

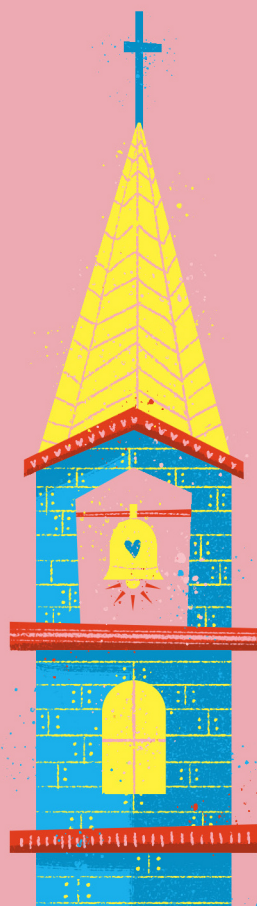
FOREWORD BY RAY ORTLUND

Help!

I'm Married
to My Pastor

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR
MINISTRY WIVES AND THOSE
WHO LOVE THEM

Jani Ortlund



“While being a pastor’s wife is not an office in the church, it comes with hidden expectations and undefined responsibilities. While knowing intimately that the integrity of the man behind the pulpit holds enormous blessings, living in the constant, unyielding spotlight can weary the soul. A pastor’s wife must learn how to feed on the word of God, turn the other cheek, cling to Christ, embrace the means of grace, protect her children from criticism and callings that they did not choose, and support a husband whose calling demands he lay down his life again and again. And all of this is done in the public eye. A pastor’s wife needs a trustworthy friend, and she will find that friend in Jani Ortlund’s book. Jani’s wisdom has been refined by almost fifty years of being the wife of her pastor. Her writing style is simple, straightforward, and sane. Practical, poignant, and personal, this book is—like Jani—wise and tender and most of all, faithful to the call of Christ to join in the ‘fellowship of His sufferings’ (Phil. 3:10 NKJV). I love this book.”

Rosaria Butterfield, Former Professor of English, Syracuse University; author, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*

“Ministry wives today face both joys and challenges as they navigate their calling. Would that we could sit down with Jani Ortlund and learn from her wealth of wisdom from nearly fifty years of experience as an excellent wife alongside her pastor husband, Ray Ortlund. This book is the next best thing! Each short chapter tackles a timely challenge and then answers it biblically and specifically. Jani is one of the Lord’s sweetest servants, and she embraces the high calling to be a pastor’s wife to the glory of God. Jani loves Jesus and draws others to him. Jani loves Ray and inspires all of us who are ministry wives to serve more enthusiastically as we swim against the tide. Her writings are a gift. I am particularly eager to share this encouraging book with student wives as they prepare to serve our Lord and his church.”

Mary K. Mohler, Director, Seminary Wives Institute, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *Growing in Gratitude*

“I am thankful for this special and much-needed book—fresh, joyous, and written by someone who has been there and not found God to be wanting. What an encouragement to us ministry wives! It made me glad to be a pastor’s wife, strengthened my hands for the work, and made me want to share this with my husband.”

Carolyn Ash, wife of Christopher Ash, Writer-in-Residence, Tyndale House, Cambridge

“Oh, my goodness! I was hooked from the foreword to the very last prayer. I already knew I was going to love this book from my interaction with the gracious author, Jani Ortlund. However, I must say, this book exceeded my expectations! It is written with such warmth, humor, understanding, and grace. It is a must for every pastor’s wife. Jani offers sage advice comingled with gentleness, understanding, affirmation, and oodles of encouragement. I plan on buying numerous copies of this book for women I know whose husbands are in God’s service. Every chapter brought tears to my eyes, a smile to my face, and joy to my heart!”

Cheryl Brodersen, speaker; Bible teacher; Host, *Living Grace*; wife of Brian Brodersen, Pastor, Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, California

“If you’ve lived as a ministry wife for more than ten seconds, you’ll likely know how incredibly rewarding yet exceedingly difficult it can be. Jani Ortlund definitely does! This wonderful book is a treasure chest overflowing with refreshing, practical gems of wisdom, advice, and encouragement from a woman who has been there. Jani knows how to read the emotional dashboard of life as a ministry wife and then point us back to Jesus. Read this book slowly and soak up these truths; you’ll find fuel for your journey and joy along the way.”

