ORDINATION IS INPERIOR

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Why Ordination Is Important

By Superintendent Gene Roncone

Something is really troubling me. At the time of this writing, 43 percent of our network ministers are NOT ordained. That's a bit troubling to me, and I'm hoping you'll give me a few minutes to explain why. This statistic begs the question: If God is the one who called you to the ministry, why is it important to be ordained by a manmade organization; or if you already have a ministerial license, why should you advance to ordination?

These are excellent questions that deserve a thoughtful response. Ordination is an important process that has a biblical precedent and should be taken with the utmost seriousness. There are several reasons why it should be important to you, to the church, and to God's people. If you are reading this today and have not taken the next step to advance your credential, let me give you a few reasons why you should.

- 1. Ordination is a biblical model. Ordination can be defined as the public ceremony by which an ecclesiastical movement acknowledges the divine call, commission, and qualification of a person to serve in ministry. In a sense, it is a formal authorization for a person to be a minister and do ministry. The tradition of ordination is found throughout the entire Bible. We see it symbolized through the act of the laying on of hands. Those who were in spiritual leadership and authority laid hands upon and prayed for those who were acknowledged to be called, qualified, and ordained to ministry. Moses did this with Joshua in Deuteronomy 34:9. The church leaders did it with Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:3. In most denominations, ordination is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These are people who are fulfilling one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Ordination is important because it is biblically exemplified and commanded.
- 2. Ordination is different from licensing. There are some things that cannot and should not be rushed. The Apostle Paul taught us that ordination was one of those things when he said, Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure (1 Timothy 5:22, NIV). The New American Standard version states this admonition much more strongly when it says, Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others. Licensing recognizes the call of God on a person's life. Its focus is on the individual, their character, call, and preparedness for ministry. A ministerial license is a symbol of our accountability structure recognizing the "call of God" upon a person's life. After licensing, there is a time of "testing and watching" the fruits, patterns, and effectiveness of one's ministry that flow from that call. While licensing focuses on the individual, ordination seeks to examine the ministry that flows from that person. The time in between licensing and ordination is the period where leadership fulfills their biblical obligation to observe your ministry, not just your calling. It gives leadership time to examine the fruits of your ministry and make an informed and Spirit-led decision about how effective that call works itself out in the context and pressures of ministry. Licensing is about your calling; ordination is a recognition of God's blessing on your ministry. An invention is not considered an innovation until it can prove itself effective outside the sterile and predictability of a laboratory. In the same way, a calling is not fully recognized

unless it can prove itself spiritually effective in the real-life context of life and ministry. That is why ordination is important. It is a formal recognition of the maturity of your call.

- 3. Ordination is important for accountability. Ordination is the act of having a spiritual authority over you to recognize your authority to represent God and His word to His people, to the world, and to the church. You remain accountable to this spiritual authority in areas of moral wholesomeness, family health, doctrinal purity, ministerial ethics, corporate integrity, financial uprightness, and leadership standards. Even Paul, after receiving the call directly from God in a vision, submitted to baptism, the laying on of hands, and the leadership of the Jerusalem church. Ordination is important to those who seek and welcome biblical accountability.
- **4. Ordination is important for credibility.** Full-time ministry in most churches involves the official endorsement of a reputable denomination or organization. These organizations fulfill the biblical pattern of an authority structure that confirms your call, qualifications, accountability, integrity, effectiveness, and readiness to minister. This confirmation is usually in the form of licensing, ordination, and recognition of your call from a church denomination. If it is a reputable organization, it will take this step seriously and use an extensive process of application, testing, interviews, and a solemn ordination service. This process will ensure:
 - The genuineness of your Christian experience.
 - The sufficiency of your spiritual, moral, emotional, and societal maturity.
 - The reality of your divine call.
 - The correctness of your doctrine.
 - The adequacy of your preparation and abilities.
 - Your commitment to community and collaboration.

The important thing to remember is that if God has called you, your call will be evident to godly leaders who serve in authority over you. When you seek their confirmation, they will either say yes or no or wait. Whatever the answer may be, ordination is the most important public confirmation you can receive that you are credible and that your ministry and doctrine can be trusted.

