

A HANDBOOK  
FOR  
MINISTERS' WIVES

*Sharing the Blessings of your Marriage, Family, and Home*

DOROTHY KELLEY PATTERSON

FOREWORD BY TIM AND BEVERLEY LAHAYE



BENNINGTON, VERMONT

## **A Handbook for Ministers' Wives**

Sharing the Blessings of your Marriage, Family, and Home

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# *Dedication*

*To* First Ladies who have been special to me—

To my mother, who is the First Lady of my daddy's heart and ever the encourager in my life;

To Honey, my mother-in-love, who modeled devotion to Christ as she served as Patée's First Lady in the First Baptist Church of Beaumont, TX, in which I was reared;

To Sarah Eddleman, who gave me my first opportunity to learn and preside over hospitality in the home of a president during my years as a student at New Orleans Seminary;

To Rhonda Kelley, my sister-in-love and the First Lady of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where my brother Chuck is President, who is my kindred spirit for exchanging ideas and for encouragement in the work we love;

To my sisters Eileen, who is her pastor husband Steve's First Lady, and Charlene, who has also served as her husband Russ's First Lady when he was a pastor, and to Kathy who has a lot of work to do to keep up with all these First Ladies;

To my daughter Carmen, whose pastor husband selected her to be his First Lady; she inspires and helps Mark as he serves the First Baptist Church, Little Rock, AR; she faithfully nurtures Abigail and Rebekah; she presides over her household;

To Rachel, who has become the First Lady in the heart of my son Armour;

To Paige, the pastor—and now president—who made me his First Lady; he has generously provided for me, faithfully protected me, passionately loved me, and consistently intertwined our lives in ministry; he forgives my weaknesses and praises my strengths, and more than any other he finds and enriches my giftedness.

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# FOREWORD

*After thirty-seven years of service as pastor and wife in three different churches, we can readily identify with Dorothy Patterson's often humorous and very practical evaluation of "the pastor's wife, who must also serve as mother and dedicated servant of Christ and a dozen other jobs she never envisioned when she said, 'I do.'" They say it takes one to know one, and Dorothy certainly qualifies. She was the wife of Dr. Paige Patterson when he was the associate pastor of the great First Baptist Church under Dr. W. A. Criswell. She knows the ecstasy of God's hand on her life and ministry, but she also knows the sadness when others would criticize and wish they could lay hands on her and her husband.*

Yet she has an uncanny ability to take criticism and objection as a part of the job and always maintains a Spirit-filled joy, even in the midst of the most difficult pressures of the ministry. She has been her husband's greatest cheerleader, encourager, and best friend for over three decades. During that time she was a vital part of raising their two dedicated children and now can rejoice at their availability to God in their adulthood.

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We remember praying with Dorothy amid the tensions of denominational difference when she and her husband were the brunt of much criticism. Never did she lose faith that God was in control, even when things seemed out of control. Her long reliance on the Lord and His ability to see them through to the perfect will of God was a powerful encouragement when Paige needed her most, and she served as an example of what God can do when a person is faithful.

Now they serve as president and president's wife of one of the finest seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention—Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. There she has endeared herself to the students by her incredible sense of humor and her deep insights into God's Word. One visit to their chapel services, and you will find she is a favorite among the students and their wives.

Any pastor's wife or prospective wife will benefit from this book, based as it is on the Word of God and filled with practical helps in the multifaceted role every pastor's wife must fill. This book could not have been written by anyone who had not been a pastor's wife. Anyone who reads it will find it a blessing!

Tim LaHaye  
Author, Educator, Minister

Beverly LaHaye  
Author, Educator  
Chairman of Concerned Women  
of America

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**T**o write and publish a book always brings together a team. There is inspiration and vision, research and recording, editing and refining, not to mention encouragement and support services.

First, I am blessed to have a husband who especially inspired this effort because he included me in his pastoral ministry and then challenged me to pass on lessons learned first in the setting of the Bible college we served in Texas, then on seminary campuses in North Carolina and Texas, and ultimately through the writing of this volume for ministers' wives to the women who now serve alongside their husbands in ministry or who are preparing to do so. My children and extended family are always involved in my writing projects by supplying wonderful illustrations, offering words of encouragement, and by personal input along the way.

Second, at the time this volume was written, I was helped by a wonderful staff at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. Computer problems were solved by our IT staff under the direction of Tim Shidal. The SEBTS Reference Librarian Terese Jerose helped to uncover even the most

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insignificant details of documentation. But more than any others, our Magnolia Hill staff members—Chris Thompson, Bobbi Moosbrugger, Kirk Carlisle, and Jim Elliott—went beyond the call of duty in pouring out themselves in our hospitality ministries so that I could devote periods of time to research and writing for such a project as this.

Finally, I am indebted to Northeastern Baptist Press and Dr. Mark Ballard, as well as their entire team, for putting this volume back in the market place so quickly!

Dorothy Patterson  
Hacienda del Pastor  
Dallas, Texas

## INTRODUCTION

**T**oo often there exists a distorted and even ridiculous image of the preacher's wife. Some view her as a brainless airhead, prey for the juiciest gossip and a sitter for the nursery. She is homely and dowdy in appearance, with out-of-date and ill-fitting clothing, a deathly countenance, no makeup, and no ornamentation. She has a spongelike ability to absorb all criticism, graciously and without complaint, accepting martyrdom for her lifeless but pious body. She is one of the walking wounded, discouraged, lonely, stripped of all self-worth, bereft of any friends, neglected by her husband, and unappreciated by her children. With no identity of her own, she remains in the shadow of her husband and is measured according to his success or failure. An Anglican bishop's wife once quipped, "Clergy ought to be celibate . . . because no decent, right-minded man ought to have the effrontery to ask any woman to take on such a lousy job!"<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, others expect the preacher's wife to be Super Server and Wonder Worker. A woman idolized by all, emulated by many, and kept on a pedestal by her family and friends, she presides over House Beautiful—enhanced by clean picture windows, drawn-

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back draperies, and open doors for all to observe perfection among the living. Many extol this saint's virtues; her reputation spreads far and wide.

