

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

A PRACTICAL BOOK FOR PASTORS'

AND LEADERS' WIVES.

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PREFACE

I will never forget the very first Ladies Meeting I had to conduct. I was twenty years of age and had taken no notice of such meetings up until that time. I had been interested in Youth Meetings. Ladies Meetings were for older women.

Why hadn't someone prepared me for this!

My husband Ken, then an eager young pastor, had boundless faith in my abilities.

"You'll be fine dear", he said, "no problem!"

The fact that I was very pregnant at the time didn't help matters but somehow I muddled through, feeling totally inadequate. No one had ever given me any advice. It wasn't until four years later I was to receive any advice on being a pastor's wife, and then it was merely a heart stopping declaration-

"You realise that you can either make or break your husband's ministry."

That was it!

Over the years I learned many things- how to conduct a meeting, give a Bible Study, lead in worship, but what a pity I could not have been taught all the things I needed to know earlier. I could have been far more effective and could have been saved many a stumble!

I would have had a far better self image, had more confidence, suffered less heartache, helped more people, and been of more use to the family of God.

These days pastors' wives are far better prepared. Or are they? I decided to find out for myself and prepared a questionnaire, which I have been handing out to my peers over this last year.

Some of the information I have compiled and some of the helpful hints I have in this book I owe to these very wonderful and godly ladies.

When you are a pastor's wife you learn to laugh a lot otherwise you might cry too much. It can be a wonderful life if you don't mind watching your husband being moulded by the hand of God and circumstances, and by God's wonderful, beautiful, sometimes mixed up, courageous, impossible saints.

There should be classes for future pastors' wives and for leaders' wives. Classes to teach them public speaking, counselling, singing, Bible study preparation, dress sense, hospitality, economy, child psychology, all kinds of things. Think of the confidence they would gain. It would enhance their husband's ministry and perhaps double and triple his usefulness to the kingdom of God. Perhaps we could have a convention to teach some of these things?

What would I have liked to know when I first began? What would I like to tell others who are just beginning? These are the things I have tried to present to you in this book.

Some have already seen the need for training new pastors' wives and they have allowed me to use some of their material, for which I am grateful. I pray you will be also as you read these

pages.

CHAPTER ONE

A UNIQUE LIFE!

One day, through a misunderstanding, my husband and I arrived at a pastor's home for dinner. Five minutes later the family arrived home from a two-week holiday at the beach! They would not hear of us leaving, nor would they allow us to order a Pizza. I must admit I was most impressed by that pastor and his wife.

He was everything a pastor should be, she was everything a pastor's wife should be. She not only made us welcome, she cooked a lovely meal while organizing her household, answering the telephone, and attending to her children.

He unpacked the car, made us coffee, set the table, and entertained us with lively conversation. It was all done seemingly effortlessly. Their names? Richard and Chris Murray of Canberra.

We have been entertained in many homes because of our travelling ministry, and pastors and pastors' wives are always gracious, kind and hospitable. Hospitality is a part of the gifting of God for a pastor and his wife.

But it is not the only part of the unique life of pastoring a church and attending to the flock of God.

In recent months psychiatrists and counsellors have been examining the life of the pastor's wife and they have come to some startling conclusions.

Here is one of them!

"As those in the ministry know, Protestant pastors' wives are unique in the extent to which they are impacted by their spouse's vocation. Clergy marriages are highly visible, closely scrutinised by community members, and frequently looked to as the models for Christian marriage."
(From WMM's A New Kind Of Model, by Duane Alleman. Printed in Theology News and Notes. Dec. 1990 Pg.11.)

RESULTS OF SURVEY

One of the most interesting results of the survey that pastor's wives have completed for me this year has been the number who have discovered, as I did myself in the first few years of ministry, that it is impossible to please everybody in the church. In fact the more you try the less successful you become! The reason is fairly simple. Everyone wants something different from you and so in trying to please all you finish by annoying everyone.

My conclusion, and that of many others, was to be true to yourself and God's will for your life and leave everyone else to accommodate themselves to that as they are able. In fact the single most frequent answer to the question, "What helpful advice would you give to a new pastor's wife?" was "Be Yourself!"

The truth is, pastors' wives are just the same as all other Christian women, with some strengths and some weaknesses, the same needs, emotions, trials and responsibilities. Their difference lies

in two directions: one is that their congregation expects so much from them; and the other is that their marriage and family are so highly visible.

INVENT AS YOU GO?

This week I read something in the daily paper which caught my attention. It was a description of the life of a prime minister's wife. The similarity to the life of a pastor's wife was irresistible. Here is the quote:

"It's a job you invent as you go, and all hell breaks loose if you make a mistake. There's no training course, no job description, no pay and relentless public scrutiny. Nobody is ever satisfied: feminists want you to speak out, and traditionalists expect you to act like a 'lady' ."
(from Prime Ministers Wives by Diane Langmore. McPhee Gribble paperback.1992).

When you have had no training you have to invent as you go, and in this modern age the rules are changing. Some pastors are expecting their wives to partner them in their ministry far more than when I first began my life as a pastor's wife, but until recently there has been no-one to teach or train young women who have been faced with the daunting task of beginning a ministry with their husbands; at least not in most pentecostal churches.

Other pastors' wives are being left free to pursue their own careers, outside of the church altogether.

A congregation may expect each new pastor's wife to conform to the previous pastor's wife, even though she may be a totally different personality with her own unique giftings. It is unfair to expect conformity, or uniformity, in each case.

AN IDEALIZED VIEW

The people may have an idealized view of what a pastor's family life should be like. If they try to force their beliefs on the pastor and his family all kinds of stresses and strains may develop. Especially if the pastor's family try to conform to the unreal expectations of their congregation.

In our country we have a multi-cultural society, each culture with its own idea of what a pastor and his family should be doing, and how they should live and conduct themselves.

"What are we going to do." Susan cried to her husband, " Everyone will find out about this divorce our daughter is going through. What will they think? Will we lose our ministry? Will the people understand? I just can't bear anyone to know about it!" Her husband sighed heavily. Compassion for his wife and daughter mixed with apprehension for the future. What would his church people say? Would they ask him to move on? He drew his wife to him and gave her an understanding hug. " Perhaps we can put in for a transfer, then we will not have to tell anyone about it."

Susan was facing the dilemma of her daughter's divorce, wondering how it would affect her husband's ministry, or whether the church would insist that he leave the ministry because he could not manage his family. Also she felt all of the shame of people gossiping about their daughter's failed marriage.

THREE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

1. PERFECTION

There are three major difficulties facing the pastor's wife: the first involves the pressure to be perfect, a perfect wife, a perfect mother, and a perfect pastor's wife!

This can be very wearing. The stress of keeping up appearances, of always striving to live up to all expectations, of hiding any traumas and hurts within the family, can be exhausting.

At least three quarters of pastor's wives feel this pressure, to be ideal role models of motherhood and Christian family life.

If you accept these pressures and try to live them out you will be filled with resentment, feel a failure, and finally burn out. What is more important, your children will suffer and may never recover. Christianity will become to them a thing of hypocrisy, an impossible dream, not connected to reality.

You must learn to please God, to please your husband and your children, and to let the people find their level of acceptance of you and your family.

Don't let others set your agenda for you. Be an actor not a reactor, being pulled here and there by others. Decide who you are, what your gifts are, and then ask God to guide you into what he wants you to do.

Remember the words of Jesus,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise." (Jo. 5:19).

Say to yourself, "What does God want of me," and then live accordingly.

In this way you will be living honestly, not in deception, and because of this you will be able to deal quickly with any hurts or problems, which arise from time to time in any family.

Mary groaned and heaved a big sigh, the children were fighting again. She could hear them out on the patio. They seemed to fight all the time these days, she hadn't had a minute to herself for days. Having the children quickly had been her idea, now she had three under five and she wasn't so sure it had been a good decision after all. She had come from a family where the children were born many years apart and she had always regretted not being close to her siblings.

Sometimes, on days like this one she really resented her husband being a pastor.

"I should have married a farmer, or perhaps a plumber", she mused, "Then maybe I'd get some help with the children, especially in the evenings."

Each day when Peter came home, excited about what God was doing in his ministry she would have to bite back the tears. It wasn't fair; she would like to be out there too, ministering to people; that was one of the reasons she had been so thrilled when Peter had asked her to marry

him.

Peter tried to understand, but he too was beginning to resent her attitude.

"Why can't she be happy with what God is doing", he thought to himself. "She used to be such a happy person and so on fire for God."

Sometimes, like Mary, we can feel left out of ministry. Especially when we have little ones, and feel we aren't helping our husbands or doing anything significant for God.

Your home is your ministry, your children are your ministry.

A significant verse was given to me by the Lord many years ago, and afterwards it was confirmed to me by Rev. Dick Mills.

"Those that stay by the stuff get the same reward as those who go out to battle" (1 Sa.30:24).

This was a decision made by David when some of his men, who had suffered the heat of a battle, wanted to keep all the spoil instead of sharing it with those whom David had asked to stay by their equipment and protect it.

What does this mean for us? Simply this. Those of us who cannot, for whatever reason, share in a public ministry, will share in our husband's reward on that great day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2. FRIENDSHIPS

The second problem we face is what to do about friendships. Many pastors' wives have no close friendships within their church. They feel awkward about making close friends from among the congregation, in case it leads to jealousy.

This idea of having no close friends within the church leads inevitably to isolation. It is difficult to have intimate friendships. A guard must be kept on your lips, you must be careful not to betray confidences.

In my own life I have tended to be very quiet, not very talkative, mainly because I have learned it is safer that way. I learned discretion in the school of hard knocks! In early days I made mistakes by speaking when it would have been better to have remained silent. So, in reaction, I became very careful of my speech. "Least said, soonest mended." This is an old and wise saying, which I have made a habit.

Even so I have made many close friendships over the years with other women who have shared my joys and sorrows during the years I was growing and maturing, having my babies and learning to love and serve God.

We shared picnics and parties, had our babies at around the same time, and shared our baby clothes as we shared our trials. We learned together what it means to be a godly wife and mother.

My husband pastored the same church for 16 of his 26 years as a local pastor, and that enabled us

to make deep friendships. It would be difficult to make similar friendships now we are moving constantly in a teaching ministry.

If I am asked who is my best friend, I would have to say my husband. We have never felt the need for other intimate friendships as some people do, though this has not stopped us from building many delightful and loving friendships with godly people.

One caution needs to be aired. Always be prudent and careful not to share intimate details of your life with anyone. There are some things which should remain with your spouse and no one else. Be careful too, not to expose your children's lives to others; be sensitive to their feelings.

Be careful of your reason for choosing a friendship. Are you using a friend to denigrate your husband or to criticize others in the church? This can be devastating. Sometimes we need to air our hurts and deal with problems, but if this is so then it should be as a means of showing forgiveness and to repair relationships, not just to air our grievances.

To come together with a group of women for mutual support and encouragement is a healthy and wise thing to do. During our years in San Diego, USA, Pastor Pamela Truscott began a pastors' wives support group, which we held once a month. It was touching to see the younger pastors' wives come to that meeting, seemingly happy and tranquil, but before long one or other of them would be pouring out her heart and revealing deep hurts, which needed our prayers and our compassion and some wise words from those older and more experienced.

Being a pastor's wife is not easy, and if we are not careful to choose some good friends in whom we can trust we can become deeply hurting individuals in desperate need of support and encouragement.

Praise God he is always there for us; but we also need some kind friends who understand, peers who can teach us the things we need to know.

3. INTRUSION

Our third problem is that our husband's ministry seems to intrude into every part of our lives. The ministry seems never ending, it goes on constantly, day and night, day after day, every day.

For many years my husband and I lived without a structured ministry life. The ministry ran us; we allowed other people to dictate the time and place of ministry. After years of this total dedication we realised we needed to preserve our health and our family life; and so we began to educate the people. It took some time but once it was established that appointments needed to be made for counselling, people soon became used to the new way of doing things and stopped complaining.

Sometimes of course there is an emergency and we must go; but normally people's problems take time to develop, and it will not hurt if they cannot see a counsellor for a day or so.

I learned some truthful, though neutral words for the telephone.

"I'm sorry, but the pastor is not available just now. May I take a message?"

It is no concern of anyone just exactly what your husband happens to be doing at the moment of telephoning. He could be having his dinner, playing with his children, counselling someone else; no matter, he is simply "not available."

How I wish that someone had taught me those simple words. It would have saved much time, and how much more rested and relaxed my family would have been. People do not mean to intrude; many times they 'phone at the dinner hour because they realise you will be at home then. Unfortunately, what they do not realise is that they are one of many who are trying to contact the pastor. Many times our meals were interrupted and grew cold because of ministry. Nowadays there is also the answering machine which can help.

We must learn that most ministry can wait. The problems can usually wait 24 hours without too much trauma. They have probably been a long time forming and a few more hours won't make much difference to the outcome.

Pastors are realising more and more that they need to spend quality time with their wives and children. If they do, then family life will be happy and secure; if they don't, they will reap a bitter harvest.

Many pastors' wives feel emotionally deprived because of their husband's total involvement in ministry. They don't complain, because how can they admit they are 'jealous of God'. The children also become hurt and bewildered when their father keeps putting meetings and other people before their legitimate needs. Their self image suffers; and because their father is, in a sense, their role model of what God is like, they grow up with the impression that God is too busy for them, a remote figure, one who doesn't really care how they feel.

A MESSIAH COMPLEX

Why do pastors get so absorbed in ministry? One reason is a messiah complex. The idea that they and they alone are able to do the work, rescue the people, bring them deliverance, and so on.

