

Preparing To Compliment Your Husband's Pastoral Training & Ministry

What is it like for your husband?

A burden ADDED to his current life responsibilities:

- Duties in sanctification (honoring Christ, fighting temptation, killing sin)
- Duties as a husband (sacrifice, lead, protect, provide/stewardship \$)
- Duties as a father (shepherd, discipline, correction, training)
- Duties at work (integrity, skill, diligence, submission to authority)
- Duties in the body (worship, prayer, Bible in-take, discipleship, giving, service)
- Duties as a good citizen (watchman, law-abiding, wisdom, evangelism)
- Duties as a good steward of resources and assets (\$\$)

Pastoral training and ministry work:

- If any of the above responsibilities falls into a pattern of failure, his future ministry credibility suffers, perhaps even permanently –
- Proficient in Biblical languages (mental strain not only from grammatical studies, but also from the essential nature of the skill)
- Developing theological convictions
- Learning to preach publicly and live with limitations, lack of skill, specific gifting (insecurities, fears, clarity, distracted preparation, congregational critique, opinions of wife)
- Learning to counsel/shepherd through other people's messes, often becoming their least favorite person
- Learning to work with other leaders and having to wisely apply Scripture to very dicey matters in church life
- Hours upon hours upon hours of lonely, wearying, reading and studying, often with little to show for it
- Far less REST (sleep and mental replenishment) than most outside of ministry
- Dealing constantly with new temptations to fear man's opinion of sermons, counsel, giftedness, effectiveness, leadership
- New temptations to pride—to love significance when ministry responds positively
- Increasing guilt over failures

Temptations to nurture insecurities

What's a pastor's wife to do?

1. **Remember That Ministry is an Undeserved Privilege**

Your husband's giftedness comes freely from Christ:

- ➔ 1 Tim 3:1 – *“If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”*

- ➔ Eph 4:11 – *“And [Christ] gave some as...pastors and teachers”*

- ➔ 1 Cor 3:6 – *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth”*

- ➔ 1 Cor 4:7 – *“...what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”*

- ➔ Rom 15:17-19a - *“Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in the things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit;...”*

Implications:

Do not cease to pray for the Spirit's work through your husband (Eph 6:18-19)

Do not compare your husband's gifts with others (1 Cor 12:14-25)

Do not promote your husband's gifts as superior in the church (1 Cor 12:14-25)

Do not covet another pastor's gifts which you wish your husband possessed

2. **Your Primary Role is to Serve The Church**

If you want to be a faithful pastor's wife, be a faithful servant of God's people first.

➔ Eph 4:16 – *"...according to the proper working of each part"*

➔ Heb 10:24-25a – *"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."*

➔ Heb 13:17 – *"Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."*

Implications:

Learn to submit happily to elder leadership (Heb 13:17)

Nurture a love for the church, despite her flaws (Rom 12:10)

Cultivate gratitude for evidence of the Spirit's work (2 Thess 1:3)

Prepare your heart each Lord's Day for vibrant worship (Psa 111:1)

Strive to be with God's people as often as corporate worship is scheduled (Heb 10:25)

3. **Be a "Fruitful Vine" Within Your Home**

For your husband's training to flourish, you must learn how to bring spiritual fruitfulness to your home.

➔ Psa 128:3 – *"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house..."*

➔ Pro 31:11-12 – *"The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life."*

➔ 1 Pet 3:5-6 – *"For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear."*

➔ Titus 2:3-5 – *"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored."*

Implications:

Take seriously each quality listed in Titus 2:3-5

Nurture patterns of godliness in your home SO THAT your discipleship of others is credible (1 Tim 4:7)

Practice godly speech in your home, especially about the body of Christ (Eph 4:29)

Be trustworthy in all your husband asks you to do

4. Learn To Joyfully Embrace The Sacrifices of Ministry

➔ 2 Tim 2:3-7 – *“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”*

Implications:

Pray for your husband’s strength and stamina in the hardship of ministry and training

Learn what intense study requires and begin to embrace the fruit of it

Practice sacrificially giving your husband time to serve the needs of the body

Follow up with your husband about the spiritual fruit of his labors

Thank him often for his service to the church and for fulfilling his calling

Entrust him to the Lord when he is mistreated, and do not grow bitter

Communicate clearly and wisely about the needs at home, and then trust him to respond as he believes necessary

Be an excellent listener

DO NOT attempt to usurp the role of the Holy Spirit in your husband's life. It is impossible, and you will only become a pseudo-spiritual influence in his life.

