

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PASTOR'S WIFE IN TODAY'S  
EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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By

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, David, and my children Brandon and Lindsay. They have been my cheerleaders and encouragers through this process and I could never have completed this project without their support. But most of all, I have to thank the Lord who has given me the strength and the ability to do this. He has helped me to do something that I never imagined or dreamed that I could do. Because of this, it is my desire to use this degree to bring honor and glory to Him as I continue to minister for Him as He has given me the privilege of preparing the next generation to serve Him.

## ABSTRACT

### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PASTOR'S WIFE IN TODAY'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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The purpose of this project is to explore the changes that have occurred in the lives of pastors' wives over the years in regards to her position in the church, her role within the family and her life outside of the church. Research will be conducted through interviews of pastors' wives in various stages of ministry and church experience, as well as a research/literature review of materials showing the historical role of the pastor's wife and how her role has continually developed and changed over the years. The underlying goal of this thesis is to provide a framework for teaching women who are preparing for ministry and also to provide guidelines to minister to pastors' wives who are already in ministry.

Abstract length: 147 words

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Author's Rationale**

I have always had a special place in my heart for pastor's wives. I am the wife of an evangelist and have ministered alongside my husband for over thirty years in church ministry. I was trained in ministry before marriage and my impressions of what a pastor's wife should be were established by the books that I read on the subject and also from personally watching women that were a pastor's wife.

My husband began his ministry serving as a youth pastor in two different churches. It was in that first church that my perceptions of what a pastor's wife should be changed. The first pastor's wife we ministered with broke all the molds of what I believed a pastor's wife should be. The pastors' wives that I had observed had always been in the background, were always smiling and happy and did not always have a set ministry for which she was responsible. She mainly served wherever there was a need in the church. I believed that her house should be clean and well organized and she should be a great hostess. Her children were also to be perfect and of course, she should be able to play the piano and sing. Those were the things that I had been taught about what it meant to fulfill the role of the pastor's wife. And this pastor's wife had many of those qualities, but she was not very involved in the church mainly because she worked outside the home. In my mind she was not fulfilling her proper role in the church and

was therefore not a good pastor's wife!! It was through watching her life that the Lord began to open my eyes to the women that the Lord called to serve beside their husband in ministry. I began to see that God did not use carbon copies of people to serve Him. They were not cookie cutter replicas of each other. These women had their own distinct personalities, talents and abilities and strengths and weaknesses. It was after meeting and getting to know Joyce that I changed my mindset as to what a pastor's wife should look like and what she should be.

After being in youth ministry for five years, my husband and I began our evangelistic ministry. For five years, our family traveled fulltime with my husband going from church to church. Because of this, I had the opportunity to meet many pastors' wives and form relationships with them. To say the least, I have met every kind of pastor's wife imaginable. There are some women who love their life in the ministry; others are very unhappy with their role, while some are confused and have no idea what is expected of them in this position of "the pastor's wife."

One advantage that I found in meeting these pastor's wives is that I was considered a "safe" person to talk to. I was "safe" because they knew they were talking to a kindred spirit – someone who understood this life that they were living because I had experienced many of the same issues that they were facing. They also knew that they could tell me anything because I would be leaving in a couple days and there was no fear that I would tell anyone else what they were experiencing in their lives. These women also became my sounding board from time to time because I was able to share with them the joys and dilemmas I was also experiencing in my own life being married to someone

in ministry. These opportunities allowed me to hear their hearts and their cries as they tried to figure out how and where they fit into this huge calling.

Over the past thirty years, ministry has changed. I have seen it evolve. It is my intent to share my observations of the changes that have taken place through the years and how these changes of life in ministry have affected these women who are known as “The Pastor’s Wife.”

### **Statement of the Issue**

It is the hope of the author throughout this thesis to discuss many of the changes and issues that are confronting pastors’ wives today as they seek to serve the Lord through being the wife of a man in ministry. Much of the discussion will center on my observations from years spent in ministry and also my research of past and present women in ministry.

It is important to first define who is being addressed in this paper. The “pastor’s wife” or “minister’s wife,” is a woman who is serving beside her husband in ministry. These titles will be used simultaneously throughout the paper. These titles can include the senior pastor’s wife, the associate pastor’s wife, the youth pastor’s wife or the wife of anyone who has a vocational position of leadership in the church.

Part of my discussion will also include the comments and observations of a small sampling of pastors’ wives that I have interviewed for this thesis. These interviews were not to form a statistical base but more to find out if my observations over the years would be backed up by what these women have also experienced in ministry. The survey questions were designed to help those that I was interviewing to think about what they

had experienced and also to explain how or if they had been prepared for the role of pastor's wife.

Those interviewed brought many years of experience to the table. Some have been in ministry for over fifty years and others are just beginning their ministry as a pastor's wife. They have served in country churches as well as churches in big cities. Some served in churches that were small and others were very large. Many of the changes in ministry that I will be talking about in the paper can be seen in the stages of these women's lives.

#### *Sampling of Questions of the Pastor's Wife Survey*

- *How long have you and your husband been in ministry?*
- *What year did you begin your life in ministry?*
- *Did God personally call you to ministry?*
- *Did you know your husband was going to be a pastor when you married him?*
- *Did you go to college?           Major?*
- *Did you go to seminary?*
- *Did you take any classes to prepare yourself to be a pastor's wife?*
- *Did those classes help you once you got into ministry?*
- *Is there anything that you wish you had been taught about what to expect in ministry before you arrived at your first ministry opportunity?*
- *Do you feel that you were prepared for your life in ministry?*
- *Did you have any impressions of what a pastor's wife should be?*
- *Did you pattern your life as a minister's wife after anyone?*
- *Were your parents in pastoral ministry?*

- *Were there any books that you read about what would be expected of you as a pastor's wife?*
- *Were the books helpful to you in understanding what your role would be as a ministry wife?*
- *As a young ministry wife, did you have a mentor to help you understand your role as a pastor's wife?*
- *Did you have a sounding board – someone that you could be honest with and they would be honest with you?*
- *Did you have girlfriends within the church?*
- *Did you have friendships with other pastors' wives outside your church?*
- *What type of church did your husband pastor?*
  - *Traditional model? – an established church.*
  - *New church plant?*
- *Did the size of the church make a difference in the way you ministered?*
- *Did the congregation respond to or treat you differently based on the size of the church?*
- *How involved have you been/or are you in church ministry? (choose one)*
  - a. *Very involved*
  - b. *Limited involvement*
  - c. *No involvement*
- *Were you ever “expected” to fill certain positions in the church?*
- *What ministries are/or have you been involved in?*
- *What are your spiritual gifts?*

- *Did the congregation allow you to work in the areas of your giftedness and your passion?*
- *Have you ever had to work in a ministry within the church that you had no passion for?*
- *Did your role as a ministry wife give you a platform to minister to other women?*
- *Do you believe that you have been a role model to the younger women in the church?*
- *Have you worked outside the home while serving in ministry?*
- *Why did/do you work outside the home? (Choose those that apply)*
  - *Financial reasons?*
  - *Follow your own career?*
  - *So you won't have to be as involved with the church?*
- *If you do work outside the home, do you still have a ministry within the church?*
- *Have you ever had anyone from the church question why you were working?*
- *On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) has being in ministry made your marriage stronger or weaker?*
- *Are you and your husband partners in ministry?*
- *Did your husband communicate to the congregation what your role would be in the church?*
- *Have you felt supported – emotionally and spiritually – by your husband?*
- *How have your children responded to your ministry?*
- *Have any of your children gone through times of rebellion against the church?*
- *Are your children involved in the ministry of the church today?*

- *What affect did your position in ministry have on family decisions and activities?*
- *What were/are the hardest issues you have been faced with in ministry?*
- *What personal issues have you dealt with in your own life that you believe were affected by being in ministry?*
- *Quote – A pastor’s wife is “a full-time partner in the most important work on earth, and is largely responsible for her husband’s success or failure.” Do you agree or disagree with that statement?*
- *How have you changed since going into ministry?*
- *How has the ministry of the pastor’s wife changed since you have been in ministry?*
- *If you had a chance to live your life over, would you still want to be a pastor’s wife?*
  - *Yes, absolutely!*
  - *No way!*
  - *I’d have to think about it!!!*

The following questions will also be explored and hopefully answered through the chapters of this thesis:

- What is the historical background of the pastor’s wife and does this have any affect on how the pastor’s wife ministers today?
- How has the marriage of the pastor and his wife changed over the years and what are the dangers that need to be considered in today’s society? How has her role changed in regards to her family life? What personal issues are affecting pastors’ wives today and how do these issues impact her ministry?

- What should the role of the pastor's wife be in the church today? How has her role and the expectations of her role in the church changed through the years?
- What should her role be concerning the world outside of the church?
- What are the conclusions of this paper, and what principles can be shared with those who desire this role of a pastor's wife in their own life? What principles and encouragement can be shared with those already in ministry?

### Historical Perspective

Those having problems being the wife of a pastor is not a new issue. It was interesting to find an article that was written in 1960 for *Time Magazine* entitled *Mrs. Minister's Troubles*. The article begins by saying that

every meeting of preachers brings word of another minister's wife who is on the brink of a mental and emotional collapse... The stresses and strains are enough to stagger an Amazon...Most ministers' wives have never heard a divine call, they have simply married men who have.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the article, psychiatrists shared some of the case histories of pastors' wives that had come to them for help. Many of the problems that were discussed were the same issues that pastors' wives are still facing today. These issues include,

The pressure to conform...guilt over her own shortcomings and her earlier history...a feeling of abandonment...[and many] are up to their ears in church work, using it as a substitute for a personal need that is not fulfilled by busy, distant husbands.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Mrs. Minister's Troubles," *Time in Partnership with CNN*, October 3, 1960, [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,894963,00html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,894963,00html), (accessed March 13, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



But, when asked what the solution was for the problems that these women were experiencing, one of the ministers from a church in Oklahoma said, “The solution rests with the wives. Retaining some semblance of sanity will require a whole rethinking and rearrangement of life...The preacher’s wife must be herself. She must nurture and express the distinctive personality that God has given her.”<sup>3</sup> While what he says is true, the basic attitude with which it was said seems to be the thought patterns of many in the ministry still today as it has been throughout the years – it’s the woman’s problem and she is the one who needs to change and basically just needs to get over it! The one issue that many of these women battle is that they don’t believe that anyone cares about their struggles understanding their place in the ministry – not their husband, not their church, not anyone.

One of the questions that many wives of those in ministry ask is, “Where do I fit in?” One thing that we know for certain – the wife of a pastor is in a very unique position, and in today’s church, the opportunities for her own ministry are endless. “Barna’s Research Group reported that there were 396,000 clergy families in the United States in 2001,<sup>4</sup> while others report that there are over 400,000 pastors’ wives in the United States today.<sup>5</sup> Some of these pastors’ wives are still trying to find out where they fit within the church and what their role specifically should be. Many times her role is defined by her church or her denomination with no thought about what she desires to be

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hileman, Linda, “The Unique Needs of Protestant Clergy Families: Implications for Marriage and Family Counseling,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*; 2008, Vol. 10 Issue 2, pp. 119-144, 26p., (retrieved October 22, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Deanna Strode, “Introduction,” *Pastoring Partners*, March 31, 1998-2008, [www.pastoringpartners.com/intro.html](http://www.pastoringpartners.com/intro.html), (accessed March 5, 2009).

or do. But in order to understand the unique role of the pastor's wife today, it is good to go back and look at her role through history.

H.B. London and Neil Wiseman have written that:

Through 2,000 years of Christian history, the role of the minister's mate has changed often, and it continues to change rapidly. Even in a single ten- or fifteen-year period, variations have often moved from caring companion to hearth keeper to resident sacrificer to spiritual sustainer to ministry partner to energetic helpmeet to institutional church leader to deputy pastor. But whatever direction the minister's wife's role tilts at any moment of human history, it always involves a position of trusted support for the work of ministry. And it is always an invaluable asset in the service of the kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

One of the first places to begin the discussion on what the role of the pastor's wife should be would be to look at her role from a scriptural standpoint. The New Testament does not describe a specific role for the pastor's wife. Paul lists the qualifications for those desiring to be a pastor or a deacon in I Timothy 3: 2-10 and although he does not address them as pastors' wives, he says that the wives of these men should be "reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." (v. 11)<sup>7</sup>

Frances Nordland writes,

We need to recognize that in the early church period the leaders of the church were men whom we would not designate as laymen. There was no separation, as now, between clergy and laymen, making a separate class of people in the church known professionally as "ministers." So, if you want to learn from the Bible what a minister's wife should be like, you must look for references to wives. You will find no double standard – one for pastor's wife and one for the layman's wife.<sup>8</sup>

"The fact that Paul mentions the Christian character and spiritual maturity of the wife in the passage in I Timothy indicates that her relationship to Christ is significant in

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<sup>6</sup> H. B. London Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman, *Married to a Pastor's Wife* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible, *The Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Frances Nordland, *The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 14.

how it relates to her husband's calling."<sup>9</sup> As his wife, she was to conduct herself as all other Christian women in the church in that she was to be growing in her walk with the Lord and because she was the wife of a man in a leadership role, she was to be conscientious of her actions. Because her husband was involved in "a noble work" (vs. 1), she should also hold to the same standards just as her husband was to be "above reproach" (vs. 2); so her life was also going to be very visible and influential. This was the standard that was upheld throughout New Testament scripture.

Leonard Sweet believes that the first pastor's wife "is a child of the early church, when married men were regularly ordained. Not until the fourth century did Pope Siricius (384-398) ban sex for both married and unmarried clergy, thereby paving the way for the twelfth-century requirement of universal clerical clergy."<sup>10</sup>

From the New Testament, jump ahead to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's. The Reformation begun by Martin Luther brought about the biggest changes to the pastor's home. Luther "declared that marriage for the clergy and true believers was not a means of grace but a way of life. Sacramental intimacy with Christ is not through marriage but by faith."<sup>11</sup> Up until this time most of these men had lived as celibate priests. Luther believed that the Roman Catholic "[doctrine of celibacy] is an invention of Satan."<sup>12</sup> So, because of Luther's teachings, these former priests desired to marry. Luther matched these men with women who were formerly nuns who desired to continue

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<sup>9</sup> Susie Hawkins, *From One Ministry Wife to Another* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 12.

<sup>11</sup> Paul A. Mickey, and Ginny W. Ashmore, *Clergy Families: Is Normal Life Possible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

serving the Lord in ministry. Luther himself married a former nun by the name of Katharina after she asked him to marry her. Luther and Katie (as he called her) were a team. Katie not only served and ministered to her husband, but she, along with these new pastors' wives, also ministered through their homes to their church members. Their main purpose was to serve their husbands so that they would be free to do the work of the Lord. It is said of Katie that

For twenty-one years of married life she was a loving companion, caring for Luther's physical needs, nudging him out of depressions, freeing his mind from domestic concerns, advising him on strategy, raising his six children as well as thirteen orphans, entertaining the students, visiting clergy, and dignitaries who increased her average table setting to twenty-five, nursing Wittenberg's sick and poor, and superintending one three-story house with forty rooms on the first floor, two gardens, one farm, one orchard, one brewery, one fishpond and one dog...Luther said of her in 1535; "My lord Kate drives a team, farms, pastures, and sell cows...and between times reads the Bible."<sup>13</sup>

Like many women in ministry today, Katie was not totally accepted or appreciated by the women in Wittenberg. She was often the subject of criticism and gossip. But that did not seem to stop her. "She was proud to be the wife of a minister, and proud that she was the one who, like Aaron and Hur with Moses, 'held up his hands' (Exodus 17:12) and strengthened them for ministry."<sup>14</sup>

There are many pastors' wives today and also those in the past who would say that they are still fulfilling many of these same roles as Katie Luther in their home and within the church. Author Susie Hawkins says, as pastors' wives today we can "blame it on Katie!"<sup>15</sup> In many ways, the Reformation "created the Protestant parsonage, which

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<sup>13</sup> Sweet, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>15</sup> Hawkins, 23.

would have so great an influence upon western attitudes toward family life, and...give new prominence and esteem to women's role as wife."<sup>16</sup>

In 1547, when King Edward VI of England became king, the marriage of clergy became legal for the first time in England. But, it did not last long because he was followed to the throne by his half-sister, Mary, who was of the Catholic faith and she reversed the law.<sup>17</sup> It was not until 1604, after the Protestant Reformation had spread to England, that James I recognized and gave state recognition to the wives of the English clergy.<sup>18</sup> But, there was still persecution for those men who desired to be a married clergyman and break away from the Roman Catholic tradition of celibacy. Throughout the English Reformation in the sixteenth century, "Imprisonment, loss of property, or hanging were provided for those who dared break the vows of celibacy to take a wife."<sup>19</sup> But, it was through this marriage relationship that the clergy would be able to demonstrate to the world God's love through the example of human love and the human relationship.

Nothing shaped the social status of the Protestant ministry as decisively as the fact that they were permitted and indeed encouraged to marry...Ministerial households often exemplified the practical application of the Reformers' new understanding of the Christian religion, namely, that the faith in Christ must be practiced in mutual love and service in the natural, social setting of human life and in the ordinary, secular pursuits. Thus the married ministry came to demonstrate that family life together with the manifold social activities it engenders can be a more effective vehicle for religion and the service of God than asceticism, celibacy and other-worldliness.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sweet, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Mace, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Sweet, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Mace, 24.

The recognition of married clergy was then adopted by the conservative Puritans who brought that model to the New World in New England. It is here that the pastor's wife's role was elevated and she became a person of honor and prestige. "She felt no special calling to be the wife of the minister, although she enjoyed the honor of being married to one of the most spiritual, educated and prominent people in town and thereby conceded a high social position herself."<sup>21</sup>

In the 1700's, men like Jonathan Edwards came to rely greatly on their wives. Jonathan fell in love with his soon-to-be wife when she was thirteen years old. They married four years later and were married for thirty-one years. "She gave birth to eleven children...managed the property, relieved her husband of household duties and remained poised throughout Edward's turbulent years at Northampton...Some said that Sarah was Jonathan's only source of information about what was going on in his parish, so absorbed was he in study and prayer."<sup>22</sup> But even though Sarah seemed to be the strength in the marriage she had one issue that seemed to cause her unraveling – "an excessive concern over her likeability quotient, her driving need to be admired by everyone."<sup>23</sup> Eventually it led to what we would term today as a nervous breakdown. But through her time of weakness, she experienced a spiritual breakthrough that would make her stronger and a much stronger influence in her husband's ministry.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sweet, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 20-22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Even though it seemed that the role of being the pastor's wife elevated many of these women to a higher social status, in the early 1800's a book written in England entitled *Hints for a Clergyman's Wife; or, Female Parochial Duties* seemed to bring the wife down to the level of being whatever her husband and the church wanted her to be. The book espoused the following idea,

The pastor's wife should always be the advancement of her husband's ministry, the salvation of the souls committed to her pastoral charge, and the alleviation of their temporal wants. Let her feel, that on becoming a clergyman's wife she has, as it were, wedded herself to her husband's parish, and to be the best interest of his flock."<sup>25</sup>

Mickey and Ashmore also write that many of these same themes were suggested,

The pastor's wife was to live a life of martyrdom – not to the enemies of the church but to her husband's career as she gives total support to his ecclesial adventures...she is to be diligent in season and out of season. She is to work somewhat like the women mystics who regarded the quietness of meditation, solitude, and hard physical labor as a means by which purgation is achieved and unity with the will of God is realized.<sup>26</sup>

It will be seen that these same ideas would be continued on in later decades.