5. Ordination is a higher level of preparedness. Ordination will require classes that will increase your knowledge of the Word, enlarge your theological foundation, and bring spiritual growth to your life. In essence, you will be increasing the capacity of your leadership and enabling yourself to bring deeper and greater levels of spiritual resiliency to your ministry. For example, a minister who is certified has yet to go through the AG's internship, pass the AG polity exam, and take the 18 classes required for license and ordination. A person who is licensed has yet to take 8 classes, be interviewed by the Executive Presbytery and be officially endorsed by receiving ordination, participating in the ordination ceremony and receive the laying on of hands by the Network eldership. However, an ordained person will have not only taken more classes but received a deeper level of mentorship and credibility. Not only should these growth opportunities be important to you, but they will be important to those considering you for future ministry positions. Additional information on these growth opportunities can be found at: http://www.agspe.org/AG Credentials.pdf

- 6. Ordination is important for responsibility. Full-time employment in churches can usually be divided into two categories: ordained and nonordained ministry. Most churches have employees who are not ordained. These people work in ministry without being ordained for ministry and usually serve in areas that support ministry functions. Paid administrative assistants, janitors, nursery directors, ministry directors, media personnel, and musicians are examples of nonordained employment opportunities in a church. However, ordained ministry usually carries greater authority and responsibility to God's people. In many denominations, ordination is so important that their churches require it for a person to serve on the pastoral staff, perform weddings, baptize converts, serve communion, or represent the church at denominational gatherings. As a matter of fact, the bylaws of most Assemblies of God churches require those who serve as a lead pastor be ordained. Why? Because even lay people, deacons, and pastoral search committees feel that ordination enables an individual to steward greater responsibility.
- 7. Ordination is important for the health of the local church. Ordination ensures that the pastoral leadership within the local church is comprised of individuals who are proven, qualified, genuine, and divinely called. It also helps to maintain a higher level of doctrinal purity within the body of Christ as well as an accountability structure outside of a team or local context.
- 8. Ordination creates a partnership of trust. Ordination is the official recognition that you and your ministry have proven to be valuable, needed, and affirmed in the greater body of Christ. In a way, it is as though the entire Fellowship of the Assemblies of God is saying, "Not only do we acknowledge the call of God upon your life and your commitment to that call, but we also now express our willingness to put confidence in your ministry's contribution and your leadership should God ever anoint you to lead us." That is a powerful thing in and of itself.
- 9. Ordination increases our capacity for leadership. As of October 3, 2019, the Rocky Mountain Network has 570 ministers. Of that number, 11 percent are certified, 32 percent are licensed, and 57 percent are ordained. That means 43 percent of our ministers are NOT ordained. That should concern all of us. Why? Because the kingdom of God and the leadership pool in our network is being limited. Our leadership pipeline will never exceed our level of ordination! According to our network bylaws, the highest levels of leadership in our network require ordination. For example, the district superintendent/network pastor, assistant superintendent, secretary treasurer, executive presbyters, every member of the presbytery, provisional presbyters, and those empowered to call a special meeting of the Network Council in the event of an emergency are all required to be ordained. That means the network's source of leadership, vision, and potential will be limited to the pool of those who are ordained. In other words, ordination is the lid that determines our highest potential and capacity as a network. Anyone who believes in leadership succession should also be equally passionate about ordination. We owe it to ourselves and our future to maintain the highest percentage of ordained ministers within our network.
- **10. Ordination has benefits and privileges**. To recognize and honor the sacrifice, commitment, and ministry accomplishments of those who have achieved the highest level of credential, the Rocky Mountain Ministry offers exclusive benefits to those who are ordained. Among these benefits is a 50% discount on all graduate level tuition in the Masters and PhD programs of Trinity Bible

College and Seminary. As one of our primary educational partners, Trinity assists us by investing in leaders already serving in our Network, as well as increasing our ability to recruit new ministers to serve as lead pastors and staff in our RMMN churches. For more information on the qualifications and requirements of this and other benefits, contact the District Superintendent's office or visit www.agspe.org/trinityscholarship.pdf.

If you desire to serve in ministry, one of the decisions you will have to make is whether you want others to recognize and affirm your calling (licensing) or your ministry (ordination). And believe me, there is a big difference between the two. That is why I believe the Bible places such a significant emphasis upon ordination. It signifies a greater level of biblical obedience, ministry maturity, accountability, credibility, opportunity, responsibility, partnership, and health for the local church.

That is also why I am appealing to all in our network who are not ordained to contact our Secretary/Treasurer's office this week and take your next step—whatever that may be. Why? Because the future needs you! I need you, the network needs you, our churches need you. More importantly, the kingdom needs you.

If you would like to advance your credential and pursue ordination, please email Secretariat@rmdc.org