Then there is sometimes a need for him to escape from problems in his home and family- especially if his wife is attempting to make him see that he is neglecting his family. If he doesn't want to face the discussions he will make sure he is always too busy to talk. He may find he is unable to say "No" to people; or he may feel he has to do everything, because no one else can do it well enough.

We went through many of these stages and we could have been saved from many errors, if only someone had told us in the beginning of our ministry the things to watch for and avoid.

NEGLECTED

Duane Alleman lists five things a wife of a busy pastor can do to overcome the feelings of neglect she has because her husband is over-involved in ministry.

The list is his, the comments are mine.

1. Identify her feelings: how is her husband's busy ministry affecting her and their children, and their family life together?

2. Clarify her expectations and desires: what does she want, what is a reasonable life style, what can she expect? She must be specific so that a compromise can be worked out.
3. Communicate her feelings and desires directly: I remember a mistake I frequently made when we were first married. I would brood over some task not done, some neglect, and then when I had bottled it up for several weeks I would burst out with, "I wish you would do so and so...!"

"My poor husband, in all ignorance that I had been feeling these things, would be overwhelmed by my outburst. After this had happened a few times he lovingly asked me to please tell him in a reasonable manner when he had made an error. Instead of "I wish..." would I say, "Darling would you do so and so...?" We got along much better after I learned this appropriate response!

4. Seek out other relationships: do not expect your husband to meet all of your needs. He is not God. It is draining for him if you are continually expecting him to be the sole input into your life. The Lord knows your needs, and if you pray he will guide you into friendships that will add to you, and cause you to be a strength to your husband. This will help to build him up also.
5. Seek help: if after taking all these precautions you still feel all is not well, then you need to get some help. Don't be afraid to seek out a Christian counsellor, someone you can trust, someone who is not too close to either of you and so can see things more clearly. It may save your marriage and your husband's ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

SOME OF THE THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE BEEN TAUGHT!

Before I begin to write this chapter I would like to point out that these are the things I would have like to have known before I became a pastor's wife. You may have a different list and may have other ideas of the necessities I feel led to mention here. I am now 59 years of age so some of my ideas may seem archaic to those of you that are younger and have grown up in a different world. If so I would like to hear from you. Perhaps together we can produce a second edition of this book which will be more relevant to you and the way you think and feel today.

YOUR OWN DEVELOPMENT

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (Ma.22:37-38).

Be yourself! Don't try to please everyone. Cultivate a good self-image. Learn who you are, your temperament and motivational gifts; learn to flow in those things that are right and easy for you.

I remember how freeing it was for me to discover that I was a mercy person with a servant heart. It explained why I was no good as a leader. I used to wonder why I could not easily organise people to do things. I was always far happier doing everything for myself, and never happier than when I was serving others. Also I was not much good at helping people overcome their sin, I had rather not know about it, which is characteristic of a person with a mercy motive.

Over the years I have studied and gained my masters degree and have become more of a teacher. I still love to serve my husband and family, but no longer feel the compulsion to serve anyone and everyone as I used to do. I have discovered the truth that we can develop and change as we mature.

If there are jobs to be done and you don't feel able, then perhaps you can delegate, or pray someone else in to do the job.

Try not to be bound by the expectations of others, either for yourself, your husband, or your children. Instead work on pleasing God and your husband, satisfying your children, and allowing yourself to grow and mature slowly but surely into other tasks you feel capable of doing.

Keep a good sense of humour, learn to laugh at yourself. Don't take life so seriously that you have a breakdown. Have lots of fun, balance your life, do something every week that has nothing to do with people or problems! Take up a hobby, play a sport, or improve your education.

ON STARTING IN A NEW CHURCH

"And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ep.4:11-13).

1. The honeymoon period.

In the first few months the new pastor appears perfect to the congregation and he can do no wrong! This is a good time to make changes, though not too many and not too quickly.

Everyone is attempting to gain the new pastor's favour, a very happy time!

2. The settling down period.

The pastor begins to know his people and the people begin to know their pastor and to see he is not as perfect as they thought at first. This can still be a good time but give and take are essential. Adjustments need to be made on both sides. If the pastor is secure within himself then he can accept and deal with criticism, changing where necessary and scriptural. The people's criticisms need to be taken into consideration as much as possible within the framework of true Christianity, otherwise they will lose heart and 'vote with their feet', that is, leave the church and go to another.

3. The mature relationship period.

This is the time when everyone has settled down into their role and the church can begin moving and doing something for God. The pastor has assessed his people and knows their capabilities and ministries and where he can fit them into church life.

Communication should then be free and full flowing as the people share in the ongoing ministry of the church. Together the congregation and the pastor can do great things for God.

COURTESY

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." (Cl.3:12-15).

This scripture refers to the church, the body of Christ, but in a sense the family is also a 'little church' therefore this scripture refers also to the family. It is love which binds every member together in perfect harmony.

"Some people think that the closer they are to another person the less courtesy they need to show. The reverse is true. The closer you are to others the more essential good manners are to the ongoing relationship." (Oliver Wendell Holmes, an American writer, physician, teacher, and popular public speaker).

Good manners should be practised daily in the home. If your children hear you being polite they

will automatically copy you in time.

When I was nursing I was taught not to raise my voice unless there was a fire or other accident! I feel this is a good idea as a calm home can be so restful. Of course there can be riotous times of fun and frolic within the family in a happy joyful sense. We all need these moments of happiness, but voices raised in anger can be so wounding to all concerned.

Talk politely to one another, compliment frequently and sincerely. Be considerate of each other's feelings; learn tact and diplomacy unless these come naturally to you. Think before you speak. Is this necessary, is it kind?

"Sometimes fathers and mothers treat their grown up children with an incivility, which, offered to any other young people would simply have terminated the acquaintance." (C. S. Lewis in "The Four Loves").

As our children grow and mature into their teenage years we need to continue to treat them with courtesy if we want them to honour us and retain close family ties.

CHURCH MANNERS

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" (1 Pe.5:1-5).

Some people are just naturally likeable and affable toward others. The rest of us need to be taught people skills!

I remember several things I used to do which hurt people's feelings.

I would walk up to a group of people and begin to speak to one person and ignore the others. When I was busy doing something I would look up as someone entered the room then go on with my work without greeting them. Finally someone pointed these things out to me and this was a great help. It does not take a moment to greet a group of people before you begin to speak to one in particular. It only takes a second to greet someone who has walked into a room before you continue with your work, but these little courtesies make all the difference to the self esteem of members of your congregation.

Smile often, be aware!

Don't discuss your husband with the members of your church. If the need arises, always lift him up in the estimation of the people; never criticise him in public. If you are desperate for advice, talk to one of his peers, one you can trust, preferably someone far enough distant not to be emotionally involved with the problem, one who can speak with wisdom, unmixed with self-seeking.

"Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone." (Cl.4:5)

If you are working in a small church then greet new people and introduce them to at least one other person. If you are in a larger church then you may have ushers and deacons to take on this task for you.

Be tactful and courteous to all, though it is only natural that you will feel closer to those of your own age and cultural background. Even so it may be better not to have any close favourites within the church body. This is something you will have to work out for yourself.

HOW TO COPE WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE THE CHURCH

Depending on the reason why people leave your church you can have different feelings. If they are moving away because of a new job or for some other legitimate reason then you will feel some loss but no grief or rejection. If they leave because of criticism or because of some problem, then you may feel grief, rejection, bewilderment and sorrow.

How do you cope with these feelings?

"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all." (Ps.34:17-19).

First you should accept the feelings, accept the fact, talk over your reactions with a trusted friend, then leave the people concerned with God. Let him work it out. Love the people and let them go with your blessing, better that they go than that they stay and cause problems in the church family.

What if they take others with them?

Continue to pray for them all and leave them in God's hands. If they leave then they have removed themselves from your church family; they are no longer your responsibility. If you release, them then God will be able to deal with them, if that is necessary.

For yourself, make sure that you work through any feelings of bitterness and grief.

"When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." (Mk.11:25).

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Ma.5:23-24).

If you are sure there is nothing you can do, or need to do, in the way of reconciliation then put the whole experience behind you, then go on to love and assist those people who do love you and fellowship with you.

If you should meet the person or persons socially after they have left your church, then treat them

with courtesy.

WHAT KIND OF A HOME SHOULD YOU HAVE?

"...train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited." (Tit.2:4-5).

Your home needs to be a place of refuge, solace, peace, a place for rest, refreshment and refuelling, both spiritually and materially. It should be moderately clean and well managed as there will be visitors. It is good to have an hospitable home; but you should never feel ashamed or embarrassed if you have no expensive food for casual callers. Bread and butter will do. If people come unexpectedly then they must accept what you have. If you invite people, then of course more will be expected.

Your home should be well ordered. A hundred years ago, some pastors' wives had at least one house maid, possibly a cook, and a gardener as well! Others were far worse off than we are today as they were very poor and had no modern conveniences. We must do our best! Obviously those who are organised will do better. If you have children then as they get older it will become easier.

Together with your husband work out responsibilities concerning the house and garden; who will do which chores. If you have children then develop some guidelines for their jobs, depending on their age.

I found it best to do one major chore each day, beginning with one room and giving it a thorough clean. By the end of the week each room had one good clean. It is too tiring to do all of the work in one day, unless of course you live in a small apartment and only have to launder for two!

Thankfully these days there is no longer the compelling urge to keep the house perfect. Women can waste a lot of time while their children are small, polishing floors.

I well remember when we laid our kitchen linoleum in our first new home. I polished that floor lovingly and was so proud of it. Unfortunately the slightest scratch showed up and so I began demanding the children remove their shoes before they entered the house. I was always growling at them for forgetting to do this. Eventually sanity prevailed and I decided I'd rather have a happy family than a floor I could see my face in. Looking back now I think how ridiculous it all was and what a waste of time and effort. Especially as every six months or so I had to scrape off all of the polish I had put on and then begin again.

A clean home or a happy home? I chose to have a moderately clean, happy home!

HOW MUCH WORK SHOULD YOU DO IN THE CHURCH?

"Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Cl.3:17).

Sit down with your husband and talk this over quietly and objectively. It will depend on your gifts and abilities, on whether or not you have children, on their age if you do have them, and on whether you have a job outside the home.

Be realistic, don't try to do too much. Your first job is to care for your family, and to do your own work at home. If you have spare time and the energy then you can do other things.

If you have a desire to add to the life and ministry of the church, but you have little ones, then begin to prepare for the time when you can help. Study the word of God, cultivate your own spiritual life, encourage other young mothers. If you are older, and no longer have home responsibilities then work out your giftings, what you would like to do. If your gifts lie in the direction of community service then explore that option.

Old or young, keep learning, don't stagnate, keep advancing, read, listen to tapes, take note of things that interest you. Remember: what interests you will interest others.

HOSPITALITY

"Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Pe.4:9-10).

"Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality." (Ro.12:13).

It is always good to have the beds made up and the room prepared before the arrival of visitors who are coming to stay with you. It makes them feel so welcome.

Think carefully before putting your children out of their room for visiting ministry too often. This can cause bitterness to grow in their hearts if they feel that they are continually put last, pushed around, and their lives disrupted.

If you don't have a room for visitors, then find someone in the church who does, and who is capable of taking care of visiting ministry. Your speaker needs a decent bed to sleep in if you want him or her to be rested enough to preach well.

In our numerous travels sometimes our hosts have given us their very own bed, and we are always extremely well cared for. However on one memorable occasion, many years ago, we were given a camp stretcher. That was a very long night!

One good idea is to have a bowl of fruit in the visitor's bedroom.

Remember: preachers can be very tired after meetings, and may need to be protected from enthusiastic saints!

SHOULD YOU HAVE A JOB OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

There is a tendency in the USA for pastors' wives to have their own career and even to go to a different church from the one their husband is pastoring! This is happening in Australia too among certain denominations.

Of course nowadays it could be that the wife is the pastor and the husband who has his own career!

Some feel it is far better for the husband and wife to work together as a team, if that is at all possible. A good wife can be a wonderful asset to her husband, but we are all different and this is something that couples in ministry need to work out for themselves.

Whether you go to work or not depends on many factors: training; the ages of your children; and finances. The ideal, if there are young children, is to be at home. It is a good idea to work out exactly how much you would really earn if all the extra costs of going to work were taken out. As a young mother you may find that working outside the home is not really worth the enormous effort involved.

SHOULD YOU TAKE IN FOSTER CHILDREN OR BOARDERS?

"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God gives the desolate a home to dwell in;" (Ps.68:5-6a).

Because of the heart to minister in many pastors' wives, there is a tendency among them to take in foster children or boarders who need a home and some care.

In New South Wales now the Welfare department will not allow couples to take in a child that is older than their youngest, because the foster child could influence the younger child, and if there is any problem this could have far reaching consequences.

Remember: if you have children of your own, they must come first. They have been given to you by God; they are your first responsibility. Only when you are sure that all their needs are being met can you have time for another child.

Let the decision be a family one. Let your own children have a say in whether they can cope, and review the situation at regular intervals.

As far as adult boarders are concerned: When you take in an emotionally disturbed person you can no longer counsel him or her objectively. You become too close, too involved; part of the problem. They can lose respect for you. It is better to keep a distance when you are counselling people.

In the case of ordinary folk who need a home, remember your husband and children need their home to be a place of rest and refreshing. Can they have this plus boarders? How much of your time do the boarders take? Are you having to neglect other important matters to cope with the boarder?

CHAPTER THREE

HALLELUA YOU'RE A PASTOR'S WIFE.

(Lois Cronin & Alison Chant)

Mark and Beryl were devastated. They had just been informed they were no longer wanted by their church! Three important families had given them the news and they had no reason to disbelieve them. This had been Mark's first church and for three years he had worked hard and built the church to three times its former size. He and Beryl had poured all their love for God, their youthful enthusiasm, and their concern for God's people into their little church. Of course they had made mistakes, but surely not that many!