Sweet identified four roles of the pastor's wife as seen from the sixteenth to nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. During this period, young women aspired to have the coveted career of being the pastor's wife. She would fulfill this role in one of four different ways:

- The *Companion* who would be a 'ministering angel' to her pastor-husband by taking care of all his needs and holding up his sacred calling.
- The *Sacrificer* who would see to it that her husband's call to the ministry would not be hindered because she would take care of the home and all the

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<sup>25</sup> William Douglas, *Ministers' Wives* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> Mickey, 17.

aspects of ministry life so her husband could freely serve. She would ask very little of him “by staying out of his way and raising the family on her own.”<sup>27</sup>

- The *Assistant* would help with her husband’s responsibilities as the pastor and “became her husband’s right-arm, sharing many pastoral responsibilities and functioning as an extension of his ministry.”<sup>28</sup>
- The *Partner* who would share the ministry with her husband by doing her own work in the ministry, but also serve as the pastor’s pastor.<sup>29</sup>

These historical models, as described by Sweet, seem to have set the standard or the mandate as to how pastor’s wives were viewed then and how they are still being viewed in some of today’s churches. But the foundation of what Sweet was saying is that these women came to the ministry “with a sense of their own unworthiness”<sup>30</sup> and with high expectations of sacrificing and serving, not only to their husbands, but also to their God. Their involvement in the evangelical church at the time also “enabled women to participate in the central and critical aspect of the movement, thus eroding any lingering sense of a male-dominated theology and clergy.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, even though the husband had the title, husband and wife could serve together in the church. These are the women who are not confused with their role because they have separated their “role”

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<sup>27</sup> Sweet, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Minister’s Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism,” *American Historical Review* 89, No. 2 (84 April): 516.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 517.



from who they really are. To these women, being a pastor's wife is a high calling, as it is with most women today who take on the role of a pastor's wife.

Many of these models were carried through to form the characteristics that were written about in the early and mid 1800's that continued to mold what would become the model for pastors' wives to follow in years to come. But in the mid-twentieth century with the impact of feminism in the American culture, the focus of the role of the pastor's wife "shifts from the more spiritualized, idealized, and passive role of women...[to the] empowerment of service and social organization, with stress upon the importance of management skills for the pastor's wife as homemaker."<sup>32</sup> Sweet also saw the roles begin to change at the beginning of the twentieth century,

Although the tradition of ministers' wives as women in the ministry lost much of its vitality in the twentieth century, men...could still be found searching for wives who could face and outface the challenge of ministry...But for the most part the status of the minister's wife became less and less functionally relevant to the profession of ministry; and more and more women married ministers, not because of, but either in spite of or in indifference to, their husbands' calling. In the first half of the twentieth century, more women chafed under the classification "the minister's wife." And women increasingly talked of being companions to their husbands as they walked together through life, not of being helpers to their husbands' calling as they performed the sacred duties of God's service. A position that once had advanced opportunities and creativity for women was now seen as potentially hazardous to these same developments."<sup>33</sup>

In 1951, minister's wives along with the wives of other professional men, became the subjects of a research study. The study began with William Whyte's articles

on "Wives of Management" and "Corporation and the Wife." While there had been little or nothing published in periodical form between 1941 and 1950 on wives of business or professional men, Whyte's articles literally opened the floodgates of interest in and discussion of this topic.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Sweet, 11.

<sup>34</sup> William Douglas, *Ministers' Wives* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 13.

These articles discussed the importance of the professional man's wife and a kind of blueprint of what the ideal executive's wife should look like was born. Not only was the public interested in the role of the executive's wife, but denominations and seminaries were interested in how these models could be applied and how they would affect the model of the minister's wife. So in January 1959 a study project was begun by the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Indiana, which would study the effectiveness of the ministerial wife and her impact on ministry. The study was called "The Minister's Wife," which would explore "the status and condition of the wife of the Protestant parish minister in America..."<sup>35</sup> But by 1962, the outcome of this project was that there were too many variables for them to make an overarching statement about what the pastor's wife should be because of the "individuality of people and relationships which made it impossible to discuss meaningfully "the status and condition of the wife of the Protestant parish minister in America."<sup>36</sup> In other words, it gets back to the fact that each pastor's wife is unique and no two are alike.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

## **Modern Day Model for Ministry**

### *Traditional Model*

The Traditional Model for pastors' wives would encompass Sweet's definition of the Companion and Sacrificer models. These would be the women who became pastors' wives in the early 1900's and would continue through today where some churches and pastors' wives still hold to these models.

Many of the early books written about the pastor's wife were written from an idealistic and sometimes from a very unrealistic perspective. They proposed that if a woman was to be the "ideal" pastor's wife that she needed to possess certain characteristics that would help her fulfill that role. While many of the characteristics were of value, and still are today, there was no consideration taken that each of these women were individuals who came with different personalities and backgrounds and that they needed to be themselves and not model their life after someone else. To the author, these women are those who many times played a role. They have read the books and are doing what they believe others think they should be doing. In some cases, these women found that they were expected to fill a role that had been prescribed by those in the congregation. In some cases their own husbands placed these expectations on their wives because they believed that as the pastor they also needed to "perform" in a certain way to please their congregations. In other words, many of these pastors' wives were wearing masks and were afraid to show who they really were for fear that it would jeopardize their husband's ministry. The roles that they were fulfilling were performance-based and in some cases they were living in competition with other pastors' wives that they knew.

Many of these women began to follow the philosophy that Andrew Blackwood wrote about in the introduction of his wife's book where he describes the pastor's wife "as a full-time partner in the most important work on earth, and as largely responsible for her husband's success or failure."<sup>37</sup> While what he says is true – that they are full-time partners and that the work that they are doing is very important – the second part of that quote seems to put a lot of pressure on the pastor's wife – that *she* is the one responsible as to whether her husband succeeds or fails as a pastor. As one pastor's wife wrote, "I do believe my faithfulness to Jesus and to my husband can directly aid him in his success...a pastor's wife is a very powerful role...it can be totally detrimental or totally an eternal blessing to her husband."<sup>38</sup>

The influence of Carolyn Blackwood's writing can be seen in the early traditional model and is many times the basis for the performance-based role that the pastor's wife would play. "The early portrait is of a clergy family in which the minister is male, the spouse is a faithful Christian homemaker, who reflects the virtues of the Virgin Mary...and is willing to martyr herself on behalf of her pastor-husband and 'his' church."<sup>39</sup>

Many women in this era of the traditional model took this burden upon themselves – in many ways trying to be the perfect example – never wanting anyone to see them in a negative light. In this model, "the ministry wife is 'put on a pedestal' by the congregation to be admired and imitated in what she does and how she does it."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Carolyn P. Blackwood, *The Pastor's Wife* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Personal Interview, October, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Hawkins, 28.

These are the pastors' wives who also feel the pressure many times to fill the role of the previous pastor's wife – even if her talents and abilities are not the same.

Gail MacDonald wrote a book entitled, *High Call, High Privilege – A Pastor's Wife Speaks to Every Woman in a Place of Responsibility*. That is a great title because not only is being a pastor's wife a very high calling and a privilege, but it also takes a very courageous woman to fulfill this call on her life. Many say that being the wife of a pastor is like living in a fishbowl because everyone watches every move and step that you and your family take. Some of these women live in the shadow of their husbands, standing behind him and almost seeming invisible at times. And sometimes when she is introduced, she is only known as 'the pastor's wife,' with no name of her own.<sup>41</sup> But, for the majority of these women, they are glad that their husbands are pastors and that God has called them to this place of ministry where they are able to come alongside their husbands to support them and love them. They would not trade their life for anything.

### *Contemporary Model*

According to Hawkins, the contemporary model has been developing over the last decade. "This pattern is based on the reality of contemporary church culture and is what younger ministry wives who are not in traditional churches are looking to model. New church plants and younger congregations are generally characterized by this generational shift in thinking."<sup>42</sup> She goes on to say that these women want to be authentic or "real" with those that they have relationships with. They want to build relationships with those

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<sup>41</sup> Ellen Button, "The Title I Didn't Ask For," *Gifted For Leadership*, May 20, 2008, [www.giftedforleadership.com/](http://www.giftedforleadership.com/), (accessed March 21, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Hawkins, 25.

in their church congregation “based on friendship, community, camaraderie, and common goals...[which will be] based on a ministry wife’s transparency, common experiences, and honest conversation.”<sup>43</sup> But, in order for this to work properly boundaries must be put into place.

Many of the pastors’ wives in the Contemporary Model today would follow Sweet’s roles of the “Assistant” and the “Partner” in ministry. Instead of just doing everything for the husband in the home, many of these women are more involved in the working of the church – some of them even sharing with the pastoral responsibilities.<sup>44</sup> These models will be explored more fully in the chapter addressing the role of the pastor’s wife in the church.

### **The Calling**

One of the first issues that needs to be addressed is the issue of a “calling.” Every child of God has been called to some kind of ministry. But women have come to understand that they can also be called by God to their own specific full-time ministry just as a man is called by God into ministry. Almost everyone in church leadership would agree and “believe that God calls couples together into ministry, and God’s true call is considerate of each partner’s needs, fear, and aspirations. How this works itself out at home and at church is as individual as the couple.”<sup>45</sup> Pentecost points out that

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>44</sup> Sweet, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Linda Riley, “When Your Wife Resents Your Call,” *Christianity Today.Com*, October 1, 2003, [www.christianitytoday.com/le/2003/fall/5.51.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2003/fall/5.51.html), (accessed March 21, 2009).

“when the average girl falls in love, she is just choosing a husband. But when a girl marries a minister, she is not only choosing a life partner but a lifetime career.”<sup>46</sup>

Lovingood and Landrith explain the four types of calls that most pastors’ wives identify with:

- *Specific calling* – These women are those who have a clear cut call of their own to ministry. They believe that God has called them to fulfill the role of pastor’s wife. Because of this calling, they have prepared themselves for this role. They are very involved together in ministry as a couple.
- *General calling* – These women are those who believe God has called them to ministry but don’t know in what specific area. Like the specific call, these women are confident in themselves and how they are to minister. They have prepared themselves for ministry but not necessarily as the wife of a pastor. They are open to whatever area God calls them to.
- *Unexpected calling* – These are women who were married to a man in a different profession and then he felt called to the ministry. These are women who feel called to the man. Because of the change in career, these women sometimes feel unsure about their place in ministry and feel inadequate to fill the role. Most have not been prepared for this role but most step into the role believing that if God called their husband to ministry, then he has also called her.
- *Impersonal calling* – These are women who do not feel called to ministry and they see the pastorate as their husband’s job and not their own which can cause problems not only in ministry but also in their marriage. Many of these wives have no desire to work in ministry along with their husbands and many times they resist from becoming involved in the ministry. They are usually just a support system for their husbands, but there are some who do not like the fact that their husband is a pastor.<sup>47</sup>

World Vision, a mission organization that works with children, families and organizations, recently did a survey among pastors’ wives to find out how women felt about their “call” to the role of being a pastor’s wife. Of the 80 women who responded to

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<sup>46</sup> Dorothy Harrison Pentecost, *The Pastor’s Wife and the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Rachel Lovingood and Jennifer Landrith, *In Our Shoes: Real life Issues for Ministers’ Wives by Ministers’ Wives* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2008), 13.

the survey, “90% supported their husband’s calling, with 25% explicitly mentioning a “shared call.” Several were uncertain about such support, a few had a high commitment to their husband’s faith but less...to his call.”<sup>48</sup> For many, a pastor’s wife lives in the shadow of her pastor-husband. But, for the most part, “she is pleased that God has called her husband to this place of selfless service, but there are days when she wished for a more ‘normal’ life.”<sup>49</sup> A survey of over 1,000 clergy wives by Focus on the Family, a ministry that gives support to families of those in ministry, revealed that “56 percent felt personally called to ministry as a clergy wife, while 39 percent did it to support their husbands.”<sup>50</sup>

Many women don’t believe that God has “called” them specifically into ministry – but they do feel called to the man. They go into the marriage believing that because their husband has been called to the ministry, they will serve God in this way because of their relationship with their husband.

Another side of this is when men wake up one day believing that they are being called into ministry from another vocation after they have been married for a while. When a man decides to go into ministry, if he believes that God has called him into full-time ministry, it means that the wife has been called also. Even though it may be a hard adjustment and not one that was in her plans, she should “bring her will and desire into

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<sup>48</sup> Rowland Craucher, “What Pastors’ Wives Wish Their Husbands and Churches Knew About Them,” *John Mark Ministries*, January 27, 2009, [www.jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8202.htm](http://www.jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8202.htm), (accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Nancy Leigh DeMoss, “31 Days of Praying for Your Pastor’s Wife,” *Revive Our Hearts Ministries*, 2001-2009, [www.ReviveOurHearts.com/](http://www.ReviveOurHearts.com/), (accessed March 6, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> *Free to Soar*, Global Pastors Wives Network, et al (Ventura: Regal Books, 2005), 11.



line with that of the Lord and her husband.”<sup>51</sup> Women who fight the call of their husband into ministry usually do so for several reasons. First, they will let it be known that they did not “sign up” for this! They also may fear the financial and economic changes that will come with this new position. But, in most cases it is because these women feel confused because they don’t know what will be expected from them in this new role. It is in this group that many times there is anxiety, confusion, discouragement and even fear about how they fit into ministry. This fear comes because they feel that they haven’t been prepared for this role and never anticipated having the role of pastor’s wife.

It is so important for husbands and wives to make sure that they are both ready for this commitment and that there is total agreement before they embark on this journey of ministry and that they understand that if God does call them to this ministry that He will also give them the grace to fulfill all that He puts before them.

Many pastors and researchers into pastoral ministry are discovering that a joint sense of call by both a pastor and a pastor’s spouse provides a powerful resource against the breakdown of communication within the family...For those 65 percent of pastoral spouses who knew at the time of marriage that they were marrying a minister, the bilateral call is more easily discerned (Mickey and Ashmore, 1991, p. 72). When the partner did not know the spouse would enter a career in ministry, the couple should proceed as a team and develop or recognize the call together.<sup>52</sup>

One aspect of being called to ministry is the fact that there is always going to be sacrifice needed to fulfill this call. Most couples know this before they begin ministry. That is why they need to go into ministry for the right reasons. “The more carefully and

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<sup>51</sup> Pentecost, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Blake J. Neff, *A Pastor’s Guide to Interpersonal Communication: The Other Six Days* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006), 211.

thoroughly the pastor [and the pastor's wife] understands that ministry is a spiritual call primarily between the pastor and God, the more secure the marriage."<sup>53</sup>

The other groups of pastors' wives are those who believe that they have been called to this ministry. The majority of these women go into ministry with high expectations – not only personally but also spiritually. In some cases, they have studied and planned for this position, some even going to Bible colleges and seminaries. But the question has to be asked: have they been properly prepared for what they are about to be involved in? Even though many of them have studied and feel that they have prepared for this calling, "60% of pastors' wives desire more training to serve better."<sup>54</sup> And of their husbands, "31%... indicated that [knowing how to handle] conflict management [within the church] was lacking in their seminary or Bible college training."<sup>55</sup>

Author Dorothy Pentecost believed that women needed training to fulfill this role. Along with taking courses in the Bible, she also believed that they should take classes in homemaking so that they would know how to manage a home, budgeting, entertaining, decorating, etiquette, care of children and guests, English, public speaking and psychology.<sup>56</sup>

H.B. London, Jr. wrote about his wife's experiences of going to a seminary wives meeting that was to help prepare them for their position as a pastor's wife. When she came home from the meeting, he asked her what they had talked about. She said, "They

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<sup>53</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 73.

<sup>54</sup> H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastor's at Greater Risk* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 118.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>56</sup> Pentecost, 27.

taught us that if we are going to be good pastors' wives and good pastors, we need to have people over for dinner every Sunday after church. They taught us how to set the table – using our best china and...best crystal and...best silver” [which they had none of].<sup>57</sup>

It is sad to say that this is how many women were prepared in the past for their role of being the wife of a pastor. It has been because of instances like this that when these women do get involved in actual ministry, they are sometimes discouraged because the ministry is not what they thought it would be because they have not been trained properly for the role that they are about to fulfill. They find out quickly that ministry is about relationships and dealing with people and that many times these people they are trying to minister to will disappoint and hurt them or expect things of them for which they are not prepared.

### **Review of the Literature**

One of the positives of writing and looking at the lives of pastors' wives through the years is the myriad of books and articles that have been written on the subject. There is a progression of thought that has followed the life of the pastor's wife – especially through the last several decades that shows how the roles have changed. In most cases, the basics of what she stands for have not changed but how these women approach their position has changed. The author has taken a sampling of books written about pastors' wives from each of the decades beginning in the 1950's. Up until the 1950's and even into the 1960's, most of the books written about pastors' wives by today's standards seemed unrealistic or almost idealistic. Frances Nordland quotes Wallace Denton as

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<sup>57</sup> *Free to Soar*, Global Pastors Wives Network et al. (Ventura: Regal Books, 2005), 175.

saying that “for the most part it is a stereotyped picture. As such, it is one that is frequently superficial and possibly misleading as to what the wife of a pastor really is.”<sup>58</sup> He goes on to say that many of the books almost picture her as a character that is playing a role that has been handed down through tradition instead of fulfilling the role that God gave her. “Most wives would probably agree that the characteristics of the ideal minister’s wife listed in some of the literature are much to be desired...However, the attitude seems to be communicated to the reader that the *good* minister’s wife possesses all these characteristics.”<sup>59</sup>

### **Books**

- Leonard I. Sweet’s book, *The Minister’s Wife*, is a great look back at the roles pastors’ wives filled from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. By using his models of the Companion, the Sacrificer, the Assistant and the Partner, he describes the lives of the women who filled these positions as the pastor’s wife. It was during the nineteenth century that the minister’s wife was seen as emerging “from the crowd to become the institutional leader of church women and to occupy one of the most coveted careers available to American women.”<sup>60</sup> From this perspective, Sweet writes of the long trail that women have traveled through the years to fulfill this role of pastor’s wife. It has not always been an easy road, but much of the basis for fulfilling this role can still be seen in the lives of pastors’ wives even today. This book is a historical perspective of many of the first women to fill the position as the pastor’s wife and the trails that they blazed along with their husbands.

