

Licensed Credential Orientation

8.19.2021 1.20.22 8.18.22 1.19.23, 6/23, 8/17/23

Congratulations on this important step.

A. Today is a day I hope serves as a signpost in your ministry journey.

1. What you are doing today is an opportunity for people further in their ministry journey to confirm your calling.
2. The Presbytery does not call ministers into ministry but assists in recognizing and confirming your calling.
3. Today is not a day you should fear, but it is also not a rubber stamp.

B. Today, should all go well in your interviews, you will be approved for licensed minister credentials.

1. My task is to give you some encouragement and some instruction that will assist you in achieving an effective and long-term life of ministry.
2. I want to share 3rs of Credentials: Requirements, Rights, and Responsibilities.
3. Then, with the time left, I want to share insights from my spiritual and pastoral journey.

#1. Rights of License Credentials.

A. Within the state of MO, credentialed ministers have the right to:

1. Marry and bury people.
2. If the church employs you, you can take advantage of the IRS tax benefits, including housing allowance.

B. Within the A/G, licensed ministers can be senior/lead pastors.

1. You can serve in Sectional leadership.

2. Vote at District and General Councils.

C. You should pursue Ordination for a few reasons:

1. Some organizations require ordination (military or hospital chaplaincy).

2. The A/G limits certain offices and opportunities for those who are ordained.

a. Presbyters are to be ordained.

b. District leadership are to be ordained.

c. Licensed step is a working credential, a time of preparation and discovery.

d. It is a step, not a landing spot.

3. To quote our Executive Secretary, you should pursue ordination because it is the only credential mentioned in Scripture.

a. I confess that ordination is a monumental moment for those that pursue it.

b. Let me encourage you to take the necessary classes and pursue ordination in two years.

#2. Requirements of License Credentials.

A. First, you must pay your dues.

1. Licensed minister's dues are \$240 per year to General Council.

a. You must renew every year.

b. This can all be done online.

2. Second, half of all minister's tithes are given to the District Council and half to your local church.

a. This requirement varies by District.

b. Many Districts require up to 100% of the minister's tithe be paid to the District or Network.

3. Third, \$10 a month is required for the Minister's Benevolence Fund here at the Network.

a. Why? This is not insurance.

b. Here is why this exists: Imagine you were one of the many thousands of people who have given their lives to pastoring and serving churches.

c. Many never made much money, barely surviving and making ends meet.

d. When this dear and faithful servant passes, the money given from MBF provides additional comfort, security, and appreciation to the family in a challenging time.

1. Years ago, the District would announce the loss of a credentialed minister and provide an opportunity for people to give to the family.

2. The well-known pastors would receive large offerings, while the unknowns would receive very little.

3. MBF provides a financial gift for all of our ministers and their families at the loss of the credentialed minister.

4. Full members receive a \$6,000 death benefit.

B. Second, you need to be familiar with the Network bylaws.

1. The Bylaws are what govern all of our behavior and our actions.

2. We all have a responsibility to know how we conduct business.

a. We repeatedly see pastors make decisions that are illegal.

b. When something violates our bylaws, they are illegal and can have ramifications.

c. Please do your part, and be familiar with this document.

C. Third, Take advantage of AG Financial.

1. This is not a requirement.

a. But, AG Financial provides a valuable service to us through a 403b.

b. They will also provide financial planning and help.

2. Because the AG does not have a mandatory retirement plan, you need to take seriously your financial future, especially if you are a full-time minister.

3. AG Financial can help with this, so can Rhonda Amer who has been a blessing to me personally in the area of financial advice.

C. Lastly, Support Missions and the Local Church.

1. You are required to be part of a local church.

a. Sometime ago, my church came alongside another church for a season during a pastoral transition.

b. During a 6-month period, I was responsible for ensuring this particular church's pulpit was filled each week.

c. One week, I received a call asking if I would let a minister preach at this church.

d. It is a small world, so I knew this man was not serving in any capacity at any church, so I informed him I would not use ministers who were not engaged at a local assembly: He called my presbyter on me.

e. **If you want opportunities to play, you must show up to the ballpark.**

1. To receive credentials, you must be a member of a local church.

2. If you want to pursue opportunities, show up and serve.

2. And you should be required to give to missions.

a. We are a missions movement.

b. We should want to give generously to missions and encourage others to do the same.

