

On Having a Good Interview in the Church

- (1) In answering questions try as much as possible to show what you are for rather than what you are against.

Interviewers have a responsibility and desire to find out what you believe and what you care about. If you have passionate concern about almost anything good it will be respected and accepted. You should therefore try to convey as full and complete a picture as possible of what the good and Godly things are that you want to devote your efforts in ministry to. "Give a reason for the hope that is in you."

- (2) In preparation for the interview you should review or rehearse the answers you would give to likely questions, keeping in mind number (1) above.

The atonement is a favourite question. It is tempting to concentrate on theories of the atonement that you do not like. However, it would be better to say what you understand by atonement and how you understand the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Keep your negative comments about other views to a minimum. Interviewers do not like to be attacked.

Other questions that might arise include: baptism, the theology of worship, what is the gospel, how to deal with fundamentalists and/or charismatics, the theology of ordered ministry and ministry of the laity, inclusive language, how you deal with conflict/stress, what support system you like to have, the theology of spirituality.

- (3) If the questions posed to you do not directly invite you to reveal your most important concerns then be sure to volunteer the information one way or another, either by expanding your answer to a given question or by raising the matter when you are given the chance. Do not leave the interview without showing the fire in your belly. (The fire of the Spirit, that is).
- (4) If your understanding of the Christian mission and Christian hope are directly related to Jesus and the Bible, and you can show that convincingly, you are unlikely to be unacceptable. In revealing what you stand for show the connection with Jesus as much as you can.
- (5) Interviewers want to know if you have experienced sorrow and loss and can empathize realistically with others who are in trouble. Be ready, if necessary, to share with them some of your own experience of loss, failure or adversity and the way in which your faith was operative in those circumstances.
- (6) Remember Micah 6:8 (do justice, love kindly, and walk humbly with your God), especially the latter which implies also walking humbly with your neighbours. In revealing your own passionate concerns try to do it in a "catholic" not "sectarian" spirit. Interviewers are typically concerned about how you will fit into the United Church ethos of tolerance for diversity. If you show a crusading mentality in the worst sense of the word you may be challenged. On the other hand, don't be "mealy mouthed", evasive or lukewarm. If they think you are a weasel you are in trouble.

Paul Newman
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