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<sup>58</sup> Nordland.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>60</sup> Sweet, 3.

- One of the earliest books that the author found on the subject of the pastor's wife is a book entitled the *Trials and Triumphs of a Minister's Wife* by Mrs. Julia A. Shelhamer that was written in 1923. This book is mainly her life story of what it was like to be a minister's wife in the late 1800's to the early 1900's. One of her chapters brought out the fact that the minister's wife's behavior will have a serious impact on her husband's good preaching. She writes that there are three kinds of "wives who are a hindrance to their conscientious husband's work: The talkative woman, the slouchy woman and the worldly woman."<sup>61</sup> Most of these points had to do with how the woman was to dress. She says,

According to the Bible a woman was to dress in modest apparel, which excludes garments that expose the form and figure. This also would indicate something of the colors to be worn – nothing flashy or bright...we are forbidden to ornament ourselves with gold or pearls which would doubtless include all precious stones. This is a plain command and is incorporated in the Discipline of many orthodox churches.<sup>62</sup>

- Up until the 1950's, most of the books that were written about pastors' wives were written by men. But, in 1951, Carolyn Blackwood wrote a book entitled, *The Pastor's Wife*. She was the wife of Andrew Blackwood and they began ministry together in 1910 in the local church. They served in this capacity for fifteen years before Dr. Blackwood continued his career teaching at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary and then later at Princeton Seminary. The purpose for Mrs. Blackwood writing this book was to give practical advice to the pastor's wife and how she should conduct her life in the parsonage and how she could fulfill the role of being a helpmeet. While today many of her discussions would seem outdated and very idealistic, when the book was written in the

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<sup>61</sup> Mrs. Julia A. Shelhamer, *Trials and Triumphs of a Minister's Wife* (Atlanta: Repairer Publishing Company, 1923), 176.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 179.

1950's this was how pastors' wives were viewed. Mrs. Blackwood addresses the following issues in her book:

- Courtesy
- Carriage
- Neatness and how to dress
- Cheerfulness
- Cleanliness and organization of the parsonage
- Protecting your husband and his time
- The behavior of the pastor's children
- Setting an example of gracious living on a modest income
- Having a large garden
- Working with women in the church
- Being an example of a committed Christian woman

Sinclair describes these as static roles for the minister's wife because these duties were more functional than relational, whereas, Mrs. Blackwood "describes how a minister's wife can be successful and effective in filling a role that has been defined for her."<sup>63</sup> Mickey and Ashmore see her book and her ideas as

a re-emergence of Roman Catholic themes in American homemaking garb...the minister's wife as the long-suffering, Christ-like martyr who, replete with managerial skills and as the power behind the throne, makes everything come together. She is the happy, contented supporter of her husband's work. And she understands her role to be far more material than that of the Blessed Mother, martyr, mystic models of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant minister's wife is instead the Andrew Carnegie or the John D. Rockefeller, the pillar of industry who makes the wheels of ministerial functions work for the sake of the kingdom of God.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Donna Sinclair, *The Pastor's Wife Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 12.

<sup>64</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 18-29.

- In 1964, Dorothy Pentecost wrote her book *The Pastor's Wife and the Church*. One of the first subjects that she discusses is her belief that the pastor's wife should be called of God for this position and that just loving your husband is not enough to fulfill this important role. While her book was not as idealistic as previous books on the subject, Mrs. Pentecost began to address some of the issues that the pastor's wife would probably encounter in her position in the church, such as how to counsel women who come to you with a problem. It was also during this decade that she tackles the subject of the pastor's wife working outside the home, even though she believed that it was best that she continue her role in the home and not in outside employment.
- In 1972, Frances Nordland's book on the *Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife* took another step toward change in the life of the pastor's wife. She, like Dorothy Pentecost, wrote of the importance of the husband/wife relationship within the ministry. She also addresses the emotional issues that pastors' wives were beginning to express like loneliness and jealousy and also conflict between herself and church members. But the biggest change that is seen in this book is that outside employment is discussed as a possible option for the pastor's wife. Even though Nordland also believes it is not the best thing to do, she believes that the pastor's wife has the right to work outside the home and she gives the reasons why many of the women were choosing this path in their life. Most of the time it had to do with financial reasons and helping to provide for their families.
- In 1981, *The Pastor's Wife Today*, written by Donna Sinclair describes the pastor's wife as a woman who has choices. "She can actively help her husband in

his career, as a helpmate. Or she can choose to remain in the background...or she may want to pursue her own career actively in the secular world.”<sup>65</sup> Mrs. Sinclair admits that the culture has changed the way women think, especially in the subject of equality and because of this it has changed the role of the pastor’s wife in the church also. In the introduction to this book, Sinclair discusses the differences between Carolyn Blackwood’s book that was written in the 1950’s and that how what she wrote was good but that it was more for the pastor’s wife of the 1910’s, 1920’s, 1930’s and 1940’s where the pastor’s wife was filling a role that had “been defined for her.”<sup>66</sup> But Mrs. Sinclair sees that the life of the pastor’s wife is more about a journey and “growth that can come from moving from one stage of adult development to a new stage. She emphasizes the importance of choosing to grow and to change rather than trying to fit into a role defined by someone else.”<sup>67</sup>

- Nancy Pannell was one of the first that this author found that really addressed the issue of the pastor’s wife being who God created her to be. In 1993, she wrote the book, *Being a Minister’s Wife and Being Yourself*. As a pastor’s wife for over thirty-five years, she shares not only the good parts of being the pastor’s wife, but also the hard things. Most of her book relates experiences about how to deal with the different relationships that the pastor’s wife comes in contact with everyday – from her husband and children, to those that she works with, and also those in the

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<sup>65</sup> Sinclair, 21.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



church, the good and the bad. The whole premise of the book is that the pastor's wife needs to be real in her relationships.<sup>68</sup>

- Lorna Dobson goes even further in her book, *I'm More Than the Pastor's Wife*, in 1995, describing the importance of allowing the pastor's wife to not only be real, but also to allow her to serve the Lord with the spiritual gifts that God has given her. Since she was a musician, her passion was to be more involved in the music ministry and not in a role prescribed for her by the church congregation. Her book is very practical and is based on surveys that she conducted with pastors' wives as they shared their experiences and advice for other pastors' wives.<sup>69</sup>
- In 2008, Rachel Lovingood and Jennifer Landrith wrote the book, *In Our Shoes: Real Life Issues for Ministers' Wives by Ministers' Wives*. The main premise of this book is to show that all pastors' wives are different and that they shouldn't try to fill someone else's shoes. This book is a topical study and can be used as a Bible study for a group of pastors' wives. They use different kinds of shoes to address issues that these women will be confronted with in their lives and in their churches. They discuss the issues that many pastors' wives are discussing today: the importance of their own personal relationship with the Lord, the importance of a strong husband/wife relationship, strong relationship with their children, spiritual warfare and how to form much needed relationships with other women inside and outside the church. Another thing that they bring up in the book is the

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<sup>68</sup> Nancy Pannell, *Being a Minister's Wife and being Yourself*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993).

<sup>69</sup> Lorna Dobson, *I'm More Than the Pastor's Wife*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).

fact that some of these women were not raised in the church or maybe in another denomination and that many of them do not have any idea of what is expected of them in the role of the pastor's wife. Lovingood and Landrith emphasize that these women need to be themselves and be who God created them to be and that there is not a specific mold that they need to fit into.<sup>70</sup>

- *From One Ministry Wife to Another* (2009) is a great book that shows the diversity of pastors' wives in the twenty-first century. Susie Hawkins writes in her introduction that even though we all come from different settings and that we have different expectations and traditions that we are following that there is a common bond between ministry wives. She covers many of the relationships that the pastor's wife must be aware of and especially the importance of her relationship with Jesus Christ. She also discusses how the woman's personality, her spiritual gifts and her philosophy of ministry will play a huge role in who she is and how she will fulfill her role. This is a very practical book from a woman who has experienced many different kinds of ministry in her life as the pastor's wife.
- *10 Things Every Minister's Wife Needs to Know* was published in 2010 and is a practical look at the pastor's wife written by Jeana Floyd, a woman who had been in pastoral ministry with her husband for over thirty years. She writes of her experiences in church ministry by discussing her own personal walk with the Lord and how each pastor's wife can find balance in her life and in her ministry. The book's theme is centered around the relationships that the pastor's wife will have

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<sup>70</sup> Lovingood and Landrith.

and how she can make a difference in all of their lives. This book is mostly about encouragement for today's pastor's wife.<sup>71</sup>

### **Technology and Print Media**

It is not only through written books that pastors' wives can find help and encouragement. Technology has opened many avenues for pastors' wives to receive help through mediums such as Facebook and Twitter. Just browsing online reveals many websites by pastors' wives and other ministries reaching out to the minister's wife.

- One of those websites is the "Global Pastor's Network" which has a website just for pastors' wives called the "Global Pastor's Wives Network." This aspect of the ministry was begun in 2002 by Vonette Bright who had a long-time burden to minister to pastors' wives. The mission statement of GPWN is to be "a valuable resource to pastors' wives around the world...Our passion has always been to equip pastors' wives to minister with enthusiasm in their marriage, homes, churches and communities."<sup>72</sup> Along with their website, GPWN has also published a very practical book in 2005 called *Free to Soar*, which was written by pastors' wives from around the world.
- It was almost twenty years ago that Jill Briscoe had a dream to begin a magazine that would minister and encourage women who were serving the Lord and had a heart for ministry. "She had a dream to provide a tool written by ordinary women, serving an extraordinary God, for the purpose of encouragement and

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<sup>71</sup> Jeana Floyd, *10 Things Every Minister's Wife Needs to Know* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Global Pastors Wives Network: History of GPWN, [www.gpwn.org](http://www.gpwn.org), (retrieved September 7, 2010).

support. From the beginning, the deep love and concern for women with a heart for ministry is what has driven the dream.”<sup>73</sup> The result was the magazine *Just Between Us*. This magazine is published quarterly and is written by women in ministry to women in ministry. The topics that they address are very practical in nature and they deal with the issues and pressures that women in ministry face everyday – from relationships, family issues, church issues, marriage and raising their children.

- In the past several years, LifeWay, a Southern Baptist agency that provides ministry support and has provided many resources for the pastor’s wife. Not only do they have an online community that is available only for pastors’ wives where they can share prayer requests and also share experiences on the online discussion group, but since it is anonymous, many of the women are able to open up and discuss the issues they are facing in ministry.

In 2009, Beth Moore conducted a conference, hosted by LifeWay, just for pastors’ wives. It was entitled, *Six Little Words With the Power to Change Your Life*, and it is available on their website. Because of the success of this conference, Lifeway now hosts a two-day conference for pastors’ wives before their women’s conferences that are held around the country. Beth focused on the challenges faced by wives whose husbands have been called to ministry.

[Because] “life can be messy and frustrating. Ministry is hard. [This video series] highlights healthy alternatives to some of the aggravations that arise when

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<sup>73</sup> Shelly Esser, *Just Between Us Magazine*, [www.justbetweenus.org](http://www.justbetweenus.org), (retrieved September 7, 2010).

seasons of misery visit ministry...Beth leads women to a place where they can be 'tended' to by Jesus."<sup>74</sup>

### *Websites*

In researching this paper, it was amazing to see how many websites are dedicated to the pastor's wife. Websites and blogs 'like PastorsWives.org, SarahsTent.com and GPWN.tv...share their thoughts on topics of unique interest...' <sup>75</sup> Lifeway.com/women has a blog section just for pastors' wives. They also encourage them to share with each other on Facebook and Twitter. These websites include articles to encourage and address the issues that these women are facing today. They find common ground with these women as they share their experiences and how they are surviving and even thriving in their ministry roles. Again, women need to have an outlet with other women to discuss the issues they are facing – to know that they are not alone. Also available in these websites are chat rooms just for wives of those in ministry. Even though the greatest help can come from face to face encounters, some pastor's wives are so trapped in the belief that they should be perfect and not have any problems, these chat rooms are meeting a need for them because they are able discuss their feelings of failure and shortcomings in complete anonymity. Many of these responses on the websites would be helpful for lay people in the church to read so that they would have more of an understanding of some of the dilemmas and situations faced by the pastor's wife.

### **Conclusion**

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<sup>74</sup> "Helps for Ministers' Wives," *LifeWay: Biblical Solutions for Life*, [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com), (retrieved September 7, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Lisa Takeuchi Cullen, "Pastors' Wives Come Together," *Time* in Partnership with CNN, March 29, 2007, [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/), (accessed March 13, 2009).

In beginning this discussion on the lives of pastors' wives, it is important to understand the changes that have occurred over the years. These changes can be seen in the books that have been written on this subject – especially through the last six decades. But taking a look at the historical perspective also helps us to grasp that the underlying purpose for these women is still the same.

Being married to a pastor has not always been about prestige or the joy of being married to one. Looking back through the historical perspective, being married to the pastor was hard work and many times a very lonely position. The main goal of Katie Luther and many of those who followed her as pastors' wives was to make sure that everything was taken care of – the home, the children, the farm and the church – so that her husband, the pastor, would have plenty of time for study and prayer and not have the cares of day-to-day living. For some, this pattern has continued through the years and is still an underlying goal of some pastors' wives today. They want to take as much of the burden from their husbands as they can so that he is free to focus on the needs of the church.

Even though society and culture have changed the way that many of these women reach that goal, they still have a deep desire to serve the Lord and to fulfill the calling that they believe that He has placed on their lives.

## Chapter 2

### The Pastor's Wife's Role within the Home

#### *Parsonages*

There have been several changes that have affected the pastor and his family and their home life over the years. One of the biggest changes has been the requirement of the church to provide a parsonage for the pastor and his family. Younger women going into ministry today may not even know of this practice of the church providing and choosing the home where the pastor the pastor and his family would live. It was reported in 1999 that depending on the “denomination, between 32 and 90% of pastoral families live in a church parsonage...provided as part of the pastor’s salary package.”<sup>1</sup> This has been a customary practice for many Protestant churches and it could be either a blessing or a curse depending on how the congregation felt about meeting the needs of the pastor’s family. In some cases, the parsonage even included the furniture which meant that all the pastor’s family would need were their own personal belongings. The pastor and his family were expected to be grateful for whatever was provided and many times they were at the mercy of the board of deacons’ attitudes toward how they should be provided for. ‘Few of [the parsonages were] ever new, or remodeled; most of them [were] almost impossible to heat comfortably. Many would be a discouragement to an interior

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<sup>1</sup> Hileman.

decorator...many a wife weeps bitter tears over the building that is turned over to her and her husband.”<sup>2</sup>

Author Dorothy Blackwood lived during a time when the parsonage was always provided for her and her husband. She says that you always had to take the parsonage as you found it and many of them were very inadequate when it came to the needs of the pastor’s family. She jokingly says of those parsonages,

Parenthetically let me pay my respects to the men who devised some of those old-fashioned parsonages, the kind I have sometime had to live in. I should take a savage delight in believing in purgatory, but in lieu of that I should like to compel each of those architects to live through both winter and summer in one of these houses; large, almost immense, drafty, [and] inconvenient.<sup>3</sup>

There were several drawbacks and advantages to having a parsonage. Many times these homes were next door to the church which made it convenient for the pastor to be close to his work. But, at the same time it also made the parsonage convenient for those in the congregation because many believed that the pastor’s home should be open to them at any time – since the home technically belonged to them and the church. This meant that they could drop in at any time unannounced which also meant that the pastor’s wife needed to have the home in acceptable order and cleanliness at all times. This added a lot of pressure to the pastor’s wife because she would be judged by the appearance of her home. When the furniture was provided for them, they would have to make do with what they had whether it met their needs or not.

One of the advantages to having a parsonage is that when it came time for the pastor to leave that church, they did not have to worry about selling their home because

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<sup>2</sup> Pentecost, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Blackwood, 44-45.



they did not own one. This was a clean break and they could leave unencumbered.

Another issue with having the parsonage provided is that when it came time for the pastor and his wife to retire, they would have no place to go and usually no resources to buy anything for themselves because the parsonage had been part of their salary. And if the pastor would die, the pastor's wife would be left without any place to go because the parsonage is the property of the church and was part of her husband's salary.

In the 1970's and 1980's, some pastors began to ask church boards for the opportunity to purchase or to rent their own homes. Churches began to provide a housing allowance to the pastor as part of his salary so that he could begin to build equity in a home that would help them later on in life. When they were able to buy their own homes, not always right next door to the church, there was a greater sense of privacy and their home became their haven. They were also able to decide on their own the size of their house and how they wanted to decorate it.<sup>4</sup> There was no longer the pressure on the pastor's wife to have a "perfect" home at all times because their congregation no longer felt the obligation or the right to "drop in" at any time they desired. But if the pastor and his wife owned their own home there may be difficulty when they changed pastorates because they would need to sell their home before they would be able to buy one in their new location.

Even though there were problems with many of these parsonages, Pentecost's attitude would be that you are to be a pioneer and that things would not always be comfortable, so she told pastors' wives to just "make up your mind that this is your home, even though it does belong to the church...no matter how terrible the manse is, remember

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<sup>4</sup> Nordland, 48-49.

you are there because the Lord willed it to be so...Just keep asking Him for strength to be cheerful and brave.”<sup>5</sup> The fact that many churches do not have parsonages anymore has been a great change and benefit for those in the pastorate.

### *Marriage*

The marriage of the pastor and the pastor's wife can be a teaching example to the church family about relationships and love and having a strong marriage that will be an asset to their ministry. Does that mean that the pastor's marriage will be ideal or perfect? No. But, because they are living in a “fishbowl” their marriage and their family life will be on display for everyone to watch. If the pastor is to have a successful ministry, it is important that churches and congregations understand the connection between a happy marriage and a successful ministry and the stresses of ministry that can destroy that marriage. Churches today need to be aware that if their church is going to stay healthy and vibrant then they need to “be sensitized to the fact that the health of a pastor's marriage and the well-being of the church depend on each other.”<sup>6</sup>

Psychologist Diane Langberg believes that marriage and ministry should fit together.

Many couples believe and live as if marriage and ministry do not fit together. They view these two areas as being in irresolvable conflict and feels that one must be subordinate. Frequently, this translates into a severe neglect of the family, because “serving the Lord” is more important. Those having this attitude define service to God as “those spiritual things that take place outside the home.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pentecost, 142.

<sup>6</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastor's at Greater Risk*, 89.

