

PASTORAL ORDINATION

WHY THE NEED FOR GUIDELINES

It should first be noted that the following guidelines are not iron clad rules that a church must feel they have to obey. We believe in the autonomy of the local church, therefore, the following guidelines are only suggestions, not commands.

In 2004 our concern of unqualified men being ordained into the Gospel ministry had come to a head. It seemed that one of the churches in our association had called a minister who, we later found, was very immature, unlearned in Scripture, and one who was childish and very angry about many things. This writer was very disappointed in, and concerned about this man. As I thought about this man God told me, in His quiet voice, "You should be concerned, you helped ordain him." I then realized how I had failed the process and was not obedient to the Scripture concerning ordination;

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." 2nd Tim 5:22

The reader needs to understand that when we are overly cautious in fear of upsetting the process, or seeming to be antagonistic at the presbyter council we have failed. Out of this fear we may allow others to answer for the candidate instead of allowing him to answer for himself. The presbyter council needs to be assured that the candidate is fit to be an ordained pastor. In an effort to rush, since the ordination service is only forty-five minutes or an hour away, an unqualified man may be ordained. It would be uncomfortable to not approve the man since his family and others have come to witness his ordination who are just outside the door, and this would bring great embarrassment upon the candidate, his family, his friends, and the church that wants him ordained. When we allow the pressures of the moment to keep us from doing our jobs of closely questioning the candidate on matters of doctrine, his personal life, his wife's support, Christian life, and his understanding of the office of pastor, and not be willing to say "no" when we find the candidate lacking then we have not only failed but sinned.

When we, as ministers of the gospel, fail in our responsibilities by ordaining an unprepared man to the ministry we can do the candidate and his family much harm by sending them to a position of authority in which he is not ready to perform. We can do the church where he will pastor much harm by sending an unprepared man that may mislead the church in matters of doctrine and ministry. Lastly, we do the gospel harm by taking a chance of a situation occurring that will bring shame on the church in the community or to the cause of Christ if the man we ordain fails in matters of doctrine, life, and purpose. We as ministers of the gospel have an obligation to take the ordination of a man to the gospel ministry very serious. We need to establish guidelines that will insure that only qualified men are ordained to pastor our churches, or most importantly, God's churches.

Other reasons for ordination guidelines are as follows:

1. To identify and certify men truly called and equipped by God for the pastoral ministry.
2. To provide a process that would eliminate men seeking pastoral ministry credentials who are not called by God.
3. To give a local congregation confidence that their pastor is genuinely appointed by God.
4. To provide a process that furnishes a standard of accountability for the church concerning their pastor's ministry.
5. To commend a man to the pastoral ministry wherever God's will takes him.
6. It provides an avenue whereby other ordained ministers may give approval that the candidate has shown evidence of the calling, qualification, and authority found in Scripture.
7. Ordination gives the candidate assurance and encouragement that affirms his call is consistence with the Biblical Qualifications.

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OR ORDINATION

Ordination is the process of ministers of the gospel affirming the call, equipping, beliefs, and maturity of a man to become the pastor of a church. In the Old Testament ordination was used to affirm a man to serve God's purpose. Ordination validated God's will for a fully qualified man to serve God and His people.

Moses 'ordained (**ml yd**, "filled the hand of") Aaron and his sons to the priesthood of Israel. Moses symbolically represented God's will for Aaron to serve as high priest by the laying on or stretching of hands, thus authenticating or ordaining Aaron for priestly ministry (Ex. 29:9,29,35). This same procedure appears in Leviticus 16:32 and Numbers 3:3.

The laying on of hands (ordination ceremony) was a symbolic gesture of setting aside a person, animal, or object for the service of God and it was a symbolic gesture for identification. When the head of the house brought an animal to the priest for sacrifice he would lay his hand upon the animal signifying that the sins of his family were now placed or identified upon the animal. The animal was thus set apart to be a sacrifice for the family's sins.

Often in the New Testament the ordination (laying on or stretching of hands / set apart / appoint) was used to appoint elders (pastors) and deacons (which we will discuss in another report) in the New Testament Churches. Notice the following Scriptures:

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:3 NKJV

Here we see Paul and Barnabas are ordained so that they could go on their mission trips starting new churches.

So when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Acts 14:23 KJV

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the eldership. 1 Timothy 4:14 NKJV

Timothy is reminded of his ordination when he was set aside to be the pastor of the church at Ephesus.

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in through the laying on of hands. 2 Timothy 1:6 NKJV

Timothy is once again reminded of his ordination (his setting aside for pastoral ministry).

