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Role of the Minister's Wife

Sosamma Abraham

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ROLE OF THE MINISTER'S WIFE

A Graduate Research Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Religious Education

by

Sosamma Abraham

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are only a few references made to the minister's wife in the Bible. But there is no question about her existence. Both Matthew and Luke refer to the mother-in-law of Peter. Paul, in writing to Timothy, asserts that the minister is "the husband of one wife" (I Tim.3:2). Paul also says that the deacons' wives are to "be grave, not slanderers, sober, and faithful in all things: (I Tim. 3:11).

The one reason for the fewness of Biblical references to the minister's wife is the fact that at this early period the ministry had not become professionalized.¹ That is, the religious leadership of the New Testament church was essentially a lay leadership. The concept of a clearly defined ministry in which a dichotomy was made between the layman and the clergyman evolved subsequent to New Testament times. Therefore, on seeking a picture of the minister's wife we must look to references in the Bible to wives in general.

A beautiful picture of her is given in Proverbs 31:10-20. The Biblical wife was domestic. As Paul phrased it later, she "guides the house" (I Tim.5:14). "Her primary sense of fulfillment was achieved within the home, nurturing her children, spinning, weaving and caring for her husband." Her reward was to see her husband honoured and esteemed within the community

¹Wallace Denton, The Role of the Minister's Wife, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) p.:18.

and observe her children grow into adulthood as godly citizens, marry and have children. In all this she knew she had played a vitally important role. With reference to her husband she was a helpmate. The relationship between them was characterized by love, trust and a mutual recognition that they both stood responsibly related to a living God.² The husband was the head of the house. Thus Paul admonished young wives to "be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands" (Tit.2:4,5).

The role of ministers' wives is strikingly similar to that of wives of other business and professional men. However, these roles diverge at the point of the expectations of the minister's wife to participate in her husband's work. She is expected, by her husband, church and herself to work with him, to a greater or lesser degree. The wife of a minister is expected to have some knowledge of religion and is called upon to speak on religious topics. Her counsel is sought on religious problems. The comprehensive role of the minister's wife is composed of many subroles: wife, mother, hostess, devotional speaker, counselor and others.

One wife responded that the place of the minister's wife is "to help her husband as much as possible but to be strictly in the background". Another said, "I don't think the minister's wife has any special place. Like other women, I believe she should be a helpmate to her husband and provide him the comfortable home". The minister's wife is actively participating with her husband but in a behind-the-scene type of activity. The husband and his work continue to be one of the primary focuses of the family. By

²Ibid. p. 18.

virtue of her role as minister's wife what she does is different from what the other women do. Even though the ministers' wives are leading a life of activity within the church somewhat like the other active laywomen, they are still reminded of the fact that they are not simply other women. It is probably safe to say that no wife is without some conflict in the performance of her role. This is to be expected. The wife who rejects her role has more difficulty than one who does so to assume another role such as that of a teacher.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to help the minister's wife find her role in her husband's ministry. It is also to help those who are going to be ministers' wives.

Importance of the study. The minister's wife should have some knowledge of her role in her husband's ministry. Most of the ministers' wives may not have enough theological training. Thus it is helpful for them to know and make use of the sources which are available to them. The ministers' wives are involved in their husband's ministry one way or the other. So it is necessary for them to be prepared to help their husbands in their ministry.

Limitations of the study. This study is limited to the role of the ministers' wives, not to the laywomen. There is a relationship and a responsibility associated with this role. Her relationship to her family, church members and others is also discussed in this paper. It deals with the practical aspects of the ministry of the ministers' wives in the present day living. The responsibilities of the minister's wife is also evident

from this study. The books written for the ministers' wives are limited.

Method of procedure. This study begins with the role of minister's wife in the family, which consists of her role towards her husband and children.

This is the essence of chapter two.

Chapter three deals with her role in the church and in the community, which shows the different ways she can minister to the people.

Chapter four deals with the positive and negative qualities of the minister's wife.

Chapter five shows how the minister's wife can receive her preparation and training.

Chapter six looks into some of the problems which ministers' wives face.

Chapter seven deals with the joys and rewards of the ministry.

Chapter eight gives the conclusion of this paper.

Sources of data. The main sources of this study has been books. Some periodicals also have been used. The books that were most helpful to this study were Wallace Denton, The Role of the Minister's Wife, Arthur W. Hewitt, The Shepherdess, Daniel S. McDaniel, The Pastor's Helpmate, Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastors Wife and the Church, and Welthy H. Fisher, Handbook for Ministers' Wives.

CHAPTER TWO

ROLE OF MINISTER'S WIFE IN THE FAMILY

The chief area of service for ministers' wives is at their homes. Here they can make their most important contribution to the church and its cause. "There is no one more responsible for the depth and purity of home religion than the pastor's wife"¹. If the home religion of the minister and his family is pure and natural it won't be long before they are influencing other homes. "If the welfare of nations depends upon its homes, so does that of the churches! Back of the most useful pastorates are found happy homes; the secret of many failures is the lack of congenial companionship in the sacred circle"². Whether this home is a parsonage or not, it must be in good taste, well-kept, cheerful and inviting. As the home is an important factor in the life of the pastor, it is also with the children. Thus, this chapter deals with the role of the minister's wife towards her husband and children.

1. TO THE HUSBAND

"Behind every successful man, there is a good woman". The first duty of a shepherdess is to be a good wife to her husband.

¹Things a Pastor's Wife Can Do (Philadelphia; American Baptist Publication Society, 1898) p. 44.

²Douglas S. McDaniel, The Pastor's Helpmate (Tennessee; Broadman Press, 1942) p. 40.

If the minister's wife did no other thing than to make her husband happy and at rest in a perfect home, then through its effect on him she would have done more for the parish than ten thousand times all other service she could possibly do. To be his perfect lover is her greatest and most sacred duty. There must be sexual harmony, understanding and communion, if there is to be perfect spiritual love. The first habit of the perfect home is affection, second, respect, third, devotion to God and fourth sharing all life.

The chief area of service for ministers' wives is at their home. How do ministers' wives help their husbands in the home? Provide "relaxed atmosphere", "encouragement", "being a friendly critic", "running an orderly home" and "providing a refuge" are frequently mentioned. "If he is despondent, she cheers him, if discouraged, she encourages him, if bewildered, she talks it out with him, if filled with hostility, she hears him out."³ As one pastor phrased it: "she ... will help him buckle on his armor as he leaves home in the morning. She will be first to greet him at the close of the day and bind up the inevitable wounds of life's skirmishes"⁴. The wife's relationship is one of mutual sharing in her husband's work, though the main sphere of participation appears to be more of a supportative role in the home. The biblical concept of the wife as a helpmate appears to prevail throughout the husband-wife relationships.

"The traditional concept of the family views the father as the head of the house; the mother is entrusted with the care

³Wallace Denton, The Role of the Minister's Wife (Philadelphia; The Westminster Press, 1962) p. 48.

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

of the house and children; and in return for this love and care, the children owe their parents honor and obedience. Developmental concepts of the family are based on interpersonal relations of mutual affection, companionship, and understanding. Associated with this is a recognition of individual capabilities, desires, and needs for the development of each member of the family, whether father, mother, or child."⁵

There is a meaningful participation in their home life. Husband and wife sharing in a meaningful conversation, reading, listening to music are essential parts of their personal life together. One of the common expectations that the husband has of the wife is to listen and share with him some of the problems of the parish. To know how to give his mind its freedom at the right times. A sympathetic wife who is a good listener to all his hopes and troubles is a helpmeet indeed. She should be able to appreciate his good points. He may need a great deal of kindly criticism, correction of mannerisms and other things from his wife. One pastor remarking on this point said, "it's awfully nice to have in the congregation a friendly critic who doesn't have an ax to grind". "You need a pulse out there", he continued, "and my wife serves that function very well because you never know how things will sound from the pews".⁶

One wife said that the minister needs someone to talk to, because he carries the burdens of the whole church. There are limits to which a wife can or should be expected to bear the cares and burdens of her husband unless she herself has someone to whom she can turn. But the opportunity to share together some of her husband's concern can be deeply rewarding. It is one of those things which bind a couple together. In all of this

⁵Ibid., p. 92.

