



Interview Questions You Will Be Asked by Churches

By: Craig A. Janney

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Getting a job is a job. Approaching the search process as your job requires an investment of your time. As one who has ~~hired~~ called and has been ~~hired~~ called, nearly every interview has at least the same four skeletal questions:

Q: “What can you tell us about yourself?”

A: Write a few paragraphs—because you’ll have to write copy for your new employer’s website eventually—and commit them to memory. Practice it every day – in front of a mirror, on the phone with family, or in person with a friend – to make it natural. I use a **Present-Past-Future** formula to answer the "tell us about you" question:

*I’m **currently** the Reference and Referral Manager at the global headquarters of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, where I help churches and ministers navigate transitions with joy amid change and chaos. **Before that**, I served as a bi-professional pastor and higher education administrator at my undergraduate Alma Mater. The chance to serve my denomi-network is an exciting **opportunity** to weld my proficiencies and passions for ministry in a seamless transition. I look forward to partnering with ministers and churches to move the Fellowship forward!*

Churches will also ask about your family, your conversion, and your call to ministry so be prepared to share, giving testimony to your journey and Christ’s transformative work in you.



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Q: “What do you know about us?”

A: Describe the church in fourteen seconds or less. Define their niche, reinforce their brand, and build excitement for the future. Some churches have a robust “About” section on their website; if not, ask a state coordinator, former professor, associational director, or city administrator how they would describe the church.

Answering this question requires that you make the connection about how you see yourself fitting into the church and the congregation’s subculture. Articulate your philosophy of ministry and your theological convictions clearly and concisely.



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Q: “Why should we hire you?”

A: While search committees may not ask this question directly you need to demonstrate your awareness of the key skills, expertise and experience required to do the job and give concrete examples (read: stories) that prove you possess those skills. As you read the job description, take time to bullet point the things that energize you about the task of ministry in that particular context.

In addition to tell compelling, qualitative stories, be sure to pepper in the quantitative metrics that verify your narrative. The committee is trying to gauge whether or not you want the job, so be sure to reply with authentic enthusiasm.



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Q: “What questions do you have?”

A: Prepare at least three good questions. During your interview other questions might arise; write them down, but always start your question with “What...” to keep their answers open-ended. The more a search committee talks, the more you learn.

Questions about the written and unwritten expectations are a good start. Search committees care about budgets, buildings, and bottoms (that is, people). Mirror the depth of inquiry posed to you in your questions to the committee. Ask them to share personal stories of how the church has impacted them. Pay attention to where they start and stay as they answer each question, which reveals their priorities for the church and the position.