



**Questions for Trent Hunter  
For the Congregation, February, 2017**

**PERSONAL**

1. Briefly describe your conversion to being a disciple of Christ.

You've asked so many great questions, and this is the best place to start. My salvation began with the prayers of a friend in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. In 1994 he invited me to church and I joined him. I heard new and true things there. I heard about sin and I believed what I heard. I heard about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for sinners, and I believed. I cannot express my gratitude to our Lord for his grace to pursue me and to redeem my life from the pit.

2. How do you describe Jesus Christ and what does He mean to you?

Jesus Christ could be described in multiple ways, for his glory is multifaceted. John wrote his gospel in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we would have life in his name. This is a beautiful summary of who Jesus is and who he is to me. To borrow from the words of a favorite song, Jesus rescued me "out of my bondage, sorrow and night," and he brought me "into his freedom, gladness, and light."

3. Describe your call to pastoral ministry and how it has been affirmed.

As a new Christian I started Bible studies, shared the gospel, and longed for others to hear and treasure the Scriptures. I desired to pastor, and this desire was affirmed by those who knew me well, including several pastors. After Bible college, I was invited by my church to return as the youth pastor. Since those early years, my desire, fruitfulness, and the affirmation of others has only grown. It's all of grace, and an encouragement to press on in the work of shepherding.

4. How does your wife feel about a potential call to Heritage?

Kristi is my true partner in life and ministry. She has been supportive of this process from the start. But more than supportive, she has been my conversation partner and counselor through every interaction I've shared with Heritage's elders. We've watched sermon and prayer service videos from Heritage together, we've prayed together, and we've made a few friends among you through two visits.

5. Closely examine each of the Bible's qualifications for pastors, deacons, and their wives (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

- A. Which are your strongest qualities?

I thought Kristi would be the best one to answer this question and the next. I asked her to pick out two strong and two weak qualities.

Kristi: "Trent has a number of qualities that I could highlight here. I'll highlight two. He is clearly 'the husband of one wife.' He is loyal to me and faithful in our marriage. I have complete trust in Trent and how he relates to other women. In addition Trent is 'well thought of by outsiders.' He genuinely cares for the people in our church and community, from sensitive souls in our church to bank tellers to staff and fellow parents at our children's school."

B. Which are your weakest?

Kristi: "On Trent's harder days he can be impatient and discontented. I think this would relate to the qualification of not being "quick tempered." This manifests itself the worst—I know this sounds weird—when we're moving furniture around together. This is not an ongoing problem and Trent has grown in this over our marriage. Second, Trent is a clear-headed leader in our home and at church, but during harder and weightier seasons he can become sullen and discouraged. I might put this under the category of 'sober-mindedness.' Trent knows during these times that he needs to watch his sleep!"

C. Are there any which presently disqualify you from ministering? (Note the phrase "must be" in 1 Tim. 3:2.)

None.

D. Describe your wife and your relationship to her.

When I asked Kristi to marry me I could not have known how great a decision I was making. Kristi is patient, longsuffering, a diligent planner and worker, an attentive listener, supportive, a lover of God's Word, and gentle. She is not a gossip, or brash, or attention-seeking. Kristi and I are joined in all of life, talking from the start to the end of the day, laughing, eating pizza, watching movies, putting up with each other as sinners in marriage must, hosting friends, and playing with the kids.

E. Describe the spiritual life of your children.

We have three children between six and eight years old. They are obedient and they are cheerful, by God's grace. Each child has a Bible, and they have varying levels of eagerness to read their Bible alone. My son, the oldest, reads quite a bit on his own, while my youngest daughter asks nightly for us to read a book called, The Ology, which instructs the kids in theology. We read Scripture and pray at the dinner table, and the children love this. In the spirit of Deuteronomy 6, we talk about the Lord in our coming and our going, not car ride to school, and at their bedside at night. We are encouraged for God's work in their hearts.