⁶Ibid., p. 48.

there seems to be more than verbal exchange, but beneath the words there is communicated a sense of acceptance, love, belonging and understanding. The ability to discuss things together accounts for successful and happy marriages of ministers. "The degree to which a pastor and his wife are able to communicate on the deeper levels, to that degree their marriage is strengthened. Without it, even minor irritations are fertile soil for major conflicts"⁷ Another positive aspect of minister's wife's ability to share meaningful discussions with their husbands is that it encourages them to grow together.

There is another sense in which ministers' wives can help their husbands. The pastor's home is frequently the scene of dinners or other types of entertainment. Various board meetings are held there on occasion. Visiting dignitaries are rather common experience. During these times the wives are responsible for hostess duties. The parsonage telephone rings frequently. The parsonage is viewed as an information dispensing service by many parishioners. The wives seem to feel that they are participating in their husband's work, performing a vital function by answering the telephone, answering questions and making appointments. Another way the wife can help her husband is by doing secretarial works such as typing, keeping records, getting out mailing etc.

"As a minister's wife you are standing alongside a man dedicated to God's work in the world. You stand with him and for him. You share his life, his work, his sorrows and his joys; you share his struggles and his triumphs,"⁸

⁷Ibid., p. 100.

⁸Welthy H. Fisher, Handbook for Minister's Wives (New York: Woman's Press. 1950) p. 59.

said Mrs. Welthy H. Fisher, in her book called "Handbook for Ministers' Wives". No minister can develop to his fullest capacity unless the one who lives most intimately with him shares his enthusiasm for the work to which he is devoting his life. The minister and his wife must stand together for their own happiness, and for the sake of their work in the church. First, there must be togetherness in goal and purpose. Unless the wife has felt an inner leading of the Lord to make the sacrifices and denials that are entailed in her marriage, she is apt to be resentful of any demands that are made on her time. The wife's attitude toward her husband's work has a great effect on him.

"When a minister knows that his wife believes in what he is doing, is backing him up in his work, is praying for its success and seeking God's will and blessing on his ministry, he is provided with a great incentive to be and do his best. The knowledge that she is cheerfully giving him time and encouragement to do all the work he feels is necessary, even though she might personally want attention herself, keeps him happy, as he devotes himself to the purpose of his work."⁹

Second, there should be togetherness in spiritual growth as well as in purpose. There is strong temptation to take care of the spiritual needs of others and to let one's own needs go. To keep the Lord's blessing on your marriage and your work, it is important to make a daily practice of reading the Word and praying together as a family. The two marriage partners also should have a private time of reading the Word and praying together. Learn to lean on each other spiritually. Stand together and then grow together spiritually. Togetherness in your spiritual life is the backbone and main support of your ministry and of a happy marriage.

⁹Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1964) p. 78.

Third, there should be a togetherness in love. Work together to maintain love and a happy marriage, just as we have to work at anything else. The special stresses and strains that come to the pastor and his wife are often the cause of their gradually drifting apart in the most important function of the marriage, that of talking things over and settling them. Real love is responded to with the same love.

Fourth, there should be togetherness in a mutual admiration society. Many a successful man has said that he reached the top because his wife believed in him. A happy peaceful home and a vital unity in your marriage make a refuge from any storm from without.

The pastor's wife can be a helper to him by means of prayer. She can be a "prayer helper" in a way that Christians of the first century helped the Apostle Paul (II Cor.1:11). The husband and wife who pray for each other both in the presence and the absence of the rest of their family are making use of one of the best ways for maintaining communication. Someone has said that when a husband and wife can pray together openly and honestly they will remain sensitive to each other's feelings and attitudes. Also when a husband and wife pray together at the close of the day, it would seem to require that they forgive one another. Eph.4:26 says "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath".

"Communication between husband and wife is stimulated by their spending time with other pastors and wives for sharing of their hopes, their disappointments and their problems. Fun with other couples who are interested in the same type of recreational activities is good for you both."¹⁰

¹⁰France Nordland, The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife (Chicago Moody Press. 1972) p. 112.

The husband and wife not only should participate in times of relaxation, fun and spiritual fellowship with others but they ought to plan to be together for brief periods when they can be alone and can give undivided attention to each other. Make your aim that your love shall be a glowing, growing thing.

The wife must beware of the danger of putting into her husband's mind any thoughts that may create bad relationships between him and members of the church. She must be very careful lest she try to manipulate her husband or to manage him. This is illustrated in the Old Testament story of Isaac and Rebekah, where the wife was the dominant personality. How much grief she caused by her maneuvering and manipulating! It takes faith-confidence in God to wait for the working out of His purposes. Another good reason for the wife not manipulating or managing her husband is this: He must feel total responsibility for his work. "An aggressive or dominant wife can diminish her husband's feeling of accomplishment. Your most important help can be given to his physical and emotional interior, by undergirding your husband with love and understanding."¹¹ "The ministry of the interior" can be viewed in two ways (1) as a ministry to the husband's physical needs by furnishing attractive, nourishing well-balanced meals; (2) his emotional needs.

Since many demands are made upon the pastor, the wife must aim to make few demands upon him. Make the home the kind of place where your husband will love to come, as Kathleen N. Nyberg's book states:

¹¹Ibid., p. 116.

"Love and loyalty alone do endure as the foundation of a happy home. A loving wife, better than a bushel of good conduct medals."¹² A minister seems to need more love and affection than most men. The reason for this may be that, he is constantly drained of his own resources by the demands of others.

The most crucial contribution a wife can possibly make is to love her husband utterly with complete and abiding loyalty. Considerateness on the part of the husband, flexibility and adaptability on the part of the wife--these qualities are of critical importance in ministerial marriages.

"They should inspire each other so that their ministry and life together becomes not a duel but a duet. They must be careful not to let walls begin to build up between them; either by permission or by neglect. Let the husband and wife aspire to live and serve together in a way that will merit, those gentle words of commendation, 'well done, good and faithful servants... Enter into the joy of your master'."¹³

2. TO THE CHILDREN

"The coach's son who fails to make the team, the policeman's son caught in a crime, the minister's son convicted of moral laxity, are all sins magnified at the hands of public opinion. One writer notes that fish bowls magnify the size of fish and suggests that those who live fish-bowl lives must be prepared to have trivial incidents exaggerated into occurrences of major proportions."¹⁴

As a public figure such incidents are not unusual to ministers.

¹²Kathleen N. Nyberg, The Care and Feeding of Ministers (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961) p. 114.

¹³"The Minister and His Wife", Christianity To-day, June 20, 1969, p. 4.

¹⁴Denton, op. cit., p. 105.

Children of the presidents of the United States, movie stars, wealthy or prominent people and ministers have one thing in common. Because of their parents' positions in life such children are seldom allowed to live a completely normal life. They see their lives pushed into a mold that is shaped more by public opinion and the parents' positions than by their parents' personal views. The preachers' children are criticized. When the criticism is justified, then be sure to correct your children at home. It will be for their good. If the criticism is not deserved, keep them as far away as possible from those critics. The primary place for carrying out the responsibility of bringing up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is the home, not the church or the Christian school. Teaching and training is to be carried on not only daily but hourly by both parents from the time they rise in the morning until they go to bed. This is God's standard for all children.

"There are four ways in which the minister and his wife can have the wrong influence on their children. These are: neglect, pressuring the little ones into a preconceived pattern of what the preachers' kids should be, the attitude of the parents towards the church and the demands of the ministry and the atmosphere of the home. There are many ways of neglecting children while giving them the best physical, educational, cultural and even spiritual training."¹⁵

There seems to be much evidence that the parents neglect of their children due to the pressure of the church work has more to do with the way they turn out. They are entitled to at least one parent who is willing and able to put their development and their interest first. They cannot grow up normally otherwise.

¹⁵Pentecost, op. cit., p. 104.

"Nothing we do in the church is more important than giving our children the warm affectionate interest they need to become fine human beings. Lay people and our husbands should understand this, but if they do not, it is still up to us to take a firm stand on this issue. Children cannot love unless they have first been loved. 'We love because He first loved us'. There may be times when the church by its demands on parents becomes the enemy of the child. It is not heresy to say this and we need not feel guilty. But it still takes courage and determination!"¹⁶

There are many people who can carry on the work of the church but you are the only one who can be a mother to your children. The children should be as keenly interested in the activities of the church as the parents, so that the family is doing together something everybody likes.