#3. Responsibilities.

#1. Responsibility to Participate.

1. We are a voluntary, cooperative fellowship.

a. To a great degree, you will receive from this fellowship what you put into it.

b. But no one can "make you" cooperate.

2. By becoming credentialed, you declare your willingness to participate, show up, and serve.

a. One of our strengths in the AG is our relationships.

b. It is a beautiful thing to develop lasting and lifetime relationships

3. If you never connect with your Area, District, or Fellowship, you will not find fulfillment in being A/G.

a. Being part of this fellowship provides opportunities to develop relationships you would not likely have developed.

b. Some relationships are for a lifetime, and some relationships are seasonal.

1. Some people come into my life at the right time for me to learn from them or to encourage them.

2. Some people come into my life, and lifelong friendships develop.

c. We all need relationships in ministry.

1. Relationships can provide energy when you are low.
2. Relationships can bring support when in crisis.
3. Relationships can stir vision.
4. Relationships help us push further and farther than we would on our own.

#2. Responsibility to Study, Grow and Learn.

1. The A/G has very minimal educational requirements.
 - a. This is good in that we do not establish unnecessary barriers to ministry.
 - b. That also means that there is no formal expectation or accountability for growth.
2. The truth is, people can tell if you are studying, growing, and learning.
 - a. The longer you are in one place of ministry, the more important growth is.
 - b. Your colleagues and congregation can tell if you are not growing as a minister.
3. Changing times require growing people.
 - a. Ministry today looks very different from when I took over as a lead pastor over a decade ago.
 - b. The challenges I face today are terribly more complex.
 - c. The scale is very different than when I started (a church of less than 20 to a church of 160).
 - d. **By failing to grow, I fail my Lord and my people.**

#3. Responsibility to Guard the Gifts.

- The statistics of ministry failure truly disappoint me.
- In five years eighty percent of you will not be in ministry.

- 1,800 pastors leave the ministry every month in America (not retirees).
- Sixty-five percent of ministers say they would leave the ministry if they could find work that could support them financially.
- Fifty percent of pastor's marriages will end in divorce.
- Seventy percent of pastors battle constantly with depression.
- Forty percent of ministers admit to extra-marital affairs.
- Seventy percent of pastors say they only read the Bible when preparing for a sermon.
- Ministers, on average, pray less than five minutes per day.

#3a. Guard the gift of Calling.

1. Ministry is UP and Down.

- a. There are seasons of great confirmation of your calling.
- b. There are seasons of great frustration.
- c. They usually follow each other.

2. So GUARD your calling:

- a. Don't leave a place you know God has called you to unless you are clear God has called you away.
- b. Don't attach your calling and significance to external conditions.

3. Do guard your calling by:

- a. Guarding your devotion to the Lord.
- b. Guarding your heart (hardest for me).
 1. Discouragement.
 2. Resentment
 3. Jealousy
 4. Insecurity
 5. Frustration are all dangerous to the heart of ministers.

c. Do not disqualify yourself from ministry.

1. Gold, Glory, and Girls (Guys) are the downfalls of many ministers.

2. Dr Jim Wilson states that the calling of God is irrevocable. Under a footnote he aptly writes:

Pastors may have to step down from service due to moral failure and will suffer the consequences of living under an unfulfilled call, but that does not mean God's call is nullified, just that they wasted their opportunity to fulfill God their call to pastoral ministry.

3. Do not waste your opportunity and your calling.

#3b. Guard the Gift of Ministry.

