**MINISTERIAL SPOUSES’ CURRICULUM GUIDE: LECTURES**

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**Lesson 2**

**Coping with the Challenges of being a Ministerial Spouse**

Note*: Some of the following material addresses the specific challenges of ministerial 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.*

Sometimes the challenges of our ministry weigh so heavily on us, that the joys of our service often tend to escape our notice.

1. The Joys of Being a Ministerial Spouse
2. Caring and thoughtful church members **Refer to slide #2**
3. Married to a spouse who loves Jesus
4. Living in a safe home environment
5. Acceptance by church members
6. Acceptance and privileges in the community **Slide #3**
7. Knowing that you are needed and trusted
8. Opportunities for witnessing
9. Opportunities for mentorship
10. The Challenge **Slide #4**

One has to admit that there are many challenges in the ministry. Being a high profile figure has multiple social and professional demands. The ministerial spouse is not excluded from having to face these challenges. According to Marion H. Nelson, *Why Christians Crack Up,* “Being a pastor’s wife is the most hazardous and dangerous occupation a woman can have.”

1. Unique challenges **Slide #5**
2. Living under scrutiny. Your every move is watched closely.
3. Unrealistic expectations. People expect you to be perfect and a model.
4. Perfect social behavior. You are not allowed to make social blunders. The ministerial spouse must be on the cutting edge of what is socially acceptable.
5. Thorough Bible knowledge like the pastor. People think that because the ministerial spouse is married to the pastor, you are a trained Bible expositor. They may even express disappointment when she does not have all the answers to Bible questions.
6. Attendance at all meetings. While other church members may have legitimate reasons for missing church sometimes, the ministerial spouse is expected to be at church at all meetings. A ministerial spouse can also have a legitimate reason for missing church sometimes. You do not have to feel guilty.
7. Ready entertainer. We are normal people who have lives of our own. We are not always ready to entertain. In order to avoid the stress of surprises, we may need to have some emergency supplies, in case a hungry stranger drops in. Do not feel you need to prepare a banquet at a short notice. God gives the wisdom and the resources for us to cope in these situations. (Read Chapter 6 of *What No One Tells the Pastor’s Wife,* for additional suggestions*).*
8. Spiritual giant. The ministerial spouse is expected to be a real saint who does not have any flaws. People think the ministerial spouse must be an example of perfect Christianity.
9. Limited finances. **Slide #6.** Pastors do not get salaries equivalent to other professionals with similar qualifications. However, with careful planning and budgeting, the pastoral family can avoid abject poverty. In addition to his salary, some allowances make living possible. Check with your conference officers, and read your policy material to become aware of what you are entitled to receive in addition to the basic salary (Housing allowance, education allowance, medical, travel, etc.). It could also be helpful to consult a financial expert to give you any needed help in managing your finances. Also, being intentional as a family in taking care of the finances can help. Do not be reluctant to turn off unnecessary lights, and running water. Early in life, teach your children the value of money. Wild destruction of toys, books and household effects should not be allowed.
10. Demands of church members. Be kind; but value your time and the time of others.
11. Loneliness. You are going to be lonely sometimes. Learn to enjoy your own company. Find ways to fill those voids.
12. Critical church members. Expect to find these critics. Do not let them discourage you. Ask yourself if anything they are saying is the whole or partial truth. In other words, use the criticism to examine yourself. If there is truth in the criticism, try to correct your behavior. If there is no truth in what they say, pay no attention to the critics. Ask Jesus for His love in your heart. Determine not to let criticism make you discouraged or ugly.
13. Overwork. Lead a life of balance. Be temperate.
14. Lack of privacy. Your life is open to all. That is painful. Do not allow persons to penetrate your private hopes, dreams and struggles. You are the one to guard your personal life. Be on the alert for prying persons.
15. How to Succeed as a Ministerial Spouse **Slide #7**
16. Love and accept yourself. Learn to love the person you see in the mirror.
17. Concentrate on being the best you can be. Have a plan to improve yourself.
18. Have realistic expectations. Identify your strengths and weaknesses; and work with them to go after your dreams.
19. Build your own spiritual life. Pray and study your Bible. Read enriching material.
20. Work on self-improvement. **Slide #8.** Study. Take classes**.** Read.
21. Love and accept your spouse.
22. Accept and understand your husband’s ministry.
23. Decide on what you are comfortable doing in your church. Do not allow yourself to be forced into doing what you cannot do well. Aim for excellence.
24. Not the assistant pastor **Slide #9.** Your position is not to help your spouse run the church. Find your niche and work there. Promise yourself not to be an interfering wife. This behavior will bring disrespect on you.
25. Be your spouse’s honest, loving critic. Allow yourself the quality of relationship that will allow you to be honest with each other. Neither of you is perfect. Admit this, and discuss faults in love. Start with an affirmation, then follow in the discussion of areas for improvement.
26. Do not neglect your children’s training. God expects us to “feed his lambs.” Teach them refinement and courtesy.
27. Take care of your home. Keep it tidy and attractive. Encourage your family to help you. Teach the children the importance of tidiness. Do not use your children as an excuse for a habitually untidy house. Help them to get accustomed to “clean up” time.
28. **Slide #10.** Take care of your appearance when out of the home, and when at home. Ellen White talks about our appearance at home. “Sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn.” (White, *The Adventist Home,* 252).
29. Take care of your health. Schedule regular check-ups, exercise, sleep and eat well.
30. Learn to be contented. “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Tim. 6:6.
31. Have your own identity. Know who you are and enjoy who you are. You can be yourself best.
32. Make time for yourself. **Slide #11.** Do not allow your responsibilities to rob you of time for yourself.
33. Be confidential. Suppress the temptation to be a thoughtless talker. If someone tells you something in strict confidence, keep that confidence. This should be the strength of a pastor’s spouse. Information about suicidal plans or thoughts, or intentions to hurt oneself or others must be shared with a professional. Those types of information are not to be kept confidential. Find a professional to help you handle this.
34. Respect your spouses’ need and responsibility to be confidential. Do not ask your spouse to tell you what took place at meetings, boards, counseling sessions, etc.
35. Keep your home attractive. Everyone enjoys a pleasing environment.
36. Develop entertaining skills. **Slide #12**
37. Learn to love all types of persons. Make it a habit not to discriminate. Love each person as a soul Jesus died for.
38. Have a sense of humor. Laugh. Laugh at yourself, too.
39. See your office as a divine ministry. **Slide #13.** God put you in the ministry of pastor’s wife. He will equip you and sustain you.
40. Thank God for the opportunity to serve in your capacity.
41. Develop an attitude of praise and thanksgiving.