With all fantasy aside, the minister's wife deserves a serious look. She is usually a lively doer who takes great joy in funneling her unbounded creativity and energy into her family and congregation, thereby putting her own personal stamp on the kingdom of Christ. This woman needs to be extraordinary to fulfill the expectations of her family, not to mention the congregation her husband serves.

The church looks to her for a shining example of biblical womanhood. The world wants to see in her the refreshing breeze of sincere, Christlike servanthood ready to meet community needs. Her children are looking for a steady rock to which they can cling during the storms of life. But her preacher-husband just wants the made-to-order bride and helper who God promised would labor at his side in life and ministry.

An informal survey conducted among pastors and their wives revealed that 63 percent of the women, compared with 44 percent of the men, believed that the pastorate is a two-person job; 78 percent of the men and 75 percent of the women agreed that the wife's active participation in church activities is necessary for the pastor to be perceived as successful. Further, 60 percent of the women and 73 percent of the men acknowledged that wives attend some activities just because they are expected to do so. However, the survey's saddest revelation is that 54.4 percent of the wives believed that their husband's first priority is the church, and 36 percent of the pastors agreed. In this framework a

survey placing clergy divorces as the third highest among professional people is not too surprising.<sup>2</sup>

What does it mean to be a minister's First Lady? Unfortunately, the modern age has moved from "getting two for the price of one" to "settling for one for the price of two." The U.S. government actually has a law prohibiting members of the presidential family from being on the payroll, as a result of former President Kennedy's appointment of his brother to a cabinet-level position. Hillary Rodham Clinton, as America's First Lady, had no government salary, but she received much money for support staff, travel, and entertainment. A cloud remains over her husband's administration regarding how she used taxpayers' money and unbelievable perks coming out of the White House to launch an unprecedented campaign for the Senate.

A pastor's First Lady has no written job description, yet she walks into a role with amazing expectations and sometimes overwhelming responsibilities. She is her husband's wife and thus, according to the biblical mandate, *his helper*. She has a function and role given by God—regardless of any occupation she might choose. This handbook's focus is the religious arena in which the minister's wife is not called by the church to a particular position. Although there is no law prohibiting her paid service on the church staff, the church does not assign a salary to a minister's wife for her work as First Lady.

The role of First Lady is still a demanding one. Most people still consider the preacher's wife to be an extension of her husband and the functional equivalent to the pastor. Yet this volume will present the minister's wife as a woman with duties and responsibilities that super-

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seede whatever she does in the church without limiting her prerogative to carve out her own unique role in kingdom ministry. Unity with diversity is the hallmark of the teamwork and partnership needed by the minister and his First Lady as they labor in the kingdom vineyard. They may have different gifts and conflicting ideas, but with grace and lovingkindness they will work together to maintain a strong family and vibrant congregation.

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Brother Lawrence, member of the barefooted Carmelite monks in Paris in the 1600s prayed: “Lord of all pots and pans and things . . . make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates! The time of business does not differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen . . . I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”

## CHAPTER 1

# POSITION DEMANDS PASSION

**A**s a minister’s wife, to attempt to mold your life into meeting the expectations of your parishioners will send you to disaster and disillusionment on the fast track. You aren’t meant to busy yourself dancing for the pipers, nor are you called to perform on a ministry platform under the scrutiny of eyes and glare of lights. Rather, your task is genuine and sincere commitment to the responsibilities God has given you. The rest of the script will unfold according to God’s plan for you.

You are not defined by your husband’s work or even your own labor, as important as it may be; your identity and worth are not judged by personal skills or giftedness but by your intimate relationship to Christ. The passion in your heart will manifest itself in your position in the kingdom.

## BEAUTY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The essentials for living the Christian life and making a difference in the kingdom are not determined by your physical appearance, your intellectual acumen, your personal charisma, or even your personal giftedness. Working from the inside out, your greatest resources are found in the heart's spiritual sensitivities, which have been developed

“My worth to God in the public sector is no more than the substance of my walk with him in private.”

—DOROTHY PATTERSON

through a consistent walk with the Lord (Prov. 31:30; 1 Pet. 3:3–4).

The Holy Spirit must occupy the throne in your heart. As your Guide, He

will enhance your character with His fruit (Gal. 5:22–23). He will give and develop your gifts (1 Cor. 12:8–11). You may know the contents of the Bible; you may be familiar with church polity and organizations. However, to model the Christian life and equip the saints, you must be intimately acquainted with the Spirit of God. He alone can prepare you for your task. Mary of Bethany chose to sit at the feet of the Savior. She focused on Him without being distracted by her family or other responsibilities.

Hearing the Word of God, gleaning the inspiration found in corporate worship, and seeking the edification that comes from great men of God are all important. Many preachers' wives are Bible teachers in their own right and spend much time studying the Bible to prepare for teaching responsibilities.

How can you bring the presence of God into your life? Jesus more than anyone practiced the presence of God. By studying His life, by adopting His priorities, by living as He lived, and by doing what He did, you can become like Him. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, dead by age thirty, said, "It is not talent God blesses but likeness to Jesus."