"Just make sure that your children don't have the feeling that they are shoved around from babysitter to nursery to a meeting or any place to dispose of them because the church work comes first. Make sure your children feel first in your life, and then they will cheerfully give time for the sake of the work of the church."¹⁷

As long as the mother keeps her God-given place in the home and gives the children proper attention and the daddy gives them at least a little undivided time each day, they won't resent the many times when daddy must be out. As long as they feel first in the lives of their parents and are assured that they are wanted and appreciated, they will be interested in the church work.

The children get good or bad attitudes toward the church people from their parents. If they have good impressions about the work they are doing the children also will get that impression. So it is very important to show our children that we think what we are doing is the greatest work in the

¹⁶"Some Reflections on Bringing up the Minister's Family", Pastoral Psychology, December, 1961. p. 30.

¹⁷Pentecost, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

world. Children are imitative to the core. What they see you do, and do lovingly will influence them more than all you say or command.

Mrs. Nordland, the author of the book, The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife, advises young wives of pastors to be sure to give plenty of time to their children. She said:

"your children will go through the most impressionable years of their lives--the preschool years--only once; they will go through the growing-up process only once. Give them the emotional security that children gain when mother is there and available to them, when mother is able to give more of herself because she hasn't taken on too many outside activities and hence is less hurried and harried, less tired."¹⁸

The parsonage stands on a social peak. The privileges and the dangers of its children exceed those of other children. The parsonage children ought to do better than others.

"The minister and his wife are usually people of high ideals who put spiritual values first and whose home is spiritual in its atmosphere, purpose and activities. The most distinctive mark of a Christian home is the personal religious life of the parents, communicated by them through the experience of their daily living. Spiritual rather than material qualities in the life of parents cannot fail to be important in their influence on the children in the home."¹⁹

"Children must see and feel that religion is genuine imperative in the lives of parents, for children very early learn to discriminate between true and affected piety and sooner or later tend to swing over to the real parental attitudes and beliefs. To be sure, it does happen occasionally that a child becomes a Christian in spite of irreligious parents, and contrariwise, one reared in a religious home sometimes chooses a different way of life, but generally the depth of

¹⁸Nordland, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁹Golda E. Bader, I Married a Minister, (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942) pp. 86-87.

a child's spiritual perception and experience will be in direct ratio to the strength of the family religion."²⁰

"No matter what era of the world's history, no matter what the culture, religion, or civilization, woman has always had this special part to play in relation to the home. It may be sensitivity to the dignity of each personality in the home and her determination to preserve its unique characteristic. Perhaps it is her guidance as to literature, food, religion, justice and human relationships that makes her the steady hub around which the family revolves. Children's deepest impressions are made and their religious attitudes are solidified here."²¹

Woman is the psychic center, whether in sorrow or in joy. The family follow her lead. For example, as the family was waiting for the father to come home for dinner, here he brings two or three strangers with him for dinner and tells that they are going to have dinner with them. The children's attitude will depend upon the attitude of the mother. If the mother satisfies their hunger with a snack, and tells them the wonderful meal they are going to have, this is one of the greatest contributions a mother can make to her children in meeting situations of this kind. For psychologically they have met the situations with you. Your own psychic center has been at work in preparing the next generation to meet the unexpected situations.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of rearing children in the parsonage.

"The greatest advantage to the children of parsonage living comes from having sane, sensible, godly parents who accept in full the responsibilities which children in the home bring, and endeavor to discharge those responsibilities in such a manner as will command the love and respect of the children and fit them

²⁰Phyllis Stark, I Chose a Parson, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 187-188.

²¹Fisher, op. cit., p. 104.

for the highest usefulness in society."²²

Some other advantages are,

"The development of social skills through contact with many people; the intellectual stimulation from good books and interesting visitors in the home from around the world and the cultural advantages of good music, travel and other broadening experiences."²³

Some of the disadvantages are that too much attention is showered upon the children and more is expected of their children than of other children.

The ministers' children also have the disadvantage of moving from one place to another. This sudden disruption of normal life can bring triumph or disaster. The mother is the only one who can bridge the change in geography, in school, in friends, and in the adjustment to a different house. In the face of economic insecurity, the mother must be the more ingenious and creative. The minister's children sometimes have to wear clothes sent in by friends. The mother, in co-operation with the children, learns how to change these garments and refit them. The mother needs to be more, not less conscious of prevailing fads in children's clothing.

Marietta B. Hobkirk, in her article "Some Reflections on Bringing Up the Minister's Family" quotes a minister's wife who wrote to her, saying

"our single purpose has been to make our home a Christ-like place in which our children would learn to know Christ and to love His church even as we do...I feel very keenly the necessity for a minister's wife to be just as dedicated as her husband to full-time Christian service in the ministry... I think, too, that ministers' children so quickly sense a mother's resentment of the church and its demands; and that

²²Bader, op. cit., p. 91.

²³Denton, op. cit., p. 106.

this accounts for most of their rebellion."²⁴

The first responsibility of the mother is to her children, to provide a home which is Christ-centered.

"The house which is never locked, that entertains the plumber and the missionary from Africa and the Bishop with equal generous hospitality, the house where men of spiritual stature talk freely of the Christian demand for social justice; the house that becomes in one lightening moment a chapel or a nursery or a meeting-house; the house that is always a haven for the discouraged and the homeless; the house whose budget bursts at the seams--this is the house where a family, in love and loyalty, struggles upward to know the will of God and, in knowing, sends out its children to God's greater glory."²⁵

²⁴"Some Reflections on Bringing up the Minister's Family", Pastoral Psychology, December, 1961. p. 26.

²⁵Fisher, op. cit., p. 117.

CHAPTER THREE

HER MINISTRY IN OTHER AREAS

The minister's wife lives and moves in the larger context of her church and community. The church and community expect them to be persons with whom they can get acquainted easily, who have no air of superiority. The ability of the minister's wife to relate comfortably and easily to people is one of her greatest assets. If she lacks friendliness, she is likely to be judged as a poor minister's wife by the congregation. As she moves in the community and in the church, there are all kinds of services she can render. One of the important ministries among them is counseling. This chapter focuses on the role of the minister's wife in the church and in the community and also looks at her ministry as a counselor.

1. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

The woman who marries a minister should have a call or inner urge, by which she knows that the Lord is leading her personally into His service as the helpmeet of a minister. When a girl marries a minister, she is not only choosing a life partner but a lifetime career. Other women can give up their profession or career if they do not like it, but the minister's wife has no choice. "A call to be a minister's wife is seldom sudden or different from a call into any other kind of work. It is usually a slow unfolding of God's will by an inner urge of the Holy

Spirit, coupled with circumstances."¹ The job of a minister's wife is many times difficult, so a girl must be very sure that it is the Lord's will for her life, if she is to receive from Him the wisdom, tact and patience necessary for her job.

The minister's wife is expected to participate in her husband's work. In marrying, they marry more than a man. They also become a part of a role with a long tradition--the ministry. In matters of religion, they are expected to be "experts". One of the primary roles of the wife of a minister is her participation in her husband's work. At times the question is raised by some wives as to whether they are active laymen or assistant pastors. One pastor's wife said, "I think the minister's wife is a kind of 'little minister'". This kind of wife is engaged in all kinds of church activities such as teaching, speaking, visiting, counseling, etc. In a sense she is her husband's third arm. She could be realistically considered the assistant pastor of the church. One wife of this type remarked, "our church feels it has two ministers". In some churches they expect the pastor's wife to be involved in everything. The general feeling of the wives is that no more should be expected of them than of any other active layman in the church. The author Wallace Denton interviewed some women, which indicated that they tend to perceive their role largely as participation in the work through their husbands, rather than directly in church activities.

¹Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1964, p. 20.

Mrs. Fisher, in her book, Handbook for Ministers' Wives, writing about the place of the minister's wife in the church, asked the following questions.

"What needs to be done in this parish--where is leadership or service required? Where, among the many things needing to be done, do you have a special contribution to make? When will you have time to do it? Does your time schedule fit the need?"²

A minister's wife should ask these questions to herself before she takes up any responsibility.