For this cause I left thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city. Titus 1:5 KJV

What we understand about the men who were ordained to be a pastor was that he met each qualification found in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5- 9. When reading the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) one will learn that the pastor was a student of Bible doctrine. Emphasizing doctrine was far greater than the experience of the worship service (concerning what kind of singing or service).

EXAMING THE HISTORICAL FACTS CONCERNING PASTORAL ORDINATION

In Philip Schaff's Book, *History of the Christian Church*, volume three page 489, we learn additional information about the ordination of pastors during the fourth and fifth century:

1. Ordination conferred the capacity and authority of administering and governing the body of believers.
2. Ordination imparts, according to the later scholastic doctrine, *a character indelebilis*, and can not therefore be repealed. But this of course does not exclude the possibility of suspension and excommunication in case of gross immorality or gross error.
3. Ordination was performed by the laying on of hands and prayer, closing with communion.
4. Only Bishops (pastors) could ordain other pastors.
5. There were to be at least three Bishops (pastors) present at the ordination service.
6. Candidates were obliged to prepare themselves for consecration by prayer and fasting.

We learn from John McClintock's book, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Theology and Ecclesiastical Literature*, volume seven, page 418, additional information concerning ordination around the time of the Reformation:

1. The candidate was required to profess his faith and promise to obey the canon (Bible).
2. The candidate was required to instruct his people in Christian doctrine according the Holy Scripture.
3. The Reformers took this very seriously and that they made the charge to be given and the promises that are to be taken to be very expressed and solemn, so that the ordainers and the ordained might be rightly instructed in their duty, and struck with an awe and dread that they ought to be under so holy and so important a performance.
4. They required that the promises be made upon the alter in the nature of a covenant.
5. They required the candidate to profess that he was "inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon him this office and ministration to serve God," and that he was truly called "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ."

EXAMING BAPTIST HISTORICAL FACTS CONCERNING PASTORAL ORDINATION

In the book entitled, *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptist*, we find the following in regards to pastoral ordination:

1. From 1609 through the early 1700s a local church that called a minister did their own ordination since there were so few Baptist churches in the area.
2. With the formation of local Baptist associations in the 1700s there was a movement where only Baptist ministers from sister churches were invited to participate in the ordination of the candidate.
3. With the formation of Baptist associations the Southern Baptist practice of ordaining a man at the church where he was called now changed to the local church in which the man was called from (his home church).
4. In very early Baptist history a man could not leave one church for another unless the church where he was already serving agreed to the move. However, sometimes when the man moved to another church he was re-ordained. This practice eventually discontinued.
5. A man was not customarily ordained unless he was being called by a church to become its pastor.
6. At which time the ordaining church called an ordaining presbytery composed of ordained ministers from sister Baptist churches.

7. The presbyter will ask the candidate questions regarding his Christian experience, call to the ministry, doctrinal beliefs, and proposed conduct as a minister of the gospel.
8. The church did not set a date for ordination until after the presbyter committee has been fully satisfied.
9. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptist* reveals that a minister's ordination can be revoked because of gross sin or gross doctrine. The historical procedure for such is following:
 - a. The revocation should only be initiated by the church in which he is a member. No other body has disciplinary authority over him.
 - b. The church calls a large representative council to furnish information and to gain advice.
 - c. Although distasteful, the same media of publicity given to the ordination should be used to inform the community of the revocation of ordination. The hurt inflicted in the case of one individual may serve as a warning and prove salutary to many.

PREPARATION FOR ORDINATION

Following is a list of recommendations that will better prepare a minister for the ordination for pastoral ministry. We recognize the autonomy of the local church and remind you that we can not force anyone to accept the following suggestions:

1. The responsibility of the candidates pastor or/and home church:
 - a. The pastor and/or church should be honest with the minister and tell him if he is ready or not to be a pastor. This could save him some humiliation, and save a church future conflict.
 - b. The pastor and/or church should mentor the minister in areas of theology, missions, and church ministry.
 - c. The pastor and/or church should supply the minister with a copy of the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and then go over it with him until he understands the theology fully.
 - d. The pastor and/or church should not set a date for the presbyter meeting until the pastor and/or church is convinced that the minister is ready to be a pastor.
 - e. The church should mail invitations to the pastors of sister churches within the association. If the association has an associational presbyter committee the church may want to invite the committee.
 - f. It is advised that the pastor or church should not plan the ordination service until after the presbyter has been fully satisfied with the candidate.