Kristina Ramsey, pastor’s wife and church planter, Liberty Church, Gold Coast, Australia

“The church is often aware of the chaos that comes with being a pastor, but the struggles of a pastor’s wife are often overlooked. Jani Ortlund’s motherly affection for younger pastors’ wives shines through in *Help! I’m Married to My Pastor*. She disciples us at the turning of every page with her godly wisdom and love.”

Nikki Daniel, wife of Bert Daniel, Pastor, Crawford Avenue Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia

“Jani Ortlund invites pastors’ wives and ministry leaders to drink from her deep well of biblical, practical wisdom. This book is a winsome reminder of why we must press on in our calling despite real hardships along the way. Jani is running with us, coaching us to press on toward the goal because Christ is worth it. Every married woman in ministry will be spurred to the finish line through her mentoring in *Help! I’m Married to My Pastor*. It’s been added to my list of must-read books to equip and encourage women. I joyfully recommend it!”

Leslie Bennett, Director of Women’s Ministry Initiatives, Revive Our Hearts

Help! I'm Married to My Pastor

*Encouragement for
Ministry Wives and Those
Who Love Them*

Jani Ortlund

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
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Help! I'm Married to My Pastor: Encouragement for Ministry Wives and Those Who Love Them

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To Ray Ortlund Jr.
The truest and best of his generation
and the Christlike pastor I get to be married to.
I'm forever grateful.

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Foreword

AN *UNSUNG HERO* IS defined as “one who does great deeds but receives little or no recognition for them.” It’s an accurate description of a pastor’s wife, isn’t it?

She pours out her life not only for her family but also, with her husband, for her church. She is not a life-depleting person but wonderfully life-enriching to all around. The world is more alive because she is alive. She is like Christ. Indeed, she is from Christ.

If you are the wife of a pastor, that’s *you*. It’s why you so matter. You are not always thanked as you deserve to be. So as you open this book, let me be the first to say *thank you!* Thank you for putting Christ first. Thank you for loving your pastor husband. Thank you for believing, for praying, for serving. We all owe you a great debt of gratitude.

This book matters because you matter. My amazing wife, Jani, wrote this for *you*—to affirm you and encourage you; to put some fresh wind into your sails; to help you feel noticed, understood, and respected; to invest in you and strengthen you and prepare you for your glorious future. She is glad this book is now in your hands. May the Lord himself add his blessing!

FOREWORD

Let me tell you something about this book's author. Even as "there was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6), there is also a woman sent from God, whose name is Jani. I have the sacred privilege of being her husband. Under Christ himself, she is God's greatest gift to me. She is a gift to you too, even as you are to so many.

I am glad Jani wrote this book. She is qualified to do so. She knows what she's writing about. When I was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1975, she was there, and she was all in. I can't remember a single Sunday in all these years when she wasn't there, praying for me and encouraging me, all in. Jani has seen it all and survived it all, and to this day she is still giving life—even more than ever.

I have never once seen Jani turn away and refuse the call of Christ upon her life. I have never once seen her return evil for evil. I have never once seen her sink into despair and rage. Time after time after time, she has put her trust in the Lord and bravely done the next right thing. And she has only grown deeper in Christ and richer in her capacity to give life. I owe her so much. The churches we have served owe her so much. My success is hers.

Now her hard-won experience over these many years is her gift to you—through this book. Maybe the best way to benefit from it is to read slowly, just one chapter at a time, sharing your thoughts with your husband along the way. At the end of each chapter, Jani includes a brief note to your husband as well, so that the two of you can experience the journey side by side. By the end, you'll be in a deeper place together, by God's grace, for his glory. And with you stronger, Jani will be happier too.

FOREWORD

Thank you for giving Jani the privilege of serving you.

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make his face to shine upon you and be
gracious to you;

The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you
peace. (Numbers 6:24–26)

Ray Ortlund, Pastor to Pastors,
Immanuel Church, Nashville, Tennessee

Introduction

HER VOICE WAS UNKNOWN TO ME, but her story was all too familiar. “My husband is a pastor and I don’t know who to talk to. Would you have time to meet?” Soon she was pouring out to me her heartache of discouragement, confusion, and broken relationships.