1. A dear friend of mine is the superintendent of a public school.

a. Our jobs are similar in that they are heavy in leadership and administration.

b. As we share about our weeks, he has repeatedly said, "It must be so cool to be doing something that matters every day, like being a pastor."

c. I confess I don't usually feel like what I'm doing matters.

d. When we "complain" about being in ministry, we grumble against the great opportunity God has given us.

1. Remember, every profession has its headaches.

2. We often waste our prophetic voice by complaining instead of building up.

3. We are facing a shortage of pastors, especially in rural and small-town America.

4. Possibly because all we have heard are the complaints instead of the blessings of pastoring.

e. Not everyone gets to do this, at this level, and we should remember that.

1. A few years ago, I was leading my first building project.

2. I remember talking about this in a negative way to a much older and more mature pastor.

3. He looked at me and told me that what I was doing was a privilege.

4. Not every minister gets these opportunities, so don't complain.

5. The obstacles you are complaining about may be the obstacles others are praying for.

2. Guard the gift of ministry:

a. The people you serve are a gift; love them well.

b. The money you manage is a gift; steward it well.

c. The opportunities you receive are gifts; utilize them well.

d. Our greatest fruit happens in the fields we bless, not the ones we curse.

3. The ministry God gives you deserves your best.

a. If you are a preacher, study preaching.

b. If you lead kids or teens, study what makes these generations tick.

c. We must consistently develop as people and as humans.

1. My Presbyter and I travel once a year to preaching conferences to hone our skills and ministry calling.

2. I'm constantly reading or listening to podcasts.

#3c. Guard your Family.

1. Billy Graham has a similar story to tell about when Ruth asked him to stay home with her because she was having labor pains. She asked him to cancel his speaking engagement at a meeting in Alabama. Graham refused. That evening Ruth delivered their daughter Gigi.

In 1949, at the famous Los Angeles crusade, Ruth's sister and brother-in-law came to the meeting. While they were together, Billy admired a child they were holding. "Whose baby is this?" Graham asked.

It was Anne, his daughter. In his later years, Graham, said that if he could do it over again, he would have devoted more of his time to his family.²¹¹

2. The Apostle Paul admonished church leaders to lead themselves and their families well. Otherwise, they were not qualified to lead a congregation.

a. I submit to you that if you win at church, and lose at home, you have lost the greatest thing.

b. More than likely, we can find someone to replace you in the church, in the pulpit, or in the youth group. But we can't replace you at home.

3. Be intentional about being with your family.

a. Take nights off.

b. You don't have to be at every event.

c. You can delegate opportunities.

d. You can say "NO".

e. My wife and I joke, "Only you can prevent forest fires," to illustrate areas that only we can determine.

f. Only you can keep the fires of your marriage hot.

4. Please don't let "family" become your excuse for poor ministry.

¹ Jim L. Wilson, [*Pastoral Ministry in the Real World: Loving, Teaching, and Leading God's People*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 63.

- a. A shift has taken place from ministers who were never home to ministers who are rarely available or accessible.
- b. Not all situations can wait; therefore, you must be aware that **ministry ALWAYS requires sacrifice.**
- c. **Rarely is ministry convenient or easy.**
- d. Use wisdom regarding when to say "yes" and when to say "no."
 - 1. Every "Yes" has a "no" attached.
 - 2. When you constantly answer your phone at the dinner table, you are telling your family no.
 - 3. If you refuse to leave your kid's 50th tball game of the summer while a congregant member calls to announce their spouse just died, you are telling the family that Tball is more important than their loss

#3d. Guard your Reputation.

- 1. We live in an age of great ministerial scandals and falls.
 - a. Some of the leaders of the Church Growth movement have fallen terribly recently.
 - b. Billy Hybels, James MacDonald, Mark Driscoll, Ravi Zacharias, Carl Lentz, Perry Noble, and Perry Stone are some of the bigger names.
 - c. Many more have fallen or simply disappeared.
- 2. What many of these men have in common is that their loss of reputation undid their work.
 - a. This is nothing new.
 - b. Jimmy Swaggert, Jim Bakker, and many others have experienced similar things.

c. If you study the brief history of Pentecostalism, you will read that charismatic and gifted ministers have often struggled with sin and temptation.

