

*Behind Every
Good Man*

*Candid thoughts for preachers' wives
and those who love them*



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Spiritual "equipment" for the contest of life.

*The Preacher's Wife*¹

—Miriam M. Morrison—

You may think it quite an easy task,
And just a pleasant life;
But really it takes a lot of grace
To be a preacher's wife.
She's supposed to be a paragon
Without a fault in view,
A saint when in the parsonage
As well as in the pew.

Her home must be a small hotel
For folks that chance to roam,
And yet have peace and harmony
The perfect preacher's home.
Whenever groups are called to meet
Her presence must be there,
And yet the members all agree
She should live a life of prayer.

Though hearing people's burdens,
Their grief both night and day,
She's supposed to spread but sunshine
To those along the way.
She must lend a sympathetic ear
To every tale of woe
And then forget it,
Lest it to others go.

Her children must be models rare
Of quietness and poise,
But still stay on the level
With other girls and boys.
You may think it quite an easy task,
And just a pleasant life,
But really it takes a lot of grace
To be a preacher's wife.

¹ <http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archives/1961/MIN1961-09.pdf>

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Finally, I thank God for presenting this opportunity. It is my prayer that this will be a work that will bring encouragement to sisters in Christ, help to develop deeper commitment and as a result, bring glory and honor to His name.

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Introduction

by Joyce Jamerson

After our companion book *Behind the Preacher's Door* was released, many comments were received about how much a similar book is needed for preachers' wives. It has been both a challenge and a joy to see this book come together. There are no manuals, no *how to* books, or sets of directions for being a preacher's wife. Even in Scripture, there are no special references or directions to preachers' wives, above that given to all women. Scripture is still our guide; a complete guide through the ages—in changing times. We see changes in this generation—lack of respect is now common; not only for authority but for one another. It's known as the **me** generation and it filters into the church. We could more appropriately call this selfishness a lack of love; failure to develop in the fruit of the Spirit. Do these things translate into our daily lives? You be the judge. In preparation for this book, seven questions were distributed to a group of women by e-mail, including but not limited to preachers' wives. Two of the questions were for everyone, the remaining five only for preachers' wives. I'll refer more to that later, but consider this question, addressed only to preachers' wives:

I see this changing trend among preachers' wives _____.

The answers were revealing. Maybe we're more influenced by changing times than we thought?

Changing Trends

- ◆ More talk and less action.
- ◆ Unwilling to be in front and lead women in Scripture or use their talents to write women's Bible class material.
- ◆ More career-oriented than being a helpmeet to their husbands.
- ◆ More work outside the home.

- ◆ Materialism.
- ◆ Unwilling to be hospitable to anyone.
- ◆ Not taking part.
- ◆ Expects husband to carry her work load.
- ◆ Not having people in their homes for Bible classes or social gatherings.
- ◆ Having a selfish attitude towards getting involved in husbands work. Some work outside the home and use this as an excuse.
- ◆ More inclined to go along with culture in attitude, dress, working outside the home.
- ◆ Preachers' wives have entered the work force in mass. Unfortunately, it has for many become an absolute necessity for her to supplement her husband's income so the family can simply survive.

Paul's words to the saints at Philippi seem to be contemporary to our time. He had an immense joy because of their obedience to Christ, but it was not without concern.

*Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, Philip-
pians 2:1-5.*

Even though they had administered to him in many ways, he still reminded them of their need for humility as they went about their daily lives. God was at work in them and Paul knew the joy they had

in serving others. This joy should be shared, even as difficult trials surrounded them. He warned them of potential dangers, challenged them to rejoice, and in doing this, they would find the peace of God.

This book has a similar purpose. Although we see rapid change as time goes on, we still find joy to share among difficult trials, we still administer to one another, and we still have the need for humility. To be warned of potential dangers and challenged concerning the future is sorely needed, both when we tend to forget our goals and when the goal seems unobtainable. Philippians is very much a book for preachers' wives. Its applications are striking when read with that view.

