

Evaluating Prospective Pastoral Candidates

Practical Advice

Character

Consistent Christlike character is essential for ministry effectiveness. The qualifications for the pastor in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are the standard. There are no perfect pastors just as there are no perfect people. The best men at their best are but men, as someone has said. But pastors must have ample evidence of God's grace in personal godliness, be well-established in spiritual disciplines, and must be living beyond reproach. Their character should be consistent and predictable. God changes people, but in a pastor that change must already be clearly evident, established, and effective.

Conscience

A Bible-informed, Spirit-filled conscience serves as a moral and ethical governor for a man's life and ministry. Conscience is not perfect, but it is vital. Discover where a man lands on questions of conscience. These questions of choices may be answered by believers and ministers in varying ways. Where does he stand on music, modesty, entertainment, and media? What boundaries of behavior does he have for himself and his family? Where he personally lands will likely lead to where the church will eventually land.

Capacity

Every pastor has a combination of spiritual gifts, natural abilities, personality, and life experiences. Every pastor will have strengths and some areas in which he is not particularly proficient. Although we all should be striving to improve, you cannot make someone into something he is not. A pastor's ministry will often be defined by his corollary gifts such as administrative expertise, evangelistic burden, counseling expertise, or exceptional preaching or teaching abilities. Personality is hard-wired and is unlikely to change substantially. Get to know the prospective candidate well. Take your time. He should be a good solid match for the church.

Companion

A pastor's wife should be a woman of excellent Christ-like character. She should be a devoted wife and mother with a sweet disposition. She should be a committed church member, using her gifts and abilities in church and community life. She should be in full support of her husband's pastoral ministry. She may have unusual abilities. Most pastors' wives are preoccupied with caring for their own children and home. This is a great model and an important insurance plan for a church. Others are able to serve as an administrative assistant, teach a class, assist in the music program, or organize activities. Let her be herself and serve the Lord in light of her gifts, capacity, and life experiences. Get to know her in the evaluation process. The children should reflect well upon the Lord and their parents.

Change

God has commanded that believers to be in the ongoing process of changing to be more like Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:2). Both pastor and people must be committed to growth in godliness. This process requires self-denial and self-discipline and involves confession, repentance, and humility. The pastor and lay leaders and membership must turn from

forms of worldliness, fleshliness, and selfishness. All must turn afresh toward Christ for His sake and glory. Churches are made up of imperfect people at every level. The pastor and his people are works in progress. Change comes by God's grace through commitment to biblical ministry under courageous, godly leadership. Find a pastor who will challenge the church to grow and change. Then grow and change together.