

Insure Good Staff Hires With These 200 Interview Questions

- Jim Baker

Effective interviewers don't consider themselves excellent interviewers just because they are a "good judge of character." They know how to conduct an interview that asks the right questions which requires time and preparation. By following these suggestions, your comfort and skill as an interviewer will increase:

- 1.** Open the interview with prayer for the candidate and you!
- 2.** Begin by building rapport with the candidate. "Break the Ice...Chit-chat!" Your goal is to put the candidate at ease, and get them talking comfortably.
- 3.** Tell the candidate that you will be using a structured interview guide prepared in advance, and that you'll be asking a series of questions. Inform them that you will be taking notes.
- 4.** Probe for more details on a particular response. "Tell me more about..." "Why was that..." "How did you..." "Describe how it felt when..."
- 5.** Ask open-ended questions: Use few questions with yes/no/one-word answers. Remember that the less the candidate says, the less you learn.
- 6.** Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions, but be careful to not sound like you're "challenging" the candidate's answers.
- 7.** Goal: The candidate should talk 90% of the time...you only talk 10% of the time. Make the candidate the focus.....listen!
- 8.** Stay in control of the interview. Don't let the applicant make this an interview of you!
- 9.** Offer to answer any questions for the candidate.
- 10.** Close the interview with a prayer for the candidate and the process.

The questions below are not position specific questions but are broad questions that are appropriate for most any ministry position in the church. You will find a variety of questions on spiritual, personal, organizational and ministry leadership. Choose and adapt those that fit your personal style and are most critical to your understanding of a particular candidate.

Asking no more than 12-15 questions per interview session is a good rule of thumb or up to an hour and a half at most. You will want to interview a candidate multiple times in multiple formats to properly assess the candidate.

Assigning different questions to several interviewers is a proven approach for a more comprehensive view of a candidate. And, you will find the questions requiring specific examples are appropriate to submit to the candidate for a written response, allowing him or her time to think through their memory bank for illustrations and allowing you to see how well they communicate in writing. Good luck and feel free to add your own questions to this list.

- 1.** Tell us how you came to know the Lord.
- 2.** Describe for us your call to ministry.
- 3.** Describe for us your ministry path and the spiritual markers along the way.
- 4.** In your spiritual walk, how has God used adversity to mature you?
- 5.** How do you express your spiritual gifts?
- 6.** Have you ever taken a personality assessment? If so, which one and what is your personality profile?
- 7.** Share your definition of spiritual leadership.
- 8.** What pursuits presently engage you that you know God initiated?
- 9.** What evidence do you have that God is pleased with your leadership?
- 10.** What is your definition of success?
- 11.** Are you currently discipling or mentoring anyone? Describe.
- 12.** Are you currently being discipled or mentored? Describe.
- 13.** What discipleship materials do you like to use? Why?
- 14.** Share your most recent witnessing experience.

- 15.** Share your involvement in local, national, and international missions.
- 16.** How would you characterize your marriage relationship?
- 17.** In what areas of your relationship have you grown in recent years?
- 18.** What practices and disciplines have the two of you put into place to remain spiritually connected?
- 19.** In what ways is your spouse currently involved in ministry?
- 20.** What concerns does your spouse have about your possible involvement in ministry here?
- 21.** What spiritual practices have you put into place with your children?
- 22.** How have you learned to balance the demands of family and ministry?
- 23.** Have you and your spouse had any serious marriage crises, and what were the outcomes?
- 24.** Have you been divorced? If yes, please explain the circumstances.
- 25.** Is there anything in your past that might hinder you from an effective ministry here?
- 26.** Do you drink alcoholic beverages?
- 27.** Do you use tobacco products?
- 28.** What is your general practice to show hospitality to the congregation?
- 29.** How have you grown spiritually in the last year?
- 30.** How does God typically speak to you?
- 31.** How do you discern God's will?
- 32.** What has God been teaching you recently?
- 33.** What prayers have you seen answered?
- 34.** Where have you seen God working in your ministry?
- 35.** Please share your spiritual disciplines and practices.
- 36.** Share how you shepherd your flock and demonstrate compassion.
- 37.** What evidence is there in your life and ministry that you are leading in the power of the Spirit, and not out of your own abilities and strength?

