

100

Good Questions for Pastor Search Teams



Dr. Gerry Lewis
(and Others)

Why do pastor search teams need a list of good questions? Because they already have a list of bad ones! The list may not be compiled and printed anywhere, but if the team is not intentional about planning and asking really good questions, the questions that will be asked in the interviews will not really assist the church team in discerning God's direction.

So, what does a bad question look like? Here are some categories and examples:

- A question that comes from an individual's personal agenda – "I really like the old, hymns. If you were our pastor, what kind of music would you want in the worship service?"
- A question that is really not a question – "Do you think a pastor has the right to come in and begin making changes?"
- A question that can be answered "yes" or "no" – "Do you believe the Bible is the word of God?"
- A question that is an ambush – "What would you do to deal with the problems in our youth department?"

Rather than a long list of bad ones, how about we just give some **principles of good ones?**

- Good questions are open-ended, allowing the prospective pastor to reveal more of himself than a "yes" or "no" question.
- Good questions are non-argumentative, seeking to gain insight into the person and his ministry, not to get him to agree with your point of view.
- Good questions allow you to see the prospective pastor's heart and passion as well as his competencies in order to discern whether he is a good fit for your church.
- Good questions give an opportunity to depart and end a prospective pastor's candidacy with mutual grace and respect if it appears that he is not a good fit for your church.
- Good questions reveal something about the candidate in the **way** he answers the questions as much as in the **content** of his answers.

NOTE: You will not want to ask any candidate all 100 questions. These questions lend themselves to paragraph answers, open discussion, and follow-up questions ("tell us more about that"). Also, every question will not be a good fit for every church. As a search team, you will want to go through the list and select those questions that are most important to you. You might select your top 10 for the initial interview and another 10 or so for the next interview where you want to go deeper.

These 100 questions cannot serve as your magic bullet. You will need to devote much time to prayer and seeking the Lord before you begin any interview. These are just good suggestions based on the wisdom of those who have been on both sides of the interview process.

100 Good Questions for Pastor Search Teams

Personal Life

1. What are your short and long range goals?
2. What are your plans for participation in the community at large?
3. What leaders do you admire and why?
4. What do you consider to be the components of a healthy conversation?
5. What are some things we might not like about you if we knew them?
6. What is important to you about personal friendships and how do you maintain them?
7. What activities do you enjoy away from the church?
8. If you had 3 minutes to tell us about yourself, what would you say?
9. What are the top 5 things we need to know about you?

Personal Gifting, Skills, and Style

10. What evidences exist that God has called and equipped you to be a pastor?
11. What are your top 3 strengths?
12. What skills do you have that have prepared you to pastor this church?
13. What are your top spiritual gifts?
14. Would you say that you are more task oriented or people oriented? How is that a strength? A weakness?
15. What is your system of task management?
16. How do you define success?
17. What are your top strengths and weaknesses in the areas of organization/administration?
18. What are your strategies for handling conflict?
19. What is your preferred work environment?
20. How do you organize your daily calendar? Weekly? Monthly? Annual?
21. What does an ideal workday look like for you?
22. What kind of leader are you?
23. What would your previous church list as your top 3 strengths?
24. What motivates you to put forth your best effort?

Family Life

25. What place do your wife and children have in your ministry?
26. What are your greatest joys and challenges in family life?
27. What health issues exist in your family?
28. What financial issues exist in your family?
29. What do you do to keep your marriage healthy and growing?

Personal Growth

30. What do you do to nurture your soul?
31. What have you been learning about God in the past year?
32. How has God humbled you?

33. How has your theology changed in the past 5 years?
34. What does your devotional life look like?
35. What do you do to keep your ministry skills sharp?
36. What is the last book you read and who are your favorite authors?
37. What is a weakness you have and what have you done to grow in that area?
38. What is the last conference or workshop you attended and how are you using what you learned?

Ministry Life

39. What is the passion that drives your approach to ministry?
40. What is your personal mission? (Who are you and why are you here?)
41. What is your ministry “sweet spot?”
42. Why do you want to be our pastor?
43. What are your non-negotiables?
44. Describe the importance of accountability in your personal and ministry life? What processes do you currently have in place to insure that?
45. How do you intend to personally participate at the associational and denominational levels?
46. What do you do when you have identified an area of ministry weakness?
47. What are your personal rules for interaction with the opposite sex?
48. What style of evangelism is most natural for you?
49. Where, on your list of priorities, does the church fall?
50. What are the top 5 things you need to know about us?
51. What is your understanding of your ministry calling?

Personal Beliefs

52. What do you believe to be the greatest challenges of the North American church?
53. What is your perspective on the concept of “call to ministry?”
54. What are your views related to Reformed Theology (Calvinism)?
55. Do you agree with everything in this church’s statement of faith? Is there anything missing from this statement of faith that you would like changed or added? Is there a confession of faith which better articulates your views?
56. What is your preferred translation of the Bible? What are your feelings about people using other translations?
57. What is your definition of “ministry?”
58. What is your definition of a “disciple?”
59. What beliefs do you hold that make you say you are a Baptist?
60. What beliefs do you hold that would make others say you are not a Baptist?
61. Which of your theological convictions will you preach on most?
62. What are your views on pro-life/pro-choice issues?
63. What does pastoral authority mean to you?
64. What are your views on homosexuality and same-sex marriage?
65. What is your understanding of church membership?
66. What are your views on divorce and remarriage?

67. What does the Lord's Supper mean for you?

Theology

68. How can a person come to know the will of God?
69. What is your understanding of Biblical repentance?
70. What is your understanding of the purpose of the church?
71. What is your view of the nature of Scripture?
72. What is your understanding of Scriptural baptism?
73. What is your understanding of the Biblical role of Deacon? Elder?
74. What is the gospel?
75. What does grace mean to you?

Role of the Pastor

76. How do you address controversial issues in preaching and teaching?
77. How important is vision in the life of the pastor?
78. What do you see as the difference between leading a congregation and managing a congregation?
79. What are your top 3 priorities as a pastor?
80. What are your requirements for performing a marriage ceremony?
81. What do you see as the pastor's primary responsibilities?
82. How would you lead the church in responding to issues of immorality inside the church? In the community/society?
83. How do you handle prospective church members who are coming from a different church background?
84. What are the components of a healthy church? What kinds of processes would you favor for supporting those components?
85. How do you encourage and empower church members to identify and use their spiritual gifts?
86. How do you generate enthusiasm among your congregants?
87. What is your preferred method of interaction with other church staff and leaders?
88. How would you help our church develop strong families?
89. What processes would you use in discipling people?
90. How do you deal with people who differ from you theologically?
91. What is your approach to preaching and what do you try to accomplish in the pulpit?
92. What is your understanding of the Biblical role of the Pastor?
93. How long do you feel a pastor should stay in one church?

Church Vision

94. What is your missionary vision for the church?
95. What are your thoughts on worship music for the church's main worship services?
96. What is your view of the relationship between the local church, the local association, the state convention, and the denomination? Under what circumstances would you seek to change our church's current denominational relationships?
97. What changes would you make to our church's current leadership structure?

98. How frequently do you prefer to celebrate the Lord's Supper?
99. What are your most important goals for the church in public worship?
100. What questions do you have for us?

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