Some of the most important things a pastor's wife can do are the most difficult to describe. In some way she should always be found among the soul winners in the church. In order to have the strength and time for this most important work, it is well to accept as few offices as possible. It is the custom to offer one office or more to the pastor's wife when she comes to a new parish. There are many reasons why she should not accept these offers. "Things a Pastor's Wife can Do" written by one of them says,

"there are in every church, no matter how small, women who are by nature fitted for these offices and the ideal pastor's wife should delight in the discovery of such workers, and she will be longer and better loved for helping to train such women than if she filled the office herself. Again, the most successful pastors are those who can leave a church in the best running order, and his wife should so regulate her work that their leaving should jar as few interests as possible. But the most important reason for not accepting these offices is that both the time and attention they absorb are too much for any pastor's wife who has before her the aspiration of being the very best she possibly can be".³

But there are exceptions to all the rules sometimes.

²Welthy H. Fisher, Handbook for Ministers' Wives (New York, Woman's Press, 1950) p. 92.

³Things a Pastor's Wife Can Do by one of them (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1898) pp. 28-29.

There is something which is very important a minister's wife can do, that is her visiting ministry. When death strikes the parish, what is the role of the preacher's wife? "O, Lord give me the prudence to know when I am needed and when I am not needed, and the wisdom to know the difference"⁴ prayed one of them. If a close friend has died, then a visit with her husband is in order. But if the person is not an intimate friend, then the pastor had better take over, unless there is something she can do such as care for the children, answer the phone, etc. Sudden disaster such as burning the home or some accident, all these call for quick and sympathetic action.

The other kinds of ministry she can do are visiting: the aged, the shut-in persons, especially women. In their loneliness they will welcome the visits of their shepherdess. At this late hour of their lives the good you do will not be to change so much as to comfort the soul. She can visit the sick. "A friendship formed while steadying a person through a crisis of discouragement will last for life. On the other hand, neglect at such a time leaves a lasting bitterness."⁵

The minister's wife has a special ministry to the tempted or the fallen. Within her limits here is a field where no one can quite take the place of the shepherdess. Many adolescent girls or young women will come under her influence at a time when right guidance will make a lifelong difference.

⁴Alice Taylor, How to be a Minister's Wife and Love It (Michigan Zondervan Publishing House, 1968) p. 68.

⁵Arthur W. Hewitt, The Shepherdess (Willett, Clark and Company, Chicago, 1943) p. 132.

Voluntary consultants from almost any range of age will bring problems of joy, sin or misfortune. These will not often be men, for men are much more likely to want admiration from women than advice. Some other thing which she can do is to teach a Sunday school class. Sometimes she is asked to teach a class or else she may be asked to fill in for somebody when needed. With the exception of the mother of young children, or the working wife or the woman in poor health, the minister's wife should be eager and willing to enter into the full life of the parish. Her talents will greatly differ. But talent or no talent, all can offer their homes for an occasional meeting.

"The minister's wife is one of those in the church to whom the people look when things are especially uncertain. If she has truly given herself to doing God's work, she feels, and so do the people she works with, that it is the Church, not a particular individual, which is caring for them. This is of primary importance."⁶

If the minister's wife feels herself an instrument for service, there are many times when she can be used. "We should continually shrink from prominence, but not from work or influence."⁷

2. MINISTRY IN THE COMMUNITY

As the wife of a public figure, the influence of the minister's wife extends beyond the bounds of the church into the larger community. She is sometimes expected to lend her support to various community organ-

⁶Golda E. Bader, I Married a Minister (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942) pp. 44-45.

⁷Things a Pastor's Wife Can Do, by one of them (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1898) p. 31.

izations. The minister's wife who works outside the home has her own peculiar problems. Some types of work are more permissible than others. Having music students and teaching school are among the more acceptable types of work. The responsibilities of the home and church have prior claim on their time and energies. Community activities lay claim to whatever time remains, which seems to be little. However, one value of community contacts is that it provides a change of pace for the minister's wife and helps her to maintain her perspective on life.

Mrs. Fisher, the author of the book, Handbook for Minister's Wives, advises not to commit yourself too early to the role you will play in the new community. How do you decide what your role is to be? Only by examining your conviction about the job to be done in the town and by estimating your own assets which can contribute to it. Let your part develop naturally, and slowly, from this mixture of skills which you possess and from the needs of others. As far as possible, make your contribution where you personally enjoy the greatest satisfaction. Also where your particular background and experience enable you to make the biggest contribution. At the same time learn to do the things you shrink from.⁸

"No thinking wife of a minister should confine herself to the members of her parish unless she should be the fortunate person to live in the parsonage of Freistatt, Missouri where the parish and community are one."⁹ In a town where there are a good many churches, the wife of a minister will probably want to make her contribution to interdenominational activities. Every clergyman's wife has a chance to serve as her church's ambassador to

⁸Fisher, op. cit., p. 90.

⁹Fisher, op. cit., p. 100.

such gatherings as the World Day of Prayer or Lenten Union Services. The World Day of Prayer committee which includes women of all races and denominations may need her help. She can be active in World Community Day of the United Church Women. She may want to initiate or to participate in a local project designed to further the kingdom of God. Many ministers' wives especially in cities, find it preferable to take more responsibility in community agencies than in parish leadership. Your local library will probably have a copy of the social work Yearbook, where you may secure information about programs and leadership of all national social agencies. "Most ministers' wives, because of education and experience, are especially fitted to participate in the work of civic organizations which are so essential to the vitality of American Democracy."¹⁰ "Any community offers a marvelous arena for the clergyman's wife who wishes to offer her services beyond her own parochial sphere. Board memberships, health clinics and fund drives are only a few of the many avenues of service."¹¹

The minister and his wife become involved in every kind of social problem at some time because individuals whom they know are faced with it. For example, a boy is probated to one of us. At once, we are drawn into the circle of the juvenile court, the playground program, the housing problem and the detention homes. Or a father deserts his wife and children; we work with legal aids, with family welfare boards etc. As a result of these experiences the minister's wife has many chances to know of the work that is being done and that needs to be done in the community. If she is willing to work, she is received with enthusiasm by those who are active

¹⁰Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 73.

in these fields.

"Through all the works a minister's wife may do in civic or social service runs the thread of her special philosophy. This is her chief contribution. She believes that in addition to feeding and clothing and healing and educating and giving recreational outlets to people, we must give them something to believe in, to live for."¹²

3. COUNSELING MINISTRY

People come to the minister's wife for counseling one time or another. This may not be just the people of the congregation but may also be some people of the community. Webster says that the word "counsel" means to "give advice or to consult; to exchange ideas or to talk things over". The pastor's wife may not counsel in the strictest or professional sense of the word but she will spend many hours just listening to people tell their troubles. They do not want advice but some one with a sympathetic ear to listen. This puts the pastor's wife in a real dilemma. She has to decide how much time she is going to give to people of this type and what she can do to stop their calls when she sees that nothing can be done to help them. First thing to do is to listen to these people and try to help them. If you know that they are just wasting your time, you have to be firm and turn down those who sap your strength and keep you from important things which need to be done.

There is a real difference between counseling and just listening sympathetically to other people's troubles. The average minister's wife will find that there are few times that she will have opportunities for

¹²Bader, op. cit., p. 50

real counseling. But many hours will be spent in listening to people who feel that she should be interested in their feelings and misunderstandings. Most people who have serious problems want to discuss them with the pastor, a doctor or some trained counselor. They seldom feel that the pastor's wife falls into one of those categories, which is generally true.

However, there are a few basic rules of counseling that the pastor's wife should know.

"Three problems must be faced: (1) you must know yourself as counselor, (2) know, or find out, as much as possible about the person in need, the counselee. (3) Have a good method for finding trouble and leading the person to see the true problem and to make a definite decision for solving it."¹³

First we have to check our own attitudes. If it is our habit to live a life of rigid rules, we must also have to listen carefully, without showing shock, no matter how terrible the things which have been told. If we show a horrified attitude, the person who needs help will be afraid to tell us the full story. They may depart as soon as possible. We must not show any of our personal feelings, no matter what we might feel inside.