- 38.** What steps do you take to guard and cultivate your integrity?
- 39.** Are there any areas in your life that could be considered by biblical standards to be out of balance or in excess?
- 40.** What steps do you follow when you sense disagreement or conflict with someone in your church?
- 41.** In what areas of your life is it easiest to demonstrate self-control? In what areas is it most difficult?
- 42.** What do others respect about you most?
- 43.** How have you been tempted to compromise your values?
- 44.** Do you support our statement of faith?
- 45.** Where have you encountered theological disagreement in your ministry? How did you handle those?
- 46.** What is your belief and practice concerning tithing?
- 47.** After reviewing our church web site are there any areas of hesitation or disagreement?
- 48.** After talking with our Senior Pastor and listening to his preaching, do you have any theological concerns?
- 49.** What areas of ministry do you enjoy the most?
- 50.** What areas of ministry do you enjoy the least?
- 51.** In what area(s) of ministry do you spend the majority of your time?
- 52.** How do you currently train leadership for various ministries in your church?
- 53.** Describe in detail the process you use in making major decisions related to the ministry of the church.
- 54.** What committees or ministry teams do you currently relate to and how?
- 55.** What role do you believe you should have in giving direction to the goals and direction of the church?
- 56.** Outline the governance and decision-making structure of your church.
- 57.** If another staff member is having difficulty in fulfilling his job description, what do you believe is your responsibility, if any, to him/her?
- 58.** How much, and what type of information do you expect staff who report to you to give you about their activities?

- 59.** What types of decisions are staff who report to you required to submit to you for approval?
- 60.** What have you done to promote staff relationships?
- 61.** Do you pray regularly with your staff? Give examples.
- 62.** How do you communicate your ministry goals, direction of ministry, etc. in your church?
- 63.** How are you held accountable for your performance in your current position?
- 64.** What is your practice regarding staff meetings?
- 65.** In what ways has God prepared you for this position?
- 66.** How has your education and past work experience prepared you for your ministry?
- 67.** With what aspects of this position are you most comfortable?
- 68.** With what aspects of this position are you least comfortable? Why?
- 69.** What would a thorough reference check reveal as your strongest attributes?
- 70.** If you had to cite a single skill or attribute that has most contributed to your career success, what would it be? Why?
- 71.** What has been your single biggest work-related failure to date? Why?
- 72.** What steps have you taken in the past year to improve your overall performance? Why?
- 73.** If we asked two or three of your peers who know you well, to be somewhat critical of your performance, what two or three improvement areas would they likely identify? Why?
- 74.** What do you consider your two or three most significant accomplishments?
- 75.** What were your key job objectives during this past year, and how well did you perform against each?
- 76.** With what aspects of your current performance are you least satisfied?
- 77.** With what kind of people do you most enjoy working? Why?
- 78.** With what kind of people do you have difficulty working? Why?
- 79.** How would you describe your relationships with others outside your immediate department?

- 80.** Tell me about a time when you had a major conflict with another employee.
- What was the cause of the conflict?
 - What things did you do to alleviate the conflict?
- 81.** If, during a reference check, I asked your boss to describe your interpersonal skills, what would he or she likely tell me about your overall effectiveness with others?
- 82.** What aspects of your interpersonal skills would you most like to improve? Why?
- 83.** What type of day to day work do you find most stimulating and rewarding? Why?
- 84.** What type of day to day work do you find least stimulating and rewarding? Why?
- 85.** In which of your past work environments were you happiest?
- Why were you happy?
 - What specific factors contributed to your feelings?
- 86.** In which of your past work environments were you least happy?
- Why were you unhappy?
 - What factors most caused your unhappiness?
- 87.** What type of work environment do you find motivating and stimulating?
- 88.** What type of work environment do you find demotivating? Why?
- 89.** Based on your experience, what three things will you definitely avoid in your next staff position?
- 90.** What five or six adjectives best describe you?
- 91.** In your judgment, what factors account for most ministry failures?
- 92.** What basic values and beliefs do you feel are important to good performance?
- 93.** Would you describe your decision-making process as careful, thorough, analytical and cautious - or decisive, intuitive, expedient and willing to risk?

- 94.** With which of the following management styles are you most comfortable?
- Controlling. Like to make most decisions personally and give close direction to others.
 - Participative. Like to involve others in the decision-making process as much as possible, and see my principal roles as facilitator, teacher, coach.
- 95.** If we asked your immediate subordinates to describe your management style, what would they likely say?
- 96.** What do you see as the key difference between a leader and a manager?
- 97.** Are you more a manager or a leader? Why?
- 98.** Describe your overall planning process.
- 99.** What are some of the techniques you use to motivate poor performing staff and volunteers?
- 100.** What is the toughest decision you have had to make as a manager?
- 101.** How do you go about evaluating individual employee and volunteer performance?
- 102.** Describe your approach to staff development.
- 103.** Describe your process for staff and volunteer selection.
- 104.** Describe your response when you have discovered decisions made by your predecessor with which you did not agree.
- 105.** Give an example of something very creative that you did.
- 106.** How do you go about organizing your work?
- 107.** Give some examples of things you have done that go considerably beyond what is required by your job.
- 108.** What basis do you use for measuring your own performance?
- 109.** Please describe your present duties and responsibilities.
- 110.** Describe a typical work day.
- 111.** In the past, for what things have your supervisors complimented you? Criticized you?