Ministry marriages bear unique strains that often obscure the joys of building a lifelong romance. A woman marries a man, not his ministry, but somehow her husband’s calling seeps into every aspect of their one-flesh relationship. The weight of accurately teaching God’s word week by week, the burden of bearing the confidential crises of his people, the responsibility of guiding friends through life’s most significant events (births, baptisms, weddings, deaths), the obligation of leading a staff and lay leaders with competence, the task of raising up a godly family in a public setting, the call to live a life worthy of imitation in every way—these and other pastoral pressures can cause tension in any ministry marriage.

This book is for every ministry wife who has ever felt alone and fears she might not have what it takes to sustain a happy ministry marriage. It is, strangely enough, a validation of that fear. Who, after all, is truly capable of this calling?

This book is also an affirmation that God will work out his delightfully good purposes in and through her. Marriage to a pastor is a sacred calling. A ministry wife's fears about rumors and romance, finances and friendships, hospitality and home-making can all find a resting place in the one who called her into this ministry marriage. "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

What every ministry wife needs is a friend—not another list of things to do to keep everyone happy, but another woman calling back to her from farther down the road, telling her that this life of sacrifices is worth it because Jesus is worth it. I want to be that kind of friend, Lord willing, who will call back to those behind me, "Keep going! You may be in a muddle right now, but keep going! It will be worth it! We serve the God who remembers. He sees. He knows. He cares."

Help! I'm Married to My Pastor comes out of almost fifty years in a ministry marriage. Throughout our ministry I have experienced both successes and failures, shed tears of joy and tears of shame, spoken words of affirmation and words of gossip. I've loved Ray well, and I've hurt him deeply. But in it all, Jesus Christ has never forsaken me. He has guided and loved me and has given me a story to tell—a story filled with his mercy and strength in the midst of my own sin and weakness.

I want to share some of the ways our kind King has answered me when all I could cry out was, "Help! I'm married to my pastor!" I want to strengthen your soul in Christ and encourage you to continue in the faith (Acts 14:22).

I also want to help you build a bridge from your heart to that pastor you fell in love with. At the end of each chapter you'll

find a letter I've written to your husband. See if he's interested in reading it and interacting with you. If not, lean on me and tell him with a twinkle in your eye, "Jani says that if you read her letters to you, I'm to make it worth your while!" Then, dear ministry wife, start thinking of a good prize for your pastor husband! Maybe you could read a book that *he* has suggested you read. Or maybe he has been wanting a guilt-free trip to the nearest sporting goods store for that new fishing pole or deer rifle (ask me how I know about this kind of treat). Or maybe he would enjoy a date night out that you arrange for the two of you. Or even a quiet evening at home alone with candles and a good movie and . . . The possibilities are endless. The idea is to show him your gratitude in a way that's meaningful to him. You'll both benefit, making it a real win-win blessing for your marriage.

Thank you for reading this book. Thank you for striving for the most satisfying and exemplary ministry marriage possible. As you read, I'm humbly praying that these words might sweeten and soften the sacrifices that every ministry wife makes. May God bless you more and more.

Help! I Didn't Bargain for This

WHATEVER YOUR STORY, we're in this crazy club together, this "I'm the preacher's wife" club that marks you in the eyes of anyone else who isn't. Some of you grew up hoping to marry a minister, and God gave you the desires of your heart. Others of you fell in love, and your man was heading toward the pastorate, so you followed him there. And some of you met, married, started work and your family, and then—wham! Your husband told you that God was calling him into ministry. You might still be trying to figure out what happened!

However you got here, you have joined that special group known as "ministry wives." Could I be your friend? Could we share a few hours together delighting in the joys and privileges of becoming one with a man set apart to lead the church of the living God? And may I bear with you some of the unique strains that flow from your calling in life as we look to the one who called us all?

They Act Like They Got Two for the Price of One

In our almost fifty years of ministry so far, I have never once met a wife who told me, “Jani, being a ministry wife is so much easier than I ever thought it would be! Every woman should be so fortunate as to have my role!” What I have heard, and sometimes felt myself, is:

“Some people treat me as if pastoring is my job as well as my husband’s.”