The following is a short list of your husband's duties along with suggested practical responses that will bless his labors:

- ❖ Duties as a husband (sacrifice, lead, protect, provide/stewardship \$)
 - Strive to be refreshing to lead and provide for
 - Humbly pray before you raise an issue
 - Don't complain about his leadership
 - Thank him often for his protection/provision
 - Don't trouble the finances

- ❖ Duties as a father (shepherd, discipline, correction, training)
 - Communicate everything he'll need to know to shepherd faithfully
 - Show the children how crucial it is that the family trust the Lord and follow the leader God has provided
 - Do not challenge his discipline and correction (humbly appeal at a later, discreet time)

- ❖ Duties at work (integrity, skill, diligence, submission to authority)
 - Be a gentle, sympathetic, supportive sounding board
 - Let him know that biblical principles are your highest joy
 - Avoid advice about how he handles his work, but always let him know you're praying for him to have wisdom in all the challenges
 - Be thankful for his labors and developing skills (be patient with how long it takes to advance at work—watch you contentment)

- ❖ Duties in the body (worship, prayer, Bible in-take, discipleship, giving, service)
 - Love church
 - Love God's people
 - Love serving
 - Put aside resentment over how much of his time is demanded
 - Worship with fervor alongside him
 - Be faithful to your own growth in the body

- ❖ Duties as a good citizen (watchman, law-abiding, wisdom, evangelism)
 - Pray for his protection from the evil one, and for perseverance and spiritual stamina
 - Never pressure him to go against his conscience in anything

- ❖ Duties as a good steward of resources and assets (\$\$)
 - Don't complain about his \$\$ stewardship
 - Thank him often for his protection/provision
 - Don't trouble the finances

If any of the above responsibilities falls into a pattern of failure, his future ministry credibility suffers, perhaps even permanently –

- ❖ Proficient in Biblical languages (mental strain not only from grammatical studies, but also from the essential nature of the skill)
 - Let him study
 - Help quiz him if he would like that
 - Help him keep some hours blocked off (as seems most efficient to him)

- ❖ Developing theological convictions
 - Listen with interest to his theological “sermons” at home
 - Ask for clarity, and be excited when you get it

- ❖ Learning to preach publicly, and aware of limitations, lack of skill, specific gifting (insecurities, fears, clarity, distracted preparation, congregational critique, opinions of wife)
 - Pray for him, especially before, during, and after preaching/teaching (don't pray with selfish motives—that he'll look good, be impressive, not say something embarrassing, be better than other seminary students so that you can be more “significant” than that other sem wife you're jealous of)
 - Do not critique his preaching as though you relate to the heavy burden upon his shoulders (you're not a preacher). Ask for clarity, mention “distractions” that may hinder clarity, look past lack of skills (which take more time to learn than you imagine), find the clearest truth and thank the Lord and your husband for his shepherding
 - Tell him you're praying for boldness
 - Never imply that he should be less offensive in his preaching (if his personal demeanor might not translate well, humbly appeal the issue and walk gently alongside him as he strives to change those things)

- ❖ Learning to shepherd (disciple/counsel) through other people's messes, often becoming their least favorite person
 - His counsel may not always be spot-on, but remember the burden he carries, the often thankless hours he gives to serve the mess in someone else's life, and the heartfelt sobering that comes to his own walk from seeing the burden of sin in others
 - He cannot avoid becoming the enemy of those he tries to help. You cannot protect him from these things. You must always grow in your faith so that you'll trust God when your husband is unjustly scorned by someone he tried to help

- ❖ Learning to work with other leaders and having to wisely apply Scripture to very dicey matters in church life
 - Stay out of the elders' business! Live out Heb 13:17, so that other women in the church will have the encouraging example of your humble trust in the Lord (few things are more burdensome to a pastor than to strive with immature, difficult elders between Sundays ever-looming responsibilities, only to come home to an 'elders' meeting after the elders meeting.

