

SUMMARY:

**The Biblical, Theological, Historical, and
Cultural Perspective of Ordination**

Published August 24, 2024



This document is about the biblical, theological, historical, and cultural perspective of ordination in the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Ordination

This section explains that the position paper on ordination was prepared to educate Georgia Baptist churches on the meaning and practice of ordination, with the aim of deepening their understanding and significance within the local church and denomination. The paper was approved by the Administration and Executive Committees and will be made available on the Georgia Baptist Mission Board website.

Introduction

This section explores the definition, biblical foundations, theological reflections, historical context, and cultural considerations of ordination in Southern Baptist and Georgia Baptist churches.

- The paper aims to explore the meaning and purpose of ordination, specifically in Southern Baptist and Georgia Baptist churches.
- The working definition of ordination is the public recognition by a local church for Gospel ministry.
- The paper raises questions about the nature and character of Gospel ministry and the need for biblical boundaries and precision in defining candidates for ordination.
- The study focuses on the office of “pastor” and does not cover the ordination of deacons.
- The paper asserts that ordination is a good and right practice for the church, as those called to Gospel ministry should be set apart by the local church.
- Biblical foundations of ordination are explored through the examples of Moses, Aaron, and David, who foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus.
- The New Testament provides guidance on the organization and leadership of local assemblies, with a focus on the appointment of elders/pastors.
- Four texts are examined to understand the qualifications and responsibilities of pastors: Acts 20:17-38, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 14-16, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- The section concludes that ordination is a biblical practice that requires men of character and humility to lead the church for the glory of God.

Theological Reflections

This section discusses the nature and character of the church, the importance of biblical fidelity, and the need for vigilance in maintaining it.

- The Reformation defined the church as a place where the Gospel is preached and the ordinances are administered.
- Biblical fidelity and theological integrity are essential for a true church pursuing purity.
- Over time, the church can lose focus and the light of the Word of God can grow dim.
- The Baptist Faith and Message underwent revisions to ensure biblical fidelity and remove liberal loopholes.
- The church/denomination moved towards purity by affirming that Jesus is the criterion for interpreting Scripture.
- Ordination should be reserved for those serving in a pastoral capacity, primarily as elders or pastors.
- The office and functions of pastoral ministry have been assigned to men according to biblical and theological understanding.
- The understanding of ordination for men only does not diminish the important role of women in ministry.

Historical Context

The section discusses the historical background and cultural context of women in ministry in Baptist life, highlighting the autonomy of local churches and the role of women in Scripture.

- Women have served in leadership roles in Baptist life since the 1600s.
- General Baptists were more liberal and inclusive, while Particular Baptists were more conservative and exclusive.
- Both groups were committed to the autonomy of each local church.
- Scripture shows that God has always raised up women as a vital part of His work.
- However, there is no woman in the Bible who serves in the role of “elder/pastor.”
- The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 upholds this standard.
- The Southern Baptist Convention has addressed the issue through non-binding resolutions.

- The practice of ordination among Baptists varies based on cultural contexts and the autonomy of local churches.

Practical Implications

This section discusses seven key areas that pastors and local churches need to address, including scriptural sufficiency, the priesthood of the believer, subjects of ordination, calling out the called, process or procedure, pastoral responsibility, and local church autonomy.

- The importance of scriptural sufficiency and the belief that the Bible can answer all questions related to ordination.
- The concept of the priesthood of the believer and the responsibility of each individual for their own salvation and the support of others.
- The need to ensure that only those who meet biblical requirements are ordained, rather than relying solely on personal connections or familiarity.
- The process of discerning and confirming a calling to ministry, involving the internal and external call and the involvement of pastors and church leaders.
- The importance of following a proper process and not rushing through ordination, including understanding the distinctions between licensure and ordination.
- The responsibility of pastors to teach about ordination and identify potential candidates for ministry, as well as encouraging theological training.
- The recognition of local church autonomy and the need for each church to take responsibility for their own approach to ordination.
- The concept of theological triage, categorizing issues into first, second, and third order, and the question of where the issue of ordination of women falls within this framework.

Conclusion

The Georgia Baptist Convention believes that ordination is a public recognition by a local church for individuals called to Gospel ministry. They state that ordination is only for those serving in a pastoral capacity, and the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. They emphasize that while both men and women are gifted for service, the role of pastor is reserved for men.