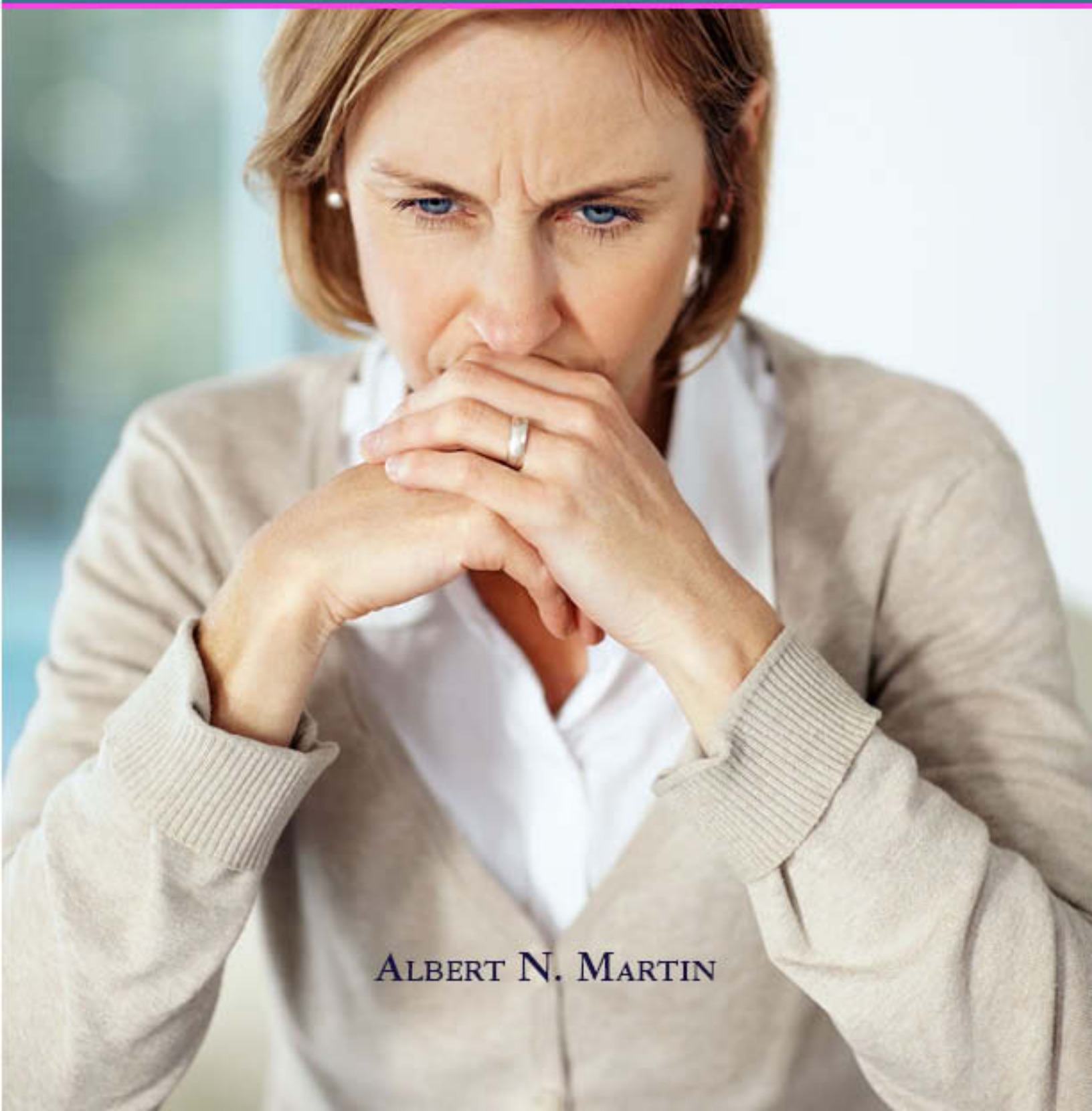


Encouragement for
Pastors' Wives



ALBERT N. MARTIN

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PASTORS' WIVES

Albert Martin

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ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PASTORS' WIVES

I. Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to focus our minds upon concerns peculiar to pastors' wives. As we launch into our subject, we must begin by underscoring what I trust is a conviction of each pastor's wife and of her husband. What conviction am I referring to? The conviction of the absolute authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures for everything pertaining to life and to practice. I want to set the framework for our study by looking very briefly at four key texts of Scripture.

The first one is Isaiah 8:20: *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* In context, the prophet is exposing the horrible sin of people in Israel looking for light and direction for their lives, now and in the future, by seeking out mediums and those who dabble with what the Scripture calls "familiar spirits." And in the midst of that setting, the prophet says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word," surely there is no dawn, or light, or morning for them. The prophet is calling the people back to the touchstone of written Scripture, to the Law and the testimony. If they do not speak according to God's Word, whatever else they are speaking, there is no true spiritual light coming from them.

Then, the very familiar text, Psalm 119:105: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."* It is the Word of God that marks out the path of what a pastor's wife ought to be and how she should fulfill her God-given roles and responsibilities.

Next are the very familiar words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God (literally, breathed out by God), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* The apostle Paul has reminded Timothy that from a nursing babe,¹ he has known the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. But then he goes on to say, in essence, "Timothy, Scripture not only has this function of being the instrument by which

¹ **nursing babe** – this refers to the Greek for "child" [*brephos*] as it appears in 2Ti 3:15. This word may refer to "an unborn child...new-born child, an infant, a babe..." cf. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 594; [hereafter, *Thayer*].

we are brought to salvation through faith in Christ, but all Scripture is breathed-out by God and is profitable. Scripture is profitable not only to be the instrument of bringing us to salvation through faith in Christ, but it “is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [or *training*] that is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” Furthermore, he then says to Timothy, “Scripture is not only the divinely appointed instrument to lead you to salvation through faith in Christ, but to lead you, as a man of God, to become perfect [*complete*], mature unto good works.” He is saying, “Scripture is sufficient for you, Timothy, as a man of God, to teach *you*, to reprove *you*, to correct *you*, and to instruct *you* in the path of righteousness.” Then, Paul goes on to say to Timothy, “I charge you in the sight of God, preach the Word” (4:1-2)² Timothy, that Word which is continually equipping you for your task, preach that Word.

As we come to this subject, I am addressing it with the conviction that any pastor’s wife whose conscience is held captive to the Word of God believes that the Scriptures will afford us all the light we need. Luther³ stated this when he stood before the Diet of Worms⁴ and said, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God, I can do no other, so help me God.” I do not need to claim to be a guru with special inside knowledge of God’s will for pastors’ wives. You don’t need to have some other individual—*male or female*—become the expert to tell you the secrets to being an effective pastor’s wife. I hope we are joined together in this conviction: it is through the Scriptures that we will be thoroughly furnished unto every good work, even the good work of becoming a God-pleasing pastor’s wife.

The fourth text is Matthew 22:29. In this context, Jesus is interacting with the religious leaders of His day, and they think they have caught Him on the horns of a dilemma. In response to them, Jesus says, “*You do err* [you go astray], *not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*” I have learned over the years in listening to pastors and pastors’ wives, and by my own experience as a pastor seeking to shepherd my own wife, that again and again we err, not knowing the Scriptures. Or if we know what the Scriptures tell us by way of clear directives, we limit the power of God to enable us to fulfill those God-given responsibilities. Therefore, if we would avoid having our Lord indict us with the words of this text, we must seek to have our minds and our actions directed by the Word of God with respect to what He desires for pastors’ wives; and we must believe that God can give us the grace and power to fulfill those directives.

² We must remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original letters; thus, Paul’s thought in this portion of 2 Timothy extends from 3:10 to 4:8.

³ **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic monk, theologian, university professor, and church reformer, whose writings and preaching inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

⁴ **Diet of Worms** (January 28 - May 25, 1521) – a meeting of the supreme council of the German rulers, in which the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V demanded that Martin Luther recant his writings that proclaimed the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Luther refused to do so (April 18).

II. Foundational Perspectives

In this first section, we will address what I am calling *foundational perspectives*. These perspectives are foundational to any clear, biblical thinking about the roles and responsibilities of a pastor's wife. If we do not start here, and we try to build the superstructure⁵ of what I would call some of the more "practical concerns," we will find ourselves wavering, and never becoming settled on these issues.

As we take them up, some of them may jar you at first; you may read things that even shock you. But we all stand under the authority of the Scriptures. If what I assert the Bible teaches does not line up with the Bible, make me a faceless man;⁶ you must consider these issues with your Bible open, and ready to search the Scriptures (Act 17:11). We are all under the authority of Christ and His Word in our consideration of this teaching.

A. No specific requirements

Here is foundational principle number one:

The Bible contains no specific character or gift requirements for a pastor's wife.

If you were to search the Scriptures from Genesis 1:1 to the last words of Revelation 22, you will nowhere find an explicit list of specific character or gift requirements for a pastor's wife. Now track with me as I seek to explain this foundational perspective.

The Scriptures do contain very specific lists of both character and gift requirements for a *pastor*. Any man aspiring to be an elder, a shepherd, a pastor in Christ's church, knows or ought to know that God has given us two very clear lists of the character and gift requirements for the sacred office and function of an elder. The first is in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1Ti 3:1). Paul then goes on to list those graces and gifts that must be manifested in any man who would enter the pastoral office, assured that God has placed him in that office (1Ti 3:2-7).

The overseer, therefore, must manifest conformity to a divinely-inspired standard of character and gift. Anyone entering the pastoral office without conforming to this passage and the parallel passage in Titus 1:5-9, enters in disobedience to Jesus Christ. Any church that calls a man to function in that office and does not have the conviction that he meets these standards acts in blatant disobedience to Jesus Christ. And what is the standard for character and gift? He must be "blameless," or "without reproach" (1Ti 3:2). Notice, it does not say "sinless." But there must be no just⁷ cause to reproach him for being something other than what he professes to be and what Scripture requires him to be. He is to be "the husband of one wife" (literally, *a one-woman man*), temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality," and—here is the one requirement in terms of a gift of speaking—he must be an "apt teacher." Paul goes on to affirm that he must be "no brawler, no striker;

⁵ **superstructure** – portion of a building constructed above and/or on top of the foundation.

⁶ **faceless man** – one who exercises no influence on a matter, as if he were not there.

⁷ **just** – merited; deserved; legitimate.

but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money, one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (But if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” Further, Paul says that he must “not be a novice (a recent convert), lest being puffed up, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (see 1Ti 3:2-7).

There is not a word here that he must have a wife who is this or that. Now granted, when it says that he must be a “one-woman man,” that requirement *infers* that his wife is a one-man woman—but that is only inferred. The requirement is that it be evident that the man in leadership has only one woman in his eyes, his heart, his arms, and his bed. He must be a one-woman man through and through. And when it says that he must be given to hospitality, the *inference* is that he has a wife that will cooperate with him in his being given to hospitality. Also, since it is required of any man who aspires to the pastoral office that he must be one who “rules well his own house,” these words also *infer* that his wife is in basic submission to the loving rule and wise government of his home. These are three inferred standards for the wife. However, there are no asterisks in this Spirit-inspired list of the spiritual character and ministering gifts required for a man aspiring to the eldership—asterisks pointing us to footnotes that tell us what the wife of this one-woman man must be: more than average in her physical attractiveness or multitalented—an efficient, multi-tasking woman, gifted to lead ladies’ Bible studies, to teach children in the Sunday School, to organize and administer the nursery schedule, to organize and decorate for church banquets, weddings, etc., etc., etc. No such asterisks pointing to such footnotes are in the Word of God. They simply are not there!

It is interesting that Paul does highlight graces that need to be present in a deacon’s wife in 1 Timothy 3:11. I believe that text is speaking to the wives of deacons, but he doesn’t do this in regard to the wives of pastors. (A discussion of why this requirement for deacons was given is neither necessary nor appropriate for our purposes).

When we come to the parallel passage in Titus 1:5-9, we find a similar emphasis. And that is very interesting because Titus 1:5 says, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” If ever there is a place where there would be some specific biblical directives about the standard for a pastor’s wife, surely it would be when the apostle is leaving a man in a sphere of labor specifically to see that qualified men are put into the office of an elder. But when you read the ethical, the moral, and the gift requirements for elders, there is not an explicit word about requirements for the pastor’s wife. “If any [man] be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful [*trustworthy*] children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate”—now here is the requirement alluding to gifts—“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Ti 1:6-9).

There is not a word about specific or special requirements of his wife. When I say that this is a “foundational biblical principle” with which we must start, that the Bible contains no specific character or gift requirements for a pastor’s wife, I believe I am standing on solid biblical ground. Now if your conscience is persuaded of that assertion, this foundational principle has two vital applications: one negative and the other positive. Here is the negative implication: as a pastor’s wife, *you must not make up your own self-generated list of character and gift requirements for a pastor’s wife, nor must you allow others to impose their list upon you.* The Lord Jesus condemns any effort to bring men’s consciences into bondage to man-made traditions when it comes to ethical and moral issues. Remember what He said in Mark 7:8 and 13, speaking to the religious leaders of His day. He charged them that “laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men...making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.” And then in Galatians 5:1, Paul commands the Galatian believers to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” And I say to you women, do not come up with your own man-made list of character and gift requirements that God in His Word has not made for you. And do not let others bring you into bondage to their list.

