

INTERVIEWING PASTORAL CANDIDATES

1. Eat a meal with them. Watch how they treat the servers.
2. Play a sport they like with them, or have a sub who does that. I vetoed a youth pastor once because he did not hustle.
3. Have a separate theological exam. Theology often gets buried with other subjects. Have standard questions for all candidates, including these:
 - * You have to change or alter just one of the statements in our faith list. Which one would it be, and how would you adjust it?
 - * If someone disagrees with bent on theology, assume it will come out.
4. Make a clear orderly grid of the steps and have someone keep track of where each candidate is:
 - First contact
 - Phone interview
 - Reference checks
 - Committee discussion of assets and needs
 - Personal lengthy interview
 - Theological interview
 - On-site visit to where she or he works
 - More reference checks (by here you get permission to talk with people around him or her now)
 - On-site visit to you, so they know the church and area better
 - Presentation of salary package
 - Formal visit to meet committee, peers, whole leadership team
 - Lesson taught, worship led, peers meeting, parents meeting
 - **Decision made**

When interviewing, remember this!

- + Meet the spouse if the person is married. See how he or she feels about the possibilities. See how they treat each other.
- + Always ask about their hardest decision recently, and how they made it. What were the options?
- + Note if they hide anything. Once we hired someone who hid his tattoos in the interview, and revealed them on his arms after being hired. It was not the tattoos as such, but the deception.
- + Believe the record. People do not change much.
- + Ask open-ended questions, and keep probing: “Say more about that...” “How did that make you feel?” “Why did you stop talking about that?” “Would you handle that the same way today?”
- + Ask what were the best things they learned from others, either in an informal way or in a teaching relationship? You will learn how teachable or independent a person is.
- + Present a few case studies, the kind that happen in their areas of ministry, and ask what the issues are, and how they think they would handle this.
- + Watch their eye contact with your eyes.
- + Ask questions about the person they reported to previously. You will pick up their view of authority.

- + Ask what a typical work week looks like, or what they would hope it looks like.
- + Ask how they learn Scripture for personal reasons, and when they pray.
- + “Do you go to church on vacation?”
- + How much they watch television may reveal some discipline issues.
- + Always have a woman present for the interview. They have extra intuition and good perspective. Once I could tell a man was a bit irritated when a woman asked him something.
- + Watch how they eat.

“Pigeon-holing” or assuming a woman cannot take a strong pastoral or director role

+ The background of theology and church practices of many of us influences this.

+ We easily forget how much of people work is directly with women and girls, and that women and girls can best serve there. Single mothers, female victims of divorce, widows, sexually abused.....and more.

+ Many women can take over an area and be a director for that ministry, and the question of ordination is not even close. The personal ministry is.

+ It is a good rule to have a woman or more in on all ministry decision meetings. The perspective of a woman and sometimes of a mother can save many mistakes.

+ Women can be strong leaders and command the respect of both men and women. Many of us would embrace a practical theology that may say a senior pastor or pastor should be a man, and that the spiritual leader of a family should be a man. But we have no limits as to a woman being the president of a company or a country.

+ Policies that are brief and pointed should be written about all this, so that decisions are not made when personalities are involved.

Pastors can become administrators

Though every pastor or ministry leader must manage and administer details, it is common knowledge that the pastoral role can morph into too much administration, because that offers safety and is comfortable, for many.

THOUGHTS ABOUT AVOIDING SLIDING INTO AN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE

+ Teach and insist on the strategy of a Point Person (a staff member, by definition, who seeks to expand and give excellence to an area of ministry) and Ministry Manager (by definition, a volunteer who helps to carry the details and administration for a ministry area, reporting to the Point Person) for all the ministries of the church.

The senior pastor will by default become the Point Person for any ministry in the church not assigned to a Point Person on staff.

+ Not that we do not need good administrators! But pastors are called to pastor, and that means vision for the area, people relationships, discipleship, mentoring in ministry.

+ “Give away titles and responsibilities freely” – Marlene Wilson, in her book on volunteers.

+ Help them use an administrative assistant well, not because they are “above that kind of work,” but because the pastoral part is their calling. Consider the earthly issue of pay related to this. A salaried pastor would be misusing that pay when doing what a per-hour person or volunteer could be doing.

+ Must have a discipleship group of 4-6 men (women if she is a woman). This breeds a pastor’s heart. It is even important to

have a goal of sharing ministry details and people work with the ones in this discipleship group. We multiply ministry.

“I do, we do, you do.”

+ Realize that there is a safe harbor in an office doing paper work for someone who finds the hard work of people problems exasperating. The computer offers so many things to view before a decision is made, and distractions galore. Even checking out what can be read, or what other churches are doing in an area, can take way too long and be way too easy.

Going after people or dreaming ministry dreams – these are hard work.

And administrators see their work as 8:00 or 9:00 to 5:00 rather than having some early appointments and some evening and weekend times when people are available.

+ There should be accountability and reporting on some of this:

appointments to meet and challenge....discipleship

group....prayer with people in need....thank-you

notes...administrative or Ministry Manager areas assigned to others...