

*This questionnaire was recently sent to me from a pastoral search committee. Perhaps the questions and my answers will be helpful for other churches as well – to have an idea of my beliefs and philosophies in ministry. - RLW II*

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for your prayers and considerations during the last few months, as well as the current opportunity to share a bit about myself, beliefs, and ministry with you.

1. What is your vision in accomplishing missions?

I have been blessed by God to have been able to proclaim the gospel in Venezuela, Alaska, and China. I have participated in preaching, prayer walking, construction, theological education, and personal evangelism all over the world. Since I became a Christian I have had a passion and solid understanding of the necessity of missions. In 2000 I spent nearly four months in China that reshaped my view of God's purpose for missions.

Two thousand years have now gone by since the establishment of the New Testament Church and its command to preach the gospel to all nations. (Matthew 28:18-20) Yet 42% of the world population falls under the category of -unreached people groups (people groups with less than 2% professing Christian believers). There is much work to be done. The work of the gospel among the nations demands the attention; and participation from Christians equal to its importance. The importance of taking the gospel to the nations is that without the gospel they will not be saved from their sins!

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Romans 10:14)

This very issue is the reason for my resignation from my previous pastoral position at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church. After teaching doctrine concerning the necessity of explicit faith in Christ for salvation I was confronted with the fact that many leaders in the church rejected this doctrine. I sought to individually counsel them from Scripture (using the above passages and others on the subject) and Baptist documents (The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 was the doctrinal statement of the church and it states concerning this matter: There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.). Yet they insisted that God saves, by unknown means, those who do not have access to the gospel. Had I thought that missions was unimportant, and the gospel of Christ not a priority, perhaps I would be there today. However, I see the gospel of Jesus Christ and its application through evangelism and missions as the cornerstone of the church (Acts 4:11).

My vision (according to my understanding of Scripture) for participating in missions is first to personally apply the implications to myself and family - to pray for the work of missions, give to the cause of missions, participate personally as God allows in missions, and teach my family the importance of the gospel and its application to the nations. I have also dedicated myself to the work of the gospel among the Awa people of China.

God placed these people on my heart and in my life. My prayer and personal work is that they would not be an unreached people by the end of my lifetime. I have worked with three different teams of missionaries among them for over seven years - providing prayer, encouragement, and assistance as God allows.

As a man called by God to lead others in the church I seek to teach and instill the following attributes in others:

- Teaching the importance of missions often to those in my care that they would grow to be obedient to Christ - praying for God to create a true passion in others for His glory among the nations.
- Teaching the theology and history of missions, as well as educating on the channels that Southern Baptists have created for churches to participate together in missions.
- Providing times of worship dedicated to missions through special missions' conferences or guest missionary preachers - also providing special times of focused prayer for missions and missionaries.
- Creating opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally for people to experience and participate in the work of Christ among the nations.
- Encouraging people to follow God by becoming missionaries to other nations.

2. How important is it to you for the church to participate in missions?

In the end it is more important to Christ than to me that the church participates in missions. A believer that would have no desire for others to experience the grace of God - provided only by knowing Christ - has either a severely dysfunctional understanding of salvation or no true understanding of it at all.

There are many ways to measure participation. There are churches that give annually to missions in sums that are more than most churches' budgets. They give in order that people would be fed, aids cured, poverty eliminated, and children dressed; but they have no concern for telling these people of their sins and God's grace. While feeding the poor, curing aids, etcetera are of value, these churches are dead to the call of missions. Missions is not primarily about worldly issues but about the eternal matters of people. Missions is about people unable to be reconciled to God without personal faith in the Son of God who was crucified for their sins that they may receive grace rather than wrath.

Too many Christians have been taught that participation in missions is primarily a "checkbook" issue. Every Easter and Christmas they give and soon forget about the work of Christ among the nations. I expect more out of the Church because I believe that God expects more out of us! God is not in need of our money, but rather that which is harder for us to give: our hearts and minds. He calls all Christians to participate in the work of the gospel so that we will be shaped and formed to His concerns. Just as in other areas of the Christian life God is calling us to be transformed, to lay aside earthly thinking and see

things as He does. It is not that God primarily needs us to accomplish His will, but rather that we need to be satisfied in Him.

