

# A Pastor's Wife

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## I. The purpose for this sermon.

1. Too often pastor's wives are overlooked, underappreciated, misunderstood, and are the subject of unreasonable and unbiblical expectations.
2. A pastor's wife is crucial to the success of his ministry: she can make him or break him.
3. It's necessary for churches to have a Biblical view of the role of a pastor's wife so that they understand the very difficult position she occupies and can be there to support her.
4. I have interviewed four pastor's wives in preparation for this sermon to be able to understand their perspective.
5. It is my hope you will have a better appreciation for your pastor's wife after hearing this sermon.

## II. A pastor's wife has the most important job in the world that any woman can have.

1. A pastor's wife's job is NOT to...
  - A. be a co-pastor
  - B. be the pastor's secretary
  - C. relay messages from church members to the pastor
  - D. be in charge of a "ministry"
  - E. be a church counselor
  - F. lead the women of the church
  - G. work outside the home to help the pastor provide for the needs of the family
2. *A pastor's wife's job is to take care of the pastor (Gen 2:18).*
3. Her job is the same as every married woman's job, and that is to be a keeper at home (Tit 2:5).
4. Her "ministry" consists of the extremely important job of...
  - A. loving the pastor
  - B. being emotionally and physically supportive of the pastor
  - C. providing a happy and comfortable home for the pastor
  - D. cooking
  - E. brewing coffee
  - F. doing dishes
  - G. cleaning
  - H. doing laundry
  - I. grocery shopping
  - J. taking care of the children
  - K. helping to educate the children

## III. What does the Bible say about a pastor's wife?

1. There is not a lot of information in the Bible concerning pastor's wives, but there is some.
2. The Bible specifically teaches the following concerning a pastor's wife.

- A. If a pastor is married, he can only have one wife (**1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6**).
    - i. A pastor doesn't have to be married, which was the case with Jesus (**Heb 13:20; 1Pe 2:25**) and Paul (**1Co 7:7-8**).
    - ii. A pastor must "be" the husband of one wife, meaning that he cannot "be" the husband of more than one wife.
      - a. A pastor could not be bigamist or a polygamist.
      - b. A pastor could not divorce his wife, except if she commits adultery, and marry another because he would be the husband of two wives, being bound in covenant to two women (**Mat 19:9**).
    - iii. A pastor could have had more than one wife during the course of his life.
      - a. A pastor could be a widower who remarried (**Rom 7:2-3**).
      - b. A pastor could have been the victim of adultery and put away his wife and married another (**Mat 19:9**).
      - c. A pastor could have been married to an unbeliever who abandoned him prior to being called to the ministry and then remarried after being freed from her (**1Co 7:15**).
      - d. In all three of these cases, the pastor would be free of his first marriage in the eyes of God and therefore would "be" the husband of one wife being presently bound to only one woman.
  - B. A pastor's wife must be submissive to him (**1Ti 3:4-5**).
    - i. A man's house includes his wife and children (**1Ti 5:8**).
    - ii. House *n.* - 1. A building for human habitation; esp. a building that is the ordinary dwelling-place of a family. 5. The persons living in one dwelling; the inmates of a house collectively: a household, family.
    - iii. A pastor must rule his family well including his wife.
    - iv. A pastor must lead his wife, not follow her (**1Co 9:5**).
    - v. A pastor's wife therefore should be meek and submissive, not domineering and controlling, just like all Christian women should be (**Eph 5:22-24; 1Pe 3:1-6**).
    - vi. Unfortunately, it is all too common in many churches for the pastor's wife to be a domineering, controlling busybody.
    - vii. A church should never call a pastor who has such a wife.
3. The following things can be reasoned from the scriptures regarding a pastor's wife.
- A. The qualifications for a deacon are given immediately after the qualifications for a pastor (**1Ti 3:8-13 c/w 1Ti 3:1-7**).
  - B. The list of qualifications for a deacon begin with the word "likewise" (**1Ti 3:8**).
    - i. Likewise - 1. (The full phrase.) *in like wise*: in the same manner.
    - ii. This means that the deacon's requirements are in the same manner as the pastor's qualifications, and vice versa.
    - iii. There are certain qualifications that are specific to the office of an elder (pastor) such as being apt to teach (**1Ti 3:2**) which would not apply to deacons.
    - iv. But many of the qualifications are the same, such as family related ones.
      - a. Both a pastor and a deacon have to be the husband of one wife (**1Ti 3:2, 12**).
      - b. Both have to rule their children and houses well (**1Ti 3:4-5, 12**).