3. What we need to know is that we are never too big or too small to fall.

a. We must guard our reputation.

b. 1 Thess. 5:22 tells us to “not give the appearance of evil.”

c. Proverbs says, “Above all else, guard your heart.”

4. As A/G ministers, on your credential renewal, you will be asked to abstain from alcohol.

a. You must be mindful of what you post on Social-Media.

b. You must be mindful of the language you use.

c. You must avoid sexual sin like the plague: 1 Cor. 6 “FLEE sexual immorality.”

1. Pornography is one of the most dangerous traps for ministers.

2. If you are presently using pornography, please get help and tell your interview committee today.

3. Will confession delay your application? YES.

4. Will it ruin your “ministry”? NO. It might save it.

d. Lastly, The A/G is a small world, so don’t talk or gossip about others.

Concluding Thoughts:

A. The Calling of God is amazing.

1. Ministry presents challenges, obstacles, joys, and delights.

2. Committing yourself to serve however and wherever God calls is a joy and delight.

3. Ministry is seasonal:

- a. Where you are now will not be where you end up.
- b. What you are doing now may change several times before it is all said and done.

4. Implement positive language surrounding ministry:

- a. I have learned to describe hard times by saying,
- b. "Ministry isn't very fun right now."
- c. Or "I'm in a fun time of ministry."
- d. This helps me to remember that ministry is seasonal.
- e. But it also helps me not to dwell on difficulties or threaten to quit.

5. When ministry is difficult, don't threaten to quit.

- a. Just like in marriage: if quitting is an option, it becomes a possibility.
- b. I'm called, therefore, I'm committed.

6. Ministry is a process:

- a. Embrace the process the Lord has you in.
- b. Learn the lesson that every season presents for you.
- c. **Enjoy the Call.**

B. Do not do ministry alone.

- 1. Do not forsake your first love.
- 2. When you are discouraged, reset your eyes upon Jesus.
- 3. When you are tired, look upon Jesus, who is the Renewer of our strength.
- 4. When you don't know what to say, be comfortable with silence and the Ministry of Presence.

5. Endeavor to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

C. Remember the 3 C's of Calling:

1. Competency
2. Character-If you don't have character, the others don't matter.
3. Chemistry

D. Don't let hurt go to your heart.

1. Conflict and disappointments in ministry feel very personal.
2. Don't let your hurts define you.
3. Don't let hurt keep you from ministering in your calling.

Before we close, I want to share a "prayer" with you.

Prayer of a Minor Prophet

By A. W Tozer

This is the prayer of a man called to be a witness to the nations. This is what he said to his Lord on the day of his ordination. After the elders and ministers had prayed and laid their hands on him he withdrew to meet his Saviour in the secret place and in the silence, farther in than his well-meaning brethren could take him. And he said:

O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou hast called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. Thou are about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. O Lord, our Lord, Thou has stopped to honor me to be Thy servant. No man takes this honor upon himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. Thou has ordained me Thy messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected Thee, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my unfittedness for the work. The responsibility is not mine but Thine. Thou hast said, "I knew thee—I ordained thee—I sanctified thee," and Thou has also said, "Thou shalt go to all that

I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.” Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, Thou God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honor Thee Thou wilt honor me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honor Thee in all my future life and labors, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for Thee to work, for the enemy has entered into Thy pastures and the sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Thy flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech Thee, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to distinguish the false friend from the true. Give me vision to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Thine own that even the sick sheep will recognize it and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet; not a promoter, not a religious manager—but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from the bondage to things. Let me not waste my days puttering around the house. Lay Thy terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from overeating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that I could make my life easier. If others seek the smoother path I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or if, as sometimes it falleth out to Thy servants, I shall have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Thy kindly people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that it will not injure my soul

nor diminish my spiritual power. And if in Thy permissive providence honor should come to me from Thy church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honors or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to Thee; let them be many or few, as Thou wilt. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven. Though I am chosen of Thee and honored by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray Thee therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others. Fill me with thy power by the Holy Spirit, and I will go in Thy strength and tell of Thy righteousness, even Thine only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my normal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. Amen.