<sup>7</sup> Diane Langberg, *Counsel for Pastors' Wives* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1988),

The problem, as Langberg states, is that many in ministry do not see the connection between their ministry for the Lord and their ministry to their own families. When the ministry in the home is neglected, it can cause several problems within the home between husband and wife and also with the children. It is so important that the pastor and his wife become “intentional and set aside time for family, friends, social life, and her or his own spiritual renewal.”<sup>8</sup> Pastors and their wives must also begin to look at their marriage and their family life as a ministry to the Lord and begin to set appropriate boundaries and priorities.

Like all marriages, ministry couples need to learn to protect their marriages. Because the role of women has changed in our culture, the role of the pastor’s wife has also changed within the context of marriage. Just because a couple is in ministry does not mean that they do not need to work on their marriage. One of the problems with ministry marriages is that they are trying to meet the needs and expectations of many different people within their ministry and because of this, they sometimes forget about their own marriage. “Sixty-six percent of pastors and their families feel pressure to model the ideal family to their congregations and communities.”<sup>9</sup> Statistics also show that the same numbers of minister’s marriages are just as likely to end in divorce as those in their congregations and the divorce rate among pastors and their wives is “the second highest divorce rate among all professions.”<sup>10</sup>

Wilhelm Pauch wrote of the historical perspective of marriage and ministry,

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<sup>8</sup> Hileman.

<sup>9</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 86.

When marriage was permitted after the Reformation that ministerial households often exemplified the practical application of the Reformers' new understanding of the Christian religion, namely that the faith in Christ must be practiced in mutual love and service in the natural, social setting of human life and in ordinary, secular pursuits. Thus the married ministry came to demonstrate that family life together with the manifold social activities it engenders can be a more effective vehicle for religion and the service of God than asceticism, celibacy and other-worldliness.<sup>11</sup>

Even looking back just a few decades ago, the question of divorce between a pastor and his wife was very seldom discussed. Their roles were very clearly defined and each one knew what was expected. But, today these roles can be very confusing because of the nature of our society and the changing roles of both men and women. Marriages can take on many different patterns and London and Wiseman believe that there are four patterns that are very prevalent in ministry marriages and that if not done correctly, the ministry will have an adverse effect on the marriage:

- *Partners in Ministry* – This is the model where the wife stays at home and also shares in all aspects of the ministry. She could be seen as an unofficial co-pastor because she will do whatever needs to be done in the church. London says that “the flaw is that both partners are sometimes so influenced by the other’s viewpoints that they can’t accurately gauge reality.”<sup>12</sup>
- *Ministry is his business* – This pattern shows that the ministry is the husband’s profession and the wife is not involved in the day-to-day ministry. Her role is more of a supporter for her husband and her only ministry is like that of any other church member.

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<sup>11</sup> David Mace and Vera Mace, *What’s Happening to Clergy Marriages?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 24.

<sup>12</sup> London, *Pastor’s at Greater Risk*, 108.

- *The wife brings home the bacon* – This pattern happens when the wife is the one who is bringing in the most finances for the family – many times out of necessity because the church is not meeting the economic needs of the family. This pattern can bring stress on the marriage because the pastor's wife is usually not as involved in the church which can bring about isolation and also a "lack of confidence in the husband's ability to earn a living."<sup>13</sup>
- *The two-career pattern* – This is the pattern where the husband and wife both have their own career which is very prevalent in ministry marriages today. But, this can cause potential problems in the marriage for either one if there is a job transfer or if the pastor has to change churches.<sup>14</sup>

Again, it comes down to the husband and the wife knowing and understanding what God has called each of them to do. Even though many of the pastors today have seminary degrees, they are finding that they are not as "prepared for the burdens they will face as pastors. Ministering to the dying and those left behind, broken families, the results of infidelity, abuse, neglect, chronic illness...takes a toll."<sup>15</sup> Mickey and Ashmore believe that the more educated and prepared the pastor and his wife are about what will be expected of them in ministry, the more they will be prepared for the pressures that are awaiting them in their place of ministry. When these expectations of potential ministry and future pressures are not fully communicated by the husband to his spouse and to the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>15</sup> Hileman.

family it will cause problems within the home that will later have an impact on how they will accept and manage the ministry that they are given.<sup>16</sup>

*Problems within the pastor's home*

A recent article said that over the past 25 years that the divorce rate for pastors rose 65%. "Eighty percent said their ministry has a 'negative impact' on their home life, while one-third said 'the pastorate has been a 'hazard to their families.'""<sup>17</sup> With these statistics, it is so important that pastors and their wives learn how to protect their marriage and to be aware that a destroyed marriage will also destroy their opportunity to influence and minister to others.

When David and Vera Mace surveyed clergy couples in the late 1970's, they found that the top issues that pastors' wives had the hardest time adjusting to within their marriages were time alone with their husbands and a lack of privacy, confusion about their role within the church and how to handle friendships outside the church. Today, thirty years later, women are still battling those same issues. The only change now is that women don't seem to be as fearful in expressing the problems they are having.<sup>18</sup>

Many times along with their own personal struggles, pastors' wives are disappointed in their relationship with their own husbands. Problems arise when their pastor-husbands are also feeling pressure to deal with their own insecurities. "Pastors brim with self-confidence in many areas of their ministry, but admit it is a challenge to maintain genuine connections with other people...[and] one in every five contends that

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<sup>16</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Wendy Murray Zoba, "What Pastors Wives Wish Their Churches Knew," *Christianity Today* 41, no. 4 (April 97).

<sup>18</sup> Mace and Mace.

they are currently ‘dealing with a very difficult family situation.’”<sup>19</sup> When there are problems in home, “pastors are often the last people to admit a need for counseling.”<sup>20</sup> Barna found in one of his survey’s that most pastors feel and believe that they lead a balanced life.<sup>21</sup> When there are problems within the family, usually it is the wife who is more aware of what is going on because their husbands are so absorbed with what is happening in their own lives and in the ministry of the church that they shut everything else out.

If a couple is going to be successful in ministry, they need to learn from the beginning that they need to set boundaries in their lives – boundaries for their marriage, for their family and for their ministry. In order for these boundaries to work in their lives, they also need to learn how to communicate with each other – not just talking, but really hearing what their spouse is saying. When they have discussed these boundaries and have put them into place, they will help to protect them as a couple.

H.B. London, Jr. writes that “if you ladies are having a hard time getting your husbands’ attention...you need to stand up on the roof and get two garbage can lids and just slam them together...!!!!”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the pastor’s wife needs to make her husband understand that she is struggling and that she needs his help and his attention which means communication needs to be a top priority in their lives.

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<sup>19</sup> George Barna, “Pastors Feel Confident in Ministry, But Many Struggle in Their Interactions With Others,” *Barna Group*, July 10, 2006, [www.barna.org/](http://www.barna.org/), (accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Rowland Craucher, “What Pastor’s Wives Wish Their Husbands and Churches Knew About Them,” *John Mark Ministries*, January 27, 2009, [www.jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8202.htm](http://www.jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8202.htm), (accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Barna.

<sup>22</sup> *Free to Soar*, 179.

Some pastors' wives see their husbands as being "married" to the church and some deal with husbands who are workaholics. Probably one of the hardest issues to cope with is when the wife feels that her husband has betrayed her because he has failed to stand up for her and protect her by failing "to inform 'call committees' that their wives are to be treated like everyone else – their ministries will coincide with their own gifts and be within their own personal limits – not anyone else's!!"<sup>23</sup>

There are articles written that talk of the church as being the husband's mistress because it drains away their "time, energy and affection."<sup>24</sup> When this happens, many of these women lose their own identity and feel powerless and helpless and become angry because the expectations seem to be overwhelming at times.<sup>25</sup> Another aspect and probably one of the hardest to understand is many times these women feel that their husbands have emotionally deserted them. "In the view of a Boston psychiatrist, ministers' wives suffer most from a feeling of abandonment."<sup>26</sup>

In an article entitled, "The Pastor's Mistress," one pastor's wife talked about her husband's "affair" with the church. She wrote,

I couldn't fight her and I wasn't about to compete with her, so I just turned my feelings off...that was the only way I could cope with what was happening. The biggest problem was guilt. How could I possibly resent the fact that he was spending so much time and energy doing the Lord's work?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Craucher.

<sup>24</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 125.

<sup>25</sup> Cullen.

<sup>26</sup> "Mrs. Minister's Troubles."

<sup>27</sup> Oswald C. J. Hoffman, "The Pastor's Mistress," *Ministry Health*, October 5, 2004, [www.ministryhealth.net/](http://www.ministryhealth.net/), (accessed March 14, 2009).



Not only do these women share their husband with the work he does in the church, but they also share their husbands with other women from their churches that are having problems. “Pastors are the last ‘helping professionals’ to regularly visit women alone in their homes...[because of this] there are unique temptations to cope with.”<sup>28</sup>

One of the temptations often mentioned are pastors who have affairs. In fact, pastors are shown to be on the list of those most likely to be susceptible to having an affair. Along with this, the parsonage which is thought of as “a fortress, is often overloaded by a barrage of arrows which continually attack its foundations. These arrows put pressures on the parsonage which can make pastors and their families remarkably vulnerable...including affairs.”<sup>29</sup>

### **The Pastor’s Wife’s Ministry within the Family**

#### *Ministering to your husband*

One of the words that is used when discussing the role of the pastor’s wife to her husband, the pastor, is the word “helpmeet.” While this word may seem old-fashioned to some and out-of-step with our culture today, the word is actually a beautiful word that God gave to address the relationship of a wife to her husband.

One ministry that a pastor’s wife should have is her ministry to her husband. She is to encourage her husband and build him up to succeed. There is no greater security a woman can give to her husband than for him to know that she is behind him and that she believes in Him. Because the pressures of ministry can be overwhelming at times, he

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<sup>28</sup> Craucher.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas F. Fischer, “The Affair-Proof Pastorate,” *Ministry Health*, October 5, 2004, [www.ministryhealth.net/](http://www.ministryhealth.net/), (accessed March 14, 2009).

needs to know that someone is on his side. That is why she needs to become his encourager.

Many times women need to remember that marriage is about a relationship and that relationships grow and change over time. There are going to be times that the pastor and his wife may disagree about things. But this is the time that they need to learn how to guard and take care of their marriage. They also need to learn to talk to each other, become best friends, build each other up and also learn how to develop trust in each other. Their home should be a place where they can both go for rest and peace. They need to learn how to guard and protect their home. It is good to remember this about marriage, “if all heaven is for it then all hell will be against it!”<sup>30</sup>

#### *Ministry to your family*

Along with the issue of marriage are the needs of the family. “A survey taken by *LEADERSHIP* journal in 1992 reveals that 94 percent of ministers feel pressured to have an ‘ideal family,’ while 77 percent said their spouses felt pressure to be ‘an ideal role model for the Christian family.’”<sup>31</sup>

Not only do pastors’ wives feel neglected by their husbands at times, but their children are also recipients of their neglect. When pastors are busy with everything that needs to be done in the church, it is his wife who is at home taking care of the children – many times making excuses as to why “Dad” can’t be there. Many wives begin to feel resentment when it seems that she has to shoulder all the responsibility for the home and for the children. But, this problem of always being too busy can also be extended to the

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<sup>30</sup>Quote from a *Ministering to Troubled Families* class with Dr. Tim Clinton, January, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Zoba.

pastor's wife also. Some are just as busy as their husbands and the children feel neglected by both parents. Pastors and pastors' wives need to make sure that they keep their focus on their God-given roles of husband and father and wife and mother instead of putting their entire focus on the church family. This means that they need to guard the children's time with their parents.

Some churches have the expectation that the pastor and his wife and also their children will be very involved in the ministry of the church. If there is not clear communication and understanding between the pastor and his family, it can in some cases cause distress within the family.<sup>32</sup> Neff writes that "some evidence also suggests that developing that sense of call within pastoral children assists in keeping the whole family's lines of communication open."<sup>33</sup> Mickey and Ashmore also back this up,

Pastors' comments indicate that the more clearly the call is discerned by the pastor and the more thoroughly the decision is processed by the family, the higher level of support for ministry and the less likely the family is to be harshly surprised by the realities of ministry...If the pastor is sensitive to their concerns, the more supportive the family is of the pastor's role as shepherd of God's flock.<sup>34</sup>

When interviewing pastors' wives, the author found that most of their children had a positive attitude toward the church and that very few of them had rebelled against the church during their growing up years. In fact, most of their children are still involved in the ministry of the church today – many of them in ministry positions themselves. The author believes this is because these parents ministered to their own children and were an example to them by the way they lived their lives that God had called them to ministry.

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<sup>32</sup> Hileman.

<sup>33</sup> Neff, 211.

<sup>34</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 72-73.

Then these children were made to feel a part of the ministry along with their parents and that it is a wonderful privilege to be able to serve the Lord together as a family and that you are all in this together.<sup>35</sup>

Your children should not be made to act any differently than any other child in the church. Hopefully they will be different because of their own walk with the Lord and not just because they are the pastor's child. Don't let your children think that they are missing out on anything in life. Even if you don't have a lot of money, be creative and also teach them the wonderful less of depending on the Lord for their needs and their wants.

As parents, you need to be careful about what your children hear you and your husband talking about. If there are problems within the church, they should not know all the details of everything that is happening in the church. You need to guard your children so that they will not become bitter and angry if they happen to see or hear negative things from those in the congregation. There are times when conflicts within the church between the pastor and members of the congregation can have a negative impact on the children because they will feel caught in the middle and many times be shunned by their own friends.<sup>36</sup> This means that the communication lines need to be open between the parents and the children and that you are available to listen to them.

What it comes down to is that in order to "keep your family attuned to a ministry vocation...the ministry of God's love and care begins right in your own bedroom, then in the family room, and then take what's left out the door to the church, rather than the other

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<sup>35</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Hileman.

way around.”<sup>37</sup> Mickey and Ashmore back this up by saying “that when theological and familial issues have been openly discussed among family members, the pastor and the family will experience less stress than those who ignore or take lightly either spiritual or family commitments.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, priorities need to be kept in order!

Remember that no matter how old your children are they will always be your children even though the nature of the relationship will change. Nurture your relationship with your children early in life so that when they get older you will not only have a wonderful child, but a wonderful friend!

### **Personal Issues**

The connection between her husband and the ministry has the possibility of bringing with it other heartaches and issues that the pastor’s wife never anticipated having to deal with in her life. Jeana Floyd makes the comment that after being in ministry for over 30 years she has observed “that rarely is a minister successful in ministry when his wife is miserable.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, if the pastor’s wife is happy and content, the pastor will also be happy and their ministry together will be more successful. It has also been shown that one of the number one reasons that pastors leave the ministry is because of wife issues.<sup>40</sup> Because of this, there are certain danger areas that pastors’ wives need to be aware of so that they are not caught unaware of the personal problems they may find themselves confronted with. These areas of concern will not only affect

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<sup>37</sup> Linda Riley, “When Your Wife Resents Your Call,” *Leadership*, October 1, 2003, [www.christianitytoday.com/le/2003/fall/5.51.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2003/fall/5.51.html), (accessed March 14, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 73.

<sup>39</sup> Jeana Floyd, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Cullen.

her marriage but also her family life and her ministry within the church. Each of these issues brings with it its own set of problems and when you add them to the list of the daily responsibilities that she is already struggling with, the issues can become overwhelming.

Minister's wives were surveyed at a conference conducted by Focus on the Family where these women were asked what their greatest challenges were in ministry. The top responses from the seventy-eight respondents were consistent in these five areas:

- Loneliness and feeling of isolation. (I need a good friend.)
- Balance of family and church. (There isn't any.)
- Expectations of church members. (Feeling like everyone has a great plan for my life.)
- Criticism. (Needing affirmation but receiving "you-don't-measure -up" messages.)
- Finances. (If I don't work, we can't make it.)<sup>41</sup>

But, as Gail MacDonald wrote about these responses, she was surprised at what was missing from the list. She writes that "only five out of the group said that their greatest challenge was loving and pleasing Christ in such a way that he would receive praise from how they lived."<sup>42</sup> What this is saying is that somewhere along the line, these women have lost their focus and the reason behind why they are ministering in the first place.

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<sup>41</sup> Gail MacDonald, *High Call, High Privilege* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 50.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

### *Self-Worth*

One important need among many pastors' wives "was finding a sense of self-worth."<sup>43</sup> Many times this loss of self-worth is caused "by her own guilts and anxieties...her own shortcomings and her earlier history. Marrying a minister doesn't wipe out her past or her thoughts...[many use] church work...as a substitute for a personal need that is not fulfilled by busy, distant husbands."<sup>44</sup>

But the one area that seems to destroy her self-worth is when others expect her to "derive her sense of self from the role-prescription her husband, the congregation, and society at large have for her, she [becomes] dissatisfied, frustrated, anxious and even angry as she becomes more of what everyone wants her to be and less of what she really is."<sup>45</sup> What she desires most of all are clear and healthy expectations of what they expect from her in this role.<sup>46</sup> One article states that there are some pastors' wives who feel very intimidated by other pastors' wives – especially those who seem to be successful and who are held up to be role models. "Even articles in *Just Between Us*, a magazine for clergy wives, can make a pastor's wife who is struggling with her role feel inadequate."<sup>47</sup>

Zoba goes on to say that "in addition to the expectations from the church, the ministry wife also receives signals from the larger believing community about who (or what) she should or should not be."<sup>48</sup> One pastor's wife wrote,

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<sup>43</sup> Hoffman.

<sup>44</sup> "Mrs. Minister's Troubles."

<sup>45</sup> Wessels.

<sup>46</sup> Zoba.

<sup>47</sup> Hileman.

<sup>48</sup> Zoba.

What they seem to be looking for – and what they'll never find in me – is perfection...For them, I am a symbol – a projected fantasy of what it means to live a life of faith – not an actual person. Many prefer to believe the plastic persona rather than get to know the authentic, warts-and-all woman behind the smile.<sup>49</sup>

When she believes that she is not living up to everyone's expectations, she may experience feelings of guilt. She also becomes vulnerable to the attacks of Satan who whispers – as one woman wrote – “if you don't perform correctly – perfectly - then you're worthless, unlovable and hopeless. God will never be able to use you again.”<sup>50</sup>

Many are trying to live up to the reputation of the previous pastor's wife. One thing that the pastor-husband can do would be to continually mention his wife's unique abilities and strengths to those in the congregation when it comes to ministry. In this way, he will be giving her the freedom to choose how she will minister with the gifts and passions that God has given her and hopefully she will be given the opportunity by those in the church to fulfill her purpose. This would also be another way of showing how they can work together as a team by supporting and encouraging each other in their own ministries.<sup>51</sup>

But, sometimes there are those who bring these feelings of not living up to everyone's expectations on themselves. Many get their sense of worth by being busy – always trying to perform or even trying to outdo the former pastor's wife. <sup>52</sup> If she is the

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<sup>49</sup> Eileen Button, “The Title I Didn't Ask For,” *Gifted for Leadership*, May, 20, 2008, [www.giftedforleadership.com/](http://www.giftedforleadership.com/), (accessed 21, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Tricia Hicks, “When Your Church World Collapses--and You're The Pastor's Wife,” *Ministry Health*, 1996, [www.ministryhealth.net/](http://www.ministryhealth.net/), (accessed March 21, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Wessels.

