

Ministry Interviewing Techniques

Tips for Interviewing

The first step in being prepared for your interview is becoming fully acquainted with your resume. Be ready to discuss it in depth. Think through the work experiences you had, your performance, attitudes, and proofs of success. Be able to cite examples that feature growth you experienced and other positive qualities.

Other interviewing essentials:

1. Questions to Be Ready to Answer
2. Questions to Be Ready to Ask
3. Questions You Should Not Ask During the First Interview
4. Potential "Deal Breakers"

Questions to Be Ready to Answer...

SPIRITUAL

1. How did you become a Christian? Tell me about your conversion experience.
2. What experiences have shaped you spiritually?
3. How do you pursue continued growth in your walk with God?

PERSONAL

4. Tell me more about yourself. What are your hobbies and interests?
5. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
6. How would you describe the ideal ministry for you?
7. Rate yourself on a scale of one to 10 in these categories: communication, leadership, teaching, energy, intelligence, planning, organization, analytical ability, conflict resolution skills, direction, initiative, self-confidence, decision-making ability, willingness to accept responsibility, financial management, supervisory ability, self-awareness, mentoring skills, visionary outlook, imagination, interpersonal skills, flexibility.
8. What are your short-term and long-term objectives?
9. What do you want to be doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
10. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
11. What are your spiritual gifts?
12. How do you work under pressure?
13. What is your philosophy of ministry?
14. Share some of the features of your theology.
15. Tell me about your current church involvement.
16. Who do you admire most and why?

WORK/ACADEMIC HISTORY

17. Describe your past work experiences. What did you do well? What did you enjoy?
18. How will your previous experiences fit in here? How would you contribute to our ministry?
19. What two or three accomplishments in your life have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
20. Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, why?

21. Are your grades a good reflection of your ability? Why or why not?
22. What were your favorite classes? Why? What has seminary taught you?
23. Do you have plans for continued study? Another degree?

MINISTRY SPECIFIC

24. Why are you interested in ministering here?
25. How does your family feel about your filling this position?
26. What do you think it takes to be successful in a ministry like ours?
27. What is it about this specific ministry that sounds appealing to you?
28. Why are you willing to leave your present job?
29. What kind of salary and benefits are you looking for?
30. What questions do you have about this ministry and this job?

Questions to Be Ready to Ask...

1. Tell me more about your ministry.
2. Tell me about your church's/organization's theology, history, priorities, etc.
3. What are your goals for this ministry?
4. What are the future plans for the growth of this ministry?
5. How would you characterize this congregation/ministry?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this church/ministry?
7. What specifically would be my responsibilities in this position?
8. What is the most important function performed in this position?
9. What results are expected from the position and how do you measure those results?
10. What do you feel would be the ideal experience and qualifications for this position?
11. Is this a newly-created job?
12. (If applicable) Why did the last person leave this position?
 - if quit, why?
 - if promoted, why?
 - if fired, why? What was your dissatisfaction with his or her performance?
13. What could be improved in the way previous employees performed in this position?
14. Who would I report to? Work with?
15. What is the turnover rate in this ministry? Do people stay a long time? Why?
16. Are there any particular doctrinal issues that have caused problems with staff members in the past? What were they?
17. Why am I of particular interest to you?
18. What has been the most significant event in the life of this congregation since you have been a member?

19. Aside from the upheaval of looking for a new pastor, what has been the most upsetting event in the life of this church?
 20. In your opinion, what areas of concern need to be addressed by this congregation?
 21. What kinds of things did your former pastor do particularly well?
 22. What were the circumstances surrounding your former pastor's departure?
 23. In what areas did you wish your former pastor(s) had more expertise?
 24. Tell me about the governing board.
 25. Has the pastor's family traditionally taken an active role in this church?
 26. How should your pastor spend his or her time? In the course of a week, how much time should be spent in prayer? Personal study? Sermon preparation? Administration? Individual and family counseling? Visiting? With the family?
 27. What organizations in the congregation are the most active or successful?
 28. Beyond calling a pastor and its related concerns, what is the highest congregational priority for the next twelve months?
 29. What goals have you established for church growth? What methods can be used to achieve those goals?
 30. What plans have you made for the expansion of staff or facility?
 31. How stable is this congregation financially?
 32. What programs have you planned to implement in the next ten years?
 33. How soon do you intend to make a decision on someone for this position?
 34. Do you have questions about my resume?
 35. What would be my family's role?
 36. What is the next step in the interviewing process?
5. Lack of confidence and poise; nervousness
 6. Lack of tact
 7. Lack of maturity
 8. Lack of courtesy; ill-mannered
 9. Condemnation of past employees and employers
 10. Failure to look interviewer in the eye
 11. Indecision
 12. Expressing unhappy married or family life
 13. Sloppy application materials
 14. Lack of seriousness about the position; merely shopping around
 15. Seeking to fill the position for only a short time
 16. Little sense of humor
 17. Emphasis on whom you know
 18. Cynical
 19. Narrow interests
 20. Poor handling of personal finances
 21. No interest in community activities
 22. Inability to take criticism
 23. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience
 24. Little knowledge of the Bible
 25. Late to interview without good reason
 26. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time
 27. Failure to ask questions about the job
 28. Showing a desire for power; not humble
 29. Unclear on vision or reason for being in ministry
 30. Lack of initiative
 31. Approaching interview process too casually
 32. Arrogant attitude: "I'm going to come and fix your ministry"
 33. Overemphasis on salary and benefits
 34. Inability to discuss past performance; vague; not prepared
 35. Having a "what can you do for me?" attitude

Questions You Should Not Ask During the First Interview...

1. Does this ministry believe in and support continuing education?
2. What is the salary range for this position?
3. What benefits does the ministry provide?
4. What is the cost of living and housing in this area?

BUT do ask in subsequent sessions:

How is the pastor's compensation package determined? How frequently is it reviewed? By whom? What factors are used in determining that package? Merit, or cost-of-living increases? Social security reimbursement? Equity in the parsonage, or a cash equity allowance? Continuing education, book, and automobile allowances?

Potential "Deal Breakers"

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Inability to express yourself clearly (voice, diction, grammar)
3. Lack of planning; no purpose or goals
4. Lack of interest and enthusiasm; passive, indifferent