

What About Me? The Wives Ask

Mrs. Julie Stiegemeyer

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. . . . So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife . . .”
(Genesis 12:1–5).

These verses have always had special meaning for me because they were the basis of the first sermon that I heard in the seminary chapel at the opening service of my husband’s first year at the seminary. I’ve often wondered what Sarai was thinking and how she was coping with this sudden and life-changing journey. Was she crying as she left her mother? Did she see it as an adventure?

The thing I like about Sarah is how honest she was. She was far from perfect; she—along with Abraham—laughed in the face of God’s promise for a son in their old age (Genesis 17:17 and 18:12). But God, in his mercy, blessed her with his gifts, including a son they never dreamed they would have. Hebrews says: “By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised” (Hebrews 11:11). It was God who gave Sarah this faith, who helped her through all of the changes in her life.

Over the years, I’ve heard and read a lot about being a pastor’s wife. The common perception is that a pastor’s wife lives in a fishbowl—meaning that everyone is always watching her. I’ve had strangers come up to me and feel sorry for me because my husband is a pastor. “Don’t you ever wish you were married to a plumber?” one person asked me.

However, in the first ten years of my husband’s ministry, I can honestly say that I have loved being a pastor’s wife. That doesn’t mean we don’t have problems or that we’re immune from sickness, frustration, and arguments. It simply means that I love my husband and am committed to him no matter what his vocation in life may be.

It is true that a pastor has many challenges and burdens to carry. He visits new babies in the hospital; he also visits teens who have attempted suicide. A pastor teaches the confirmands, and has to deal with their parents who almost never come to church. A pastor works for hours on a sermon, but then watches members of the congregation sleep through the message. These are burdens that your husband as a pastor will have to bear, and sometimes those burdens spill over to his personal life.

But there are many more joys than frustrations. He has the joy of sincere gratitude from a member who needed to hear what he had to say. He also watches the children he baptized grow into young believers who share the love of God with their neighbors. He is honored at an anniversary lunch, showered with gifts, and bragged about by his congregation. A pastor's duties are many and varied, and through each task, he ministers to sinners who come to hear about God's forgiveness and love for them in Christ Jesus. And these blessings also spill over to the family.

As a pastor's wife—just as in every other situation in life—we have a choice. We can choose to celebrate the joys in life, or we can focus only on the burdens. As a pastor's wife I heard recently said: "Your husband is a servant of the King. What other joy in life could there be?" And then I think that Sarah—and I—have it pretty good.

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