In these changing times, we want to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; we want our reputation to be one of standing firm. As Paul had to be separated from Timo-

thy, his kindred spirit, we have to be separated as well, from those we have loved and taught. Sin has to be dealt with and those who have been led astray rescued, all the while living among brethren who have differing opinions and ideas. We must press on and rejoice while doing it, training our minds to think on things that are “*true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and of good repute,*” Philippians 4:8, NASV.

It's a lofty task. Not all of us do it well. Pressure, rather than spiritual growth, can control our actions. Because of our actions, others can be discouraged and some husbands have had to relocate much more often than they would otherwise, because of their wives' inability to exercise self-control. There are many areas in which self-control and self-examination is needed. Amid our daily frustrations, can we learn to be content within our circumstances? Can we get along with those who

—
*Pressure, rather than
 spiritual growth, can
 control our actions.*
 —

differ in life-style? Can we live humbly or in prosperity? Are we a help or a hindrance to our husbands? Will our actions cause someone else to stumble spiritually? Do we need an attitude adjustment?

Paul had learned the secret, Philippians 4:13. We can too. Good women gave up some of their summertime activity to work on this project; addressing some difficult topics—ones perhaps that we'd rather leave dormant. Because they saw the need, two of our writers stepped out of their comfort zone to put pen to paper for the very first time. What a joy! What a blessing for me to see the work of all these women come together in this form. This book will help us take a good look at the woman behind the good man—the preacher's wife.

An Inside Look *—The Preaching Life—*

by Joyce Jamerson

Preaching has long been a curiosity. In the minds of many, preachers are on a pedestal. As a girl, I remember great excitement when we were getting a new preacher, and I was particularly curious about his family. How old were they? Did they have children? I'm sure everyone wanted them to be close to their age. Getting a new preacher didn't happen very often, so with the arrival came great anticipation. Care was taken to welcome them, often filling their pantry or having a special party so they could get to know everyone. My parents were usually close to the preacher and his family, for my dad served as an elder. We were challenged and uplifted by them and profited by their good influence. The preacher was very capable and the preacher's wife was pleasant, kind, and happy. She had great influence on me and I would often baby-sit their well behaved children. It saddened me greatly when I saw her crying one day, explaining to my mom how someone had hurt her feelings. A catty comment was made about the dress she was wearing. With that event (plus others like it) tucked back in my memory, I met and married a preacher.

As a girl, I loved to sit at the table, listening to preacher stories. During a gospel meeting, my parents would always invite the visiting preacher over on Sunday night to have sandwiches since they both worked on week days and it would have been difficult to prepare a meal otherwise. Those simple times were some of the best. People don't often serve sandwiches anymore, at least the way Mom did. She put everything on the table and we all made our own. Simple, yes, but Mom found that her sandwich night was a favorite among many who came our way. Little did I know that those Sunday night sessions were actually preparing me to be a preacher's wife. The thought of being such had not entered my

mind until Frank and I met when he came to a congregation across town to do his first full time preaching. There were not many Christians close to my age in our area, so in looking back, we believe that God's providence was at work.

During our dating years, as our relationship was growing, a fellow worker asked me, "What do you *do* on a date with a preacher?" It was a funny question because people of the world think preachers are to be feared and cannot possibly have any fun. It didn't take long to know that people looked at preachers a little differently. On a recent work day at our place of worship, there were things that needed attention; so of course, we all went in our work clothes. (There was painting involved, so we were really scrubby looking.) One young woman made the comment that seeing us in work clothes was blowing her mind; she had a mental picture of always seeing us in *Sunday best*. Contrary to what some must think, preachers don't stay dressed up all the time and they do not sleep in their ties!

