

Interview Material
Rondel Ramsey, Youth Ministry Professor, Lincoln Christian University
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Interviewing for a ministry can be like deciding to get married on a phone call, one blind date, and what three of her friends say about her. That is silly. But that is what happens more often than not in the mysterious, and sometimes ambiguous, world of church and youth ministry (or other ministry) match making. In an effort to produce long-term “marriages” (ministries), we have compiled some helpful suggestions, guidelines, questions you should be prepared to be asked and ones you should ask. Above all, pray. Ask God who knows all things to direct this process. Don’t over spiritualize your decisions (“God told me to take this other church” when he really didn’t), but don’t under estimate the power of God either.

Resume

1. The resume is designed to get you to the interview process.
2. The resume is the first impression. You never get a second chance at a first impression. Make it a good one! Be sure there are NO mistakes.
3. Do not forget to proofread your grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Do not forget to do it a 2nd time! Then have someone else look it over. Do not make this mistake!
4. If sending via mail, provide a cover letter. Briefly describe yourself and share how you envision you helping that congregation in their ministry to youth. Remember, this is not just about you. You have to help them see you as the one who will fill the needs of their ministry context.
5. Be honest. Give them all the information they need. If they have to find out more, most likely they will move on.
6. Do not be too wordy. Describe yourself and your experience in concise thoughts. Use active voice words and phrases. Include activities and experiences that relate to the position not just random experiences.
7. Use professional paper with a neutral color font.
8. Do not forget to bring a copy of your resume to your interview.
9. If you can put your resume online as a webpage or blog (wordpress.com), then the church will not have to copy it for the whole search committee. They can explore who you are for themselves.

General Interviewing Guidelines

1. Do your homework. Learn everything you can about the church or ministry before you go. Search their website. Ask the church to send you some basic information and visioning documents. Talk with others who know the ministry. You may discover these areas from a variety of avenues e.g. phone calls, website, former staff members, and church publications. The point is to get as much information as possible before the interview date.
2. Have faith and confidence as you enter this process, but do not be naïve. There are many ways to do ministry, myriads of youth ministry expectations, varieties of personalities and perspectives, all of which can cause conflict, confusion, disillusionment, and hurt. It wastes valuable kingdom time, money, and energy. Churches do not like to have to look for a youth minister every two years. It takes time away from other important matters. So be sure you know yourself, are not afraid of asking hard and realistic questions, and are willing to open yourself up to be known by the church who is just as concerned as you are about how this match will work out.
3. Pray. Pray. Pray. Fast and seek solitude.
4. At the interview, do not just blurt out answers. Think first and then respond.
5. Memorize key names and roles prior to arriving.
6. Engage in interpersonal interaction with others.
7. Be on time (15 minutes early is on time).
8. **Look sharp. Dress up. Guys, wear a tie. 1st impressions really do matter.** Do NOT go in with the idea that “they will just have to accept me for who I am.” Those issues may need to be discussed, but you need to look professional and mature.
9. Take key notes. You will never remember everything. You will want some time to reflect and pray about what you discovered.
10. Anticipate their questions and answer them before they ask them. Paint your vision to them. Use illustrative and descriptive phrases. Share your experiences. Give illustrations of how you have performed in the past.
11. If they are asking about certain characteristics you may possess or ask you how you will handle a specific situation then most likely those issues have come up in the past.

12. Great interviewers may not ask the typical questions. They may ask how you handled or would deal with a certain scenario. Think and then respond. You cannot just make stuff up. You may need to start by saying, "I've never experienced this before, but ... For example:
 - Scenario 1: A parent stops you in the hall outside the student center and begins verbally attacking you and your sponsor team. How do you handle the situation?
 - Scenario 2: A student leader talks critically about you behind your back. You hear about it from a third source. What do you do?
 - Scenario 3: A student comes to you wanting to become a Christian. Briefly outline the process you would lead them through.
13. Be prepared to fill out a pre-interview questionnaire before you come. That is not uncommon. It is very wise for a church to do this. If there are any particular questions that cause you concern (as to why in the world did they ask this?), then ask about those in the interview. Seek to find out why they asked what they did. It may reveal a little bit more about the church dynamics.
14. After you get narrowed down and are going for an interview, you could always send them a short questionnaire with key questions that you would like to know about. Below are four statements that you could ask that will help you determine their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Ask for several key leaders and workers to complete it. You could ask informally too.
 - a. When I think of this church I am thankful for...
 - b. What are the things I am concerned about?
 - c. In the next 3-5 yrs our church could (what?)
 - d. In the next 3-5 yrs our church must (what?)
15. Have in mind what a church would look for. Do you meet all of these things? If not, how do you overcome their picture of their ideal youth minister?
 - a. Churches that are rapidly growing and demographically made up of young adults both in the church and the community usually look for youth pastors in that same age group.
 - b. Some churches see younger applicants as more mature and stable if they are married. In what ways can you prove to a hiring committee that you are mature and capable even though you are single?
 - c. Even though many churches are growing with young adults, the leaders are typically still older adults. Inexperience is a major obstacle for the young youth minister. How do you show the leadership of a church that you can overcome that lack of experience?
16. Know who you are. Evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses. What skills do you possess? What is your temperament? (If you don't know, take a personality profile). Be prepared to share your perceptions of your
 - a. Character (inner strength)
 - b. Chemistry (relational strength)
 - c. Competency (abilities to lead/oversee the ministry)
 - d. Commitment (hard word and perseverance)
17. Know the position. What are they looking for? What are you looking for?
18. Know the qualifications. Degree? Marital status? Experience? Background?
19. Bring everything you have with you to interview. Portfolio, copy of resume, letters of reference, sermon tape, lesson outline, Philosophy of Ministry, etc.
20. Throughout the interview look for the following:
 - a. Does my personality fit here?
 - b. Does the job description fit me?
21. Have a mental and emotional picture of when you leave prior to the meeting. Determine what will satisfy and make you feel good about the interview. When you leave, you MUST know:
 - a. What they expect from you
 - b. What your boundaries are (including sacred cows)
 - c. What your freedoms are
 - d. Who you will answer to
 - e. That there will be a regular evaluations of you and your performance AND based on what
 - f. What the pay package is (including housing, taxes, medical insurance, books, convention allowances, retirement, etc)
22. After the interview, send the church a written thank you note.

