



“DO I HAVE **WHAT IT TAKES** TO BE A MINISTRY WIFE?”

“So you’re a pastor’s wife? ...those words created a flood of pressure that washed over me as I tried to imagine the woman I was expected to be. Just hearing my new title caused my mind to formulate images of the ideal wife and mother, perfect homemaker, gracious hostess, gifted ministry leader, competent Bible teacher, engaging speaker, chief counsellor for women in the church and capable piano player.”

Ed. Catherine J Stewart, *Letters to Pastors’ Wives*
(P&R Publishing, 2013), p79.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

In response to the quote above, how do you feel about being a pastor’s wife?

When you married, did you envisage this journey with your husband? Reflect how the Lord has led you step-by-step to serve Him alongside your husband in church ministry.

What is the minimum necessary to be a pastor’s wife?

All of us as ministry wives feel inadequate and unable to live to glorify God as we would seek to do. When we look at Christ and all that he has done for us, does your heart respond with love and from that love does the desire come to be obedient to Christ? If so, then we can serve out of our limited resources.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
2 Corinthians 12:9

1. CALLING

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.
Ephesians 4:1-7

WHAT IS YOUR CALLING 'IN CHRIST'?

You may not have felt particularly 'called' to be a pastor's wife. As you look back on the journey your husband and you have had into ministry maybe you were surprised by your husband moving from secular work to train for the ministry or being given more and more ministry opportunities in church life until someone said to him "Have you thought of becoming a pastor?" Then, you began to consider what does this mean for me? What am I called to? Ephesians 4 helps us to see that our "calling" flows out of our identity. Being a Christian, a church member, a wife... and a ministry wife flows out of who we are "*in Christ*."

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE BEING "IN CHRIST" TO SOMEONE WHO ISN'T A CHRISTIAN?

Never forget that first and foremost you are a follower of Jesus, you have been called into a living relationship with him.

By virtue of being married and married to a man in ministry you are a Ministry Wife. You share in ministry just as you share in everything with your husband. Husband and wife are one flesh; this is a permanent arrangement – what God has joined together let no one separate (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 6).

Christian ministry is therefore part of who you are as a couple. You can't duck out of being a ministry wife. You can't think it would have been better if your husband had married someone able to speak at women's meetings, play the piano, who didn't find being meeting new people so intimidating!

God has drawn you and your husband together in marriage and you are to be a suitable helper to him just as Eve was for Adam. "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing*" (Proverbs 18:22). You are a good provision for your husband by simply being his wife.

So, Paul's exhortation "*to live a life worthy of the calling you have received*" for you, includes being a ministry wife.

2. CHARACTER

Paul helpfully shows that for all believers of more importance than what we do or don't do is our character. That is true for ministry wives. We can easily feel defeated when we recognise our own lack of Christ-like

character. As we will see later – God gives grace and equips us with all we need and even works in our weakness.

HUMBLE

*Be completely humble and gentle;
be patient, bearing with one another in love.*
Ephesians 4:2

Humility is possessing a mindset that sets God in his rightful place and us in ours. Ephesians 4:2 says that we are to be completely humble. Wow, that's a challenge as it necessitates self-denial, e.g. by enabling your husband to serve, to be at meetings and minister to others while you are at home often working hard or we are to encourage another woman to grow in her gifts and not build our own little kingdom.

We should seek to be humble like Christ (see Philippians 2:6-9). We know Christ was perfectly humble when we are not. Christ is our substitute in this area as well as enabling us to grow in humility as we follow him.

GENTLE

1 Peter 3:4 speaks about Christian women exhibiting true beauty, and having a gentle and quiet spirit. This is particularly hard to apply in our speech. Are you gentle in your speech with your husband, children (if you have them), at work and in the community? Do you have a reputation for gentle speech? We are encouraged to T.H.I.N.K. before we speak – is your speech True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind? If not, then we should be silent. Again we are to be like Christ our Saviour who was gentle and humble in heart (see Matthew 11:29).

PATIENT

Patience trusts in God's sovereignty and submits to God's timing and His will. Some of our frustration and unhappiness comes because we are impatient with God and we want now what only heaven will provide.

*Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become
blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and
crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.*
Philippians 2:14-15

We are helped to be like Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23).

BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

This is being able to be patient under provocation. Ministry Wives see the best and worst of people. Ministry Wives are often more visible and therefore more vulnerable. It is a great comfort to know when we are wronged that the Lord is the just judge and to remember that our motives are almost always selfish and that our sense of justice is twisted. There's only one Judge in the universe! We need love for others even in difficult relationships in church life. *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8). Be like Christ (see 1 Peter 2:23) – more of this when we look at criticism and conflict that affects us as ministry wives.

To develop Christ-like character we need to live in dependence on God's grace. See v7: *"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."* Our ability to minister does not come from our role or title or even our gifts and abilities. All we do is the extension of the ministry of God's Word by his Spirit to our own hearts. Ask God to strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 3:14-21).

Hebrews 13:20-21 is a great encouragement and we can make this our prayer as ministry wives. The Lord Jesus is our great Shepherd, and he will equip us and work in us, even when we feel weak.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

THINK IT THROUGH

1. *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8) Spend some time reflecting on God's great love for you shown in Jesus. Pray, expressing your love and thanks to Jesus for his salvation.
2. Apply the characteristics of humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance in these scenarios:
 - A church member tells you that your husband's sermons are a bit long and boring? How should you respond in the light of Ephesians 4:1-7?
 - A younger woman has tons of energy and seems very gifted. She is confident, and in your eyes, a little bit pushy. She would like to have a role in the women's ministry which is your responsibility. How do you seek to encourage her? How do you feel?
3. What are the areas of character from this study where you have been particularly challenged?
4. Pray in response to God's word as you consider your calling and character, and how and where you need to grow and change. Thank God that his power is made perfect in weakness and his grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Further reading: Ed. Ann Benton, *The Minister's Wife* (IVP, 2011), Chapter 1: Her responsibility to God: 'Daughter, do you love me?', Val Archer.