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SPECIAL CONFERENCE INFORMATION AT THE END OF THIS LETTER

**April 2017
"MINISTRY CALLINGS AND COLLEGE DEGREES"**

Dear Friends,

If you needed open heart surgery, would you want a doctor operating on you who had never gone to medical school? If you were arrested for a crime you did not commit, would you want an attorney representing you who had never attended law school? If you were boarding a plane for a cross-country trip, would you want the pilot to be someone who had never graduated from flight school? One more question: Would you want someone pastoring your church who had never graduated from a seminary or Christian college?

The answers to the first three questions should be a resounding, "No!" But sadly, far too many Christians and churches would also answer "no" to the fourth question. I have actually read ads by churches searching for a pastor where the requirements stated that all prospects have at least a Master's degree; some have even required a Doctorate. Additionally, I have been contacted over the years by Christians wanting to know what Christian college, university or seminary they should attend so they can get a degree and operate in their calling or get a job in ministry.

I'm all for learning, but is it right to demand that a person earn a college degree before being able to pastor? Is it necessary for a Christian to graduate from a university or seminary before operating in a ministry calling or being employed in a ministry? Furthermore, are there any examples or standards in scripture we can use as guidelines on this matter?

Let's first consider Jesus. We can read from the four Gospels how Jesus taught in many different locations such as synagogues and on hillsides. Many who heard Him had some very interesting comments,

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? (Matthew 13:54-56)

*Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?
(John 7:14-15)*

People had a very difficult time believing that Jesus could have such a depth of understanding, wisdom and knowledge of the Word of God. The reason was two-fold: (1) He had never "learned" (graduated from what we would call a university or seminary); (2) they knew His family and believed that a carpenter, who was the son of a carpenter, could not in any way be smart enough to teach as Jesus taught.

Next, let's consider the Apostles Peter and John. In Acts chapters three and four, Peter ministered to a man born lame and the man instantly received a miracle healing. Peter then began teaching the people about Jesus and how the lame man had been healed. As a result, about 5,000 men – let alone women – accepted Jesus as Savior. Peter and John were subsequently arrested for teaching about Jesus. When they were put on trial before the Jewish religious leaders, Peter openly taught them about Jesus and that He is the only way unto salvation. Their reaction was very interesting,

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. (Acts 4:13-14)

The Jewish leaders were baffled as to how two uneducated fishermen could know so much about God, teach with such authority and be used in such power. But they also noted that Peter and John had spent much time with Jesus.

What we're seeing is that, according to many people and religious leaders of the time, Jesus, Peter and John did not have a college degree, had not graduated from seminary, did not have the right "ordination for ministry" and therefore should not have been able to minister so effectively. This attitude is no different today. According to the educational requirements of some churches, Jesus, Peter and John *would not be qualified to pastor!* Can you imagine telling Jesus that His lack of a degree eliminates Him from consideration to pastor a church?

Jesus never told the Apostles they had to graduate from college before they could go into all the world preaching and teaching about salvation and the Kingdom of God. Likewise, consider what the Apostle Paul told Timothy,

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

Paul did not tell Timothy to enroll in a university or seminary and he did not tell Timothy to instruct others to enroll in such schools. What he did tell him was to teach what he had heard Paul teach, then instruct others so they could likewise teach.

Here's the point I'm making: Christians, churches and religious organizations today place far too much emphasis on graduating from a college, university or seminary. Formal education has its place in the world; but when it comes to serving God and fulfilling a ministry calling, *God has not said in His Word that graduating from an institution of higher learning and getting a degree is a necessity.* Instead, here is a sampling of what He has declared:

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. (John 16:13)

When it comes to spiritual preparation for serving God, applying the verses listed above are of much more benefit than attending a school. Plus, there is no cost. I have encountered people who spent thousands upon thousands of dollars and years of hard work to obtain a degree from a religious institution, yet their doctrine was terribly inaccurate. Spending time with the Holy Spirit and the Bible is the first and foremost requirement when it comes to being prepared to fulfill a ministry calling.

Right about now, someone could say, “*Hold on, Brother Martin, you’re starting to sound a bit hypocritical. Didn’t you go to school to get a degree and didn’t you start a Bible college?*” That is an excellent point that I will address.

In 1998, God began dealing with me about going back to school and getting a Doctorate. I had no idea why and though the thought of returning to school was in no way appealing, I obeyed. During my time of working on my Master’s in Pastoral Ministry and then my PhD in Christian Theology, He explained why He had sent me back to school: I was to open a Christian college unlike any other. The result was Grace Ministries Bible College, which began operation in September of 2001. Earning my degrees had nothing to do with qualifying me for ministry; but it had everything to do with starting a Bible college.

Grace Ministries Bible College (GMBC) is a four-year institution and is different from other theological schools in several ways:

- There is no charge to enroll.
- There is no charge for tuition.
- There is no charge for course materials.
- There are no administrative fees.
- There is no graduation fee.