"We must not let ourselves become identified with the person in trouble. There are sound reasons for not letting ourselves become emotionally involved with the person's problem. First of all, we cannot stand aside and view the problem without letting it be colored by our own emotional background and reactions. That keeps us from clear thinking and reasoning and prevents us from asking what the real problem is; what brought this person to this condition; and what I can do about helping him. Second, it takes too much strength and energy to counsel when we identify ourselves with the one who is being counseled."¹⁴

It is important to read all you can, attend any classes that are

¹³Pentecost, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 176.

available, and talk to psychologists and psychiatrists. Never give your private opinion on spiritual matters. Turn to the Word of God for the answer. Never or seldom give advice unless you are forced to or you honestly feel it will help. It is dangerous to take sides in any dispute, because in so doing you are judging from one person's point of view and that is not good. You will have to study the personality of the person who needs help, as well as listen to what he has to say. The person must be gradually drawn out by questions and by your restating what he has said, to see for himself that he must take full responsibility for his situation.

The methods used in counseling are varied. But there are some general rules which can be used in nearly every case. Hewitt, in his book The Shepherdess gives some valuable suggestions for counseling. They are the following: There are some who want to talk to you but when the time comes they cannot say a word. Locate a common interest. Talk about things in which they are interested. Then let them talk out their problems. Let the person who needs help decide when and how he will tell his problems. Let him set the pace of conversation or action. Many times this pouring forth of the problem will so clarify it to the person himself that he will need no advice though ever thereafter he will credit you with having saved him.

Guide mostly by suggestion. If we were more evidently perfect, if we spoke by divine authority manifest to all, then we could guide by rule. Even so, it would be better so to shape our counsel as to suggest germinal ideas which our listener at once will think his own and therefore be controlled by. The atmosphere and direction of the conversation can be highly suggestive, the illustrations and references to God's word even more so. Drop the vital suggestion and leave it. Soon the person will change his

direction toward the fold and think his own impulse which urges him. If we had tried to drive him he would have butted us over.

Rebuke rarely; scold never. Be very careful about direct rebuke and criticism. Get your sinner into places where God is, and let Him do the denunciation. But when the sinner sees her fault never deny it. Take it for granted that it is a fault and show her how to be forgiven and escape.

Never minimize the trouble of another. To tell a person how much worse things might be is not exactly the way to comfort her or to show her sympathy. To her the trouble is very real and great. Recognize the weight of their burden and you can comfort them. So also with sin. Stress forgiveness and recovery. You will lose the confidence of anybody whose sins you minimize when her own conscience has told her how wrong they are.

Be positive and constructive in your counsel. To abandon sin gets nowhere if the tenement, late on lease to the devil, is left empty. Sin will return and celebrate therein. To urge the forsaking of bad habits is only half the battle. So give something to do, some new inspired thing to read or share. Be positive in every suggestion, rarely negative.

Make your approach from the personal, not the abstract. Your object may be to induce someone to do her duty. Now duty is a cold abstract thing to most people. There is a human interest way which will lead you home.

Be sensitive to the situation. This should not be forgotten. What you give is not determined by what you hand out but by what the recipient will take or can take. Tender opportunities come which, if unused, will never return. There are no rules - only be sensitive to every situation.

Use practical proxies. For example, here is a young mother who is wrong in her care of her child. If you tell her that she will take offense. But you can arrange that a copy of the Parents' Magazine discussing her very mistakes gets in her way.¹⁵

Be as unemotional about the problem as possible. Perhaps the hardest thing to do is to avoid using pet Christian phrases and answers. We seldom help the counselee when we give such responses.

"The purpose of counseling is twofold: to help with the immediate problem and to help the person to learn to solve his problems alone. Our purpose is to help when necessary, but also to train the person to find his own answers for himself, and not to continually lean on another for advice."¹⁶

The easiest person to help is the one who comes with an open mind, ready to discuss his problem in full. Happy is the counselor who can help a person to see his need.

"Real counseling is a challenge for those who want to engage in it, but it takes fortitude and courage to put an end to wasting time and precious energy on those who are only using you to escape facing their real problems."¹⁷

Keeping the confidences is very important in the counseling ministry. The people who come to her for counseling must have faith in her that she would keep their problems confidential. If they find that they can trust you then they will be willing to share with you their problems. We will be considering this aspect in detail in the following chapter.

¹⁵Hewitt, op. cit., pp. 134-141.

¹⁶Pentecost, op. cit., p. 184.

¹⁷Ibid. p. 188.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITIES OF A MINISTER'S WIFE

When a person applies for certain kinds of jobs, he should have some qualifications for those jobs. In the same way, the minister's wife also should have some qualifications for her ministry. If she wants to be a good minister's wife, surely she must have some good qualities. While some of these qualities may be negative let us give consideration first to the positive ones.

1. THE POSITIVE QUALITIES

(a) She must be both lover of God and men. If this is lacking then all other gifts are of no avail. She must be spiritual. Love is the first, and almost the all-inclusive one. The minister's wife cannot be a good shepherdess unless she really loves the people and has a heart which goes out to them until their troubles are her own. She must be inspired of God. The love and peace of God must rule over life. "If you go among the sorrowing with eternal peace radiating from your own heart, you will be transfigured before the, you will become a "consoler of the afflicted" for the glory of God".¹

(b) She must have good mentality. With right spirit and character a woman with humble endowments can be a most lovable shepherdess. If she happens to have high mental endowments and has common sense enough to use

¹Arthur W. Hewitt, The Shepherdess (Chicago, Willett, Clark and Company, 1943) p. 129.

them properly, she may be a great help to her husband. A shepherdess must have a good mind and a fair education.

(c) She must be a good housekeeper. The parsonage is a peculiarly public home. Almost anybody may appear there at almost any time. The disorder in the home defeats the minister before he starts. There is little hope for a man who has to be ashamed of his own home. So she must be a good housekeeper. This doesn't mean to make the house a show place. Fussy housekeepers usually are not only unsocial but not neat. Good housekeeping includes good cooking too.

(d) She must have common sense. The woman who uses common sense in human relationships is the one who has imagination enough to put herself in the other person's place and realize how things will seem to him. What we call diplomacy in dealing with nations is called common sense in dealing with neighbors. "Your judgement of what is sensible is right only when it takes into account how it will be received. Speak your mind only when folks are ready to mind it."² She must put first things first.

(e) She should have a sense of humor. There is one saving grace every minister and his wife should foster - a sense of humor. They need it in the home and in the church. Many serious situations have been met and solved by a sense of humor. Salvation from defeat and despair is often brought about by a bit of fun. "When one is tense and tired nothing provides such therapeutic relaxation as a good laugh. A deep, sincere, merry laugh relieves the soul as a bath cleanses the body."³ Humor is not for the sake of fun, but it saves your nerves from snapping. It makes life more pleasing and lovable.

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 56.

(f) She must have social winsomness. The one word describing it is love. One of the greatest faults a pastor's wife can have is to be critical. If the shepherdess has love she will not want to be critical. "A loving person sees all, says little and mends much."⁴ There should be something in her which should attract people. People should feel comfortable in her presence. If she wins their confidence, then she has everything.

(g) She must be a good economist. The values of a home are made possible far more by good taste than by expense. Keeping your shepherd's garments up to their best by repairs and occasional visits to the cleaners will postpone expense. Another great saving is to have the joy of raising your vegetables in a garden. If you are wise and watchful, if you have the spirit of saving what God gave you, you will not fail. One becomes expert in home management, as in all other skills, by practice.

(h) She should be unselfish. Unselfishness cannot be overestimated as a requisite for a pastor's wife. It goes without saying that she must be unselfish toward her husband and children.

"But others who cross her pathway will have need of her time and strength and talent. She can help to find the best for others, and in all her daily contacts she must 'never be weary of giving her best.'"⁵

(i) She must have patience.

"'Ye have need of patience', because daily requirement of this virtue will press upon her, and one cannot too often counsel patience for her enthusiastic adventures in the manse.

⁴Ibid., p. 61.

⁵Douglas S. McDaniel, The Pastor's Helpmate (Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1942) p. 14.

Never should a wife be depressed if blamed unjustly by her husband, or any member of her church. Nothing will be gained by defending yourself, God will do that, and by a judicious, silent patience everything will be made right. It is rare when injustice or slights patiently borne, do not leave the heart at the close of the day filled with marvelous joy and peace."⁶

Patience is needed everywhere - in the home, in the church and with herself.