That night they wept in each other's arms, and the next Sunday they resigned publicly from the church.

It was then they discovered the majority of the people wanted them to stay. People began to weep and beg them to remain as their pastors. They had not known of the decision to ask Mark and Beryl to leave. It was not a congregational decision, but the decision of the few families involved.

After seeking advice from their peers, Mark and Beryl felt they should leave to keep the church united. If they stayed, the three families would leave and so, as they had already publicly resigned, they made the further decision to abide by that resignation for the sake of church unity.

As it happened, Mark and Beryl went on to greater heights in ministry and God blessed them wonderfully. The church, after a few years of struggle, finally dissolved.

Despite the hard work and the spiritual burden, and sometimes the heart break that comes from ministry to the people of God, it is a privilege to be chosen to serve God's flock faithfully. Our reward is great, both here and in heaven. The costs are great too. However, as Mark and Beryl found, anything precious will be costly. We must endeavour to keep an eye on eternity.

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Ro.8:18).

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Co.4:17-18).

"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." (2 Ti.2:10).

As pastors' wives, we are called and chosen by God for the task he has given us, just as our husbands are called to the ministry. Depending on the ability and gifts given to us by God, we may have a public or a private ministry. Either way, we are called to be help-meets to our husbands.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will

last, Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (Jn.15:16).

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things- and the things that are not- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" (1 Co.1:26-31).

A SPECIAL GRACE

We are each given a special grace to carry out our task. We could not do anything without God's help and his enabling power.

"God..has saved us and called us to a holy life- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."(2 Ti.1:9).

Your husband's call is your call too. You are one flesh and God calls you to respond to the work he has opened up to both of you.

Some feel they need their own call and we respect that. Heather Eaton, who gives her testimony later on in this book, was called at an early age, and knew she was to be a pastor's wife years before she met her husband Dean.

"The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.'" (Ge.2:23-24).

God is our Master and Lord. Who are we to question his call? It is for us to obey and trust him to give us all of the gifts and abilities we need to mould us into the shape he wants us to take.

"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'." (Is.45:9).

God will not give us a burden greater than we can bear. He helps us in our infirmities, and in our weaknesses. If we put ourselves into his hands, and allow him, by our obedience, to mould us into vessels of honour, we will be equal to the task. We don't have to be reluctant to follow his call. We must respond to it with all our hearts, and with a faith expectancy that he will keep his promise to us.

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 Jn.5:3-4).

"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mt.11:28-30).

We must find God's yoke and wear it. Then our attitude should be to accept his call gladly and not chafe under it. If we do strain against the call of God then his yoke will seem hard, harsh, sharp and pressing.

BEING A PASTOR'S WIFE

"Being a pastor's wife is the most hazardous and dangerous occupation a woman can have."
(Marion T. Nelson, Christian Psychiatrist.)

Judith made her preparations methodically. She is a tidy person. She finished her work and then looked around. All was in order; she could go ahead. She opened the oven door and prepared to switch on the gas.

Sadly she thought over the last few months. She could stand no more - the angry words, the coldness, the unreasonable attitudes. She wanted peace, an end to the conflict. This was the best way, she knew that now.

If only she knew why Paul and Beth had turned against her. From the time she and Ray had taken the little family in a year ago, they had all lived in harmony; but now for no apparent reason Paul and Beth had turned against her and Ray. After all they had done for them, it was devastating. She could bear it no longer; she was too deeply hurt to want to go on living.

She reach out to turn on the gas - and at that moment the front door bell rang....

Judith's life was saved by God's perfect timing. A dear friend arrived in time to avert a tragedy.

You may say, "This could not happen to a pastor's wife." But it can, and has. By their very nature some people are loving and giving. This pastor's wife, and many others, are full of compassion and take people into their homes and into their hearts. They are living out their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. When the very people they seek to help turn against them it can be a very bitter trial.

In Judith's case it transpired that another member of her church had told some lies to Paul and Beth which turned them against her. Later on the truth was revealed, and there was a reconciliation. Judith received an apology from all concerned.

Why do these things happen in churches? Why are some people so far from understanding the principles of Christianity?

You may say, "I would never allow anyone to hurt me in that way."

Maybe you would not, you may have a different temperament from Judith, you may be more assertive and sure of yourself. Judith needed to be taught how to cope with these kinds of people and these kinds of situations. If she had, she would not have been so vulnerable; which brings me back to the reason for writing this book....

She has now been taught, and she will not have to face this overwhelming heartbreak again.

Next time, if there is a next time, she will be well able to withstand an attack of that nature.

Pastor's wives need to know that people, because of their own hurts and insecurities, can be cruel. These people need to be handled with love and compassion, they also need to be shown their wrongdoing and to repent of it, thus enabling them to grow into a greater understanding of the principles of living the Christian life.

I was talking with a very new pastor's wife recently and her cry was, "Why didn't someone warn me of these things. If only I had been warned I could have been prepared, and that would have made it so much easier."

This has been the cry of many young pastor's wives over the last few years and slowly the need is being met. More and more psychologists and counsellors are becoming aware of the struggles of the pastor's wife and the reasons for them.

Mature pastor's wives are becoming aware of the need to help one another, and to teach and prepare those who are just beginning to serve God in this way.

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Most churches expect two for the price of one. In other words they expect the pastor's wife to fill the "empty spaces" in the ongoing life of the church. To be the receptionist, the tea lady, office worker, creche worker, and telephone counsellor.

And because the pastor's wife, especially if she is young and enthusiastic, feels called by God to stand by her husband and do things for the Lord, she may neglect her own family life to "fill the gap". There is a balance needed between family and church.

Karen was excited at the thought of the new church she and her husband had been called to pastor. The people were so friendly and helpful, and she was sure they would all get on well together.

She noticed that there was a job which needed to be done, so she volunteered. The next week she noticed another that needed doing, and so took that on as well. Without realising it, over the next few weeks she took on six jobs. They all needed doing and she was capable of doing them, so she did. After some months of working for the church as well as looking after her husband and children, she began to feel worn out. She couldn't get everything done; there seemed no time to relax. Every evening except one was taken up with church work. The children began to complain that she was too busy to give them the attention they needed, her husband asked her to rethink her position. She did and resigned from all but one of her positions.

Afterwards she said, "It was all so stupid, I should have realised, but the jobs came one at a time and each one involved only a few hours per week. What I didn't realise was the accumulation of time they would take. Now other people have taken up the slack, I have more time for my young family, my husband is happier and all is well."

This is a mistake made by many enthusiastic pastors' wives. The task is there, it needs to be done, so they do it, forgetting that their primary role is to look after their husband and children and to keep their home a place of peace and happiness. A place where their husband and

children can be refreshed and restored and made fit to face their world.

A TASK NOT GIVEN BY GOD

I made this mistake one year. It all began so innocently. A dear friend of ours, a widow, died leaving two teenagers. One was old enough to go into the army and had plans to do that, but the other one had another year to go at high school. He didn't want to move to a different school for his last year, so we took him in. This would have been quite within my capabilities and worked well for a time; but then an older brother asked if he could stay with us for a while, and then two more teenagers asked for temporary accomodation for different reasons.

Finally I finished up with five boarders plus three of my own children who were still quite young, and a very tolerant husband. He kept saying, "Are you sure you can manage all these people. Isn't it too much for you?"

I was enjoying myself, it was fun having all of them!

It was a year later that I noticed my knees were getting stiff. Usually at the end of a prayer meeting it was hard to get up from a kneeling position. Over the next few weeks I was reduced to crawling around the floors to do the vacuuming. I visited my Doctor and he examined me, and then asked what my life-style was. I told him I was a pastor's wife and that I had five boarders plus three children at home. He looked at me and said these words. I have not forgotten them, for they seemed to me to be a direct word from God.

"Mrs Chant", he said, "If God had wanted you to have eight children he would have given you eight children. Go home and tell your boarders to find somewhere else to live."

So I did, and they did! My knees improved and I have had no more trouble with them.

Always remember, God first, husband and children second, and then church. It does no good for the pastor's wife to be doing church work to the detriment of her primary task, given to her by God: to be a wife and mother.

People can have very strange ideas about their pastor.

One young pastor was found grocery shopping with his wife and children. His parishioner was greatly astonished and said, "Pastor, you shop!"

"Yes", answered the pastor, "I also eat!"

The pastor can also get very absorbed in the life of the church, to the neglect of his wife and children. Balance is the word to keep you both on track. Stop and evaluate. Think! It does no good to save others if it means losing your own family. That would not be a good witness and has happened far too many times in the past.

There may be some in the church who feel that because they are contributing to the pastor's salary therefore he belongs to them and should be available at all times; others are more thoughtful. It is hard as a pastor's wife not to feel resentful when people demand your husband's time as their right. It is your right gently but firmly to remind them the pastor has many demands

on his time, and they are only one of many. He will do what he can as God enables him. They should not expect any more than that.

FOUR IN ONE

Pastors' wives need to be four people in one! A good wife to her husband, thus freeing him as much as possible for ministry. A good mother, though coping with lack of time, strength and resources. And all this while under the magnifying glass of the congregation's expectations of what a pastor's family should be! A good housekeeper; and finally a good church member, attending all meetings and taking an active role.

She has to cope too with living on a reduced income, receiving criticism from all sides, little appreciation or help, and feeling that her life is being lived in a gold fish bowl! Little wonder some pastors' wives grow weary in well-doing!

But there are some rewards. Listen to these words from Hebrews.

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." (He.6:10).

God does not forget you. A pastor's wife is blessed with a godly husband who is motivated to help others and see their lives changed, a husband who desires always to do God's will in his life.

Her children are growing up in a godly home in the very best climate of love and security. They are learning to discipline their lives and share with others; watching their parents witness to the unsaved and seeing them give unselfish service to God and the church. They are exposed to other godly people when visiting ministry is invited in, and they learn to meet new people and thus learn social skills.

The pastor's wife also benefits in other ways. She gets to travel to conferences, to visit other churches, to make wonderful friends. She has an outlet in the church to use her abilities. She comes into contact with many different and interesting people. She often receives generous gifts. She has the joy of seeing people come to the Lord and of helping them mature in Christ.

KNOW YOURSELF

The pastor's wife needs to assess her talents, her abilities, and her weaknesses. This will help her to fit into her church role consistent with the way the Lord has designed her. This can be a trial and error undertaking. Be prepared to try any task you feel fitted for. You may surprise yourself!

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." (1 Co.12:4-6;see also verses 7,12,18 & 27).

In many churches now there is no stereotyped role of the pastor's wife. A diversity of gifts are recognized. If you are in a small church you may have to do some things that are not in your "gift" but you can train others gradually to take up these tasks until you can be released into your particular gift.

At any time you may need to fill a gap, so you should avoid having the attitude that, "I can't do that, it is not my gift."

THREE GENERAL ROLES WE MAY TYPIFY

As a pastor's wife you are first of all a helper for your husband. But after that you may take one of the following roles -

1. PARTNER

In this role you may have a public ministry, you may counsel with your husband, visit with him, sing with him. This kind of team ministry can be very rewarding and enriching to a couple. In fact in some circles it is expected.

In this role you need to be aware of the danger of feeling so absorbed in your husband's ministry that you are losing your own identity. You may need some space to be yourself.

2. ENABLER

Then you could be an enabler, actively supporting him from the sidelines but not having a public ministry yourself. The reasons could be lack of desire, small children to care for, an aged parent to look after, work outside the home - things that may limit your involvement.

The danger here could come from using your tasks as an excuse not to do the things that involve ministry, when the real reason is your fear of failure, or fear of criticism.

On the other hand it could be that you see yourself only in a supportive role and there is nothing wrong with that.

Either way do not allow inferiority to dominate your life. Rise up to take the risk of being involved. If you are not involved in the life of the church you will not understand the pressures and demands your husband faces. You will see only your own needs and the needs of your home. If this is so you will become a further source of strain to your husband.

3. SPECIALIST

If you specialise in one area you may be working in a different sphere from your husband. In this case the danger could come from growing apart by going in two diverse directions. This could be overcome if the two of you share your various realms by communication. This could then become very enriching to you both.

Over the years, as the needs of the home change and the children grow, your role will change; but whatever your role, it must be consistent with that of all pastors' wives. It is important to be an active support to your husband.

The word help-meet in the Hebrew is 'neged', meaning 'counterpart' or 'the opposite part'. For psychological strength the pastor will lean on his wife. Emotionally any man is very dependent on his wife.

During our life together I have always supported my husband, but he in his turn has also encouraged me to grow and develop my own talents. As soon as our children were grown he made it possible for me to study for my degrees and to begin to teach in Bible College, a role I enjoy very much. I also have a degree in Counselling and it is very rewarding to be able to help others with the knowledge I have gained.

To some degree then, we may cover all three roles: we may be a partner, an enabler, or a specialist. However usually one of these three will predominate.

OUR PRIORITIES - TOWARD GOD

In the end God wants true worshippers, those who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." (Jn.4:23-24).

We have to be constantly watchful to spend time with God. We must not allow ourselves to become Marthas rather than Marys. We need to cherish our first love.(Lu.10:39-42 & Re.2:1-7).

The Old Testament shows that the people of Israel had three main divisions: warriors; priests; and Levites. Those divisions represented warfare, worship, and service. All are needed; but notice that worship is central to the other two. If we lack worship we will overbalance toward warfare or service. This will result in us doing warfare or service in our own strength and wearing ourselves out. This would not be pleasing to the Lord.