Some might think, “Wow, GMBC is a free college!” They would only be partially correct. Though we do not charge, all students are expected to ask God what they are to give in support of the school and then give accordingly. In that sense, God is the One “charging” them to attend.

Furthermore, the curriculum at GMBC is very unique. I have personally gone on the internet and reviewed the curriculum of many schools offering various theological degrees, diplomas and certificates. Thus far, *not one of them* is offering complete courses of study that adequately train students to fulfill 2 Timothy 2:15 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This does not mean that all the courses offered at those schools are insufficient, just that the sum total of what is offered is not fully preparing students to be spiritually equipped unto all good works.

I’ll give you an example. It is possible that you may find a Christian university offering a degree in Pastoral and Biblical Theology. Two of the required courses for graduation might be Old

Testament Kings (I) and Old Testament Kings (II). Now, I agree 100% that learning about the Old Testament kings can be extremely interesting. But does the New Testament record that Jesus, Peter, John, Paul, James or any other Apostles taught about the need to study and research the lives of Old Testament kings? The Old Testament is part of all scripture and most definitely needs to be studied. However, the priority for me to be fully equipped unto all good works is to clearly understand what Jesus and the Apostles taught concerning salvation, the new nature, righteousness and all other aspects of being a citizen in the Kingdom of God.

Here is another example: There are pastors in many churches who may be able to explain in detail the journeys of the Apostle Paul, yet they cannot explain what “born again” really means. Many of them will teach that if you are born again you still have a sin nature. Though such a teaching is foundational in many churches and denominations, it is diametrically opposed to what is revealed in scripture about salvation.

I will not be so bold as to say that the curriculum at GMBC is the best you will ever find. What I will tell you is that each course builds on the foundation of previous courses and that the emphasis is to help students know what they should believe, how to believe it and to be prepared to explain what they believe (1 Peter 3:15). We teach students how to study the Bible from a line-upon-line approach. Verses, chapters and passages are broken down in detail for clear understanding. I can also guarantee that any student who puts into diligent practice what is taught in just the first year will not only discover the ministry calling God has on his or her life, but will also learn how to be spiritually prepared to fulfill that calling.

Those who complete all four years at GMBC will not necessarily be fully equipped to step into their calling, but they will definitely know how to become fully equipped. The truth is, what we teach at GMBC is a part of what all churches should be teaching to those attending. It is *impossible* to properly disciple Christians without line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept teaching. GMBC is doing for Christians what many churches cannot or will not do.

As I previously mentioned, when God instructed me to return to school and earn a Doctorate, it was for preparation of opening Grace Ministries Bible College. Yes, I have a PhD, but you will not find “Dr.” next to my name on our church sign, on my business cards, on our website or on any other materials other than what is exclusive to the school. I do not ask that people refer to me as “Dr. Martin.” I do not seek to promote myself or gain recognition according to what I accomplished through college. I want to be known in the way Peter and John were known: that they had been with Jesus.

A college education is an absolute must for many occupations; but God does not demand that all His children graduate from a college, seminary or university in order to be used by Him in ministry. However, if you are seeking to go deeper in your understanding of scripture, how to properly meditate and study the Bible, discover your ministry calling and be spiritually equipped to fulfill it, pray about enrolling in GMBC. We will point you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

In His Grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim".

Who we allow to speak into our lives is extremely critical. There are so many voices in the world who claim to declare the full truth of God's Word, but some of them have doctrine that will greatly mislead those who receive it. My sermon offer this month addresses this subject and brings to light how serious it is that we guard our hearts against wrong teaching. The title of the sermon is, "Who's Dwelling in Your Prophet's Chamber?" To receive a CD of this sermon, use the order form below.

IT'S TIME FOR THE 2017 SPRING PRAYER AND POWER CONFERENCE!

Services will be Sunday, April 23 through Friday, April 28 at

Grace Christian Center
4184 East Patterson Rd.
Dayton, Ohio 45430

Service times are:

Sunday, April 23 10:30 AM & 6:00 PM

Monday, April 24 - Friday April 28 10:00 AM & 7:00 PM

Pre-Service worship 45 minutes before every conference service

Service times are subject to change if the Lord so indicates. We will be following the leading of the Holy Spirit concerning who will minister in each service.

Our host hotel is: Country Inn and Suites (Fairborn South)

3971 Colonel Glenn Highway

Fairborn, Ohio 45324

(937) 429-2222 Fax number is (937) 427-2204

www.countryinns.com/fairbornoh email: cx_fabo@countryinns.com

Discounted rates are available. When contacting the hotel you must ask for the Grace Christian Center conference rate to receive the discount.

More information about the conference, registration and hotels is available at our website, www.jmmgrace.com. *There is no charge to register or attend.*

_____ Check here to receive a CD of the sermon " Who's Dwelling in Your Prophet's Chamber?"

[PLEASE PRINT] Name _____

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Email _____

My love gift is: \$ _____ (Make checks payable to "Jim Martin Ministries.")

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