## THE REQUIREMENT OF SOLITUDE

What did Jesus do? He sought solitude and silence—uninterrupted time to communicate with the Father. In the modern penal system, solitary confinement is used to break the strongest will. Spiritually, you need solitude in order to overcome external pressures and develop and nourish a relationship with God. The absence of interruptions and removal of human influences create a vacuum into which God fits. Silence moves beyond quiet or solitude because it closes out all distractions—music, words, or noises. Whether the desert, your closet, or any isolated spot—to be silent and still and wait on the Lord is a prelude to hearing His voice (Ps. 46:10).

Moses found his strength and preparation for ministry in the wilderness. Jesus, too, spent a time of solitude and deprivation in the wilderness—the cauldron in which He developed strength. He prayed and meditated. He quoted Scripture. He adopted a simple and sacrificial lifestyle; He expended His energies in service to others.

No woman will adopt such a lifestyle just by *meeting* Jesus; she must *live* with Him in order to become like Him. You must learn how to invest your time and energies in a lifestyle that puts you not only in touch

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with but also in harmony with the Lord. By tapping His resources, you can carry out an otherwise impossible ministry assignment.

When endowed with spiritual disciplines, you can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. You use your will in proper choices and activities. You practice the presence of God until you respond automatically and without thinking in your choices.

These disciplines seem to be givens—things taken for granted for the wife of a preacher. Yet many preachers and their wives meet the Lord only in order to prepare for teaching or other ministries. Their Bibles may be dog-eared from use, but their hearts have not been crammed with Scripture. Suffering from spiritual starvation, they are spiritually weak, not because God will not endow them with strength but because they have deprived themselves of the necessary nourishment. As a result they are left mutilated, their growth stunted, their testimonies weakened, their ministries deformed.

For spiritual disciplines you must purposefully embrace specific tasks using your heart, mind, and body as well as your passion, will, and spirit. Your personality and the way you order your life must be molded by a power beyond yourself as you yield and bow to the Lord's control of your life. You incorporate this discipline through times of solitude (prayer, meditation on Scripture, fasting) and celebration.

## THE REWARD OF SUSTENANCE

Your soul and heart must be laid bare before the Lord as you read and meditate on Scripture for your own personal nourishment. I prefer to use my time reading the biblical text, but some enjoy using a devotional book as a companion. Read the Word every day. I read a chapter

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from Proverbs daily because it is practical for my life as a wife, mother, and grandmother. In addition, I am now reading through Psalms each month, finding comfort and encouragement.

Taking your petitions, confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise out of Scripture is the best way to pray according to God's will. My prayers are not confined to the written Word of God, but I weave His words throughout my prayers. Especially is this true with my daily portions from Proverbs and Psalms. I pray aloud as I personalize them; I write my initials or those of one for whom I am praying as I claim the promises and cling to the comfort they bring.

My mother-in-law read through and marked a Bible for each of her children and grandchildren. In the Bible prepared for me, she has written notes that are especially meaningful to a wife and mother. There are devotional thoughts, insights gleaned from the text, and even some notes of love from her to me. As I read my Bible, I put initials of family members or friends next to verses as a way of identifying my special prayer for that person. You can do the same for your loved ones—read through and find a way to personalize a copy of Scripture for the one you love and give it as a gift on some special occasion.

Seeking the sustenance you need for spiritual power is a quest of its own. Reading a few verses here and there is not sufficient. You must have a heart commitment to study Scripture systematically, to meditate on what you read, to contemplate its meaning for your own life, and to memorize helpful verses for recalling at later times. Meditation does not allow your mind to drift aimlessly without focus.

Meditation is putting your mind and heart on a single verse or thought, mulling its words over in your mind (Ps. 1:1–2; 63:5–6; 143:5;

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119:48, 78, 148; Josh. 1:8). You cannot be hurried, and you can meditate only when your mind is free from outside distractions. Disciplined thought brings insights and lays the foundation for practical application. Read the verse through again and again—perhaps aloud to hear the words and cement them in your mind.

Memorizing the verse or passage focuses your mind on its words and message. Calling to mind the verses throughout the day in conversation, teaching, or counseling will help to implant its message in your heart.

Personalizing the verses you read brings comfort to your meditation. Insert your name as you contemplate each verse. Use different translations and paraphrases to see new insights and renew old truths. Doing your devotional reading in a copy of Scripture you have not used before allows you to mark verses with fresh vision.

### *A Verse Especially for Me*

“Fear not, for I have redeemed Dorothy;  
I have called Dorothy by her name;  
She is Mine.

When Dorothy passes *through* the waters, I will be with her;  
And *through* the rivers, they shall not overflow Dorothy.  
When Dorothy walks *through* the fire, she shall not be  
burned;  
Nor shall the flame scorch her.”

Adapted from Isa. 43:1–2

—DOROTHY PATTERSON

*Practicing the Presence of God*

- Reading and studying Scripture systematically
- Meditating on specific verses
- Memorizing key verses
- Personalizing verses with your own name
- Seeking inspiration in corporate worship
- Finding edification in great women of God

The payback from meditating on God's Word is worth the time and energy invested. You make your ministry deep through personal quiet time, and the Lord will make it wide through unlimited opportunities for service. You meet the Lord in ways you've never known Him before (Jer. 9:23–24; Col. 1:9–10). Your mind and heart will be encased with a protective shield (Phil. 4:6–7). Your mind will be renewed with His thoughts (Ps. 119:38; Prov. 23:7), and you will have a clear channel for divine direction in your life (Prov. 3:5–6). Meditation transfers what you have read in God's Word into spiritual strength and wisdom and a lifestyle lived for the glory of God just as digestion of food appropriates what you have eaten to the physical needs of your body.

