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CD 513
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Pathway to the Alliance

This course further affirmed my call to be a part of the Alliance family. The main reason I enrolled in this course is because I am seeking ordination. While this course really is designed for those who are not accredited, there were still great takeaways that are applicable for me as I prepare for my ordination exam in July.

The interviews with Oman, Anson, and Kelvin were very edifying and reinforced both the challenge and joy of seeking to be an official worker with the Alliance. I particularly enjoyed Kelvin's thoughts on what the Alliance is: it is a Jesus movement, not a Jesus monument. I also resonated with his statement that C&MA workers "Don't look back but reach back and reclaim the DNA of the founding to bring it to who we are today." This really resonated with me because I do feel that Jesus is not stagnant and stuck in the past, but he is moving and dynamic. He calls us to be equally agile with the world we minister to. When we reach back to our past, we find footing on the unshakable, so we do not compromise the truth when we press forward with the times. This is how I want my own church to function.

I felt conviction when Kelvin gave his own testimony about whether to apply for the District Superintendent position when he heard Jesus say, "Do I have your 'yes' no matter what?" I think that is the question Jesus asks all of us. He asked A.B. Simpson when he left his lucrative church job and he's asking me as I find myself in a crossroads of applying for the Lead Pastor position at my church or stay employed at the college I work at. A.B. Simpson placed

Jesus at the center of his life and ministry and pushed against titles and prestige so he could minister to the least of these. I feel this is where I may be headed.

The vision casting of the Alliance's strategy of "Love, Proclaim, Reach, and Launch" really set the tone of urgency that every worker should have. It was an exciting and invigorating vision that I could get behind. Stumbo challenged leaders to lead with love and be intentional about making the gospel accessible to people we often overlook. It was almost as if Simpson's own ministry to the Irish immigrants was recapitulated in Stumbo's own vision for the modern C&MA. The same issues remain, and we still need to be reminded about who we serve.

I also really enjoyed hearing the thoughts of John Stumbo, Terry Smith, and other leaders in the Alliance pour out what "Jesus Only" means to them. Stumbo's love for the church was infectious and challenges every worker to remember that Christ *died* for the church. Being part of the church is a witness to the world. Being part of the church tells people who we are for: we are for Jesus and for his people. Being part of a church makes us a holy place in our cities and communities. We are the outpost for the gospel that both draws and sends so that Matthew 24:14 will be fulfilled. I now have a deeper appreciation for my own church.

Another highlight of this course was giving me access to websites, books, and other Alliance materials I can reference in the future. There are a few people in my own church that are considering ordination and consecration because they know I am going through the same process. While my district was very helpful preparing me for my own ordination exam, having a book like *Accreditation Helps* and better understanding the C&MA handbook and Alliance ministries (e.g., CAMA and Market Ministry) allows me to be a better director to up and coming leaders.

Probably the best aspect of this course was how it was immediately applicable to my own ministry. While it is designed to help a person get accredited, the readings and lectures were rooted in scripture and exalted Jesus. I was inspired and challenged to do self-searching to evaluate my motives for pursuing vocational ministry. I originally entered the C&MA to become a Navy chaplain, but God may be directing me somewhere else. Is my desire to be a chaplain taking up undue residency on the throne of my heart? Do I have enough trust to let this aspiration go if God tells me to change course? The more I minister to my church the more I sense God may be expanding the work he has for me. I would not have been open to this had I not read about Simpson and listen to the lecturers.

As I am nearing the completion of my own ordination process, I look back at the two challenging years it took to get to this place. Omar reminded me that we ourselves expect our pastors to wield the word of God well, live holy, and be above reproach so why would we expect any less of ourselves? The seriousness with which the C&MA vets and trains their licensed workers is by far one of the most comprehensive and lengthy processes of other denominations, but the hard work makes for a better leader and a stronger denomination. Pursuing ordination requires the most serious of commitments and clear callings. This does not mean an ordained or consecrated person is better than the next Christian, but to use Omar's words the process "affirms" a person's calling and deems them worthy to shepherd God's people. May God find me worthy.