"You will have manifold opportunities of possessing your soul in patience; with those who love us and those who love us not; for the greatest things and for the least; against sudden in-roads of trouble and under daily burdens; disappointments as to the weather, or the breaking of the heart; in the weariness of the body, or the wearing of the soul; in our own failure of duty, or others failure toward us; in everyday wants, or in the aching of sickness or the decay of old age; in disappointment, bereavement, losses, injuries, reproaches, in heaviness of the heart, or in sickness amid delayed hopes. In all these things, from childhood's little troubles to the martyr's sufferings, patience is the grace of God whereby we endure evil for the love of God."⁷

(J) She must be friendly and willing. If the minister's wife lacks friendliness, she is considered as a poor minister's wife by the congregation. She may have other qualities but that will not cover for the lack of friendliness.

"The experience of many pastor's and their families is that churches will contend with a lot of poor preaching and fumbled administrative balls if the pastor and his wife are outgoing and friendly."⁸

She should love people She should be ready to pour oil into all kinds of wounds, bodily and otherwise. A cheerful optimism is necessary for such a service. She should be willing to help others.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Ibid., p. 16.

⁸Wallace Denton, The Role of the Minister's Wife (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1962) p. 119.

Mrs. Fred Pick wrote:

"if you can learn to put yourself into another's place and do the natural thing from a heart of kindness, your people will love you for helping them plan their weddings, receptions, showers etc."⁹

(k) She should have spiritual discernment. We must have an understanding of human needs. Not everyone comes with the same problem. We cannot give the same advice to everyone.

"Many are in trouble of their own making, and without being rude or harsh we must help them to see where they are wrong, and also tell them God has an answer for them. Lead them to God if possible."¹⁰

Doctors say that many of the emotional disturbances and sicknesses of today are caused by a troubled conscience. The minister's wife should show people the only way to get relief is to confess their sins and get right with God. When we help them, they will bless us as long as we live. There are people who need our encouragement, comfort and prayer. They come to us because they have confidence in us.

2. THE NEGATIVE QUALITIES

(a) She should not be jealous. The pastor's job compels him to be in constant association with other women. He is the physician of their souls. He has to give counsel to the needy people, even to women. They will pour out their hearts to him. A true pastor's wife accepts all these things. To be jealous is simply fatal. If you loved him enough to marry him then trust him. Have faith in your man. The sure way of getting

⁹"Beyond the Parsonage Door - You Represent God", Nazarene Preacher, August 1966., p. 34.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 33.

victory over jealousy is to allow the Holy Spirit to control you and produce in you His fruit of love. (I Cor:13)

(b) She should not be shockable. There are many shocking things in this world. All kinds of sin. If by any chance she come across such things, let her remember that the freedom granted to man leaves him free. These things happen in life and the adult must be able to face them. Some of these people may come to her for counsel. When they share their sins and problems, the shepherdess should not be shocked. Even though their sins are horrible, they can be forgiven.

(c) She should not gossip. Be a safe keeper of confidences whether voluntarily given or accidentally imposed. The people of the congregation will share their personal problems with the pastor. The pastor may share some of these things with his wife to unburden himself and also for prayer. She should not speak about this to anyone if it has been given in confidence. If she has a tendency to tell others such things, she better watch out or else if the pastor knows about it, he better not tell his wife about such things. The women of the congregation may come to the pastor's wife for counseling. If she could get their confidence, then she is a real winner. If they know that she could keep their secrets, then only they will come and share with her. So the minister's wife must learn to keep the secrets. She must guard her tongue more than anybody else. She must set a seal for this before the congregation.

(d) She should be careful in developing intimate relationships with people in the congregation. There is a difference between being friendly and intimate while she should be friendly with all, care must be taken that intimate relationships with certain ones within the congregation are

not developed. If intimate friendships develop, there could be jealousy among the other members. Intimate friendships within the congregation may encourage situations which will be a bit delicate to handle when your husband moves on to another congregation. However, don't feel that you need to turn down dinner invitations from your parishioners. Acceptance of such invitations does not require a return invitation to the parsonage. It is ideal for a minister and his wife to open their home to their people on occasions. It is best for a minister and his wife to cultivate intimate friendships with persons outside their congregation.

education. In this biblical study, never hurry, linger over it in pure enjoyment. Let it grow and ripen. Have someone with whom to talk it over.

3. Get an elementary knowledge of the theology of your church. The source of theology is the Bible. The different groups have interpreted the revelation so differently that each has its own system of orderly instruction in faith. You ought to know yours. There are books which will explain it to you very clearly.

4. She should have some knowledge of Church History.

(a) The great, thrilling story of the Christian Church from earliest ages could be made the subject of detailed special study.

(b) In addition to the general Church History, each one ought to know the history of her own denomination.

(c) In addition to the general history and the special denominational history you should know the current history of Christianity, especially of your own church.

5. Current periodicals are important means of education. She has to make her own choices for this. There are so many periodicals available today. From these she has to select the ones which she likes best.

6. Group and convention methods of training are very useful. Conventions such as teacher's conventions, church conferences, missionary meetings etc. Anything which brings people together and at the same time adds the knowledge is worthwhile.

7. The courtesy of contacts sometimes known as "etiquette" is very necessary. The science of etiquette will adorn and not restrict the really courteous heart. You will want to know what to do according to good social usage and the reasons for it. Read all their rules, but make your manners out of the spirit.

8. The comradeship of the cultured is one of the best means of education for your profession. Be with the people of much social culture and learn their social cultures. People like to talk of their hobbies and specialities. You will meet those who have travelled, those who know art, literature and many other things. To let them, by their conversation, become your teachers.

9. Love of classic literature is a sure road to a good education. Love to read and choose well what, and you are pre-destined to be better educated than those of any degree of schooling who do not love it. Love of reading will make you learned. Slowly, patiently, gradually, you will become educated if you wish it.

There are many ways through which the minister's wife can get her training. The following points deal with some of these.

"There are three ways for a pastor's wife to find the training she will need. First, the most ideal time to get the preparation is before marriage, but this is impossible for those who do not realize what they lack until afterward. Second, help can be found at the seminary where her husband goes to school. The third way is a self-training program for those already in the pastorate and even for those who have had help in the first two places, because we must keep growing in knowledge."³

The idea of getting preparation for the pastorate before marriage will appear ridiculous to some. Most girls have a very good idea of what they want to do in life and of the kind of man they hope to marry. Those who are seriously interested or engaged to a man who is preparing for full-time Christian service should make definite plans to get training that will fit her for the future ministry. They both must have an understanding about

³Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1964) p. 26.

the future. If it is possible she should enroll in a Bible College or Institute, even if she can take only night classes. If there is no other way to manage, she can always take excellent Bible courses and related subjects by correspondence from the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Her major fields should be in the Bible. Courses in the home making area must be for learning how to manage a home, budgeting, entertaining, decorating and the care of children and guests. Courses in English, public speaking, and psychology are essential too. If she has any talent in music it would be best to develop it.

We can also learn through the experience of others. Therefore, it is well that you become as friendly with your present minister's wife as she will let you. If you feel she is not the kind of pastor's wife she should be, then find someone else in your own town who will be a worth-while model. See her in her home. So you can understand about her home situations. Ask about her experiences, both pleasant and hard and how she handled problems. Find out what she considers the greatest handicaps and the finest joys of being married to a minister.

From the time a girl promises to marry a ministerial student until he retires from the active work, she should spend time in reading materials that concern their work. This will make her to be a better wife, homemaker and worker in the church. There are books, good magazines, articles etc. to read concerning the minister and his family.

"If, after all this preparation, you still feel that you are called or being led into a partnership with a minister, then you can be reasonably sure that you have stood the tests and will make a successful parson's wife. At least you will have a very true picture of what you are getting into and can decide, with this enlightenment, if this is the life you

want or not."⁴

Seminary days should be the best time of preparation, but the working wife finds it almost impossible to get the classes and Bible study she should be having.