Another source of comfort and edification is the hymnal. The Book of Psalms is the hymnal of Israel and contains some of my favorite devotional readings. Many of the great hymns of Christianity are full of theological truth and provide an excellent source for meditating on Scripture.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SUBMISSION

Reading the Bible is not the only way to “hear” the Word of the Lord. Prayer is also an indispensable tool God uses to speak to your heart. The metaphor “garden of prayer” is appropriate to define prayer. You set the boundaries for your garden—a place to blend personal imagination, memories, dreams. It must be a sanctuary from the cares of life; it must be private and accessible to you alone or only to guests you invite; it is a place for renewal and revival.

Selecting the best time varies with the individual, but your most important meeting of the day is with the Lord. Unfortunately, most preachers’ wives are “time impaired” because of their overbooked lives. You live by the calendar; you can schedule and organize God right out of your life. In ministry you can set out with great intentions to spend a lengthy time with the Lord and then be swallowed up with one interruption after another until the maximum becomes the minimum.

What could be more fortifying than beginning and concluding your day with God! Before you venture out to the challenges of the day, you seek His help; and when you have completed the day, you return to thank Him and ask for renewing strength through the night. God clearly expects His children to spend time with Him (Matt. 6:33). In fact, He created the man and the woman for fellowship; He planned for them to have intimate communication with Him (Ps. 25:14; 27:4).

A church historian once commented that Martin Luther was quick to say that when faced with a tremendous amount of work to do in an unusually short time, he would more than ever need to spend several hours in prayer before he began such an arduous schedule. Luther

knew the real source of power and realized that he was too busy and his work was too important not to connect with God in preparation for the task.

Getting up in time to meet the Lord is not as easy as it may sound. You start by going to bed on time the night before. The easiest way to achieve time with the Lord is to make the time for your going to bed and arising in the morning habitual. Your quiet time will not be meaningful if you are not at your best physically as well as mentally and spiritually. If you are so tired as to be half asleep, you will be unable to concentrate.

You need to have the same time and the same place reserved for Him. I've always had a cozy corner in my home—not only a place to relax in body and mind but also a place to meet God. This place is comfortable and familiar; I am not only drawn there, but I want to linger. What a delightful place for intimate conversation with the Lord or a tea party with a special friend. I can have piped-in praise or worship music, but often I have silence, which may be the most important “sound” for communing with the Lord.

How much time does it take to commune with the Lord? Quality does not supplant quantity in the sense of giving yourself time to hear from God through His Word, speaking to Him with your prayers and praise, and then meditating long enough for Him to work in your heart. Certainly fifteen minutes is minimal. The time does not have to be exactly the same every day, for there will be times when you find yourself extending the time without even realizing it.

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My prayers, and the prayers my husband and I share together, are wafted from many different settings. I love my comfortable blue chair. I can go there at the end of a challenging day and find a blessed retreat with the Lord. The prayer garden—an enclosed oasis to which our bedroom opens—has a bubbling fountain, fragrant floral beds, and a giant Texas-shaped stone, reminding me of my home-state roots. Two large Indonesian chairs carved out of massive teak trunks offer a place to recline with a small table for a cup of tea and my Bible. The deck overlooks a wooded area and is marked by the sounds and movements of a variety of birds. The sunset is visible through the trees; the wind chimes add music; the hanging baskets frame the painting of nature. There are comfortable chairs and the solitude necessary for a time with the Lord.

Although I would prefer an isolated beach or a wooded path with sights and smells that heighten my senses, I can always find relaxing solitude in a long walk in any setting—hotel corridors or parking lots, through the seminary campus, on the treadmill in my bedroom, while I am at home or on a trip. Most important is the solitude and quiet that allows me to talk with the Lord as I would in conversation with an intimate friend. Walking and talking with the Lord just seem to go together!

Prayer walking is one of my favorite settings for quiet time. I read Scripture before or after I walk; but while I am walking alone, I pray aloud. For me it is an intimate visit with the Lord, and I have the added benefit of physical exercise, which without the prayer time is drudgery!

You can also have a portable prayer setting. My sister-in-love Rhonda gave my mother a basket filled with wonderful helps to en-

*Dorothy Kelley Patterson*

hance prayer time. I began giving prayer baskets to brides or new mothers or friends celebrating a birthday or holiday.

My personal prayer basket has my Bible; a pen; highlighters; a journal with family photographs and space for recording prayer requests and answers; selected birthday photographs from my Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary prayer box; facial tissues and a special handkerchief (my “tear bottle” always seems to be overflowing); cards for notes of encouragement to students, missionaries, friends, or family members for whom I have prayed; a favorite Scripture card done in calligraphy by my daughter Carmen; Magnolia Hill bookmarks with instructions for how to brew a proper cup of tea. You could include a tea cup and saucer with tea bags, a devotional book, a scented candle, or some carefully chosen tapes or CDs.<sup>1</sup>

Debbie Baker designed a prayer box, an organized system to pray weekly for church members and prospects. She prepared an index card with the church member’s photograph, name, address, and telephone number on the front. On the back she added information about the person (directions to his home, prayer requests and answers, cards sent, visits or calls made). She alphabetized and divided the cards into groups for each day of the week. For prospects, she used a different color of card. This idea could be used for family, friends, Sunday school class, Bible study group. For a larger group of names, you could recycle bi-weekly, monthly, or, as I do, annually. This routine can be in your personal quiet time, or it may be used in prayer time with your husband or family. Debbie shared the benefits she received from this prayer program: an organized way to pray for the church family and prospects,

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a reminder of prayer requests and answers, a record of ministries to members and contacts of prospects, a source of information including telephone numbers and addresses.