Not everyone will be as equally engaged and passionate in missions as me and others. However, I expect for those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells to have a genuine growing concern about people who do not have access to the gospel.

3. What priority do you place on outreach in ministry?

I place a high priority on outreach because I place a high priority on the gospel. The gospel proclamation needs not only go to the deep dark jungles of the world, but also to the deep dark sinful hearts of men and women in the neighborhoods of our churches! Salvation requires personal faith and repentance that is only revealed to persons through the gospel message.

Now many refer to outreach meaning entertainment and marketing (hosting events, or providing social programs for the community). When I refer to outreach it is implied that we are creatively, passionately, and lovingly engaging the community for the gospel of Christ, (personally, as well as corporately) not for our benefit, but for that of God's glory. Outreach with this understanding may take place in many forms; however, the end result is that people realize the need to and learn how to proclaim Christ in their everyday lives. It becomes a lifestyle rather than a program, and yields lasting conversions rather than fleeting entertainment.

4. What would you say your strengths/weakness are in ministry?

Strengths:

- Teaching, Preaching, Evangelism, Counseling, Administration/Marketing, Team Building and Encouraging.

Weaknesses:

- I easily over commit (hard to say no to people), time management (has a lot to do with the over committing), patience (I am learning more and more to wait on God, and look at things with larger timelines).

5. What areas of your ministry do you feel you need the most support?

- Prayer - simply because I do not feel that it is possible to pray enough for the ministry of the church.
- Leadership support- I have a young family that needs my attention at home more so than someone with grown children. I need the leaders of the church to help in organizing and executing ministries and events. I have a tendency to do everything that needs to be done myself when no one else is willing to help. Given willing people I delegate well, and everyone benefits from the experience.

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- Administrative Support- I have found myself taking over many office projects which could be easily delegated due to support staff unwilling or unable to learn necessary skills to help.

#### 6. What is your vision for the church?

My vision for the local church is that they would be a people established by the Word of God. They need to be people marked by a passion to work together in unity to glorify God in their community as well as the world. The church should be changing the culture rather than being changed by the culture. The church should be a ministry which is engaging and relevant to non-believers, while remaining uncompromising on biblical truth. The primary goal and vision of a church should be upon that of biblical health rather than any number of benchmarks that could be set – such as size, budgets, and etcetera. There are a great number

of churches that are large, wealthy, and even some who have many baptisms each year, who would fail a biblical health check up. Many of these churches have even departed from the true gospel in order to reach their aspirations. That is why I say that the matter of health is the essential vision I have for the church. If I can minister and maintain a biblically healthy church then God will surely bless us according to His good will.

Here are some of the areas that I believe have a major impact on the health of the Church:<sup>1</sup>

- Biblical Preaching
- Biblical Theology
- Biblical Understanding of the Gospel
- Biblical Understanding of Conversion
- Biblical Understanding of Evangelism and Missions
- Biblical Understanding of Membership
- Biblical Church Discipline
- Promotion of Christian Discipleship and Growth
- Biblical Understanding of Church Leadership

#### 7. What are your goals for the church and ministry?

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed idea of the importance and attributes of a healthy church I recommend Dr. Mark Dever's free pamphlet *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* available at: [http://rlwilson2.com/Documents/NineMarks.9\\_Marks\\_of\\_a\\_Healthy\\_Church.pdf](http://rlwilson2.com/Documents/NineMarks.9_Marks_of_a_Healthy_Church.pdf)

You may also visit the 9 Marks website at : [www.9marks.org](http://www.9marks.org)

(While I do feel that the points outlined by Dr. Dever are vital I do differ with him on some of their applications, so please ask me any questions you may have after reviewing these links that I may clarify my positions.)

Faithfulness! My main goals for the church and my ministry are not set by numeral anticipations but by biblical expectations. My prayer is that I am a man faithful to God in my life and ministry, and that my church is one marked by men and women who live faithful lives together. I desire that we would truly glorify God with our lives and service - that we would be a people led by his Word and Spirit. I want us to have as our agenda to seek God in his Word, study it together to know what it truly means, and then apply it to our lives and church - no matter how difficult it may be. I want us to be a people marked by true faithfulness to God, a people willing to follow where He commands.