6. What are your regular practices regarding the spiritual disciplines?

As a general practice, I read, meditate on, and pray a psalm each day. For maybe a decade now I have used Don Whitney's Psalm a Day method. I take the day of the month, then open to that Psalm, then add 30 5 times, which yields five possible psalms for meditation. In conjunction with this, I'll often pick a verse to return to throughout the day and will set this as the image of my lock-screen on my phone. To help me stay faithful with this, I have a small notebook devoted only to Scripture and prayer. I keep notes on Scripture in this book, as well as notes about prayer needs I learn about. In addition, I have some irregular practices. At times I'll engage in extended study in a single book. Or, at times I'll carry with me a print out of a text to memorize in the car.

7. Who are your favorite Christian writers, commentators, theologians, etc.? Why? What books have you read in the past year?

In addition to those men who have heralded the Word of God week-in and week-out in the churches I've called home, I am grateful for the influence of many writers and preachers in my life. Here are a few:

- John Piper taught me to see the glory of God in all of life and all of Scripture.
- Stephen Wellum taught me to see how the Bible fits together and centers in Jesus Christ.
- Albert Mohler taught me to understand the world through the worldview of Scripture.
- Tony Payne taught me to properly relate the logistics of church life to the life of the church.
- Tim Keller taught me how to wisely consider the unbelieving hearer in preaching.
- Paul Tripp taught me to see the church as a congregation of counselors.
- Mark Dever taught me to seek a biblical church through biblical means.
- Dave Helm taught me the beauty and power of a properly prepared sermon.
- D.A. Carson taught me to mingle a love for the main things and the minutia of Scripture.

In the past year, I have read—more and less carefully!—a number of books. Here's a selection:

- *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*, by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.
- *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*, by Jonathan Leeman
- *Know the Heretics*, by Justin S. Holcomb
- *Knowing God*, by Mark Jones
- *It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies*, by Mary Eberstadt
- *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else In Business*, by Patrick M. Lencioni
- *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix Paperback*, by Edwin H. Friedman
- *Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong and Lasting Marriage*, by Rob Green
- *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, by Daniel J. Boorstin
- *Shame: How America's Past Sins Have Polarized Our Country*, by Shelby Steele
- *Preaching: Simple Teaching on Simply Preaching*, by Alec Motyer
- *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, by Heath Lambert
- *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, by Mark Dever
- *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love*, by Edward Welch
- *Neighborhood Mapping: How to Make Your Church Invaluable to The Community*, by John Fuder

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## THEOLOGY

8. Do you fully endorse the HBC Confession of Faith?

Yes, I do. May our Triune God be praised for these glorious truths!

*What is your understanding of the Bible's teaching on . . .*

9. Creation

The first thing to say about Creation is that it is the Lord's. The Lord is the self-existent, self-sufficient, and eternally existing Creator of all things. From nothing, he made everything. When asked about my view of Creation, though, usually a person has one of a few things in mind, so I'll hit those. First, I believe the earth was created in six days. This fits best with my reading of the account itself, and with the Old and New Testament's assumption of historical days as a pattern for the calendar, culminating in rest. That said, I make an important distinction between the age of the earth and an historical Adam. This gives us a nice opportunity to practice how we weight theological differences. If someone were to disagree with me on the age of the earth, I would seek to persuade them. If they were to claim that Adam was not an historical figure, then I would warn them. The story of redemption hangs on a real man named Adam and a real fall into sin (Ro. 5; 1 Cor. 15). These two issues present different theological consequences.

10. The inerrancy of Scripture:

The Word of God is a faithful and true reflection of God himself—every word inspired by the Spirit through human authors, so that the words of Scripture are the very Word of God.

11. The knowledge of God and the future:

There is not one atom of space or moment in time over which God does not possess perfect and exhaustive knowledge. This is a basic entailment of what it means for him to be God and is a ground for our praise.

