

PART SIX
THE PREACHER'S WIFE

Few people ever start life's vocation with no preparation. We have technical schools, business colleges, apprenticeship, hospitals, Bible colleges, correspondence courses, night schools, etc. But --- Where is the training for the Preacher's Wife? Actual courses to prepare women for this important work are few, but there are now many books to which we may go for examples and suggestions. Choose them carefully for the advice to most denominational preachers' wives is not fitting in the life of a Christian preacher's family, where real holiness of life and daily consecration are required. Often books are a record of many moves as directed by the "Bishop," stories of penury, and the "missionary barrel," because no tithing is taught to these churches. They are not run by Bible teaching. Some books are just an entertaining group of humorous stories, not at all helpful in serious matters.

The following poem is an illustration of what I mean. It gives the impression that things, which should be a part of every Christian woman's life, are peculiar to the preacher's wife only. They are here considered as burdens to be borne, not privileges to be enjoyed.

THE PREACHER'S WIFE

You may think it quite an easy task,
And just a pleasant life;
But really it takes lots of grace
To be a preacher's wife.

(It does for any woman to be a real Christian)

She's supposed to be a paragon,
Without a fault in view,
A saint when in the parsonage,
As well as in the pew.

(All Christians should be saints)

Her home must be a small hotel,
For folks that chance to roam,
And yet have peace and harmony --
The perfect preacher's home.

(All Christians should be hospitable)

Whenever groups are called to meet,
Her presence must be there;
And yet the members all agree,
She should live a life of prayer.

(Faithful prayer-filled lives are expected of all Christian women)

Though hearing people's burdens,
Their griefs both night and day,
She's supposed to spread but sunshine,
To those along the way.

(This is her joy and privilege)

She must lend a sympathetic ear,
To every tale of woe,
And then forget about it,
Lest it to others go.

(Not gossip)

(Should be remembered in prayer)

Her children must be models rare,
Of quietness and poise, (Eccl. 12:1)
But still stay on the level,
With other girls and boys.

You may think it quite an easy task,
And just a pleasant life, (And it *is* a pleasant life, too.)
But really it takes lots of grace
To be a preacher's wife!

I hope and pray that the material following may help you over rough places, make you better able to solve problems, make you happier as you serve; make you a better home maker, soul winner, and Preacher's Wife, if such you ever become.

Now - What does the scripture say about Preachers' Wives? It must be in Jude the fourth chapter. There is very good advice to deacons' wives, I Timothy 3:11. But there is enough scripture to cover anything for anyone who *wants* to find it.

A Preacher's Wife is a converted Christian companion and helper for a consecrated proclaimer of Christ's Gospel. Not a housekeeper for a Preacher.

A Help-meet in the truest sense of the word. Genesis 2:18.

Encouraging in the most difficult of jobs. If you see where constructive criticism will help, and you should be watchful for it - CRITICIZES IN SECRET. Careful! Constructive! LOVING! Sparing! "Don't be a Ding Dong Nag." (Hunt)

Be slow to accept tales others bring you about him.

Moses made two choices - - - So must be you.

	MOSES	PREACHER'S WIFE
1st choice	Align himself with Israelites. Ex. 2:11-14, Heb. 11:24-25	Align yourself with the Christians. Acts 2:38-47
2nd choice	Dedication to God's service. Ex. 3:5; 4:18	Dedicate yourself in complete service for Christ Matt. 16:24

God told Moses to remove his shoes when he made his decision for complete dedication to God because he stood on Holy Ground. So it is for the preacher's wife. We who choose to be some servants of God, a servant of God's people, and to represent Godly ideals before the world, stand on Holy Ground.

Be not negligent or slothful, but diligent in your work as a preacher's wife. Read Romans 12:11 and Ephesians 6:10-18 and you will find that the Christians are in a battle today one that requires alertness and diligence.

The character of preachers' wives is not negative only. Yes, it is abstaining from all evils of the world but it is more than just that. It is the positive pressing the battle for righteousness. Not just **not** helping people to Hell and destruction, but a definite effort to help people out of sin and lead them to a truly converted walk toward heaven.