This is my overall goal and would encompass any other goal that I would set for myself. In 30-40 years, Lord willing, as I reflect upon my ministry what will matter is my faithfulness, and the faithfulness of others that God through my ministry produced. I pray that God will use me and my service for His glory, in whatever capacity He sees fit.

8. How do you view your wife's place in your ministry?

God has greatly blessed me with a wonderful wife who is intelligent, beautiful, caring, and gifted in many ways. Her primary role in my ministry is to be my wife, to love, encourage, support, and help me to do all that God has called me to do. She is not a built in associate minister, nor an automatic Sunday school teacher, music leader, or nursery coordinator. I mention these things because often churches have in mind that the pastor and his wife are a 2 for 1 deal; you pay his salary so she must do \_\_\_\_\_. I expect my wife to primarily serve me and my family's needs just as I would expect any other man's wife to do so for him. However, as a Christian woman I expect her to involve herself in public worship, as well as individual ministry within the body and the community. Christa has always found places in the church to serve and minister to others. I have learned from past instances not to volunteer my wife for things; so I will always allow her to choose her place for service and ministry.

9. If applicable, how do you view your children's place in ministry?

As my children grow and Lord willing become Christians I will expect from them what the Bible teaches. I will expect them to worship God publicly, and privately, as well as find ways to serve Him in the church, and the community. I do not expect anything different from my children than others. My prayer is that my wife and I are raising men and women who love God passionately, with their hearts and minds, and who seek to please Him with their lives. This is what I would hope all Christian families pray for their families because this what the Bible sets forth.

10. How do you view a woman's place in ministry?

The Bible is very clear with examples and inferences of God's use of women for His service. However, there are two clear biblical prohibitions for women in the church. They are not to teach or to exercise authority over men. (1 Timothy 2:12) A woman

is able serve anywhere within the church so as far that she stays within the boundaries that God has established for her. I believe that the complementary position best reflects Scriptural interpretation concerning the roles of men and women in the Bible, as well as the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

Section VI. -While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

Section XVIII. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Below is a brief definition of Complementarianism. For more info I would suggest The Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood - [www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org).

*Complementarianism holds that God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the church. The complementarian position has clear implications for the ordination of women as well as for Christian views of marriage. Men are expected to take spiritual responsibility, often called "headship," for leadership in the home and in the church. Women are restricted from holding the teaching office of the church and from spiritual leadership in the home and in marriage.*

11. Are you looking for years of service in one place? If so, why?

Absolutely! For a few reasons:

1. My family desires to have a -home. Our personal desire is to be somewhere for a long time that can become home to our family. We want to be in a place where God can plant us in order that we can see lasting fruits of our lives and ministry and family.
2. The transforming work of God in the hearts and minds of people takes time. Often the more time a man dedicates to the teaching of one people is quite proportionate to the amount that God blesses His people. The vast majority of the men in ministry I admire

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have had long tenures in their churches. Patience is a key for success and faithfulness in ministry.

3. As I look to the Scriptures for a guide for ministry I do not see the modern mentality of pastoral ministry focused on the individual, but rather as the individual man of God focused on the church. Thus I associate a ministerial calling with commitment, from both sides joining together and pledging to seek God's will together.

11. What are your views on both contemporary and traditional worship services?

By worship service I assume that you refer primarily to musical styles. I believe that the church should be "intentionally mixed" in worship. Here is what I mean by that statement: many churches provide a "mixed" worship service mainly as a compromise position. I believe that the choice of worship styles should take in consideration the preferences of the local body. Our worship can be a testament to unity in the body rather than dissention and disunity. The focus of worship is to be God-ward, rather than man-ward and the songs that are chosen help to create that atmosphere. The focus of the church in worship is not to be on personal preferences, but on God.

Songs are not to be considered good based on whether or not they are old or new, but rather the content within them. For there are a great many songs old and new, fast and slow, popular and unknown that fail to measure when questioned whether the content is truly worshipful.