How do you connect with the Lord? First, you seek Him with your whole heart (body senses, intellect, and emotions). Time with Him must be a priority. You must be willing to let Him govern your life and faith. You can *see* the beauty of creation; you can *hear* classical music presentations or even the melodious singing of the birds; you can *smell* the aromatic flora and fauna as well as spices and herbs; you can *touch* a family member or friend with feelings of affection and delight. Not only do your senses connect you with the Lord, but also your emotions add feelings of joy and personal experience, enabling you to praise the Lord and celebrate His goodness. Alongside your emotions is your intellect, which helps you find answers to your questions. Although you can never explain God, you can learn more about Him as you read and meditate on His Word.

Prayer offers personal guidance to get you through daily activities. It puts a protective shield around your husband and children. Prayer is not merely a means for getting God to do what you want Him to do; rather, its purpose is to lead you to God's will on earth. Prayer should

“Read and study your Bible in the highways of life—an opportunity for witness; pray in your closet—a source of power.”

—DOROTHY PATTERSON

make you single-minded with God.

The subject of your prayers includes known events coming as well as unknown challenges. Occasionally I like to

write out my prayer in a journal or on stationery as if I were writing a letter to the Lord. These intimate epistles then chronicle my walk with Him and serve as encouragement in the future. I also find it therapeutic to list my petitions in a prayer journal. I note God's response from His Word, using Scripture to find comfort and strength; and I record answers. In looking back, I

wish I had put my prayers and petitions into a set-apart journal to follow the trail of God's answers and promises over a lifetime. When I do read past journals, prayers and answers are always there, reminding me that God is sufficient for my every need!

A student designed a spiral-bound prayer Rolodex, writing prayer requests on the index cards. She stands it as an easel on the kitchen table. For the mealtime blessing she flips to the next card to lift its request to the Lord. She notes answered prayer on the card. When a card noting answered prayer appears again in the cycle, the family thanks God for answering that prayer!

*Dottie's Dictum for  
Prayer Power*

- Write a letter to the Lord.
- List your petitions in a journal.
- Record your answers to prayer.
- Walk while you pray to keep the adrenalin flowing.

## THE GREAT ESCAPE

Only by spending time with the Lord can you look like Him (Ps. 17:15), think like Him, talk like Him, and act like Him (Prov. 16:3;

“Don’t seek a ministry,  
but expect the fruit of a  
disciplined life.”

—JOHN WESLEY

Ps. 91:1; 19:7–11; 16:8–9). Taking time away from normal routines and people who have been woven into your life is a necessity just as are eating and

sleeping. Solitude is an antidote for stress and fatigue that allows you to withdraw long enough to regroup and regain momentum and composure. By isolating yourself from interruptions and distractions, you find new thoughts, unique wisdom, and workable solutions.

Solitude must be balanced with intimacy. It is different from aloneness, which might suggest loneliness. Solitude suggests time for replenishment from within. You can invigorate your spirit with enthusiasm, renew your body with energy, and restore productivity to your life.

Once the personal spiritual disciplines are in place, then the minister’s wife is prepared to assume responsibility as a willing and eager helper to her husband and to emulate the Christlike lifestyle before her children. Children, too, must be taught to make solitude a part of life, for only then can they pursue personal Bible study and prayer. They, too, need to be separated from daily burdens and responsibilities of life in order to meditate and build personal spiritual strength.

None of these disciplines should be done because you are the minister’s wife but rather because you are the Lord’s child. Everything done should be motivated by your love for Christ. Your service to husband, children, family, and church must be done “as unto the Lord.”

*Dorothy Kelley Patterson*

In addition to the daily time with the Lord, consider a special personal retreat—a time for examining your own heart, reviewing what has gone before and contemplating what is to come. Such a time might be scheduled on your birthday, as you begin the new year, as you move from season to season, or as you complete one major project and prepare for another. It may be a quiet place in your own home or a secluded spot somewhere else. You should visibly seek God’s wisdom, His guidance, His blessing. You will come out strengthened spiritually and prepared to meet whatever problems, temptations, or trials may come to you (Isa. 40:29–31).

I sought him whom my soul did love,  
With tears I sought him earnestly;  
He bow’d his ear from Above,  
In vain I did not seek or cry.  
In my distress I sought the Lord,  
When nought on earth could comfort give;  
And when my soul these things abhor’d,  
Then, Lord, thou said’st unto me, Live.  
—Anne Bradstreet, First Lady of Massachusetts Bay<sup>2</sup>

## JOY IN THE JOURNAL

Any view suggesting that God is against fun, play, relaxation, amusement, and pleasure is distorted. In fact, Satan would like nothing better than to make the Christian life look unattractive and negative, when in truth Christ offers a life of joy and blessing, vitality and enthusi-

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asm, even in the midst of adversities! Instead of negatives, it projects positives. The emphasis is not on what you can't do but on what you should do in order to have the maximum joy and blessing. Long for God (Ps. 63:1); come to God (Ps. 65:2); cry out to God (Ps. 84:2); bless His name (Ps. 145:21).

Journaling is the way to record your spiritual journey. Through the years I have kept many different journals. I have had the general journal in which I recorded daily events, family milestones, Paige's preaching texts, and decisions made in his ministry; travel journals in which I described the daily itinerary, evaluated the hotels and restaurants, listed favorite shopping places and the purchases made, noted guides and other people with whom a future contact might be made; journals that are dedicated to spiritual struggles; journals planned for my children and granddaughters and even for nieces and nephews if I live long enough! Putting my gratitude to God into words, recording blessings and answered prayers for praise now and in the future is great therapy for responding to future doubts and frustrations, questions and anxieties. Only God and my journal really know the depths of my despair, the heat of my anger, and the pit of depression into which I can fall.