- c. The wife of a deacon must meet certain qualifications which a pastor's wife must meet *likewise* (1Ti 3:11). These include being:
- (i) grave
    1. Grave *adj.* - 1. Of persons: Having weight or importance; influential, respected. (Sometimes used as an epithet of respectful address.) Of authors, books, maxims, advice: Weighty, authoritative. 3. Of persons, their character, aspect, speech, or behaviour: Marked by weighty dignity; of reverend seriousness. In later use with wider sense, of temperament, feeling, or their manifestations: Serious, not mirthful or jocular; opposed to gay.
    2. A pastor's wife must be serious, influential, and respectable.
    3. My wife is a woman of principle who takes her life and her Christianity very seriously.
    4. The reason my wife doesn't mill around and talk with people *before* church, but rather sits by herself, is not because she is unsocial, but rather because she wants to prepare her heart and mind to worship God and not be distracted by other topics of conversation.
    5. A man who doesn't have a serious and respectable wife is not fit for the ministry.
  - (ii) not slanderers
    1. Slanderer *n.* - 1. One who slanders, one who devises or utters false or malicious statements about a person, etc.; a defamer or calumniator.
    2. A pastor's wife must not be a woman who spreads malicious rumors about people.
    3. This is a necessary qualification because some women are known for their propensity to whisper, backbite, and gossip about others.
    4. A man who has a wife who spreads rumors about others is not fit for the ministry.
  - (iii) sober
    1. Sober *adj.* - I. 1. a. Moderate, temperate, avoiding excess, in respect of the use of food and drink; not given to the indulgence of appetite. II. 4. a. Of demeanour, speech, etc.: Grave, serious, solemn; indicating or implying a serious mind or purpose.
    2. A pastor's wife must be moderate in her appetite and serious in mind and purpose.
    3. A pastor's wife should not be a silly woman who doesn't take life seriously.
    4. A man who has a wife who is not moderate and of a serious mind is not fit for the ministry.

(iv) faithful in all things

1. Faithful *adj.* - 1. Of persons, their actions, etc.: Full of or characterized by *faith* (sense 3); believing. 2. a. Firm in fidelity or allegiance to a person to whom one is bound by any tie; constant, loyal, true. 3. a. True to one's word or professed belief; abiding by a covenant or promise, steadfast. 4. a. Of persons and their conduct: Conscientious, thorough in the fulfilment of duty. 5. Of persons and their actions: That may be believed or relied upon; trustworthy, veracious.
2. A pastor's wife must be full of and characterized by faith and belief of the gospel.
3. A pastor's wife must be loyal, true to her word and her beliefs, dutiful, and trustworthy.
4. She must be a woman who is steadfast in her convictions.
5. A man with an unbelieving, unconverted, or untrustworthy wife is not qualified for the ministry.

(v) These qualifications show that it takes a good woman of strong character to be a pastor's wife.

- d. Interestingly, the qualifications to be a pastor's wife are the same as the qualifications to be a pastor, which the words "even so" in 1Ti 3:11 show (although there are additional pastoral qualifications).
  - (i) A pastor must be *grave* in that he must have his children in subjection with all *gravity* (*the quality of being grave; weight, influence, authority*) (1Ti 3:4; Tit 2:7).
  - (ii) A pastor must not be a *slanderer* in that he is to be "blameless" and "of good behaviour" (1Ti 3:2) and "just" and "holy" (Tit 1:8).
  - (iii) A pastor must be *sober* (1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:8).
  - (iv) A pastor must be *faithful* (Tit 1:9; 1Ti 1:12; 2Ti 2:2).
- e. Given that some of the qualifications of a pastor are also qualifications for a pastor's wife, it follows that she will have to bear some of the heavy burdens he does (see examples below).