"Surveys show that from two-thirds to three-fourths of the Seminary students today are married. It also shows that very few of the girls have had any training for their future work and have no idea of what the average church will expect of them."⁵

Mrs. Pentecost, the author of the book, The Pastor's Wife and the Church, says that, "if the only way a couple can get through seminary is for the wife to work, I wonder if it wouldn't be much better to delay the marriage until she can get her training before she takes on the job of being the family bread winner". She and her husband decided that she would not work but would devote her time to study and training. Again she says, "I pity the working girl who misses all the blessings. It is sad but true that most of them are working just to gain more material things rather than because of necessity. They do not see their need of training but are carried away with the 'cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches'". She continues, "they feel they must have the things they were used to having at home before they were married. They have to have new clothes, the latest cars, television, air conditioning, vacations, meals out, and all kinds of entertainment, all of which take a lot of money". The seminary days are also an ideal time to join a local church and become very active in its work. Working in a church gives valuable experience in dealing with all kinds of people, learning new and effective methods of church work.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

⁵Ibid.

The wife also has access to library books on any subject which pertains to her work. She can acquire for herself a full education for her future by just reading, reading! It is also wise to learn all you can about public speaking from books and experience.

Now let us look at the situation from the viewpoint of the pastor's wife. The church people have their own ideas of how a minister's wife should be. "Some surveys show that many women already in pastoral ministry have completely given up trying to be themselves, trying to do any of the things they enjoy and have given up God's rule for their lives."⁶ They have completely conformed to the demands of the church members.

The wife who is already in the pastorate can find help in studying books, taking any available courses offered by her denomination at summer conferences, special retreats, or at nearby seminaries. Much can be gained by meeting regularly with other ministers' wives for discussions, study periods or general exchange of ideas. Perhaps the best kind of leadership can usually be found in an older, more experienced pastor and his wife who will take an interest in you and your problems. Someone who will lead you and guide you through the rough places. Any pastor's wife who really wants to serve the Lord according to His will can be assured that He will never let her down. He will carry you through all the way.

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PROBLEMS OF THE MINISTER'S WIFE

The life of the pastor's wife is like the other people, in that she has some dark days and some bright days, stormy days and days filled with sunshine. Life in some ways is like the weather, the sunshiny days far outnumber the stormy days. A pastor's wife has the same problems with children and housekeeping and getting tired and discouraged like any other woman has. "Being a pastor's wife is the most hazardous and dangerous occupation a woman can have," says Dr. Marion H. Nelson. He believes that only the best adjusted emotionally, those who have had full love and security in childhood, and who are "thickskinned" will ever come through the experience emotionally and mentally unscarred. This chapter deals with some of the problems of the ministers' wives.

1. Lack of time. The active minister's wife quickly finds herself engaged in many time-consuming activities of her church. If one adds the meetings, services of different kinds, preparation for and presentation of messages, teaching Sunday school etc, the true picture of demands on her time begins to come into focus. Many wives say that they have to do all the office work, including their husband's letters and church bulletins.

Perhaps the most time consuming job, which no one seems to realize is that the time spent for answering the telephone. The first few years, the husband's duties are not very heavy, there is happiness in working and travelling with him. Quite often, it is not until the children begin to arrive that she fully realizes what is involved in her position. Problems

arise with the coming of children. The minister's wife finds that the ladies expect as much of her as they did before the children arrived.

"The average minister works seventy hours a week. This does not include any of the time his wife spends on church activities."¹ He has very little time for his family. The wives feel that their husbands are so involved with the church that the whole family has little time together. This is not to say that all wives find their husbands lack of time a problem.

"Some say that when you really enjoy your work you do not count time."² They may be active directly in church activities, community projects etc. This may be a problem to the wives who have little children at home. The sense of loss is not only for themselves but also for the children.

How do the wives cope with this problem of time? The most frequent response has to do with accepting it as an inevitable aspect of the role. Some have problems of adjusting to it earlier in their marriage. The younger wives are more frustrated by the husband's absence than those who have had time to learn this adjustment. "The advice, they would give to a girl engaged to a minister has to do with accepting his absence from home as a part of her life."³ This is not an easy adjustment to make. But it is important.

2. Loneliness. A sense of loneliness appears to be one of the more frequent problems confronted by the minister's wife.

¹Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1964) p. 50.

²Wallace Denton, The Role of the Minister's Wife (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1962) p. 81.

³Ibid., p. 84.

"Expansiveness of her role covers most areas of her life. and most social settings. The result is that she feels set apart, and loneliness ensues. This loneliness is aggravated by her expectations and the church's, that she will not develop close friendship within the church. Her loneliness is further complicated because her husband is absent from the home most evenings. Wives who are able to develop other friendships or outlets appear to be less lonely."⁴

The Wives must plan to do something which will interest them when they are alone at home or with children. Then they will not feel very lonely when their husbands are away from home.

3. Feeling of inadequacy. Uncertainty and feelings of inadequacy, tensions and frustrations among pastor's wives without doubt contribute to the high rate of break downs among them. France Nordland, in her book "The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife", gives the following reasons for the feelings of inferiority.

- a) She comes from a home which did not provide her with a Christian background.
- b) She lacks a background of culture which should give her the assurance she is doing the right thing as far as etiquette is concerned.
- c) She doesn't have a college education.
- d) She doesn't have Biblical knowledge, and feels this lack when asked to teach a Bible class.
- e) She is without natural gifts of leadership.

There is no need for her to feel this way. There are books, which she can read and learn about the things she needs to know. There are books about the Christian home and etiquette and entertaining. She can read them and

⁴Ibid., p. 149.

learn about them. If she doesn't have a college education and wants one she can take some courses if a college is nearby which allows individuals to take less than a full academic load. There are men in the ministry who don't want a "brain" for a wife. They want a woman with a warm, outgoing unselfish personality.

4. Inadequate salary. There is a great difference in the incomes of the ministers.

"Numbers of fine Christian people feel that Christian workers should not need or want much of this world's material things; these people feel that the standard of living for the minister is different from theirs. It reminds one of the deacon's prayer for his pastor, "Lord, you keep him humble, we'll keep him poor."⁵

Even if they have rent-free houses, they have other needs such as educating children, clothing, food, car expenses etc. The minister's wife is using considerable time and energy dealing with the problem of economy in the parsonage. A problem related to the financial one is the fact that many ministers' wives feel the church expects them to live on a social and economic level far above what the minister's salary can provide. Many ministers and their wives feel their children are entitled to some economic freedom with the rest of the community. One thoughtful wife who is finding that her outside job is merely enabling the family to hold its former standards against rising costs comments that the

"family as well as the preacher need more than ever adequate tools - a parsonage that can be used to entertain graciously to permit the wife to spend time on the relationships rather than on laborious kinds of economizing. Children need good enough clothing and play and other equipment to participate in the standard activities of the community without being

⁵Pentecost, op. cit., p. 51.

unduly dependent on others, and the home requires space for them apart when entertaining is going on. These adjustments are in process, but the lag produces tensions that evidently I am more aware of lately than in years past."⁶

5. Another problem the minister's wife faces is being placed second in her husband's life. Another feeling that comes from within the woman is the heartache she experiences because she is usually placed second in her husband's life. His vows to the Lord and to the church must come first. Many church members take advantage of this, making it hard for her not to feel like a neglected wife. After this goes on for a few years she begins to think that she is inadequate and inferior and not attractive to her husband. She even thinks that his affection for her has also changed. Such thoughts cause one of the most serious marital problems in the home. She feels she is second on the list. This feeling is often the basis of the wife's resentment toward church members which cannot be understood by the congregation.

6. Lack of understanding. This kind of suffering comes from within. She feels the lack of understanding on the part of the women of the church when she cannot take part in every activity of the church. Many women expect her to be interested in Christian groups outside the church. When they are refused, they will be hurt. When she is pleasing one group she is alienating another. There is no such thing as pleasing all the members at once. The pastor's wife is seldom encouraged or thanked for what she does that is pleasing. There isn't much done to honour the pastor's wife. She also likes praise and appreciation like all the others.

⁶"Some Reflections on Bringing Up the Minister's Family", Pastoral Psychology, December, 1961. p. 28.

7. Psychological problems. There is a deep-seated psychological problem which is caused by the church people and causes much suffering for the minister's wife. Dr. Smiley Blanton, a psychiatrist gives the underlying drive that pushes people into demanding that the wife of their parson be perfect. He explains it in this way:

"the minister is given the respect and love of his parishioners - which we will call emotional transference - a powerful factor in his work. Strangely enough, the wife usually gets what we call negative transference. The more the parishioners like the minister, the more critical they are of his wife. They hate anyone who takes the minister away from them."