<sup>52</sup> Abe Funk and Linda Ozirney, “The Weird and Wonderful World of Being A Pastor's Wife,” *Baptist General Conference of Canada*, [www.bgc.ca/pastor/Being%20a%20Pastor's%20Wife.gtml/](http://www.bgc.ca/pastor/Being%20a%20Pastor's%20Wife.gtml/), (accessed April 24, 2003).



type of person who is very conscientious and driven, she may have the tendency to become over involved which will again give her a sense of failure if she doesn't believe that she has accomplished what others expect of her.<sup>53</sup> One pastor's wife related that "a lot of the expectations I struggled to meet...came from my own striving to excel, not from our congregation."<sup>54</sup> She had to learn that her self-worth and acceptance came from God and not what she did or could do for Him. Pastors' wives need to know that it is all right to be yourself!!!

It also needs to be understood that pastors' wives have opinions and are able to think for themselves. Many of these women have been educated and have college degrees of their own. But, because of their position, if they express their viewpoints or their theological beliefs, it may be seen as a reflection on her pastor-husband.<sup>55</sup>

One of the consequences of a loss of self-worth is the ability to begin wearing "masks" to cover up what they are really feeling on the inside. They also become performance oriented and very good at role-playing. If they could only learn how to just be themselves and really like who God made them to be and not feel like they have to become another person in order to please everyone else!

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<sup>53</sup> Tim Stafford, "The Church's Walking Wounded," *Christianity Today*, March, 2003, [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/march/9.64.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/march/9.64.html), (accessed March 14, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Riley.

<sup>55</sup> Cullen.

## *Loneliness*

Of all the issues that pastors' wives are dealing with, according to "*Just Between Us* (a magazine for pastors' wives) the number one felt need of wives of pastors is for friendship and community, due to an acute sense of loneliness."<sup>56</sup> Not only do pastors' wives have a problem with loneliness, but it has been reported that 70% of pastors also feel that they have no close friends within the church congregation.<sup>57</sup> "Many pastors' wives simply yearn for an uncritical, listening ear – someone they can pour out their feelings to with no fear of condemnation or reprisal. They long for a safe place to vent their frustrations and feel loved and accepted just as they are."<sup>58</sup> Many times it seems like everyone else in the congregation has someone that they can turn to for counseling when they have a need – everyone except the pastor's wife!!<sup>59</sup>

What kind of loneliness does a pastor's wife experience? Even though they are surrounded by people in their congregation, they may feel isolated from those in their congregation. One pastor's wife said, "The loneliest feeling in the world can be sitting on a pew by yourself in a sanctuary full of people where your spouse is preaching."<sup>60</sup> In some cases the pastor and his wife are even seen as outsiders. When a pastor and his family come into a new church situation, they are being thrust into a church family that

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<sup>56</sup> Zoba.

<sup>57</sup> Hileman.

<sup>58</sup> "Pastors' Wives - Fatigue and Burnout," 2002 – 2009, *All About God.Com*, [www.allaboutGod.com/pastors-wives.htm](http://www.allaboutGod.com/pastors-wives.htm), (accessed March 6, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Wessels.

<sup>60</sup> Hileman.

have already formed relationships and it is very hard for someone to break into a group and make themselves part of that group. Some congregations see them only as temporary residents and fail to see the need to form relationships with them. This is especially true if the church is considered a “family” church that is basically run by a group of family members, or the congregation may be hesitant to accept a new relationship with the pastor and his wife if they were very close to the previous pastor’s family.

But, generally speaking, much of the time they are just confused and frustrated “from not being sure what [their] role is... just when [they] think [they] have it defined, a change happens – a relocation...etc. (‘statistics tell us that the average senior pastor moves every four years, and the average associate’s stay is between 9 – 18 months.’)”<sup>61</sup> This frustration comes because women are relationship oriented. It is so hard for them to make friends when they don’t know if they will be there tomorrow. Then when they do go to another church, they are fearful of beginning new relationships. That is when many of them begin to build walls around themselves to protect their feelings and their emotions.

Then there are those who have tried to form relationships with members of the congregation only to have their trust betrayed. “There is a sense of fear to reveal one’s heart, especially in ministry...fear of condemnation...Confidences told by the pastor’s family can quickly become the latest church gossip and lead to dismissal.”<sup>62</sup>

This topic is always one of the big questions that every book and article on pastors’ wives addresses – “Should the pastor’s wife have other women friends within the

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<sup>61</sup> Deanna Strode, “Stay Beautiful,” *Pastoring Partners*, March, 2003, [www.pastoringpartners.com/news.html](http://www.pastoringpartners.com/news.html), (accessed March 31, 2003).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

church congregation?” Since women are very relational, it is important for them to be able to share with others the needs and hurts that they may be experiencing in their lives. But many have found that by forming relationships with other women in the congregation that it can backfire and cause further hurt and frustration.

The pastors’ wives who were interviewed for this paper overwhelmingly said that it is possible to have friendships with women in the church but that it must be approached with caution. Some of the women have felt betrayed or used by those that they believed were their friends. Several of the women expressed that some in the congregation would use them to relay messages to their husbands or to let them know what their pastor-husband was doing wrong. This is especially true if there happens to be a church “split.” When these friendships are broken, this causes a deep, emotional hurt that sometimes causes the pastor’s wife to build a wall around herself and her family because she does not want to feel betrayed again. This is where she can also begin to have trust issues – not only with others but also in her relationship with God.<sup>63</sup>

It is so essential for these women to find someone in human flesh that they can trust and share their heart with. They may have to depend on past relationships to find a listening ear. It may be a member of their family, a friend from college or another woman in ministry – someone who will accept them for who they are and really listen to what they are saying. When preparing women for ministry, this author shares from her experience by telling her students to form strong relationships now with other women who have the same passions or with those who will also be going into ministry. These

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<sup>63</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

lifelong relationships will continue through the years and will be a great source of comfort and encouragement to them in the future.

There are many women in ministry who are forming accountability groups with other women in ministry for the purpose of encouraging each other. “The continuing importance of this group is to provide [them] with a great support. If and when attacks come from inside or outside the church, [they] have each other to rely on. There are some things that only other ministry wives can understand.”<sup>64</sup> Having groups like this give these women the opportunity to have a sounding board with like-minded women.

If the pastor’s wife is in a church that has other staff wives, this could be an opportunity to find a support system within the church. Some senior pastors’ wives have their own ministry of meeting with the staff wives to encourage and build them up. But, this does not always mean that they will have close relationships with them.<sup>65</sup>

Even with all the stresses that many wives contend with, Wendy Zoba encourages them by reminding them that “the call of the pastor’s wife is both consecrated in its place of privilege and complicated in its emotional ambiguities...There is a certain blessedness in the mantle bequeathed to her by virtue of her intimate connection to the shepherd of the flock.”<sup>66</sup> She also adds,

When you are in it up to your neck, you don’t always see how high and how good the call of the pastor’s wife can be. There is a degree of suffering attached to this role, and no small measure of sacrifice. But there is also the privilege of sharing the trust of hurting people who depend upon you, whether you deserve it or not...There is also the privilege of participating in sacred moments when the human heart cries out for the face of God....The hard points and the sacred moments, in tandem, are

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<sup>64</sup> Angelie R. Stahlnecker, “Friendships Made In Heaven,” *Just Between Us*, Summer, 2000, [www.justbetweenus.org/5\\_02/friendships.html](http://www.justbetweenus.org/5_02/friendships.html), (accessed March 31, 2003)

<sup>65</sup> Floyd, 134.

<sup>66</sup> Zoba.

the brick and mortar of kingdom-building. The pastor has been entrusted with the soul-nurture of the bride of Christ, and with or without her assent, his wife is part of that trust.<sup>67</sup>

### *Depression*

From loneliness comes another problem – depression. Dr. Lois Evans, wife of Pastor Tony Evans from the Urban Alternative, has started a ministry for pastors’ wives called, “The First Lady Ministry.” One of her reasons for starting this ministry was because she found that according to many doctors and psychiatrists that pastors’ wives were among some of the most likely candidates to suffer from severe depression. She also found that the relationships between pastors and their wives were suffering because they were not able to adjust and deal with the issues that they were confronted with on a daily basis. She was saddened by many who decided to divorce because of these pressures. She decided that these women needed help in finding encouragement and the power to fulfill the highest call on their life instead of just giving in to the pressures.<sup>68</sup>

One of the ways that depression comes about is because “she (the pastor’s wife) continuously does what she feels others would expect of her, not what she would like to do, and as a result feels depressed.”<sup>69</sup> One psychiatrist found that “the more fundamental or rigid the religion, the greater the chance of breakdown.”<sup>70</sup>

Depression not only affects the pastor’s wife, but many pastors also fight depression because of the stresses in their own lives.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Lois Evans, “The First Lady Ministry,” *The Urban Alternative*, April 24, 2003, [www.tonyevans.org/lady/](http://www.tonyevans.org/lady/), (accessed April, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> “Mrs. Minister’s Troubles.”

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

The pastor's wife is the secondary, innocent, victim of these stressors that so badly affect her husband. In addition to this there are stressors that affect the pastor's wife because of her unique position. Many pastors in South Africa left the ministry lately. A psychologist who devotes a large part of his counseling practice to pastors estimates that seventy percent of these cases are related to wives that cannot cope with the demands that the ministry brings about. Research into high medicine bills of South African pastors revealed that about 73% was stress related.<sup>71</sup>

Most of them feel that they have no one that they can honestly share their feelings and problems with from their congregations. Not only do pastors' wives feel this pressure, but pastors report that the top eight areas of stress for them are: "time, boundaries, isolation, conflict, mobility, life in parsonage, concern for children and spouse and family dynamics" and "45.5 % of pastors say that they've experienced depression or burnout."<sup>72</sup> When their husbands are struggling, this also puts even more pressure on the pastor's wife because she carries the burden for both of them.

It was interesting to read from a historical perspective that some of the Christian leaders like Luther and Calvin also suffered from bouts of depression. Each turned to his wife for help, "nudging him out of depressions" and "to lift her husband out of his frequent states of depression..."<sup>73</sup> But today it seems like the situation has been reversed and it is the wife who suffers many times from depression along with her husband.

### **The Struggles of the Pastor's Wife within the Church**

The first thing that needs to be remembered about pastors' wives is that they are human. Just like every other woman in the congregation, they are also faced with the

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<sup>71</sup> Wessels.

<sup>72</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastor's at Greater Risk*, 172.

<sup>73</sup> Sweet, 14 – 15.

challenges of everyday life and trying to balance their roles and their responsibilities as a wife, mother, and church member. They even have the same struggles spiritually as any other person.<sup>74</sup> They are normal people who also have “hopes, dreams, families, challenges, insecurities, and idiosyncrasies.”<sup>75</sup> But, along with the day-to-day struggles, she is also trying to be what she believes others want her to be. When she does this, she adds more stress to her life.

In Sarah Wessel’s article, “*Care for the Pastor’s Wife, Too*,” she lists some of the typical stressors that many pastors’ wives face. Some of the stresses include:

- No emotional outlet.
- Suppression of own identity.
- Being neglected by her husband. She feels (and in most cases is) neglected by her husband’s sense of responsibility which takes him away from her. Often times this sense of responsibility is misplaced.
- Surrounded by so many Christians with whom she cannot communicate because they do not even have the vaguest idea of the position, or in whom she may not confide as a result of the confidential nature of her unique position, the pastor’s wife is often the most lonely person in the whole congregation.
- Lack of privacy. Members of a congregation often think of the parsonage as their property and regard the pastor’s time as belonging to them.
- Social life is inhibited. Friendship within the congregation can pose problems.
- Double standards prevail in the pastor’s life. “Pastor Perfect” comes home from a successful but stressful meeting and house calls, just to take it all out on his undeserving family. His spouse has to put up with the “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” syndrome.
- Finances.
- Frustration, stress and poor health that is a direct result of being a pastor’s wife.
- Lack of pastoral, spiritual and emotional care for the pastoral family.
- Unfavorable congregational criticism deriving from misconceptions regarding the pastoral family.
- Time for leisure almost non-existent and mostly only on an irregular basis.
- Sexual problems deriving from the pastoral lifestyle.
- Conflict between colleagues or congregations.

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<sup>74</sup> Nancy Leigh DeMoss, “31 Days of Praying for Your Pastor’s Wife,” *Revive Our Hearts Ministries*, 2001 – 2009, [www.ReviveOurHearts.com/](http://www.ReviveOurHearts.com/), (accessed March 6, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> Barna.



- Live in the shadow of a former minister and/or his wife.<sup>76</sup>

### **Conclusion**

One of the foundations for a successful ministry in the church is that the pastor and his wife have a successful marriage and family life. Church congregations need to understand the importance of allowing the pastor and his family the room to grow together as a couple and as a family so that they can minister together in doing what God has called them to do. Even though the pastor and his wife can be an example of what having a godly marriage and family can entail, there is also a delicate balance that needs to be preserved when it comes to privacy and the pressure that can be placed on the family to be “perfect.” These pressures of trying to live up to the expectations of others will sometimes cause personal conflicts and struggles for the pastor’s wife that can result in heartache and guilt of not fulfilling her call to serve the Lord.

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<sup>76</sup> Wessels.

## Chapter 3

### The Role of the Pastor's Wife in the Church

#### *Passion versus Expectations*

When a woman knows that she is going to be a partner with her husband in ministry, there is a sense of excitement and wonder that the Lord has chosen her to fill this role. In her mind, she imagines the ways the Lord is going to use her to minister to other people and she is overwhelmed with new possibilities for how she will minister. Many have trained and prepared themselves for this role and they are passionate about ministry. For those going to an already established ministry, upon arriving they are greeted with enthusiasm by their new church family as they settle into their new home. But for some women, this time of excitement is replaced with fear and uncertainty as she begins to understand what will be expected of her from her church family. For those who have studied and prepared themselves for this role, they may soon find out that their expectations are different from the reality of what they are experiencing.

One of the most important aspects of this discussion is that these women need to learn and understand what ministry really is. Many congregations hire a pastor believing that he is the only one who is to “minister.” But, “according to the Bible, ministry is not the activity of a spiritual elite or the work of a professional class. Rather it is the ‘lifestyle, responsibility, and privilege of every believer.’”<sup>1</sup> According to one source, ministry is not about the call to serve the Lord, it is a call to a life of intimacy with the

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Mabery-Foster, *Women and the Church* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1999), 229.

Lord. “Ministry is what He does out of the overflow of intimacy. Everything Jesus desires to do through my life He will do as the overflow of His love relationship with me.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, ministry is really about a relationship. It is not about what we do for Him, but about the relationship we have with Him.

### *Expectations*

What role should the pastor’s wife fulfill in the church? Following is what many churches are looking for in a pastor’s wife.

Help wanted: Pastor’s wife. Must sing, play music, lead youth groups, raise seraphic children, entertain church notables, minister to other wives, have ability to recite Bible backward and choreograph Christmas pageant. Must keep pastor sated, peaceful and out of trouble. Difficult colleagues, demanding customers, erratic hours. Pay: \$0.<sup>3</sup>

Denton has written that the characteristics of the ideal pastor’s wife can at times be quite unrealistic,

The composite picture of her depicts a woman who is the very epitome of all that is gracious, tactful, lovely, righteous, pleasant, and friendly. She is a skilled financier who does wonders with her husband’s limited salary, an understanding counselor to those seeking her help, a gracious hostess to those accepting the hospitality of her home, her husband’s right arm when needed, and possessing the finesse of a diplomat in handling inter-personal problems both at home and in the church.<sup>4</sup>

Even though these may be tongue-in-cheek descriptions of what the church is looking for in a pastor’s wife, for some church congregations it is closer to reality. These job descriptions are the expectations that many congregations have come to expect when they view the position of a pastor’s wife. When looking for a pastor, most churches do

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<sup>2</sup> Floyd, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Cullen,

<sup>4</sup> Nordland, 18.

not advertise for the position of pastor's wife, "but many churches expect when they hire a pastor, to get a package that includes a wife who will work diligently alongside her husband, without pay."<sup>5</sup> In other words, some churches and pulpit committees are looking for a "two-for-one deal." But, from God's viewpoint and from scripture, the pastor's wife should be no different from any other Christian woman in the church and "has no more call to public duty than any Christian woman in the congregation."<sup>6</sup>

"Pastors may feel prepared for the lifestyle, but, one study [indicated that], 84% of wives don't."<sup>7</sup> They "feel unqualified and discouraged about their position...[and] totally unprepared to fulfill the responsibilities thrust upon them."<sup>8</sup> When interviewing the pastors' wives for this project, the majority said that they did not feel prepared once they were involved in ministry. Even though some of them had taken a few classes or had gone to seminary wives fellowships, they still were surprised at what they found out about themselves and those that they were ministering to once they got to their place of ministry.<sup>9</sup>

In preparing for ministry, most pastors' wives have been taught that God will meet their needs and that He will also give them the strength to overcome any struggle. So, why do many feel alienated – not only from God – but also from their husbands and from those in their congregation that she believed loved and cared about her? Her desire, especially if she believed she was "called" to this ministry by the Lord, is just to serve the

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<sup>5</sup> Funk and Ozimey.

<sup>6</sup> Dobson, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Wessels.

<sup>8</sup> *AllAboutGod.com*.

<sup>9</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

Lord. But, like Nehemiah when rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem, it is easy to get discouraged when you are constantly dealing with all the “rubble” lying around. Sometimes life can just be overwhelming – when they come to believe that everything they are doing is for nothing or that there is always a battle in order to accomplish something.

When trying to know where they fit in, most pastors’ wives will tell you that they are much more “comfortable with parameters, boundaries and job descriptions than with vague expectations and undefined roles.”<sup>10</sup> Part of this confusion comes because they feel pressure because “congregations have become quite efficient at constructing molds...for where [they] want [their] professional clergy and their spouse to fit.”<sup>11</sup>

“The real danger is that [they] buy into their expectations and try to fulfill them...Congregational expectations do not have to control our lives. Instead, we give away the control of our lives when we fulfill others’ expectations and fail to make our own decisions.”<sup>12</sup> Some also “still struggle with the outsized expectations of their congregations, and some of the most conservative denominations still see the women in a traditional role.”<sup>13</sup>

Instead of a prescribed set of duties that need to be fulfilled, today’s pastor’s wife has many options and opportunities that are opened to her. She has choices that many of

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<sup>10</sup> Funk and Ozimey.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Jackie Katz, “Great Expectations,” [www.justbetweenus.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=74113](http://www.justbetweenus.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=74113), (accessed April 11, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Zoll, “Role of Pastor’s Wife has Changed,” *The Orange County Register*, [www.ocregister.com/common/printer/view](http://www.ocregister.com/common/printer/view), (accessed March 27, 2010).

her predecessors did not have – the choice to be involved in the church or not, the choice to work in a career outside the church and the home, the choice to minister alongside her husband by using her spiritual gifts and her passion for ministry instead of filling the role of the previous pastor's wife. This is an exciting time for ministry for the pastor's wife!