Since there are no manuals or crash courses on how to be a preacher's wife, I hoped for the best and asked advice from others whom I admired. Curiously, I wonder what the statistics would be if we took a poll of preachers' wives. Everyone has a story. Did they know that's what they wanted? Did it just happen that the man they met and married was a preacher? Or did his decision to preach come after the wedding? In any event, hearts that truly love God will be successful, Luke 10:27; Psalm 31:23–24. If you are a preacher's wife, you have chosen to be by his side, and your help, your encouragement, your positive outlook, will sustain him through good times and bad. Preachers' wives are no different in that aspect than any other wife. We want our husbands to be successful in life and in their chosen vocations, but being in the public eye will deliver a twist to the responsibilities of a preacher's wife.

Questions in the poll (mentioned in the introduction) are as follows; the first two addressed to all who participated; the rest only to preachers' wives:

- ◆ What are the top 5 things you would like to see in a preacher's wife?
- ◆ What are the top 5 things about preacher's wives that disappoint you?

If you are a preacher's wife, finish these sentences:

- ◆ Brethren have no right to: _____
- ◆ The best thing about being a PW is: _____
- ◆ The hardest thing about being a PW is: _____
- ◆ I see this changing trend among preachers' wives: _____
- ◆ The funniest thing that happened to us was: _____

Again, the results were very interesting. In this chapter we'll investigate two more questions, and later in the book the results to the remaining questions will be revealed.

Top Five Things You Like to See in a Preacher's Wife

Friendly was the number one answer, with *hospitable* following second with one notation that they should be *cheerfully* hospitable. Other submissions will be listed in groups, as follows:

Spiritual Concerns

- ◆ Serious Bible student
- ◆ Knowledgeable
- ◆ Ability to teach women
- ◆ Spiritual leadership and Bible knowledge
- ◆ Spiritually minded and committed to God's truth

- ◆ Willing to attend & teach ladies Bible classes
- ◆ Dedication to Bible studies (Some do not attend extra studies but always have time for kids activities or card groups.)
- ◆ Excited to teach children's classes
- ◆ Concern for the church
- ◆ Deep awareness of life's brevity

Personal Qualities

- ◆ Trustworthy
- ◆ Honest
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Genuine Concern
- ◆ Loyalty
- ◆ Compassion
- ◆ Kindness
- ◆ Gracious
- ◆ Cheerful
- ◆ Down to earth
- ◆ Calming; quiet leader – not pushy or domineering
- ◆ Humility
- ◆ Generosity of spirit
- ◆ Sense of humor
- ◆ Easily approachable
- ◆ Personable
- ◆ I like to see her smile – she must be exhausted
- ◆ Keeps things in perspective
- ◆ Discretion
- ◆ Modesty
- ◆ An obviously healthy marriage; others need to see how godly couples deal with struggles, enjoy each other and work to improve their marriage

- ◆ Don't think of yourself as a preacher's wife – but a Christian woman who happens to be married to a preacher; a distinct person with your own unique abilities, talents, and needs

Relating to Others

- ◆ Keeps secrets and confidences — a safe place for others to share problems
- ◆ Encourages others
- ◆ Slow to criticize
- ◆ Right words for right occasion
- ◆ Willingness to befriend all females in congregation
- ◆ Creating ways and means for others to do good deeds
- ◆ Not partial or inclusive
- ◆ Show hospitality without partiality
- ◆ Accepting disposition
- ◆ Devoted to husband and family
- ◆ Have obedient children that show respect to others
- ◆ True help meet; subjection to husband
- ◆ 100% behind husband
- ◆ Truly loves brethren
- ◆ Ability to counsel younger women soundly with compassion and love and do it well
- ◆ The best preachers and wives are part of a team.

If I had been presented such a list when I was newly married, I think I would have fainted!

On the lighter side—a preacher's wife must be:

- ◆ Exciting yet calm
- ◆ Lovely yet plain
- ◆ Stylish but conservative in dress
- ◆ Greets everyone enthusiastically yet stays in the background
- ◆ A good conversationalist but never loud

- ◆ Up to date on current events but never opinionated
- ◆ Good homemaker, with office experience
- ◆ Young but wise; with 30 years of experience
- ◆ Cheerful yet contemplative
- ◆ Can critique without finding fault
- ◆ Generous but frugal
- ◆ Good organizer but never gives orders
- ◆ Experienced counselor yet never gives advice
- ◆ Old school yet innovative

Ready for the Challenge?

