

GOD DELIGHTS IN YOU:
Encouragement and Counsel for the Pastor's Wife
Sovereign Grace Pastors Conference 2023

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Zeph. 3:17 "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

Heb. 6:10 "For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."

2 Thess. 3:5 "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

Introduction: Hidden Figures and Unsung Heroes

Margot Lee Shetterly "There were parts of this whole endeavor of the space program that were very high profile like the astronauts, test pilots, and Mission Control; but we didn't really understand how much work went on behind-the-scenes to make that successful. These women were very much part of that."

Charles Spurgeon "A true wife is her husband's better half, his flower of beauty, his guardian angel, and his heart's treasure. In her company he finds his earthly heaven; she is the light of his home, the comfort of his soul, and (for this world) the soul of his comfort. Whatever fortune God may send him, he is rich so long as she lives. ...A well-matched couple carry a joyful life between them. They multiply their joys by sharing them, and lessen their troubles by dividing them: this is fine arithmetic. The wagon of care rolls lightly along as they pull together, and when it drags, a little heavily, or there's a hitch anywhere, they love each other all the more, and so lighten the labor."¹

Prov. 12:4 "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones."

¹ *Spurgeon's Practical Wisdom*, 95-96.

I. FOUNDATIONS

1. Your fundamental identity is not found in your role as a pastors wife, but in being known and loved by God.

Paul Tripp “Looking horizontally for your identity, meaning, purpose, and internal sense of well-being asks people, places, and position to do for you what only your Messiah can do. ... Looking horizontally for our identity and peace is burdensome, exhausting, and self-defeating.”²

Timothy Keller “If you believe the Gospel and all its remarkable claims about Jesus and what he has done for you and who you are in him, then nothing that happens in this world can actually get at your identity. Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to believe this. Consider what a sweeping difference it would make.”³

2. The work of a pastors wife is not one-size-fits-all. (There is no office of pastors wife.)

3. Pastors wives face unique challenges and privileges, with the privileges outweighing the challenges.

Charles Spurgeon “If I was a young woman, and was thinking of being married, I would not marry a minister, because the position of minister’s wife is a very difficult one for anyone to fill. Churches do not give a married minister two salaries, one for the husband and the other for the wife; but, in many cases, they look for the services of the wife, whether they pay for them or not. The Pastor’s wife is expected to know everything about the church, and in another sense she is to know nothing of it; and she is equally blamed by some people whether she knows everything or nothing. Her duties consist in being *always at home* to attend to her husband and her family, and being *always out*, visiting other people, and doing all sorts of things for the whole church! Well, of course, that is impossible; she cannot be at everybody’s beck and call, and she cannot expect to please everybody. ...Difficulties arise continually in the best-regulated churches; and the position of the minister’s wife is always a very trying one.

Still, I think that, if I was a Christian young woman, I would marry a Christian minister if I could, because there is an opportunity of doing so much good in helping him in his service for Christ. It is a great assistance to the cause of God to keep the minister himself in good order for his work. It is his wife’s duty to see that he is not uncomfortable at home; for, if everything there

² *Lead*, 156, 169.

³ *Making Sense of God*, 139.

is happy, and free from care, he can give all his thoughts to his preparation for the pulpit; and the godly woman, who thus helps her husband to preach better, is herself a preacher though she never speaks in public, and she becomes to the highest degree useful to that portion of the Church of Christ which is committed to her husband's charge."

II. ENCOURAGEMENTS

1. God knows the challenges a pastor's wife faces.

- Expectations
- Sacrifice
- False guilt
- A sense of insignificance
- Loneliness
- Financial challenges
- Criticism
- Departures
- Exhaustion

2. God rejoices over the pastor's wife.

Isa. 62:3-5 "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you. For as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

Wayne Grudem "I suspect that just as Satan accuses Christians and wants them to feel false guilt and false accusation, so he also seeks to keep them from the great joy of knowing the favor of God on their daily activities, of knowing that God is pleased with their obedience."⁴

⁴ Storms and Taylor, eds., *For the Fame of God's Name*, "Pleasing God by Our Obedience: A Neglected New Testament Teaching," 279.

- Do you believe that God exists and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him? Heb. 11:6 says this faith is pleasing to God.
- Have you shared with others or made sacrifices for others? Heb. 13:16 says “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”
- Are there any ways you are resisting being conformed to the world? Rom. 12:1-2 says this is acceptable or pleasing in God’s sight.
- Do you give financially? Phil. 4:18 says it is “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”
- Do you care for those in your home or support aging parents? 1 Tim. 5:4 says “this is pleasing in the sight of God.”

3. God equips the pastor’s wife to honor him.

- Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
- Isa. 40:29 “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.”
- 1 Pet. 5:7 “...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”
- Heb. 4:16 “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
- Ps. 138:3 “On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.”

III. COUNSEL

1. Make sure people know you are not a pastor.

2. Your most important ministry is to your husband.

John Newton “I wish Mrs. Coffin to consider that a simple desire to please God, to walk by the rule of his word, and to do all to his glory...consecrates the actions of common life, and makes everything that belongs to our situation and duty in civil and domestic life a part of our religion. ...It is an unpleasant mistake to think all the time as lost which is not spent in reading, or

hearing sermons, or prayer. ...It would be wrong to neglect the house of God; it would be equally wrong to neglect the prudent management of her own house. It is chiefly as a mother and a mistress of a family that she can let her light shine to his praise. I would not have her think that she could serve the Lord better in any other station than in that in which his providence has placed her. ...Religion does not consist in doing great things, for which few of us have frequent opportunities, but in doing the little necessary things of daily occurrence with a cheerful spirit, *as to the Lord.*"⁵

3. Sunday mornings are a unique opportunity.

Ps. 122:1 "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

4. Cast the burdens of unjust criticism, mistreatment, and betrayal upon the Lord.

Ps. 55:12-14, 20-22 "For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng. ...My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved."

5. The pastor's wife plays a unique role in promoting team health.

Eph. 4:1-3 "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

⁵ *Letters of John Newton*, 392-394.

1 Thess. 5:12-13 “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

Rom. 12:10 “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

5. Strong faith makes for joyful living and service.

Isa. 7:9 “If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.”

Charles Bridges “The main difficulty is not in our work, but in ourselves; in the conflict with our own unbelief in the form either of indolence or of self dependence. When faith is really brought into action, the extent and aggravation of the difficulty (even if it were increased a hundred-fold) is a matter of little comparative moment. Difficulties heaped upon difficulties can never rise to the level of the promise of God.

...It is most important habitually to contemplate our work in its proper character as a ‘work of faith.’ As such, it can only be sustained by the active and persevering exercise of this principle. ...It is faith that enlivens our work with perpetual cheerfulness. It commits every part of it to God, in the hope that even mistakes will be overruled for his glory; and thus it relieves us from an oppressive anxiety, often attendant upon a deep sense of our responsibility. The shortest way to peace will be found in casting ourselves upon God for daily pardon of deficiencies and supplies of grace, without looking too eagerly for present fruit.

...Unbelief looks at the difficulty. Faith regards the promise. Unbelief therefore makes our work into a service of bondage. Faith realizes it as a ‘labour of love.’ Unbelief drags on in sullen despondency. Faith makes the patience, with which it is content to wait for success, ‘the patience of hope.’ ...To gain therefore an active and powerful spring of renewed exertion, we must strike our roots deeper into the soil of faith.”⁶

Close

2 Thess. 3:5 “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

⁶ *The Christian Ministry*, 175, 178-179.