### *Spiritual gifts and passion*

One thing that is happening today is that the mindset of what a pastor's wife should be doing in the church is changing because of the emphasis of knowing and using her spiritual gifts and passions when it comes to her service for the Lord. This has been a huge change that has changed the face of ministry today. Pastors' wives are now being allowed to follow their own passions for ministry, along with the other women in the church by using the spiritual gifts that God has given them. Whereas it used to be that the church would assign or dictate what ministries a wife would be involved in, she is now able to choose her own ministry based on her spiritual giftedness, desires and passions. But, there are still pastor's wives who feel guilty for not becoming involved in certain ministries in the church which have "traditionally" been held in the past by the pastor's wife.

As stated earlier in the paper, God calls women to specific ministries. "Some women are called to children's ministry, others to worship, others to women's ministry and others to work outside of the church either at home or in the secular world...and rarely is our calling the same as the previous pastor's wife's calling."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Angelie Stahlnecker, "From the Heart of a Pastor's Wife," September – October 2002, [www.freemethodistchurch.org/Magazine/Articles?sept-Oct%202002%20Articles/S-O\\_2002](http://www.freemethodistchurch.org/Magazine/Articles?sept-Oct%202002%20Articles/S-O_2002), (accessed April, 24, 2003).

“Interestingly, the Bible does not assign any specific duties to be performed in the church by the wives of overseers (pastors/leaders), but it does state expectations of her character. Because of her high visibility...I Timothy 3:11 (*Amplified*) says, ‘The women likewise must be worthy of respect and serious, not gossipers, but temperate and self-controlled, (thoroughly) trustworthy in all things.’ These are God’s expectations.”<sup>15</sup> Dalton writes that in I Corinthians 12:24-28 we need to remember that we are all part of the Body of Christ and that God has given each of us a function to perform in the Body. She goes on to say that “none of us are *complete* by ourselves...It’s not fair or realistic to expect our shepherds or spouses to exhibit all the gifts and fill all the roles. We must allow our pastors and spouses to follow *God’s* leading, not *our* mandates.”<sup>16</sup>

Kay Warren, the wife of Pastor Rick Warren, says that this trend of pastors’ wives being able to fulfill their passion and their spiritual gifts has “really allowed [her] to specialize” in the areas that she is most passionate about. She says that she has “basically been doing anything I’ve wanted to”...and that led her to focus “on calling the church to the fight against HIV.”<sup>17</sup>

Martin and Stovall write that “every pastor’s wife will come with a unique set of gifts and talents. She needs to be supported whether she is directly involved in the ministry to women or not...Her season of life, as well as her giftedness and talents, will determine a lot about where she will be able to be involved. She may have a passion for

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<sup>15</sup> Katz.

<sup>16</sup> Dalton.

<sup>17</sup> Zoll.

the worship ministry or the children's ministry...involve her to the extent that she wants to be involved..."<sup>18</sup>

But the exciting aspect of working within our giftedness is that we will have "maximum effectiveness and minimum weariness...when we work outside those areas, we will have minimum effectiveness and maximum weariness."<sup>19</sup>

### **Today's Opportunities**

Many women have found that their role as the pastor's wife has given them a platform to minister to the women in their churches. They may or may not have an official role in women's ministry, but because they are in a high profile position and since women make up the majority of our churches today, they are in a place to influence and be an example to them.

"As women have gained independence in society at large, awareness about what pastors' wives provide the church also has grown."<sup>20</sup> Many pastors and their wives now consider themselves to be a "team" when it comes to ministry. In some ways, this is going back to the way they worked together in the past, except that now women are seen as an integral part of this "team" – they are seen as a partner in ministry. Most of the women interviewed for this thesis considered they were a team partner with their husband in ministry, but one said that she saw herself more of a "silent partner" and did not get as involved in the day-to-day ministry of the church.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jaye Martin and Terri Stovall, *Women Leading Women* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 2008), 162.

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Van Reken, "If You Think You're 'Nothing Special' Think Again...", *Just Between Us*, Fall, 1999, [www.justbetweenus.org/11\\_99/special.html](http://www.justbetweenus.org/11_99/special.html), (accessed March 31, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Zoll.

<sup>21</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.



In Sweet's historical model, these women who consider themselves a partner in ministry with their husbands would have been seen as the "Assistant" or the "Partner." These models gained more prominence when women began to attend Christian colleges, universities and seminaries to prepare themselves for ministry in their own right. Men desiring to be pastors also began to marry women who had more education in ministerial and theological classes and who also had a heart for ministry. These women became very involved in the work of the church, not only to help their husbands but also to fulfill their own calling to ministry.<sup>22</sup> "At no time in modern history have ministry wives been as educated or had as many educational opportunities as today. This enhances their value to their husbands, as well as to the church body."<sup>23</sup> "Sixty-five percent feel fairly well equipped to be effective as pastors' wives."<sup>24</sup> But even after their training, when these women get into the actual position of being a pastor's wife, there are many surprises awaiting them.

When men are interviewed for the position of pastor, most are not even questioned about what role their wives will play in the church; it is just taken for granted that she will work alongside him in his position as pastor. But, as is seen in many congregations, there is often "a preset role-prescription for their pastor's wife. Often these prescriptions arrive from a handed-down tradition that has long been outdated. She has to cope with baggage that has been the norm in churches since early ages."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Mace and Mace.

<sup>23</sup> Hawkins, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Craucher.

<sup>25</sup> Wessels.

Dr. Louis McBurney agrees that “just below the surface are the unwritten traditional requirements. These may vary from one church to another...None of these expectations may appear on written job descriptions, but parishioners may still feel serious disappointment if they are not fulfilled.”<sup>26</sup> It is these unwritten rules that put so much pressure on the pastor’s wife to conform, in many cases, to unrealistic expectations.

It has been jokingly said that a woman who aspires to be a pastor’s wife should be able to sing and play the piano. There are many women who while in Bible college took piano lessons and voice lessons – even though they were not gifted in these areas – so that they could prepare themselves for their future role. They were also made to believe that they needed to be involved in almost every area of the church, including women’s and children’s ministries or any ministry that no one else wanted to do, even if they have no desire or passion for those ministries. Since “more than 90 percent of the 325,000 churches in the United States have attendance under 120 people...the pastor’s wife has to fulfill many responsibilities that are not necessarily her strengths.”<sup>27</sup>

Through the interviews that were done with pastors’ wives, the author found that many of these women would do whatever needed to be done, especially if it was their first church experience or if it was a new church plant. This occurred when the pastor and his wife were considered to be teammates or partners in ministry. But when asked about her involvement in the church, one pastor’s wife replied by saying that she found that she has “selective involvement.” By that she was saying that she is careful to only

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<sup>26</sup> Wendy L. Dalton, “Expectations - Pastors and Spouses in A Spiritual Squeeze,” *Renewal Ministries*, June 21, 2002, [www.renewalministries.org/expectations.html](http://www.renewalministries.org/expectations.html), (accessed April 24, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> *Free to Soar*, 12-13.

choose what she desires and what she knows the Lord desires her to do within the church, thereby allowing her to minister through the passion that the Lord has given her.<sup>28</sup>

A survey of pastors' wives that was conducted by Ruthe White found another side of the pastor's wife. Through this survey she found that many pastors' wives felt confused and frustrated about their roles because they did not have any role models to identify with or help in knowing what is expected of them.<sup>29</sup> It was surprising to find that many of the women interviewed for this paper did not have a model in mind for how they would minister. But there were those who said that they had somewhat of a model – but there were even those who said they knew what they “wouldn't do” because of watching other pastors' wives in the past.<sup>30</sup>

The Alban Institute in Washington, D.C., “says stress and burnout among clergy wives is as high as for pastors – and that's high!...[they are now being called] “the walking wounded.”<sup>31</sup> Much of their wounding comes from their sense of guilt and duty – that they are not fulfilling their role in what they believe others expect of them. Even though the “walking wounded” syndrome crosses all denominations and ages, the majority of those seen in this category are “young wives making these initial discoveries, and some older women whose resentment had deepened over the years. But one said, “We're not the walking wounded unless we allow ourselves to be.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Button.

<sup>30</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Craucher.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Many of these women who do become over involved are idealists who begin over identifying themselves with their ministries...a highly conscientious person...may suffer from a false sense of guilt for not living up to her own expectations. This may be magnified by the tendencies of the church to plug her into its programs without attending to her soul.<sup>33</sup>

London writes that “the reality is that our congregations will take from us whatever we can give.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, many pastors and their wives have allowed or trained their congregations to expect much from them – or their congregations have told them exactly what they expect from them, and those in ministry have accepted those conditions thinking that that is what they have to do in order to keep their positions of pastor and pastor’s wife.

### **The People-Pleaser**

The pastor’s wife who decides to play the role of people-pleaser is actually looking for approval from everyone else in an attempt to validate and feel good about herself. It is here that pastors’ wives need to decide who they are going to try and please. If they are not content with themselves or are unsure of what role they are to fill, some can become people-pleasers which will lead into a lifestyle of trying to please everyone which will lead to stress and ultimately burn-out.

A people-pleaser is defined as,

A person who has a set of self-defeating thoughts and flawed beliefs about yourself and other people that fuel compulsive behavior that, in turn, is driven by the need to avoid forbidden, negative feelings. This triple combination of distorted thinking, compulsive behavior, and the need to avoid fearful feelings creates the syndrome of people-pleasing.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Stafford.

<sup>34</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastor’s at Greater Risk*, 177.

<sup>35</sup> Sue Edwards and Kelley Mathews, *Leading Women Who Wound* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2009), 50.

Because of her position of trying to decide where she belongs or trying to make everyone happy with her, many pastors' wives fall into this trap of trying to please everyone. The characteristics of the people-pleaser are:

- Perfectionism which has a tendency to bring about an impossible standard that will only bring discontent and dissatisfaction in everything that they attempt to do.
- Inability to say "no." Because of their desire to please everyone, they over commit. Again, they are deriving their self-worth by their actions. Especially in ministry, when everything job is "good," it is easy to rationalize our being busy as being spiritual. Because others know they won't say "no," they can be easily manipulated.
- Dishonesty comes because people-pleasers won't say or tell people what they are really thinking because they are afraid of being rejected. They will do anything to avoid conflict.
- They become oversensitive and become very defensive when they are corrected or given constructive criticism or disapproval to others.<sup>36</sup>

The biggest cure for overcoming the role of people-pleaser is to "learn to perform for an audience of One."<sup>37</sup> When pastors' wives understand that they do not have to work for God's approval because He loves them unconditionally, it will change their focus back to where it should be – on the Lord!!!!

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 52-56.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 57.

### The Contented Pastor's Wife

“Eight in 10 pastors’ wives say they feel unappreciated or unaccepted by their husbands’ congregations...the same number wish their husbands would choose another profession.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, the number one reason that pastors leave their ministries are because of “wife issues.”<sup>39</sup> But, there are also many who enjoy this role of being the pastor’s wife. “A *Leadership* survey found that 90% “always” or “often” enjoy being a pastor’s wife.”<sup>40</sup>

One group that seems to have much satisfaction in their role as a pastor’s wife are those who have started a church along with their husbands. Because they have built the church together they have been able to set the stage where there are no pre-thought expectations about what their role as a pastor’s wife should be. Many of them have been able to carve out their own role - one that fits who they are as an individual. Because of that there is much satisfaction in how they are viewed by their church family.

There are many women who are striving to fulfill these unrealistic expectations as they minister alongside their pastor husband. But, as Wessels points out in her article,

Pastors’ wives who strive to fulfill [these] types of expectations...begin assimilating an identity which reflects and aspires to the congregational role-expectation about *who* she should be, *what* she should do, *when* she should do it, *where* she should (and shouldn’t) do what she is supposed to do, and *why* she should do what she does.<sup>41</sup>

And wives who feel pressure “to conform to the church’s expectations of them...eventually lose motivation to pursue God’s call on their life even where they are

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<sup>38</sup> Cullen.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Craucher.

<sup>41</sup> Wessels.

gifted. They're made to feel "duty-bound" with regard to *how* and *where* they serve in the church."<sup>42</sup> What it comes down to is that many churches "place expectations upon shepherds of the flocks (and shepherds' spouses) which have nothing to do with shepherding or leading. It is particularly unfortunate when those expectations take little or nothing into account of a person's spiritual gifting."<sup>43</sup>

But, over the years the job descriptions for pastors' wives have changed and so have the women. What once was taken for granted by churches in what they expected from the wife of the pastor has changed with the times. "The rise of megachurches, dual-career couples and women's independence have complicated the role and in some cases intensified the frustrations,"<sup>44</sup> and the roles are not as clearly defined as they once were. There are so many more choices for women today.

It has also been shown that the age of the pastor's wife has much to do with how she responds to what is going on around her. For first-time pastors' wives between the ages of 20 – 30, they may begin to feel anger or they may lose their identity as they try to be everything to everybody. They learn quickly that even though their desire coming into this role was to be open and to minister to whomever the Lord brought into their path, they have a tendency to be stretched too thin. They found out as London said that everyone would take from them whatever they were willing to give.<sup>45</sup> Because of this idealistic view of what it is going to be like to be a pastor's wife, some begin to blame

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<sup>42</sup> Dalton.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Cullen.

<sup>45</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastor's at Greater Risk*, 177.

God for the situation they find themselves in. This is when they begin to feel guilt and begin to blame God which may lead to depression because they feel that this is their fault and that they have somehow failed God.<sup>46</sup>

For those in the 30 – 50 years of age range, if they have not learned how to handle the pressures of ministry, many have learned how to put on masks to cover their anger because they no longer feel like fighting to prove who they are. But, at this stage there are also those who gain boldness and courage and begin to share how they really feel. It is during these middle years in ministry that many marriages begin to fail and because of this, many have to leave the ministry because they can no longer cope with the stress and strain that they have endured for so many years.<sup>47</sup>

In the last age group of those 50+ years to retirement, some have finally come to an understanding of who they are as an individual, but many have paid the price for this freedom. Some have come to the place where they are emotionally independent from their pastor husband, but they have also come to the place where they understand that they are responsible for their past and cannot blame anyone else for the way that they have lived their lives in the ministry.<sup>48</sup>

### **Should the Pastor's Wife be Involved in Women's Ministry?**

There are many pastors' wives who are "expected" to serve as the leader of the women's ministry in their church because that is the way it has always been done in the past. Many women follow the previous pastor's wife who may have been totally

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<sup>46</sup> Wessels.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



involved in leading the women's ministry. But today there are many pastors' wives who are not choosing to be as involved with women's ministry as in the past. Couple this with the statistic that about 70% of pastors' wives are now working outside the home,<sup>49</sup> many do not have the time for leadership positions within the women's ministry or other ministries as they once did. This has caused a controversy for many in the church. Over the years, it was just expected by the church congregation that the pastor's wife would stay at home and be ready to serve in the church when there was a need. Because of this thinking and belief, "many pastors' wives feel inhibited in pursuing their professional or hobby interests outside the church."<sup>50</sup>

One thing that needs to be considered is the change taking place in women's ministry in the church today. Women's ministry has changed over the years and continues to change as more opportunities for women are taking a new direction especially in leadership positions in our churches. Gone are the days of the women's ministry leader being the only one doing everything. Many ministries, especially in the larger churches, are now using the "team-based" philosophy of leadership and these ministries are being filled by full-time, paid, church staff. Because of this, it is not always going to be the pastor's wife who is going to be in charge of this ministry as it has been in the past. In most churches where the pastor's wife fills the position of women's ministry director, she will not be considered as part of the staff and most will usually not be paid for their work because of her position as pastor's wife. Another thing that needs

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<sup>49</sup> Cullen.

<sup>50</sup> Craucher.

to be considered is how well she and her husband work together because this could cause conflict within the ministry.

Even if the pastor's wife does not have the position as women's ministry director, she can still be involved in women's ministry. Her role may now be that of an advisor or consultant to the leaders of the women's ministry and it should always be that she has the role of being an example of what a Christian woman should be to her congregation.

The author recently had the opportunity of speaking to two women who are very involved in ministry with pastors' wives. Chris Adams is the Women's Ministry Resource Director for LifeWay. Diana Davis and her husband, Steve, are the Executive Directors of the Indiana Baptist Convention. She has been a pastor's wife for thirty years and is now in the position of encouraging other pastors' wives. In order to find out how involved pastors' wives were with the women's ministry in the church, I posed the following question to both of these women: *What percentage of pastors' wives do you see filling the role of women's ministry director or the head of the women's ministry in their churches?* Their responses were quite surprising. Chris responded by saying that there is very little research out there concerning this subject, and that she has nothing to back up her claim, but she estimated and believes from what she has seen in the past few years that there are only about one-third of pastors' wives who are now involved in leading the women's ministry in their churches.<sup>51</sup>

Diana seemed to be in agreement with Chris and wrote the following concerning my question:

I've probably spent time with several hundred pastors' wives in the past few years, and we visit in a different Baptist church every single week. We have 427

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<sup>51</sup> Chris Adams interview, March 29, 2010.

churches, and I spend time every week with different pastors' wives in our state. I'd have to say that I've observed very few who fill that role. Guestimate--maybe 5%? This almost comes as a surprise to me because women's ministry was an area of ministry where I served most of the 30+ years that I was a pastor's wife (in a church plant, medium and large churches.) God gave me a love for that ministry and a call to lead in that area, just as He calls other pastors' wives to lead in other areas of the church. Since Steve and I moved to Indiana where he works with our Baptist state convention seven years ago, I have learned more about pastors' wives in those seven years than all the years before! I've observed very effective pastors' wives who serve in their church as the drummer, custodian, Wednesday night cook, softball coach, outreach coordinator, drama team leader, and all kinds of "unorthodox" ministry positions. Of course, there are those who lead the women's class, play piano, or lead women's ministry, too! <sup>52</sup>

As you can see, Diana's answer backs up the claim that many more pastors' wives are following their passions and using their spiritual gifts as their ministry within the church.

