

PBBA Equip Ministry | An Ordination Guide

Within Southern Baptist polity, individual churches are tasked with ordaining biblically qualified men who are called by God to gospel ministry. While a church may invite non-members to assist in the process (e.g., Association Pastors and others who are ordained), the responsibility ultimately falls to the local church and its elders. This guide seeks to aid the local church by supplying a framework for ordination that is consistent with Baptist distinctives in both theology and polity.

Invitation

“God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.” Those words from Henry Blackaby in *Experiencing God* should be a regular part of worship services and pastoral conversations. Churches are encouraged to be regularly inviting their congregants to hear and heed God’s call upon their life (e.g., to call out the called). For some, God is calling them into vocational ministry as a pastor/elder. Should that calling be as a pastor/elder, the church is encouraged to be prepared to guide that individual in the fulfillment of their calling.

- Action | Guide the individual through a curriculum/study that helps them to understand the call to ministry and regularly meet with them. (est. 3-6 months)
 - o [Call to Ministry Resource](#)¹ (Southern Seminary)
 - o “Is God Calling Me?” (Iorg)
 - o [Called – Pursuing the High Call to Ministry For the Church](#)² - online study
- Timeline | Estimated 3-6 months

Preparation

After the individual completes their Invitation work and there is a consensus between the called individual and the pastor, a course of Preparation can begin that may lead the individual toward ordination and eldership. (Note: should the calling be to some other form of vocational ministry besides eldership (e.g., various staff roles, missions, etc.), preparation can still begin yet the process would be adjusted accordingly and without ordination). Should the church observe a genuine call to ministry upon the individual, and as an affirmation for the individual to pursue God’s calling, the church may decide to “license” the individual as they begin (or anytime within) the preparation process.

- Action | A weekly (or regular) meeting with a church elder for discipleship, mentorship, observation, and elder-candidate development.
 - o Resources:
 - A. Complete Resource | [Biblical Eldership Ministry](#)³
 - B. Compilation
 - Ministry Basics | *The Pastor’s Primer* (O.S. Hawkins) or *Practically Trained Pastors* (Croft & Carroll)
 - Spiritual Disciplines | *The Disciple* (Stott & Chester) or *Basic Christianity* (Stott)
 - Evangelism | *A Witnessing Journal* (sample)
 - Theology | *Christian Beliefs, Revised Edition: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grudem), [Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#)
 - Baptist | *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church* (Norman) or *More than Just a Name: Preserving our Baptist Identity* (Norman)
 - SBC | *Together on God’s Mission* (Hildreth)

¹ Available at <https://www.sbts.edu/press/the-call-to-ministry/>

² Available at <https://ftc.co/called/>

³ Available at https://www.biblicaleldership.com/files/pdfs/elder_dev_prog.pdf

- Leadership | The Care of Souls (Senkbeil), The Peacemaker (Sande), Didn't See it Coming (Nieuhoff), Spirit-Led Preaching (Heisler)
- Teaching | A format where the candidate is able to teach (regularly or in rotation)
- Timeline | 3-5 years (but primarily when the candidate demonstrates he has met biblical qualifications.

Examination

When the pastor (or assigned pastor/elder if a plurality of pastor/elders) believes the candidate is ready to be examined by an ordination council, the pastor/elder works with the candidate to establish a date and time. It is recommended that a minimum of two hours be set aside for the meeting. Pastor/Elders outside the church may be invited to attend (e.g., local Association Pastors and/or other ordained individuals desired by the pastor and/or candidate.). It is recommended that an invitation letter be sent to each invitee with an enclosed agenda for the meeting as well as sample questions that may be asked (note: the council will be permitted to ask questions not on the list, and the council is not required to ask all the questions.). It is recommended that the host pastor facilitate the discussion and will appoint a "secretary" to take generalized minutes of the meeting, primarily focusing on the decision made for church records. The host pastor needs to communicate to the council the percentage required for approval (e.g., majority, two-thirds, unanimous, etc.) of the candidate. After preliminaries are completed (e.g., fellowship, introductions, procedural overview), the examination may begin. The sample set of questions can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

When the examination is complete, the candidate will be excused from the room for the council to discuss and decide. The host pastor will determine the format of voting (e.g., lifted hand, secret ballot, etc.). The secretary will then record the outcome while the host pastor will invite the candidate back in the room.

a). If the council has voted in the affirmative and is ready for the ordination to be scheduled, the council shall stand as the candidate enters the room.