On the positive side, this principle demands that, as a pastor’s wife, you must identify and give yourself to a life of spirit-empowered obedience to all those specific directives addressed to you—as a Christian, as a Christian wife, as a Christian mother, as a Christian grandmother, as a Christian sister who has any living siblings, a Christian daughter who has parents who are still alive, as a Christian church member, and as a Christian citizen. You are to be serious concerning what the Word of God says to you as a Christian wife in all of these areas, a Christian wife who just happens to be responsible to fulfill those roles while joined to a man who is a pastor. When you think of who you are and what you are responsible to do, you should not think in these terms: “My identity is primarily that of a *pastor’s wife.*” Rather, you should think this way: “My identity is primarily that of a *Christian wife*, who happens to be married to a pastor.” Now that is not just playing with words. It is an entirely different orientation of mind. You are essentially a Christian wife; so when you come to your Bible and find things addressed to Christian women in general, you are not to regard these directives with indifference. You must not say to yourself, “Well, since these directives say nothing to me as a *pastor’s wife*, I don’t need to take them to heart.” You are a wife, and you are a wife united to Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, responsible in the power of the Spirit to fulfill your God-given responsibilities as a wife who belongs to Christ.

In other words, you are no different from any one of your sisters in Christ who is married to a man engaged in a different occupation than that of your husband. Any Christian wife must adjust her general biblical obedience⁸ to the peculiar opportunities,

⁸ **adjust her general biblical obedience** – her obligation to obey God in all matters has not changed, though her position as a pastor’s wife tests her more pointedly on some matters than she would be otherwise.

temptations, and pressures placed upon her because of her husband's occupation. You are no different in this regard from the woman who is married to an airline pilot. She has to fulfill all of her Christian responsibilities as a wife, mother, sister, and daughter, conditioned by the peculiar pressures, privileges, and temptations that come to a Christian wife married to a pilot—or a doctor, a carpenter, or a computer programmer. In other words, you are not some kind of an exotic breed for whom God has given a tailor-made set of directives, if only you could discover them! Everything you need to know about your role is in God's Book, directed to you as a wife—a Christian wife. So the first and fundamental building block is this principle: the Bible contains no specific character or gift requirements for a pastor's wife.

B. Not an unremunerated second member of a gospel team

As we come to the second principle, I would be very surprised if I didn't shoot some sacred cows.⁹ (I have never been reluctant to shoot so-called sacred cows when they are cows that God never created and put in the field!) Here is the principal:

The Bible nowhere assumes, infers, or approves the notion that a pastor's wife is to function in the capacity of an unremunerated¹⁰ second member of a gospel team.

While this notion may not be very prevalent in your immediate church circles, it is still very much abroad within the wider evangelical community; therefore, I am constrained to address it. For some of you who have never thought this way, coming to grips with some of the biblical principles that enable me to make this statement will equip you, hopefully, to help other women who may need that help.

It is not unusual to find church members who have expectations of a pastor's wife that are not based on biblical standards, but on notions absorbed in their past church settings. Perhaps they grew up in a church where the pastor's wife was the kind of woman that would be featured in a contemporary pastoral leadership magazine as the "Ideal Pastor's Wife." Your husband may be the pastor of a church that has some of these dear saints that had this "ideal pastor's wife" in their formative years. That image is deeply embedded in their minds. When they see you, their current pastor's wife, they say to themselves and others, "Oh, she doesn't match the 'ideal pastor's wife.'" You are being constantly compared to that "ideal"—probably a greatly idealized memory embedded in the mind and in the spirit of men and women in the assembly. Often, people who have absorbed this perspective are truly convinced that it would make a great difference if only their pastor's wife would be like "so and so."

During five years in an itinerant ministry years ago, I frequently encountered this mentality in the many mainline evangelical churches in which I ministered. At that time, as a man in my mid-to-late twenties, I was ignorant, pathetically ignorant, of many facets

⁹ **sacred cows** – with reference to the Hindu veneration of the cow as a sacred animal; therefore, it applies to a person, idea, or opinion unreasonably held to be above questioning or criticism.

¹⁰ **unremunerated** – not paid for work done.

of biblical ecclesiology¹¹ when I was seriously considering accepting the call to shepherd a small congregation in north Jersey in 1962. However, based on what I had observed in those five years in broad mainline evangelical churches, I was convinced that I had to make plain to this church that if they were to call *me* to be their pastor, they would not be calling a “gospel team,” comprised of my wife and me.

At that time, my wife and I had been married for six years and had an 18-month-old baby boy. My former wife (who went home to be with the Lord in September 2004) came out of a background in which she was reared by her father. Her father and mother divorced when she was only two years old; he was given custody of Marilyn and never remarried. As a result of this there were many homemaking skills that she was just in the process of learning, since she accompanied me during those five years of itinerant ministry when the Lord had withheld children from us. I knew that in the denomination of the church that was contemplating calling me, there was a strong and patent assumption that the pastor’s wife was to function as the unpaid other member of a gospel team. I also knew that if my wife did not perform the way they expected the pastor’s wife to function as the other member of the gospel team, there would be trouble. I explained my convictions on this matter as plainly and simply as I knew how.

In one of my meetings with the leadership prior to my being called to that church, I said something close to the following:

“If you are calling me to be your pastor, you are calling *me*; do you understand that? My wife is called to be my wife, God’s gift of a helper answering to my need, to be the keeper of my home, to be the mother of my son, and a faithful and loyal member of the church. Anything else she does in the church will only be in terms of what any ordinary wife and mother of a toddler would be expected to do. You must not have additional expectations for her simply because I put a ring on her finger. If you do have other expectations, they must be rooted in the Scriptures.”

As a result of making these things very plain to the people before I accepted their call to become their pastor, the issue of unbiblical expectations of my wife never was raised throughout my decades of ministry among them.

It is vital that the church not have unbiblical expectations of what a pastor’s wife is to be and to do. When I assert that the Bible nowhere assumes, infers, or approves the notion that a pastor’s wife is to function as the unremunerated second member of a gospel team, I trust in your heart you can say, “Amen! That is true.”

C. Fulfilling the responsibilities of a Christian wife

The third foundational principle is this:

¹¹ **biblical ecclesiology** – what the Bible teaches about the church including its nature, origin, purpose, membership, and government.

The Bible does require you to understand your various categories of responsibility and stewardship as a Christian wife, and to give yourself to fulfilling them in the strength of Christ to the glory of God.

In seeking to flesh out this biblical principle, I am going to use this term: “your generic Christian wifely duties.” What does this mean? Generic pharmaceuticals are a good illustration. When you get a generic drug, you are getting a drug that has all the components of the expensive brand, but without the fancy name. The “generic Christian wifely duties” are all of the duties scattered throughout the Scripture that God sets before us by addressing wives. You must understand *those* duties (generic in nature) and the responsibilities and stewardships connected with them. You are to give yourself to fulfilling those generic Christian duties and stewardships in the strength of Christ, and with a passion that God will thereby be glorified in you because you are fulfilling the role of a Christian wife.

As I was wrestling with the best way to focus upon these generic duties, I picked up Mary Somerville’s book entitled *One with the Shepherd*. This is what she says: “Scripture does not give a job description for the wife of a man in ministry. So how do we know what God expects of us? What is our role?...Scripture makes it plain that our calling is exactly the same as that of every other woman in the church—to be a godly woman, wife, mother, and faithful member of the body of Christ.”¹² I almost did a backflip in my study, saying to myself, “Here is a woman reading the same Bible I read, and she is not coming up with some exotic description of what a woman must be because she is “married to a shepherd.” I repeat her words, “Scripture makes it plain that our calling is *exactly the same* [author’s emphasis] as that of every other woman in the church—to be a godly woman, wife, mother, and faithful member of the body of Christ.”

As I was considering how to highlight those “generic Christian wifely duties,” my mind was drawn to the Titus 2:3-5 passage. When I went back and consulted my female counselor in her book, I discovered that this is exactly what she did in identifying what those generic wifely duties are. She says, “What passage more beautifully and succinctly brings together God’s will for a Christian wife than the Titus 2 passage?”

The passage begins with Paul’s words to Titus, instructing him what he should say to older women in terms of what it is to mark their character, and what they are to train the younger women to do and to be. Notice, he doesn’t put a parenthesis saying to Titus, “*If* you can find any women who admit to being in this category of older women.” He does not allow for any possibility that Titus would say to them, “Now Paul told me that I am supposed to give directions to the older women; are there any older women here?”—and no hands would go up! No, Paul assumes that when he gives this directive to Titus, the older women in the churches on the isle of Crete would be honest concerning the fact that this was precisely what they were—older women.

¹² Mary Somerville, *One with the Shepherd: The Trials and Triumphs of a Ministry Marriage* (The Woodlands, Texas: Kress Christian Publications, 2005), 4.

The older women are to be charged to do what? To “be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women...” (2:3-4). Then the apostle Paul identifies seven specific things in vs. 4-5 that constitute the focal points of the Spirit’s emphasis upon what a godly Christian wife and mother is to be and to do. The older women are directed to train the younger women “to love their husbands,” literally, to be husband-lovers. The apostle uses a word that brings two words together, one word for lover and the other for husband: “to be husband-lovers.” He does the same thing with the next requirement, “to be children-lovers,” and then to be “discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” We will survey these seven things with a few comments on each one, reminding you along the way that these are the basic generic duties that God lays upon you as a Christian wife who happens to be married to a pastor.

1. Husband-lover

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”—Titus 2:4

What has God called you to be as a pastor’s wife? You are called to be a Titus 2:4-5 woman; that is what you are called to be. It is interesting that the bookends of this passage are 1) at the head of the list, a husband-lover; and then 2) at the end of the list, a husband-submitter.

It is very interesting that the passage is bookended by the nature of your relationship to your husband. You are to be first of all a husband-lover. In other words, your *husband*, not your children, not the church, not your house, not your service to others, but your husband is to be your top priority of concern. You are to be a husband-lover above all else.

This takes us right back to the institution of marriage in Genesis, Chapter 2. After creating Adam from the dust of the ground, God placed him in the Garden of Eden and gave him a clearly defined task. God put him in the garden to dress it, to keep it; he was to be a diligently occupied gardener (Genesis 2:15). In Genesis 2:18, God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone and that he intends to create a helper for him. Then, in Genesis 2:19-20, Moses gives us the record of how God assigned to Adam a second distinct task, namely, Adam was to give names to all of God’s creatures. It would appear that the assignment of this task was not only to reflect that man was made to rule in God’s world, but also to awaken in Adam a felt sense *of* his need for a creature that answered *to* his need.

As God brought the animals to Adam (and assuming God brought them to Adam in pairs as male and female), Adam analyzed their distinctive features and functions assigned to them by the creative wisdom, will, and artistry of God. Adam then gave each animal a name consistent with what he observed about them. However, as the animals came by in pairs, the male and the female, Adam had a growing awareness that the doe answered to and complimented the buck, the hen the rooster, and that each female animal answered to the male of its kind. In the course of fulfilling this task of naming the animals, Adam

realized that he did not have one of his own kind. However, it is recorded in Genesis 2:18, God had already purposed that He would make a creature that would indeed “be a helper answering to him.” God did not create the woman primarily to be someone who could bring a womanly touch to Adam’s gardening task, though that would be part of being his helper; furthermore, God did not create the woman primarily that Adam would have one of his kind in order to procreate the human race. Rather, primarily and essentially, she was made to be one answering to him, to be one brought along side of him as his perfectly suitable companion.

Let us look at 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, where we read, “For the man is not of [*not made from*] the woman; but the woman of [*from*] the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.” What does Paul say? Not only was woman taken *from* man (Gen 2:22), but she was made *for* man. *From* and *for*—that is the biblical order. She was made for the man. Therefore, when Paul directs Titus to urge the older women to bring younger women to sober thinking,¹³ he wants the younger women to think in terms of this reality—their first and foremost responsibility is to be husband-lovers.

Now, for single women, it is perfectly legitimate to have other facets of the Lord and His work as their primary focus of concern. Remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:34, “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” That is the way it should be.

