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Healthy Lifestyle

7 *Secrets to Happiness*

YOU CAN FIND CONTENTMENT IN THE MIDST OF A BUSY SCHEDULE AND SINFUL WORLD.



EVEN THOUGH WE LIVE in a sin-sick world, we all want a level of peace and contentment. Yet the Bible reminds us in Isaiah 14:12-15 that Satan, a fallen being from heaven, is the prince of this world. Therefore, we will face trials and temptations on this earth until Jesus appears. However, despite the obstacles, frustrations, and feelings of loneliness we might face, God is able to rock us in the cradle of His arms.

Having been married to a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the past 11 years, I have shed many tears, felt the yearnings for a normal life, and wondered when the burden of our district would become lighter. But I have also learned many lessons about contentment. Realizing that I could not change everything, I asked God to give me a different perspective on life. So here are my seven “secrets,” or reminders, of how to find true happiness.

1. Don't get involved in all the church's issues and problems. My role is to support my spouse, not solve his problems or those of the district. There are a lot of things we cannot handle, so it's best to just listen and pray for our spouses. This does not mean we cannot assist or offer sound advice, but we must remember that we are not the captain of the ship—the shepherd of the flock is responsible for the sheep. The pastor was trained and equipped with the Word, a church manual, and an employee handbook. God will give pastors wisdom to cope, and we should hold up their hands as Aaron and Hur did for Moses. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you” (Isaiah 26:3, NIV).

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2. Spend time alone with God. I cannot overemphasize this point. It is mainly in my quiet moments that God reveals Himself to me. Of course, the devil does not like that, so he distracts us with anything he can think of, both good and bad. When our minds are cluttered with everyday activities, work, the children, and church duties, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Yet even though family and friends are important, God is greater, and He must have time alone with His children. Mark 1:35 tells us that even our Savior found time to pray very early in the morning, so dedicate a corner or room in the house and let the family know that it's your quiet space.

3. Choose friends who care about your eternal salvation. The life of a pastor's spouse can be a lonely one, so close friends are critical. One evening I was looking at pictures on social media, and I noticed that many friends I grew up with have left the church. But I have also come to realize that even in the church we can be lost. Matthew 7:21 reveals that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter heaven. And even though it's hard to find people we can confide in or socialize with on a personal level, with prayer God always provides a friend who will care and pray for you.

4. Remember that our children are our ministry. Preachers' kids have their unique battles. Our role is to nurture and love them from day one. Feelings of hypocrisy, abandonment, being in the spotlight, criticism, and isolation are some of the challenges in their lives. Not all may experience these, and others may never share these feelings with us as parents. Yet many pastors' kids feel that the church is not friendly territory at times, so it is our duty to let them know and experience Jesus for themselves. We can do this through having morning devotions, creating opportunities for them to sing and participate in

church, and helping them make friends with the less friendly. Sometimes because of movements between churches, they are left out of participating in special events. If your spouse pastors more than one church, ask the Lord to choose a church (don't focus on size) that will meet the needs of your children (even if it's not your personal first choice).

5. Cultivate forgiveness. On our wedding day we promised to love faithfully, forsaking all others. Then came ministry. It brought late dates, forgetting birthdays and anniversaries during evangelistic meetings, interruptive phone calls during bonding, and unexpected visitors at our home. Seemingly endless funerals, weddings, and meetings interrupted game nights and plans. We spouses tend to resent being ignored, and we gather hate for the brethren and even neglect to forgive our spouses when they forget these treasured moments and dates. Yet when we forgive, we nurture a heart of pity.

6. Never neglect the sanctity of marriage. When God made the first man and woman, He pronounced a blessing on them that is holy, and He encouraged them to become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The truth is that sex is also a great stress reliever for men, especially pastors. Never withhold that need, as it can lead to infidelity and wandering thoughts. Sadly, many pastors have fallen by the wayside due to weakness of the flesh. Let us not be deceived that our spouses are invincible. Remember David.

7. Pray for your members. We all have needs, and Jesus' method was successful in meeting the needs of the people. It is impossible to please or attend to everyone, but when others know that the pastor's spouse is praying for them, it makes a difference. We all need the prayers of those we love. 7

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