- 112.** What are some of the problems you encountered on your job, and how did you solve these problems? Be specific.
- 113.** Describe a situation in which you have had to be assertive. How did you assert yourself and what were the results?
- 114.** What would be the perfect ministry position?
- 115.** How does this opportunity square with your “ideal” position?
- 116.** What are your long-range goals and objectives?
- 117.** What kind of position would you like to have in five years? Ten years?
- 118.** What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- 119.** Describe a situation in which you could not reach your goals. How did you react?
- 120.** Would you rather work with people on a project, or do the task individually?
- 121.** I see you attended (name of institution). Tell me about that experience, and what influenced your decision to enter the ministry/your current field.
- 122.** What do you know about this position? Why does this position interest you?
- 123.** Explain the type of work culture in which you best perform. What do you know about our culture?
- 124.** Why would you be willing to leave your current position?
- 125.** Thinking about the positions you’ve held, which position was most rewarding? Why?
- 126.** Thinking about the positions you’ve held, which position was most challenging? Why?
- 127.** Given your understanding of this position, what contributions can you see yourself making? How can you contribute to the strength and outreach of our ministerial team?
- 128.** How would your co-workers describe you? What is your reputation in your current position?
- 129.** What specific opportunities has God identified for you, to further develop your passion and calling.
- 130.** Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
- 131.** What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

- 132.** What do you view as the opportunities and advantages, as well as risks and disadvantages of accepting this position?
- 133.** As you think about this position, what skill set do you view as “most critical” to your success?
- 134.** Tell me about the goals you’ve established in your current position. What have been your results?
- 135.** Give an example of a positive result that your personal efforts drove.
- 136.** Describe the most persistent/entrenched problem in your current ministry/position. What ideas do you have for alleviating the problem?
- 137.** Give me a couple of the most challenging or difficult decisions you’ve had to make recently. What fact-finding do you typically do before making a decision?
- 138.** Give an example of a courageous action or unpopular stand you have taken. What was the outcome?
- 139.** Tell me about the position you’ve had that was the most challenging or developmental for you. What specifically did you learn?
- 140.** Give me a few of the “most important lessons” you have learned in your ministry/career.
- 141.** Tell me about a high stress situation where it was important to keep a positive attitude - or to keep your cool. What happened?
- 142.** Describe yourself in terms of emotional control. What sorts of things irritate you the most, or get you down in your ministry/position?
- 143.** Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with unexpected change in your ministry/position. What was the situation, and how did you feel about it?
- 144.** Tell me about a team effort that had really successful results that made you proud.
- 145.** In your experience, what are the biggest obstacles to successful teamwork in a church?
- 146.** What are the biggest risks you have taken in recent years? Include one risk that worked out well... and one risk that did not work out so well.
- 147.** What factors most influence your willingness to take a risk?
- 148.** Describe a situation where being a good listener really paid off for you.
- 149.** Tell me about a time when you needed to be very tactful in communicating a difficult message or giving feedback.

- 150.** How have you coached volunteers who have struggled in a leadership role?
- 151.** To what extent do you solicit ideas and input from others? Give examples.
- 152.** Describe your experience in leading others through change. How did you build their support?
- 153.** Describe two situations: One where you were able to influence someone's point of view and one where you wish you had pushed harder for your point of view.
- 154.** Describe a situation in which you were most effective in selling an idea of yours.
- 155.** Describe two situations: One when your negotiation skills proved effective and one where your negotiation skills were ineffective. Give an example of a time where you had to compromise, in order to achieve a goal.
- 156.** What's your approach for resolving conflicts or differences in opinion with others? Provide an example of a time where a conflict with a co-worker was resolved.
- 157.** Give an example of a time where you had to overcome barriers that were getting in the way of solving a problem or getting results. What was the outcome?
- 158.** What's the biggest change you've experienced in your ministry/position that caught you by surprise? How did you react? What did you do?
- 159.** What deadlines do you typically face in your current position? How do you go about prioritizing your work? What situations or problems do you have the greatest sense of urgency about?
- 160.** To what extent are you experienced in working in a changing or ambiguous environment? Tell me how you stay focused on getting your day-to-day work done, in the midst of change.
- 161.** To what extent do you delegate work in your current position? What is the most difficult part of delegation for you? Why?
- 162.** How do you follow up on work you have delegated? Explain.
- 163.** Give an example of a time you've supported someone in another department.
- 164.** Describe your own personal standards for identifying and developing future leaders.
- 165.** How do you motivate and energize others to perform at their highest levels? Give an example of a time you've recognized and/or rewarded someone for their performance.