12. The extent of man's depravity:

In a word, total. The biblical portrait of the human problem is bleak. Every human being is born guilty in Adam, and polluted by Adam's sin. Put another way, we are born condemned and corrupted by sin. We are not each as bad as we could be, but every part of us—our mind, our bodies, our desires, etc.—are twisted and corrupted by sin.

13. Hell:

This is a terrifying but true doctrine. As a consequence of sin, human beings are condemned to a punishment that is just, eternal, conscious, and terrible. This is a removal from the blessing of God and an experience of his personal wrath. Hell includes everyone who is not found in Christ, for humans are without excuse since God's invisible attributes and divine nature are clearly seen in what He has made.

14. The sovereignty of God in salvation:

Given human sinfulness, we cannot make the slightest move toward God apart from grace. But in the new birth, the Spirit regenerates our hearts so that we are freed from sin to respond in faith to him. This doctrine is a ground of great comfort in life, great confidence in our evangelism, and great rejoicing for eternity.

15. Repentance and Faith:

Faith and repentance have rightly been compared to two sides of the same coin. Repentance is a turning from trust in oneself and this world's treasures, and a turning to Jesus Christ for the treasure that he is. This entails a renouncing of sin but is deeper than a mere decision about external behavior. Repentance entails a remorse for sin in the heart and agrees with God's view and verdict concerning sin. In this way, repentance is integral to saving faith. If repentance is letting go of the treasure of this world, then faith is laying hold of Jesus Christ as our treasure.

Biblical saving faith entails both believing certain things about Christ and personally and fully trusting in Christ.

16. Justification and Sanctification:

Justification, as a facet of our salvation, makes possible every other facet. Justification is that act whereby God declares a sinner, “not guilty,” on account of Christ. Though righteous, Christ was declared, “guilty,” on our behalf. Through union with him we are not only declared “not guilty,” but we are declared “righteous,” as his righteousness is credited to us. Sanctification, as it is most commonly used, is an ongoing process of being made more holy; that is, more like our Lord Jesus Christ, into whose image we are being conformed. Both are brought about by the miraculous work of God by his Spirit.

17. The preservation and perseverance of believers:

Those whom the Lord saves, the Lord secures unto heaven. A professing Christian may be shown never to have savingly believed, but it is not possible for a Christian who is genuinely regenerated to have their salvation reversed. In other words, true believers persevere in believing precisely because they are preserved by God’s grace. They work out their salvation as God works in them for his good pleasure.

18. Baptism and the Lord’s Table:

Baptism is the sign of the new covenant in Christ. Baptism is a sign unique to the new covenant and reflects realities that are unique to the new covenant: union with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, as well as the washing of sin. This is the visual symbol given to us by which we publically signal our saving allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Whereas baptism is that one-time obedience symbolizing conversion, the Lord’s Supper is a repeated obedience symbolizing the broken body and shed blood of Christ. The Lord’s Supper points backward to Christ’s death and forward to his return, as believers proclaim his death until that time. The Lord’s Supper is a symbol for the congregation to share together with examination.

19. The proper use of the Old Testament law:

The old covenant given to us through Moses has been eclipsed by the new covenant in Christ. The old covenant with its blessings and cursings has not been replaced, but fulfilled. That to which it pointed has come in Christ and so we are no longer under the old covenant. However, the old covenant is instructive for us in many ways, not only as a preparation for the coming of Christ, but also for instruction. Murder, theft, and adultery are wrong for us, not because they are commands given in the old covenant. Rather the old covenant expressed these commands because of prior realities tied to creation—every human being is made in God’s image. So, just as a rule in high school against punching people in the face is no longer binding when we have graduated, it is nevertheless instructive for us after we have left because that rule arises out of realities that are prior to our schooling. For those who are in Christ, we are under the law of Christ, which has internal and external entailments that far exceed that of the old covenant, but which are possible because of the new covenant blessings of the Spirit and a new heart; indeed, the law is written on our hearts and we hear and obey our shepherd’s voice.