Jesus appointed his servants, first and foremost, to be with him. (Mk.3:14-15).

To maintain our freshness and vitality, to be hearing from God; we have to spend time fellowshiping with him. The most difficult time in our lives to maintain this fellowship is when our children are small. Usually it is not possible to spend large amounts of time in reading the Word and in prayer. However we can still be turning our minds toward God during the time we are doing repetitive type chores.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Col.3:23-24).

OUR PRIORITIES - TOWARD OURSELVES

..."Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself." (Mt.22:37-39).

If we have not come to the place where we can accept ourselves and know we are precious and worthwhile in God's eyes we will have many problems as a pastor's wife.

Very likely we will be hurt, shattered, touchy, threatened, jealous, fearful, discouraged or depressed. We will be crippled by criticism, reacting with defensiveness, anger, aggression, or

withdrawal. We will perform to be accepted and approved, and will react with anger and hurt if we aren't appreciated. We will be possessive of our own domain. We won't be able to accept talented people who seem better than we are. We will be looking for negatives in others or be negative about ourselves. We will be anxious,, fear failure and disapproval, and we may reveal perfectionist standards. Our relationships with other people are only as strong as our relationship with God. And the degree by which we love and accept ourselves will be the degree we love and accept others.

PERSONAL HABITS

We must be impeccable in our standards of hygiene. Our dress should always be neat, clean, and becoming. An easy-care hairstyle is preferable, so we may always be ready for any emergency.

I will not forget the time a distraught mother came to our home for comfort. She had just been told that her seemingly healthy baby was going to die of a crippling disease. I was in the middle of the washing and had my hair in curlers, I certainly wasn't ready for any emergency! When my husband came looking for me to help him comfort this poor little mother I demurred for a moment as I felt embarrassed about my appearance. My husband rebuked me for caring about something so trivial as my hair and clothing at a time like that and I had to agree with him. As if those things mattered at such a time. I quickly made myself tidy and sought to bring what comfort I could. However, after that time,I made sure I was always prepared.

Our housekeeping needs to be neat, and wholesome, without being so houseproud we have no time for family or guests.

Exercise, rest, and recreation are the hard ones. We can get so busy that we stop caring for ourselves. We hardly have time to think, let alone plan times of rest and refreshing. If our husbands are equally harried; then the problem becomes more horrendous. If you have young children they can be of help here. At least while the children are younger, we must take time for trips to the zoo, picnics at the beach, hikes, bike riding, or lunch at one of the fast food outlets, depending on your tastes and the things you enjoy doing.

MENTAL HABITS

Learn to acknowledge your feelings without letting them dominate you. Don't ignore them either. They need to be dealt with. Our feelings are governed by our thinking. If we can change the way we think then we can control or redirect our feelings. Unless there is some medical reason, such as an imbalance of hormones, we can learn to think in a godly fashion. We will then reap the benefits of walking in the revelation and understanding of who we are in Christ, rather than walking in our own strength, and reaping confusion and bad feelings.

We may wonder why we sometimes feel angry and frustrated. This is always linked to what we are thinking concerning a person or a situation. Negative feelings about someone can be a warning to us to check our thinking about that person. We must take responsibility for our thoughts and feelings. We may not be able to control other people's actions, but we can control our own attitude, and our reaction to those actions.

If we try to change our feelings without changing our thinking, we are doomed to failure. We

can confess our anger as sin, however, unless we deal with our thinking concerning the event that made us angry, the feelings of anger won't go away.

We need to control our feelings and not be victims of them.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery...So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." (Ga.5:1,16-18).

Be aware also of pre-menstrual tension. Our hormones can really effect our emotions. Watch out for self-pity during these times.

FEELINGS AND COMMUNICATION

Pick suitable times and places to share your feelings with your husband. Just before a meeting or while he is busy preparing a message may not be wise! Don't drop hints; be specific. If you are tired and need help with the children, then tell your husband clearly. Men are different from women, they prefer plain speaking. They are used to precise instruction and detailed information. Their thinking is more analytical and critical than the average woman's. It just frustrates a man if his wife drops hints and then, when he doesn't respond, blows up and cries all over him. Sometimes we feel no one appreciates us; we give and give, and only receive criticism in return. We begin to feel, "Who needs this? Why should I have every one's problems? I have enough of my own!"

Sometimes we feel like running away!

It helps to remember that there are other professions, which require similar sacrifices from the wife. Think about the wives of politicians, business executives, soldiers, sailors, airmen and the like.

They do it for an earthly reward; our rewards are eternal.

"Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord, and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ."(Cl.3:23-24)

We can turn a negative (lonely hours by ourselves) into a positive, by using those hours constructively and creatively. We can take up a hobby, we can sew, knit, listen to tapes, do a Bible Study Course. Get to know God in your loneliness.

We must learn to admit that we are human; we are not superwomen. God is still working on us. We must learn to be patient with ourselves, not expecting perfection until the resurrection!

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed,so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Ph.2:12-13).

Indeed we show our strength and maturity when we can reveal ourselves as we really are. It is reassuring to others to know that we too face grief, and pain, and struggles. We don't have to share all our personal details; but we can allow people to see that we need their support and prayer. We don't have to know all the answers. We aren't perfect. However, there is no need for us to explode all the time either!

God does not share his glory; so don't let people idealise you; be real!

Our spiritual walk will have times of rapid growth and then times of standing still, even slipping back a little. Sometimes God will ask something we aren't ready for and he may need to bring us around again until we are ready and willing to step into the next phase of growth.

You can't please every one, so don't even try! You can't do everything people want you to do or be everything they want you to be. Learn to say "NO!" when necessary.

(Some excellent books on the theme of communication are written by Dr. Norman Wright).

AVOID RESENTMENT

"Should nots" and "ought nots" bring expectations which, if they are not met, cause resentment.

We put it on our husbands: "He should be more attentive to me."

We put it on our children: "They should be an example to the assembly."

We put it on the assembly: "They ought to consider our personal lives."

In this way we make our lives miserable with resentment, and with its twin, bitterness.

Learn to deal with failure, both in yourself and in your husband. When it comes, don't say, "I told you so", "I warned you."

He doesn't need to be told. He is already feeling badly enough. Instead be loving and kind, and warm toward him sexually, for this reaffirms your belief in him and his belief in himself.

"At least my wife loves me, I can't be such a failure after all", will be his reaction.

Develop a positive mentality toward failure. Just because we have failed doesn't mean we are failures.

"The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he doesn't make the biggest mistake of all - doing nothing." (Benjamin Franklin).

"Behold the turtle - he makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." (James Bryant Coront, President of Harvard)

"It's better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing perfectly." (Robert Schuller).

A reporter asked Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, "How do you feel about 10,000 failures?"

He answered, "I've learnt 10,000 ways in which it doesn't work."

"I never see failure as failure, but only as the opportunity to develop my sense of humour."

"I never see failure as failure but only as an opportunity to develop my understanding of God and develop myself."

"I see failure as a necessary part of my walk in God."

You should learn from failure, and therefore not need to repeat it. A failure can be a stepping stone, or a stumbling block.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained." (Ph.3:12-16).

Learn to apply the blood of Jesus.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jo.1:9).

Resist condemnation! Know your position in Christ and where your righteousness is based. (Ro.5:1)

"Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Ro.5:1.

We must deal ruthlessly with any self-pity that we might feel.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Ph.4:4-7; see also 1 Th.5:16-19;Ro.8:28)

A MARTYR'S ATTITUDE

Do you have a martyr's attitude? Let us examine ourselves regularly and change any attitudes that need to be changed. We have to learn a hard lesson in life. We can't live other people's lives for them. We can't change anyone; only God can do that!

Here is an example of handling expectations.

"It would be wonderful if my husband was more attentive to me. I can share how I feel, but I can't force a response from him. I can be responsible in my behaviour toward him, but I can't control how he behaves toward me, unless I try to manipulate him!"

Resentment can arise sometimes because we feel we own our husbands. We must surrender him to God. We must not feel, "He's mine! He belongs to me. This is my time."

No, rather yield your rights to the Lord. You will find that as you surrender your rights, God will arrange circumstances to give you all the time you need with your husband. When the pressure of your demands is released, he will be happy to be with you and draw much strength from you to help him in his work.

Some women expect far too much from their husbands. They expect him to fill a place only God can fill. They drain their husbands until they feel they must withdraw. Don't be like that; rather be a fountain of refreshment, as you draw your strength from God; and then let it flow to your husband. (Prov.11:24-25;Rev.22:12; Ge.15:1)

Times of crisis or the demands of some urgent need can occur that disrupt what we have planned. Unless we place our rights to our husband on the cross we will become resentful and angry.

GOALS AND DESIRES

You should clearly understand the distinction between a goal and a desire. If you know how these two differ from each other you will save yourself from much stress and frustration.

A goal is the purpose to which I am unalterably committed, and for which I assume responsibility. This must be something which I can accomplish, and which is well within my control.

Never assume responsibility for a goal that you cannot control!

A desire on the other hand is something I want to happen, but cannot by my own efforts make happen. For example, my desire may be for an unsaved relative to come to Christ, but I cannot make it happen.

If we turn desires into goals, we will end up angry and resentful.

We should pray for our desires, and work on our goals.

Here is an example: circle either G=goal or D=desire to indicate which one describes each of the following statements -

G/D "I want you to listen to me"

G/D "I want the church to grow"

G/D "I want to go to bed early tonight"

G/D "I want to speak to my neighbour about Jesus"

G/D "I want to be at church on time on Sunday"

G/D "I want you to be encouraged by my friendship"

G/D "I want my husband to rest on his day off next week"

G/D "I want my children to love the Lord"

(See Larry Crabb's "Encouragement" bibliography.)

"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this." (Ps.37:4-5).

We should pray for our desires and work at our goals. Sometimes our goals have to become desires. For an example if we have a flat tyre on the way to church our goal, to arrive early must give way to a desire that we won't be late!

Remember this great saying:

" God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

TRUE AND FALSE GUILT

We must learn the difference between those two. Have you sinned? Then deal with it, put it under the blood of Jesus, and turn away from it, looking to Jesus who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. He has broken the power of sin; he has destroyed the root of sin in our lives. We no longer have to sin; we are free to choose to live a godly life in Christ.

False guilt comes from our own insecurities or over - sensitivity.

"This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him." (1 Jo.3:19-22).

We can feel guilty for example -

After legitimately saying, " No", to someone.

After failing our own standards.

After failing others' standards.

When we feel we must keep working.

When we feel we could have done more.

Guilt leads people to act inconsistently. Then they over-compensate. So, a pastor's wife, feeling that her children are being deprived because of her involvement in ministry, may wrongfully indulge them in some other way.

Remember: you will never do anything perfectly, so allow yourself grace - God has poured out his grace for you!

Whether you suffer from true or false guilt, Christ's death on the cross is your only solution. We cannot by ourselves live up to the standards of God, or even our own standards.

"Christ not only bridged the gap between God's holiness and man's sinfulness, he also bridged the gap between our own demands and our actual performance.

"In other words, through Christ we are made acceptable to God, and through Christ we are made acceptable to ourselves.

"If God can accept us, surely we can learn to love ourselves. If God can forgive us, we can forgive ourselves. That's why guilt feelings should have no place in the Christian life." ("You're Someone Special by Bruce Narramore).

BEWARE OF JEALOUSY

"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave." (Ca. 8:6).

The other woman! Some men of high repute in our day have wrecked their ministries and their homes because they allowed their eyes to stray to another. There are different kinds of such women in the church.

There is the woman who looks for a strong, masculine, confident father image. She feels that, because he is a pastor, he is safe!

There is the woman who is wanting a surrogate husband. Many women, having no husband, or having an unsaved husband, dream a little of someone strong, dependable, a gentleman, courteous and kind. As they only see the pastor at stated times they get an idealized view of him and this fosters a liking which is harmless enough; so long as the pastor is careful and his wife is watchful.

There is the woman who merely appreciates the shepherding role of a man of God.

There is the woman who deliberately designs to lure a pastor into sin. She is not a Christian but only a pseudo Christian who delights in destroying a leader of the people of God.

How can you guard your man? Work at your marriage, keep each other happy, contented, and at rest; fully satisfied with your home and family life. If you do this; then you will have a good basis for trust in each other. You are his greatest protection (after the Lord) and he is yours.

If there is an American cadillac in the garage then who needs a German volkswagen off the street!

STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING WOMEN OF MISPLACED INTENTIONS.

Make friends with them. They will feel less able to approach your husband if you are showing them love and friendship.

Don't withdraw from your husband physically when the woman is around. Stay nearby, stand up,

don't allow her to make you feel like an intruder. Let her see your oneness, your unity, the fact that you are one flesh with your husband.

"No weapon forged against you will prevail."(Is.54:17).

Because of the fall of some prominent ministries some wives feel insecure about their husbands. Because of their insecurity they displace this feeling on to their husbands and begin to feel afraid for them.

On the other hand it may be the wife is the one who feels vulnerable, and afraid that she can be tempted, and she may displace that fear onto her husband.

Don't expect your husband to explain his every move to you. He needs the stimulation that comes from his associates, even if one of them is a woman! We can't meet all of his needs. We must trust God for our marriage!

A wife may also feel jealousy when her husband is constantly being called on, and she is in the shadows. The phone calls are always for him; he is the one people look to. His ministry is recognized and appreciated and hers is perhaps ignored. We need to give all of those feelings to God and let him deal with them. If we are willing for him to deal with them, he will!

HAVE A SERVANT HEART

Jesus is our example in all things, He was not too proud to wash the feet of his disciples, and he calls us to follow in his steps.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him." (Jo.12:24-26.)

"For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk.10:45).

"Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.(Ph.2:5-8).

