

Advice for Ministers' Wives from Ministers' Wives

Written by Grace Clausing

An unsung hero—that's what you could call a minister's wife. Rarely do church members comprehend how much the pastor's spouse endures and gives up for her husband's job. The calling is tough, and many feel alone and judged by their congregation.

Who better understands the plight of a minister's wife than a fellow clergy spouse? Take a look at some advice that pastor's wives have offered to encourage and inspire others.

Facing Expectations

It's easy for wives to fall into the trap of feeling that they must meet and exceed certain expectations from church members. Amy Goen's husband, Kyle, has been in the ministry for 17 years. He serves as the executive pastor at First Baptist Church in Smyrna, Tennessee. Dealing with church expectations, Goen encourages wives to be themselves. "Early on in ministry, I had some great mentors who encouraged me to just be who I was and not try to conform to someone's expectations. Focus on what God expects," Goen says. Don't be afraid to show the real you to the congregation, complete with flaws. It shows that you're human and someone they can relate to.

Supporting Your Husband

Franklin Graham witnessed incredible spousal support between his parents, Billy and Ruth Graham. "My father would not be who he is today if it wasn't for my mother," he often tells people. It's important to keep your home a safe haven for your shepherding husband. He needs a place where he can rest and rejuvenate, even if he is always "on call" for the church. Beverly Hild's husband is the lead pastor of First Baptist Church in Sarasota, Florida. They have been married for 28 years and Hild has discovered the importance of being a supportive wife for her husband. "I've learned that my husband does not need me to play the devil's advocate in difficult situations; he has enough of those. I try not to give him advice unless he asks for it. He needs me to listen to him and trust his judgment."

Raising a Family in Front of the Congregation

Having the church body analyze your parenting skills can be more than a little taxing. Just remember that the church hired your husband to pastor them, they

didn't hire him so they could critique your mothering abilities. Leighann McCoy is raising three children in front of her husband's congregation in Thompson's Station, Tennessee. "My children were entrusted to me, and I refuse to let the church think they are responsible for them. My primary job is to protect them from having to be 'ideal' simply because they had the fortune or misfortune of being born into our lives." Your children are yours, not the congregation's. It is your responsibility as their mother to raise them in a godly environment, simple as that.

Taking a Breather

Raising four children and working as the senior vice president at the Urban Alternative in Dallas, Texas, wore Lois Evans out. Getting time to talk to her pastoring husband, Tony, was sometimes a challenge. She eventually found a free moment with him and told him she needed a break. "I have to get away and get refreshed," she told him. She encourages wives to tell their husbands when they need some down time. "We ministry spouses often pout when times grow hectic. We hope our mates see how exhausted we are and suggest that we take a breather. Yet we often don't come right out and say, 'That's it. I've had enough, and I'm taking a break.'" Let your husband know when you've hit a wall. Don't expect him to read your mind. Everyone needs a break from time to time, including you.

Being a pastor's wife can be draining on you, your family, and your marriage. Take proper care of the responsibilities that God entrusted you with as a pastor's spouse. Remember, above all else, be yourself! Don't let stereotypes of what a pastor's wife is "supposed" to be hinder who you really are. Be genuine and your congregation will appreciate your honesty. It takes a special person to be in the role that you are in, but it can also be an enormous blessing.

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