20. Spiritual gifts, including your views about miraculous gifts:

Spiritual gifts are gifts of grace from God’s Spirit for believers for the upbuilding of the church. I am not convinced by the careful exegesis of relevant passages that the miraculous gifts have of necessity ceased. Yet I have not witnessed their use and am concerned that much of what is

attributed to God in the working of gifts is actually a work of deception. For this reason, I say I am “exegetically open but practically cautious.”

21. Divorce and remarriage:

In marriage, a man and woman join in a one-flesh union. God hates divorce, though he permits divorce in certain circumstances as a concession to human sin. Jesus allows an exception for adultery, where the offended party is free to leave, and the Apostle Paul allows for divorce in the case of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. In both of these instances, what may be termed a legitimate divorce allows for the possibility of remarriage without sin. I have been presented with complex scenarios which have required careful reflection and counsel among our elders. As elders, we are willing for a measure of interpretive difference among us.

22. Eschatology:

The Bible is an eschatologically oriented book moving from beginning to end, and from promise to fulfillment. The eschatological horizon of the Bible is the horizon for every text of the Bible, and so every sermon has a certain eschatological orientation depending on where in Scripture it falls. I believe that Christ will return as he promised in great glory. This is that great event and hope to which the New Testament looks. I hold to an historic premillennial view of the millennium based on my interpretation of Revelation 20. I believe that all of God’s Old Testament promises are already fulfilled in Christ in an inaugurated sense, and that they will be fulfilled completely in the new creation. We experience this reality in deeply personal ways, as we are new creations in Christ and yet we are being prepared for glory when our redemption will be complete. There are differences among God’s people on how we put together the timeline for end-times events. I’m okay with that. My pastoral practice is to encourage deference on particulars and hope in Christ’s coming and the completion of God’s new creation.

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## CHURCH LIFE & MINISTRY

23. How are you currently discipling people as shepherd and overseer of their souls?

Discipleship is the heart of the church’s work, a great privilege, and a deep joy. My own labor in discipleship happens in five ways. *First*, as an elder I lead our church with a team of men. In this role, I coach several Community Group leaders, providing them with direction and counsel as they care for their members. *Second*, I disciple through what we call, one-to-one Bible reading. Across the year I’ll meet with several men for week or monthly visits over Scripture, prayer, and life. It is my aim to do this with them for a time and to see them begin doing the same with another brother or with an unbeliever. Often it is in the context of these Word-based friendships that deeper counseling needs emerge. *Third*, I counsel individuals and couples caught in sin and suffering. Strangely, while being up close with people’s pain is a burden, it is also an honor to be up close to God’s work in a life, and to be trusted by people with their care in such vulnerable times. *Fourth*, I care for members who lead ministry teams, meeting quarterly for coffee, and having them in my home for encouragement. Teaching our membership class and leading periodic mission trips is also a deeply satisfying way to disciple.

24. What is your approach to personal evangelism? Corporate evangelism?

In my personal life, I work several strategies for forming relationships for evangelism. *First*, I am a regular in a few places around town—the gym, the bike shop, restaurants. *Second*, as parents we

form relationships in our neighborhood and at our children's school. I run a program at our children's public school designed to involve fathers in the life of this school. This volunteer role has embedded me in relationships among the school staff and among a number of families. *Third*, I look out in the course of my ministry for those who are curious about spiritual things but who aren't likely Christians, and I make offers to meet over Scripture.