- 166.** To what extent do you solicit ideas and input from others? Give an example of a time where ideas from others helped you.
- 167.** In the past year, what specifically have you done in order to remain knowledgeable about your ministry? What trends do you see? Other than the Bible, what books have you been reading?
- 168.** What are your principle development needs and what are your plans to deal with them?
- 169.** What specific opportunities has God identified for you to further develop your passion and calling?
- 170.** Tell me about the personal standards you set for your ministry/work. Give an example to show how your work reflects your high personal standards.
- 171.** Give an example of an effort you've made to improve the way your current role gets done. What sustained improvements took place?
- 172.** How would your co-workers describe your personality and communication style? In what ways are you easy to work with? What makes you difficult to work with?
- 173.** Tell me the strengths and shortcomings of your previous supervisors. Describe what you consider to be an "ideal supervisor."
- 174.** What communication process do you use with your supervisor?
- 175.** What types of things are you looking for in your next ministry?
- 176.** Is there any information that would be helpful to you, as you give further consideration to this position?
- 177.** How can I be praying for you?
- 178.** Are there any questions that I can answer for you?
- 179.** Would you rather respond or initiate?
- 180.** Would you describe yourself as more competitive or altruistic?
- 181.** Would you rather be viewed by your peers as competent or well liked?
- 182.** Would you prefer to be out front or behind the scenes?

- 183.** When you find yourself in a group without a leader are you more inclined to personally fill the leadership vacuum or let someone else assume that role?
- 184.** Would you describe yourself as accepting or dissatisfied with the status quo?
- 185.** Would you describe yourself as more experimental in nature or more conservative?
- 186.** Do you prefer to set goals to guide your actions or be more flexible and have the freedom to respond as the circumstances dictate?
- 187.** Do you prefer to operate within a disciplined structure or do you prefer to define your own path?
- 188.** Would you describe yourself as naturally more optimistic or pessimistic?
- 189.** Are you a more linear practical thinker or a more strategic thinker playing out “what if” scenarios in your mind?
- 190.** Do you prefer to make a decision that requires problem solving on your part, or do you prefer to leave those types of decisions to a supervisor?
- 191.** Do you prefer to spend time creatively dreaming about future plans or orchestrating and managing the current plan?
- 192.** Would you prefer to try and win over a stranger or spend time with close acquaintances?
- 193.** Do you naturally extend trust or do you believe that trust has to be earned?
- 194.** Do you prefer to lead in the conversation or let the other person lead?
- 195.** Do you prefer more multi-relationships or fewer deep interpersonal relationships?
- 196.** Do you prefer frequent interaction with your supervisor or more independence?
- 197.** If there is an issue that needs to be addressed, do you feel compelled to bring it to the surface or more inclined to wait and see if it will take care of itself?
- 198.** Do you find yourself listening and empathizing with the emotions of those you talk with or are you more inclined to give them practical advice on how to deal with their situation?
- 199.** Do you prefer a team sports or individual sports environment?
- 200.** Do you feel compelled to be involved in the growth of others or would you prefer to focus on your own growth?

About Sacred Structures and Jim Baker



For the past 10 years Jim has served as Executive Pastor at Brentwood Baptist Church outside Nashville, Tennessee serving alongside Senior Pastor Mike Glenn to lead one of the largest and fastest growing churches in the nation.

During Jim's tenure Brentwood Baptist Church has doubled and tripled every significant metric of church growth and health and has grown from a staff of 14 ministers to over 50 with a support staff of over 100. Jim is also a certified Model-netics Instructor, a nationally recognized training system of organizational and management concepts and principles.

In his spare time Jim exercises his passion for both creativity and structure through his hobby of reclaiming vintage bibles, hand made pieces and broken and cast away items and repurposing them into crosses and representations of biblical metaphors. Jim sees these "sacred structures" as representative of how Christ "makes all things new" through God's Word and his Spirit and can repurpose our mistakes and our lives for his purposes.

Information on Jim's coaching, consulting, training and speaking services as well as purchase of his art structures is available on his website, SacredStructures.org.