

The Church part 4

1. What is ordination?

- Ordination is the act, wherein the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognizes and confirms that a Christian believer has been gifted, called and set apart by God for the work of the ministry and in the name of Christ commissions him for this work.
- Symbolizes the confidence of a congregation and the Christian Community in those called of God to serve the church.
- Approval to serve in a certain capacity, does not give special status or privilege.
 - Baptists do not believe in Apostolic succession
 - But other denominations do, and so does the government
 - Often these groups view pastoral care or ministry offered by non-ordained people as less than fully valid or effective because of the belief in apostolic succession.
- NT – people were appointed to serve the congregations and to serve as ministries. The church laid hands on these people and prayed over them, but these are not considered prototypes of ordination.

2. Who are Deacons and what do they do?

- In Scripture
 - Acts 6:1-7
 - 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- Historically among Baptists:
 - English Baptists in the 1600s: Deacons care for the poor and sick.
 - Charleston, S.C. in the 1700s: Deacons dealt with the secular concerns of the church
 - B. C. Howell, 1846, Deacons called a board of directors, concerned with temporalities
 - DC Haynes, 1856, their responsibilities, “relate to the poor, and to temporal matters, to conform in particulars to the necessities of the churches choosing them.”
 - W. B. Boggs, 1898, “Deacons minister in the temporal things of the church.”
 - Southern Baptists in the 1920s: reinforce the pastor in his spiritual duty while still taking care of temporalities.
 - Harold Tribble, 1936, “The lack of any detailed instructions in regard to the office gives us to understand that they might be charged with any duties at the pleasure of the church.”
 - Pastors: teaching, preaching, prayer
 - Deacons: care of members, possibly taking care of the business of the church
 - W. T. Conner, 1937, “It is usually considered that they should have charge of the financial or business affairs of the church.”
 - But perform their duties for spiritual purposes or ends.
 - Business ability and high moral and spiritual character.
 - J. Clyde Turner, 1945, “Deacons are servants of the church, chosen by reason of fitness for certain duties.”
 - No authority to regulate the affairs of the church.
 - No definition of duties. Emphasis on character.
- Currently: Deacons serve as needed by the church so that the Ministerial Staff can do the things only they can do.
- Possible Deacon Ministries:
 - Family Ministry – personal ministry to every family to discover/meet the needs of every member
 - Hospital visitation
 - Shut-in visitation
 - Inactive member recovery
 - Visitation and Evangelism teams
 - Church ordinance teams
 - Ministerial Staff support team
 - Raising funds for church-member benevolence

- Caring for the church property
- New Member visitation
- Discover and do jobs no one else will do or wants to do: scenery, transportation
- Lead out in ministry to children

3. Scott believes:

- Any local church can call and ordain anyone to serve in any capacity,
- Divorced men can be considered individually by a church for service as a deacon or on the ministerial staff.
 - We must respect the importance and the dignity of each person's story of grace and redemption and pre-judge or place people in categories with labels.
 - Paul's emphasis was on proven character in recent history, not a flawless track record.
 - It was not his intention to put one sin above every other, which is what we do.
 - Paul held up an extremely high standard for service, ministry, and leadership.
 - No one, not even Paul, attains to that standard.
 - What ordained man among us can claim to be blameless as an adult believer?
 - But, by the grace of God, is there a demonstrated pattern of faithfulness, or is there a demonstrated pattern toward sin and unrepentance?
 - There should be sufficient time to demonstrate the fruit of repentance – brokenness, humility, more focused understanding
 - Broken people sometimes make the best ministers.
 - If God is obviously calling them out (there is fruit), and if the church wants them to serve, then let them serve.
 - However, those who are not broken and unrepentant should be avoided because they make a mockery of God's grace and will likely repeat the sin.
 - This would be true for any past sin of any church leader.
- It is allowable for a woman to serve in any ministerial position in the church, except the Senior Pastor.
 - Because of the creation order and the emphasis on the man being the spiritual leader of the marriage and the family.
 - The man should also be the spiritual leader and shepherd of the church.
 - God will honor this as long as men are willing to serve in that capacity.
 - I think a church can and should license women for the ministry.
 - But, churches should probably avoid this issue because it is so divisive to a church. A godly woman would not want to cause division.
 - I think a church could ordain a woman to serve in a particular capacity, such as a chaplain, when the ordination is required by an outside agency.
- It is allowable for a woman to serve as a deacon to serve the needs of women and children in a congregation.
 - I don't think this should ever happen, again because it is so divisive.
 - Nor do I think ordained deaconesses should be asked to minister to men. And I think men need to be careful about ministering to women.
- This issue should never divide a church. People on both sides of this issue should value unity and relationship above this issue, and be willing to let their way go to preserve the unity.
- No man or woman needs official recognition to do the work to which God has called them. Each person should serve as God leads and not expect recognition, etc.