“I am not a pastorette! Why do people expect me to know all that is going on at church?”

“I worked to put my husband through seminary. Why do some people expect me to be a biblical expert? I feel embarrassed and ignorant at times.”

“Women come to me for counsel, but I have had no real training. What if I make it worse?”

“What if . . . ?” “Why . . . ?”

What I have heard is that the complexities of this role outweigh a wife’s expectations and dreams. Most ministry wives want desperately to support and enhance their husband’s service to Christ, but they feel like failures. They feel alone and fearful that they will never really measure up.

I want to tell you that you are *not* alone. You are not crazy. You didn’t make a mistake in marrying that man. God knew exactly what he was doing when he brought the two of you together and kindled that extraordinary love in both of your hearts.

Long Ago

Think of all God has done to bring you to this very moment in your life. God, in eternity past, chose you to be an active soldier in his mighty rescue operation for this needy world.

The Bible says that long ago, before the very foundations of the world, God thought you up and chose you for his very own:

. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. (Ephesians 1:4–5)

Long ago, before you were even born, God formed and numbered the days of your life:

Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:16)

Long ago God planned the path for your very own personal race in life—a race that only you can run:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Hebrews 12:1)

Long ago God decided and prepared good works that only you would walk in:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

And then he stepped into time and made you in secret, knitting you together in your mother's womb and brought you forth into his world and revealed himself to you with irresistible divine power and set you on your own personal pilgrimage to spend eternity with him:

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb. . . .
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
(Psalm 139:13, 15)

Along the way, he introduced you to that godly man who captured your heart. God caused a sweet fire to ignite between you, and he brought you to your husband as his own personal gift from the Lord:

He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favor from the LORD. (Proverbs 18:22)

Let's learn to see the big picture of God's mighty purposes. Our calling as women deeply involved in ministry is a vital part of God's eternal plan. He knows, he sees, he cares. Your life as a ministry wife may feel like so much more than you bargained for. But God is in it, intimately involved and committed to helping you fulfill his call on your life (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Look to him. Lean on him. It will be worth it.

————— A LETTER TO YOUR PASTOR —————

Dear Pastor,

Have you given your wife the freedom to open her heart to you? Why not ask her what is hard for her as a ministry wife? As she opens up, try not to correct her or defend yourself. Listen and empathize. Are there ways you can affirm her? By all means, do!

And why not ask your wife what expectations she feels from you and others? Decide together which ones to embrace as from the Lord and which ones can be safely disregarded (2 Corinthians 10:18). And then take her in your arms and pray for her and your ministry marriage. You'll be glad you did—and so will your flock!

*Prayerfully,
Jani*

Ministry is hard. And every ministry wife needs—and deserves—encouragement.



A woman marries a man, not his ministry. But all too often her husband's calling complicates their life together. What if ministry life isn't what she bargained for? What happens when her children make mistakes? How does she deal with church gossip, or even slander?

As a pastor's wife of almost fifty years, Jani Ortlund addresses these questions, along with many others, as she offers encouragement and guidance to ministry wives. Jani reminds readers that God works out his delightfully good purposes in and through their sacrifices.

"Practical, poignant, and personal, this book is—like Jani—wise and tender and most of all, faithful to the call of Christ to join in the 'fellowship of His sufferings' (Philippians 3:10 NKJV). I love this book."

ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD

Former Professor of English, Syracuse University; author, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*

"Jani Ortlund invites pastors' wives and ministry leaders to drink from her deep well of biblical, practical wisdom. This book is a winsome reminder of why we must press on in our calling despite real hardships along the way."

LESLIE BENNETT

Director of Women's Ministry Initiatives, Revive Our Hearts

Jani Ortlund is a well-known writer and conference speaker. She worships at Immanuel Church Nashville with her husband, Ray, who serves as a pastor to pastors. Jani, a former schoolteacher, holds a master's degree in education and serves as executive vice president at Renewal Ministries. The Ortlunds have four children and fifteen grandchildren.

WOMEN / CHRISTIAN LIVING