Both Joseph and Elisha are "types" of servant rulers. (see Ge.37:2-11;1 Kings 19:19-21;2 Kings3:11)

Jesus' service came out of his authority. He knew God had given all things into his hand. He knew that he was come from God, that he was called and chosen by God, and he knew that he was to go back to God. He was perfectly secure in himself; he didn't have to defend his position. His importance didn't have to be proved. (Jo.13:1-17)

We must take a lesson from this. If someone criticizes you, don't brood over it. If it is valid then change; if it is not valid then ignore it. Who are you striving to please? Is it not God?

One lesson we must learn. We cannot please all the people all the time! Therefore we must work to please God; then we can be sure we are doing the right thing.

As time goes by and we gain maturity, criticism will hurt us less and less. We will be intent on pleasing God, and all our circumstances will come into order as he guides and directs.

Don't react to criticism by giving back the same as you receive.

What should you do when people come to you with criticisms of your husband? Here is one strategy: tell them that if they have anything to say, they can say it to him themselves. Men tend to be emotionally less vulnerable than women. Don't be trapped into passing on comments. They will find it easier to say it to you than to face your husband. Don't let them take advantage of you.

Be careful both of pride and of inferiority. Don't compare either yourself or your husband with others. There may be pastors with a more mature ministry or with different gifts. Comparisons are odious. Don't compare your families with other families, for the same reason. Everyone is different, and it is not fair to compare. It only brings discontent and envy and hinders our development and our husband's also.

Those who make such "odious comparisons" show lack of trust in God and in their lives. He does not want us all to be alike. He has different tasks for each one. Different places need different strategies, different types of people, and different gifts. Be content with who you are, and allow God to mould you according to his will.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROLE CHANGES FOR PASTOR'S AND LEADER'S WIVES IN OUR MODERN WORLD.

Tradition has called for the pastor's wife to become involved in church work to support her spouse or because she felt she should.

Changes are in the air in the USA among the mainline churches. I'm not sure that I agree with them but these are the kind of things which are happening.

Some of the wives are attending other churches and even other denominations; others have no religious affiliation. Some of them have a career, which takes them to other places for days or weeks at a time. Some are pastors themselves in another church.

Regardless of the amount of involvement or non-involvement, pastor's wives who are happiest are those who have a good self image and are pleased with their own life and career options.

SOME NEGATIVES WHICH CAN CAUSE OVER - INVOLVEMENT BY THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

1. Lack of privacy.

A new church may be a house church. If the services are held in the pastor's home, then this can cause a great lack of privacy; even more so if the home is owned by the church; then people may feel they can visit at any time of the day or evening.

2. Lack of money.

This may cause friction. Pastors have to be content with less money than other men who have studied for the same length of time. They must build the church until it is large enough to support them with a decent wage. In the meantime the wife may become bitter and resentful. She can go out to work if the children are old enough; but she is likely to be criticised for this even if the church makes it necessary. If she does have a career of her own, it can be blocked by her not being able to move when necessary.

3. Lack of a support group.

It is not good for a couple to go out alone to build a new church. They need at least one other couple to share the work, the prayer, the expense and the setbacks, as well as the triumphs.

Each pastor's family needs friendships, people from outside their church with whom they can relax. Because of the busy life they lead, too many pastors and their families become isolated from any friendships with people from their community.

4. Lack of fulfillment and identity.

If the pastor's wife cannot discover who she is, if she cannot define her own role in life, if she

becomes a cipher, just a part of her husband's ministry, then she can become miserable and frustrated. If she has a career and yet is unable to fulfill that career or find employment in her field, then she can feel extremely trapped, and unhappy. Those reactions in turn will reflect on her husband, and he will not be able to function so well in his ministry.

5. Lack of spiritual development.

This can be caused by the pastor forgetting that his wife is also one of his flock, a person in need of instruction and motivation. Opportunities need to be opened up for her to grow and develop spiritually. Not by coercion, but by encouragement and example.

6. Ministry that goes on day and night.

People expect their pastor to be available day and night. The pastor tries to fulfill their expectations because of his strong call to help and assist others. The result is that he experiences burn out and his wife and children experience bitterness because they have had their legitimate needs ignored.

The pastor's wife is also expected to be a helping member of the congregation, to the neglect of her home and family.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF MINISTRY.

People feel uplifted because they are doing things for God, and they value belonging to the church family and the support that it brings.

Pastor's wives like being married to a Christian husband, one who is polite and gentle, a good and loving father to his children.

A pastor and his wife meet all kinds of interesting people, and they have an easy entrance into the society of the city or town in which they live.

Because of his flexible hours; the pastor can spend time with his children. He should carefully make time for them, and not allow ministry to take up the hours that belong to his family.

WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME.

Today many pastor's wives work outside the home. Some churches have come to expect this, for it relieves the congregation from having to be the sole support of the pastor's family.

However they do like their pastor's wife to be doing something appropriate to her husband's calling. Furthermore if the pastor's wife does have a job outside the home, then it becomes imperative for the pastor to have some kind of protection when he visits his people. In days gone by he could always take his wife; but if she is not available, then it is probably better for him to have people, especially women, to come to the church office for counsel.

A DOUBLE STANDARD.

I have observed this anomaly: if the wife is the pastor, and her husband is the one in the role of

helper, then a double standard is at once apparent. Instead of expecting the husband to be useful to the church in any way, the people are pathetically grateful if he does anything at all. Praise and gratitude are the order of the day. The pastor's husband is even praised for attending a meeting, and if he brings a dish to a potluck the people are overwhelmed. He is treated like royalty for his slightest contribution.

If the male pastor's wife was treated this way there would always be happy and contented spouses in the manse!

PASTORS MARRIED TO OTHER PASTORS.

In the USA there is an increasing tendency for both the pastor and his wife to be pastors. Often one could be pastor of a church and the other be a chaplain of a hospital. On Sundays no one questions if one or the other is missing, they could well be preaching elsewhere.

IS THIS FEASIBLE?

In Australia I think many would object to the idea of a pastor's wife attending a different church to her husband's. There are pitfalls. If the wife is not there to work with her husband then he must find someone else to do the work. If that someone else is a woman then there could be a danger of getting too close to each other - with all the peril that implies. There is enough danger facing a man of God, without looking for more!

For some women, it might be good to make some difference between herself and her husband's ministry. If she has that distance it might enable her to be more of a support to him, enabling her to minister to him more effectively.

Finally we come back to this: as a pastor's wife you should ask yourself, "What do I feel is right and proper for me to do? What does God want me to do? What is right for my husband and for my children?"

Have the courage to prayerfully consider the options and together with your husband strive to please God in everything you do.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

(Moya Enright)

HONEST COMMUNICATION

Communication in marriage is not a new subject for the '90's. For many years bad communication has been a major ingredient in the breakdown of many marriages.

Open honest communication is essential in any relationship. How much more so for a pastor and his wife. They are, after all, to be examples to the flock. The most crucial relationship in any local church is the relationship between the pastor and his wife.

Our churches must see a couple of genuine people who have learnt to live happily together in this life. Not two plastic people, pretending to have it all together.

Most couples enter marriage with great hopes, and desires for a wonderful future of joyful harmony. Unfortunately, many of the dreams and expectations are idealistic and unreal.

We spend months during courtship convincing our loved one how wonderful we are, and how we desire to meet their every need. We are selfless in our love, giving all, demanding little. We choose to overlook some of those irritating little idiosyncracies, calling them cute. We are oblivious to the underlying motivation behind our efforts - not so much to love, as to be loved.

Too little time is spent in discussing the real issues of a marriage relationship. Neither partner has a real understanding of what the other is truly expecting of them. Fanciful ideals and expectations create a rather wobbly threshold over which to carry the new bride.

ENTERING THE MINISTRY

Many enter ministry together in a similar fashion. Full of zeal, enthusiasm, hopes, desires, and expectations, many of which are unreal and unfair.

It is so easy to rush into ministry without a clear definition of what you are working towards, or why and how you are going to do it.

What begins as a committed partnership, to win the world and feed the flock of God, can somehow turn in on itself and begin to crumble. Many go on for years living, so far below God's intended joy for them, and not understanding the destructive dynamics that are in place.

EXPECTATIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

How many young pastor's wives have been disappointed to find they are not married to a Billy Graham, or a Paul Yongi Cho, after all! And how many young pastors have been discouraged to find his young wife is not a dynamic Catherine Booth, or a Katherine Khulman.

Open honest communication with our spouse can save us from the snare of disillusionment, and

help us discern the real person from the phantom.

A profitable exercise for any couple in ministry would be for both husband and wife to make separate lists of what they feel defines the role of: 1) The pastor, and 2) The pastor's wife. Allow plenty of time to think it through thoroughly. Next comes the fun part of comparing lists. (This will need to be done when each are feeling reasonably amicable of course).

There will undoubtedly be conflicting ideas presented but, if done honestly it will expose some of the unreal, and unfair, expectations we impose on one another - and ourselves. It should also highlight any priorities which have slipped to a lesser place. Be frank and honest about every area.

Now, work together on a fair and customized profile for both this particular pastor, and this particular pastor's wife. Be prepared to alter priorities - to add or subtract some things, and highlight areas which need to be compensated for by team members. You can then pray together about these things.

As the profile of the church and your family changes, so the roles may need to be adjusted. This should be discussed periodically, to ensure each is aware just what the other is expecting of them, and to guard against any potential pitfalls.

FEMINISM AND THE NEW GENERATION

This generation we serve, with our husbands, has not existed before. There are new concepts in society which have affected men, women and children. The feminist movement of the 70's has had a drastic affect on the local church.

The world has been thrown upside down through the results of male/female role reversals and church women have become insecure, and confused about their roles. This has affected many pastor's wives.

I was raised in a denomination where women took equal training and rank with men. Even now, they have a higher ratio of women in full time ministry than men. It was nothing new to me for women to take the lead. This was never a competitive thing with the men. There was never any need for debate on women's rights in the area of ministry. It was the natural outcome of any life, called and equipped. The simple fact is that much of the ministry - missions, social, and church work, would be defunct were it not for the women responding to the call.

Entering the ministry in the early 70's as a single female pastor, I then went on to marry and, jointly with my husband, served in our first local church. The hullabaloo of the women's liberation movement seemed insensible to me. I was already liberated through Jesus, as were several generations before me. I felt the feminists didn't know what they were talking about.

However, it is sad for me to look back now, and see the devastation, and ruin, that has been caused by that movement in our society. The saddest thing is to see the subtle and insidious way the philosophies of this movement have crept into church life over two decades. They have eaten away at the very core of our existence and family life.

So now, while on the one hand I have no question at all about the validity of women fulfilling a

ministry role, I would give this advice; to younger women in particular. Take time in the early years of marriage to work on excelling as a wife and mother. Establish your marriage on solid ground. Don't be deceived by the world's opinion that you need to be performing in some ministry role to be accepted as the wife of a pastor.

CAREER PRESSURE

It's my opinion that families in our churches need to be set free from the pressure on women to find a career outside the home - or even within the church. A pastor's wife who is happy to be at home is a great example to, and a release for, other Christian women. That doesn't mean that a woman, pastor's wife or not, can't pursue other interests and goals, but these should never be looked upon as the source of her true value.

Pastor's wives; don't abdicate your chosen role of wife and mother. Learn early to discern between vision and ambition. There is plenty of time and scope for ministry, but don't neglect your family for it.

Pastoring is a vocation, and not a mere career. It has nothing to do with ladder climbing or brownie points, but everything to do with listening to the Father. A ministry in the church can be a great asset in a pastor's wife, but it can also be a great stumbling block, for herself and her husband, if ambition and striving are in her heart.

If I were starting out again I hope I would take my own advice seriously. I hope I would relax in my own giftings and sit back awhile and allow my husband to find his own level. If a wife doesn't try to force her husband to perform well in ministry then he will mature as a pastor far more quickly. Having him secure in his role is a good foundation on which a wife can then venture out into some area of ministry. Over all, a happy and contented pastor means a happy and contented pastor's wife.

WISDOM AND ENCOURAGEMENT

My main role as a pastor's wife is to keep my husband happy and encouraged, and to assist in any way which becomes necessary, while we go through different phases of church and family life. Sometimes that means helping with the work load, and sometimes it means backing off.

I think I've learned to trust my husband's ability to lead the congregation. I realise he will do just as well without God's little helper. I hope I reflect that to the women in our church. It is amazing; the way God equips a saint for service if we give him half a chance.

BOOKS ON COMMUNICATION

There are many well written books on the subject of communication in marriage. I suggest working your way through one of these WITH your husband, and then develop some good communication principles. While we can each learn independently, it's surprising how differently a husband and wife can interpret the same piece of information. Our perspectives are very dissimilar. Reading these books alone does not benefit as much as studying them together and discussing chapters as you go. You will be far more likely to implement good ideas and principles you discover if you read the books together.

Most husbands need to be told very clearly what his wife's limitations, abilities, and needs are. No matter how many hints are dropped, subtle, or unsubtle, he will most likely miss them. Don't be cryptic or talk in riddles. Be clear precise open and honest.

LIMITATIONS

The things a young wife can keep pace with before the babies arrive is often very different from what she can accomplish with two or three little ones at her ankles. Don't be afraid to acknowledge limitations. They are not evil. There will be plenty of time later for more spiritual things.

Communicate clearly about your physical, spiritual, and emotional limitations at any given time. Don't allow room for resentment to grow: 1) From you toward him because he won't ease the pressure, or 2) from him towards you because he doesn't understand the reason for your lost zeal.