Here are some potential questions that might be asked by a hiring committee or a group of elders. It is important to note that these questions may be asked in a variety of ways. The first way is straightforward and to the point, but they could appear in specific scenarios which may ask several questions at once. As you go through these questions, think about what circumstances and dialogue, some of these questions would appear in the interview process and consider how you would respond. There are also some important questions that you as the interviewee would like to get answered. Remember that as they are interviewing you, you are interviewing them just the same. Use these questions to help answer some of the issues that you might not have thought about before.

Theology and Philosophy of the Church

Should be prepared to answer:

1. How do theology and youth ministry relate to one another. How will you demonstrate this relationship?
2. What role do you believe Christ has in terms of both salvation and the Church?
3. What led you to become a Christian and why?
4. What feeling or reason do you have that calls you to the ministry of youth? What makes you feel called to this church?
5. Do you have a vision for the Church? If so, what is that vision?
6. What are your views on the Bible? How do you see those views as important to the Church? How do those views affect decision-making both personally and as a potential leader?
7. What is your philosophy of ministry for the Church? How does that extend to the youth?
8. What are your views on Baptism?
9. What are your views on the taking of the Lord's Supper?
10. What is your view on the role of the Holy Spirit?
11. What do you feel is the role of women in the Church?
12. What are your views on worship in the Church?
13. In what ways has the Church had an effect on your life?
14. In today's culture what are the strengths of the Church?
15. In today's culture what are the weaknesses of the Church?
16. What is the role of leadership in the Church? By what parameters does leadership differ from the layperson?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. How does the Theology direct the affairs, decisions, and daily ministry activity of this church? How do you determine something should be a theological (theological principles) matter as opposed to a pragmatic (methods) matter?
2. Does this congregation have a vision statement in place? If so, can someone recite it to me?
3. Have you outlined the nonnegotiable core values of the church? If so, can someone recite them to me?
4. Does the church have a mission statement? If so, can someone recite it to me?
5. Does the church have a philosophy of ministry? If so, can someone briefly explain it to me?
6. As a church, are you evangelistic in nature? What process do you go through to help bring people from a non-believer to Christian?
7. What steps does the Church take in the area of discipleship?
8. What is the church's view on worship in the Church? How is that displayed in the services at this congregation?
9. What is the role of women in the Church?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this church?
11. Is there a long-term plan on how to fulfill the vision statement? Are their intermediate and short-term plans to fulfill the long-term plan? If so, what are these and where can I find them?
12. How has the growth been in the past five to ten years? What do you think the reasons behind that growth have been?
13. What would be expected of me as a leader of this church?

Spiritual Disciplines

Should be prepared to answer:

1. What is the state of your prayer life?
2. What is the state of your commitment to read the Word of God?
3. What areas would you say that you need to grow in order to be a more effective leader?
4. What is the state of your marriage/relationship at this time?
5. In our past youth ministry has grown numerically, but has not produced disciplined young adults. What are your views on this problem and how would you attempt to fix it?
6. What books have you read in the last six months, and what are you currently reading?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. What is the state of the church's prayer life?
2. What commitment has the church made to make the Bible the ultimate authority? How is this commitment being implemented?
3. What is the state of the leaders' spiritual lives? By what venues as a group are the leaders promoting growth?
4. Is there a mentoring program established here for the youth ministry position?