Mrs. F. C. Low once stated, "A minister's wife spoke to me recently of the 'business we were in'. 'It's awful to call it that, I guess,' she apologized, 'but it's the truth isn't it?' Indeed It is! I suppose we all go through a period as ministers' wives when we very blithely say, 'I'm no different from other women. I will live my own life and do only as I please.' But Alas! Sooner or later, gracefully or quite ungracefully, we must face the fact of our business.

"And what miserable failures some of us are in our business. Not where the church is concerned! Oh no! I don't mean that. I mean failures as well adjusted personalities. We might do and do in the church and be the loveliest of smiling personalities on the outside but still be miserably unhappy within. I can't help but remember what a doctor fresh from medical school told me. He said that there is a regular disease that doctors are on the lookout for among ministers' wives called Ministers' Wives' Neurosis." Think of it! And then a soldier friend who has had extensive psychiatric clinical experiences remarked that in his observation there seemed to be more ministers' wives among their women patients than any other type. When I say that we tend to fail in personality adjustment I mean becoming a neurotic."

Can any Christian say, "I will live my own life and do only as I please?" I wonder if failure in "personality adjustments" is not really failure in conversion and dedication? The promises contained in 1 Pet. 5:6-7, 1 Cor. 10:13, Rom. 8:28 should surely be a preventive in the life of any preachers' wife against becoming a neurotic.

A preacher's wife should be, and has the opportunity to be, the best and happiest wife in the world. And there should be the sweetest harmony between her and her husband. She should be the best, most blessed mother in the world, and there should be less friction within the home. She should be the best example in the world.

Is this because of any special promise God has made to a preacher's wife? No! But - "Every promise in the book is mine." All the "Blesseds" are yours, and blessed means *happy*. Read Psalms 1 and Matthew 5. Both of these scriptures list the characteristics and rewards of happy or "blessed" people.

Over all, we have the smile of God's approval. These promises are yours because you are a Holy Spirit filled Christian, following Christ's example because you are "a Christ's One."

Preachers' wives first and above all must be Christians with all that it entails. As a recognized leader in Christian work (James 3:1), she must be converted herself. She must have crucified self as referred to in: Matt. 16:24, Gal. 5:24 and Gal. 2:20. She must not only tell others but must live the first and greatest commandment in Matt. 22:37. God must be first in her heart, the same as in the preacher's. The care of her home, family, and husband all must be seen in the light of "For Christ's sake and His glory."

The fact of your home being a minister's home does not make the relationship between you and God any different from any other Christian. But the responsibility of your position should draw you closer to Christ. Read Col. 3:17.

No amount of "service" to the church, to preachers, to the congregation, hospitality in your home, or any other "service" can ever take the place of your own spiritual growth. I mean time spent in prayer, study of God's word (privately), meditation on things of God. There is a tendency on the part of preachers' wives to let "things" of the kingdom, even, crowd out spiritual food for the soul. There is always the time element. Most preachers' wives get up to the telephone instead of the alarm clock many times; usually the day is crowded with interesting people, unusual problems, and deep spiritual things, until bed time comes again and there has not been the time taken for food for the soul.

She went about her "church work"
With a glamorous beaming face
Not knowing that her "church work"
Had taken the Master's place.

Remember the incident with Mary and Martha in Luke 10? Martha actually supplied needed food for Jesus' tired body. This was very important, but what did He say? "Choose what cannot be taken away." Martha was letting service for Christ crowd out her listening to His word and talking to Him (compared respectively to our Bible study and prayer). The bigger the day's work, the bigger the need for prayer. Make a prayer list and keep it alive to you. Never let prayer become a habit of the subconscious mind. It must be an outpouring of your heart to God, a pleading for loved ones, a soul desiring salvation of others, and an earnest desire for His Kingdom.

You must have the same conviction about Christ and His Kingdom (the church) as the preacher. You are *not* in the work "just because of him" (your husband). You must be dedicated to Christ the same as he is.

Do not believe things simply because he says so. We are to go to our husbands for teaching and I feel sorry for a wife not having enough confidence in her husband's knowledge of the scripture to ask and learn from him. But we must have some conviction, faith and zeal of our own planted deeply in our hearts. This comes from our own personal Bible study as well as the preaching.

Never become hardened to his preaching. We hear so much, often by the same man (our husband), but we should never fail to take it to ourselves and be guided by it. Sermons are to help save our soul and our families the same as others. Sermons are to help us grow spiritually if taken into our own hearts.