Paul is not saying this in a derogatory way. This single woman, well, she just serves the Lord; but the poor married woman, she is all uptight about trying constantly to please her husband. No, he says there are two different spheres of assignment. If you are a wife, you must see your role primarily, essentially, and fundamentally as that of being a husband-lover. Your primary calling is to be what God created you to be, as Eve was to her husband: a helper, answering to him. Not a busy-body and not a busy-beaver pastor’s wife answering to the demands of people and the expectations of the congregation, but a woman who,

¹³ **sober thinking** – Titus 2:3 closes with “teachers of good things,” which comes from one Greek word *kalodidaskalos*. In 2:4, the words *they may teach...to be sober* also come from one Greek word *sophronizo*, which means “to instruct in prudence or behavior that is becoming and shows good judgment, encourage, advise, urge.” William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 987; [hereafter, BDAG]. *Kalodidaskalos* and *sophronizo* are different from *didaktikos*, “apt to teach” in 1 Timothy 3:2 (in the context of pastoral qualifications) and 2 Timothy 2:24 (in Paul’s direction to Timothy). What then is the nature of the “teaching” that older women share with young women? Most commentators generally agree that this passage points to mentoring in domestic life. This is important in our day, in which Titus 2:4 is used to legitimize women formally preaching in congregations. William Mounce clarifies the kind of teaching to which Paul refers: “This is not a formal function of the church but a personal, one-to-one teaching, a task that cannot properly be accomplished by men. They are to teach the younger women what they themselves know, to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands.” William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 416-17.

when she puts her feet on the floor in the morning, says, “My first fundamental and primary responsibility today is to glorify God by fulfilling my responsibility to be a husband-lover, and to show my love in all the ways that the Bible tells me to do this. I understand that I am to manifest my commitment to being a husband-lover today.”

Dear pastor’s wife, regardless of what you have thought prior to reading these words, you are solemnly obligated to receive from the Scriptures this clear directive that you are to be a husband-lover, primarily, fundamentally, essentially. Your orientation is to be to your man.

2. Children-lover

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”—Titus 2:4

God says you are to be a children-lover. Now this, of course, refers primarily to your own children if you have them; you are then to go to the Bible and find out what is a biblically defined and biblically directed love of a mother to her children. It is to be a love that draws within its orbit everything that the Scriptures tell us concerning the necessity of careful and consistent instruction in the Scriptures (2Ti 3:15), careful, consistent discipline and training of the child in character development; in short, all of the things that constitute what Solomon calls the “law of thy mother” (Pro 1:8). In the book of Proverbs, Solomon calls his son not just to heed the law of his father, but the law of his mother—recognizing particularly in those earlier years that the mother ordinarily has the primary input into the child, while the father is engaged in his responsible labor to provide for his own household as the Scriptures require.

Ephesians 6:4 clearly identifies the father as the one who has the primary executive responsibility for the training of the children. However, the actual administering of that training, particularly in the earlier years, rests upon the mother.

Some of us will be eternally grateful for mothers who saw their God-given identity as being children-lovers, loving us with the kind of love that was constantly laboring to form character perspectives in us. I think of my dear mother, who birthed 11 children (I am the second of those 11: one died in infancy, one has gone to heaven, while nine of us are still in the land of the living); and I ask myself how she had the time and energy to do all the things she did in seeking to fulfill her God-given mandate to be a “children lover.” Remember, she was fulfilling that role back before wash-n-wear clothes, clothes dryers, and automatic washers. Back then all the clothes washing had to go through the double sink by way of two passes through the Maytag ringer washer. Those were the days when diapers hanging on the clothesline in the winter got stiff as boards when it was below freezing and had to complete their drying process by being draped over the old cast iron radiators. Yet that woman of blessed memory had time to get on her knees with her first-born son, and when he was being taught how to scrub a floor, she would say, “Son, the scrub brush doesn’t quite get every little bit in the corner. You’ve got to take the rag and wrap it around your finger and dig the dirt out of the corner. God sees the corners as much as He sees the middle of the room!” She had time to train me. There were times when I was in

the pastorate back in New Jersey on a Saturday night, and everything in me was tired. It was 10 o'clock, time to go to bed. Yet there was something in the sermon that wasn't quite right. My mother's mantra would ring in my ears: "Son, a job worth doing is worth doing well."

The home we lived in through most of my years until college days had two French doors going from the living room into the dining room with all those little panes of glass. I loved to scrub floors, but I hated to clean glass. When spring-cleaning time would come, I leave you to guess what job was assigned to me—you guessed right—cleaning the glass on the French doors. I would say, "But Ma, I don't like..." She would say, "I know, Son, that's why I've assigned you that task—because doing things you don't like to do develops character." Well, at that point, who cared about character? Today, of course, I am thankful she did. To this day, when I have written out my to-do list or have made a mental list and I know there is something on it for which I have no natural inclination, my mother's voice is in my ear, "Son, doing things you don't like to do develops character. Attack the one thing you don't want to do first, get it taken care of, and with a free spirit you'll be able to accomplish the rest of the tasks."

This is what I mean by being a children-lover: loving them enough to be concerned about the maturation and development of their character, loving them enough to prepare them for their responsible place later on in life. When I think of the competence my six sisters have as housekeepers, seamstresses, cooks, and all of those things, including the hands-on burying of themselves in the lives of their children, I bless God with them for the privilege to have had a mother that taught us so many basic life skills—a mother who would say to me, "Son, someday when your wife is in the hospital having a baby, you shouldn't be helpless." So she taught me the basics of stove-top cooking and how to sew on my own buttons, that I might not be helpless. When I got to be a little bit of a dandy and wanted to have trousers with a crease, she said, "Son, I don't have time to be ironing those things; I'm going to teach you how to do that task." So she taught me how to dampen those trousers with a sprinkler bottle and roll them up the night before. When it came time to iron them, she taught me how to turn the trousers inside out and to iron the pockets and the inside of the waistband first. Then she taught me how to turn them right side out and match up the inside seams in order to iron the crease in the proper place. She made the time to stand at an ironing board and pour her life into her son. She even engaged in the difficult task of a right-handed woman teaching a left-handed son how to perform basic knitting and crocheting!

My dad was a Salvation Army officer when I was born, although he left that position and function shortly thereafter. If ever there was a group that had the gospel team mentality, pushing mothers to be involved in manifold activities outside of the home, it was the Salvation Army. That gospel team mentality surrounded my mom, but she resisted it. She said, "I just prayed, 'Oh God, give me a vision for the mission field that's here in my own home. Give me a vision for what I must do to seek to prepare these children to face

life and eternity, prepared for what they must face in the will of God.’” I rise up and call her blessed.

Dear women, dear pastors’ wives, you are to be a husband-lover and a children-lover. May they be able to rise up and call you blessed that you embraced your God-given role by the grace and power of Christ.

3. Self-controlled

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”—Titus 2:4-5

Paul tells Titus to direct the older women to train the younger women to be discreet or *self-controlled*¹⁴ (Ti 2:5). This word in the original is one of these words that has a great latitude of usage in both its noun and verb forms; basically, that is why you have in some of your translations the rendering *sober-minded*. It means that there should be a perspective on life that accords with reality, and that our response to things should be realistic. To be self-controlled means that you are not controlled by momentary impulses or the expectations of others. To be prudent and self-controlled as a pastor’s wife means that your biblically instructed mind sets your priorities, a biblically instructed mind that embraces the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. You see yourself as Christ’s free-woman, set loose from bondage to sin in order to be yoked to Christ, to fulfill the will of Christ for you. As such, you should not allow any human being to intrude upon the blood-bought rights of Christ in your life. The apostle Paul captures this perspective in 1 Corinthians 7:23 where he writes, “you were bought with a price; do not become the slaves of men.”

I love the godly response of young Mary to the words of the angel who came to her and said, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee...that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35). How did Mary respond? She said, “Behold the handmaid [*doulé*] of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luk 1:38). *Doulos* is the standard word for slave; Mary used the feminine form and said, “I am the *doulé*.” Once God’s will was made known, she said, “I am the female bond-slave of the Lord, be it unto me according to your Word”! Dear pastors’ wives, that is the disposition that ought to govern and control you. You will be a self-controlled woman who ultimately is a Christ-controlled woman, having Christ and His inspired Word shaping your job description every day.

4. Chaste

“That they may teach the young women...To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”—Titus 2:4-5

¹⁴ **discreet** – “in control of oneself, *prudent, thoughtful*...especially of women: *chaste, decent, modest*” (BDAG, 987).

Then fourthly, you are to be chaste or pure.¹⁵ This is the same word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 11:2, where he says to the Corinthian church, “I am jealous over you¹⁶ [*I have a zeal or passion*]...that I may present you as a *chaste* virgin to Christ.” The word *chaste* points to the fact that you as a Christian wife are to maintain an inner disposition characterized by exclusive sexual attraction to your own husband, and diligently avoiding (as much as it lies within your power) being sexually attractive to anyone other than your husband.

Here I am going to get very specific. As a chaste woman, you will not indulge in the reading of the so-called Christian romance novels and engage in fantasies of romantic silliness and uncleanness of mind. We often speak more to men about mental adultery; I fear this sin is running rampant among professing Christian women by means of these novels. A woman’s own husband may be a bit dumpy; he has begun to get wrinkles and sagging jowls. In terms of being sexually attracted to him, he has become kind of old stuff to her. Then she picks up one of these romance novels. In its pages, she confronts a dashing, handsome hunk of a man and the thought of being crushed in his embrace by his iron-like arms becomes very attractive to her mind. A woman committed to being truly chaste will have nothing to do with any kind of reading, TV or movie watching, which in any way provokes this kind of sinful mental fantasy.

However, this chastity and purity must not only be a prevailing *inner disposition*, but it must be manifested in your *outward appearance* as well. One of the main burdens the apostle Paul had in composing 1 Timothy was to give to his younger colleague in ministry clear and specific directives concerning how men and women are to behave themselves in “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Ti 3:15).

His first specific directive given to women as a group within the church is found in Chapter 2, verse nine where we read, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [*modesty*] and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (2:9). In other words, Paul means that when the saints of God gather for worship, among other things, there should be nothing in the physical appearance of the women that would be an unnecessary distraction to the minds of men or even be provocation to the sin of mental adultery. Everything about their outward adornment from their hairstyles to their shoes should reflect the fact that they have not adorned themselves for a fashion show or to make themselves sexually attractive to others, but that they are in the house of God in order to meet with the living and true God.

¹⁵ **chaste** – “pertaining to being without moral defect or blemish and hence *pure*—‘pure, without defect.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 745; [hereafter L&N]; “pure from carnality, modest” (*Thayer*, 8).

¹⁶ **I am jealous over you** – literally, “I have zeal [or jealousy] with a zeal of God”...It may be more natural to be closer to the Greek in this case: “I am jealous for you, and this jealousy comes from God.” Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington, *A Handbook on Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 192.

Therefore, this demand that the younger women be taught to be chaste or pure is a directive that touches a woman's *internal* disposition, causing her to guard all the inlets of her eyes and her ears and her mind, and diligently seeking to maintain that internal purity. But this internal disposition must also find expression in the *outward* physical adornment.¹⁷ This is what God calls every woman who names the name of Christ to manifest in her external demeanor. Everything about you should declare the fact that you regard your identity as a woman, including all of the facets of the chemistry of your sexuality, as a precious gift from God, and that all of those faculties and capacities are locked up, to be unlocked only with your husband—and that with holy abandonment and delight. Remember, God says your husband is to be intoxicated¹⁸ always with your love (Pro 5:19).

5. Home-worker

“That they may teach the young women... To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home,”¹⁹ good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”—Titus 2:4-5

The fifth thing that is emphasized in the passage in Titus concerning your job description as a Christian wife is that you are to be a “worker at home.” Once again, we have a compound word: one word means “in the home” (*oikos* is the standard Greek word for house), and the other is the verb, “to work.” You are to be a “home-worker.” So the text emphasizes two things: it tells you *what* you are to be in your role as a wife, and *where* you are to manifest your commitment to that role.

What you are to be is a *worker*, not a shirker. If we try to use Proverbs 31 as a rigid paradigm for the modern, ordinary Christian wife and homemaker, we will run into some very difficult problems of exposition and application of that chapter. I think it is right to say that that chapter is picturing a woman who is being prepared and equipped for her role as the wife of a significant leader, possibly even a king. That is why she has servants who can do her bidding, etc. However, whatever else we glean from Proverbs 31, one thing is clear: the virtuous woman described in that chapter is not a shirker; she is a worker. Proverbs 31:27 distills that truth very clearly: “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” Now let me get very specific: this means that on the most elementary level, you will *not* be spending hours lounging around your home watching TV, surfing the Internet, reading a lot of banal²⁰ blogs, absorbing the

¹⁷ For more information, I recommend an audio lecture *Validating the Gospel in Modesty* by Pastor A. N. Martin, available on SermonAudio.com; the booklet *Dressed to Kill: Thinking Biblically about Modest & Immodest Clothing* by Robert G. Spinney; or *Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America* by Pastor Jeff Pollard, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁸ **intoxicated** – according to Gesenius' *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, the sense of the word translated “ravished” in Proverbs 5:19 is “to reel through wine,” that is, to be “drunk with love.”

¹⁹ **keepers at home** – “keeping at home and taking care of household affairs, domestic” (Thayer, 442).

²⁰ **banal** – boringly ordinary and lacking in originality.

drivel of much that is on Facebook, or wasting time in lengthy, empty, and gossipy telephone conversations.

