

Chip Stapleton – Answers to Ordination Questions – November 2017

6. *Will you in our own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?*

Being able to answer this vow in the affirmative is, for me, a central and integral aspect of living into the call to vocational ministry and, in truth, is a foundational aspect of living into our common call as the priesthood of all believers.

This question is so important because it speaks to the relational nature of God and of our call to serve God. The language of the question – and its required response – is relational: following; loving; reconciliation and this moves us from our intellectual ascent to what we believe in the first several questions (obviously important as well), to the application of those beliefs in our lived expression of gratitude for all that God has done and is doing in our lives and the world.

The relative ‘success’ of the journey of vocational ministry rests on the depth of one’s relationship with Jesus Christ. Without continual focus on our personal life of faith, even the most gifted minister will fail to live into the fullness of God’s call and plan for life and ministry.

Conversely, when a life of ministry is built on and flows from a vibrant life of personal faith and devotion, which is most clearly demonstrated in acts of service and compassion for our neighbors near and far, it is both more faithful and more effective at inviting others into their own life of faith and place in the mission of God in this world.

8. *Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*

I grew up in a time and place where the question of church attendance was assumed, it was simply a matter of which local church your family chose to attend. That culture, as far as I can tell, no longer exists. This is both a challenge and an opportunity.

The ‘Field of Dreams’ pattern of ministry, ‘If you build/schedule/announce it, they will come’ no longer is an effective or workable solution for our local churches. This requires churches that wish to continue to be effective and sustainable witnesses for Jesus Christ to change and evolve. Critically, the message – the Good News of Jesus Christ – is not changing but how we share it and how we invite others to experience it must.

This means that to effectively engage and serve our communities we must begin with love: God’s love for us, God’s love for all his children and our own love for our neighbors. From that starting point, we must be willing to think creatively and holistically about the people God has called us to, what their needs are and how we might most effectively serve God by serving those around us. When we attend to this task with energy, intelligence and imagination I believe we see a wide variety of expressions – God’s gifts of creativity and imagination encourage this diversity – of the same thing: God’s love for and desire for reconciliation with the whole world.