



The Top 5 Mistakes of Search Committees

The process of finding the man of God's choosing for pastoral leadership in a church is a challenging one. In independent churches, the time commitment and sometimes frustrating process can take their toll on both the Search Committee and the church family. In my current consulting ministry, I've observed a few common mistakes that could be avoided—and perhaps greater success achieved. Consider these five:

1. **Not enough prayerful preparation**

Prayer by the entire church family is crucial. Additionally, the Search Committee in a special way ought to emphasize prayer for God's clear leading and for guidance as they establish and implement the process to be followed in the search itself.

Want help with these initial organizational and spiritual preparations? We provide consultation to churches in this area. Contact me at JVogel@nfibc.org or call me at 810.853.9204.

2. **Unrealistic expectations**

Most of us are thankful for our churches, and we believe they deserve the very best in pastoral leadership. But frankly, we sometimes set the bar so high we will never be able to find a pastor who can fulfill all those expectations. The bottom line: no pastor has the "entire package." All pastors have weaknesses and strengths! That's not to say that we shouldn't expect a measure of skill in the pastoral roles of preaching,

caring, and administration, but each man's abilities and strengths differ from those of others. We need to be realistic and wise in our pastoral expectations.

And another thing to keep in mind: the "pool" of available pastors who are qualified and share our values and doctrine has been shrinking as Bible Colleges and seminaries continue to close or refocus on liberal arts educational priorities.

3. Moving too quickly

Those months or even years between pastors' ministries can be difficult ones. In a desire to "get it done" or because of weariness with a process that can take so long, some committees rush ahead. They may ask a pastor to candidate without having taken adequate time to review references or ask questions and interact thoroughly. The results can be disastrous! Take your time. And don't let church members who are understandably impatient deter you from a careful process. God's man *in God's time* is what you want.

4. Overemphasizing preaching

Most churches make their decision about a pastoral candidate based primarily on preaching ability. In short, if a man is a good communicator and makes a good impression from behind the pulpit on a "candidating Sunday," he's in! It's almost as if we say, *Who cares about the other stuff; we won't fall asleep on Sunday mornings!* Please don't misunderstand me here. Preaching is important—I have

always believed that there's no excuse for boring people with Bible! But pastoring isn't just about preaching. Pastoring also involves caring ministry and administrative leadership. Find a man who likes to serve people outside of the pulpit—one who will counsel, visit, and fellowship with the church family between Sundays. Look for more than just a preacher. Look for a pastor.

5. Compromising convictions

The sad reality is that some churches are willing to rethink their convictions or core values to call a well-known or highly regarded pastor who may not fully share their current beliefs. A willingness to trade beliefs for a big name—it happens! No doubt an independent Baptist church has a right to vote to change its established convictions at any time, but its motivations for doing so are probably not principled under these circumstances. My advice: Exercise carefulness and patience. Don't compromise your Biblical convictions or core values. God will lead you to a pastor who shares your beliefs.

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