

Is it Time to Change Ministries? **A Checklist of Vital Questions**

I. Spiritual Considerations – Is it the will of God for me to seek a change of ministry?

Am I...

- A. Truly *dedicated* to Christ and willing to do His will? (Romans 12:1-2)
- B. Immersing my life in *God's Word* and doing what I know to be His will? (Psalm 119:105)
- C. *Prayerfully* seeking God's will? (Psalm 143:10)
- D. Keeping my *motives* free from worldly thinking? (1 John 2:15-17)
- E. Sensitive to the leading of the *Holy Spirit*? (Acts 16:6-10)
- F. Listening to *wise, godly, mature counsel* from people who know God, me, and life well? (Romans 15:14)
- G. *Submissive* to the authority God has placed over me? (Hebrews 13:17)
- H. Exercising good *stewardship* of my God-given spiritual gifts, talents, and opportunities? (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- I. Focusing upon *today's* responsibilities rather than being sinfully anxious about tomorrow? (Matthew 6:31-34)
- J. *Trusting* God during the uncertain times and acknowledging Him in all my ways? (Proverbs 3:5-6)

II. Personal Considerations – Why am I considering a change?

- A. Could my real need be to improve my ministry skills rather than change my location?
- B. Have I faithfully shepherded this church to a point of maturity and readiness for a change of pastoral leadership? Have I truly completed the task God gave me?
- C. Is the church able to sustain a change of pastoral leadership at this time?
- D. Have I noticed mood swings in myself or my wife that are negatively affecting my stability? If so, what is causing this?
- E. Am I allowing one or two primary people in the church to keep me off balance?
- F. Do I have the support of the lay leadership and a strong majority of the church membership?
- G. Is this a good time for my wife and children to change ministries?
- H. Am I financially prepared for a change of ministry?
- I. Am I changing ministries too often?

III. Practical Considerations – How does the process of transition take place?

- A. Timetable – 12 to 24 months to transition to another ministry
- B. Preparation
 - 1. Resume, cover letter, biographical profile, doctrinal statement
 - 2. References – all contact information from references; significance of reference

- C. Network of communication – Pastors, mentors, evangelists, college referral service, mission board directors, camp directors
- D. It is best to move from one ministry to another, if possible, without an intervening time out of the ministry.
- E. Communication with current church’s lay leadership – timing, ethics, confidentiality

IV. Candidating Considerations – How does the process of candidating work?

- A. Expect several months of discussion and waiting prior to a first visit.
- B. The first visit is usually pulpit supply only with a possible informal meeting with the search committee or lay leaders.
- C. A candidating visit should last long enough to get to know the ministry and to allow the people to get to know you and your family. Two Sundays and the week in between is ideal.
- D. The vote should occur within a week of the candidating visit.
- E. Weigh the affirmative percentage of the vote. Most candidates like to have a 90% plus positive vote. Churches vary on the minimum percent needed to call a pastor (70-80%).
- F. Complete your current ministry on a positive note.

V. Retirement Considerations – Has the time arrived for a transition out of full-time pastoral ministry?

- A. Health – Do I have the energy to meet the demands of full-time ministry? What about my wife’s health and energy?
- B. Family – Is it time to relocate near other family members? Any special needs of children or grandchildren to consider?
- C. Financial – Are we financially prepared for retirement?
- D. Ministry – What type of ministry will I continue to have? What is realistic? What are some opportunities?
- E. Church – Should I remain in the church from which I am retiring or find another church home?
- F. Transition Plan – Does the church have a succession plan for an orderly transition to a new pastor, perhaps one who has been trained under the retiring pastor?

Resources

Before You Move: A Guide to Making Transitions in the Ministry by John Cionca
 Published by Kregel Publications in Grand Rapids, Michigan (2004). This book is helpful in sorting through relocation and candidating issues. The earlier version of this publication (published in 1994) was titled *Red Light, Green Light: Discerning the Time for a Change in Ministry*.
<https://www.amazon.com/Before-You-Move-Transitions-Ministry/dp/0825423929>