IV. A pastor's wife has one of the most difficult jobs in the world.

1. A pastor's job is his life.
  - A. Being married to a pastor is difficult because he can't separate his home life from his job.
  - B. Unlike most other jobs and professions, a pastor's ministry *is* his life, not just something he does to earn a living.
  - C. It's therefore hard for him to transition from work time to home time.
  - D. This is hard for a pastor's wife because her husband can't leave his work at the office.
2. Her identity is wrapped up in who she is married to.
  - A. She is often referred to as "the pastor's wife."

- B. No other woman is referred to by the profession of her husband.
  - C. She may feel like she is only valued because of whom she is married to.
3. Privacy
- A. A pastor and his wife do not have the level of privacy that other church members do.
  - B. They live in a fishbowl.
  - C. People know a lot about the pastor's life and therefore they know a lot about the pastor's wife's life.
  - D. This can make the pastor's wife feel like everything she does is being scrutinized.
4. Lack of close relationships
- A. It is hard for a pastor's wife to make close friendships in the church.
  - B. This is due to numerous factors.
    - i. She has to be careful whom she opens up to.
    - ii. She can't share her problems with other women because she wants to be very careful to protect her husband's reputation.
    - iii. Most women will likewise not want to open up to her because they are afraid it might get back to the pastor.
    - iv. They also may avoid getting close to her because they think she might scrutinize their lives.
  - C. For this reason, many pastor's wives suffer with loneliness.
5. Judgment and scrutiny of others
- A. A pastor's wife is conscious of the fact that people will judge (wittingly or unwittingly) every decision she makes and everything she does.
  - B. People often have higher expectations of the pastor's wife than they should.
    - i. She therefore feels a lot of pressure because she knows her actions will affect the ministry and reputation of the pastor.
    - ii. It only takes a little folly to sully a pastor's reputation for wisdom and honor (**Ecc 10:1**).
    - iii. If the pastor has very high personal standards as I do, then people will be watching him and his wife very carefully to see if they can spot hypocrisy.
      - a. I have experienced this, and even had a man admit that he did it.
      - b. I'm okay with that.
    - iv. This can make for a stressful life for the pastor's wife.
  - C. The pastor has to be an example to the believers (**1Ti 4:12; Tit 2:7**), so naturally his wife is an example as well because they are one flesh.
  - D. She must be extra careful how she represents her life with her husband in public because lots of people are watching and looking to them as examples.
  - E. For pastor's wives with children, their parenting skills will be under the microscope by some church members.
6. Time
- A. A pastor's wife feels like she has to share her husband with other people all the time.
  - B. Since most church members work during the day on weekdays, the only time they have to call or meet with the pastor is in the evenings or Saturdays.
  - C. He feels like he needs to take their calls during those times which cuts into her time with him.

