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# Interview Questions

## Questions the Ministry May Ask

We encourage you to prepare for interviews ahead of time. The following questions may be used by a search committee during an interview. These may or may not be asked, but will provide ideas to help you prepare. Feel free to add your own and contextualize them to your specific situation.

### Personal

1. Briefly share the story of your personal spiritual development, including how you came to personal faith in Christ.
2. Briefly tell us what your home atmosphere was like (e.g., your childhood home).
3. How does your family feel about your being in the ministry?
4. How do you personally go about establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries between ministry and family?
5. How do you picture your spouse's involvement in the ministry?
6. What is your attitude toward the privacy of your home and family?
7. How do you resolve conflict in your personal and professional life? Share a real life example.
8. Please describe your relational style, including strengths and weaknesses.
9. What kind of schedule (study/visitation/counseling/meetings) would you anticipate?
10. What are your likes and dislikes with regard to work responsibilities and personality types?
11. What would be your procedure of notification and availability when leaving town for 24 hours or more?
12. What other possibilities for ministry are you considering?
13. How do you react when things do not go as you planned?
14. How do you respond to criticism? How do you respond to criticism from someone you respect very much? How do you respond when you feel the criticism is unjustified? What have you done in such a case?
15. In what areas of ministry do you feel most experienced and competent?
16. What do you think are your weaknesses?
17. Are you satisfied with your present education or will you want to further your education?
18. What do you do in your spare time?

**It is always recommended that you understand the laws that govern what personal questions can be asked. Check with a local HR director if you are unsure.**

## Experience

1. To what degree do you feel your formal education equipped you for effective ministry, and specifically within the area of this particular position?
2. Beyond your formal education, what other training have you received for ministry?
3. Describe your experience and expertise in long- and short-range planning, vision casting, and ministry development.
4. Please describe your experience and relative effectiveness in counseling. What particular approaches to counseling have you found most natural for you? What is your practice with regard to counseling members of the opposite sex?
5. Why are you looking to relocate and leave your current position?

## Ministry and Vision

1. Please share your personal vision for ministry with this position and experiences and influences God has used to develop that vision in you.
2. Please share briefly your views on divorce and remarriage.
3. Given free reign, how would you structure a ministry, specifically how it relates to this position (e.g. age-levels, lifestyle groupings, etc.)?
4. What do you feel are your primary spiritual gifts?
5. What is your ultimate professional objective?
6. How many years would you be willing to commit to this ministry?
7. Is there any specific area of ministry within this position with which you are uncomfortable, or which you might anticipate posing a significant challenge for you?
8. What is your view of the role of the senior pastor in a multiple-staff setting?

## Leadership Style

1. What would you say are the major lessons you have learned about ministry in each of the places you have served thus far?
2. How would you rate your current ministry? Describe its strengths and weaknesses.
3. What would your current pastor/supervisor say are your areas of strength and weakness in ministry leadership?
4. Describe your experience and expertise in budget planning and administration.
5. What techniques would you use for recruiting and building team leadership?
6. How would you structure your time in directing this ministry?

## Doctrinal and Church

1. Are there any points in our doctrinal statement which you would not or could not affirm? If so, which points and why?
2. What is your view of Scripture?
3. What is your plan of evangelism/outreach? What steps do you follow in leading an individual to Christ?
4. What is your view of church government (elder, line of authority, congregational government, etc.)?
5. What is your plan for church growth (local church growth and new church planting)?
6. What are your convictions on tongues, miracles, and healings?
7. What are your convictions on divorce and remarriage? What is your position on marriages you will or won't officiate, and your policy on premarital counseling?
8. What are your convictions concerning eschatology?
9. What are your convictions concerning the security of the believer?
10. What is your view of the atonement?
11. What is your view of Calvinism, Covenant Theology, Reformed Theology, and Dispensationalism?
12. How do you view the ordinances in relation to salvation?
13. How do you view the ordinances in relation to church membership?
14. What is your view of biblical preaching?
15. How do you define the word "inerrant" in relation to the Bible?
16. Are there any books of the Bible which you would not use in preaching?
17. What is your view of the baptism and filling of the Spirit?
18. How do you interpret the term "imminent return of Christ"?
19. Is there a real heaven and/or a real hell? Are they eternal?
20. What is your understanding of the Bible on the giving of money to the Lord's work or toward church finances?
21. What is your concept of missions and giving to missions?
22. What are your expectations of the deacons or elders?
23. Who should join or be a member of the church?
24. What are your convictions on the use of alcoholic beverages and drugs?

## Miscellaneous

1. Name two or three books that you have read as part of your educational process that had particular impact on your view of ministry.
2. Who are some of your favorite authors? Why?
3. How do you stay current with new materials and new ideas in ministry?

4. Please arrange the following in order of importance to you personally and explain why:
  - a. Evangelism of the un-churched
  - b. Teaching and discipleship of current members
  - c. Counseling
  - d. Program development
  - e. Development of lay leadership
  - f. Fellowship and recreation
  - g. Missions

## Questions for You to Ask

Be prepared to ask questions similar to the ones below of the ministries with which you will be candidating. Feel free to add your own and to contextualize them to your own situation.

