

As tempting as it may be to gift your pastor's or elder's wife with a flowery coffee mug or another potholder with a proverb, give her something more helpful and lasting. Give her Megan Hill's book *Partners in the Gospel*. Each concise and thoughtful reflection addresses a joy or challenge unique to pastoral ministry, offers a corresponding word of biblical encouragement, and presents an opportunity to personally reflect, pray, and act on the good news of the gospel. Give your pastor's or elder's wife a gift that lasts by giving her one that strengthens and equips her to stand firm in the faith.

—**Lindsey Carlson**, church planter's wife; author, *Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl's Guide to Maturing in Christ*

I am glad to recommend Megan Hill's *Partners in the Gospel* to any woman whose husband is in ministry. Not only are its contents highly relatable, but its application is both challenging and encouraging. It will remind you of what is true, then help you to apply that truth to your everyday life.

—**Aileen Challies**, elder's wife

Having been both a pastor's daughter and a pastor's wife, Megan Hill has had a close-up view of the ministry role of the wives of pastors and elders. It is from this vantage point that she suggests there is "something else" that makes the role of a ministry wife different. With real-life illustrations, Megan explores the joys and challenges of life in the local church. *Partners in the Gospel* is a user-friendly, fifty-day devotional book designed for the busy ministry wife. Visit the book for a moment, or take time for an extended stay. Either way, you will gain an understanding and refreshing friend in Megan.

—**Anne Harley Duncan**, teaching elder's wife

If you're the wife of a pastor or elder, let me encourage you: read this book. *Partners in the Gospel* is full of wisdom, insight,

compassion, and perspective. These daily devotions by Megan Hill will remind you of the truth, offer you sympathy in your struggles, and refresh your heart as you walk alongside your husband in ministry.

—**Melissa Kruger**, pastor's wife; author; director of women's initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

Being a pastor's or elder's wife is an important role that comes with very little explanation of the expectations. This can be helpful at times but also hard. Megan Hill knows the joys and challenges of being a pastor's wife, and she lovingly points us to the Savior as we serve and love our husbands and our churches. Hill serves as a trusted friend as she speaks to the myriad of circumstances that a pastor's wife encounters. This devotional is a gift to pastors' and elders' wives everywhere.

—**Courtney Reissig**, elder's wife; author, *Teach Me to Feel: Worshiping through the Psalms in Every Season of Life*

Megan Hill's devotional is beautifully and clearly written. Deeply rooted in Scripture, Megan explores the themes of heart, home, church, and community, highlighting the joys and challenges in each. She is brutally honest about the life of service that is filled with rejoicing, sacrifice, and, on occasion, disappointment. Particularly helpful is the way she connects reflection and prayer with a call to action at the end of each chapter, always pointing to an expression of love for our Savior and thankfulness for the salvation we have in him. Though written primarily for the wives of pastors and elders, congregants too ought to read this, so that they might know how better to pray for those helpmeets sacrificially laboring alongside their elders and pastors.

—**Catrina Trueman**, teaching elder's wife

PARTNERS
in the
GOSPEL

PARTNERS
in the
GOSPEL

50 MEDITATIONS FOR
PASTORS' AND ELDERS' WIVES

Megan Hill


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For Colleen, Deb, Eileen, Emily, Kathy, Kristy, and Sue—
my fellow elders' wives.

You refresh me with your friendship,
encourage me by your example,
and delightfully remind me that no two
elders' wives are exactly alike.

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A WORD TO THE READER

My husband has a card that he carries in his wallet. It was given to him by the administrative office of our church's denomination, and it declares him to be an "ordained minister in good standing." It's marked with the denomination's logo and is signed and dated by the stated clerk of the General Assembly. Every year, they mail him a new one. I'm not sure that he ever has to use it, but for twelve months it nestles there in its slot next to his driver's license and his debit card—official proof of his identity as a pastor.

There is no such card for pastors' and elders' wives. I don't have a laminated piece of cardstock in my purse that quickly identifies my place in the world and the church. I can't take it out on days when I'm feeling insecure or overwhelmed in order to remind myself who I am and what I should be doing. And I can't wave it around to remind other people either.

I have spent sixteen years as a pastor's wife—and nearly twenty-five before that as a pastor's daughter—and yet when people ask me to define what the role of a ministry wife is, I still don't have a quick answer.

Sometimes I joke that my job is to keep the pastor alive. Which is partly true, of course. In order for our local church

to be shepherded well, the shepherd needs clean clothes and a nutritious breakfast. Most of the things I do every day are pretty mundane and the types of things that lots of other wives do, too: laundry, vacuuming, grocery shopping, cooking.

Sometimes I tell people, more seriously, that my job is to be a faithful Christian and a good church member. This is true, too. Scottish pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne reportedly said, "The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness." And just as local churches benefit from having holy pastors and elders, they also benefit from having holy pastors' and elders' wives. When I pray continually, commit to studying God's Word in public and in private, seek to be conformed to the image of Christ, put sin to death in my life, worship wholeheartedly, serve where I can, love God's people, and faithfully participate in the meetings of the church, it is the greatest blessing I can offer my congregation. This too is a responsibility that I share with many other women.