My dear sisters in Christ, with all the advertising and social pressures to purchase and use the almost endless number of available electronic communication gadgets, without a Spirit-wrought and Christ-dependent determination to resist this pressure, you will eventually become ensnared and end up shirking your clear God-given responsibilities. In the place where I seek to engage in regular, vigorous exercise, people come in with ear buds stuck in their ears and MP3 players strapped on their arms and often with their cell phones strapped to their waists or stuck in their pockets. In between sets with the weights or weight machines, or working out on the treadmills or elliptical machines, they are pulling out their telephones, checking their texts, and texting others—absolutely addicted to this electronic gadgetry. In addition to these things, there are individual TV screens mounted on many of the exercise machines and large flat-screened television sets every few units by the treadmills. Everybody is bombarded with sights and sounds 24/7. I give these examples only to underscore how extensive and continuous is the pressure to allow ourselves to become addicted to these things. How can you be a “worker at home” if you allow yourself to be ensnared by all these distractions? It is impossible! Therefore, you must develop a sense of holy feistiness²¹ to say by the grace of God, “I will not allow these things to dictate and control my life and prevent me from being what God has called me to be – a ‘worker at home.’”

The second thing that the text emphasizes is not only *what* you are to be (you are to be a worker), but also *where* you are to fulfill the role. You will be primarily a worker *at home*. The primary sphere of your labor will be your home. It should not be the church nursery, the church office, the church Sunday school rooms, or the church choir room. Whatever your time, gifts, and other factors will allow you to do outside the home, you will see to it that your primary sphere of labor is your own home. Back to the Proverbs 31 passage. Here we read of this virtuous woman, “She looketh well to the ways of her *household*, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (31:27). She is a worker, and she is a worker at home.

What precisely will this involve? Let me attempt several answers to that question. First of all, you will seek to make your home as comfortable and attractive as is economically feasible. To this end, if you were not reared in a setting where your mother taught you matters of good decorating taste, furniture arrangement, etc., you can go to the library or the Internet and consult those books and materials that will help you to cultivate those skills. If you were not reared in a home where you were taught how to cook and how to prepare truly nutritious and attractive meals on a limited budget, books, the Internet, TV cooking programs and friends are readily available to help you learn these skills. But, unless you have this mindset, that your home is your primary sphere of assigned labor, your flesh will avoid the discipline of learning those skills—and justify it by saying, “But I am doing the Lord’s work here and the Lord’s work there.” According to this text in Titus,

²¹ **feistiness** – lively, determined, and courageous.

the Lord's work for you is to be a worker at home. There is no parenthesis saying, "except if you are a pastor's wife, and then your primary sphere of labor may be somewhere else."

Women in our day are being brainwashed into thinking that labor expended in the home is a kind of demeaning drudgery,²² a form of domestic slavery, an outdated cultural relic that ought to be discarded with a vengeance. As a godly Christian wife, you must desire to demonstrate that you *glory* in being a homemaker, a "home-worker."

In various situations over the years, I have been asked the question "Does your wife work?" There are times when I would answer the questioner with a straight face saying, "Yes, she does work and if she didn't, she wouldn't eat." They would look at me as if to ask, "What kind of a cruel monster is this man?" Before they could draw such a conclusion, I would explain what I meant by saying something like the following: "Now, if you are asking me does my wife work out of the home or in the home, my answer is that she has chosen to be a worker at home. That is why with delight I provide for her to eat. For my Bible says, 'if any would not work, neither should he eat' (2Th 3:10)." I try in this way to introduce a biblical perspective because the world has taken certain terminology by which it seeks to project and impose its own perspectives. When we encounter words that reflect this worldly perspective, we ought to seize the opportunity graciously to respond in a way that reflects our distinctive biblical convictions concerning these issues. When you fill out medical information forms in a doctor's office, and they ask in the general profile for "wife's occupation," wherever you can, put "housewife and homemaker." For the address of your place of employment write, "same as above"—and do this with joy and thankfulness to God He has made you a wife who is committed to performing her God-given role as a "worker at home."

6. Kind

"That they may teach the young women... To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good²³, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."—Titus 2:4-5

The sixth thing Paul tells us is that you are to be "good" or kind. This particular word also has a broad range of usage in the New Testament. Suffice it to say that kindness is one of the attributes and characteristics of God Himself. You as a wife are to seek to manifest this quality of bearing in your dealings with your husband, your children, and all who come within your influence—particularly in the home, since that is the primary focus of these directives.

Again, it says of that noble woman of Proverbs, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (31:26). Whatever it means to be kind, it

²² **demeaning drudgery** – humiliating, exhausting, and boring work.

²³ **good** – "benevolent, kind, generous" (Thayer, 3). "[Good] either qualifies and strengthens the preceding reference to domestic skill ('fulfill their household duties *well*'), or stands alone as a reference to kindness. The syntax favors the latter understanding and suggests that she is to show consideration to those with whom she has contact in carrying out her household duties." Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 727.

obviously means the opposite of being edgy, sharp, impatient, or irritable in your overall demeanor. As more and more common grace erodes and even dies in our society, everyday things such as courtesy and kindness become a bright light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phi 2:15). People are curt; people are edgy with one another and defensive. May God help us to be kind, just as our heavenly Father is kind—even to His enemies.

7. Voluntary submission

“That they may teach the young women... To be discreet, chaste, keeps at home, good, obedient²⁴ to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”—Titus 2:4-5

Finally, you are to be living in voluntary submission to your own husband. This is what the text says: “obedient [submissive] to their own husbands.” Paul uses a present middle participle of the verb, *hupotasso*, which means to arrange yourself consciously and voluntarily under someone who has legitimate authority. When speaking to men concerning their responsibilities as husbands, I have often pointed out that when you search the Bible from beginning to end, there is not one command that says, “Husbands, bring your wives into submission”—not one such command is in the Bible. Do you know why? The answer is because no husband can do it! Nobody can bring another person into voluntary heart submission against his or her will. You may by whip and by threats bring someone to an external obedience, but inwardly they will be like the little Quaker child sitting in a so-called Quaker “quiet meeting.” He was standing in the pew against the clear directive of his mother. His mother yanked him to his seat. Whereupon, he looked up and said, “Mother, me sitteth on the outside, but me standeth on the inside.” That is what a husband can do with a woman. He can get her to follow some outward form of submission, but inwardly it is a matter of the heart. That is why all the commands to be in subjection are addressed to the wives. Only you, dear wives, can take that place—voluntarily, cheerfully, and joyfully arranging yourself under your husband’s God-given authority. In spite of the shrill shrieking of radical feminism, in spite of the twisted scholarship of so-called evangelical feminists (who like to be called *egalitarians*²⁵), the testimony of Scripture is clear, compelling, and consistent concerning the fact that wives are to place themselves in voluntary submission to their husbands.

Hear the Scriptures:

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1Co 11:3).

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the

²⁴ **obedient** – “to subject one’s self, to obey...obey, be subject” (*Thayer*, 645; BDAG).

²⁵ **egalitarian** – person who believes that all people should have equal political, social, and economic rights.

saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph 5:22-24).

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord" (Col 3:18).

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear...But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1Pe 3:1-6).

For any person reading these passages—with no cause to promote, just reading the passages—it is clear. Here is a vital principle for women: *true freedom is the experience of being able to act without restraint within the sphere for which we were created*. The bird is never more free than when it splits the air with its wings. But for the bird suddenly to say, "You know, I'm getting sick and tired of being limited to the air with my wings and my ability to fly; I envy the little fish in the stream down the road. I want to be free to be submerged in the river like he is." That would not be the bird's attainment of his freedom—it would be his death! And likewise for the fish who has made his way up and down the stream propelled along by his little fins. One day as he comes up to catch a bug, he sees a bird up on the limb of a nearby tree, and says, "I'm not free; I'm cooped up in this river. I want the freedom of being able to fly like a bird." If you were to take him out of the water and put him on the limb of that nearby tree, you would not be procuring freedom for him. Rather, you would be securing his death! His freedom is realized when he is given unimpeded liberty to function in the sphere for which God made him.

It is a liberating thing, dear wives, if you do not know this already. If you have not come to this internal disposition and experienced its blessedness, I covet it for you. When you look at yourself in the mirror and can say, "I was made to be a free woman under the government of my husband," and, embracing that submission from the heart, you now become a truly liberated woman. It is not by seeking a position for which you were not created, which results in death, but by being comfortable with the revealed will of God in the sphere for which God made you that true life is found.

Now, in several areas you and your husband stand on absolutely equal ground. It is certainly true in terms of your dignity as a creature made in the image of God: "In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen 1:27). In terms of our fallenness in Adam, the husband and wife are also on level ground: "as in Adam all die" (1Co 15:22). In terms of who we are in Christ, we are also on level ground: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). That is true biblical egalitarianism. We share

equally in the image of God. We share equally in our fallenness. We share equally in our privileges in union with Christ.

However, in the administration of the family, God has placed the husband as head over his wife, just as Paul says, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:23-24). All of our privileges in Christ do not make us egalitarians with Christ. He says, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (John 13:13). And so it must be in your relationship to your husband.

Dear pastor’s wife, one of the greatest contributions you can make to the health and well-being of the assembly in which your husband labors is to manifest in your thinking, demeanor, speech, attitudes, and the patterns of your life, that you are indeed a truly liberated woman—liberated from the sinful tendency to overthrow the dominion of your husband. That was Eve’s problem subsequent to the fall. God said this would be one of the results of the fall, that the woman would seek to overthrow that place of headship given to the man in creation. Subsequent to the fall, God said to the woman, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband [*to usurp his authority*],²⁶ and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16). That is, the man who was created to be a loving head over his wife will now resist her efforts to usurp his God-given place and will manifest a sinful and overbearing rule over her.

Dear sisters in Christ, seek to demonstrate that you are Christ’s free woman, free to be what God made you to be, comfortable under the loving headship and leadership of your husband. As God is pleased to bless the evangelistic endeavors of our churches with real conversions among previously raw American pagans, there will be more and more young women coming into the church who have had no example in their mothers of the freedom of a submissive wife. They will have gone to secular schools; from their early years, they will have been brainwashed with the death-producing lies of feminism. May God grant that when they look at you and how you relate and speak to your husband, they will say, “That’s a true woman; that’s what God made me for. That’s what I too can have in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.” They need to see this godly submission modeled among the ladies of the church.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope something of my initial assertion has come home to your heart: that this is what God calls you to be—a thoroughly Christian wife who happens to be married to a pastor, but whose relationship to this man as a pastor does not exempt you from any of the directives of this passage in Titus 2. I began by seeking to lay a solid biblical foundation with respect to precisely how a pastor’s wife should view herself and her role as a pastor’s wife. In doing so, I laid out three foundational principles.

²⁶ **desire...[to usurp his authority]** – consider the same word (“desire”) in Gen 4:7 regarding this understanding (“to usurp his authority”).

The first is that the Scriptures nowhere give us a definitive list of the graces and gifts essential for a pastor's wife.

Secondly, I tried to underscore that the Bible is not at all sympathetic to the notion that a pastor's wife is the unpaid other half of a "gospel team."

Thirdly, we considered the more positive perspective that the Bible does require a pastor's wife to understand her various roles, stewardships, and responsibilities essentially as those of a Christian wife who happens to be married to a pastor. The truly liberated pastor's wife derives all of her understanding of herself, her role, and her responsibilities from those generic biblical descriptions of the duties of a Christian wife. In all of her efforts to meet those expectations, she must be consciously dependent upon the Spirit of God and seek to fulfill them by the grace of God to the glory of God. If others do not like it, then she can say with Paul, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment" (1Co 4:3).

III. Pastoral Counsels to Pastors' Wives

Within the sphere of the foundational perspectives and the "generic duties" of a Christian wife established in the previous section, and without in any way undermining, diluting, or eroding them, I want to give in this section what I am calling a potpourri of pastoral counsels to pastors' wives. Potpourri is a variety of dried flowers and spices mixed together and used for fragrance. As a supplement to the three foundational perspectives, we are now going to consider a potpourri of seven pastoral counsels for pastors' wives, in light of the peculiar opportunities, temptations, and pressures of being married to a pastor.

A. The main counsel: maintain your own walk with God

The first word of counsel is the dominant, all-embracing one. If someone pressed me to identify just one important counsel for pastors' wives, what would I say? What would be that one dominant, all-embracing word of counsel? Dear pastor's wife, as you read these words, seek to imagine that I am talking to you individually and pointedly. Here it is:

Never forget that your greatest contribution to your husband's ministry is the reality, vigor, and freshness of your own walk with God, and your communion with Jesus Christ, in the context of living with an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

That would be my paramount²⁷ word of counsel.

Now, you should seek such a walk with God for no higher reason than that the glorious triune God invites you to such a walk with Him. He commands you to seek such a walk with Himself; but pursuing such a walk has peculiar relevance to you as a wife of a pastor. If you are indeed to be a helper answering to his need, there is nothing he needs more than a wife who maintains this kind of communion with God and with her Savior.

