew 7:7).

James tells us, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God*” (James 1:5).

James further instructs us, “*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures*” (James 4:2-3).

How many of God’s blessings do we miss out on because we do not ask? But remember 1) we must ask 2) we must ask with the right motive 3) we must ask in faith 4) we must ask according to God’s will. Do we “*think the scriptures speak in vain*” (James 4:5)?

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)