But those two job descriptions don't quite cover that indefinite *something else* that also shapes life in ministry. Yes, I care for my husband. And yes, I seek to follow Christ. So should all godly wives. But, as much as we might like to think otherwise, pastors' and elders' wives also have unique circumstances and unique opportunities. This *something else* can vary according to the particulars of each woman, her family, her cultural context, and her church—but it is, nevertheless, present for everyone in ministry. It influences our relationships, sets our priorities, and dictates our responsibilities. It is the reason we say some things and bite our tongues before saying others. It is the reason we volunteer for some tasks and quietly decline to do others. It is the reason people seek us out for counsel and encouragement and the reason they invite us to their bridal showers and birthday parties. It is the reason we sometimes cry on the way home from church. It is also the reason we keep going back.

This book, then, is about all those things. It's about the nitty-gritty of Saturday nights spent getting spots out of a Sunday best button-down. It's about the blessing of receiving the Word and prayer and the sacraments—God's means of grace for all of his beloved people. And it's about that *something else*: the joys and sorrows and expectations and disappointments that belong particularly to the wives of the shepherds of the church.

If you are the wife of a pastor or elder, this book is for you. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the term *elders' wives* to refer to all women married to men who are gifted for and ordained to spiritual leadership in the church. Elders whose primary work is teaching and preaching and who are often paid by the church for their labors (who are sometimes called *pastors*) do have a unique role in the local church (see 1 Tim. 5:17), but it's beyond the scope of this book to address questions of church polity. The Bible itself uses *elders* to refer to all the church's ordained shepherds—including its pastors—and I will do the same here. Whether the church typically calls your husband *pastor* or *elder*, you are an elder's wife, and, hopefully, you can apply the meditations in these pages to the particulars of your own situation.

Being an elder's wife is a joy—and a challenge. Like many of the callings the Lord may place on someone's life, this one brings us to our knees and gives us opportunity to cling to God's goodness. Whether you are new to being an elder's wife or have been in that role for decades, there are probably days when you need refreshment. This devotional is designed to lead you to the only source of true refreshment: the Word of God. As we focus together on our heart, home, church, and community, we will explore both the joys and the challenges that elders' wives experience in each of those areas. As we do, we will see that God's grace is sufficient for every circumstance. Many of the truths in this book are probably things you already know. But it is always good to be reminded.

You may choose to read this book from cover to cover in fifty days, but it isn't necessary that you do so. If you prefer, you could simply keep it on your shelf or nightstand so it's ready for those days when you need to hear again that the Lord knows your situation—and that he is unfailingly good.

INTRODUCTION



1. I Am the Lord's Servant

*"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)*

I am an introvert. Being around people, talking to them, and sharing in the complex circumstances of their lives eventually makes me feel depleted. That doesn't mean that I'm shy or grouchy; I find people fascinating and truly value their presence in my life. I also always feel like I need a nap after they leave. It's surprising, then, that God called me not only to be part of his church but to be the wife of an elder. From a human perspective, I'm naturally unsuited to invest in the intense relationships of life in God's household. And yet that is exactly what God asked me to do.

Your calling as an elder's wife may be surprising in a different way. Maybe you are a new believer and are all too conscious of your rudimentary knowledge of the Bible. Maybe you are already overwhelmed by your responsibility to parent multiple highly energetic children. Maybe you are daily weighed down by a chronic illness. Or maybe your husband has been called to shepherd a local church in a cultural context that is radically

different from anywhere you have ever lived. Whatever the reason, there are probably days when you don't understand why the Lord chose to place you in ministry. You are not alone.

In today's passage, Mary was called by God to an unexpected ministry. She was a virgin, and yet God called her to be a mother. She was young, and yet God called her to disciple the eternal Son. She was from an obscure town, and yet God called her to parent the Savior of the world. It's no wonder that when the angel first appeared, she was "greatly troubled" (Luke 1:29)—and even after he explained, she couldn't quite reconcile the circumstances of her life with God's declared plan. Mary's question, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 34), is not that different from the questions that many of us ask. God's call to ministry doesn't always make immediate sense.

But Mary knew the unchanging truth about God and, ultimately, came to rest in it when her life took a surprising turn. She knew and proclaimed God to be mighty, holy, merciful, strong, just, kind, and loving (see vv. 46–55), and she trusted that this God would do only what was right. She knew she was weak, and so God's strength became even more precious to her. She valued God's glory above her own comfort and placed her hope in his purposes more than in her own plans. And, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Mary's humble, faith-filled response can be our own: "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (v. 38).



REFLECT. What things about yourself make you naturally unsuited to be an elder's wife? How do those weaknesses cause you to rely on the help of the Holy Spirit?

PRAY. Bring your insecurities and discomforts to the Lord in prayer. Using the words of Mary's song in Luke 1:46–55, praise God for being trustworthy and good. Confess the ways that you lack faith in his purposes, and ask him to help you to make Mary's response in verse 38 your own.

