

ORDINATION SERVICE FOR JAMES DAVIS

James, today marks a very important day in your life, as well as in the life of your family. It is a day when you will be ordained into the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. Please understand that this ordination service and our charges will not make you anything. Why is that? It is because character is not something that you are born with or just naturally have. Rather, it is something that you must develop through being faithful to God on a daily basis. This service is a time when God publicly sets you apart for His service, and ultimately for His glory. This is that moment in your life when God places a spiritual mantle on your shoulders, and what you do with that mantle is entirely up to you. It will always be your choice. Your calling has many implications. You are being called to lead by example, to be a diligent student of God's Word, to be devoted to prayer, to be a servant to others, to love your wife like Christ loved the church, to deeply love the church and those who are a part of it, and to live above reproach in every area of your life.

It is my deepest conviction that there is no higher calling in all of life than the call to both preach and teach God's Word and to be a shepherd to God's church. There is nothing glamorous or prestigious about your calling. You can ask John the Baptist, any of the apostles, or Christ Himself. Our own denomination is filled with men who simply occupy the pulpit and look at what they are doing as a job. This is not a job, this is not some career path! This is a divine calling, and once you accept that calling, it is my opinion that it is an irrevocable call. [Romans 11:29](#) says,

Ro 11:29 (NKJV) For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

This verse signifies that the calling of God on your life is “**without change of purpose**”. When God gives His spiritual gifts for ministry to a man, and when He calls that man into the ministry, God never regrets extending His grace to him. He never changes His mind as if He had made a mistake. You may fail, and you may fail miserably, but once God calls you into the ministry, He is not going to change His mind. You, by your choice, can disqualify yourself at any time. In fact, the church landscape is filled with men who have forsaken their calling for many different reasons – and now they are not qualified to be in a position of spiritual ministry. In [Luke 9:62](#) Jesus said this to someone who wanted to be His disciple, but lacked this unique attribute of purpose in his life.

Lk 9:62 (NKJV) But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

James, this morning what we are doing is a sacred event. In a sense, you are putting your “**hand to the plow**”, and we do not want you to be “**looking back**”. You have made a choice and we as a church are confirming that choice with you. We are standing with you and for you. What Scott has said and what I will say to you, we are also saying to Cindy. She is your closest friend and companion, the greatest helper and encourager that you will ever have in life. Both Kelly and Brenda are anchors for the ministries God has given to us, and Cindy will be the same for you.

This church has watched you and has followed your life in this place, and we as a church body are setting you apart and recognizing that you are a man of spiritual character and integrity. Nowhere is character and integrity more important than in the church, and especially in the positions of leadership. James, make no mistake about it, God is placing into your life **another level** of spiritual and personal demands.

You cannot under any circumstances take the demands of ministry lightly. They are godly demands that are very high and which do not come without considerable cost both to you and Cindy. Our charge to you today as a church is that you must always be a man of character and your wife must always be a woman of character. If you forsake that area of your life, you will disqualify yourself for the ministry.

As a pastor and as a spiritual leader in God's church, you must maintain both personal and doctrinal integrity in order to be useful to God and in order to be a convincing example to others who are looking to you for spiritual guidance. James, I want you to understand that God is not concerned about your talents or abilities, but about your spiritual virtue. He will give you what you need to be a pastor if you will give Him your mind and your heart. God always looks at the heart. If you maintain a life of integrity, then you will be blessed by God. You are being called to represent Christ to many different kinds of people (both saved and lost), and anything less than total devotion to Christ in both your conduct and character amounts to spiritual compromise. David said these words in [Psalm 15:1-2](#),

Ps 15:1 (NKJV) LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? ² He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart;

The value of knowing Jesus Christ both personally and intimately is unsurpassed spiritually. It is the heart and soul of ministry. Jesus Christ is the sole reason for our existence and He is more valuable than anyone or anything. Paul said these words in [Philippians 3:7-8](#),

Php 3:7 (NKJV) But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

That is the essence of your salvation and your calling. It is the exchange of something that is worthless for something that is valuable. Jesus put it this way in [Matthew 13:44-46](#),

Mt 13:44 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Those two men found something of far greater value than what they owned. For them, the decision was easy – sell all that they presumed to be valuable to purchase what was truly valuable. Jesus Christ is your treasure and your pearl, and He is far more valuable than anything that you have or can ever attain. So, the question that you have to answer is whether or not Jesus Christ is truly your treasure. You have to always be asking the question *“Is there anything else in my life that competes for and captures my attention more than Jesus Christ? Is He my treasure?”*

One very unfortunate flaw in the church is that too often it turns to the world for its ideas and for its methods of achieving results. James, **YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO DO GOD'S WORK WITH THE WORLD'S IDEAS AND METHODS.** They may benefit those in the world, but they have no value and no usefulness in God's kingdom. By the same token, you cannot simply trust in your own thinking, or simply rely on your own instincts. You have been given what the Bible calls **“the mind of Christ”**, and you must spend time with God in receiving His direction for His church.