²⁷ **paramount** – superior to all others.

Your husband needs this more than anything else. If you are to be such a woman who is maintaining this kind of walk with God, what things has God appointed as the means to cultivate that walk?

First of all, you must have a conscientious commitment to a disciplined engagement in the private means of grace.²⁸

Now when I say “conscientious,” I mean something that has become a matter of a convinced conscience before God. You must not rationalize for any reason whatsoever a lack of personal Bible reading or personal prayer as a pattern of life if you are truly committed to being a wife whose walk with God is to be real, vigorous, and fresh, whose communion with Christ is a reality, and who will not grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. Therefore, while seeking to fulfill all of your generic duties as a wife, you *must make time* for communion with God. You will never just “find” a block of time sitting out there, crying out to you, “Look at me; I am sitting here waiting for you to use me for reading your Bible; use me for praying.” No, you have got to *make* the time to nurture your own soul in the personal, devotional assimilation of the Scriptures, and in seeking the face of God in prayer.

Would you be a blessed pastor’s wife? The way of blessedness is described in Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man [*or woman*] that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his [*or her*] delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” If you would be a blessed pastor’s wife, the path of blessing is marked out by the Scriptures.

Furthermore, if you are indeed to fulfill your many responsibilities as a Christian wife, you can only do so by being filled with the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who mediates²⁹ to us in our experience the virtue and strength of Christ. But if you are grieving the Holy Spirit by a controversy with God and quenching the Spirit with unresolved issues with God, your husband, or others, then you are not going to have this kind of walk with God. At the practical level, if you are to live your life in the context of an ungrieved Holy Spirit, it means you will make honest efforts to mortify those specific sins in your life that you know grieve the Spirit. This reality is highlighted by the words of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13).

Each of you knows the areas of your particular struggles with your remaining sin. Whatever they are, the moment you give up and no longer seek to put those things to death, the Holy Spirit is grieved.³⁰ He dwells in you to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phi 2:13), impelling, drawing, motivating, and empowering us for ongoing

²⁸ **means of grace** – actions or methods by which God communicates His truth and grace to His people. Private means of grace include reading the Bible, Bible meditation, Bible study, and prayer.

²⁹ **mediates** – goes between two parties.

³⁰ See Ephesians 4:17-32 where not grieving the Holy Spirit (verse 30) is mentioned in the context of turning from sin and obeying God. Particularly notice verses 31 and 32 where Paul speaks of putting away bitterness, anger, evil speaking, and malice and being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

conformity to Christ and the mortifying of sin. When we slacken³¹ in that endeavor, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

For example, if we have sinned with our tongues, or we have become irritable and unreasonable in relationship to our children or to our husbands, what are we to do? The Scripture says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). You cannot prosper spiritually until you humbly and believingly confess your sins to God, seeking His promised forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Then, you must gather the children together, or speak directly to your husband and acknowledge your sin and ask for and receive their forgiveness.

I don’t understand why Christians are so fuzzy in their thinking and practice concerning what has come to be called “apologizing.” A pastor of my acquaintance relates the following incident as illustrative of the point I am making. If one of his children would come to him and say, “Dad, I’m sorry; I did this and this,” he would respond by saying, “That’s interesting—you are sorry; well, I am hungry.” He would then proceed, patiently and biblically, to instruct the child that both of these statements concerned their present state of feeling. The child is sorry, and the dad is hungry.

Desirous of instructing his child concerning the nature of true repentance and confession of sin, he would then proceed to interact with the child along the following lines: “Now, tell me what you mean by telling me that you are ‘sorry.’”

“Well, I did or said something I should not have done or said.”

“Oh, you did? I agree with you; now tell me, what does God call those things we do and say that we should not do or say?”

“God calls those things sin.”

“That’s right, and God expects you to call what you did exactly what He says it was—that it was a sin.”

“Well, Dad, I sinned by doing or saying this or that particular thing. Will you forgive me?”

At that point, the father acknowledged that he freely and fully forgave his child for the particular sin that he confessed. A spiritually wise father or mother will also seek to instruct his or her child that forgiveness must be sought from God in exactly the same way. The language of Scripture is clear: “If we *confess our sins* he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1Jo 1:9).

Surely, the pattern of David’s repentance as recorded in 2 Samuel 12:13 and in Psalm 51 underscores this principle. When the words of the prophet Nathan pierced David’s heart, what was his response? It is recorded in the following words: “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also has put away thy sin.” Then, Psalm 51 records what happened when David was having further and deeper dealings with God concerning his sins of murder, adultery, and a lengthy period of spiritual hypocrisy. He did not simply acknowledge that he was sorry and felt bad concern-

³¹ **slacken** – become negligent; grow less enthusiastic.

ing his sin. Rather, portions of his prayer include the following words: “blot out my *transgressions*.” Further on, he says, “Cleanse me from *my sin*...I acknowledge my *transgressions*: and my *sin* is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I *sinned*, and done *this evil* in thy sight.”

An ungrieved Holy Spirit is in the heart and life of the Christian who lives by the gospel in his or her human relationships, owning sin, and seeking forgiveness from those against whom one has sinned. In Acts 24:16, Paul says, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” How do you keep a conscience void of offense to God? Every time conscience, that internal moral monitor, reminds us that we have sinned, we are to go to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness pleading the promise that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). But we need to maintain a conscience void of offense to our fellow men and women as well. When I have sinned against another person, the only way to maintain a good conscience is to go to that person and acknowledge my sin, ask their forgiveness, and experience the restoration of the relationship that has been fractured by my sin.

Maintaining a good conscience toward God and man does not mean that we have a duty to confess to others what we might call “sins of attitude, thought, or desire” towards someone concerning issues of which the other person involved has no awareness because these internal sins of the mind or attitude did not break out in words or actions. Since such sins are outside the scope of the other person’s awareness, to ask for their forgiveness is to ask for something when there is no need for it. Such a pattern of over scrupulous³² confession of sin may actually be the occasion of causing sin.

Having given this word of caution, I would also assert that our practical danger is not that we will excessively confess our sins to others, but that we will find ourselves again and again very reluctant to say those simple words “I have sinned—will you forgive me” when they are indeed warranted by the word of God.

My dear pastors’ wives, if you become cold in your heart to God, insensitive to your sin, distant and formal in your communion with Christ, then your ability to be a loving, selfless helper to your husband will be greatly curtailed.³³ If you are living with a grieved Holy Spirit, your reaction to circumstances will be carnal.³⁴ Your influence upon your children will be negative, and you will become a spiritual burden to your husband instead of the delight of his heart.

Never forget this overarching,³⁵ dominant exhortation: your greatest contribution to your husband’s ministry is the reality, vigor, and freshness of your own walk with God, and the maintenance of your communion with Jesus Christ in the context of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

³² **over scrupulous** – overly troubled with doubts or questions of conscience.

³³ **curtailed** – cut short; restricted.

³⁴ **carnal** – fleshly; sensual, as opposed to spiritual.

³⁵ **overarching** – comprehensive; all embracing.

B. Potpourri of other counsels

Having addressed that most fundamental, overarching word of counsel, consider with me this potpourri of seven other pastoral counsels to pastors' wives. The first three relate to things you must do by your own decisive and determined choice in dependence upon the grace and power of Christ; the last four are things you must learn to do with the passing of time by the same enabling power of Christ.

1. Determine that your husband remains a pastor only so long as he is biblically qualified.

Let me attempt to explain this crucial word of counsel. According to the Scriptures, your husband should assume and remain in the pastoral office only so long as his life manifests a reasonable but real conformity to the biblical standard of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. I have been a Christian for 60 years and have preached just about as long. I was an evangelist and an itinerant³⁶ Bible teacher for five years, preaching in churches of many different denominational affiliations. I was a pastor in one congregation for 46 years. During these many years, it has also been my privilege to speak in various conference settings in many parts of the world. If this broad exposure to many churches in so many places over many years has produced any focused burden on my heart, it is the burden that is the first ingredient of this potpourri of pastoral counsels: Determine as a wife to do all within your power and God-given place to make sure that your husband remains a pastor only so long as his life manifests a reasonable but real conformity to the biblical standards found in 1 Timothy and in Titus.

In both of these passages, the Holy Spirit underscores the absolute necessity for specific character traits and proven gifts to be evident before any man should be officially recognized to serve as a gift of Christ to his church. However, this standard must not only confront a man upon entering the Christian ministry, but it must also continue to mark his life and labors as he goes on in the ministry. It is for this reason that Paul admonishes Timothy with the words "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1Ti 4:13-15).

One of the things that astounded me in those five years of itinerant ministry and in the subsequent years of my ministry—and it *continues* to astound me—is that men will appear before ordination councils, before presbyteries, and before other ecclesiastical bodies that are responsible to examine their fitness for the ministry; yet those bodies never open 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 as the outline and basis of their examination. In both of those passages, the little Greek particle *dei* is used in conjunction with the specific character traits and gifts that are mentioned. This little word is a word meaning "absolute necessity." The bishop, the overseer, *must be* biblically qualified for the office of an elder. He is qualified only if those character traits and gifts are reasonably manifested in him.

³⁶ **itinerant** – traveling from place to place.

Therefore, if your husband has come through that grid of the biblical standard describing a balanced, mature, manifested Christian character, and has proven he has the gifts to teach and to govern, he does not gain tenure³⁷ once he is given the title of “elder.” There is no such thing as “ecclesiastical tenure” in the Bible. The standard by which a man legitimately enters the ministry must not only be maintained, but according to Scripture, the graces and gifts contained in that standard ought to be augmented.³⁸

Paul could say to Timothy, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1Ti 4:15). And yet, tragically, I have seen situations where men have stayed on in the ministry long after their lives in terms of character and their evidence of growing giftedness had passed. Next to the Lord Himself, you as a wife will know your husband more thoroughly than any other person will. Therefore, I urge you to read periodically and prayerfully through 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 with Judgment Day honesty. Ask yourself, “Is this man to whom I am married beyond reproach? He is a sinner, yes; but is he above reproach? Do I have any question that I am the only woman in his heart, in his eyes, and in his bed? Do I have any question that he is not a lover of money? Do I have any question that he is not a striker or brawler in the way he deals with people?” Further, ask yourself, “Is he an assertive,³⁹ loving, and wise leader in our home?” Place this biblical standard before you, and ask yourself if you see in it a description of your husband.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us this clear verbal picture of those men whom He has equipped and called to serve as pastors and teachers in His church. He says that everyone who is His gift to the church as a pastor will resemble that picture. You are to take that composite picture from Timothy and Titus and compare your husband with those features that describe the essential Christian graces and spiritual gifts which are mandated by the Lord Jesus through His Spirit-inspired Apostle. Can you honestly say that you see in your husband a striking and unmistakable likeness to that picture? If you do not, you must neither pass over the discrepancies in fearful silence, under the false and sinful notion of being a loyal wife, nor become a carnal nag!

Instead, prayerfully, wisely, and graciously sit down with your husband and speak to him along the following lines: “Dear, you answer to God; I’m your wife, and I answer to God as well. I have been noticing this particular outcropping⁴⁰ of carnality in your life.” Or, “In recent months, I have noticed a pattern in which you are neglecting some of your fundamental duties. I’m lovingly pleading with you to consider my observations and to deal with them in a biblical manner if your conscience affirms the validity of my concerns.”

What if he does not hear you, responding to your gentle and loving admonitions in a humble way, indicating his purpose to deal biblically with the issues that you raised with

³⁷ **tenure** – status of holding a position on a permanent basis, granted to teachers and others on the fulfillment of specific requirements over time.

³⁸ **augmented** – increased.

³⁹ **assertive** – having a confident and forceful personality.

⁴⁰ **outcropping** – appearance; emergence.

him? If it is not a matter of gross moral issues such as sexual infidelity or abusive treatment of you or the children, then lovingly but with greater seriousness, address the issues a second time. These initial confrontations should reflect a conscious conformity to the words and spirit of Galatians 6:1, in which we are told, “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest you also be tempted.”

What are you to do if he justifies himself and rationalizes his sins and deficiencies? Remember, his life is comprised of putting words together with a view to persuading others. He may seek to persuade you that your concerns are ill-founded—but you are convinced they are not. If he does not “hear you,” you must do what Matthew 18 says: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more”(Mat 18:15-16). Go to another office bearer and tell him that you have observed some things in your husband that are contrary to the standard of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Inform that office bearer that you have sought on two occasions prayerfully and lovingly to point these things out to your husband, but that he has refused to hear you. Then, ask that office bearer if he would be willing to come with you, perhaps with another office bearer, while you confront your husband once more with these other leaders as witnesses.