Likewise, the Bible places no restrictions on instrumentation; however, the focus and signature of the church's musical worship should be that of voices. Instrumentation should provide the background to encourage and guide the worshipers to their joyful task of singing of the greatness of God.

12. Why, exactly, are you leaving where you are presently serving?

Over the past year God has moved quite a few key families from our church away from our community. This has resulted in a budget shortfall that has unfortunately grown exponentially each month. We had initially hoped that by cutting non-essentials we could stop the bleeding and begin to recover, however the shortfall is more than we are able to make up in cuts. It has gotten to the point that there is not enough money for the bills and my salary both to be paid. Yet, still looming over the horizon is one more key family being transferred, and another beginning their preparations to move to another state.

We love our church family and are seeing God do some great things in people's lives even during this very difficult time. However in spite of what we see God doing and our love for the people here the fact is there are too few families in our body to support a full time pastor, and there are no opportunities in our very small remote town that would allow for me to make up the difference bi-vocationally. I am quite disappointed that we are not able

to stay here longer and minister to these wonderful people, but before I am a pastor I am a husband and father and I am obligated provide for my family. These are the circumstances that are moving our family to pursue God's leading to a new place of ministry.

13. What are your views about pastor's role in visitation?

Ministry often takes place outside the sanctuary, whether it is in hospitals, funeral homes, football games, or family's homes. I feel that visitation to believers and non-believers provide very important opportunities for growth, teaching, encouragement, and support. I do not feel that visitation is just the responsibility of the pastor but that every Christian. We should all be reaching out to people within as well as outside the church. I know men in the ministry that refuse to leave the study to visit, as well as churches and men who visit so often that they spend so little time in the study it is evident by their preaching. I do see need for a moderate position. While the pastor's primary function is preaching (ministering the Word) and prayer (Acts 6:1-4) I understand the necessity of building personal relationships with others for ministry.

14. How would you evaluate the suitability of an existing staff member(s) as part of your ministry team?

First of all I do not think that churches should be ran the same way that our federal bureaucracy runs in that when a new party comes to office all the staff must change. I know of well known men in the SBC who would not go to a new church without "their people". I have even heard of situations where a new pastor will not take a call to a new church unless he first has resignation letters of everyone on staff from the executive pastor to the janitor, and then keeps only who he wants.

I cannot see myself going to a place of ministry where I am so incompatible with the people theologically, as well as philosophically, that I would not be able to cordially work and minister with people whom the church has previously called.

My evaluation would be that of Scripture: Is the person called by God and the church to serve in his capacity, living and ministering properly, and teaching sound doctrine. If so then I would be pleased to serve with him, and encourage him in his ministry. (I am speaking primary to ministerial staff, however the guidelines would be similar for support staff.)

15. What is your view on resolving conflict within the church?

First you must define whether or not the conflict is based upon sin, or sinful intentions, or is a matter of personal preferences.

The Bible is clear that in matters of sin we are to discipline those who refuse to follow

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God's Word in their lives. The purpose is to restore, heal, and build up sinning believers (Matt. 18:15; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; Heb. 12:10-13; Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:20). The Bible also gives us clear guidelines concerning the way to bring about discipline of sin in the body.

Matthew 18:15-17 -If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Many times it is not overt sins that cause disunity in the church but personal preferences and personal convictions. In such matters it is important that we are careful not to create a sinful situation. We must turn to God's Word for our direction. Many people in the church disagree because there has been little true work in searching the Scriptures.

Often, leading people who disagree with each other through a few Scriptures will clear the air and if not it can teach us how to disagree and function in unity. The Bible has much to say directly, as well as by example, of how to properly relate to others in whom we have disagreements that are not sinful issues, but preferences and personal convictions. Romans chapter 14 is primarily concerned with this topic. Verse 13 lays a foundation concerning these issues "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother."

Unity in the local body should be a goal not only for the leadership of the church but of every member.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

I pray that if you have made it to this part of the letter I have not overwhelmed you! I truly wanted to give you a real look at who I am and what I believe. I look forward to speaking with you further and am in prayer for you during this time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have for me as I will be glad to answer.

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