PRACTICALITIES

Communicate clearly about practical things; like the need for a regular clothing allowance for yourself. (If he wants to project a good image of himself, you need to be seen to be well cared for). Keep him informed about the increasing costs of living; just talking about these simple things will ease the load for you.

Don't feel obliged to protect your husband from the added pressure of these everyday areas. If they are a source of anxiety or depression to you, share them with him. They are his responsibility. He has broad shoulders. You are not helping yourself, or your husband, if you keep these worries from him. The fact that he is a pastor does not remove the fact that he is your protector and provider. Keeping him in touch with the pressures of everyday living will also keep him in touch with the real world that his flock live in.

Pastors in general could use some good clear advice on the subject of the needs of their wives. Many don't know the pressure put on their wives by the expectations of the people. Many do not have a clear understanding of his wife's role. Perhaps one of the great Christian men writers could include a chapter on these matters in a book for men in leadership. It is certain the majority of pastors will not be reading this one!

SHARING WITH OTHERS

Informal fellowship and sharing times with other pastor's wives is always very beneficial as long as everyone is prepared to be fairly transparent and real. There is much to be learned from pastor's wives who have 'walked the road'. There is also great encouragement gained from shared experiences.

Pastor's wives in general could do with a pretty good dose of encouragement, self esteem, and confidence. This would allow them freedom to be themselves. The unreachable intangible image of the pastor's wife should be toppled from its pedestal - both in the minds of the people and in the understanding of the pastor's wives themselves.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR OWN CONFESSION

Of all the people we communicate with, we talk to ourselves the most. Be aware of, and also beware of, your inner conversations. Watch how you talk to yourself! Sometimes it is good to toss things around in your head, but it can also be a destructive activity. We can go over an incident so many times in our minds, arguing from this side and that, by the time we actually discuss things with our husbands we have blown it out of proportion - all in our own minds. Be careful to keep your inner reasonings factual and honest, whether you are talking about yourself, or others.

The advice from the apostle Paul not to allow any high thing to exalt itself over the knowledge of Christ in my life, has been a constant help to me. I remind myself to call into subjection the many vain imaginations of my heart, and weigh them up against the flawless mirror of the Word of God. How many problems I make for myself by neglecting to do this! Learn to discern the imagination from the fact. Don't react to vain imaginations - act upon the truth.

CHAPTER SIX

SOME PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

EARLY DAYS - JOAN BEARD'S STORY.

OUR FIRST MINISTRY

My husband and I have been in the ministry for thirty eight years. Just after we were married we went to live in Leeton NSW, on an Aboriginal reserve called Wattle Hill. We had both decided that we should serve the Lord full time, live by faith, and trust in the Lord for all our needs. In particular, Bill and I believed the Lord had called us to minister to the Aborigines in the area.

DANGEROUS TIMES

Our home was a large caravan, which we shared with Bill's brother Cliff, his wife Helen, and their first child, Sharon. We had some wonderful times with the precious people at Wattle Hill. Many came to know the Lord, and had their lives completely changed. However, there were some very scary times also. Often at night, and in the early hours of the morning we heard fights, and beatings in progress. Once we watched in horror as a man produced a carving knife to stab a pregnant woman. Fortunately, the woman was saved by an old lady's quick action; she grabbed the knife out of the offenders hand. She was a brave lady, braver than we were, we just stood there frozen to the spot.

GOD'S PROVISION

We experienced some interesting times. Our physical needs were met and food was provided. Sometimes we would find a box of groceries on our doorstep. At other times, as I went visiting, the lady of the house would give me the gift of a carrot; at the next house I would receive, a parsnip, or a single bunch of celery. By the time I reached home I would have enough vegetables to make a pot of soup for dinner. We ate a lot of vegetable soup! Another provision for our table was through Bill and Cliff catching rabbits. We ate rabbits stewed, baked, boiled and cooked in a variety of other ways.

PADDY MELON JAM

A sense of humour was essential for those pioneering days. The Leeton cannery gave us their frost bitten oranges; we would eat so many oranges that Bill and Cliff would say they tasted like pineapples as a joke. Once when the cupboard was bare Bill and Cliff were invited out for a meal. While they were gone I decided to go out for a walk and I found a melon growing in a paddock. Thinking it was a jam melon I took it home and proceeded to make some jam with the last of the sugar we had. After cooking it I was appalled at its bitter and terrible taste. I found later that I had used a paddy melon, which was poisonous and all the jam had to be thrown out.

When Bill arrived home later that day he had heard about the jam. Kindly he said, "Never mind, I have brought you home something to eat." From his pocket he then produced a piece of lamb's fry, wrapped in a tissue. He had taken it from his plate while no one was looking, and slipped it into his pocket. I appreciated that little morsel, and Bill's thoughtfulness. We lost a lot of weight

in those days but we certainly didn't starve. to death.

GOD CONTINUES TO PROVIDE

The Lord was so faithful to us during this time even though we did some unwise things. I remember the time we ran out of petrol. We were in our big mobile caravan on the way to a crusade meeting. There we were, stranded, with about an hour before the meeting was due to start, when along came a man in a little German Volkswagen. He stopped, and asked us who we were, and what we were doing. We found out that he was a Christian and would come to the meeting that night. He was just about to drive off in his car when he came back, and said, "The Lord has just told me to give you my tithe money!"

We said, "Thank you very much;" rejoicing, we went and put petrol in the caravan, and arrived at the meeting on time.

GOD KNEW I WAS HAVING A GIRL

A special memory for me was when I was expecting my first baby. I desperately needed some wool to make some baby clothes. I prayed and asked the Lord to supply my need. Not long after this I received a large parcel in the post. I opened it and there were twenty balls of pink wool. I knitted three layettes with it, hoping I would not have a boy. Of course God knew ahead of time that I was having a girl. That was precious to me; to think that God would use a lady, from my home town, to send me wool for my baby.

Our first missionary journey to Leeton was certainly a time of learning, testing, and blessing. We left there after two years to go north. "Wattle Hill" was never the same again, even the police testified to this as they claimed they were very rarely from this time called on to break up fights on the "Hill".

In the early days of our ministry we moved all over the country, (just ask our two eldest daughters, they still complain about it). We were certainly pioneers in those days starting churches here and there across the country, doing many weird and wonderful things, going through many painful experiences and trials as well as much learning and blessings.

We have been able to pass on our many learning experiences to others so that they might be saved from making the same mistakes as we did. I am so pleased to say we have now been in Wollongong for twenty four years now. The Lord led us from Campbelltown to Wollongong, (By a series of miracles), in 1969 to start a church. We have seen it grow from a small home fellowship into a beautiful prosperous and growing church, from which many ministries have gone out all over Australia.

I have appreciated being able to settle down as it was very hard moving all the time with small children. We have four beautiful children, and we thank God for everyone of them. They are so precious to us as are our sons and daughters in law and nine lovely grandchildren that we now have.

Most of the responsibility of bringing up the children was mine, while Bill did his pastoral work. I could not get involved with church work too much at the time. I believed my children were four very important people who needed to be cared for and brought up to know the Lord. As the

children grew I was able to become more involved in the ministry. They don't stay small for very long as I found out. Now they have all married and have left home I can be full time pastor's wife, ladies leader, and musician.

I have travelled with Bill around Australia and overseas on several occasions. On the whole I love being in the ministry and being a pastor's wife, being able to serve the Lord and the body of Christ. I thank God for his faithfulness to us. He is always there in the good times and the hard times. All glory and praise belongs to him.

TESTIMONY - HEATHER EATON.

THE CALL OF GOD

I was married at nineteen and within a week my husband and I found ourselves in our first ministerial appointment. We had left the city to move to a church in a country town of 25,000 people. Our faces were shining with anticipation for what we had been called to do. The stipend was only \$50.00 a week, but we were keen to live by faith. The people accepted us and the Senior minister and his wife were wonderful to work with, showing great patience in all of their dealings with us.

MY LACK OF TRAINING

Dean and I were so idealistic; nothing could stop us fulfilling God's call on our life. My husband had been to Bible college but I had no training whatsoever. That didn't seem to matter as older Christian women gave me their gems of advice!

Your calling is your enabling; your availability is better than ability; and don't wear trousers, makeup or earrings.

My! How things have changed since then.

DISILLUSION AND DEPRESSION

God did many wonderful things during those first three years, including giving us two children to love. Yet I had become a victim of my own cynical heart, which led me to experience months of deep depression. I could not see myself surviving another week in the ministry let alone another forty years. Why had this happened?

"No", the devil had not led a landslide attack on my person, and "No", he had not completely separated me from God; although I'm sure he was quite pleased I was temporarily in the injured category. The bitterness that was eating me away came from within. As people began to disappoint me, my idealism began to diminish. It was replaced by cynicism and depression. Maybe youth and inexperience had caused this, yet how are we to grow up into wisdom without pain. My own zeal diminished with financial hardship; the Lord always provided sufficient for our needs, but I coveted more. Criticism aimed at me was not taken in grace but defended against. All this was the beginning of my education about people and myself.

PEOPLE SKILLS LACKING

I would get myself tied up in knots over people. Why won't they change and let God work in their lives? Why are they venting their anger on me? What have I done? Only tried to help!

In the end I would get angry to the point of being consumed in my own private tirades. Then the Lord spoke to me from his word.

"These shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven....robbers, liars..."

"Yes, that's right Lord, I agreed."

But then I read..."outburst of anger." I was pierced to the heart and rebuked by the Lord as conviction gripped me.

MY WEAKNESS BECAME GOD'S STRENGTH

Through all the dark times I can see that my weaknesses in the flesh led me to a place of total despair, but it was there that the strength of God could work in my life. He never gave up on me. Whenever I needed him most he would come in all of his strength and power to heal, forgive, and love me.

People's expectations of their pastor and his wife can be so daunting that they can immobilise them in the ministry. Before I entered the ministry with my husband I was under the illusion that a pastor's wife must always be joyous, bouncing around the church, spreading goodwill, looking immaculate. She must never be tired, she must sing like an angel, play the piano like Dino, be constantly feeding the church freeloaders. She must also have a perfect marriage, impeccably behaved children, be always smiling (even at 2.am when someone decides to drop in), run the Sunday School and the ladies meeting, preach, lead worship, and so on. Of course I could never match up.

If anyone knows a woman who can do all of these things, or if anyone thinks they can do all these things then please let me know!

SHATTERING THE ILLUSIONS

We must shatter the illusion of our congregation concerning the myth of the pastor's wife. As a young pastor's wife with small children whenever I met someone half resembling the above I would feel absolutely useless. At these times I would go back to what God had called me to do; instead of trying to keep pace with others.

I soon became very protective of my role as a wife and mother, knowing that the years of childhood in my young would pass quickly and that I must foster my family life with all of my energies. Our first mission field is our children.

The reality of life in most cases for minister's wives is that they will suffer financial hardship, stress to the maximum, a husband who often shows tendencies to become a workaholic with a Messiah complex, an uncertain future (you can never say to your children, "Yes! we are going to live in this house for a long time.") unreal expectations from people, followed by their criticisms.

There is often pressure on a pastor's wife to be another pastor. I have resisted this temptation, put on me by others, as I know God has not led me to do this.

COUNSELLING OTHERS

Women would cry on my shoulder about their marriages. One lady said to me, "It's alright for you, you are married to Dean. You can't possibly understand."

I do have a good marriage, and can honestly say my husband is my best friend, but it hasn't always been easy living with someone who, for great lengths of time, is only seen in the house between the hours of midnight and 8a.m.

Another woman was giving me a great tirade about her husband which ended with, " And he never mows the lawn."

I thought that was normal for husbands!

Women complain to me about their husbands lack of attention, yet at times I feel the same lack, because everyone thinks they own my husband.

Dean and I both learned after a time that our relationship with God, each other, and our children, was the number one priority in our lives. We can cope with most things if we are secure in each others love.

This concept led to a retraining process for the congregation. The church had to learn that their is a cutting off point, a sacred circle of the family, and no one crosses over that line. Christ requires a sacrifice of us, but there are some sacrifices he doesn't require, yet the church can demand them. We have to discern the difference between what God requires and what he does not require, if we are to go on in the ministry.

MANY CHANGES

Things have changed in the last twelve years. Many pastor's wives work out of financial necessity. Should she enjoy that work and make a career of it? Or should she enjoy making a career out of being a mother and a housewife? Shouls she have a life of her own?

As long as the church looks inward, gazing at its own navel, how are we as the body of Christ to spread the Gospel in all the world. Let's be open to God doing things differently from the way he has done them before. Sometimes we shut up the best assets of the church within its walls and won't let them out. If a pastor's wife has to work let her enjoy it without feeling guilty about it. You never know she may turn out to be an effective witness as she keeps in touch with the real world. I have learned that I need to be myself and not an impersonation of someone else. Having outside interests, that have nothing to do with the church or my husbands work, have been a wonderful blessing which has enriched my life with my family.

TRANSPARENCY

The transparency expected in the ministry is often painful. You open your heart to others, as you are either empathising with them or in need yourself. Then something you have said is taken out of context and gossiped all over town. You become wary the next time and appear less open, and

then people say you are cold. You can't win!

Some are disappointed in your performance.

"The last pastor's wife was on five committees and performed several different tasks."

When this was said to me I thought about it, then it dawned on me that the previous pastor's wife was in her late fifties, no longer with small children, and without a part time job.

Some others are surprisingly encouraging. As I met one lady for the first time she exclaimed, "Oh! You're the new pastor's wife. You are nothing like I expected!"

When asked what she expected she replied, "Oh! You know, boring, sensible shoes and a bad perm."