Do not waste his time! His time is given to the Lord, purchased by a group of Christians in a church. Help him give his all to Christ through them. Does a banker stay home to wash? Does a doctor leave a critical patient to baby-sit? Does a lawyer leave his client without support to take his wife to town? Far more important is the preacher's soul-saving. You do your work and let him do his. An ordinary worker is away all day. Some preachers say, "I am my own boss" but it is not so. His time is bought with a price by a congregation. He is a servant of Christ

and the church where he ministers.

Feel the weight of your responsibility. (James 3:1) Also feel the uplift of joy in service to Christ well done. If you do not feel that load, I doubt the sincerity of your dedication. Your work is never an overburdening load, especially if you claim James 1:5.

Honor your husband. (Esther 1:20) Honor him for the work he does, for the place he has in the community, and for the responsibility he has in God's plan. God has chosen to put three books in the New Testament to advise, help, and honor the preacher: I & II Timothy and Titus. NEVER MAKE LIGHT OF HIS SERMONS. Have the same attitude toward them as any true Christian, looking to him for spiritual food. They are good for you as much as anyone in the audience. Be helped by them. You have no right to "pitch fork" them to others, use the "rake" and take it to yourself.

Respect his judgment in church matters. After all, he is in charge of the work; allow him to take his place. Get out of his way; do not hinder. Women never were given any place in gospel preaching. Women have been the basis of most cults and false teaching. Ellen White, Anna BeSant, Joan Southcott, Ann Lee, Mrs. Eddy, Mrs. McPherson, and Mrs. Crawford.

Don't try to usurp his job. 1 Tim. 2:12. Remember the domineering Jezebel. I Kings 21:4-7, 14-16. The "officious-preaching-representative" Preacher's Wife is a hindrance to the gospel.

Remember you are to minister, not to be ministered unto; (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). It is an often repeated advice by an older Christian woman and it is so good. She had seen both kinds of people -- in the home, and in church, She had also seen the results of the "selfish servants" in the church and community.

As Christian Servants, you and your husband are not to be served by the congregation. You are to serve them. That is your chosen occupation. (Matt. 23:11). Don't always be expecting some kindness or gifts from the members of the church. Most congregations love their minister enough to be more than kind, but, appreciate their kindness. Don't act as though you had favors coming.

Not only are you to serve the congregation but you are to serve and expect no discounts or favors from the community. You owe them your service and your Lord. (Rom. 1:14-15). Pay them the debt you owe, (Jer. 22:13). Don't ask for discounts from the grocer, dentist, doctor, clothier, service station, hardware, baker, or hospital. It is a shame, but some preachers ask for it! People despise the gospel you represent. People scorn the Christ you preach. They also criticize the Christians who support that church. The world cares for its own, why should it be asked to favor the preacher from whom they receive nothing. Demand their respect for you as a minister. Serve and help but do not ask favors -- to be ministered unto. Some business firms consider gifts in labor or merchandise to the ministry, as their tithe. Accept it graciously and let them know your appreciation. Give thanks graciously, genuinely, at once. But don't ask for or expect such.

This poem (like the first one) contains too much of "self-pity." If you are a minister's wife, never stoop to consider your God-given position in the light of a "suffering martyr,"

THE MINISTER'S WIFE

You may sing of your heroes of war and of peace,
 Your soldiers of fortune and strife;
 When the tumult shall die, and the shouting shall cease,
 Let me sing of the Minister's Wife.

You my laud to the skies all the learned and wise,
 The servants with dignities rife;
 My heart says "Amen," but I take up my pen
 In praise of the Minister's Wife.

Oh, the Minister's Wife is a cook and a clerk;
 A dressmaker, mother and nurse; (all mothers)
 A wonderful teacher, a maid-of-all-work
 And a player and singer, of course!

She must listen, with nerves that are raw to the quick,
 To heartaches and troubles galore;
 She must welcome the stranger, and visit the sick,
 Wearing dresses her sister once wore.

She must work with the Aid, and Junior Hi-Y; (I don't think so)
 She must help with the Sunday School stunts;
 Be a leader in Missions, or tell us all why,
 And not miss a prayer meeting once. (No Christian should)

She must comfort her husband when Mondays are blue (why should Mondays be "blue?")
 And smooth out his trials - and coats;
 Be ready to move every twelve months - or two
 When he shepherds new sheep (and new goats).

