

If I Were a Gatekeeper...

If I were called upon to stand at the gate to the professional ministry, I would like to seek answers to the following questions regarding a potential candidate:

1. *Will the applicant be able to stand the heat in the kitchen?* (Evidence: Current red flags of defensiveness; how the candidate handles conflict *now*.)
2. *Will the applicant learn from failure?* (Evidence: Conversation about a conflict experience; the candidate's attitude toward it.)
3. *Will the applicant be immobilized by indecision?* (Evidence of crippling passivity and/ or hostility.)
4. *Will the applicant be able to cut the academic mustard?* (Evidence: High school and college marks; IQ estimate by clinical psychologist.)
5. *Will the applicant appreciate and be accepting of the broad range of the pastoral role?* (Evidence: Results of role-clarification tests.)
6. *Will the applicant have the capacity for self-discipline?* (Evidence: *How time is scheduled now: e.g., is there a balance between work and leisure time activities?*)
7. *Will the applicant work well with groups?* (Evidence: *Current* group involvement, both as a member and as a leader.)
8. *Will the applicant work well with people of other cultures and gender different from his/her own?* (Evidence: *Current* interactions with others are friendly; or, total lack of interactions.)
9. *Does this person demonstrate understanding of appropriate professional and personal boundaries?* (Evidence: Avoiding sexual innuendos. Is he/she sensitive to the behavior of misuse of power over a congregant?)
10. *Will the applicant be likely to consult with his/her peers?* (Evidence: Did he or she *take the initiative* in seeking out his/her pastor for discussion regarding the "call"?)
11. *Will the applicant have appreciation for laypersons and their work?* (Evidence: The *range* of occupations the candidate has considered for him/herself; one's "comprehension of the world of work.")

12. *Will the applicant be an "organization person"-in the better sense of that term?* (Evidence: Does he/she now ask questions regarding the institution of the church, the presbytery, how candidate selection is made,etc.?)
13. *Will the applicant be able to prepare and deliver helpful sermons?* (Evidence: Do current thought processes effectively demonstrate creativity, logic, sequence, movement?)
14. *Will the applicant be able to experience feelings of accomplishment from his/her . work?* (Evidence of current consideration of short-range objectives as well as long- term goals.)
15. *Will the applicant be able to enjoy his/her successes?* (Evidence: Can he/she now *talk* about successes without embarrassment?)
16. *Will the applicant be able to live with the realities of a pastor's income?* (Evidence: Current understanding of what constitutes a pastor's income, as well as present budgeting practices.)
17. *Will the applicant's spouse and family be happy and satisfied?* (Evidence: Is the spouse mentioned (included) in his/her conversation with you? Further evidence: interview with spouse and family or future spouse.) -
18. *Will the applicant be able to tolerate the tension between the "church" and the "world"?* (Evidence: *Quality* of one's conversation regarding the world and the church.) 1
19. *Will the applicant be able to tolerate the ambiguity inherent in the pastoral role: e.g., to some, a saint; to others, a parasite?* (Evidence: one's sensitivity to this reality.)
20. *Will the applicant be able to function as a "change-agent" in an institution regarded by many as a basically conserving-institution?* (Evidence: One's concept of a change- agent and attitude toward the "institution" of the church.)
21. *Will the applicant serve as an adequate pastoral counselor?* (Evidence: Does he/she *listen to you?* ...answer your questions straightforwardly, without hedging...use unadorned language...try to *impress* you?)
22. *Will the applicant grow; that is, take seriously his/her need for continuing education?* (Evidence: What is his/her attitude toward theological education? ...is it something \"merely to \"get through\"?)
23. *Will the applicant work well with session and session committees?* (Evidence: Attitude toward "authority" and authority figures stemming from childhood, adolescent and current relationships with parents and other authority figures.)

24. *Will the applicant function by “fits and starts”? That is, be "episodic" (bursts of energy followed with passivity), or "programmatic) (sustained drive toward objectives)?* (Evidence: How he/she *now* functions in school: e.g., scheduling of work, writing of term papers, etc.)
25. *Will the applicant take initiative, or simply be reactive?* (Evidence: Does he/she ask questions of you, or simply respond to yours?)
26. *Is the applicant in touch with his/her feelings?* (Evidence: *Range* of feeling! expression demonstrated in the interview: capacity for deep commitment? ...for expression of appropriate anger, etc.?)
27. *Will the applicant be using the church to:*
 - (A) *work out his/her own dependency needs (escape to Mother Church's bosom when the going gets tough)?* (Evidence: Ask the clinical psychologist.)
 - (B) *expiate guilt:* (Evidence: Does he/she have a "compulsion" to preach?...is he/she free “not to preach”?)
 - (C) *provide corporate sanction for expression of unrecognized hostility?* (Evidence: *Ask a clinical psychologist*)
 - (D) *give expression to Messianic aspirations?* (Evidence: Does he/she impress as a human being?)
28. *Will the applicant “weather well”?* (Evidence: Are his/her basic and occupational interests similar to who are engaged on a long-term basis in people-related jobs?)

Don Falkenberg, March 1973

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