From Scripture, we form our own guidelines of what God expects of women and what we should be as preachers' wives. Then we form another set of what the congregation expects of us, and it can change from place to place. It has been correctly stated that God is the only one we have to please, but on the other hand, that's not an excuse for failing to develop some people skills. Know your strengths and your weaknesses and focus on those strengths. Preachers are not all alike and neither are their wives. All will vary in personality and strengths and some have to work harder than others to be a people person; *others centered* instead of *self-centered*. With practice, it will become part of life. Love, kindness, goodness, and gentleness are the fruit of the Spirit, (as well as doing it with joy and striving for peace) and every Christian woman should work on these qualities. Let's throw faithfulness and self-control in there too, so we can work on all nine! Our lives reflect our growth or lack of it as a Christian, and have very little to do with being married to a preacher.

College classes gave me some preparation, especially Bible classes, but I felt woefully unprepared to be a preacher's wife. Being in love, knowing how to cook, and how to be friendly helped me to survive—plus being encouraged by wonderful brothers and sisters around me, who were readily anxious to help a young preacher and his wife.

Congregations then didn't have the teaching programs that so many have today. Team teaching would have been an immense help. Having a mentor and learning from a seasoned teacher would have been a wonderful support but women of that time were reluctant to share their ideas, and heaven forbid that anyone should witness them teaching a class! Very quickly after our marriage, I was expected to be involved in the teaching process (never having been encouraged to teach at my home congregation) so the students and I learned together! (Being involved in an organized teaching program is extremely beneficial, not only for the congregation but for the preacher's wife as well. My first experience with organizing one quickly revealed my flaws, but it was the best learning experience I've ever had.)

Fortunately we were across town from my parents, and I had a little time to adapt to my new challenges before having to leave them and my hometown. Moving has to be one of the greatest challenges. It can be a strain for all the family, but getting to know people from different regions has been an exciting and unique blessing for us and for our children. There are good things to be said about staying a long time in one location, and other good things can be said about change. Either way, it's a challenge, but living in different locales is an education in itself as is getting to know and being able to work with different personalities. I was excited but apprehensive as we left Richmond. Surely, I would need to be *perfect* and if I could only keep hidden all my insecurities and my lack of Bible knowledge, maybe we could get by. Already familiar with criticism, I could no longer rely on my parents for advice, and in spite of having a wonderful husband and a four month old baby, I felt very alone. Personal growth is slow and steady. No one has come up with an instant formula. Experiences in the years that followed taught me that some are anxious and willing to help and some are more willing to criticize. I will be held accountable for my actions; they for their judgments.

The second question of the poll:

The Top Five Things That Disappoint You in Preachers' Wives

This list is varied as well. Hospitality was seen as important, and in this poll, lack of hospitality was most mentioned, tying for second was gossip and a holier than thou attitude.

Spiritual Concerns

- ◆ Gossip
- ◆ Holier than thou attitude
- ◆ Neglects teaching Bible classes ~ both women and children
- ◆ There's not a point in which we should retire!
- ◆ Unwilling to teach women's classes
- ◆ Prevents husband from overseas work
- ◆ Does not lead with loving example
- ◆ Isn't honest about having troubles of her own
- ◆ Fails to realize others look to her for leadership

Personal Qualities

- ◆ Haughty
- ◆ Overbearing
- ◆ Has noticeable favorites; cliquish
- ◆ Rude
- ◆ Judgmental
- ◆ Distant
- ◆ No personality
- ◆ Unapproachable; standoffish
- ◆ Unfriendly
- ◆ Worldly
- ◆ Materialistic
- ◆ Selfish
- ◆ Complainer
- ◆ Doesn't try to live within means