

ORDINATION SERVICES

The term *ordain*, which is used often in Baptist and other Christian circles, never occurs in the New Testament. The Greek word translated *ordain* in the King James Version is better translated *appoint*. When Jesus said, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you*” (John 15:16); he used a word meaning to *appoint* or to *place*. In both the Old Testament and New Testament leaders were *appointed* or *set apart* in a special way. Paul and Barnabas were set apart as missionaries by the church at Antioch (Acts 14:23). In Acts Chapter 6, seven men were set apart as deacons.

Although the New Testament does not teach that ordination is an essential requirement for equipping leaders for their ministry, the ceremony of setting a person apart for ministry seems to fit the New Testament pattern. The practice of ordination seems to be practical for the organized work of the churches. To make ordination a sacrament is wrong. To insist that only baptism or the Lord’s Supper administered by the *ordained* is official is to violate the teachings of New Testament theology. Ordination symbolizes God’s call to ministry, the candidate’s commitment of himself to the ministry in the will of God, and the church’s approval of the candidate for the ministry. On the part of the church this ceremony is an act of approval, not an act of bestowal. It is an acknowledgement that God has bestowed certain gifts and has called the individual to service. Ordination does not impart any rights or qualifications that God has not already bestowed.

Two important things need to be kept in mind in reference to ordination:

- The church should not be hasty in ordaining an individual. It should be certain that he has the qualifications to serve in the office whether it is as pastor, as deacon, or as any other leader. The candidate should first prove himself to be qualified in character and in gifts for such ministry.
- Once an individual has been ordained, he should live an exemplary Christian life and show himself to be a maturing leader in the service of Christ. He is responsible primarily to Jesus Christ as Lord and secondarily to the church in functioning as a leader and his behavior should reflect his sense of responsibility.

I. THE ORDINATION OF MINISTERS

The following are suggested procedures. Steps and procedures will vary somewhat according to local customs.

- A. A candidate for the ministry is usually licensed by his church soon after he indicates that God has called him into the ministry. The licensing is the church’s tentative approval for a man to serve until he has proved himself qualified for ordination.
- B. The candidate himself may approach the pastor of his church with a request to be ordained, the church where he is serving as pastor may make the request of his home church, or the pastor of a candidate-in-training may request the home church to ordain him.
- C. Upon request the church will authorize the appointment of an advisory council to examine the candidate as to his fitness for ordination. This council is usually made up of ministers and deacons.
- D. The council should take its time in determining the qualifications of the candidate. The time for ordination should not be set until the church receives the report from the advisory or ordination council.
- E. The candidate should be examined at the point of:
 1. His conversion, his call to preach and his Christian experience;

2. His doctrinal views on sin, salvation, the Bible, the church, the church's mission program, the officers of the church, his beliefs and practice of stewardship, his evangelistic and missionary commitments, his commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in his own life.
- F. When the examination is completed, the council should present a written notice to the church concerning the council's decision to recommend ordination, deferment for a stated period so that the candidate may become better qualified and prepared, or rejection of the candidate.
 - G. If the council recommends proceeding with the ordination, the church will then set a time for the ordination service.

◆ **Ordination Service**

This may be incorporated into a regular Sunday morning or evening service of the church, or it may be planned for a special time.

Call to Worship

Hymn of Praise ô *Oh For A Thousand Tongues*

Scripture and Prayer

Introductory Statement ô ***Tell why you have met.*** "*We have met to ordain _____ to the office and work of the Christian ministry.*"

Presentation of the Candidate

The Ordination Prayer ô ***The candidate will kneel facing the congregation.***

Laying on of Hands ô ***While the candidate is kneeling, those who have been designated by the church file by and place their hands upon the candidate's head.***

Presentation of the Bible

Special Music

Message

Hymn of Commitment ô *Jesus I My Cross Have Taken,* *Am I A Soldier of the Cross,* *Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus,* or some other appropriate hymn.