Along with the changes in the way women's ministries are conducted today, today's women's ministry director must have leadership principles in place in her own life so that she can lead others. If it is the pastor's wife who is going to lead this ministry, she should have the characteristics and qualifications of a leader and know how to communicate her message and purpose,

But she must first know who she is...her spiritual giftedness, understand her personality, be aware of her strengths and weaknesses, and understand the season of life in which she finds herself...[she] also needs to be secure in who she is in Christ, be Spirit-filled on a daily basis, and be a good listener...[she must also] know how to follow and be a part of the team in addition to knowing what makes a good leader. <sup>53</sup>

Because of the demographics of the women coming to the church today, adjustments in the way women's ministry is conducted has gone through many changes

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<sup>52</sup> Diana Davis interview, April 6, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Martin and Stovall, 190.

from what was in the past. What once worked years ago in the way women ministered to other women will not work the same today. Up until about twenty years ago, most women's ministries and women's Bible studies were centered on one group of women – those who were married women with children. Other women were welcomed to attend, but many dropped out or were very discouraged because they felt that what was being taught was not really relevant to their life because everything was geared toward the married woman.

Over the years, women's ministry has had to change its focus and become more inclusive of all the many different groups with their individual needs. This has been a challenge for those who are leading these ministries. But, the one way that pastors' wives have helped in this area is that because many of them have become more educated and have prepared themselves to work and minister to many different types of people, they are more aware of the issues and the stages that these women are facing in their lives, thereby giving them more opportunities and ideas of how to reach more women in different stages of their life. Today, the average church should be ministering to single, married, divorced, widowed and even young teen girls. "No other individual ministry in the local church spans as many seasons of life and lifestyle choices as women's ministry."<sup>54</sup>

Even though many of the needs of the women may be the same, women respond today in a much different way than they did in years past. It is important to stop and "take a look at the generations of women in our churches [so that we] can help...meet the

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<sup>54</sup> Linda Lesniewski, *Connecting Women: A Relational Guide for Leaders in Women's Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 52.

needs of women of all ages.”<sup>55</sup> But, the bottom line should still be the same in ministry and that is that the Word of God should take center stage when ministering to these women.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it needs to be understood that not every pastor’s wife has been called to be an out-front leader. But, there are some who have been gifted by God with leadership abilities and they also have the passion to serve in a specific way. On the other hand, there are some pastors’ wives who have struggled to fulfill a specific role that was placed upon them by the congregation that called her and her husband to the church that they are serving. It is very important that it is made very clear by the pastor to those in the congregation from the beginning “that his wife has unique strengths, weaknesses, interests and ministry desires...[and] that her ministry is determined by God’s giftedness to her and her freedom to choose to what degree and in what capacity to use it.”<sup>56</sup>

Being a pastor’s wife is not a role to be performed; it is a function that God has called you to fulfill...The title of “pastor’s wife” is not to be confused with who you really are...The Christian life is not performing, it is being. It’s not filling a role or playing a part, but responding to life offstage and out of the glare of the lights...People can more easily relate to women who are real.<sup>57</sup>

Many of these women have filled positions within the church – leading Bible studies, teaching a children’s Sunday school class, or even singing and playing the piano (sometimes badly) - because they believed that it was expected of them. Because of this, some have suffered through depression and anger and some even began to resent the

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<sup>55</sup> Chris Adams, *Women Reaching Women: Beginning and Building a Growing Women’s Ministry* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1997), 29.

<sup>56</sup> Wessels.

<sup>57</sup> Katz.

ministry because of guilt for not fulfilling the role that many thought they should be filling.

Even though many women struggle to know where they belong, they need to be open to what God may be trying to do in their life. He may be working in her to begin a new ministry that she may never have thought about before. The main thing is that she needs to be open with the right heart attitude to what God may be doing in her life. She may be given the opportunity to minister in ways that she never dreamed she would be doing. They need to make sure that the ministries that they are doing are “God-given callings, not expectation-filling burdens.”<sup>58</sup> As Bobbie Houston writes, you need to “step up to the call.”<sup>59</sup>

Even though pastors’ wives may not be as involved in women’s ministry as they once were, it does not diminish the impact she can have as a role model, mentor and example of what it means to be a Christian woman. For the pastor’s wife, it means being herself and being comfortable with herself knowing that God made her unique and that He has a purpose and a plan for her life. By allowing her to follow her own passions and using her own spiritual gifts, her ministry will be more effective as she confidently ministers to those for whom she has a passion in her church. The other benefit of being able to minister within her passion and her spiritual giftedness is that she will be much more content and satisfied with the role that God has given her to fulfill alongside her husband which will in turn make him more successful as a pastor.

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<sup>58</sup> Lysa Terkeurst, *Leading Women to the Heart of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 255.

<sup>59</sup> *Free to Soar*, 85.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Pastor's Wife's Role Outside the Church**

The role of the pastor's wife outside the church is one area that has changed drastically over the last several decades. The influence of the feminist movement of the 1960's and 1970's has had a profound effect on how women view their place in the home and in the workplace. This influence has also made its way into the life of the church and the life of the pastor's wife.

Up until the early 1960's, the pastor's wife sphere of influence was mainly in her home and in the church. In 1962 seventy-five percent of pastors' wives were not employed outside the home.<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest books that addressed this issue was in 1964 when Pentecost wrote her book. She believed that it was not wise for the pastor's wife to seek outside employment because it would give a wrong impression to those from other churches and would also affect the church's testimony. This had to mainly do with the low income that their husbands were receiving from the church which would be a poor reflection on the church.

The other reasons that women had given her for their desire to work was that they wanted to get away from the work of the home and also the church. There were some in the past who would seek outside employment merely as a way to get away from the critical view of those in the congregation and to just be themselves.<sup>2</sup> But, these reasons

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair, 94.

<sup>2</sup> All About God.Com.

made Pentecost question as to why they had married pastors in the first place. The other reason that women gave her was so that they could save money for their children's education. She questioned this also because she had observed and believed that if a young person wanted a college education that there were many opportunities for them to work while they were in college and so it should not fall to the pastor's wife to provide this for them.<sup>3</sup>

But toward the end of the 1960's, mainly because of the thought patterns that women could have it all – a home and a career - a shift began to occur and more and more pastors' wives began to work outside the home. In the 1970's, pastors' wives working outside the home jumped to fifty percent.<sup>4</sup> This trend has continued up to today where statistics show that "at least 70% of pastors' wives work outside the home, many in professional jobs."<sup>5</sup> London and Wiseman report that "58% of pastors indicate that their spouse works either part-time or full-time outside the home because the family needs the income; 34.5% say their spouses don't work outside the home at all."<sup>6</sup>

When pastors' wives first began to work outside of the home it was usually because of financial reasons. That continues to be one of the biggest reasons. Many "ministers' spouses listed inadequate financial income as the most severe problem associated with the pastoral profession...[which constitutes] a major source of pastoral family stress."<sup>7</sup> In fact, of those pastors' wives interviewed by the author, those who

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<sup>3</sup> Pentecost, 285-286.

<sup>4</sup> Sinclair, 94.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> London and Wiseman, *Pastor's at Greater Risk*, 118.

<sup>7</sup> Neff, 202.



worked outside the home did so mainly for financial reasons to help provide for their families. Several pastors' wives made the comment that if the church had provided more income for their husbands that they would have preferred not to work.<sup>8</sup>

Another reason for pastors' wives working outside the home has come about because of the changes in society and the opportunities that have been opened for women in many professions. Many pastors' wives have college degrees that have prepared them for a professional career of their own. Some intentionally chose to be prepared for these careers because they knew that they would be going into ministry with their husbands and they believed it would help to supplement their incomes in the early years of ministry when their husbands would not be making substantial salaries. Because most churches today require that the pastor have some kind of higher education, whether undergraduate or graduate degrees, it also needs to be taken into consideration that many of these couples have educational loans that need to be repaid. Many of these couples come into ministry with great amounts of debt. This is another reason for the pastor's wife to work outside the home.<sup>9</sup>

Working outside the home has caused a controversy for many in the church. Over the years, it was just expected by the church congregation that the pastor's wife would stay at home and raise their children and be ready to serve in the church when there was a need. Because of this thinking and belief, "many pastors' wives [felt] inhibited in pursuing their professional or hobby interests outside the church."<sup>10</sup> But, Mickey and

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<sup>8</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Neff, 202.

<sup>10</sup> Craucher.

Ashmore write that “as more families within the congregation find it either financially necessary or personally desirable to have dual incomes, the stereotyping of the clergy family as a single-income family is disappearing.”<sup>11</sup>

Many pastors’ wives who are older and have been in the ministry for many years do not understand why a woman would want to work outside the home. One pastor’s wife when speaking to other pastors’ wives said that she was shocked that “80% of them worked full-time outside the home. She asserted that Scripture nowhere suggests that “womanly responsibilities” included the “ambitious agenda” of working outside the home.”<sup>12</sup> She went on to relate that they needed to be women of Titus 2.

But in all reality, many pastors’ wives work not only because they *want* to, but because they *have* too, because the churches are not paying them enough to meet the financial and physical needs of their families. “Ministers are underpaid...but wives are expected to maintain middle-class homes.”<sup>13</sup> Financial pressure can be very hard on pastors and their wives as churches expect their pastor’s family to live a certain way, but many times they don’t provide the means to do this. Because of this, many women now feel that they have to work outside the home – again adding even more pressure to their lives. Not only do they have an outside job, but they are also expected to be taking care of their families and also still working and doing ministry in the church alongside their husband.

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<sup>11</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 113.

<sup>12</sup> Zoba.

<sup>13</sup> “Mrs. Minister’s Troubles.”

Most of the early books tended to list the negatives of why the pastor's wife should not work outside the home. But, there are positives that can be applied to this issue. The first is that when the pastor's wife does work outside the home she comes in contact with people on a daily basis that she will be able to influence for Christ by the way she conducts herself as they watch her life. Another aspect of this will be her involvement in the community. This is a way for her to see the needs of others and just not the needs of those in her church congregation. This outside contact will enable her to open doors even for her husband and her church to be more involved in the community. For example, if she is teaching school this will be a way for her to meet and touch families because of her involvement with her students and their families and other teachers and their families.

Because many more pastors' wives have college degrees and have careers of their own today, the dual-career marriage can cause a dilemma for the pastor and his wife. To be honest, it is not just pastors and their wives who are being faced with this issue – this could be a problem for any couple that both have professional careers. But, this is happening more frequently in ministry today. If the pastor's wife is given a promotion that means the family would have to move to another location. Should the husband give up his ministry in favor of his wife's new position? In the past, this would not have even been up for consideration, but today there is discussion. One source even asks if the spouses should take turns in sacrificing their promotion for the other.<sup>14</sup> This is an issue that will undoubtedly cause discussion for many years to come!

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<sup>14</sup> Mickey and Ashmore, 81.

## **Conclusion**

Pastors' wives working outside the home is a relatively new issue that has risen mainly out of need to help to provide for their families. Over the years, most of the controversy surrounding this issue has faded away. But there are still issues that need to be considered with the pastor's wife who does work outside the home. Most of it comes down to priorities. Her first priority needs to be her relationship with the Lord. How will this be affected by her choice to work outside the home? The time she spends with her husband and her family also needs to be taken into consideration. Again, this is a dilemma that every working woman is confronted with. Lastly, is how much time will she be expected to give in service to the church. Because they have learned how to be multitaskers, many pastors' wives have learned how to manage all of these things over the years very successfully.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

There are several ingredients that are “needed for the health and wholeness of the ministry wife...clear and healthy attitudes within the congregation, trusted friendships, and a solid relationship with her husband.”<sup>1</sup> But, the most important aspect of learning how to thrive in her role as a pastor’s wife is the need for a strong and intimate personal relationship with the Lord. Pastor’s wife, Gail MacDonald, relates this relationship with the Lord to staying close to the “fire.” She is “convinced that we cannot survive healthfully in the fishbowl if we don’t stay close to the fire and keep it tended.”<sup>2</sup> She also believes that this is a personal choice that every pastor’s wife needs to make every day. She must ask herself the question, “Do I give priority attention to tending the fire within, or do I surrender to the alternatives of busyness, hurry, people pleasing, or the seemingly urgent that slowly starves my spirit and my resolve to be the woman God wants me to be?”<sup>3</sup>

In reality, it is this personal relationship with the Lord that is going to preserve all of her other relationships. She needs to understand that in ministry she will never be able to please everyone. There is only one person that she should strive to please and that is her God!!

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<sup>1</sup> Zoba.

<sup>2</sup> MacDonald, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

MacDonald quotes a passage from Oswald Chambers that says,

Our Lord's first obedience was to the will of His Father, not to the needs of men; his obedience brought the outcome of the saving of men. If I am devoted to the cause of humanity only, I will soon be exhausted and come to the place where my love will falter; but if I love Jesus Christ personally and passionately, I can serve humanity through men treat me as a doormat.<sup>4</sup>

This personal relationship with the Lord will help her to fill the loneliness that she feels when it seems that she has no one to turn to in her church family. This relationship can also help her to overcome the depression that seems to invade her life at times. It will also help her to set boundaries within her marriage and with her family and help her to keep her priorities in order. This relationship will also elevate her self-worth and allow her to be content with herself and how God uniquely made her. This relationship will also give her a passion for the spiritual gifts that He has given her to minister with. This relationship can also help her to really love her church family – no matter what is happening within the church!!

It was interesting to read in most of the earlier books written for pastors' wives how that the majority did not really address the importance of their personal relationship with the Lord. Maybe it was because it was taken for granted that because she was in ministry alongside her husband that it was just a given that her relationship with the Lord would be the basis of her role in ministry and that it would be a strong relationship. These earlier books mainly addressed their outward appearance – whether it be their own personal appearance or how others would be viewing their home or the actions and behavior of their children. In other words, it comes across that they were more concerned with how they were being perceived.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 51.

But, in the newer books that have been written, their personal walk with the Lord is addressed as one of the most important essentials in fulfilling their role as the pastor's wife. Among the pastors' wives that were interviewed for this thesis about how they had changed over the years while being in ministry, many of them responded by talking about how much their position had drawn them closer in their relationship with the Lord and that they had grown spiritually as individuals.<sup>5</sup>

The other strong point that came from those interviewed was that the pastor's wife just needs to be herself.<sup>6</sup> This is good advice for everyone – to just be who God made you to be and not try to imitate or become who you believe everyone else wants you to be.

### **Encouragement**

Is there any encouragement for those who are serving as pastors' wives? Yes!! The solutions to many of the issues presented in this paper are not always simple or easy answers. Many times it is going to come down to attitude. In other words, problems will not just disappear by giving them a list of things to do and follow.

Church congregations need to be educated about the role of the pastor's wife and how to encourage and build them up. If they would do this, they would be gaining a powerful team – the pastor and his wife – who would be able to minister in a more effective way.

But, there are several things that the pastor's wife can do herself that will help her to fulfill this role that God has given her. She needs to take care of herself –

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<sup>5</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

- *Spiritually.* This comes back to enjoying that personal and intimate relationship that she has with the Lord. Our relationship with the Lord will help to focus on what is important. Remember what your passion is and that along with your spiritual gifts will give you new energy to begin serving the Lord again.
- *Physically.* Our physical lives are very closely linked with our emotions and how we feel about things. Usually when a person is battling depression or having problems with self-worth they get to the point where they don't care about anything anymore. It is important that they are eating right and exercising and also taking care of their appearance. This is also the time when they need to learn how to be content with themselves.
- *Emotionally.*
  - Don't feel sorry for yourself. Self-pity is very destructive. Again, it has to come back to your focus and priorities.
  - Surround yourself with godly and encouraging friends and family. It is important that the pastor's wife find a support system – either within the church or with friends and family from outside the church family.
  - Take care of your relationships. One way the pastor's wife can do this is to make her family her ministry.

For those pastors' wives who are suffering with issues like depression and loneliness, psychologist Langberg says, "We live in time and we heal in time, and you



can't just apply a verse and get over it. People expect themselves to heal in that fashion, so they carry a tremendous amount of guilt when they do not.”<sup>7</sup> Tim Stafford believes that these “walking wounded” are in the minority. But, he also believes that it is the church's responsibility to move these wounded toward health so that they will be able to minister effectively in the future.<sup>8</sup>

Before going into ministry, one of the misconceptions of those going into ministry was that everyone was going to be so happy that we were going to be there to minister to them. That may be true for the first several weeks or months, but then reality sets in and you need to remember that there are days when ministry is going to be just plain tough. But when looking at the big picture, the good days will usually always outweigh the bad days.

In the end, when looking back over the years of ministry, the majority of pastors' wives will undoubtedly look at the blessings they have received and seen over the years; God's provision for them and their families, fulfillment of seeing people's lives changed, the relationships and friendships that they have formed, and most of all their much stronger relationship with God.

### *Encouragement from Scripture*

While reading through Isaiah, I came to a passage of scripture that I believe addresses what life in ministry should and could be. Isaiah 58:8-12 talks about what will happen when we quit focusing on ourselves and the problems we have in our lives and begin to focus on what God wants to do through us to those whom we are ministering to.

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<sup>7</sup> Stafford.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

There are times when ministry can be very hard. But, it is during those times that we have to remember what God called us to do and the ministry that He has entrusted to us. Many times we get so wrapped up in what is going on around us that we forget the “big picture” and that God wants to work through us.

Isaiah addresses that when our priorities are right here is what will happen:

- Verse 8-9b – “Then your light will appear like the dawn, and your recovery will come quickly. Your righteousness will go before you and the Lord’s glory will be your rear guard. At that time, when you call, the Lord will answer; when you cry out, He will say; Here I am.”
- Verse 9b – “If you get rid of the yoke from those around you, the finger pointing and malicious speaking...” When I read those words, it reminded me of what one pastor’s wife said; “When dealing with people, you have to learn to just let things (remarks and comments) roll off your back – just like water off a duck’s back.” (Personal Interview, October, 2010). But so many times we allow others to determine our moods and our attitudes. In other words, we allow others to control us.
- But, verse 10 goes on to say – “and if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday.” In other words, if we change our focus, if we shift our energies to where the real needs are, our whole countenance and our whole reason for ministry will change.
- In verse 11, God promises that He will lead us and even during times when we are discouraged and feel that our spiritual life is dried up, He

said that he would “strengthen [our] bones” and “satisfy [us] in a parched land.” In fact he encourages us by saying, (vs. 11) that we “will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose waters never run dry.”