Journals can become a personal "life file." Every minister's wife needs a record of the road traveled—whether done as a series of letters carefully written in sequence or paragraphs detailing and keeping track of the highlights and personal events of life recorded in an orderly and organized fashion. Keeping diaries, filing personal letters, and saving mementos can all dovetail into journaling.

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Every minister's wife needs some reservoir for dispensing strength for the journey. If you aren't into journals, you may want to try a Blessing Box or Provision Present or Joy Jar. When God does something wonderful for you—meeting a mundane need, unfurling a genuine miracle, or sending a serendipity into your life—you can record that on a small scroll of paper or a business card and drop it into a box, gift-wrapped present, or jar. Then at Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, on your birthday, or anytime you need encouragement, you can dip into that reservoir of documented outpourings of God's love to remind yourself of the divine loving-kindness and tender care of the Heavenly Father.

## ORDERING YOUR PRIVATE LIFE FOR PUBLIC MINISTRY

Most activities open to a pastor's wife are worthy, and many women married to pastors are doers. How can a pastor's wife determine the most effective and efficient way to use the time available to her? As you choose what to do and when to do it, hallow your priorities by Scripture. The Bible speaks to this vital question with some general principles.

Personal quiet time—sustaining your personal relationship to Christ—is unequivocally the first priority. This time is not for the work of the church or for attending its regular services. Rather, this daily prayer and Bible study lets God speak in the most intimate communication (Matt. 6:33). Nothing produces any more heat in prayer than the light of the Word of God. This discipline is that from which all else

*An Anonymous Prayer*

Lord, I have been so good today. I haven't raised my voice to anyone. I haven't called anyone rude names. I haven't yelled and screamed, ranted and raved at anyone. I haven't even broken anything or hurt anybody. But Lord, I'm getting out of bed in about five minutes, and I will probably need Your help then. Amen.

must flow; it is the governor of all that is to come; this intimate fellowship with the Heavenly Father cannot be omitted without the gravest consequences.

The second priority became mine when I chose to marry. I am a divinely appointed helper to my husband (Gen. 2:18–24; Eph. 5:21–33; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). For a preacher's wife the task of caring for her husband's mundane needs is only the beginning. She and her husband are also partners in ministry, and that seems to blossom into another full-time job!

The third priority is another result of my decision to marry and bear children. Rearing children goes beyond providing custodial care for those whom God entrusts to you. Their spiritual nurture, educational training, and preparation for citizenship in the world are all under your supervision.

The fourth priority is the extended family. Scripture gives ample evidence that God views the family as spanning the generations. He planned for family members to minister to one another at various stages of life (Deut. 6:1–9; Ps. 68:6; 78:4–7). Inevitably there will be emergen-

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cies—sickness, death, or tragedy—which touch the entire family circle, awakening a compassion and determination to pull together and rely on one another in bearing the burden (Gal. 6:2) and carrying the load.

The fifth priority is one I share with my husband, who is president of a seminary. Its ministries as well as the students on the campus are an opportunity for kingdom investment. This assignment does not minimize the work of the local church, nor does it preclude support of community causes and civic service.

Perhaps my experience will help other ministers' wives in making these choices. However, you dare not seek to do the work beyond until Christ has done the work within. Ultimately it is not how intelligent you are, what physical beauty you have, or even how many gifts and talents are in your grasp; rather, the seed for all you will ever accomplish in your home or in the church or community lies within your own heart and spirit—what Peter calls the “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4) and what the wise Solomon describes as a “fear of the LORD” (Prov. 31:30). These qualities of a woman's inner life can be developed only under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, who is the Guide unto truth (John 16:13), the Teacher for all things (John 14:26), the Intercessor to the Father (Rom. 8:26), the Agent for renewal (Titus 3:5), the Comforter in sorrow (John 15:16), and the Bestower of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8–11).

In summarizing the attributes of a minister's wife, you must begin with the genuine experience in which heart and life are committed totally to the Lord Jesus. Close behind this personal relationship with Christ is the determination to set up priorities according

to divine directives. Whatever the minister's wife plans to do in the Lord's vineyard must be secondary to her complete support of the ministry of her preacher-husband. Believing in what her husband is doing is absolutely indispensable, and supporting him in his ministry takes hard work. Women do not question paying the cost for necessities, and they seldom question spending whatever is available for luxuries; but some seem to think that spiritual things are not worthy of the cost, despite the clear biblical admonition (2 Tim. 2:15).

## TIME MANAGEMENT

Praying about your daily schedule every morning will keep you sensitive to the Lord's direction for your life. Praying with your husband about how to order the day ahead will help you both. Another effective way to manage time is to work smart. A personal survey of how you spend your time is a prelude to using your time wisely.

The concern is not how much time you have but how you use that time. Everyone has the same number of minutes in a day, but some people seem to accomplish a lot more tasks in a lot less time. The key is to break life into manageable segments of time. You must have long-range goals and a lifetime vision; but to conquer the big things, you must start with short-term goals and step-by-step plans. List all the responsibilities and projects before you for the day. Generally, using your freshest energies on the most important and getting the worst done early paves the way for more productivity on the minor things.

Prioritizing your to-do list is essential. You may use letters or numbers or symbols or even colors. Most important are things you must do

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to avoid serious consequences; next are tasks that would cause only mild repercussions; then would come things without real consequences, and finally anything you can delegate or pass along to someone else.