- D. She struggles with feeling that the rest of the church members are more important to her husband than she is.
7. Being treated differently than other church members
    - A. A pastor's wife doesn't feel like just another church member.
    - B. She is held to a higher standard than other women (see qualifications above).
    - C. In many ways, she is held to the same standard as a pastor, but she is not a pastor and has not had that gift bestowed on her which he has.
    - D. Because she must maintain a high level of faithfulness and duty to God, she notices and is disappointed when others' conduct doesn't match their creed.
    - E. But unlike the pastor, she doesn't have a pulpit to exhort and admonish the brethren.
  8. Lack of acknowledgement
    - A. The pastor gets a lot of attention and recognition.
    - B. Most pastor's are pretty spoiled: I know I am.
    - C. But his wife, who stands in the background and supports him and helps him to be the man he is and do what he does, often gets little attention and recognition.
  9. Keeping quiet
    - A. It's important for a pastor's wife to be discrete and keep quiet about situations in the church.
    - B. She must be cautious about offering her opinions about things with church members, especially if those opinions differ from her husband's.
    - C. She cannot tell other members about problems that she has with her husband.
      - i. She doesn't have people to share her problems with like other women do.
      - ii. If she tells a woman in the church about a fight she had with her husband, the pastor's wife will forget about it in a day or two, but the other woman will remember it forever.
      - iii. This can tarnish the reputation of her husband.
      - iv. She must always hold her husband in high regard to others.
      - v. She must always support him unless he is in clear error.
      - vi. She must never put him down in front of others (no woman should do this to her husband).
  10. Not becoming resentful of her husband
    - A. A pastor must preach the perfect standard of the word of God concerning all things.
    - B. This includes preaching about being a good husband.
    - C. But the preacher is a man with a sinful nature like other men, and he doesn't always practice what he preaches.
    - D. A pastor's wife will sometimes have to fight feelings of resentment when her husband preaches about how Christians should act, but then doesn't live up to that standard.
    - E. The pastor's wife must nevertheless be respectful and honoring towards him in public and private so that she doesn't tarnish his reputation in the eyes of the church.
  11. Fighting the urge to be curious
    - A. If her husband gets a call from a church member, even though she perceives that something is wrong, she must mind her own business.
    - B. Her husband can't share problems he is dealing with at work with her like other husbands can.
    - C. She must be content to not know things that she wishes she could.

12. Witnessing her husband being attacked and hated
  - A. She has to endure the pain of knowing that people hate her husband and are trying to destroy him and run the church.
  - B. She must keep it to herself and can't share it with her friends in the church.
13. Being used to get information about situations in the church
  - A. Some women in the church will ask the pastor's wife about things that are going on in the church, rather than asking the pastor.
  - B. This puts her in a difficult position.
  - C. Calling the pastor's wife to ask about what to bring for a potluck is fine, but calling her to ask about what's happening in the church is not.
  - D. In such cases she needs to learn to be nice, but firm, and tell them if they have a question about a situation in the church they need to call the pastor.
14. Being used for pastoral counsel
  - A. Some members of the church will try to use the pastor's wife for pastoral counsel.
  - B. They view her as a free counselor to unload their problems on.
  - C. The pastor's wife is not the pastor.
  - D. Do not come to her for pastoral counsel: come to the pastor.
  - E. It's fine to come to the pastor's wife as a friend, but don't come to her as a pastor.
15. She must deal with many of the same hardships that the pastor deals with.
  - A. She lives in a fishbowl under the scrutiny of the church similarly to the way he does.
  - B. She must be very careful what she says because she knows that people are listening, just as the pastor has to.
  - C. She is guarded in how much she opens up to people because there are some people who would use it against her or the pastor.
  - D. She finds it hard to have close friendships in the church due to the nature of her position, similar to how the pastor does.
  - E. She sees the difficulties that her husband has to bear, and to an extent she bears them too because they are one flesh.
  - F. She has to deal with some people who want to get close to her to be able to influence the pastor.
  - G. Some people try to use her to relay messages to the pastor because they don't want to tell him themselves. Don't do that!
    - i. The pastor's wife is not a messenger for the pastor.
    - ii. Don't tell my wife things to tell me: tell me yourself.
    - iii. Don't tell my wife things *hoping* that it will get back to me: tell me yourself.
  - H. She has to deal with the reality that some people do not want to get close to her because they fear that if they do she may report their behavior to the pastor.
16. The pastor's wife bears many of the same burdens as the pastor, but she does not reap many of the benefits and blessings that he does.

V. What can you do for your pastor's wife?

1. Pray for her.
2. Don't have unreasonable and unbiblical expectations of her.
3. Appreciate her and remember that the pastor couldn't do what he does without her.
4. Try to understand her and realize that there are reasons why she acts the way she does.
5. Be friendly with her, but give her space and respect the boundaries that she sets.