### Ministry Staff

1. What are the strengths that attracted you to me? What are your reservations?
2. What are your realistic expectations of this position? And of me to fulfill those expectations?
3. What do you consider the major priorities of the staff?
4. In your view, is the staff unified? Do you hold one another accountable? How?
5. In your view, is the elder board unified? Do you hold one another accountable? How?
6. What, if any, are the “sacred cows” or untouchable subjects and issues?
7. How are changes made?
8. Are staff members expected to be on call (especially in regard to crisis situations) “24-7”? If not, how is this responsibility handled?
9. How do you see my role in discipling and developing staff?
10. What type of administrative assistance is there available to staff? What are their limitations in assisting with ongoing responsibilities?
11. What is the chain of authority within the staff?
12. Do you have an annual staff/board planning retreat?
13. Is there an annual review of the pastoral staff? The elders?
14. What criteria will you use a year from now to evaluate the effectiveness of my ministry?

### Worship and Programs

1. What is the planning process to determine the order of Sunday’s service?
2. What is the role of the elders in planning and leading the service?
3. What is the purpose of the worship service? For whom is it directed?
4. In your opinion, what are the church’s strengths in worship? What are the weaknesses in this area?

5. Do you have altar calls? Why or why not?
6. Do you have a visitation program? Who implements it? How often?
7. Is there one specific person in charge of overseeing the evangelism/outreach for the whole body?
8. What part do the elders (leadership) play in evangelism/outreach?
9. Are members of the body (including leadership) trained and equipped to share their faith? If so, how is this impacting the community?
10. How are new believers followed up? Who is responsible?
11. How are “small groups” set up? Who is responsible for this? How do these groups relate with each other (i.e. singles meeting with other singles)? Do they reflect diversity?
12. Do specific activities and events require board approval? How much liberty does each ministry have in planning activities and events (i.e. freedom in planning an outreach that is creative and non-traditional)?
13. Does this ministry cooperate with other ministries, churches, para-church ministries? How do you determine when it is appropriate to cooperate?
14. What are the responsibilities of the congregation? What is expected of members? How is that communicated?
15. How are members trained to carry out their responsibilities? Do members know their spiritual gifts?
16. What are the greatest needs for the congregation (evangelism, discipleship training)?
17. Does the church have a babysitting co-op? Is there a “Mother’s Day Out” program for Moms who need relief?
18. How is the church involved in the community?

## Outlook of the Leadership

1. What are the most profound difficulties you, as a church, have had to address in the past? Currently?
2. What excites you about the future of this ministry? What concerns you about the future?
3. Do you have elder rule? How does it work? Are the elders distinguished from the pastoral staff? Describe the “chain of authority” currently in place.
4. How responsive are the elders to the congregation? How is the responsiveness evaluated? How is it maintained?
5. What is the attitude and relationship between the elders and staff (e.g. trusting, adversarial, partners, overseers, etc.)?
6. In your opinion, do you consider the leadership “movers” or “maintainers?”
7. Where does the real authority reside according to your constitution? Where is the “unofficial” power located?
8. What is the attitude of leadership toward professional counseling?
9. How would you describe the typical church member (age, occupation, involvement, spirituality, etc.)?
10. What is your philosophy of ministry?
11. What causes the church to grow? What are three priorities for a strong local church?
12. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your previous pastor and his ministry?

13. Can you give me some references of people outside the church who are familiar with your ministry? – A good question to ask the references and previous pastors, “If I were to take this church, what three pieces of advice would you offer?”

## Position on Issues

What is the church’s official and practical position on the following:

1. Divorce and remarriage. What conditions allow for a person to obtain a divorce? Under what conditions can a person remarry? Is there a possibility of having a ministry at this church after divorce?
2. Homosexuality. How would you minister to a person who is homosexual?
3. Church discipline. Is this part of the process of discipling a member? Have you ever implemented the “final step” in church discipline?
4. Communion. Who may partake? How often do you offer communion?
5. The Charismatic movement. What is your position on the sign gifts (tongues, miracles, healing)? What is your position concerning those who practice these gifts?
6. Women in ministry. What is your opinion on women in ministry? Do you hold to any limitations on women in ministry?

## Community and Budget

1. How would you assess your area or neighborhood as a place to raise a Christian family? What are the strengths of the area in this regard? What are the weaknesses?
2. How do you think the area will change in five years? Ten years?
3. In what community do you expect staff to live?
4. How much debt is the church carrying and what is the present state of the budget?
5. How is the budget planned, promoted and raised? How many family units currently underwrite the budget?
6. What estimated percentage of the budget goes to missions? How does this figure compare to five years ago?
7. How do you see the church’s role in assisting new staff members in transitioning into the community?
8. If the ministry has yet to broach the subject of the compensation package and you’re in the final stages of the candidating process, you may discuss salary and benefits at this time. The Placement Office provides a separate “Pastoral Compensation” resource for compensation (<https://www.westernseminary.edu/alumni/experience/placement>).

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