2. The responsibility of the candidate before his ordination:
 - a. He should spend time in prayer making sure that ordination is God's will.
 - b. He needs to be patient knowing that it is not uncommon for a man to pastor a church for several months without being ordained if he has already accepted a call.
 - c. He should study in detail the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and other books relating to Baptist Doctrine, missions, and church ministry.
 - d. He should seek his pastor and/or other pastor for counseling or instruction that would be helpful in the gospel ministry.

PREPARING FOR THE PRESBYTER COMMITTEE MEETING

The following preparations should be made before the presbyter committee meeting begins:

1. Set a time and place for the meeting.
2. Send invitations to the pastors of sister Baptist Churches.
3. If your association has a presbyter committee, then invite them.
4. Give the candidate a copy of the questions that might be asked so that he could be ready to respond with his answer.
5. The church should provide refreshments since the presbytery may meet for a few hours if they thoroughly question the candidate.

THE PRESBYTER MEETING

It is suggested that the church make every effort to invite at least five ordained ministers to be present during the presbyter meeting. This will ensure legitimacy. Following is a suggestion for the presbyter meeting:

1. Have the pastor of the ordaining church lead in prayer.
2. It is customary that the pastor of the ordaining church reads Scripture that is fitting to the occasion (usually the qualifications found in 1 Tim.3:1-7).
3. Usually the pastor of the ordaining church will begin by asking the committee to elect a moderator (sometimes the pastor of the ordaining church will be the one elected).
4. After the election of the moderator he will begin by asking for nominees to be voted on as clerk. Then proceed to let the members of the committee vote. The clerk will take notes that will be eventually, if the presbytery votes to ordain the man, read during the ordination service.
5. The moderator shall introduce the candidate.
6. The moderator will allow 2-3 members to give witness of the candidate.
7. After the witnesses have shared their testimony of the candidate, the moderator will say, "Does anyone know of any reason why the candidate should not be ordained. Then give anyone the time to do so with the candidate present.
8. The moderator, or someone else selected, should consider asking the following questions. However, the candidate should speak for himself during the questioning session.
 - a. Share with us your salvation experience.
 - b. Share with us your call to the ministry from God.
 - c. Share with us your wife's salvation and does she support your call to the ministry?
 - d. What are your plans for the future systematic study of the Word?
 - e. Do you believe the Bible to be inerrant and infallible?
 - f. How would you describe God?
 - g. Who is Christ?
 - h. What do you believe about the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ?
 - i. When do you receive the Holy Spirit?
 - j. What is the work of the Holy Spirit?
 - k. Do you believe what some refer to as the slaying of the spirit, holy laughter, and other such charismatic teachings?
 1. What does it mean to be saved and why do you need salvation?
 - m. Do you believe in the doctrine of Eternal Security?
 - n. What are the two spiritual officers of the Baptist Church? Describe their positions.
 - o. Have you read the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*? If so, do you feel you can affirm it? Is there any portion that you disagree with?

- p. How many souls would you say you have lead personally to Christ?
 - q. Do you believe in the ordination of women as pastors? What about ordaining a woman as a deacon?
 - r. Do you believe that churches should support missions?
 - s. Will you represent your church in your local Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, and Southern Baptist Convention when giving the opportunity to do so?
 - t. Will you lead your church in involvement in the local Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, and Southern Baptist Convention when able?
 - u. What is your belief concerning the end-time events such as; the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ?
 - v. Who is the head of the home?
 - w. What is your view on Soul Competency?
 - x. Are you honest and just in your business dealings and do you pay your debts on time?
 - y. Is your present marriage your first marriage? If not, explain the circumstance of your other marriage.
9. At this time other members of the presbytery may ask additional questions. However, questions relating to what version (or translation) of the Bible the candidate uses should not be asked; this should be a local church issue.
 10. At this time the candidate should be allowed to speak so as to clarify any previous question or add what he might deem as important information.
 11. The candidate should be asked to leave the room so that the members of the presbytery may discuss the candidate's answers.
 12. After there has been time for discussion there should be a motion that calls for a secret ballot.
 13. The vote shall be for one of the following three motions: a yes vote to ordain the candidate, a reservation vote to hold another presbyter meeting so that some issues can be addressed further, or no vote to not ordain.
 14. The candidate shall receive at least 90% of the vote (if there is less than 10 members voting, then if everyone but one votes yes the motion passes)
 15. If the candidate receives less than 90% "yes" votes and there is more "yes" and "reservation" votes than the "no" votes, then the presbyter will discuss their reservations and change the motion to the presbyter committee to either voting to not to ordain the man or vote to set another date for another presbyter meeting so that the candidate may address the issues before the committee. Sometimes that means that the candidate goes back and studies in the areas where he was lacking during the ordination.
 16. If the motion passes with 90% "yes" votes a date will be set for the ordination service and those on the council will go ahead and sign the ordination certificate now.