This is what I’m talking about when I exhort you as a wife to determine to do everything within your power to make sure that anything that is a contradiction of the biblical standard for an office-bearer, a pastor or elder, is going to be dealt with in a biblical manner. Should your husband refuse to hear you in the presence of another witness or witnesses, then you must be prepared to take the matter to the next level clearly described in Matthew 18:17.⁴¹

You may be tempted to say, “Pastor Martin, are you telling me that if I had to be the one to blow the whistle on my husband that I might possibly have to stand before a congregation and bear witness against my own husband?” My dear sister, that is exactly what I am saying. You must obey what God says concerning such issues, as difficult and heart-wrenching as it may be. One of the most tragic things that I have witnessed is an evil Ananias-Sapphira-like relationship between some pastors and their wives. Let me explain what I mean: Acts 5 tells us that these two agreed together to lie. Barnabas had gained a reputation for being very generous by selling his land and bringing all the proceeds to give away for benevolence. “Well,” they said, “we’d like to have Barnabas’ reputation, so we’ll sell our land; but we’ll only give part of the proceeds, and give the impression that we’ve given everything.” Sapphira was in compliance with the sin of her husband. As a result, the Lord judged them both with death. Don’t be a Sapphira!

⁴¹ I recognize that in certain denominations there is a book of church order that outlines how all such matters should be handled. I am describing the process that would be appropriate in an Independent church, operating within the framework of a church constitution that seeks to embody biblical principles relative to such issues.

I have witnessed situations in which men were eventually disciplined out of the ministry because of scandalous sin. When all the facts were eventually uncovered, it was evident that their wives were aware of the sin long before it ever became public and scandalous—and they kept their mouths shut. Dear pastor's wife, in God's name, do not do it! There will be horrible fruits of that sin and wreckage along the way because you were unwilling to take these steps. To ensure as far as possible that this would not happen to me, I would have my former wife, Marilyn, renew a vow periodically that, if she saw anything in my life that warranted admonition and exhortation based on Scripture, and I did not respond biblically in a reasonable time, she would go over my head to my fellow elders and blow the whistle on me. And she would have done it. I know my present wife, Dorothy, would do the same; and I thank God for that. Can your husband say this of you? If not, tell him that as a result of reading this booklet you are now making such a commitment before him and before God. He must become to you a faceless man in a matter of such crucial importance.

Here then is my first word in my potpourri of counsel: determine that as much as lies within you, your husband will remain a pastor only so long as his life manifests a reasonable but real conformity to the biblical standards for an elder, a pastor-teacher of the flock of God.

2. Determine not to embarrass your husband.

Secondly, determine that your husband will never have a just occasion to be embarrassed or ashamed that you are his wife. As a faithful expositor of Scripture, as a helpful guide to the flock, your husband must preach and teach the biblical standards for the people of God, including husband/wife relationships and parent/child relationships. Like it or not, the moment he does so, your relationship to each other is in the fish bowl, along with how you deal with your children. This reality is not wrong as long as the expectations of your people are biblical and realistic. People have a right to expect that spiritual leaders will exemplify in their lives what they are teaching with their mouths. That is why Paul said to Titus—after giving him many directions concerning what to tell different groups in the churches of Crete—“By the way, Titus, ‘in everything show yourself to be an example’⁴² (Ti 2:7). When Peter was charging elders in 1 Peter 5:1-3, he reminds them of their central duty: to shepherd the flock of God. Then he gives three sets of negative/positive couplets indicating how they are to perform their task of shepherding God's people. The third couplet is the capstone: “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” You must be conscious that by virtue of the higher profile of your husband's office, your relationship as husband and wife and your relationship as parents to your children come under peculiar scrutiny. The Scripture recognizes the reality of that fact and says to be conscious of it—and by the grace of God to live in such a way that your life validates, illustrates, and buttresses⁴³ what your husband teaches.

⁴² In Titus 2:7, the word used is “pattern.” The underlying Greek word means “a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided—‘model, example’” (L&N).

⁴³ **buttresses** – makes stronger and provides support.

That being so, you should seek so to live in such a relationship to your husband and to your children, that there would be no just cause for your husband to be embarrassed. The apostle Paul could say that he was ambitious to be well-pleasing to God (2Co 5:9), and as you think of fulfilling your many responsibilities, the desire to please Christ should be dominant. In addition, since the Scripture extols the virtuous wife as a woman who does her husband good at all times (Pro 31:12), then surely you would not want to undermine his credibility by areas of neglect or carelessness in your life or in the manner in which you relate to him as his wife.

Those are the principles; now for the application. This is what often gets the Bible expositor into trouble: a faithful preacher must always descend from principles to application. It seems to me that the Bible clearly indicates that no little part of the very essence of preaching *is* application. “Preach the word...*reprove rebuke, exhort*, with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2Ti 4:2). The apostle Paul could not conceive of Timothy obeying his command to “preach the word” if his preaching did not include “reproof, rebuke, and exhortation.”

What are some of the areas in which you could easily become an embarrassment to your husband? One answer relates to the appearance of your home. If you have little children, your home at times will be untidy, and that will be understandable. On more than one occasion, my dear mother said to her children, “There is a difference between a little bit of a temporary mess and a prevailing condition of untidiness and layers of accumulated dust and miscellaneous clutter.” Remember, my mother spoke those words as a mother of 10 children living in a relatively small house! If you earn the reputation of being a sloppy housekeeper, your husband is not going to feel free to engage in some of those unplanned aspects of his pastoral ministry, where it would be very appropriate for him to say to someone, “Look, pop over to see me for a few minutes,” or actually bring them into your home. This is one area in which you can be an embarrassment to your husband: being a careless, sloppy housekeeper.

Other areas in which you could be an embarrassment to your husband are carelessness with the use of your tongue and the inability to keep confidences. In addition to these things, there is the matter of your personal appearance. A godly pastor/husband neither wants nor expects you to look like you just stepped out of the bandbox,⁴⁴ but he does want to be able to present you to others and not feel, “Oh, this is my wife,” while inwardly thinking as he introduces you to others, “but frankly, I’m not too proud of her given her slovenly or irresponsibly overweight appearance.” No, you should not under any circumstance be the occasion of just embarrassment to your husband.

I have been blessed wonderfully of God that, as a general rule, neither of the two wives that God gave me (one at a time of course!) has been an embarrassment to me. Here is where the Golden Rule is a real help, ladies: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12).

⁴⁴ **bandbox** – a light box fitted to hold hats or other delicate items without damage; hence, to “step out of the bandbox” is to step out in a pristine, totally arranged, perfectly groomed condition.

How do you feel in given situations when your husband does or says something that, if you could, you would put fifty feet between him and you, take your wedding ring off, and internally divorce the klutz? Yes, some of you know what that is like. Well, as you would that others do unto you, do ye also unto them. Pray: “Lord, make me sensitive.” Communicate verbally with your husband: say, “Dear, am I doing, saying, or being anything that embarrasses you? Can you help me to know what embarrasses you? By the grace of God, I am committed to work on that area of my life.”

3. Determine never to contribute to provoking your husband to be vulnerable to an illicit attraction to another woman.

My third bit of dried leaves in my potpourri of pastoral counsels is very serious: determine that you will never be the occasion of causing your husband to be vulnerable to an illicit attraction to another woman, whether emotionally or physically. I have wrestled with that sentence to get it the way I believe it needs to be; every word is important.

Please listen carefully; this is spiritual neurosurgery. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that sin is a form of moral madness and ethical insanity. Adam and Eve were constituted a perfect married couple in the creative wisdom of God. They were placed in a perfect environment. They were given perfectly reasonable commands and directives by the one true and living God Who is the sum of all perfection. Yet, in that context of perfection within and without, they sinned! There was nothing in themselves, nothing in the world around them, and nothing in God that would have provoked them to sin—yet they sinned. Sin is a form of moral madness, moral insanity.

In a similar way, a wife may be fulfilling the full range of her responsibilities to her husband so that he has absolutely no reason whatsoever to be vulnerable to another woman, either emotionally or physically. Yet that husband enters into an illicit relationship with another woman. There is no reasonable or rational explanation because sin is moral madness and ethical insanity. Not all pastors who fall into illicit emotional or physical relationships with other women have legitimate grounds to claim that they were made vulnerable by the conduct of their own wives. To assert that they did have legitimate grounds would constitute a wicked, slanderous lie against their wives. I do not know how to state it more bluntly.

However, unlike Adam and Eve in the original creation, we now live in a fallen world. We are plagued with the reality of our indwelling sin, which wars against the Law of God. There is a wily devil who is out to devour us. There is a seducing world seeking to draw us into some form of spiritual harlotry against God. Because of these realities, remember what Jesus said in Matthew 18:7: “Woe unto the world because of offences⁴⁵ [*temptations to sin*]! for it must needs be that offences come.” It is as though the Lord pauses to think of this world in its present condition, and He says, “woe to such a world!” Why? It is because temptations to sin abound everywhere; that is the character of this post-Eden world. Prior to

⁴⁵ **offenses** – “actions or circumstances that lead one to act contrary to a proper course of action or set of beliefs; *temptations to sin, enticements to apostasy, false belief*” (BDAG, 926).

the fall in Adam, there were no woes to the world for its temptations—it was a blessed world. God beheld everything He had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen 1:31). In our present situation, there will always be occasions to sin. But Jesus goes on to say these words, “Woe to that man by whom the offence [temptation] cometh!” Yes, it is a fallen world; occasions for sin will be present, but woe to the one through whom that occasion comes.

In other words, each one of us has a responsibility to do all within our power, within the sphere in which we have been placed by divine providence, to avoid being the occasion of causing another person to be tempted to sin. For example, when Paul is commanding the Christian fathers in Colossae, he begins, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger” (Col 3:21). If a child indulges in sinful anger because of some unreasonable treatment from his parent, the child’s sinful anger is partly the father’s responsibility,⁴⁶ and he, along with that child, is culpable⁴⁷ before God. Paul is saying to fathers: do not be the occasion of provoking sinful anger. In the same way, truly godly wives, including pastors’ wives, will seek to be and to do all that is within their power to make sure they are in no way leaving their husbands vulnerable to be attracted to another woman, either emotionally or physically. So, wives, I want to load your consciences with this warning of Jesus: “Woe to the one through whom the occasion of temptation comes.” Please pray, “Oh Lord, help me as my husband’s wife to do everything in my power to make sure I am never the occasion of leaving him vulnerable to another woman, emotionally or physically.”

Immunization against illicit *emotional* attraction to another woman is produced when the pastor and his wife pursue a relationship of ever growing intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and practical intimacy. This is accomplished by frequent, transparent, and sensitive verbal communication, especially as they pray together and then confront and resolve their tensions with gospel dynamics.

Immunization against illicit *physical* attraction to another woman is produced when the pastor and his wife pursue a relationship of frequent, mutually sensitive, and chaste abandonment in physical intimacy.⁴⁸

4. Learn to be content when you must conduct yourself as a single mom or widow.

These final four exhortations all begin with the words “you must learn to be.” I take that terminology out of Philippians, where the apostle Paul writes from a Roman prison and says, “Not that I speak in respect of want [need]: for *I have learned*, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am *instructed* both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (4:11-12). Where did he find grace to learn that lesson? The apostle answers that question in the words that follow when he wrote, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (4:13).

⁴⁶ **partly the father’s responsibility** – the child is responsible for his own sinful anger. If the child’s father provoked him to it, this provoking is the father’s sin.

⁴⁷ **culpable** – deserving blame; guilty.

⁴⁸ I highly recommend a helpful little book addressing this issue entitled *Friends and Lovers*, by Joel Beeke and published by Cruciform Press.

Now, the moment Paul writes and says “I have learned,” and “I am instructed,” he indicates that he came to this position of being able to embrace with contentment both seasons of need and plenty by a special tutelage⁴⁹ from the Lord Himself. By using the words, “I have learned,”⁵⁰ he is pointing to a process. This grace was not suddenly deposited from heaven into his heart on a given day at a given moment. His conversion came that way: when he saw the blinding light, and heard the voice of the ascended Christ. Christ said, as it were, “It is now the time to get My man.” He stretched forth His hand and revealed Himself to Paul. Paul’s conversion was a dramatic, sudden experience of the grace of God. But it is not so in this business of being content, both when he was in desperate need and when he was full with plenty. He said, “I have *learned*.” There was an acquisition of this learning. So, dear pastors’ wives, when I begin these final exhortations with the words “you must learn,” I am pointing you to a process that, in some cases, will be carried along in a lifetime schoolroom.

The first of them is this: you must learn to be content and cheerful when at times you must conduct yourself as a single mom or widow. Remember that I said your generic duties are clearly identified in the Scripture; but there are peculiar temptations, opportunities, and challenges that come to you because you are the wife of a pastor. This is one of them. The rank and file of the couples in the church will sit and worship together as couples or as families, while you often are found sitting alone or with your children, as though you were a widow or a single mom. When your husband is the sole elder, the situation is even more highly aggravated. It is especially difficult when you have younger children whom you are seeking to train to sit quietly and attentively during the church service. The full burden will fall on your shoulders to maintain and administer the standards of godly training upon which you and your husband are agreed.