- Be a supportive sounding board (you are in the most privileged position)
 - Remember that the wheels of church decision-making turn like molasses.
 - Your husband needs to know that you respect the leadership of the church; he doesn't need a battle with you over relationships at church he's trying to develop for the sake of unity and ministry strength
 - Share your perspective, but keep it free from sinful fear and/or emotional turmoil. If you are not able to control those weaknesses, pray for grace and say nothing until you gain victory over them
- ❖ Hours upon hours upon hours of lonely, wearying, reading and studying, often with little to show for it
- If he's a "people" guy, he'll struggle to stay in the saddle. Don't nag his study, let his pastors, his grades, and his conscience do that
 - If he's a "loner," he'll struggle to enjoy engaging people. Don't nag his relational challenges, let his pastors, his sheep, and his conscience help him
 - Let him know your relational needs, pray for his stamina, communicate clearly and with respect, never nurture bitterness of any kind or a complaining spirit, and use your "together" time to encourage and enjoy being a refreshment to one another (with kids as well)—never hold grudges against seminary training, ministry demands, or the struggles of his call to the work (the fruits, benefits, and blessings to your life and to your family will always far outweigh the heartaches. Always let your husband know that you are counting your blessings, and are grateful for the undeserved privilege of ministry
- ❖ Far less REST (sleep and mental replenishment) than most outside of ministry
- Unless your husband needs to work with a doctor's opinion on more healthy living in some area, just don't burden him with your opinions. This is one of those areas where a ministry wife wants so badly to be an encouragement but ends up nurturing the sin of worry, which results in unnecessary conflict over amateur advice. You are not called to be your husband's physical trainer, nutrition authority,

sleep/wake expert, or family physician (unless, of course, you are a credentialed physician).

- Being a “helper” to a man is not a license to take over an area of his life and change things. He is the head of the home. Your most effective “help” is to be faithful and diligent in following Christ, humbly trusting and obeying the Scriptures, submitting to your husband’s leadership “in everything,” fervently praying for God’s grace in his life, offering clear biblical feedback, and ministering to your family and to the church.

- Pastors will always face health challenges...
- They will always need more rest...
- They will always have to consider nutrition at various stages of our aging lives...
- They will always have to learn greater balance between work and rest...
- But don’t kid yourself as the man’s wife. If you wrote the script for his ministry, much of what he accomplishes—for which you rejoice exceedingly—would be severely hindered if he were to follow a wife’s health and safety handbook for her pastor/husband.
- Share your heart with him, put your sinful fears to death in the Spirit, keep praying for God’s grace and favor, and let your husband fulfill his ministry calling. The rewards in heaven laid up for you as a pastor’s wife are not to be compared with the strain and burden you feel here on earth. The Lord will not forget your labors (Heb 6:10 – “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”)

❖ Dealing constantly with new temptations to fear man’s opinion of sermons, counsel, giftedness, effectiveness, leadership

- Most of all, resist, with all your might, the temptation to want great things for your husband’s reputation so that you can “be proud of him” and feel comforted in your life and sense of yourself.

- Your husband will be tempted to make decisions to please your opinions –
- He will be tempted to change sermon content, or even soften the message of Scripture because you’re afraid of what others will say –

- He will be tempted to pursue “success” in ministry according to your definition and those of others, instead of Christ
- He will be tempted to envy the gifts of others if you are not content with who God has made him to be in ministry. He’ll want you to admire him, but he’ll be discouraged when you criticize him or covet for him the giftedness of another
- He’ll second-guess his leadership wisdom if you’re always questioning (with a suspicious, distrusting attitude or tone) his leading of the church