

Ministerial Training Is Valuable

By Bob Young

April 2010

According to a recent survey of 1000 Protestant ministers, two-thirds have obtained at least a Master's degree, and 71% report they regularly use things they learned in seminary. In addition, 83% of those who went to seminary strongly agree that the training and experience were worth the time and money. These results are consistent with exit interviews I have conducted with graduates from ministerial training programs, including follow-up surveys of graduates after they have spent time in ministry. Ministers generally report that seminary education is helpful and relevant, but also report that it is sometimes challenging financially in view of the generally lower levels of ministerial remuneration. Ministers often find it difficult to repay education loans.

The survey also discovered that churches report greater levels of satisfaction with ministers who have received official ministerial training at a post-baccalaureate level. The fact that both ministers and churches see the value of ministerial training makes even more troubling a 2009 ATS (Association of Theological Schools) report indicating that seminary enrollment has declined. Many schools are expanding course options and are offering more online courses to make education more accessible for students.

A news item about the survey can be accessed at
<http://www.onenewsnow.com/Church/Default.aspx?id=950252>