I trust you and your husband are of one mind in your mutual commitment to the biblical precepts and principles concerning the training and discipline of your children. Furthermore, I trust you can affirm with a good conscience to anyone that your husband is ruling his own house well. The kids know that they can never run from his discipline to hide under your skirt because you have a different standard. No, your kids know there is one rule, one will in your house, and that Mom and Dad are committed to administering that rule in complete unity and harmony and with relentless consistency. However, the kids are not stupid: Papa’s in the pulpit and you are sitting in the pew; they are going to push you to see if somehow you will give in, or whether you are going to hold to the standard of behavior expected of them. That is a lonely position to be in, especially when you have internalized your role in submission to and under the protective canopy of your husband’s love and holy assertiveness. It is difficult being put in those situations in the status of a single mother or a widow.

Another example: When you go to a wedding, other couples are sitting there, holding hands and feeling a romantic surge when they hear the vows said. They can squeeze each other’s hands. But there you are just as a widow, no opportunity to share with your

⁴⁹ **tutelage** – instruction and guidance provided by a teacher or tutor.

⁵⁰ **learned** – “to learn by use and practice” (*Thayer*, 389).

husband an intimate wink of your eye and a squeeze of his hand. Once again, you are feeling some of the liabilities of being a pastor's wife.

The question is this: what are you going to do with these undesirable realities? My answer is this: you must *learn to be content* and cheerful when at times you must conduct yourself as if you were a single mom or a widow. It is one of the negative perks⁵¹ that goes along with being a pastor's wife. Grumbling about it will not change it. Just grinning and bearing it will erode your testimony and feed a spirit of resentment. But maintaining a cheerful, contented spirit, which you can learn from Christ, will make you the kind of a pastor's wife that will gladden not only the heart of your husband, but will gladden the heart of your God.⁵²

5. Learn to be content with often living in your husband's shadow.

The next exhortation in the potpourri of pastoral counsels is that you must learn to be content with often living in your husband's shadow. In any kind of a public setting, your husband will often be the object of people's attention and interest. They are not lining up to get a word of counsel from you, but they are often seeking it from your husband. You must get used to the fact that people will sometimes carelessly look through you, around you, or even by you as they seek to get to your husband to express appreciation for his ministry or to question him concerning a personal matter. These thoughtless actions on the part of others can trigger carnal self-pity and fleshly irritation as you think to yourself such thoughts as, "Do they even know I exist? Do they even care that I'm his wife? They look by me, look around me, almost walk through me to get to my husband!" However, you *must* learn to be content with often living in your husband's shadow.

Throughout the years, I have had pastors' wives tell me that it is hurtful to them when people telephone their home in order to speak to their husbands and do not even act as though his wife, who answers the phone, is a person who just might appreciate a word or two of interaction with the one who is calling before passing the phone to her husband. I've had pastors' wives tell me (this is not something I have only read in a book), "Pastor Martin, I am so glad when you call because you always talk to me for a while like I exist." I say, "Well, my dear sister, you do exist; and I'm delighted to chat with you." A lot of people don't even think in those terms. If you want to talk to "Pastor John," you dial the number—and then his wife answers, and you say, "Hello, may I speak to Pastor John?" Instead, how much more gracious to say, "Oh, hi, Jane, how are you?" or "Hi, Mrs. So and So, this is John Jones calling. I would like to speak to your husband, but before you pass the phone on to him," and then you pick up a thread from the previous conversation, "...how is that child who was struggling with this or the other?" But for a lot of people, their practice is just plain thoughtlessness. Pastors' wives are going to have to bear the brunt of that, and each must learn to be content with often living under the husband's shadow in this and in similar situations. (Any pastor's wife reading these pages has my

⁵¹ **perks** – special rights or privileges enjoyed because of one's position.

⁵² See 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

complete permission to share this last paragraph with your husband with my full blessing)!

Now, my dear fellow pastors who may be reading these pages, I want to bring a word of exhortation to you. You have the duty and privilege of instructing your people concerning the fact that your dear wife is a person, and she would appreciate being treated as a person who has worth in herself, who has interests, who likes the cultivation of relationships. Instruct your people; do not scold them because 99% of their insensitivity is just ignorance. Lovingly instruct them, especially teaching them the substance and implications of the Golden Rule: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Mat 7:12).

6. Learn to accept the physical and economic circumstances required by your husband's ministry.

Now we come to the next item that must be learned. You must learn to be content, accepting the physical and economic circumstances imposed upon you and your family by your husband's call to the ministry. The very context of the Philippians 4 passage relates directly to this issue. In pursuit of the call of God upon him as an apostle, Paul learned to embrace the dispensations⁵³ of God's providence regarding the varied states of plenty and want in connection with his physical circumstances and the supply or lack of supply of his ordinary physical needs.

I have often wondered if the health, wealth, prosperity, name-it-and-claim-it teachers ever even read of the apostle Paul's experience? Why would an apostle who can raise people from the dead have to be in want for one day? There were times that the Lord let Paul go to bed hungry, and yet he said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phi 4:11). What he did with his growling stomach, I do not know; but I do know that he said, “I have learned to be content.” There are times, especially as a wife, with all of your God-given natural instincts of nurturing and caring for your children, when you see the circumstances of your husband's call putting you in situations where your kids cannot have what other kids have, even in the church context. This fact can begin to erode your inner joy, and you can begin to feel self-pity, resentment, and irritation. Because a woman has tremendous power over her man, in a time when there may be a peculiarly aggravated circumstance of economic need, you could begin to sow little seeds of doubt as to your husband's call to that particular sphere of service by such words as: “Well, dear, maybe it's time to move on; maybe the Lord would have us in another place.” No, by the grace of God, you must be able to say with Paul, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phi 4:11).

I am fully aware that there are differing opinions among good men as to how a pastor should manage his interaction with the leaders of the church relative to monetary and material issues, including the issue of housing the pastor and his family. Suffice it to say, a man of God must do or say nothing that could justly be construed as indicating that he is

⁵³ **dispensations** – arrangement of things; ordering of matters.

a “lover of money,” because one of the requirements for someone entering the office is that he must not be a lover of money. I love the rendering of the Authorized Version, “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1Ti 3:3). Just the words sound dirty, “filthy lucre”; who wants “filthy lucre”?

It is part of the pastor’s responsibility to instruct the consciences of the people of God concerning the “whole counsel of God.” This includes expounding those passages in the Old and New Testaments that address all of God’s people regarding their care for the material needs of God’s servants. An immature and uninstructed congregation may be very insensitive to the legitimate economic and physical needs of the pastor and his family. When this is so, while your husband is tactfully and graciously instructing them from the Scriptures, you must allow no resentment, no envy, and no covetousness to eat away at your soul. Rather, you need to plead in simple faith the promise of Matthew 6:33, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” You and your husband must together be able to say that you have learned both to abound and to be in want.

Again, these are not things that I have learned from a book. I well remember when my income was barely a subsistence⁵⁴ income. I had determined that I would never, never mention money to the office bearers. I found out years later how God used that commitment when I was interacting with that little church in north Jersey in 1962, prayerfully considering whether or not I should come and be their pastor. A number of very positive factors were pointing in that direction. I remember the final meeting when I met with the elders and the deacons to discuss the possibility of my willingness to consider a call to that church. They had a whole list of questions for me, and I had questions for them. When we were all done, one of the men said, “You don’t have any other questions?” I said, “No.” He answered, “Are you sure you don’t have any other things you want to ask us about?” I said, “No.” He then said, “But you haven’t said a word about your salary, benefits, and vacation.” I said, “No, I haven’t, and I don’t intend to.” They looked surprised at my response. I then said to them, “Look, my brethren, should you extend a call to me in response to the vote of the congregation, I don’t know what you’re purposing to give me in the way of monetary compensation for my labors. But this much I know: if I accept a call to come as your pastor and you don’t give me enough to feed my family and take care of basic needs, I have a heavenly Father Who will supply my needs according to His infallible word of promise. If I come here, I’ll come here trusting God to meet my needs.”

I found out years later that this was the very thing that persuaded several of the men to call me—though they didn’t know much about me, and I didn’t know a lot of theology. As best I remember the details, they told me that there had been eight different men who had had some contact with the church and had interest in becoming their pastor until money matters came up—and then they were no longer interested. And I wouldn’t even discuss the money. They said, “Either this man is crazy, or he’s for real.”

⁵⁴ **subsistence** – relating to supporting oneself at a minimal level.

In my mind, this was the issue: does God want me here; and if God wants me here, God will take care of me. Some will say, “Oh, that’s pietistic⁵⁵ and irresponsible.” I don’t care what others may say; I cannot deny my own experience, much less the infallible promises of the living God. Those days were long before the church was generous to me, almost beyond reason. When that time came after years of ministry among them, and when the leaders would meet in an annual meeting to discuss monetary issues, I would beg them, “Please don’t increase my salary anymore!” And they would say, “Well, you have a conscience about what you should receive as compensation for your labors. We have a conscience about what we think you deserve. If you want to give half of it back to the church, that’s your business; but this is what we’re going to give you.” And I would reply, “All right, I’ll be in submission to my brethren,” and cheerfully and thankfully accepted their kind expressions of appreciation for my labors.

I would not trade the experience of those earlier days, wondering where the next payment for the Christian school bill was going to come from. Then in family worship, I would show the kids a check that came to me from out of the blue, and I would say, “Look, kids, look at that! Almost to the dollar, [here is] the next monthly payment for your tuition.” And my children would say, “Daddy, God answers prayer, doesn’t He!” I wouldn’t trade those lessons for anything.

Coming up on fifty years of age with no retirement fund and no home of our own—we had been living in a parsonage—people would say, “What are you going to do about retirement?” I would say, “Well, this much I know, God doesn’t have His servants serve Him all their lives and then send them out to pasture with no grass on the hill. God will take care of me.” “Oh, sure, but you’ve got to be practical, Al. You know you’ve got to think practically.” I would say in return, “Well, you think your way, and I’ll think my way. I just believe these words: ‘them that honour me I will honour’” (1Sa 2:30). Shortly thereafter, the church came to me and said, “Look, for 20 years we have been keeping you in that home in Cedar Grove for \$124 a month.” The allowance in New Jersey was that you could take a parsonage off the tax rolls, so the mortgage payment was \$124 a month for 20 years. When the mortgage payments were completed, they said to me, “Pastor, your labors have bought that home. Our salary structure was calibrated on the fact that you had no housing expenses. That home is the fruit of your labors; we want to deed it over to you”—and, in a way, that was legally honorable and fitting. In that home, in principle, I inherited a substantial retirement nest egg almost overnight. I never could have predicted that, but God was honoring His words of promise, “Them that honour me I will honour”; “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (1Sa 2:30; Mat 6:33).

So my dear sisters, when you feel the pinch, cry to God that you will lay hold of His promises. Then, never forget your Savior. He was born in a borrowed stable, buried in a borrowed tomb, and between the stable and the tomb, He had nowhere to lay His head. There was no place about which He could use the words, “This is My home, that is My bed,

⁵⁵ **pietistic** – exaggerated or affected religious devotion.

planted on that bit of turf to which I hold legal title.” The Creator and Sustainer of the universe did not have a square inch of real estate that had His name attached to it; that is reality. We claim to love Him, serve Him, and reflect Him. My dear sisters, when God places you in pinching situations because of your husband’s calling to the ministry, pray that God will help you that you will succumb⁵⁶ to no irritation, no resentment, no self-pity, but that you may possess and manifest only a quiet, trustful disposition toward your God and heavenly Father.

Furthermore, you should not be ashamed to become acquainted with the local thrift shops, available garage sales, and other means by which you can still provide for your family’s needs without embarrassment. Allow me to share another incident related to the period of time I mentioned when my income was just barely a subsistence income. I am an odd suit size, but at that time there was a man who bought Botany 500 suits, wore them for about a year or two and then turned them in to a local thrift shop. Although I never met the man, it was obvious that we were identical in our size and body shape. For several years, I was wearing these beautiful suits for which, if I remember correctly, I paid only \$10. It is very interesting that about the time the church began to increase my income incrementally, the man stopped sending his suits to the local thrift shop. I had to start buying my suits at Sears, when Sears used to tailor them free of charge and give free lifetime adjustments to them. I was able to purchase those suits for under \$100 apiece. They would immediately have to take in the sides of the jacket, drop the collar, shorten the sleeves, and take in the waist several inches on any 42 long suit that I purchased. Just when Sears stopped selling suits with the offering of free alterations, God brought into my life a Christian tailor who offered to obtain at his cost tailor-made suits for me. I just look back and say, “Lord, I could write a lovely little pamphlet ‘How God Provides Classy Suits for Poor Preachers.’” God means what He says when He tells us that if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness “all these things *will* be added.”

I do not often mention such personal examples; but in this kind of practical teaching, it is appropriate so that you will know I am not just speaking theoretically. We cannot deny the things we have seen and heard in the areas in which we have proven God. So my dear sisters, cry to the Lord Jesus to give you the power to be content, accepting the physical and economic circumstances imposed upon you by your husband’s call to the ministry. Perhaps you could have married a man who was making a lot more money and would have provided you with a lot more of life’s necessities and even some of its luxuries. But consider the Last Day when you will stand before your Lord: if He were to ask you, “My dear daughter, was it worth it to invest your life in that man of God?”—would your beautiful furniture compensate for the loss of the smile of your Savior? I love that old gospel hymn, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, one look at His dear face, all sorrow will erase, so bravely run the race, till we see Christ.”