As long as you know that you are doing the Lord's will then you need not worry, you know that you have pleased the Lord. Lucy Freeman neatly sums up the problem by saying,

"the minister's wife is expected to practice more than their husbands preach; they must make perfect homes, raise perfect children, live perfect lives on less than living wages and often without love or understanding from the congregation."⁷

In this chapter we considered the problems of the minister's wife. The problem of one minister's wife may not be the problem of another. But God gives enough strength to face every situation if we depend on Him. When we look we may see only the problems but there are some good things which come out of every situation. Even though the minister and his wife have to face many problems they have the great opportunity to serve the Lord and can also experience the joy which comes through this. In this chapter we saw the negative side of her ministry, the following chapter looks into the positive side of her ministry.

⁷Pentecost, op. cit., p. 57.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JOYS AND REWARDS OF THE MINISTRY

It is true the trials of a pastor's wife are often sharp and peculiar to the place but it is also true that no other woman can have the exquisite joys that God gives alone to the pastor and his wife. Mrs. Stephen F. Olford of New York city says, "that more money, leisure, privacy, and close friends could ever compare with the sense of satisfaction of the ministry." Mrs. Robert Crew of Washington said, "a large measure of their satisfaction comes when you know you are in God's will". These are the responses of two women concerning their joys of their ministry.

Dorothy Pentecost said that the keenest reward of her being married to a minister is that "God allowed her to have one of the finest and most godly men for a husband". It is a great privilege to have a godly husband. To know that he is doing the things that are good for his family and others and to help him behind the scenes is very important.

Another satisfaction comes from the knowledge that the children are growing up in the best kind of home environment and have the constant examples and training of godly parents. What better place can a child be than in a home where God is Head? What better place can be found for them to see faith in action, to experience how God can be trusted to work out every situation in their lives and to find that His will is best for their lives?

"In the manse they can learn to discipline their lives, to share with others, to witness to the unsaved, to give unselfish service in the church and learn how to live in

in a way that is pleasing to God.¹

Unless the parents are neglecting their children, the parsonage is the best training place for rearing Christian children and preparing them for future service in God's harvest field. They are exposed to the most godly and also the most interesting people on earth. Missionaries are entertained in the home and the children get firsthand impressions of many countries. The more important thing is the opportunity they have to see and feel the need of getting the gospel out to the far corners of the world.

The minister's family is immediately accepted in a new town not only by the church but by the community also. They receive many courtesies which other strangers do not get. Going from one place to another gives one a broader view of one's country and of life. Getting opportunities of seeing many things, observing new customs, types of people and ways of doing things is an advantage to the family.

A most challenging career is open to every pastor's wife. Her position is a channel and outlet for all of her talents and abilities. Instead of being confined to one chosen work or profession or having to stay in that field for a life time, the pastor's wife has the opportunity to take part in almost every kind of work open to women. She is not only a mother and a homemaker, but she can also be a spiritual leader, Bible teacher, children's worker etc. No part of her training that cannot be of help to some group in a church.

"The minister's wife has another advantage, she can switch from one activity to another as her interest changes

¹Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago Moody Press, 1964) p. 59,60.

or as the needs of the church develop. She can work on one project for a while and then start another. She can stop when she wishes. She can take a few days off when she desires without the consent of a boss, and she can take longer periods for vacations or family needs at any season of the year.²

There need never be a dull moment or time of loneliness for the mistress of the manse. She lives in the middle of a steady stream of humanity.

"Life is so interesting that every day brings a new set of duties, pleasant surprises, someone in sorrow or weighed down with burdens that make our difficulties look so small that we are ashamed of any self-pity in which we might be tempted to indulge."³

The pastor's wife can be thankful for the place that God has chosen for her to serve Him.

"The ministers' wives have the greatest joy, the greatest opportunities, the greatest variety of work and sometimes the greatest burdens. But that is what makes a full and purposeful life. The secret of finding fulfillment and true joy in this type of life is to be flexible and completely willing to let the Holy Spirit be your guide throughout the day."⁴

The minister and his family are aided in many ways with their financial needs. Though many of them overlook this fact when they complain about poor salaries. Many churches not only provide a free home but often pay the utility bills and pay for all repairs and upkeep on the manse. This may differ from church to church but every pastor has some nice things done for him.

The hospitality shown to the minister's family is generous. Her home is filled with gifts of love. If her family is sick, everyone is concerned and members come forward to help. The minister and his family is the most prayed family in the parish."⁵

²Ibid., p. 65.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 66.

⁵"Forgotten Fringe Benefits", Nazarene Preacher, July, 1966. p. 33.

They have the prayer support of their people. When someone cares enough to labor in prayer, you know you have a priceless friend in the Lord.

Above all, the spiritual rewards and blessings that come from being in the ministry are hard to explain. There is no joy compared to that of leading a person to know Christ as his Saviour or seeing people come to salvation through our church efforts.

"The greatest reward that a minister's wife can have is to know she is needed, trusted, and looked up to as a godly woman who knows the Word and has power with the Lord in prayer. The knowledge that many people will turn to you for comfort, advice, and help, makes life full and gives every church duty real meaning."⁶

The real and final reward comes when you reach heaven. So take heart if at this point you feel your labors are in vain. Even if you may never see the rewards of your efforts here on earth, God is keeping the records for faithful service. Your reward is waiting for you in glory.

⁶Pentecost, op. cit., p. 73.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper we were discussing about the role of the minister's wife. Her role in the family, church and community were discussed. Her primary role is in the home.

"She should be one who cheerfully accepts all circumstances and makes life as smooth and easy as possible for her husband. On the other hand, if she is a weight on him, with demands for larger pastorates, more money, better homes, high social levels, and more prominent places in the denomination, it won't be long before God's best for him is lost in a maze of rationalizing and pleasing a worldly wife."¹

She must get involved in the work of the church and community as much as as possible. The third chapter deals with this matter. She cannot please everyone in the church. If she knows, she is pleasing the Lord, that is enough. She must set an example before the people of her community. The fourth chapter deals with the qualities of the minister's wife. Training and preparation of the minister's wife is the subject matter of chapter five. She is doing an important job, so she must get as much training as possible. Chapter six discusses some of the problems which the minister's wife faces as she moves along the road. She can face every situation and every difficulty with the help of the Holy Spirit. The final chapter deals with the rewards of her ministry. The joys and the privileges of the minister's wife are many. The final reward will come to them when they

¹Dorothy H. Pentecost, The Pastor's Wife and the Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1964) p. 248.

reach heaven. If they do their work faithfully, they will be rewarded by the Rewarder of every soul.

Conclusion. Perhaps the most important ministry the pastor's wife can do is to pray for her husband and for the church people. They need much of our prayers. Much will be lost if we don't carry on our work. Only eternity will tell the results of the faithful and earnest prayer of one minister's wife.

The author of the book "The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife" says

"the ministers' wives should aim to be all that God expects them to be as a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and a child of God. God has high standards for His children, and He wants them to keep on learning and growing and maturing. Yield your life to the indwelling Holy Spirit to be controlled by Him, you can relax as far as your role as a minister's wife is concerned. You can relax and live naturally. The minister's wife has to be realistic about her role and recognize that she will never get to the place where she will be the 'perfect' minister's wife. But as the years pass, you will be able to see that you have been developing as a Christian person and making progress on the road to spiritual maturity. As you walk along this road, God will bless others through you without your having to 'try' to be a blessing."²

In conclusion to this paper I would like to leave the advice of a minister's wife to her daughter, who was going to enter the ministry. Ruth Vaughn, in her article, "I Delight to Do Thy Will", quotes her mother's advice as follows:

"There are joys and thrills in the role of a minister's wife, my child, for you are in a great capacity of service to your Lord. In His way, you will find delights, happiness and peace in abundance. Your cup will be filled and overflowing."³

²France Nordland, The Unprivate Life of a Pastor's Wife, (Chicago Moody Press, 1972) p. 19.

³"I Delight to Do Thy Will", Nazarene Preacher, September, 1965, p. 35.

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