And whether the weather be cloudy or bright,
 In season or out -- all the while
 If her heart, it be heavy, or if it be light --
 She must smile, smile, smile!

Oh, sing of the noble, the great, and the good
 Whom you meet in the course of your life;
 I take up the strain, be it here understood,
 In praise of the Minister's Wife.

PROGRESS (Good for a preacher's wife)
 Until I learned to trust, I never learned to pray.
 And I did not learn to fully trust Till sorrows came my way.
 Until I felt my weakness, His strength I never knew;
 Nor dreamed till I was stricken, That He could see me through.
 Who deepest drinks of sorrow, Drinks deepest too of grace;
 He sends the storm so He Himself Can be our hiding place.
 His heart, that seeks our highest good, Knows well when things annoy;
 We would not long for Heaven, If earth held only joy.
 -- Barbara Ryberg

STEP BY STEP

He does not lead me year by year
Nor even day by day.
But step by step my path unfolds
My Lord directs my way.

Tomorrow's plans I do not know,
I only know this minute,
Then He will say, "This is the way
By faith, now walk ye in it."

And I am glad that it is so,
Today's enough to bear,
And when tomorrow comes His grace
Shall far exceed its care.

What need to worry then or fret?
The God who gave His Son
Holds all my moments in His hand,
And gives them one by one.

- - Mrs. Morrison

CHRIST - AND WE

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today:
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way:
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died:
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

We are the only Bible
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's gospel
We are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message
Given in deed and word---
What if the line is crooked?
What if the type is blurred?

What if our hands are busy
With other work than His?
What if our feet are walking
Where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His lips would spurn?
How can we hope to help Him
Unless from Him we learn?

. . . Annie Johnson Flint

THE PREACHER'S WIFE

There is one person in the church who knows the preacher's life;
 She's wept and smiled and prayed for him, and that's the preacher's wife.
 She knows the prophet's weakest point and knows his greatest power;
 She's heard him speak in trumpet tone in his great triumphant hour.
 She's heard him groaning in his soul when bitter raged the strife
 And hand in hand she knelt with him, for she's the preacher's wife.
 The crowd has seen him in his power when glistened his drawn sword
 As underneath God's banner's folds he faced the devil's horde.
 But, she knows deep within her heart that scarce an hour before
 She helped him pray for strength from God behind a closed door.
 You tell your tales of prophets brave, who walked across the world
 And changed the course of history by burning words they hurled,
 And I will tell how back of them, some women lived their lives,
 Who wept with them and smiled with them--they were the preacher's wives.

TEN COMMANDMENTS -- For Preachers' Wives

1. Thou shalt not tear down thy husband in public, remembering that one of the cardinal principles of a successful marriage is respect for thy mate's ego.
2. Thou shalt not look disinterested during a service of worship, even though thou hast heard this powerful sermon of thy husband's for the nth time.
3. Thou shalt not accept the presidency of the missionary society, for she who invests herself with office openeth the door of much criticism and robs others of leadership opportunities.
4. Thou shalt not sing in the choir, even if thy voice is of operatic quality, unless thou hast the hearty consent of the choir director, the church officers, the staff, thy husband and the sexton.
5. Thou shalt not extol thy husband's virtues in public, for his deeds are his best press agent; besides, thou wilt offend other women who also have perfect husbands.
6. Thou shalt not take unto thyself a confidant, because today's confidant may be tomorrow's adversary. Moreover, confidants always have good memories.
7. Thou shalt not entertain lavishly, dress conspicuously, talk boisterously or lead aggressively -- two leaders in a minister's household often wreck the family and disturb an otherwise peaceful flock.
8. Thou shalt not show impatience when the former lady of the manse is extolled, and thy talents seem small by comparison.
9. Let thy children be restrained by the ideal of being good for goodness sake and not because of public opinion. "They are just p.k.'s (preacher's kids)" can be a compliment rather than a gibe.
10. Thou shalt not fail to pray and to fill thy days with good works, for the quiet demonstration of God's presence and power in thy daily life may turn more to righteousness than the mighty preaching of thy honored husband.
 (Above all, let not thy spouse suspect this.)

-- G. Avery Lee