-As quoted in *A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A. W. Tozer* by Lyle Dorsett (Chicago, IL; Moody, 2008), pp. 65-68.

Only if led.

MAKE HIM A PREACHER OF THE WORD

(Reverend Albert W. Pettet, Sr. went home to be with the Lord, September 2000, this excerpt is taken from the introduction of his book, *The Preacher and His Preaching*.)

Make him a preacher of the Word. Fling him into his study. Tear the word "Office" from the door and hang on that nail the word "Study." Take him off the sports magazine mailing list and turn off the TV for him. Lock him up with his Bible and books, his typewriter and word processor. Slam him down on his knees with a heart broken for lost souls. Let him weep over his lost city as Jesus did over Jerusalem. Have him intercede over his wandering sheep, hurting people, and for the uncommitted members of his church.

Force him to be a man in the community who knows Jesus Christ. Thrown him into the ring to box with God until he learns how short his arms are. Engage him to wrestle all night in

prayer with God. Then like Jacob, let him come forth in the morning bruised and beaten, but as a prince with God and with a distinctive walk as a man of God.

Set a time clock that will imprison him in thought, sermon preparation, and writing about God. Shut his mouth from spouting foolish and fickle remarks, and forever stop his tongue from tripping over every non-essential. Require him to have something to say before he breaks his silence.

Cancel his Country Club membership. Burn his eyes with weary study. Wreck his poise with a burden for God's work. Have him exchange his pious stance for a humble walk with God and man. Make him spend and be spent for the glory of God. Defuse his ego; burn up his ecclesiastical success sheets. Tie him to the pulpit. Tell him to quit playing church, and to preach the inspired Word of the Living God.

Test him. Quiz him. Examine him. Humiliate him for his ignorance of the things of God. Shame him for his knowledge of batting averages, his good comprehension of politics and finances, but his lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. Tell him, "Sir, we would see Jesus!"

When he steps into the pulpit, ask him if he has a word from the Lord. If he does not, dismiss him to the prayer chamber until he does. Tell him you can read the newspaper, discuss the world's problems, manage the community's drives, and bless the banquet's cold chicken as well as he can. Tell him not to come back until he has prayed through and heard from God. Require him to stay on his knees until he can stand up and declare, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Strip him of his carnal popularity. Smack him hard for all his worldly prestige. Corner him with questions about God and the Scriptures. Let his earthly wisdom perish, but find out how much he knows about the wisdom of God. Give him no rest until he is found walking down the corridors of holiness with God.

Then sit down before him and totally, listen to the only word he has left – God's Word. Let him be totally unaware of any gossip or criticism from faultfinding people, but let him be enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit as he walks through the hallways of Divine Truth. Let him camp in the pages of God's Word until he knows it thoroughly and so that what he declares rings with the power of eternity.

When he is consumed by the flaming Word, when he has been ignited by the unction and anointing of the Holy Ghost, when he can translate God's Truth to men so they are transformed, then give him the honor that is rightly due to him – A MAN OF GOD

Resources:

1. Preaching by Timothy Keller.
2. Pastoral Ministry in the Real World: Jim Wilson
3. The Care of Souls: Harold Senkbeil.
4. Grasping God's Word: Duvall and Hayes
5. How to Lead when you are Not in Charge. Clay Scroggins.
6. Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes.

7. Lead like a Shepherd. Larry Osborne
8. Help! I'm in Charge. Rod Loy
9. Leadership Pain. Sam Chand
10. Dangerous Calling: Paul David Tripp
11. The Heart of the Preacher: Rick Reed
12. Working the Angles: Eugene Peterson