In your prioritizing, consider your own unique abilities and special skills. Your efficiency, not to mention your pleasure, is greatly enhanced if you pursue what you do best.

Even motivated and efficient people sometimes waste time by procrastination or putting off the things they need to do but don't enjoy doing. Perhaps the formidable task needs to be divided into parts to be tackled one at a time. Or maybe you need to set aside a block of uninterrupted time to complete the task. Stopping and starting greatly increases the time required and stifles the effectiveness of the time you spend. I have addressed this problem in my life by trying to block certain days for writing—no appointments, no classes, no telephone calls (except from family), nothing to interrupt!

Sometimes it helps to identify the time of day when you are sharpest and most efficient in order to assign to that time your most challenging projects. My most productive time is from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Before 10 A.M., I work through my beginning-the-day rituals. In the evening I do less-demanding tasks—going through the mail, reading the newspaper, organizing my schedule. You do not have to reach every goal to accomplish something important.

You must keep flexibility by regularly evaluating how you use your time. Time for message preparation and other essential duties should be blocked well in advance. These time allotments should not be disrupted by unnecessary interruptions. The preacher's calls can be

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screened by a secretary in the office and his wife at home. Making and receiving telephone calls should be assigned a time rather than letting them chop up your entire day. Sometimes a call should be forwarded to another person who can better answer a question or handle a situation. Long telephone cords must have been made for women like me. What a challenge to see how many things you can do at once!

Developing shortcuts will enable you to use time otherwise wasted. Women have genes that enable them to do at least two things at once. In addition, you should not only use the time-savers you already have but look for others to make you more efficient.

Paige and I have a calendar with engagements set for two to three years in advance—board meetings, church commitments, seminary events, family gatherings. We update that calendar quarterly and carefully block time for family fellowship, spiritual renewal, and writing assignments. A detailed weekly schedule is churned out for staff and family.

Your home should also have a message center. We have used mailbags hanging on bedroom doors, monogrammed magnets on the refrigerator, chalkboards, and bulletin boards. Now my husband and I each have a monogrammed leather pouch to pass messages and information back and forth.

Making lists is one of my spiritual gifts! I can affirm the words of President Teddy Roosevelt: “I will always believe in going hard at everything I do.” Even during planned holiday celebrations, I create a list for each family member so that the labor is more evenly distributed and nothing falls through the cracks. At Magnolia Hill we have lists for

home maintenance, lists for hospitality events, even a list for changing the clocks twice a year.

There are two glaring weaknesses in my time management: scheduling for emergencies and taking a day off regularly. I heartily recommend both, and I continue to strive to incorporate these principles since I know they would ultimately be time-savers. Obviously, interruptions or emergencies may make your carefully laid plans worthless, but nevertheless the planning itself is invaluable—at least as a starting place.

Here is a summary of tips for getting the most from the least amount of time:

1. Simplify your life by getting rid of clutter—not just things but time wasters (too much television, too many catalogs, too often idleness). Having too much may be a deterrent against using what you have.
2. Organize what you do and plan how to do it. Record how you are organized. The calendar should be your nerve center. I color-code my calendar—pink is my color; blue is my husband's; yellow is for seminary dates. When the children were at home, they also had colors. When we were scheduled to do something together, we had a rainbow! All birthdays are on the calendar; flight schedules are entered for easy reference. Make your lists of tasks to be done (daily, weekly, less frequently); mark them according to priority or category and person responsible. Beware of the tyranny of the urgent! Learn to distinguish between what must be done immediately, what is important but can be done whenever possible, and what

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falls into the category of dreams and will be done if possible.

3. Be efficient in the way you work. Handle papers only once. For example, when you open mail, have Post-it notes of different sizes, pen, paper clips, stapler, rubber bands; direct the piece to filing, to someone else, or to dictation (you could have note cards and dictaphone nearby in order to answer mail that needs a response). Handle the paper now or give it a place on your to-do list. Family shopping and errands should also be done at regular intervals and with a list. You can combine tasks: listen to a teaching tape while folding clothes; prepare food as you set the table and clean up as you move through the process. Do gift buying in the midst of other shopping throughout the year and maintain a gift closet for expected and unexpected gifts. I never have to hit the mall during the holiday season or rush out for a belated gift!
4. Delegate to helpers, whether family, friends, staff, or even labor-saving devices. Don't be afraid to ask for help. When you hesitate or even refuse to ask for help, perhaps because you think such vulnerability would tarnish your own reputation, you are denying the joy of service to someone else. Involve the family in the work to be done. For example, everyone can place dirty clothes in a designated hamper, sorting them in the process.
5. Prepare for what is to come. I like to make my list and view my calendar in advance. Decide what is really important. Remember that you are allowed to say no. Don't be so deceived by preoccupation with what others may think or by your own importance that you do not consider requests in light of what you have the talent or time

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to do and even more important what God wants you to do. In this process you must connect with God. Ultimately He is the only One whose opinion matters. Take into consideration the level of stress accompanying every task, and consider each in the overall schema of life.

One of my helpers paid me a compliment I appreciated: “Mrs. Patterson, working for you has taught me to use minutes!” By planning ahead, you can always be prepared to use unexpected minutes. A canvas bag of catalogs, magazines, newspapers, notepad, Post-its, and pen is always ready to go—to the beauty shop, to the doctor’s office, for a long car ride across town. My entertainment bag can fill the moments of waiting as I read, tear or clip, write notes, or make lists. When I sit down in front of the television to watch the evening news or a selected program, I have a stack to fill commercial breaks—mail to open and handle, notes to write, functions to plan.