Hand of Fellowship ô ***It is appropriate for the entire congregation to extend a hand of fellowship to the newly ordained minister and, if married, his wife.***

II. THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS

The office of deacon is generally considered to have originated in the election of the seven as helpers to the apostles (Acts 6:1-6), although they were not called deacons. They were set aside to serve and minister to the needs of the church in Jerusalem. They were to be peacemakers, preserving harmony, order and unity within the church.

The term deacon in the New Testament means minister or servant. The deacons should be involved in deacon family ministries. They should not be looked upon as the business managers of the church.

As is true of the office of minister or pastor, the office of deacon is not a hierarchical office. No spiritual graces and no particular authority are bestowed in the act of ordination. The office of deacon is one of example. Only men who measure up to the spiritual qualifications mentioned in Acts 6:1-6 and I Timothy 3:8-13 should be considered for the office.

- ✓ A man of honest report (Acts 6:3) - a good reputation among those in the church.
- ✓ Full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3) - bigness of character, in spiritual outlook and personal dedication.
- ✓ Full of wisdom (Acts 6:3) - an ability to discern right and wrong and to stand for his convictions.
- ✓ Full of faith (Acts 6:5) - like Stephen's, a deacon's faith requires him to risk himself and his possessions.

- ✓ Grave (I Timothy 3:8) - possesses Christian purpose, who has great reverence for spiritual matters, and whose word carries weight.
- ✓ Not double-tongued (I Timothy 3:8) - dependable and honest in relating to all persons, publicly and privately.
- ✓ Not given to much wine (I Timothy 3:8) - temperate in living, abstaining from alcoholic beverages, steward of good influence, doing all to the glory of God.
- ✓ Not greedy of filthy lucre (I Timothy 3:8) - a right attitude toward material possessions, never exploiting others for his own gain.
- ✓ A holder of the faith (I Timothy 3:9) - gives strength to the church fellowship and possesses spiritual integrity beyond reproach.
- ✓ Tested and proved (I Timothy 3:10) - demonstrates his commitment to ministry before being elected to serve as a deacon.
- ✓ Blameless (I Timothy 3:10) - a person against whom no charge of wrong doing can be brought with success.
- ✓ Christian family life (I Timothy 3:11-13) - a person whose family is well cared for, whose family relations are healthy and growing.
- ✓ Husband of one wife (I Timothy 3:12) - a model of faithful devotion to one spouse committed to the sanctity of the marriage bond.
- ✓ Ruling their children and their own houses well (I Timothy 3:12) - loved and respected by all family members, caring for them as Jesus cared for others.
- ✓ Bold in faith (I Timothy 3:13) - hold firmly to what he believes, taking every opportunity for ministry.

Deacons should be selected from among men who have proven themselves faithful to Christ and the Christian calling in the ministry of the church. It is better not to elect deacons unless they are men qualified for leadership.

The duty of a deacon, along with the pastor, includes responsibility for the pastoral care and counseling of sick and needy members, and working with the pastor in implementing the general work of the church in both its material and spiritual areas.

◆ ***Suggested Procedures***

1. The church will select a committee for the nomination of deacons. (This could be the deacons.)
2. The committee will consider men on the basis of requirements and qualifications laid out in the New Testament.
3. The men interviewed should be asked if they would be willing to serve as deacons should the church elect them.
4. The committee will present to the church a list of the men who have been deemed qualified to serve, if elected.
5. After prayerful consideration, the church should vote on whether to ask them to serve as deacons.
6. The time for ordination should be set. The ordination service could be held during a regular Sunday worship service.

◆ **Order of Service**

Hymn

Prayer

Scripture Reading ô ***The following passages may be appropriate:***

Acts 6:1-7 I Timothy 3:1-13 Romans 12

I Corinthians 12 Ephesians 4:1-16

Presentation of the Candidates

Questioning of the Candidates

Church Ordination Motion

Ordination Prayer

The Laying on of Hands

Special Music

Message

Hymn of Commitment ô *“Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,” or some other appropriate hymn.*

Hand of Fellowship by the Congregation ô ***Deacon’s wives may be asked to stand with them to receive the hand of fellowship.***