⁵⁶ **succumb** – sink unto pressure.

7. Learn to commit to God the injustices done to your husband.

We come to the final exhortation, and it is an exceedingly difficult one to implement. It is this: You, as a pastor's wife, must learn to commit to God the injustices done to your husband because he is a true man of God and a faithful preacher of the Word. 2 Timothy 3:12 makes it plain: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution." To that generic⁵⁷ prophecy of persecution for every godly man or woman, add the words of John 15:20-21: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." Our Lord is speaking to the apostles—to those who were going to be spearheading this new gospel preaching endeavor—because they would become the lightning rods of the hatred of the enemy of men's souls.

This prophecy and warning will include your husband if he is a faithful man of God, a faithful preacher of the Word of God, a faithful pastor determined faithfully to shepherd individual sheep. Remember, there are scads of people to whom your husband can say almost anything he wants to say from the pulpit about any sins and any patterns of life that are not pleasing to God, and they will take it. But when he sits with them in their living room or in his study just several feet away, looking them straight in their eyes, and points out their specific sins, then he will know something of the fury of the human heart and its hatred of light and truth; and he will suffer.

Sooner or later, you will be made aware of how your husband is suffering in terms of slander, lies, innuendo,⁵⁸ and the deliberate avoidance of his person and presence. Then you will make the painful discovery that one of the most difficult things for a loving and loyal wife is to have the man she loves and deeply respects, misrepresented, slandered, and even hated at times by the very ones for whom she sees him pouring out his life. She sees his late hours in the study. She sees him at times unable to sleep deeply because of the disaffection that is within the hearts of some of the members. She knows him as no one else but God knows him. And now for him to be painted as this kind of ugly creature is deeply painful. The initial response of a loyal wife is to desire to strike out at the ones who dare to touch her husband in that way. But you must not do it—because just as God calls him to go the way of the Lamb, He calls you to go that way with him.

What do I mean by the "way of the Lamb"? I mean the way of 1 Peter 2:20-23, where Peter is speaking to slaves who are being treated unrighteously by their masters. He says, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? [*There is no glory in that!*] but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Christ not only died to procure⁵⁹ our redemption, He died the way He did to set a pattern of how we are to react

⁵⁷ **generic** – general.

⁵⁸ **innuendo** – an indirect remark that usually carries a suggestion of inappropriate behavior.

⁵⁹ **procure** – obtain, especially by care or with effort.

to unjust treatment. He suffered, not just to redeem you, but to leave you an example to follow His steps in that way—the way of Him “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled,⁶⁰ reviled not again; when he suffered [all the forms of His suffering: the sufferings of His soul and of His body], he threatened not; but committed himself (or His cause) to him that judgeth righteously.” Dear pastor’s wife, few things are more difficult than to follow that clear directive to go the way of the Lamb. Reviling is never to be found in the life of the child of God who takes seriously the directives of his Lord.

Furthermore, Jesus said in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Mat 5:11-12). This is the passage that is the greatest test to me. I have learned over the years to say, “Okay, here comes another wave of slander and libelous speech; what am I to do?” The Word of God says to envision that person who is slandering you as if he had taken a check, made it out in your name, and deposited it in the bank of heaven. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” Then, in the parallel passage found in Luke 6:23, Jesus not only calls us to rejoice, but even to “leap for joy” when we are called upon to suffer for His name’s sake.

When your husband is being slandered or abused, call to remembrance the words of the apostle Paul who said that he longed to “know him [Christ], and the power of his resurrection” (Phi 3:10a). All of us want this: “Oh,” we say, “I want the surge of Christ’s power, the very power that raised Him from the dead; oh, how I want to know that.” But Paul also goes on to say that he wants to know Christ in the *koinonia*, “the *fellowship* of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10).

What was one of the great parts of that suffering? During His earthly ministry, He faced some of the following verbal assaults. They said to Him, “We know that you are a Samaritan [*a half-breed Jew*] and have a demon. We are not born of fornication, but we know the unbelievable story about your mother and how you were supposedly conceived in her virginal womb by the Holy Spirit. We’ve heard about it.” That kind of verbal abuse was one of the major forms of suffering experienced by the pure Holy Son of God. Much of the present suffering heaped upon your husband may well come in this area of verbal assaults, a slandering of his motives, and a misconstruing⁶¹ of his godly intentions. And when your husband suffers these things in his obedience to Christ, it can unstring *you*. When this begins to happen, you need to plead with God to give you grace to go the way of the Lamb. Revile not—suffer, yes—but keep committing your cause to Him Who judges righteously, and rejoice that God is taking you into deeper dimensions of the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.

⁶⁰ **reviled** – insulted; verbally abused.

⁶¹ **misconstruing** – mistaking the meaning; interpreting in the wrong way.

C. Conclusion

This concludes my potpourri of seven miscellaneous pastoral counsels to you wives. The first three addressed things you must make a definitive determination to do in the strength of Christ. The last four addressed things that you by a lifetime process must learn to do through the same grace that is in our Lord Jesus.

Now, what do I say to you in concluding these exhortations? As surely as a man of God who sees the magnitude of his task cries with the apostle Paul, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2Co 2:16), so each wife of a man of God will cry out with similar sentiments as she faces what it means to be a thoroughly Christian wife while married to a pastor.

My dear sisters, in light of your own remaining sin, and your own sense of inadequacy, meditate often upon the promises of God especially suited to your situation as a pastor’s wife.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Promises such as 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Notice, God’s strength does not replace weakness, but Jesus said to Paul that it is made perfect and manifested in the *midst* of weakness.

Paul had a problem: “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh...I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me” (2Co 12:7-8). We do not know what this thorn in the flesh was, but whatever it was, it made Paul consciously weak. And here was the equation in Paul’s mind: this thorn made Paul so weak that he felt he could not accomplish his apostolic mission. For this reason, he engaged in three intense seasons of prayer, asking God to remove the thorn so that he might be able to fulfill his God-given commission. It appears that in Paul’s mind, faithfulness to his divine commission and the presence of this thorn were incompatible companions.

There was just one thing to do, and that was to pray. So Paul gave himself to three seasons of intense intercessory prayer: “Oh God, take this thing from me. I cannot fulfill my apostolic mission with this impediment that makes me weak. Take the weakness away by removing the thorn.” But Christ said unto him, “There is another equation, Paul, and this is it: I resist the proud, but give grace unto the humble (Jam 4:6). In light of the abundance of revelations I have given to you, lest you should be puffed up beyond the place where I could use you—because I do not use proud men, I use humble men—I have another answer for you. I am going to allow your weakness to remain, and in the midst of that weakness, I will pour out My strength upon you. And all will know that the exceeding greatness of the power is from the God Who raises the dead and Who works mightily through the weak.”

Once the Lord revealed these realities to Paul, he could then say “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities [weaknesses]” (2Co 2:9b). He did not just grit his teeth and bear it because he knew that the thorn was good for him. Rather, he could say that he was now able to glory in this weakness “that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2Co 2:9b), [literally, *may spread itself like a tent over me!*] Many of us just have to say, “Lord, I

am not there yet in the way I face and embrace my conscious weaknesses,” but it is what we want to aspire to daily. Paul says, “I offer up my weakness.” God says, “I will spread a tent of strength over it, and people will look and see the weakness, but they will have to acknowledge the power.” How does this happen? How does power come out of weakness? It comes from the risen Lord, Who conquered death in His mighty resurrection.

Well, my dear sisters, that is what God wants to do with you. You say, “Lord, I don’t have the strength to be the wife I ought to be, let alone to bear the added pressures and liabilities and temptations of being a pastor’s wife; I’m not sufficient; Lord, I’m weak!” God says, “Wonderful, I have been wanting to get you to this place. Now look to Me to make My strength perfect in the midst of your weakness.” That is how God works, and that is what we should glory in by the grace of God.

Hebrews 13:20-21

Then plead the promise of that marvelous benediction in Hebrews; plead it on your own behalf: “The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you *perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight*, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” I commend you to this wonderful promise of our God, Who works in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

Intergenerational challenge

Finally, I bring this little addendum⁶² concerning that which I have chosen to designate as the “intergenerational challenge.” Let me explain what I mean by that terminology.

One of the great blessings, among so many that God has given me in this second marriage, is that I married a woman who at the time I married her had five children and 21 grandchildren. There are now 23 grandchildren and a constantly growing number of great-grandchildren. My wife and her former husband had the vision of the intergenerational influence that we ought to seek. Before her former husband, Dick, retired from his service in the US Post Office, and much more, subsequent to his retirement, he and Dorothy poured many hours into the young lives of their constantly growing number of grandchildren. Dick went home to be with the Lord before the birth of some of the grandchildren, and, of course, all of the great-grandchildren. Dick and Dorothy were firmly convinced concerning the scriptural and practical benefit of seeking to pour their lives into their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. This is what I mean by the “intergenerational challenge.”

I would like to challenge you wives, some of whom are in the mother-in-law and grandmother stage, to capture that vision, which is so clearly impregnated into the directives given through Moses:

⁶² **addendum** – an item of additional material, added at the end of a book or other publication.

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do with them in the land whither you go into possess it: that thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, *and thy son’s son*, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged (Deu 6:1-2).

The clear implication of this passage is that the godly Israelite father would not only be concerned to pass on the statutes of God to his son, but also to his son’s son.

There is a beautiful illustration of how God used this intergenerational concern and its activities in the life and experience of Timothy. In writing to his younger colleague and spiritual son Timothy, Paul wrote as follows: “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2Ti 1:3-5).

Later in this very letter, Paul indicates that Timothy was made acquainted with the Holy Scriptures by these women when he exhorts Timothy, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of, *knowing of whom thou hast learned them*; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This is the vision of intergenerational influence.

In the latter years of my ministry at Trinity Baptist Church, my fellow elders and I discovered among some of the members a tendency that greatly disturbed us as pastors. What we discovered was this: some of the mothers, who were anticipating that within a few years their nest would be empty, were talking about going back to school, completing their formal education, and then pursuing some occupational career outside of their home, even though there was no pressing economic necessity for additional income at this stage in their lives. Their husbands were at or near their optimal income level. As elders, we perceived that something was not right in this growing perspective. As we sought to analyze this pattern of thinking, we became more and more persuaded that it was for the most part a form of worldliness of thought. In fact, in most cases, the women who were thinking this way were not conscious that they had begun to capitulate⁶³ to one of the many mantras of feminism, relative to a woman finding her own identity in her own independent career.

The fact is that these years would be the years when that rich storehouse of wisdom and experience of seeking to be a godly wife, a nurturing mother, and an efficient homemaker could now be passed on to the younger mothers (Ti 2:3-5) and invested in the lives of their grandchildren. I thank God that I am married to a wife who at this stage in her life has a clear grasp of this intergenerational vision. I married her in the full knowledge of

⁶³ **capitulate** – cease to resist; surrender.

this fact, aware that many of my responsibilities in this new relationship would involve cheerfully giving up my wife to her responsibilities as a grandmother and seeking to assume the role of a grandpa to these many grandchildren and great-grandchildren I inherited by marrying her!

When the messages that comprise this booklet were first delivered in 2010, my wife's daughter had just given birth to her fifth daughter. It meant there were hours when I was home alone, while she was giving herself to helping her daughter get back on her feet. Every few weeks my wife gives up a whole evening to her daughter and son-in-law in order that they might have a "date night" together. She treasures those hours with the five granddaughters in order to build into their young lives those things that, with God's blessing, will contribute to their coming to the knowledge of Christ and growing up to be well-rounded and responsible Christian women. It is often my privilege to spend some of that evening with those granddaughters fulfilling my role as their adopted grandpa. What a privilege it is to pour ourselves into the lives of these precious young ones! I would challenge you women who are coming up to that part of your life, and you who are younger as well: think biblically in terms of intergenerational input into the lives of your sons' and daughters' families. Most mother-in-law jokes are carnal; so you should cherish building the relationship with your daughter-in-law with mutual love and respect, so that you can carry some of the load that is upon her and pass on those things that only the years impart in the way of wisdom. And pour yourself into your grandchildren.

Furthermore, women in this older age bracket who do not have grandchildren or great-grandchildren nearby geographically can still fulfill that role with other couples in the church who would welcome their input as well as the privilege of an occasional "date night" without having to pay for the ever-growing expense of a babysitter!

For those of you who are pastors' wives that are near or actually in the "empty nest" stage, I would earnestly challenge you to be ambitious to become the kind of a woman who would be able to fulfill the clear directives of Titus 2:3-5. Should God be pleased to use the pages of this booklet to that end, I will rejoice that my labors have not been in vain in the Lord.

May the Lord bless this word to the encouragement of pastors' wives everywhere. ❧