

ORIENTATION TO ORDINATION

Virgil Warren, PhD

I. Ordination is for the one ordained.

Ordination is for impressing on the person ordained the importance of his calling. People set aside time for things that are important. By setting aside time to concentrate on what it means to enter ministry, the body of believers shows the person their regard for that calling. Ordination provides a time to be impressed with the significance of the “ministry of reconciliation,” as Paul called it (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Ordination is not for empowering a person to do ministry. It is not a supernatural depositing of charisma or gifts. In general, a minister does his work on the basis of inborn talents and developed skills that through conversion become gifts of the Spirit for accomplishing the work of ministry.

Ordination is not for validating the work of the one being ordained. Anyone has the right to speak a word to lost people about salvation on behalf of God. He does not need to be licensed for that. In Acts 8:4 Luke indicates that because of the persecution that surrounded the martyrdom of Stephen, the Christians in and around Jerusalem were scattered, and they went everywhere preaching the gospel. A person does not need ordination to authorize him to “administer” the ordinances. Paul indicated to the Corinthians that Jesus Christ did not send him to perform baptisms (1 Corinthians 1:18). Grace does not flow legally through the church’s representatives; grace flows directly from God to the individual; it is interpersonal. The ministry is a witness to grace, not a channel of grace.

II. Ordination is for the congregation involved.

Congregations can use opportunities like this to recapture their sense of awareness for the great needs that lie beyond their own immediate theater of operation. When they send out one of their own number to participate in the general proclamation of gospel, they demonstrate their desire to fulfill their outward-directed responsibilities to the world at large. In looking beyond themselves they obtain in fact a better understanding of who they really are and how they belong to the universal, eternal program of God.

III. Ordination is for the church at large.

In ordaining a person to ministry, the sending congregation is making a statement to the universal body of believers that this person has its confidence as to character, commitment, and qualification. The church has a responsibility to continue the close ties of communication and support in order to fulfill this ongoing responsibility to the body of Christ in general.