Corporately, there are a variety of ways in which a church can give itself to the task of evangelism. *First*, through the preaching of the Word, the gospel is brought to bear on all forms of unbelief. In a way that is natural to the unique shape and aim of the text, each sermon should plea with the unbeliever to respond in faith. This is important for those who don't believe, but also as a way of training the believing hearers on how to speak to those who don't believe. The pulpit is a central feature in stimulating a culture of life-on-life evangelism among the flock. *Second*, a church can engage in contextually thoughtful deed ministry in the community as a means to ministering the word of the gospel. Every church in town can't meet every need in town, but every gospel-preaching church can pick a few strategic ways to invest in the surrounding community in the name of Christ. *Third*, by building a bridge to gospel-faithful, church-oriented ministries, such as a crisis pregnancy center, a congregation can minister the gospel with men and women with acute needs in Christ's name. *Fourth*, through a strategy for visitor care and follow-up, a church can ensure a memorable and helpful welcome to those who might not believe but who have joined friends and family in a visit to church. We want to be famously hospitable, grateful for their visit, and eager to steward that interest with thoughtful follow-up.

25. Describe healthy pastoral ministry.

A healthy pastoral ministry is a ministry of shepherding that seeks the health of the flock through the means God has prescribed for the flock's care. This means a Word-thick ministry, a ministry committed to the purity and therefore the discipline of the church, a ministry where saints are equipped for the work of ministry, a ministry that is pervaded by the grace of God and governed in all things by the cross of Christ.

26. Describe a healthy church.

A healthy church is a church that is growing in its knowledge of, love for, and manifestation of the gospel; a church where Christ is deeply and wonderfully known, and where Christ is on the lips of its members in witness to his glory to both their neighbors and the nations. This kind of church health is stimulated and strengthened by a variety of biblical prescribed means: biblically qualified and biblically structured church leadership, regenerate church membership, church discipline, expositional preaching, biblically sound theology of God, man, salvation, evangelism, etc., and an eagerness to pursue the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

27. Describe your understanding and approach to biblical preaching. Include your preferred translation of Scripture.

Our faithful Shepherd leads us through the faithful preaching of his Word. Since it is God's Word that his people need, the shape and emphasis of a sermon should be submitted to the shape and emphasis of the text preached. This is what we call, "expository preaching"—preaching that expounds not only the content but the agenda of the text; preaching that not only gets across the material of Scripture, but gets it across in a way that is true to the kind of material preached (poetry, narrative, epistle, etc.). I preach almost exclusively through books of the Bible and seek a diet of Scripture that moves God's people across different books, genres, and testaments with balance. In the course of my Christian live I have used the NIV, NASB, and the ESV. These days I work almost entirely out of the ESV, but I'm not philosophically tied to that translation. Whatever

translation we use, it's good to preach from what the people are reading, and, for practical purpose, to be consistent around the church.

28. What characterizes God-honoring corporate worship? Do you have a preferred musical style?

In gathered worship God's people assemble as an outpost of heaven. When we assemble we do those things that God has given us to do: the public reading of Scripture, singing that is Scripture-shaped and Christ-centered, and preaching that brings God's Word to bear on the hearers according to the agenda of the text preached—be that comfort, warning, encouragement, or exultation. The songs we sing should be selected and ordered according to a certain theological logic, and the whole of the service should be planned as a means of shepherding the congregation.

As it concerns the style of worship, I have loved singing with my brothers and sisters in different congregations with divergent styles. During my years at the Moody Church in Chicago I enjoyed singing with the saints to soaring organ, orchestra, and a choir. The director of music there is a good friend. For these last seven years I've loved singing with the saints in a more contemporary or modern setting with a band.

I've always loved Colossians 3:16 as an anchor for thinking about our singing together: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Our singing together should be Christ-centered—we never lose sight of how it is we can sing and be heard by our Triune God. Our singing should be Word-thick—we sing songs that teach and express the Word of God. Our singing should be congregationally-focused—we come together to sing with and to one another, and so song leadership seeks to stimulate and strengthen that unity. Our singing should be internally-oriented—we train our attention on God's work in our hearts, seeking to be impressed with truth and to express that truth to God.

Where music-genre is a problem for a church's spiritual humility or unity, then genre may need some careful pastoral attention. Where music-genre is a source of unity at a church, then that's something to thank God for and cheer on. I sense that Heritage is in a good place and I'm thrilled for the talented and spiritually minded leaders and musicians I've met and observed. That's a long answer, but I know this question may be of interest to some.