CRITICISM

One of the hardest lessons I have come to learn is the real reason why criticism is aimed at my husband. Of course the devil enjoys this process of disunity. When people aim their anger at the pastor it is really God they are angry with. God hasn't delivered for them, but they see instead that it is the pastor who hasn't helped them. Their problem isn't with the pastor, it is with God, and that is where they must go to resolve their particular difficulty.

People also have a habit of transferring their own guilt onto you. At one time a person who was a very clever and manipulative man convinced us that our marriage was in trouble and so were the marriages of many of our friends. While we were analysing where we had gone wrong, it was revealed that this man was actually having an affair. To cover his own tracks he had taken our attention from him, and turned it onto ourselves. Interesting tactic!

PRESSURE

The pressure on our family life is at times intense yet this is all the more reason to make the effort to spend time with our children. Often this means getting out of our own home. People expect us to have angelic children, and some people do!

Mine, however, are three very strong willed, loud, extroverts that do not get swallowed up in a crowd, but appear to be a crowd by themselves. The humiliation that comes from having your child removed from the Sunday School and brought back into church because he has just attempted to strangle another child cannot be described.

But this is reality. Kids get stressed too, and as parents we need to protect them, and remove as much of that stress as we can, not add to it.

Needless to say my child did not go unpunished, as he had to learn responsibility for his actions.

ADVICE

Keep the church away from the house as much as possible and don't talk about the bad things in front of your children otherwise they could be the next generation of cynics.

SATISFACTION FROM BEING A PASTOR'S WIFE

I still remember the day the Lord gave me a vision and called me to be a pastor's wife. My immediate reaction was to chastise myself for a vivid imagination, but the Lord persisted with me until I finally accepted what he was saying. I had no idea what lay ahead. I was seventeen at the time and had only been a Christian for 18 months. I stored this vision in my heart and waited for the Lord. Now fourteen years later I have been living in that calling for twelve years.

In many ways the life of a pastor's wife is unglorious, but the paradox is that I know I would be miserable outside of the ministry. How do I know?

We did take six months off at one stage, but the God given desire for ministry would not go away. Instead it increased, and I was given a fresh revelation of God's love for the church.

In the ministry we see people at their worst, but also at their best. The glory and the joy of seeing people changed into the likeness of Christ is unsurpassed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE HOME AND FAMILY

CHARACTER

Ancient Rome was built on the home and family. There was only one divorce recorded during the first 500 years. That divorce was caused by a man who wanted children, but his wife was barren, so he divorced her and remarried to have children. (William Barclay) family.(William Barclay)

Then Rome with her mighty army conquered Greece. Her soldiers were stationed there and many Greek slaves were shifted to Rome to serve their new masters.

Gradually the Romans were corrupted by the debauchery of the Greeks. They descended into frenetic lust, and the home and family which, until that time, had been the backbone of the nation, began to disintegrate. Divorce became common. One woman was known to have sixteen husbands. Young women began to refuse to marry, for they could see no reason to do so.

In our day our lax society with its looser morals and the humanistic philosophies espoused by some universities and colleges have twisted many lives. Houses, cars, riches and the "good" things of life have replaced truth, integrity, family, home. In Australia, a prominent politician has been laughed at and derided for his honesty!

Today when the moral fibre of the nation seems to be disintegrating before our eyes, we need more than ever before to be aware that Jesus is Lord, and that he must be Lord of our lives.

Some Christians do not reach this stage at all. They have no joy. They have only enough Christianity to make them miserable, but not enough for overflowing peace and joy. "In his presence is fulness of joy."

What does it mean to say that Jesus is Lord?

Our modern perception of a king is quite unlike the real power a monarch possessed in ancient times. A king had decision of life and death over his subjects. He demanded absolute loyalty and faithfulness, backed up by the life and riches of each subject. He demanded absolute obedience. What does this mean to us?

Are we completely loyal, faithful and obedient to our Lord?

You may have no gross sin in your life, but how do you react out in the market place, in your job, out there in the world. Are you willing to lose your job because of your integrity?

Our homes and families should be an example to others. We should be examples to our children. Let us take the test of love. We expect our children to be loyal, faithful, obedient, and full of integrity. God expects the same from us. We are his children.

How do we measure up? There are five different kinds of sin mentioned in the Word of God.

1. Missing the target. Greek "harmartia". Means falling short of perfection. Have we been as good as we could have been? Have we reached our full potential in God?
2. Stepping across the line between right and wrong. Greek "parabasis". Means transgression. Do we always stay on the side of honesty? Do we never, by word or silence, twist, evade, or distort the truth? Do we always stay on the side of love, courtesy, unselfishness?
3. Slipping across. Greek "paraptoma". Means offence, more of a blunder than a deliberate act. Are we ever swept away by passionate sin? This form of sin is not as deliberate as stepping across.
4. Lawlessness. Greek "anomia". Means iniquity, and occurs 70 times in the Psalms. This is the sin of one who knows what is right but deliberately chooses to do wrong.
5. A failure to pay what is due. Greek "opheilema". Means a failure in duty. (William Barclay's Daily Study Bible).

It is good to make deliberate choices in life before we are challenged by a trial or temptation. Thus we should decide that we will never commit adultery, never divorce, never tell a lie. Then when an opportunity for sin arises we are ready to spurn it. We have already committed ourselves to truth, integrity, faithfulness, and loyalty. There should be no conflict, no dwelling on or dreaming about possible actions to further the trial, and make it harder to resist.

A crisis does not make us, but it does reveal who we truly are deep down. Our character is not formed by the crisis times; rather it is formed by the choices we make day after day.

Then again, although your actions may be right and good, you can be defeated over and over again by your reactions to the daily grind, to life situations and to other people's actions. Your inner reactions, if they are ones of jealousy, resentment, hatred, fear, or self pity can be hidden from others, but still bring defeat and ruin upon us.

If I plan ahead and make sure my outward actions are all good and pleasant, that is good; but it is my spontaneous reactions, which are unplanned, that reveal my true character.

"That which comes out of a man defiles the man." (Mk.7:20)

Our real problem is not external, but internal. The difficulties, the pressures, the adversities, and the disappointments we face cause reactions in us which, if revealed, show our true character, whether strong or weak.

Some people are controlled by others, they never initiate anything, they only react to what others are saying or doing. Do not allow others to manipulate your actions; decide for yourself to live for God; and to forge your being after his principles.

How can we be a good example to others?

We must realise that everyone of us has some influence on others. Every change in a person can be traced back to an individual who had influence. Think back over your own life to significant moments that changed you. A few words spoken can have a profound influence. You can make a significant contribution to the lives of others. Your life, your happiness can affect them. Statistics have shown that we each bring significant change to at least 162 people in our lifetime.

People need to see healthy happy Christians, with joyful and contented lifestyles and marriages.

There are four things we can teach others to help them maintain a happy marriage and family life.

1. Keep a positive outlook. A negative person drains and dejects others and makes it harder for them to succeed. Finally, to protect themselves, they begin to avoid that person. What a contrast a happy well adjusted person makes to family life. Everyone loves her and wants to be near her.
2. Assume God- given responsibilities. The principles of the Bible do work, but we have to work them. We must decide that our marriage is going to work and go on from there. We must make deliberate choices to follow the instructions given to us in the Word. If we do these things, where it is necessary for change to occur, the dynamics of our life will alter.
3. Concentrate on training your children during the first five years. You will reap great rewards if you spend time with them in the early years, when character is formed. There are many fine books available now to help in this task.
4. Practise God's presence in everything you do. The Jews had prayers for every occasion of life. If you follow this practice you will be bringing God into every part of your daily family life.(De.6:4-7). Christianity won't be a thing apart; your children will see it working.

Maturity remains the secret of a well adjusted marriage. It delivers us from selfishness and from using our partner to satisfy us and our desires. It gives us the ability and willingness to act in a way that makes it easier to adapt to each other. It accepts full responsibility for its own actions and the consequences of its own decisions. It is able to persevere patiently and never give up. In the end we will have the kind of marriage we are willing to work and pray for, the kind we truly desire. Building a happy is itself a ministry today. Learn the things that work for you, and then teach others what you have learned.

Your marriage is everyone's business! They need to see that marriage can work. It is the nation's business! Good families are the back-bone of the nation. It is your child's business! If your marriage ends in divorce then it not only brings disintegration to you, but also can bring disintegration of your child's personality.

Marriage is God's business!

"...You flood the Lord's altar with your tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you

have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce', says the Lord God of Israel, 'And I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,' says the Lord Almighty. (Mal.2:13-16).

How we perceive God is tied up with our marriage, our family and our children.

If the father has no pity for his child then Ps.103:13 will have no meaning for the child.

"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him."

If the mother does not comfort her child then Is.66:13 will have no meaning.

"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you;..."

Pr.18:24 reveals God as closer than a brother. Brothers are also part of the family. If there has been incest then how will a sister feel about this text?

"...There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Ep.5:25 reveals the true and godly husband, how could a woman resist loving and revering a husband who was willing to die for her as Christ died for the church?

"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her."

God wants us to have happy families, and we can have them if Jesus is Lord of our lives and we allow him to form our character. Selfishness will go! We will love one another and be a marvellous, example to all who so desperately need to be taught how to live.

Things to do with your children!

Take them for picnics, to the zoo, to the beach. Read stories to them. Seek to show that serving Jesus and loving him can be fun. Answer gladly any questions asked. Spend time with them; thus building their self esteem.

Realise being a witness doesn't mean running around neglecting home and family. It means living the Christian life as an example to others. Let them see Christianity works!

THE WIFE

During the days of the early church women gave of their time, their possessions, and their homes. Paul instructed Titus to bid the older women to be reverent, not to be gossips, to teach and train the younger women to love their husbands and children and to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands. And the reason? So the Word of God should not be discredited. Titus2:3-5.

For many years I thought God should be first in my life. And this is correct, but next on my list of priorities came the church. Being full of zeal for God I thought he and his church must come

first.

However, after much prayer and meditation and a few unhappy experiences I became convinced my list was wrong.

Now my list reads this way. 1. God. 2. Husband. 3. Home and family. 4. Church. and, 5. Neighbourhood, good works etc. Therefore, after God, my first priority is my husband. How did God show me what it means to be a good wife?

First he taught me to love myself, to work out a good self- image. Only then would I be set free to love my husband as he needed to be loved.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself." Mt.22:37-39.

Together a man and a woman make up all of the qualities of God therefore he taught me I needed to be a help-meet to my husband. (Ge.1:27;2:18).

Usually a man has more logic and a woman more intuition so that together they can work out their problems. God gave us to our husbands for strength and support and the wise man will listen to his wife and weigh her words before making any important decision. Husbands and wives should complement each other and not compete against one another.

"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord." Pr.18:22.

Strive to live always so your husband will not regret choosing you as his help-meet!

A wife is to be a companion to her husband. What a comfortable word that is. In those heart breaking verses in Malachi 2:14 where God cries out against divorce he calls the wife, "your partner and the wife of your marriage covenant". In Proverbs we read "two are better than one". If one falls the other will raise him, they keep each other warm and protect one another.

There are many very lonely people in this world. We are very blessed to have a husband and more especially a Christian husband. Let us be a true companion, one in whom he can safely trust. If we sow love, we will reap love, if we sow kindness, we will reap kindness.

We must love our husbands as we are commanded to do in Tit. 2:4. In the context of marriage in Bible days where marriages were arranged, love was something that followed marriage, it was something the wife chose to do or not to do. In our day we begin with love and sometimes it may be hard to continue to love, but we have no option. We must decide to love, and continue to love, our husbands. No matter what vicissitudes we face, because we have vowed to do so. "For richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live."

I was horrified during our ten years in America to have some pastors confide in me that their wives controlled them by threatening to leave them and obtain a divorce, to ruin their ministry, if they would not do what they wanted.

We are taught in Ep.5:33 to respect our husbands. This should be an easy thing for any wife whose husband is fulfilling the scriptural directions which refer to him, and show he is to love his

wife enough to die for her, even as Christ died for the church.(Ep.5:25.)

Last of all a wife should learn from her husband. If a husband is fulfilling his duty to his wife he will be setting her free to grow and develop and learn, just as he wants to grow and develop and learn. In doing this he will be loving her as he loves himself.

As women we must be aware and deal quickly with hurts, bitterness, criticism, and jealousy. Take them to the Lord and let him heal you. If you don't do this you will be miserable with self pity which is a breeding ground for all kinds of misery and unhappiness in your marriage. Don't allow a day to go by without dealing with any of these things, keep short accounts with God and with your husband. If you do then you will have a happy and peaceful home which will be an example to all.

THE MOTHER

A family is a picture of the church and of Jesus' relationship to the church, let him be your example. Provide a climate in your home in which love, trust, honesty and security can flourish. If you don't have this then all of the material things you can provide will have no meaning. They will just bring frustration and anger to your children. Trust and tenderness are fragile, they cannot survive battering and bruising. People withdraw and retreat if they are hurt. Home must be a place where family members can give love without being hurt or taken advantage of.

Remember love is a doing word, you can't say you love someone and do things that prove otherwise.

" Our actions speak louder in heaven than our words do on earth."

God chooses us to use us. There is no one else who can mother our children in the same way we can. If we leave this task undone it will not be done as well. Mothering our children is the next most important task for us as women. Our first is loving and supporting our husbands. Our children are a gift to us from God, the greatest gift God can give to a man and his wife.

A child is one of life's greatest responsibilities and each child is a treasure of possibilities waiting to be revealed. We must give our children love first, then discipline. If we do this then our love will make up for our many blunders. Not one of us is perfect and we must ask God to guide us every day.

Never be afraid to say those very important words, "I'm sorry!" or "I was wrong!" If you can admit your faults then your child will gain the courage to admit his or her faults so they can be dealt with.