ACT. This week, your calling as an elder's wife will likely challenge your abilities or conflict with your personality. When that happens—whether you are counseling a belligerent teen or hosting a crowd for Sunday lunch—remind yourself of your ultimate identity, and practice speaking this truth to your own soul: “I am the servant of the Lord.”



HEART

JOYS



2. Created to Glorify God

*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together
in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well. (Ps. 139:13–14)*

One of the joys of being an elder's wife is that I sometimes meet newborn additions to our church just hours after they enter the world. As I accompany my husband to the hospital or birthing center, I get to hold tiny bundles who are still drowsy from birth, their downy hair hidden by a knit cap, their wrinkled fingers tucked under a warm blanket. I marvel over each breath that comes from perfect lips and praise the Lord for his answers to our prayers for this new life. Looking at each miniature earlobe and eyelid, I also wonder what the Lord has planned for his newest covenant child. Will she be spunky or quiet? Will she love soccer or stargazing? Will she get married or remain single? Will she write poetry or design airplane engines? In her lifetime, what will this brand-new image-bearer accomplish for God's glory?

As elders' wives, we can easily forget that our value and our purpose in life are much bigger than the responsibilities we

have within the home and church. Today's verses encourage us by reminding us that, long before our husbands took church office, God established his plans for us. The Creator of the world set us before his face and paid attention to us. He formed each of our fingers and toes, gave us our eye color and hair texture, determined our height and weight (see Ps. 139:13–16). He also mapped out every detail of our lives—writing each of our days in his book (see Ps. 139:16) and preparing good works for us to do (see Eph. 2:10). Before we cried that first scratchy, newborn wail, our lives had a purpose: to glorify and enjoy God.

Our mouths were made to praise him (see Ps. 51:15), our ears were made to hear his Word (see Prov. 20:12), our hands were made to serve him (see Eccl. 9:10), our feet were made to carry his gospel tidings (see Rom. 10:15), our minds were made to meditate on his ways (see Rom. 12:2), and our hearts were made to love him (see Ezek. 36:26). As elders' wives, we may have unique opportunities for doing each of these things, but our lives' ultimate goal doesn't depend on the current role we're filling or on the specific list of tasks we have for the day. Our entire lives—from birth to death, and then forever—were planned to bring glory to the God who formed us.

No matter where you go in this world or what roles you may fill, you can say to the Lord, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).



REFLECT. Imagine not being an elder's wife. What in your life would be different? What would be the same? How is the focus of your life sometimes subtly shaped by the responsibilities you have as an elder's wife?

PRAY. Read Psalm 139, and turn each verse into praise for the God who made you and takes care of you. Ask him to help you to remember that your value and your purpose in life are ultimately found in him—not in any secondary role or calling that he may place on your life.

ACT. As you do today's tasks—particularly those associated with the church—remind yourself that you are doing them for the ultimate goal of God's glory. You are a person made in God's image who is serving others who are made in his image. Hospitality, phone calls, intercessory prayer, mentoring, and folding your husband's laundry all find their highest significance in service to the Lord (see Col. 3:23).



3. Redeemed to Glorify God

We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us . . . made us alive together with Christ. (Eph. 2:3–5)

When new people begin attending our church, we try to invite them to our home for a meal. We learn about one another around the table, and, if our guests are believers, we usually get to hear the stories of how they came to faith in Christ. As a result, our small dining room has been the arena for hearing an astonishing variety of Christian testimonies. One woman came to faith by

watching a TV preacher who had otherwise dubious theology, and another under the ministry of a faithful church. A guest came to faith during family worship in her childhood home, and another when a neighborhood friend invited him to youth group. One man came to trust Christ while serving a prison sentence, and another after picking up a used theology book from a roadside stand.

I love hearing these stories; in fact, I am often so fascinated by other people's testimonies that I forget to marvel at my own. Today's verses remind all of us to slow down and savor the amazing grace that called us each out of darkness and into the light of Christ. Whether we were called as toddlers or as teenagers, in a season of shocking rebellion or of outward respectability, from the pews of a church or the halls of academia, God poured out his grace on us, covered our sins with Christ's blood, gave us a new identity, and drew us into relationship with himself.

When we affirm that "we all . . . were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), it humbles us. We were once just as wicked—and just as deserving of hell—as anyone else who might walk down the sidewalk or through the doors of the church. And when we acknowledge that God "loved us . . . [and] made us alive" (vv. 4–5), it gives us courage. The same grace that transformed the holiest saints is at work in us. Though we often stumble, we can never be disqualified from God's love.

As elders' wives, we can find it tempting to focus on the ways in which God seems to be working (or not working) in our churches, while forgetting to praise him for the great work he has done in our own hearts. When Jesus's disciples exclaimed about the spiritual battles that they seemed to be winning in the world, the Lord acknowledged the importance of their ministry while also redirecting their focus: "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Sometimes our greatest