Note: It is recommended that an Ordination Certificate be made available for all those on the council to sign. This certificate will be presented to the candidate at their ordination service.

b). If the council has voted in the negative and is not ready for the ordination to be scheduled, the council shall remain seated. The council shall provide the candidate reason for their decision, outline a pathway moving forward, and a timeline for future consideration.

The council meeting shall conclude in prayer.

Ordination

When an ordination council has voted in the affirmative to ordain an individual, then an ordination service can be scheduled. The service should be scheduled far enough in advance for family and friends to be able to attend as well as individuals the candidate would like to participate.

Sample Service:⁴

- Call to Worship
- Welcome and Explanation to church of ordination
- Scripture and Prayer
- Introduction of Candidate
- Testimony from Candidate
- Introduction of Ordination Council
- Reading of the Recommendation of the Ordination Council
- Acceptance of Ordination Council Report

⁴ Adapted from <http://media.mobaptist.org/public/pastoral-ministry/SampleOrdinationService.pdf>

Note: This is official business of the church. A vote by church members present should be recorded in the church minutes.

Special Music
Charge to the candidate and to the church (Message)
Laying on of hands and Ordination Prayer
Presentation of the Candidate
Benediction
Greeting of Candidate and His Family

Appendix 1 | Sample Ordination Council Questions⁵

PERSONNEL

- Would you tell us about yourself (e.g., personal, family, interest/hobbies)?
- What is your salvation story?
- Would you tell us about your call to ministry?
- Explain a recent time that you shared your faith.

BIBLIOLOGY (The Doctrine of the Bible)

- Have you read all the Bible?
- What does it mean that the Bible is inspired? What is verbal inspiration? What is plenary inspiration? Are the words or the authors inspired? Explain the method of revelation/inspiration used by God.
- What does it mean the Bible is inerrant and infallible?
- Do you believe every word is inerrant, especially in matters of history and science?
- Explain Literal, Historical, Grammatical Interpretation.

THEOLOGY PROPER (The Doctrine of God)

- Explain the Unity of God and the Doctrine of the Trinity.
- Explain the distinctions between Modalism and Trinitarianism and how this affects the terms, co-equal, co-eternal, with three distinct personalities, but of one essence?
- Explain the distinctions between the attributes/perfections of God: Communicable; Incommunicable.

HAMARTIOLOGY (The Doctrine of Sin) and ANTHROPOLOGY (The Doctrine of Man)

- Explain the “imago dei” and its importance.
- Explain the state of innocence, the origin of sin, the fall, original sin, and personal sin.
- Was Adam a literal man?
- Explain your position on creationism, intelligent design, theistic and macro evolution.
- Do you believe in six literal days of creation, periods of time, or a poetic understanding of Genesis 1?
- Give a Trinitarian explanation of Creation.

CHRISTOLOGY (The Doctrine of Christ)

- Explain and Defend the Preexistence of Christ.
- Do you hold to the eternal sonship of Christ?
- Explain and defend the Virgin birth and Incarnation.
- Explain and defend the Deity of Christ.
- Explain the Kenosis; Hypostatic Union; Temptation and Impeccability.
- Explain and defend the Messianic person of Jesus from the Old Testament.
- Explain the substitutionary life of Christ.

⁵ Adapted from Pastor-Elder Ordination Questions, Klondike Church, Pensacola, FL

- Explain and defend the exclusivity of the work of Christ for salvation (Solus Christus).
- Explain the different views of Resurrection and defend the literal bodily resurrection view.
- Explain the current work and ministry of Christ.

PNEUMATOLOGY (The Doctrine of The Holy Spirit)

- Explain your positions on the following: the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament; Baptism; Indwelling; Sealing; filling ministries of the Holy Spirit, in salvation and irresistible grace.
- Explain your position on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and cessationism and continuationism.
- Explain the distinctions (if any) between the Holy Spirit's ministry in the OT and NT.
- Explain Solus Spiritus.