29. What is your view of the role of women in church ministry?

A truly biblical answer to this question starts with the glorious truth that women are coheirs with Christ, sisters in a common faith, and gifted for ministry of all kinds. The ministry of women is essential to any healthy church. Given God's distinctive design for men and women in marriage from creation, we are not surprised that he has ordained distinct roles for men and women in the church as well. The office of elder, for example, is clearly reserved for men. The assignment of this role to men is rooted in the order of creation. For this same reason, while women may edify the body in a variety of ways in a corporate gathering, exhortation and teaching are reserved for men.

30. What are the biblical roles and responsibilities of elders and deacons? How do they relate?

Elders and deacons are essential to God's glorious design for the maturity of his new covenant people. Elders are selected from among God's people to shepherd the flock of God. This is a spiritual work carried out by means of the Word of God and prayer. As shepherds, elders feed the flock with God's Word, protect the flock from sin and error, and lead the flock in following Christ. Deacons are servants who help make this ministry possible by supporting the work of elders in a



variety of ways. The needs of widows gave rise to the earliest form of this office in the first century, and is an example of one among many practical needs that deacons take on.

31. Please explain your views on church discipline.

The new covenant community is a regenerate people, and yet in this age not all who say, "Lord, Lord!," actually know Christ. Given this reality, the church has an important responsibility concerning its membership. According to Matthew 16 and 18, all of Jesus' disciples are responsible for binding and loosing. This has obvious practical entailments for the front and back doors of the church. It means churches must receive members into fellowship with attention to genuine conversion. It also means carrying out church discipline. Church discipline is that labor of love in which the church seeks to restore an unrepentant person to a faithful walk with God. The process moves from private to public, beginning one-on-one and eventually involving the whole church should unrepentance persist. When persistent unrepentance proves a person's profession not credible, that person is put out of the church and sought with the gospel for salvation. Before excommunication, the agenda of each member with respect to that person is to seek their repentance. After excommunication the agenda is to seek their salvation.

In this counter-cultural but biblical process, the church loves everyone involved: the church loves the Lord by guarding the purity of the church; the church loves Christ's body by protecting it from the poison of unchecked unrepentance; the church loves the world by protecting her witness to Christ; and the church loves the one disciplined by refusing them the illusion of favor with God. Without discipline a church cannot properly be called a church, for it cannot be defined with any boundary of doctrine or purity.

32. How should a pastor and his church relate to other churches locally and to the larger body of Christ in the world?

My own ecclesiology means that I am committed to independent congregations. That is, I see the locus of authority for local congregations as the local congregation. Christ rules through his Word, and shepherds/elders, who emerge from within congregations, lead from that Word.

That said, I don't believe local churches should be independent in spirit. I say this because of what I see in the NT: pervasive regional awareness of God's work, partnerships between churches for gospel strengthening and advance, and a celebration of it all—"gospel," of course, being a word with specific content. I love the way Paul commends the Thessalonians. They were "an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia," and their faith had "gone out everywhere" (1Thes. 1:7–8). I love Paul's numerous greetings between churches in Romans 15–16. And the Jerusalem collection provides an interesting example of cooperation, Paul even laboring to include the Corinthians in the work (2Cor. 8–9).

I thank the Lord often for good gospel-partners near and far. In my present ministry context, I benefit greatly from partnerships with area pastors and churches through lunches to review one another's sermons, gatherings for prayer and discussion, and personal relationships where we can see to the healthy transfer of members moving between our churches. I love meeting a believer around town and being able to say of their pastor, "Of course! Josh is a friend and a very fine preacher. Please tell him, 'hello,' for me." This kind of regional-awareness on the part of a pastor fosters a healthy spirit of gratitude for God's work in other congregations as members interact with other believers in the course of their daily life.