**MINISTERIAL SPOUSES’ CURRICULUM GUIDE: LECTURES**

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**Lesson 3**

**The Pastor’s Wife and Loneliness**

Note*: Some of the following material addresses the specific challenges of pastoral wives. If you happen to be the husband of a female pastor, feel free to look this section over and glean any wisdom that applies to your situation.*

Many pastors’ wives experience loneliness. However, loneliness did not originate with these ladies. A long time ago, King David complained of loneliness. “I lie awake; and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop” (Ps. 102:7). This is a vivid picture of the plight of loneliness!

1. **Reasons for Loneliness.** There are definite reasons for loneliness. **Slides #2 & 3**
   1. Moving to a new place. It can be painful when one has to relocate. Parting is difficult and it is uncomfortable uprooting and settling in new territory. One often leaves behind faithful friends and kind well-wishers, and goes to a new place where there are many unknowns.
   2. Husbands who travel. Traveling husbands can also be a contributing factor to loneliness in the life of a pastor’s wife. Many wives have expressed their dread of having husbands who travel extensively. Some of these spouses do not enjoy sound sleep when their husband travel. Others are scared and there are also others who just cannot settle into a normal routine when the pastor is away. Here are a couple of texts that could cure the insomnia:

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.* Ps. 4:8

*I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.* Ps. 3:5

* 1. Lack of adult companionship. This can also lead to loneliness. If a mom has a brood of preschoolers as her only companions, she could easily long for someone of a more mature age to share her thoughts with. Imagine having to limit one’s conversation to responding to requests for stories, for playing games, or coloring pictures. There is a longing for adult conversation and interaction.
  2. Shyness. Shyness can make it difficult for the pastor’s wife to make new friends. It takes effort and determination to approach persons and offer your friendship. Take baby steps. First, smile. Next start up by a simple greeting. Then you will gradually find that conversation will increase.
  3. Church members. Some church members are very friendly and will be friendly. Others may be reluctant to initiate friendship with you.
  4. The pastor may not want his wife to mix too much because he fears she might talk about his flaws to the flock. So he might attempt to keep her out of the members’ reach. This is rare, though. Most pastors like to see their families happily settled in the congregation.
  5. The personality of the pastor’s wife. Much depends on the personality of the pastor’s wife. Is she very reserved? Is she outgoing? Is she warm and friendly? Is she fun loving? Does she like to entertain?

1. **Signs of Loneliness. Slide #4.** Sometimes we don’t even realize that we are being plagued by loneliness. If we are experiencing at least three of the symptoms below, on a regular basis, we are lonely.

* Inability to sleep
* Loss of appetite
* Overeating
* Irritability
* Sadness
* Hostility towards spouse or kids

1. **Solutions to Loneliness. Slides #5-8**
   1. Try to find ways of being more occupied. Pick a project and work on it. Give yourself a realistic deadline. The sense of fulfillment that follows is immeasurable.
   2. Do something for somebody. Turning the focus away from ourselves is a wonderful deterrent for loneliness.
   3. Develop a skill. There is always room for self-improvement.
   4. Discuss your feelings of loneliness with your spouse. Do not complain, but share your feelings with him. Let him know that you understand the demands of his job. You are not asking him to neglect his responsibilities, but you want him to know how much you miss him when he is away. You may want to tell him that you think it is really important to you that he at least admits that you are the best judge of your own feelings. Ask him to give you some suggestions to help you overcome your loneliness.
   5. Make some friends. Allow people to catch a glimpse of your friendliness. There are some people in your congregation to whom you can become a precious friend. The sick, elderly and shut-in need your friendship. They will value a visit from you.
   6. Work on yet another project. You may want to do some re-decorating or sewing. Try out a new recipe. Learn a new song. Plant a garden.
   7. Do not be intimidated by people. Be confident as you interact with them.
   8. Develop an attitude of praise. The spirit of praise puts a sparkle in your eyes and a glow on your face. You will become magnetic.
   9. Learn to appreciate and enjoy your own company.
   10. Talk to God about your loneliness. It was He who created you a social being. Repeat several of His precious promises. They will fill you with strength and hope.

We need to differentiate between loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is painful and sometimes is born of our own attitudes. Loneliness can lead to self-pity and personal discomfort. Solitude is a gift that can be of great benefit to us. Through solitude we can find out who we are. Through solitude we can connect with God. Through solitude we are refreshed and renewed to improve our own lives and to serve others. The good news is that loneliness is not incurable! The sensational news is that you are not alone, for God always honors His promise, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).