Let us look at Mary as an example of motherhood. She was a good example in three ways.

1. She was submissive to the will of God.

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." ... Lu.1:38. (See also Ps.40:8;143:10).

Mary disdained the prayer of many people. Most of us want to change God instead of allowing

God to change us. So we pray many times "May it not be..." By contrast Mary was submissive and ready to agree with God. "May it be to me as you have said," was her prayer. She was called to a most incredible task and she was ready. She was ready because

2. She was full of the Word of God.

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."Ps.119:11.

Mary was steeped in Scripture, learned at her mother's knee. She knew someone would be chosen to bear the Messiah. She knew she was descended from David and therefore there was a possibility she could be the chosen one. She was obviously familiar with Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam.2 as the Magnificat has echoes of Hannah's prayer.

The more we store the word of God in our hearts the more we are renewed and freed from past guilty fears so that we can serve God. How important it is to teach our children right from the start of their lives the life giving words of God, to fill their minds with good and pure thoughts.

"Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." Ph.4:8 (see also Ep.5:26-27).

3. She was overflowing with the joy of God.

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. Lu.46-47.

Mary rejoiced in her God and so can we. He has saved us from sin, from sickness and from eternal death.

Rejoicing will keep us healthy and happy ,and it will ensure a happy home life.

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news brings health to the bones." Pr.15:30.

Rejoicing will make it even more likely our children will learn to love God and follow him. They will learn their attitude toward God by watching us. Are you stern or loving, happy or sad? Remember you are their role model.

A child's basic needs for love and self worth are met by the mother from the day he or she is born. This is because she has the necessary equipment to nourish and nurture that baby.

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?" Is.49:15 (See also Is.66:11-13;1Th.2:7).

In Bible days weaning took place between two and three years of age and it produced a very peaceful and contented child.

"But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me." Ps.131:2.

A mother teaches her children. (Pr.1:8;6:20.) Her children bless her because she loves them.(

Pr.31:28; Ti.2:4.)

THE HUSBAND.

The Jews have a prayer which devout Jewish men still pray each morning.

"I thank you God that I was not made a Gentile, a slave, or a woman."

In Bible days the status of women was very different from what it is today. Divorce was very easy and given for trivial reasons. Jesus came to change all of this and Paul's remarks in Ep.5:22-23 raise the ideal of marriage to the highest level. Nowadays women have stepped down from this pedestal in their search for freedom. Many men no longer respect them as they used to do. Indeed there is a great increase in the abuse of women.

Christian men are taught to love their wives sacrificially, even as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. They are taught to love their wives and cherish them and they are forbidden to hate them.

A man's wife belongs to him, the Bible says she has been placed under him for her protection. He is not to coerce her or bully her but to protect and care for her. He is not to insist on his own way in everything but together they are to work out their problems with God's help. The wife in turn should be grateful for her husband's covering and protection and not rebellious under it.

On the other hand the husband should be aware of the trust placed in him by God and measure up to it by his tender caring. The wife is not owned by her husband, only God can be said to own us, for he bought us with the precious blood of Jesus. However she belongs to her husband and in belonging to him she is in her rightful place.

I have lost the article now but I remember reading one time of a non-Christian club in England set up solely to teach good manners to couples. They claimed to have saved hundreds of marriages.

If husbands and wives would follow this simple rule of good manners, and reverse the usual trend, which is to be extra nice to the people outside of the family and atrociously rude to the partner to whom they should be loving and kind, then we would have some very beautiful, and restful, and supportive relationships within marriage.

Husbands and wives should pray for one another rather than criticise. Maybe your partner needs to change, but perhaps before God can change your partner he needs to do something in you first. Other people change in relation to changes in us. Couples should accept one another as they are and not try to change one another. Only God can change an individual.

A lack of love and mutual submission can cause the Word of God to be discredited and our prayers to go unanswered.

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." 1 Pe.3:7.

Lars I. Granberg, president of North West College, Iowa has these words to share: "Learning to give when we'd rather receive, forgive when we'd rather nurse a grudge and love when we'd rather be loved, moves us toward Christian maturity."

This kind of Christian maturity leads to happiness in marriage.

The husband who is also a pastor needs to be especially careful of his wife. He needs to be protective, if he sees she is doing too much he needs to caution her, if he sees she is being attacked he needs to show his support for her, he needs to make it abundantly clear to all that she is first and foremost his support and encouragement and the mother of his children before any extra demands are made of her.

He needs to make it clear that she and she only is the object of his love and regard, that he respects her and will not allow her to be hurt or taken advantage of.

If he will do these things then she will be set free from the demands of others and able to set her own agenda. She will be far more relaxed and happy to be a pastor's wife.

THE FATHER

Fathers are very important to children, it is becoming more and more apparent as research continues. Because many fathers have abandoned their role over the last twenty years we are now beginning to see just what a tragedy this can be. Fathers are vitally needed, by both sons and daughters. A weak or absent father can result in homosexuality in the sons and harlotry in the daughters.

What then does a Christian father need to do and be to protect his children from a disintegration of personality?

Most important is to love his wife, the mother of his children, to be there during the pregnancy, nurturing, protecting and providing for mother and baby. To speak to the baby while he or she is still in the womb, to pray for, and bless the baby even before he or she is born. In recent experiments it has been proved that babies can hear in the womb, of course they don't understand the words but hearing the father's voice prepares them for hearing his voice once they are born. This helps with the bonding of father and child.

What is a father? In the Bible a father is described as one who encourages, exhorts, and comforts.

"For you know how, like a father with his children we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God." 1 Thess.2:11-12.(RSV)

To exhort means to use words or arguments to arouse or spur on to good deeds. To encourage is to give courage to, to give confidence to, to inspire. So discipline is not all spankings and punishment but rather the positive task of exhorting and encouraging the children in our care.

Fathers also teach and train, bringing their children up in the discipline or the instruction of the Lord.

"These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." De.6:6-7.

"Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ep.6:4. (see also Col.3:21)

A good father does not provoke his children until they get angry but he disciplines his children with a firm kindness. Many times the word discipline is used in the book of Proverbs. 75% of these verses refer to correction, rebuke, instruction or reproof and only 25% refer to any form of physical punishment.

The foundation of discipline must be love. Discipline starts from the day a child is born because the foundation of discipline is love and trust. A baby whose cries are responded to promptly and whose needs are met regularly is a baby who feels loved and is developing trust.

How is this positive direction and self control developed in a child? Through unconditional love. It is easy to discipline a child who feels loved. The biggest task in discipline is to make the child feel loved. Punishment is part of discipline but only a small part. Discipline is primarily training, instruction and correction.

Self esteem is built in this way: "...giving a child our full, undivided attention in such a way that he feels without a doubt that he is completely loved. That he is valuable enough in his own right to warrant the parent's undistracted watchfulness, appreciation and uncompromising regard." Dr. Ross Campbell in "How to Really Love Your Child."

These days children have trouble with perceiving God as Father. This is because a child's perception of God is shaped by his parents and so many have abusive parents. If the parents primary orientation toward their children is one of unconditional love, forgiveness and nurture, then the child will have a true perception of God. If, on the other hand, the parents primary orientation is one of conditional love, judgement and punishment, the children will have a false perception of God.

Pastoring(or fathering) children needs constant prayer, for their physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. It requires transparency. Struggles and mistakes need to be shared and sometimes forgiveness needs to be asked.

"Behold children are a gift of the Lord." Ps.127:3.

"Successful family living strikes me as being in many ways like playing chamber music. Each member of the ensemble has his own skills....but the grace and strength and sweetness of the performance come from everyone's willingness to subordinate individual skill and personal ambition to the requirement of balance and blend." (Annis Duff).

ADDENDUM

SPECIAL CONCERNS OF WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

These are the concerns of women in leadership, not necessarily pastor's wives.

1. They are concerned about the lack of training and opportunities to get together with other leaders for encouragement, help, further training, and inspiration.
2. Some have received training but still feel the need for refresher courses and the opportunity to share together and learn from one another. Those younger than 40 years of age had received far more training than the older ladies and this is a good sign and gives hope for the future.
3. Their helpful advice for other leaders.:
 - a. Take each day as it comes, never give up.
 - b. Read books on leadership.
 - c. Listen to others and learn from them.
 - d. You have been called so God will provide the ability.
 - e. Don't lose your sense of humour.
 - f. Be punctual.
 - g. Be loyal to your leaders, try to see and understand the vision and direction of the pastor's and leaders of the church.
 - h. Don't take things too personally when someone is angry.
 - i. Don't carry other people's hurts and problems, learn to give them over to the Lord.
 - j. Remember to spend time alone with God. Don't get too busy so that you neglect prayer. Rely on the Holy Spirit for direction.
 - k. Seek advice from some other women in leadership before you begin.
 - l. Find someone to relate to and share with.
 - m. Seek personal ministry when necessary.
 - n. Accept the fact that you may fail sometimes and learn from your failures.
 - o. Always be learning, reading, studying so you have something to give.
 - p. Request advice and training for the specific task you are asked to do. Advice tailored to your needs and experience.
 - q. Your first duty if you are married is to your husband and children, don't neglect them.
 - r. Support your husband.
 - s. Don't be afraid.
 - t. Be a God pleaser, not a man pleaser.
 - u. Learn to delegate.
4. The areas most difficult to handle.
 - a. People who like to be the centre of attention.
 - b. Having to transport people to meetings and so being rushed and flurried when arriving at meetings.

- c. Seeing people I had grown close to leaving the church.
 - d. Pressures of time.
 - e. My husband complaining that church takes too much of my time.
 - f. Maintaining motivation.
 - g. Standing against discouragement.
 - h. No access to any kind of leadership meetings.
 - i. People rejecting you because of your leadership.
 - j. Challenges from God.
 - k. People who think they know it all and aren't open to teaching.
 - l. The desire to hide and not go into leadership, to back off.
 - m. Overcoming a sense of inadequacy.
 - n. Getting people to overcome their shyness and worship God aloud and with enthusiasm.
 - o. Song leading, leading worship, counseling.
 - p. Getting the study discussion back on track after it getting off the track.
 - q. Some pastor's and leader's misunderstandings and treatment of us.
5. The best part of being a leader.
- a. It gives me more confidence.
 - b. It helps me to understand people.
 - c. Seeing women change, being able to give out to others.
 - d. To care for people, to make disciples, to see them mature and become strong in God.
 - e. Being where God wants me.
 - f. Fulfilling the will of God.
 - g. The opportunity to use and develop spiritual gifts.
 - h. Being able to express compassion/empathy as a woman to other women.
 - i. Helping shy people to be more outgoing.
6. The worst part of being a leader.
- a. Dealing with rowdy children during meetings.
 - b. To be separated from my husband for leader's retreats.
 - c. Having no older woman to help me and relate to me.
 - d. Trying to find a place in which to counsel people.
 - e. Having people judge you constantly.
 - f. Having to give when you don't feel like it.
 - g. Being used by people.
 - h. Getting too busy for your family.
 - i. Feeling I need to be available to everyone.
 - j. Pulling people up without hurting their feelings.
 - k. Being deserted by leaders when at a point of crisis.
7. Special Comments.
- a. Leaders should have their own house in order first and make sure they are giving adequate time to husband and children before they attempt to teach others.
 - b. Being a leader is a privilege and a great responsibility, not to be taken lightly.
 - c. Be careful not to give wrong advice to people. Let them make their own decisions after counselling.
 - d. Remain teachable.

- e. Being a leader is often challenging and stressful and many times unrewarding, yet serving God is one of the greatest honours I could ever hope for.
- f. Working in the area of counselling I find it difficult to keep motivated and stand against discouragement.
- g. Make sure that as leaders we always present the things of God with love and zeal, not allowing ourselves to become lazy or weary but serving the Lord joyfully.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH ON PASTOR'S WIVES.

These results came from a series of questions put to pastor's wives during the last two years.

- Training.

55% of the pastor's wives I had fill out my questionnaire had received some Bible school training, the rest had received no training at all. Only five felt they had received any specific training as a Pastor's wife. Three were pastor's daughters so altogether eight had some preparation. 16% trained! No wonder we have burned out, disillusioned, bitter women who have taken their husbands out of ministry!

- Advice

61% received no advice from anyone. Of the other 39%, 6 received help from other pastor's wives and the rest received help from Leader's conferences. Imagine! 61% receiving no help from anyone. Only 39% receiving any help at all! Recently CRC pastor's wives have received help from Lois Cronin, Liz Bailey, and Moya Enright. Those who have received helpful advice have been sincerely grateful. It has made a tremendous difference to their lives.

In the questionnaire I asked them what helpful advice they would give other pastor's wives.

The single most repeated piece of advice was to "Be yourself! Be a God pleaser, not a man pleaser. Live your life to please God not as people would like you to live. Don't let people place you in a mould!"

Other advice they offered included the following; the variety of advice given shows clearly how different we are from one another. It is affected by their age, their position, and by the size of their church.

- Support your husband
- Find your ministry gift and pursue and enjoy it.
- Keep a guard on your personal relationships
- Don't give up.
- Don't try to copy anyone else.
- Live by the Word.
- Let the Lord mould and change you where necessary.
- Encourage your husband in his ministry.
- Seek God and extend yourself.
- Stay close to your husband and develop your relationship. Pray together.
- Remember husband and children are top priority.
- Learn when to say "no". Know how to delegate.

- Don't be pressured to do something. Know God has called you. Don't feel guilty because you can't do something.
- Give God the problems, don't try to carry them yourself.
- Don't try to fulfill others unreal expectations.
- Don't be a jack of all trades and don't cut yourself off from the church.
- Don't be dominated by the opinions of others, but do listen.
- Believe that in his plan God intended you to be a pastor's wife.