

The Pastor's Wife and Friendships

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4: 7–8

Friendships start with high hopes. Two people imagining a connection where ease, encouragement, and kindness are standard practice. However, the real beauty in friendship is sticking it out when all is not well, when it becomes uncomfortable, discouraging, or painful. Any relationship that goes beyond an acquaintance will reveal the deepest chasms of the sinful nature. When familiarity kicks in, conflicts arise, and offenses take place, then we are presented with our greatest opportunities for maturing in Christ. When feelings of deep love and companionship meet incidents of hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and betrayals, it is here, we learn how to persevere, manifesting Jesus more fully. The fruit of sanctification often lies amid vulnerable relationships when we let Jesus have full access. Vulnerability means, “a willingness to show emotion or to allow one’s weakness to be seen or known; willingness to risk being hurt or attacked.” Friendships offer us a gift, the chance to see the unhealthiest parts of our hearts. With this revelation, we can make changes and understand what Jesus affirms when He bids us to *come and die* in Luke 9:23.

It’s been said, “*Being a Pastor’s wife is the loneliest role in the church,*” and personally, I would generally agree. Although I wouldn’t say, “I’m lonely,” I often feel alone. There are complexities in navigating friendships distinctive to the Pastor’s wife. Living in the fishbowl of expectations proves difficult in this arena. We (pastors’ wives) long for friendships but proceed cautiously, not wanting to be viewed as “exclusive” or “cliquish.” We struggle wondering if women are drawn to us as people or drawn because of the positions our husband’s hold. When we make friends, we question whether it’s safe to be open. Not wanting to be a burden to the people we serve, we are wary about sharing our personal marital or financial issues, protective with concerns about our children and private in keeping church confidentiality. This tends to generate “one-sided” relationships and we are seen by some as “closed off.” This battle wages war within our spirits and we find ourselves constantly trying to strike the balance between transparency and discretion.

Following is a survey from pastors’ wives.

7 Things the Wife of Your Pastor Wants You to Know

1. She loves people

She loves the flock deeply; prays earnestly and is concerned with their well-being. She carries the burdens they share with her, often thinking about their needs daily. She has a deep desire to see people grow and flourish spiritually. She desires many friendships, but her time and commitments limit her.

2. She is doesn't have it all together

She possesses the same insecurities and hurts as others do, yet most of hers are open to public opinion and ridicule. She walks alongside people as they're experiencing their most horrific pain and tragedies in life, and it grieves her to the core. She suffers through ministry betrayals, church divisions, and slanderous people who want to stop the gospel from going forward. She worries about the well-being of her children growing up "in the ministry." She has bad days and hard seasons, she grieves personally, cries, and has thrown a tantrum or two, yet most expect her to "have it all together." She often comes to church to minister, while silently dealing with her own trauma, pain, and trials.

3. She is a person, not a position.

She feels ill-equipped and unworthy of this call God has on her life; she often wonders if He chose the right person. She has experienced people feeling the freedom to say whatever they want to her "position" forgetting that she is human, made in the image of God. She fights loneliness and isolation. She deals with people being uncomfortable around her, not willing to be themselves.

4. She has feelings

Her husband is frequently scrutinized and criticized, and her children are sometimes judged unfairly, and this happens publicly. She deals with friendly fire as people leave the church, and for her that may well mean an end to another friendship. Sometimes she hurts the feelings of others when she realizes (too late) that she has acted (or reacted) from a place of pain. This causes wounds in others that don't quickly heal. She often feels rejected.

5. She needs mercy, and grace.

She lives in the public eye; everyone might assume they know her well enough for her to share everything with them, but she struggles to remember all the names of those she meets, even though she desires to know them all personally. She might seem closed off or unfriendly but may just be shy or private. She struggles daily with her own sins and needs room to work out her own salvation with fear and trembling.

6. She worries about the pressure her husband carries

The pastor carries a lot on his shoulders, sometimes his wife wonders how much he can handle. She watches as he pours out his life selflessly for others and never looks for "at-a-boys." He doesn't want them, but she knows he gets his feelings hurt, he is human too, but he would never put that on the sheep he is called to care for. She carries it silently too.

7. She feels blessed beyond measure

The spiritual warfare is fierce and can be overwhelming at times but even in all the trials and tribulations of ministry, she wouldn't trade a thing because she knows JESUS IS WORTH IT ALL! She has watched God show up repeatedly, performing miracles, healing marriages, and saving the lost and lonely. What a privilege she has been given to see people grow and flourish in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. She smiles upwards during the baptisms, baby dedications and sheds tears when people surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as their Savior. She will jump in, every day, for you and for others, knowing her Lord will supernaturally do what only He can.

1 John 3:16-We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So, we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Recently, I sat down with some members of the CGN Women's Task Team to discuss, "The Pastor's Wife and Friendships," you can join the full conversation at *When She Leads* podcast.