I want you to fully understand that an unfaithful and worldly church will want you to compromise the Word of God, water it down, and not preach it forcefully. People have come to a place where their personal preferences and ideas take precedence over the Word of God. You have to appreciate that people are very content with unbiblical notions that raise their comfort level, while at the same time justify or overlook their sins. What the modern church is looking for today is a **Christianity without commitment.** There is no such thing! It does not exist! When you take a strong biblical stand against the cultural preferences that people have, they will view you as being unloving, overbearing, and arrogant if you hold them accountable to doctrinal beliefs and moral standards that they deem to be culturally outdated and irrelevant. However, your clear calling is to guard, protect, and accurately communicate the truth. ANYTHING LESS IS SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE, and is totally unacceptable as a minister of the gospel. [2 Timothy 4:1-5](#) says,

2Ti 4:1 (NKJV) I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

A “**fable**” is simply a silly idea, a worthless idea full deceitful facades. The Word of God is replete with examples of men who compromised the truth and what was right for what was wrong. In each case, their loss was very great. Samson compromised his devotion and lost his strength, his sight, and his life. David compromised God’s standard, committed adultery, murdered an innocent friend, and lost his infant son. Solomon compromised his convictions, married foreign wives, and lost the kingdom. Ananias and Sapphira compromised the truth, lied to the Holy Spirit, and lost their lives. I want you to understand what we are talking about in a very simple way. Every time that you compromise the truth, you are actually rejecting the Word of God, and in mind, rejecting God’s calling on your life. So, be very careful. You must believe the Word, study the Word, obey the Word, defend the Word, and proclaim the Word. All of those are the demands of your calling.

James, a pastor must be a man of dignity – not someone who is silly or flippant with his life. He must be a man worthy of spiritual respect, someone who is very serious about the things of God. He is someone who fully understands the gravity of life without Christ and the awful consequences of not taking God seriously. You have to have biblical convictions and you must live out those convictions. You must know the truth and you must apply the truth to your life. You must personally believe the Word of God. You cannot and will not uphold something that you do not personally believe. Therefore, you must always be cultivating and maintaining an understanding for what really matters in life. Paul urged Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:15](#),

2Ti 2:15 (NKJV) Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

This verse is your calling. God is present in His Word, and He is able to make His truth effective in the lives of those who hear and obey what He says. So, you must know the Word of God so that you can

defend the Word of God. In [Philippians 1:17](#), Paul said that he was “**appointed for the defense of the gospel**” – and so are you. The truth will always be under attack, and you must be ready to defend it with vigor and conviction. Jude encourages every godly man to “**contend earnestly for the faith**”.

It really is very simple - you cannot know God’s will for your life if you do not know the Word of God. You cannot teach others if you do not study yourself. Paul urged Timothy in [1 Timothy 4:6](#) to be constantly “**nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine**”. You simply cannot lead a godly life if you do not know what God is like and what He expects from those who belong to Him. I deeply believe that the foundation of your personal ministry is your obedience to the Word of God. You have to understand and appreciate that your value in the church is not built on your natural abilities, your winsome personality, your talents, or your common sense and human wisdom. Your value and your ability to influence and impact God’s people is built **SOLELY** on your understanding of and obedience to the Word of God. Obedience to the Word of God must be literally woven into the very fabric of your life because it is the foundation of your usefulness in God’s kingdom.

The very credibility of your ministry is based on how you live. If you will simply live in obedience to the Word of God, there is no limit as to what God will do through your life. I learned a very important lesson many years ago that I want to share with you today. It is simply that **most people are watching you much more than they are listening to you**. Your life is always being graded by those to whom you minister, and I see that as a good thing. I want my congregation to grade me and confront me when something is not right in my life. Most people are not as concerned with what you know as much as they are with how you live. Do you care about them, are you gracious, are you kind, are you faithful, do you love your wife, are you a good listener, and much more. People are always watching how you live. [Matthew 5:16](#), a word for all Christians, simply says,

Mt 5:16 (NKJV) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

James, you love to teach, and you do an excellent job because you are a diligent student of the Word. As your pastor, I trust you in the pulpit. However, and this is important, God has also called you to preach, and you must understand that the two are very different. Preaching is designed by God to confront and influence the heart, so your preaching must be challenging people, confronting them with their lukewarmness and spiritual indifference. If it does not do that, then it is not preaching. You cannot enhance the gospel with your wisdom, your cleverness, or your own persuasiveness. Paul reminded the Corinthian church in [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](#),