PREPARATION FOR THE ORDINATION SERVICE

After the date has been set and the presbyter has approved the candidate for ordination the pastor and/or ordaining should do the following:

1. The ordaining church will send out invitations to pastors of sister churches
2. With input from the candidate a pastor should be asked to preach the charge to the candidate, while another one is asked to give the charge to the church. You may have an additional pastor ask the candidate his vows.
3. There should be time to adequately plan a moving and orderly ceremony.

THE ORDINATION SERVICE

Following is a recommendation for the order of service at an ordination service:

1. The service should have instrumentalist play music as a prelude to the ceremony.
2. The ceremony should begin with a lively congregation song.
3. The pastor of the church should lead in prayer (sometimes if there are ordained members from the church that is calling the candidate one may want to ask one of them to lead in prayer).
4. Congregational singing (unless you have someone or group to sing a special).
5. Responsive Reading using 1 Timothy 3; 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9 (since there are so many translations it would be wise to place the responsive reading scriptures in a prepared bulletin. Have every other Scripture verse in bold to help the congregation stay together).
6. Report from the clerk of the Presbyter Committee recommending the candidate for ordination.
7. Congregational Singing
8. Candidate is asked to come in front of the altar and sit in a chair facing the pulpit.
9. Charge to the Candidate. A short sermon emphasizing the duties of a pastor.
10. The candidate takes his vows promising to live up to the qualification of a minister, studying the word, witnessing to the lost, to be a good husband and father, to lead his church in missions, etc. Following is a recommended list of vows:
 - a. Do you vow to preach and teach the Scripture as the inerrant and inspired Word of God, always given it authority over all authority? The candidate will answer.
 - b. Do you vow to be consistent in your study of the Word of God showing yourself approved and a workman unto God? The candidate will answer.
 - c. Do you vow to maintain your beliefs in the Baptist Doctrine you affirmed during your presbyter committee meeting? The candidate will answer.
 - d. Do you vow to live up to the qualifications of a pastor found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1? The candidate will answer.
 - e. Do you vow to not only encourage and train your flock to witness, but you will be a witness by sharing the gospel to those who are unbelievers? The candidate will answer.
 - f. Do you vow not to neglect your family and love your wife as Christ loved the Church? The candidate will answer.
 - g. Do you vow to teach and lead your church to participate and to give financially to missions, such as association missions, and Co-operative Program Missions through the Georgia and Southern Baptist Conventions? The candidate will answer.
 - h. Do you vow that you will vote in the future to ordain only men who are truly qualified for the gospel ministry? The candidate will answer.

At this time the questioner will say, "After being found qualified from the presbyter committee, and by his giving vows, I now ask that the ordained ministers come and officially ordain him by the laying on of hands.

11. Laying-on-of-the-Hands (at this time the candidate will kneel and each ordained minister will come and place their hands on his head whispering words of hope, encouragement, and prayer).
12. The presentation of a good study Bible.
13. Words from the candidate.

14. Charge to the church. A short sermon sharing the church's responsibility to the pastor.
15. Vows of church supporting the pastor.
 - a. Vows from the home church:
 - 1). Do you, the candidate's home church, vow to pray for the candidate as he goes forth to pastor his flock? The church will respond with, "we do."
 - b. Vows to the church called to:
 - 1). Do you vow to honor your pastor with the respect and support that is fitting to the office of the pastor in accordance to 1 Timothy 5: 17-20? The church will answer, "we do."
 - 2). Do you vow to respect your pastor's time with his family? The church will answer, "we do."
 - 3). Do you vow to recognize your pastor as the Shepherd and Overseer of the church? The church will answer, "we do."
- 16 Special ordination prayer.
- 17 The candidate and his wife is then called to the front of the church for all to meet and fellowship with.
- 18 We recommend a reception at the end of the service (There could be a list made of commentaries and theological books that would be helpful to the new ordained minister that people may use to buy him gifts at his reception). We recommend the Tyndale Commentary sets or The Expositor's Commentary set.

THE NEW ORDAINED MINISTER'S FIRST SERVICE AS PASTOR

It may be suggested that when the new ordained minister arrives at his new church that his first service may include the following:

1. Have someone (such as a Director of Missions, or other person) to serve in a special capacity to welcome the new minister by giving him the same vows found in the ordination service in front of his new congregation.
2. Allow the new church to give their vows found in the ordination service.
3. Pray a special prayer of dedication.
4. A special offering or gift given for the new pastor to purchase needed Biblical tools such as commentaries, dictionaries, etc.