Youth Ministry Characteristics

Should be prepared to answer:

1. What kind of structure would you use to improve the youth program at this church?
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a youth minister? How do you plan to equalize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses?
3. Where do you see the youth ministry in general going in the next ten years? How do you see those changes affecting your role as a youth minister?
4. In ten years where do you see the youth ministry here going?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. What is the state of the youth ministry as we speak?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the youth ministry here?
3. What long-term goal do you as the leadership of the church have for the youth ministry?
4. What are the job expectations of the youth minister? Are those negotiable? What are my responsibilities for the first few months? Will I be expected to preach occasionally?
5. How are the aspects of the youth ministry connected to the rest of the church's structure?

Programming

Should be prepared to answer:

1. What type of structure do you suggest would work for this church?
2. What are your opinions on small groups in the youth ministry setting?
3. In what ways as a youth minister would you try to help our families? In what ways will you involve the parents in your area of youth?
4. If change would need to occur what steps would you take to inform everyone of when and why the change was taking place?
5. What steps will you take to evangelize the youth of the community?
6. What programming events do you support? Ex. CIY, mission trips and local church camps.
7. What are your thoughts on the differences and similarities between Junior High Ministry and High School Ministry? In what ways would you accentuate the similarities and distinguish the differences?
8. What wise strategy might you use to bring about unity in the youth ministry?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. Which programs are the strongest and why?
2. Which programs are the weakest and why? Are they too weak to save?
3. What outreach programs are currently going on in the church? Which are working and which are not?
4. What programs are not up for debate or cancellation? Is there a reason why?

Youth Ministry Financial Package

Youth Ministers sometimes avoid these questions or simply don't know when or how to ask them. It is wise for you to truly know what your needs are and what other Youth Ministers or entry level professionals are making in that community. (It would be wise for you to complete the Youth Ministry sample budget that is available on the Resources Page of the Youth Ministry website.) You should approach this subject with humility and a servant's heart, but you do have to deal with this subject honestly and openly. Do not be afraid to discuss issues of money.

Should be prepared to answer:

1. How much do you need to live on?
2. How much will it cost to get you here?
3. Are you planning to rent or buy a home? (If they have a parsonage, they will probably be expecting you to live in it.)

Should be prepared to ask:

1. What is the financial package for this position? Does it include base pay, parsonage, car, moving costs, vacation, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement?
2. Are there opportunities for pay increases? How and by whom are those determined?
3. How does the pay suit the needs of living in the surrounding communities?
4. Does the Church offer any sabbatical time, if so what is the schedule?
5. How would the Church help with furthering education that would benefit the ministry here?
6. What is the policy for vacation days?
7. What is the policy for weekly days off and sick days?

Staff Issues/Church Administration

Should be prepared to answer:

1. How do you think the decision-process should work in the church setting?
2. Would you expect to attend board meetings?
3. Would you be willing to preach? Perform weddings and funerals?
4. How will you deal with parents who have a problem with you and/or your methods? How will you deal with a youth worker who has a problem with you and/or your methods?
5. How will you go about recruiting and training a youth ministry staff that will help you carry out your vision for ministry here at our church?
6. Ministry is a marathon. Sometimes there are sprints. How do you determine what is marathon ministry practices and sprint ministry practices?
7. How do well do you handle organization, administration, and advanced planning? How vital are each of them and why?
8. Interpersonal skills are a key element in ministry. Briefly describe how you relate to other people.
9. What "type of people" do you think you work best with? What type of people do you find more difficult to work with? How do you handle working alongside those difficult people?
10. How financially capable are you of handling a youth budget?
11. What ideas do you have to keep costs down?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. What is the decision-making process?
2. Will I meet regularly with the leaders of the church? Am I welcome/expected to attend board meetings?
3. What are the office hours for a youth minister? Is there compensation time for extended hours in work?
4. How does the church view sabbatical time and refreshment?
5. Is there a dress code for the youth minister for both regular work hours and services?
6. How often are staff members evaluated? When will my first one be?

Community

Should be prepared to answer:

1. What is your strategy for making contact with the school?
2. What are your characteristics that you feel would help you in this community?
3. What ways do you divide the age groups and why? Do you follow the school systems division of age groups?

Should be prepared to ask:

1. What is the community like?
2. How open are the schools to church involvement? Who are your contacts in the schools?
3. What is the perception of the church in the community?
4. Do you feel that you are doing enough in the community now, proportionally to your resources?

Personal

Should be prepared to answer:

1. What thing (or things) causes you the most stress?
2. How do you deal with stress in this (or these) area(s)?
3. How do you respond to failure?
4. How do you respond to people with differing opinions?
5. How do you respond to being told "No"?
6. What do you think about conflict? How do you handle it when it arises?
7. What are some of the greatest challenges you have faced in ministry?
8. Describe some difficult issues facing you today. How have you addressed these issues in student ministry?
9. Discuss what "support from elders" and "support from preaching minister" looks like to you.