- Then He goes on to say in verse 12 that “some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations laid long ago; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live.” I believe that God is saying here that He is going to use your role as a pastor’s wife to help restore and rebuild lives that have been ruined so that you will be called “a repairer of broken walls.”
- When I look at the phrases within verse 12 of those that we will be ministering to, many of the problems these people are facing come from broken relationships. They include: “rebuild[ing] the ancient ruins...” There are going to be times when you and your husband will go to a church where relationships were broken between spiritual brothers and sisters within the church many years before. The consequences of those broken relationships will be impacting that church even today. Or, God may allow you to “restore the foundations laid long ago...” with those who have broken their relationship with God through sin and the life choices they have made throughout their lives even though they were taught many years before about the importance of their foundation in the Lord. And then He says you will be “the restorer of streets where people live...” That means that you will be ministering to husbands and wives and children – many who are facing broken relationships because of their

choices. But the greatest joy in all of this is to think that God has put us in a position to minister to these people through our ministry as a pastor's wife.<sup>9</sup>

### *Commissioning and Renewal*

At the end of Beth Moore's video series for pastors' wives, she had a commissioning time for pastors' wives by having them repeat truths to each other about what they need to do if they are going to be strong in ministry. There are times when pastors' wives may feel defeated and they won't believe that anyone is on their side. It is during times like this that pastors' wives need to remember who they have been called to serve and what He has called them to do. Following are the truths of this commissioning service:

*My Dear Sister,*

- *You are not in ministry by default.*
- *You are not a misfit - you have been chosen by God.*
- *Quit repressing – it will make you sick.*
- *Quit rebelling – it will make you stupid!*
- *Recapture your reverence and be your true self.*
- *Do not become a slave to other people's approval.*
- *To your own master you rise or fall.*
- *Stop all the competing and refuse to be crushed by criticism.*
- *Remember who your true enemy is and you punch him with all your might.*

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<sup>9</sup> *Holman Study Bible.*

- *You've got to stay in the Word because the power is in the Scriptures!*
- *Do not be distracted by things that don't count – fight for your heart in ministry.*
- *Above all, return to your first love.*
- *Jesus Christ is your everything.*
- *Now you leave this place with your head held high and every single day of the rest of your life, keep the King the Thing!!!*<sup>10</sup>

Pastors' wives just need to begin to believe in themselves again and to be who God has called them to be – but in order to do that they may have to go back and remember exactly who they are.

It is critical for ministry wives to be a true strength to their husband and their ministry. If a pastor's wife becomes unhappy, the ministry suffers. If we work together and encourage each other, we can further the ministry of our husbands and expand the kingdom. We belong to a special calling, a collective group of women called to serve God as the wives of pastors!<sup>11</sup>

When I interviewed each pastor's wife for this thesis, I ended with this question: "If you had a chance to live your life over would you still want to be a pastor's wife?" All of the women said, "Yes, absolutely!" To me that meant that all of them said it has been worth it – all the good times and all the hard times.<sup>12</sup>

The pastors' wives that I have witnessed over the years who love this position that they are in would probably give this as a bottom line:

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<sup>10</sup> Beth Moore, "Six Little Words With the Power to Change Your Life, Helps for Ministers' Wives," *Biblical Solutions for Life*, Nashville: LifeWay, 2009, [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com), (retrieved September 7, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Angelie R. Stahlnecker.

<sup>12</sup> Personal Interviews, October, 2010.

- You have to see the big picture. This is not about you! It's about seeing people's lives changed. Watch to see how God is working!
- You also need to learn how to be flexible. Each day is going to be different. Look at it as an adventure!
- Don't take things personally. We are ministering to people. Everyone has a different personality and a different way of looking at things.
- Be secure and content with yourself. Don't try to be what you think others want you to be.
- Be yourself and be true to who you are!!! This will come when you are assured of your position in Christ – knowing who you are in Him will give you the confidence to be who God created you to be.
- And most important of all –have a relationship with the Lord that encompasses every area of your life!!!

But, in the end, the pastor's wife needs to know and understand that God has given her an awesome opportunity to minister and it is He who will give her the strength, the grace, the mercy, and the power to accomplish this great calling as "The Pastor's Wife"!

## Appendix A

Following is the personal survey with the questions and the responses of the pastors' wives who were questioned for this thesis about their role in ministry and what they have experienced through the years.

### Pastor's Wife Survey

- How long have you and your husband been in ministry?  
*The average amount of years in ministry was 29.3 years. The longest in ministry was 57 years and the shortest amount was 12.*
- What year did you begin your life in ministry?  
*The earliest began their ministry in 1953, with the majority of women being in ministry since the 1970's.*
- Did God personally call you to ministry?  
*8 responded that God had personally called them to ministry and 3 said no.*
- Did you know your husband was going to be a pastor when you married him?  
*9 responded that they knew their husband was going to be a pastor and 2 responded by saying no.*
- Did you go to college?  
*9 went to college and one did not.*  
Major? – *Following are a list of their college majors:*
  - Psychology - 4*
  - Counseling - 2*
  - Business - 1*
  - Clothing/textiles - 1*
  - Education - 3*
  - Nursing - 1*
  - Bible/Greek - 1*
  - Youth - 1*
  - Music – 1*

- Did you go to seminary?

*None of the women attended seminary.*

- Did you take any classes to prepare yourself to be a pastor's wife?

*Only four of the women took any classes to prepare them for their role as a pastor's wife. Of those, most of the classes were not formal classes but were conferences and seminary wives fellowships.*

- Did those classes help you once you got into ministry?

*Of those who took classes or had some kind of training – only one felt that it was helpful, four felt it was somewhat helpful and two said the classes did not help them.*

- Is there anything that you wish you had been taught about what to expect in ministry before you arrived at your first ministry opportunity?

*Following are the responses to this question:*

- *How to be yourself.*
- *It is not a cookie cutter experience.*
- *Many churches hire two people for the price of one.*
- *It is good to know your talents and spiritual gifts.*
- *Wish I had been warned about people and that they can turn against you when they want their way.*
- *How to deal with elders and parents of teenagers.*
- *Not to be concerned with what people think.*
- *I was a preacher's kid – I knew what to expect!!*
- *Disappointment.*
- *Not to trust anyone with your personal life.*
- *Had more Bible teaching.*
- *Wish I had been taught how to organize in order to do the things I was asked to do.*

- Do you feel that you were prepared for your life in ministry?

*Three said "yes," four said "no" and six said "somewhat."*



- Did you have any impressions of what a pastor's wife should be?

*Eleven said "yes" and one said "somewhat."*

- Did you pattern your life as a minister's wife after anyone?

*Three said "yes," six said "no" and three said "somewhat." One said that she believed she should be a complement to her husband.*

- Were your parents in pastoral ministry?

*Only one responded by saying "yes." The others responded "no." But one said that her parents were very involved in the ministry of the church.*

- Were there any books that you read about what would be expected of you as a pastor's wife?

*Very few read any books about what it would be like to be a pastor's wife. But several said that the following books helped them:*

*High Call, High Privilege by Gail Mac Donald*

*Spirit Controlled Woman by Bev LaHaye*

*Books by Jill Briscoe*

- As a young ministry wife, did you have a mentor to help you understand your role as a pastor's wife?

*Four responded by saying "yes" and ten responded by saying "no."*

*Mentors included staff members, Conservative Baptist leaders, her mother-in-law who was the pastor's wife.*

- Did you have a sounding board – someone that you could be honest with and they would be honest with you?

*Ten responded by saying "yes" and only three responded by saying "no."*

- Did you have girlfriends within the church?

*Six responded by saying "yes" and one responded "no" and five responded by saying "somewhat," but cautiously.*

- Did you have friendships with other pastors' wives outside of your church?

*Seven responded by saying "yes" and six responded by saying "no."*

- What type of church did your husband pastor?
  - Traditional model? – already established church.

*Nine went to an already established church*

- New church plant?

*Two went to a new church plant*

*Three have served in both of these ministries.*

- Did the size of the church make a difference in the way you ministered?

*Six said "yes," four said "no" and four said "somewhat."*

- Did the congregation respond to or treat you differently based on the size of the church?

*Five said "yes," six said "no" and three said "somewhat."*

- How involved have you been/or are you in church ministry? (choose one)
  - a. Very involved – *twelve said "yes" – one responded by saying they were more involved in the latter years. One replied by saying that she was "selectively involved."*
  - b. Limited involvement – *two said "yes" – one replied this was so during the child-rearing years.*
  - c. No involvement – *none replied*
- Were you ever "expected" to fill certain positions in the church?

*Six responded "yes" and seven responded "no." One said that "no one said I was expected to do certain things, but it was implied."*

- What ministries are/or have you been involved in?

*Music, choir, soloist, pianist, organist, ensemble*

*Established women's ministry*

*Taught women's classes*

*Youth department*

*Women's conferences*  
*Preschool teacher*  
*Youth teacher*  
*Adult teacher*  
*New members' meals*  
*Visitation*  
*Basket ministry to prospective members*  
*Nursery*  
*Children's ministry*  
*Counseling ministry*  
*Secretarial*  
*Janitor*  
*Treasurer*  
*Prayer chain ministry*  
*Food and clothes closet ministry*  
*VBS*  
*Social event planner*  
*Worship team*  
*Cell groups*  
*Drama ministry*

*Most said that they did what needed to be done!!*

- What are your spiritual gifts?

*Teaching, exhortation, mercy, serving, mercy, helps, administration, prophecy, shepherding.*

- Did the congregation allow you to work in the areas of your giftedness and your passion?

*All responded by saying "yes."*

- Have you ever had to work in a ministry within the church that you had no passion for?

*Most responded by saying "yes," but two responded by saying "no." Again, it was because they did what needed to be done. This was especially seen in those who started new churches.*

- Did your role as a ministry wife give you a platform to minister to other women?

*Thirteen responded by saying "yes" and one responded "no."*

- Do you believe that you have been a role model to the younger women in the church?

*Thirteen responded by saying “yes” and two responded by saying “I hope so!!”*

- Have you worked outside the home while serving in ministry?

*Twelve worked outside the home – one as a volunteer, one only briefly and one not until the children were in high school*

*Two responded by saying “no” – and one of them only worked while in foreign missions.*

- Why did/do you work outside the home? (Choose those that apply)
  - Financial reasons? – *Twelve responded “yes.” One for health insurance.*
  - Follow your own career?
  - So you won’t have to be as involved with the church?

- If you do work outside the home, do you still have a ministry within the church?

*All responded by saying “yes!”*

- Have you ever had anyone from the church question why you were working?

*Three responded by saying “yes” and nine responded by saying “no.”*

- On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) Has being in ministry made your marriage stronger or weaker?

*Ten responded that their marriage was stronger.*

*Two replied by saying they would rate it as an 8 or 9*

*One rated theirs as a 6*

*Comments – we have a common purpose and ours is a roller coaster – both balanced and stronger.*

- Are you and your husband partners in ministry?

*Ten responded by saying “yes” and three responded by saying “no.”*

*One replied that she was more of a silent partner.*

- Did your husband communicate to the congregation what your role would be in the church?

*Eight said “yes” and six said “no.”*

- Have you felt supported – emotionally and spiritually by your husband?

*Twelve responded by saying “yes” and three responded by saying “somewhat.”*

- How have your children responded to your ministry?

*Ten responded that their children had responded positively to the ministry. One had a negative response and three responded by saying that they had experienced both negative and positive responses from their children.*

- Have any of your children gone through times of rebellion against the church?

*Six responded “yes” and eight responded “no.”*

- Are your children involved in the ministry of the church today?

*Eleven responded by saying “yes,” one “no” and two responded by saying that their children were split on this question.*

- What affect did your position in ministry have on family decisions and activities?

*Following are the varied responses:*

- *Family always came first.*
- *Many times our plans needed to change in order for my husband to do ministry. Part of our eldest son’s issue with the church I believe is a direct result of the busyness of the ministry and the expectations that were placed on him because he was the PASTOR’S SON.*
- *Major affect*
- *Life has been centered around the church*
- *Changing plans*
- *We always sought to put Jesus first – serving others – yet we felt accountable to our children first and they knew that...we purposed to spend time together as a couple and as a family...working very hard to serve the church/community as well.*
- *It somewhat limited us in the early years.*
- *We worked around the church calendar*
- *I scaled back my responsibilities.*
- *It took great effort.*
- *Many of our holidays (Christmas and Easter) were usually spent serving at the church. We had to wait to go on vacation until after these days. This is not always a negative, however, the flexibility may not always be there.*

- What were/are the hardest issues you have been faced with in ministry?

*Following are the varied responses:*

- *Criticism of my husband's ministry*
  - *Church discipline with some church members*
  - *In the younger years with small children, childcare was a problem when we were expected to attend church-related activities such as counseling couples without the children or an evening with no children. In a small church we didn't have the extra money for childcare.*
  - *Balance, genuine people, people not using you, protecting my husband.*
  - *Unreasonable expectations*
  - *Time pressures*
  - *Didn't feel supported by our peers.*
  - *Very clueless and on our own*
  - *Didn't know who to go to when there was a problem.*
  - *Women falling for my husband.*
  - *Church split*
  - *Church business meetings.*
  - *When people leave the church disgruntled or talk bad about you after you have invested in their lives.*
  - *Friends*
  - *Time management*
  - *Handling opposition at times.*
  - *Being away from family and too busy during the holidays to be with loved ones.*
  - *Too broke!!*
  - *The whole 24/7 thing...Yikes!!!*
  - *Interpersonal differences*
  - *Working through personality conflicts*
  - *Decisions between the pastor (my dad) and my husband (Assistant pastor)*
  - *Loneliness*
  - *Misunderstandings*
  - *Financial problems*
  - *Controlling women who are other lay leaders or staff*
- What personal issues have you dealt with in your own life that you believe were affected by being in ministry?

*Following are the varied responses:*

- *Loneliness*
- *Trust issues with church members*

- *Fear of failure*
  - *Feeling that I couldn't make mistakes*
  - *To be aware of how vulnerable I am with other people*
  - *Overwhelmed*
  - *Lack of trust in people because of past treatment in the ministry*
  - *Became a very private person*
  - *Became self-sufficient – didn't let anyone know our needs – maybe because of pride*
  - *Depression*
  - *Bitterness*
  - *Anger at home*
  - *Problems with children*
  - *Can't deal with pressure*
  - *Stick it out no matter what.*
  - *Seeking to please others has been my greatest downfall*
  - *Feeling of worth – upon their acceptance or rejection*
  - *Bitterness – a pastor not allowing my husband to accompany me back to the states with our children at the passing of my father.*
  - *Feeling under appreciated*
  - *Being a preacher's kid soured my desire to be a preacher's wife. God broke me and I am happy to be a preacher's wife.*
  - *Attitudes*
  - *Personal spiritual values*
  - *Not making ministry my identity.*
  - *Taking time to figure out what God wanted me to do.*
- **Quote** – A pastor's wife is “a full-time partner in the most important work on earth, and is largely responsible for her husband's success or failure.” Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

*Following are their varied responses:*

- *At one time I would have agreed with the total statement but now I don't agree with the part that I am responsible for my husband's success or failure. I would change full-time partner to “we are a team.”*
- *He can't be successful when always trying to please.*
- *I believe that to be true of any wife – whatever her husband's chosen work.*
- *If pastor's home is not sound, it can affect how they minister effectively.*

- *We will each stand before the Lord one day...I do believe my faithfulness to Jesus and to my husband can directly aid him in his success...a pastor's wife is a very powerful role...it can be totally detrimental or totally an eternal blessing to her husband...to the church family...to the community...to the uttermost.*
- *Mostly agree; especially if also a mom to young children or busy teens.*
- *It is not my responsibility to make my husband a success. It is my responsibility to be available to meet his needs.*
- *I somewhat agree...it is still up to my husband to answer to the Lord for how he shepherds, however, my attitude and encouragement can persuade him to not give up. In the lowest times of our ministry life, even with my encouragement, my husband will say it was his personal time in God's Word that helped him through it.*
- *How have you changed since going into ministry?*
  - *I have learned the comfort of God through everything my husband and I have gone through during these years of ministry. I have experienced God's comfort so that I may now comfort others. I am enjoying the times I'm able to share with and encourage other young pastors' wives. I am older, bolder and more confident.*
  - *Wiser – learning to step back before you attack.*
  - *My trust in the Lord has been greatly challenged and flourished because of the pressures in the ministry.*
  - *More private – more secure in myself.*
  - *Came out of my shell*
  - *I have grown spiritually*
  - *Careful about what people think, but they don't rule our lives. They are very respectful.*
  - *Accept people for who they are and what they do.*
  - *Growth in God's Word – read Proverbs every day.*
  - *Stronger Christian and a stronger woman*
  - *More tolerant and forgiving*
  - *Accepting of others*
  - *I have softened...grown meeker in my understanding of others and their difficulties...also I am strong in my convictions...and bolder in speaking them.*
  - *Stronger in the Lord and steadfast in my faith. Eyes are on the Lord and not on people. Keeping it real and keeping it on the cross!!*
  - *Seeing the world through the eyes of Christ.*



- *Finding out what really matters in life.*
  - *More understanding of known and unknown results of ministry*
  - *How you can mess up!*
  - *How not to express our opinions – keep mouth shut!!!*
  - *Have learned how to keep confidences*
  - *I've grown up!*
  - *See life through other's point of view*
  - *See context of things*
  - *Not as judgmental – we're all on a spiritual journey*
  - *I have desired to continue to grow in my relationship with the Lord and with others. I know that my people skills, Bible knowledge and personal goals have been stretched. I have loved ministry and love that my family can see it positively. God taught me during those first years that I could not be like the other pastor's wife (nor did I feel like I should). I learned that I needed to be who God made me and use the gifts that He gave me to minister out to others. This has helped me to encourage younger women to not try to be someone else, but to be obedient to what God has called them to.*
- *How has the ministry of the pastor's wife changed since you have been in ministry?*

*Following are their varied answers:*

- *Now a lot of churches do not have all the services which we were expected to attend with our children. We had Sunday school, Sunday morning service, Sunday night church training, Sunday night church service, Wednesday night activities and perhaps other activities during the week.*
- *It depends on the church – there are still many of the traditional churches expecting the pastor's wife to be at everything.*
- *Yes, stereotypes have changed.*
- *Dress has changed.*
- *Less focus on the pastor's wife*
- *More freedom, less visibility*
- *More acceptance to be who they are*
- *Not staying at home*
- *More involved*
- *Work alongside husband*
- *First priority is to love the Lord*
- *Family should be top priority – there will come a time when you can be more involved.*

- *More set roles expected*
  - *Not as rigid*
  - *More involvement*
  - *Speak out more*
  - *It seems to be more professional today...many pastors' wives have their own career...not as many parsonages are being used...women feeling they will not choose to serve in the church or with her husband.*
  - *Today the younger wives seem to have more choices in how much they want to be involved.*
  - *We were expected to be at every service and even with babies in tow!!*
  - *More freedom*
  - *Not on a pedestal*
  - *Allowed to be themselves*
  - *Depends on the location in the country*
  - *Able to trust our discernment more*
  - *More relational*
  - *Transparent*
  - *Tailored to individual personality and gifting*
  - *I hope that churches are paying their pastors better and being more sensitive to family time for the pastor's family*
  - *The value of having partners in ministry at a local church is a huge benefit.*
- If you had a chance to live your life over would you still want to be a pastor's wife?
    - Yes, absolutely! *All answered this as a "yes" except for one "no"!!!*
    - No way!
    - I'd have to think about it!!!

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