

STANDARD C - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PART OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

Lesson 4: What Does It Mean to Be an Ordained Minister?

Introduction

One day Jesus was standing by a lake, teaching the people. So many people were around Him it seemed they would push Him into the water. Jesus had trouble seeing all of the people. There were two fishing boats at the water's edge. The fishermen who owned the boats were washing their nets. One boat belonged to Simon Peter. Jesus borrowed the boat, got into it, and asked Peter to push away from the shore. Then Jesus sat in the boat while He taught the people (Luke 5:1-11).

Afterwards, Jesus told Peter that from now on he would fish for men instead of fish. Peter was to leave his boat and follow Jesus. So, Peter left his nets and his boat, and he began to follow Jesus. Eventually, following Jesus probably cost Peter his life in the city of Rome.

Later, Jesus called other disciples who left their jobs to follow Jesus. But in many instances as Jesus traveled, He told people to stay where they were. He wanted them to serve Him as disciples in their own towns and in their own jobs. One time, Jesus healed a man who had been demon-possessed. The man asked that he be permitted to follow Jesus wherever He went. Instead of granting the request, Jesus told the man to go back and tell about Jesus in his own community. So, the man did not travel along with Jesus and the apostles, but he was a disciple in his own town (Luke 8:26-39).

A. All People Are Called to Christian Ministry.

Today, Jesus still needs many disciples who give witness to Him in the places where they live and work. He wants them to be His disciples right where they are. The important thing is that Jesus calls all of His followers to witness about Him. No one place is more important than any other. Christ gives all Christians a ministry to fulfill in the Church and in the world. Since He is the one who decides where to place us, none of us should ever be puffed up or ashamed of the role Jesus assigns.

Jesus Christ gives gifts or abilities to Christians that should be used in their service to Him and His Church. They are many kinds of gifts. Whatever one's occupation, he or she can use it as a place to fulfill the ministry Christ has assigned. When everyone practices the ministry Jesus gives, then the Church is complete. Remember, no Christian is excluded.

Question: What does Jesus call of His disciples to do?

Question: Why does God give gifts or abilities to all Christians?

B. One Ministry Is the Ordained Ministry.

1. What are the steps into the ordained ministry?

- a. The first step into the ordained ministry is the call. God calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel, administering the sacraments, and caring for God's people. When a person believes God has called him or her to engage in such ministry, certain things must happen. The person must know he or she has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The person must know without doubt they have fully given themselves for sanctification by the Holy Spirit of God. One who intends to practice this ministry must in all things become a pattern of holy living to the people of God (2 Corinthians 6:4-10).

Question: What is meant by "the call" to Christian ministry?

- b. The second step into the ordained ministry is preparation. In most instances, the Church has a very important role to play in recognizing one's call to this form of ministry. The Church determines the process by which a person may eventually engage in public and formal Christian ministry. It sets the standards for study and abilities. The Church guides a person through the process of preparation. A keen sense of responsibility before God and the Church should mark one's preparation. This requires a person to take advantage of the best educational resources available.

The ordination requirements show how seriously the Church views the ordained ministry. The requirements show how highly the Church regards the Gospel, the people of God, and the world for which Christ died. In many ways, congregations can participate in mentoring ministers-to-be.

In most Christian communities the Church will decide whether or not a person has "the gifts and graces" he or she needs for ministry. A Christian community may not be able to identify in a person the gifts and graces a minister may have. Then the Church must help that person find another form of ministry.

Question: What role does the Church play in a person's call to the ministry?

- c. The third step into the ordained ministry is ordination. First of all the "called" person must successfully complete the preparation or course of study. Also, the Church must recognize God has given the "called" person "gifts and graces" that Christian ministry required. Then the Church, acting as God's agent, may ordain a person to and for the Christian ministry. A properly appointed church official conducts the ritual of ordination. The church then identifies the person as an "ordained Christian minister." Sometimes these

persons are called “ordained elders.” Some Christian communities practice an ordination that does not include a call to preach.

At the time of ordination, these persons receive a particular charge to fulfill. The charge includes the responsibilities that one has to both God and the Church. An ordained Christian minister, who is called to preach, will faithfully proclaim the Gospel. He or she will administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. And he or she will be a shepherd of God’s people. Persons that God calls to the ordained ministry may serve as pastors of churches, as evangelists, or in some other role in the Church. An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole story of God as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Question: What are two important things that must happen before the Church ordains a Christian minister?

Question: What are three duties of the ordained Christian minister?

- d. The fourth step into the ordained ministry is understanding the role of the minister as steward. A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes, in a special way, a steward of the Gospel. He or she becomes a steward of the mystery of God, which is Christ, the Messiah. A steward manages carefully what one’s master entrusts to him or her. A good steward is diligent and alert. There is no space for laziness or privilege. Good stewards recognize they are stewards only. They are not the owners. Some day they will give an account of their stewardship to the Master.

The person who serves Christ and the Church as an ordained minister must have a thirst for knowledge, especially for the Word of God. The person must show sound judgment and good understanding. The ordained minister must clearly understand God’s plan for salvation. The person must be an example in prayer and in the works of Christian piety. The Christian minister must long to see persons become disciples of Jesus. He or she must know how to lead persons into Christian discipleship and how to help them grow as Christians. The person must have the mission of God firmly planted in one’s heart. The Christian minister must urge upon all disciples God’s call for their sanctification. The person must love justice and mercy even as God does. The ordained minister must be an example of compassion.

Question: What does it mean to be a steward of the ministry?

Question: What are some characteristics an ordained minister should have?

Conclusion

All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry are amazed God would select them. God’s call should continue to humble and amaze them. They have a very sober responsibility before God and His people. The practice of the ordained ministry must always be seen as an act of worship and obedience. The ordained minister must always

trust in God, not in himself. Christian ministers may be assured that Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, will equip them with everything good for doing His will. Christ will accomplish in them what is pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Activity: Discuss the role of the ordained minister in the Church. How can you support ministers? Talk about this in your discipleship group.

Activity: If you believe God has called you to the ordained ministry, what should you be doing? Discuss this with you pastor.