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THE PASTOR:

Pastor's Wife

Her call:

The wife of a pastor, like her husband, has a very special role within the church. Whereas her husband is called to minister to the many of the church, it is her job to minister to him. In this special role she is his confidant, encourager, helpmate, adviser, comforter and lover. This is a role which no one else is able to fulfill but her, and her alone, for she is the pastor's wife.

Though a pastor is called by God to his position, his wife many times may not sense a special call of God on her life to this new role. She simply knows that if her husband is called to be the pastor, then because she is his wife, she is called of God to be a pastor's wife. For some women this is a logical reality which they can easily accept, whereas for others it may not be so logical or acceptable. For those in the latter category, being a pastor's wife can be a more difficult position for them. Therefore if a pastor is sure of his call, he needs to be understanding and willing to help his wife accept her new ministry. Why? Because the pastor's wife can be his greatest ally and help in ministry, as well as a great help and benefit to the church. If however she does not feel a part of her husband's ministry or a sense of ownership to what she and her husband are doing in the church, then she may struggle, become depressed and discouraged, thereby hindering his ministry. A pastor needs to understand how important his wife is to his role in the church. He also needs to realize that they should function together as a team; and that without her at his side, he and his ministry may not be as effective as possible. Therefore, pastor must care for and be sensitive to his wife and her needs.

What is her function?

The function of a pastor's wife, first and foremost, is to minister to her husband. She needs to be there as his helpmate and encourager. When she supports him at home, it makes his job easier within the church. Her next most important ministry is to her children. If the children are neglected, sooner or later they will negatively impact his ministry. The children are not only the responsibility of the pastor's wife, but of the pastor as well. Their children are important, and both the pastor and his wife

are to give them the appropriate time necessary for their training and development (see the article titled, "Pastor's Family").

Along with her ministry to her family, the pastor's wife can focus some of her attention on ministry within the church. This does not mean that she becomes her husband's personal secretary (unless she desires this) or the person who does everything no one else in the church wants to do. She, like other believers, is gifted by the Holy Spirit, having received from God various talents and abilities which she is to use in the body of Christ. She, her gifts, as well as her desire for ministry, should be respected and taken into account.

Her value:

A pastor needs to understand that although his wife can be his greatest asset in his ministry, she can also be his biggest liability. Whether she is an asset or a liability may very well be the result of his relationship with her, although this is not always the case. This is why his relationship with her is to be God-honoring, loving her as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25-30). God did not give her to him to hinder him, but instead to be a tool of God to sharpen him, just as he is used of God to sharpen her (cf. Pro. 27:17). She is to come alongside him as his partner to complete him (cf. Gen. 2:18,24; Mark 10:8), as he is to complete her. He needs to remember, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD" (Pro. 18:22). He is to treat her appropriately, for she is a gift from God through whom God has blessed him. "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7).

A pastor ought to be concerned about his wife's spiritual life (cf. Eph. 5:25-27), making sure it is growing and active. He is not to neglect her for the sake of others as so many pastors have a tendency to do. His wife is not just another member in his church. She is a person who is to be treasured by him, one with whom he has a very special and intimate relationship (cf. Gen. 2:24; Pro. 5:19), a relationship which he is to have with no other as long as both of them are alive (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39; Heb. 13:4). Therefore this relationship is to be of utmost importance in his life and is to be guarded (cf. Mal. 2:13-16; Eph. 5:25-29).

Other thoughts:

In his relationship with his wife, a pastor should not discuss all the problems related to the church with her. At times this may be too much for her to deal with. Hearing certain things might cause her to become bitter toward the church and some of the people in it. When he does discuss church issues with her, he needs to be careful what he tells her. She does not need to know about all the counseling sessions he has and what things were discussed in them. These should be kept confidential. This does not mean, however, that at times her counsel and perspective as a woman should not be sought. Some pastors counsel with their wives at their sides, especially when counseling women and/or couples. This is up to the discretion of the pastor and his wife and can also be a safeguard for the pastor. Many times discussing counseling issues with someone other than his wife is prudent,

such as with qualified elders. With such men, the pastor is able to discuss confidential issues and work through problems together. If within the church such elders have not yet been developed, the pastor should have a trusted and wise friend (maybe another pastor) outside of the church who does not know the people in his church; a person whom he can talk to and receive counsel from. The pastor is to protect his wife and children from all the problems and politics of the church. It may be better for her well being and that of his family.

A pastor also should remember not to use his wife (or his children) as sermon illustrations unless he gets their permission first. If he ever talks about his wife (or his children) in public, it is to be in a positive, loving manner, elevating and honoring her. How he treats his wife may impact how the men in the church will treat their wives as well (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; 2 Thes. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3).



APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor, how do you view your wife -- as a help or hindrance to your ministry? If you view her as a hindrance, why? How can this be changed?
2. Does your wife feel that she is an important part of your ministry? If not, why not?
3. Does your wife feel that she has her own ministry within the church, or does she do only the things which no one else wants to do?
4. Do you value your wife's input or do you have the attitude that you do not need her help in the ministry? If you feel that you do not need her help and input, please explain why God gave her to you as a wife and a helpmate. Keep in mind 1 Corinthians 12:18-25.
5. If your relationship with your wife is not what it should be, how can you improve it? Is there someone the two of you can talk with to get help? If help is needed, when will you seek it and whom will you talk to?

6. Are there ways in which you can involve your wife more in your ministry? Are there situations in which it would be beneficial for you to seek her advice? List some of your ideas below.

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7. Do you share information with your wife from board meetings, other meetings or counseling sessions? Are you careful about what you share with her?

8. How is your wife's spiritual life? If it is not where it should be, do you know why? How can you encourage her to grow in her relationship with Christ?

9. Does your wife feel valued by you? How do you treat her in front of the people of your church, with honor or with dishonor? How do you treat her at home? Are there changes which you need to make?

10. What can you do this week to make your wife feel special and loved? After doing this, discuss with her how she feels about her role as the pastor's wife and her ministry within the church. Discover how she thinks her role and ministry can be improved and what can be done to make her feel an important part of your team. Then make the necessary changes.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Is your wife a part of your team? In other words, is she convinced of your calling and is she willing not only to follow you in this endeavor, but to assist you as she is able?
2. How does your wife see her role in your future ministry? Is she excited about the possibilities?
3. Has your wife always been an asset to you in your ministry or has she hindered you? If you feel she has hindered you, what has been the main underlying reason for this? Could her hindrance be God-sent -- that God was using her to slow you down or change your course? Or, is there a problem between the two of you which needs to be corrected? Could there possibly be another reason?
4. What can you do to honor your wife to help her feel loved, cherished, and a valuable part of your team?