Women who take their nurturing responsibilities seriously tend to load themselves with more than they should. Overcommitment becomes a way of life. Henry David Thoreau spoke of a “broad margin” as the model for time management. Everyone needs to leave some open spaces in the day if for no other reason than to give thanks to God for the blessings He bestows so faithfully. When a day is overscheduled and time for spontaneity is underestimated, you lose the present completely; you have no time to savor the past; and you place in jeopardy the future. The less you pack into a day, the better you can enjoy its events and the people who cross your path!

## Time Management—the Short List for Preachers' Wives

- Establish your priorities, beginning with an inviolate commitment to spend time with the Lord.
- Make your marriage the most important human assignment you have. Determine to help your husband in all his duties. Do acts of love, including maintaining sexual intimacy. Take seriously your responsibility to be your husband's best friend and most cherished companion.
- Nurture your children. Model biblical marriage before them. Instruct them in biblical truth. Guide them in going God's way via consistent discipline.
- Make your home a secure haven—a dwelling of delight. Use your creativity and energy to provide a place for the family to retire for comfort and renewal, and provide your guests gracious hospitality.
- Treat your body like the temple of God, since it is! Get proper rest; eat nutritious meals; exercise with purpose.
- Dress attractively. Establish your own style; make choices of clothes and accessories that are flattering to you. After all, you not only reflect on yourself and your family but on the King of Kings, whose daughter you are.
- Simplify your life. Take charge of your schedule. Keep a calendar. Make lists. Create your own efficiency; use every means to get the most done in the least time. Organize yourself but with enough flexibility to pick some flowers along the way. Be willing to say no graciously and without guilt.

- Improve yourself after determining your gifts and skills. Read, attend refresher courses, observe women doing what you like to do, set goals, and plan a strategy to reach those goals. Stretch yourself; serve others; set your compass on the Lord.
- Accept disappointments, trials, suffering, and pain as your opportunity to drink of His cup. “This, too, will pass.” Rest before you get tired; renew your energy and spirit before you succumb to burnout or depression. Take time for fun and fellowship. Laugh and play. Separate your public life of ministry from your private moments for rest and renewal.

## WHAT WILL KEEP YOU GOING?

As I am preparing this manuscript, I am in a wilderness or desert season of my life. Both my hands are in splints because of degenerative arthritis, my parents have experienced awesome challenges in the aging process,

### *Knowing the Joy of His Presence*

- Make a commitment to the main thing—sitting at His feet every day.
- Plan your time with Him—when, where, what—but be flexible and creative enough to adjust without giving up meeting Him.
- Expect Satan to use every means at his disposal to distract and divert you from this intimate fellowship.
- Remember God’s faithfulness through the generations and especially His blessings to you.
- Learn to wait for Him.

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a member of my extended family has gone to prison, my only son chose and married a wife whom I had never met. A loving husband, sensitive friends, caring sisters and brother, and a comforting mother are part of my life, but they have not been enough! Only the God of all comfort has healing balm, and I find myself sitting at His feet and clinging to Him as never before. Over the months the burden gets lighter.

Satan has many ways to sabotage your prayer life. You can become so self-absorbed that you are whining about your own problems rather than interceding for anyone else. Perhaps an even greater challenge is the tendency to pray sporadically when you are in trouble or have some urgent petition to put before the Lord rather than to maintain a consistent time to be alone with Him. Do you pray only when you feel the need? Such emotional bondage to feelings will often cause you to neglect the one avenue you could take to restore your warm and intimate fellowship with the Heavenly Father. Your faith makes your prayer rewarding and -effective.

Before I entered high school, I was meticulous in preparing a schedule for each day of the week. I wrote it out in my own hand and carefully calculated the time to be allotted to each task, beginning with my daily devotional time. I had a chart plotting the reading of the entire Bible in a year, which I kept with my daily schedule.

Although I did adjust the daily routine from time to time, I followed this discipline with some success—until I married a preacher! Right away I became chronically ill with what was later diagnosed as asthma and allergies; my academic scholarship was withdrawn because my father, who no longer supported me, “made too much money.” Just as the asthma and allergies began to respond to treatment, I became pregnant and several months later lost the baby.

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The schedule began to falter, and it seemed that most of my prayers failed. I really didn't feel like praying. Besides, each class in the Christian university I attended began with prayer, and I spent entire class periods studying the Bible! I also had to prepare Sunday school lessons and Bible studies for the women of the church. Meantime, it seemed more expedient to perform my duties at home, in the classroom, and in the church. I was in a busy Baptist church, not a quiet monastic convent; people were calling or coming by, and there was no solitude living next door to the church. I knew that I ought to pray, but I just didn't feel like it.

Here I am almost four decades later. Has the frustration ended? No. As I struggle in a desert season, as I don't seem to have God's ear, as He seems so far from me, as my petitions seem to be going to call waiting or perhaps being recorded on some divine answering machine, now more than ever I must seek His presence; but it is not because I feel like reciting what could be interpreted as futile petitions. Rather, it is because I know that I cannot get through the dreary days without Him. So my will sends me into His presence with purpose again and again. I cry more than ever before Him because my emotions have joined my will in this spiritual pilgrimage. I know He has been listening; and He has been there all the time, or I could not have borne the burden. I also can say with the psalmist, "Yet I will praise Him" (Ps. 42:11).

The wife of a preacher thinks nothing of draining her cup daily as she pours out service to her family and others, but she often forgets that her cup must be filled again and again in order to be ready to pour out the next time. Oh, that you might be haunted by what God has done and hungry for what God can do!