SOTERIOLOGY (The Doctrine of Salvation)

- Explain: Sola Gratia (Grace alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone) and its relation to justification.
- Explain and defend your position on Conditional Election and Unconditional Election and the meaning of predestination.
- Explain your understanding of the atonement (Particular redemption; Limited/Unlimited atonement)
- Explain penal substitutionary atonement.
- Explain Expiation; Imputation; Justification; Propitiation; Reconciliation; Regeneration (New Birth)
- Explain and defend your position on Lordship Salvation.
- Explain and defend your position on eternal security, the perseverance of the Saints, the preservation of God, and falling away.

ECCLESIOLOGY (The Doctrine of The Church)

- Explain the difference between the local and universal church.
- Defend your view of water baptism and its importance (paedo or credo; mode; spontaneous)
- Explain your view of the Lord's Supper (Memorial, spiritual presence). Explain why transubstantiation and consubstantiation is wrong.
- Explain your views on Church government/leadership (Eldership; Deacons; Deaconesses).
- What is the role of a Pastor/Elder and Deacon?
- What is the role of women in the Church?
- Explain and defend complementarianism, why women's ordination and eldership violate Scripture.
- Explain you position on Church Discipline.
- Explain your views on missions, parachurch, denominational, and locally.

ESCHATOLOGY (The Doctrine of The Second Coming)

- What is your position on the Second Advent of Jesus? Do you believe in a Rapture (Pre, Mid, Post)?
- What is your Millennial position? (a, pre, or post)?
- What is your position on the eternal state of the lost (Hell; Lake of Fire; Annihilationism; Eternal Suffering; Metaphorical or Literal)
- How would you deal with the teaching of Purgatory?
- What is the New Heavens and New Earth?

ANGELOLOGY (The Doctrine of Angels)

- Explain your position of the timing and fall of Satan and his demons.
- Is Satan a literal angelic being?
- Explain your views on Demonic possession, oppression, and the work of Satan today.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- Poverty; Abortion; Politics; Homosexuality; Transgenderism; Racism; Marijuana; Alcohol – How do these relate to the believer and the Church?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO/WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

1. If someone comes to you questioning the funds of the Church and fears that they are being misappropriated? (Proverbs 16:11)
2. If a young woman comes to you and is considering getting an abortion, but is too scared to talk to the pastor about it? (Psalms 22:10; 139:14; Jeremiah 1:5; Proverbs 6:17).
3. What is the church's responsibility to widows? (James 1:27; Acts 6)
4. A person who is angry at their former church comes to join the church. What should the elders find out/do? (Matthew 18:15-17; Proverbs 25:9-10).
5. Someone who used to come to your church has joined a cult. Their mother comes to you and lets you know. What is your responsibility? (James 5:19-20)
6. A person attending a church service gets out of control and begins to roll on the floor/make a disturbance to the congregational worship. What should be done? (I Corinthians 14:33)
7. What is the church's responsibility to orphans? (James 1:27)
8. Someone comes to you as a leader and says the church needs to adopt a new strategy that the church down the road has. They have gotten ten new members in the last month, and we haven't. How should you respond? (James 1:19)
9. Someone has lost their job they have had for ten years. They come to you as a leader needing financial help. What should you do? (Deuteronomy 15:7; Luke 14:13-14)
10. A person who joined the church and attended for 6 months has ceased coming or interacting with the church. What should you do? (Luke 15:1-7)
11. The church is planning a new budget for the next year, and even though giving has been down drastically because of the economy or people backsliding, some people want to take a small loan and include that in the budget. What should you advise the church? (Proverbs 22:7)
12. A person who has been coming to small groups for a while begins to cause major disturbances, arguing with the teacher in an unchristian manner, and causing disruption weekly. What is your responsibility? (Titus 3:10)
13. A church member wants to sue another church member (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
14. Someone comes to you furious because they think something is going wrong at the Church. (Examples: They don't like the music, the church isn't growing fast enough; they are angry at a teacher, they think the pastor preaches too long). What should you do? (Proverbs 15:1; 10:12; 29:22)
15. A man in the church chose to separate himself from the fellowship for a few months because he persisted in pursuing a divorce from his wife on unbiblical grounds. Despite numerous efforts by his wife, friends, and the leaders of the church, he refused to change his mind and turned away from everyone close to him. Six months later he falls in love with another woman is to be remarried and demands to use the facility as he is a "member" on the role of the Church. What do you do?
16. What is discipleship? How do you disciple?
17. How should you spend your time in the elder (shepherd) ministry?