

If you're new to a youth ministry position, practice interviewing by asking some of the following questions of those who have been holding down the fort till you got there. You could ask them in the past tense—"Why were you interested in working with the youth ministry?" Or you could phrase them with the future in mind—"Are you interested in continuing to work in your current role?" Comments about the purpose or value of the question is in parentheses at the end of each question.

(The **Prospective Staff Interview Questions Worksheet** includes these same questions and space for taking notes during an interview.)

1. Church Background

How did you hear about our ministry? (This gives you insight into which forms of recruiting are giving good results.)

Why are you interested in working with us? (People's motives for joining a ministry vary. They may want to spend more time with their own kids who are in the ministry. They may want to stop teenagers from repeating the same mistakes they did. They may be bored and really like the music that the high school band plays.)

How long have you been going to our church? (Someone who's just started coming may be a church hopper, or even have a history of stirring up dissension wherever they go.)

What brought you here? (It's helpful to know if they've grown up in your denomination or if they were intrigued by the sermon topics advertised in the paper.)

Are you a member of the church? (What's your church's policy on membership and volunteering? More and more churches are leaning toward requiring volunteers to be church members, for more accountability.)

2. Spiritual Background

Tell me about your faith journey. (The reason for asking the question this way is that it invites a more comprehensive story than if you ask, "Tell me about when you became a Christian." Instead of hearing "I was saved in July 1985 at Bible camp," you'll learn details that may trigger other questions or give you a feel for experiences that equip them for particular kinds of ministry.)

How long have you been a Christian? or **Talk to me about how you became a Christian.** (If you feel the answer to any question is incomplete, reframe the question until you're satisfied with the answer.)

On a scale from one to ten, what's your relationship with Christ like now and why? (Sometimes you'll get people who have recently renewed their faith and are eager to get active in the church. You may want to give them some time to get grounded by attending a small group of their own rather than placing them in leadership. Question any extreme on the scale. If they're a one or two, find out if they expect the youth ministry to bolster their faith. If they're a nine or ten, how do they deal with the dry times in their walk?)

What do you do to keep your spiritual life sharp? (Are they active in a Bible study or small group? Do they practice spiritual disciplines like devotions and prayer? You're trying to get a sense of how they nurture their own faith. If they aren't maturing themselves, they can't help someone else.)

Are you or have you ever been disciplined or been in a small group? (This is especially appropriate if the person is applying to be a small group leader. If they've never experienced a successful small group, they'll have difficulty leading a group. You may want to suggest that, before they volunteer in the youth ministry, they take some time to ground themselves. A tough call? Yes, but it communicates that you're more interested in their spiritual growth than in their being a body serving in the youth ministry. Don't worry they'll come back.)

3. Ministry experience

Are you serving with any other ministries? (Typically, youth ministry is one of the most time-intensive ministries of the church. Unless they're helping out in a non-relational capacity—e.g. putting together newsletters for you or entering data in the database—they won't have time or energy to serve in other ministries at the same time.)

Have you served in another ministry in the past? If so, why did you stop serving? (You're listening for patterns here. Does the person have a track record of leaving when things get tough? Do they cause conflict and leave? Do they leave if they don't get their own way? If you have a corresponding section in your application, you can do some comparing. Word of experience: if someone left their last ministry because of unresolved conflict, you can bet that conflict will follow them into this ministry.)

[Church Name]

[Contact Name and Phone #]

What do you believe your spiritual gifts are? Or what do you love doing? What have other people told you you're good at?

(Do their gifts fit the needs of the job for which they're applying? They may have been "guilted" into volunteering with the youth ministry, when their talents really lie with the senior citizens or the justice and mercy committee. You're also looking to see if other people have affirmed their gifts. Often we'll hear the phrase, "God's leading me to work with the students." Don't be satisfied merely with their assertion. Ask, "Who else has seen you in action and affirmed this leading?" Probe for details.

Have you ever worked with our ministry before? (If you're relatively new to the church—and especially if you know there was divisiveness in the ministry before you came—you'll protect the ministry by asking the question. If this person left because of your predecessor and now wants to come back, is that a good thing or a bad thing? Investigate this one.)

4. Personal information

Introduce this section by saying something like this: "It's important that we have a handle on the personal lives of our leadership team because seasons of life and relational dynamics can greatly impact our ministry. This information is strictly confidential, unless we get your permission to talk about it with a third party. Please tell what you feel we should know and what you are comfortable with sharing, with the understanding that we need to know anything that would influence or impact your ministry with students and the ministry as a whole."

(Optional) What is your home situation? Are you married? Are there children? Do you have a roommate(s)? (You're listening for issues dealing with their personal relationships. Are they divorced, separated, living with someone of the other gender? What is your ministry's and your church's stance on these issues? If they are divorced or widowed, how long has it been, and have they worked through the grieving and other issues affiliated with those kind of losses?)

(Optional) If married, are your spouse and/or kids supportive of your commitments? (You're trying to avoid putting this person in conflict. If they're not being supported, their ministry can be hindered.)

Where do you work? (Be listening for jobs that may affect the applicant's fit with the ministry. For example, if she's a CPA, she may be out of commission from January until April. If she's teaches high school or middle school, will she flame out if she serves students "after hours" as well?)

Are you reasonably content with your job? (Discontent is a yellow flag only; job satisfaction may or may not impact their effective ministry.)

Tell me about your relationship with your family growing up. (You're listening for unresolved issues here. Although you're not a therapist, you may learn you need to recommend one. Again, people get into ministry with mixed motives. How they dealt with (and continue to relate to) their family of origin affects how they do ministry.)

Students with whom you are in relationship pick up not only what you teach, but also what you model. What one thing in your life would you like them to learn from you? On the flip side, what one thing would you rather they didn't learn from you?

Each of us struggles with a character weakness or a stubborn bad habit. What would you say yours is? (Compare this response to the previous one. Are they similar? If not, why not?)

Is there anything in your life currently, or in your past, that we should know about in your ministry to young students? (Alcoholism, drug use, family concerns, child abuse, depression, etc.)

What are your views on the legal use of alcohol/smoking, etc.? (This question may be related to certain views they expressed on their application or that the church holds.)