1Co 1:23 (NKJV) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It is the simple, but powerful truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that will never fail to elicit saving faith at the appropriate time in the lives of those who hear. The only source of this monumental truth is found in the Word of God. So, never try and redefine the gospel in some way to make it more appealing, more attractive, more comfortable, or more acceptable. In our culture today, men are constantly inventing spiritual words to sound creative and to try and enhance the gospel. They

are all spiritual failures. **YOU CANNOT IMPROVE ON GOD'S WORDS OR GOD'S MESSAGE**, so please do not try.

James, the effectiveness and the character of any church is **DIRECTLY** related to the quality of those who lead that church. A church will never rise above the level of their leadership – never. In the same way that you must guard the truth, you also must guard yourself. Your life must be a model of what it means to be a godly person. You cannot compromise what is right. Please remember that **a godly man always casts a long shadow**. You must maintain sexual purity at all costs. If you become involved with another woman, God will quickly remove His hand off of your life and ministry. You have been called to be a vessel of honor and not one of dishonor. You can and may fail in other areas of your life, but this is one area that can never be compromised.

Unfortunately, the philosophy of compromise has found its way into the church, and the buzzword today is “tolerance”. You know, just do not rock the boat too much. We live in a Christian culture that has decided to abandon moral standards and Christian principles in favor of expediency, comfort, and convenience. **2 Timothy** says that we are living in an age where people are “**always learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.**” The motto of this age is “*If you want to do, do it. If it works for you, do it. If it feels good, do it.*” It has nothing to do with whether what someone is doing is right or wrong, but with what they want to do. This is spiritual compromise that becomes their way of life. Even the most conservative churches in America are teeming with people who claim to be born again, but who live like pagans. They say that they believe in God, but they live as if He does not even exist. Some refer to them as “Christian atheists”. Unfortunately, contemporary Christians have been conditioned to never question anyone’s salvation. If someone declares that they have trusted Christ as Savior, then no one ever challenges their testimony – regardless of how inconsistent their lifestyle may be with the Word of God.

Here is the problem that all of that creates: THE CHURCH SEEMS TO ALWAYS BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GIVE THE GOSPEL TO PEOPLE **WITHOUT OFFENDING THEM**. How silly! The very nature of the gospel is one that it is offensive simply because it confronts men with their sin, and tells men that they cannot be good enough to earn their salvation. Men do not like that. **We have created a gospel that seems to challenge men to accept it without living it out in their life. We have made the gospel pleasant and non-threatening, and therefore ineffective.** We have created a Christianity where we are able to claim conversions and enroll people as members, but one which has virtually no impact on the culture around us. In fact, you will find it relatively easy to get men to profess Christ, but very difficult to get them to follow Him. The truth, however, is that any salvation experience, no matter how sincere it may seem at the time, that does not alter a person’s sinful lifestyle and transform their heart is not a genuine salvation. You can call it what you want, but it is not the gospel. The gospel exposes us as sinners and its mandate calls us to repentance. The heart of our message is that Christ has broken the power of sin.

Now, let me make all of this very personal. Most all of these issues and problems are because of people just like you and me. It is because men who have been called into the ministry have compromised the truth to make it more palatable for their congregations to digest. We have become very adept at separating initial faith from ongoing faithfulness. James, never hold out a false hope to people by telling them in some disguised way that they can have eternal life, yet continue to live in rebellion against God

and His Word. Do not tamper with this message, do not corrupt it in anyway. I encourage you to preach that the cost of following Christ is very high and that the way is narrow and very few find it.

Unfortunately, you will find that Satan will work very hard to undermine your ministry. He will do everything he can to discourage you and to try and make you give up. In fact, I personally believe that your temptations and struggles will increase in proportion to your character and commitment to Christ just because the devil hates you and hates what you are doing. You now have a bullseye on your back. Your weapons are the Word of God and prayer. If you are not a man of God's Word and prayer, you can be assured that God will not give you the influence that you desire today. God has always drawn men into His kingdom through men who prove to be different from the world. Yours is a high calling.

James, you and Cindy are a very rich and precious treasure to this church. You are both deeply loved and appreciated, and it is with the utmost confidence that we as a church both recognize your gifts and calling. As your pastor, your mentor, and your friend, I now charge you before God to be a man of character, a man of the Word, and a man of prayer. May God's richest blessings be your reward.

Will you and Cindy now come forward for the laying on of hands?