



THE PASTOR'S WIFE

The role of a pastor's wife is a very difficult one, both to carry out as well as to define. Her husband has been trained for the task, spending years anticipating the future and the likely problems he will encounter. In other words, much thought and many prayers will have gone into his preparation. His wife though was not in that position, entering her husband's ministry via marriage, invariably untrained for the role and, more often than not, emerging from completely unrelated circumstances. Usually she possesses a number of disadvantages when she steps into a pastorate for the first time, not least the fact that everything will be new, probably even her husband! If he is nervous to begin with, *how* much more will she be.

SEEKING A ROLE

At first, in her inexperience she will feel uneasy in a new and unusual situation, not understanding what her role actually is. Nobody has told her. Is she expected to play only a quiet part, centred in the home, or is she also to feature prominently in church life? Is she just one of the women, or as the pastor's wife, their leader? Who exactly *is* 'the wife of the minister'?

If she asks her husband, more-than-likely, he will have no idea! Strangely, his college or seminary prospectus did not include this important topic, nor was his future wife even mentioned, except, historically, as a warning to him not to marry her during training! In any case, the newness of *his* situation, and inexperience in coping with the problems already surfacing, will be as much as he can cope with at that stage. In short, from day one she jumped into the deep end.

¹ This statement does not preclude a pastor's wife from going out to work, especially, for example, in cases of church plants or small works, where and additional salary is needed to make up the household income. Note that the excellent wife in Prov. 31 is quite the business entrepreneur, considering and

Needless to say, Satan will harass her, creating unrest, frustration, perhaps even depression. Is she doing the right thing, in the right way? She wants so much to be of use to the Lord, and an asset to her husband, not letting either down. She is "the pastor's wife" [a daunting realisation], and not an ordinary housewife. Everyone is closely observing her: her godliness, her example to others, her efficiency as a wife, her capabilities as a mother, her practical abilities within church life, her appearance—neither ostentatious nor drab, 1 Peter 3:1-6. Perhaps, more besides, the list is as detailed as the whim of the observers.

A WARNING REQUIRED

One thing she is certainly *not*, she is most definitely *not* the assistant pastor, nor "The Wife" as to the manor born! Such a woman is a stain upon the local church, and a defect upon its life and witness. If only such women had been warned about this at the beginning—and they are more plentiful than one might realise—it being both embarrassing and wrong for a "living minister", to coin Spurgeon's phrase, to discover his wife leading from the front, rather than consoling from behind. Official church business discussed and decided upon at the meeting of the church officers, she must have *no* determinative influence upon whatsoever. Life behind the Manse door is not about setting direction or policy!

AN HONOURED POSITION

What, then, is the role of the man of God's wife? It is *primarily* domestic, despite what the "Womanist" movement says to the contrary! A lady's God-given gifts are seen to the best advantage when "she looketh well to the ways of her household", as the Scripture reminds us. Rooted in domesticity how active, and useful, a "virtuous woman" is (Prov. 31:10-31).¹

buying a field (v. 16), making merchandise for profit (v. 18), making and selling garments, delivering them to the merchant (v. 24). Yet, clearly, she is "rooted in domesticity" (Ed.)



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Yet, she will find time for further activities (godly women invariably do), not seeking prominence and position, but in a lowly capacity. What better witness to the grace of God, than a quietly humble and Christian lady influencing those around her by secret prayer and a Christ-like example: encouraging her husband, working alongside the women of the church, advising the younger ones, visiting the sick and the elderly, and instructing the children?

Such a lady is precious to the Lord who called her; to his servant who married her, and to the church privileged to know and share fellowship with her.

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