

The Problems Facing a Pastor's Wife Today

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[WLQ: Volume 81, No. 1]

This essay rests on the assumption that if you want to find out how a pastor's life is going, you have to talk first to his wife and then to him. Why this assumption? The reason is that many wives seem to be able to discuss openly the trials and problems faced by the pastor's family. The minister has too much at stake, he concludes, to bare his soul. Many a clergyman is content to bury his emotions, hurts and anxieties rather than reveal his problems as a husband, father and pastor of God's flock.

The pastor, the man, is apt to zero in on his calling when he judges whether his life is going smoothly or not. He tends to leave others with the impression that the area in life which could cause him the most problems is in ministry when, instead, it could be his calling in the home. Many a pastor often thinks that the biggest fires to be put out are those in his church. In reality, however, the fires at home often can and do burn hotter and cause more personal damage than those in his congregation. This is true because at home he is dealing with his wife who has become "one flesh" with him and his children who are "his flesh and blood." When a pastor fails his parishioners, he certainly will feel pain and anguish. However, when a pastor fails his family, whether it be intentionally or unintentionally, he experiences an even greater sense of failure because of the husband-wife and parent-child relationship.

The essayist's study and research seems to indicate that pastors' wives are either facing more struggles today because of their role or are not as well equipped to handle the pressures they feel in the parsonage as their counterparts in previous generations. The writer believes that it is a combination of both situations. It is his conclusion that the pastor-husband is in the best position to increase or decrease the stress his wife is facing. Therefore, this subject deserves the attention of every husband in the ministry.

The purpose of this paper is not to say that the position of a minister's wife is only one of sorrow and unhappiness. There are more advantages than disadvantages and more blessings than problems in her station in the marriage. However, the number of complications faced by women married to men of the cloth seems to be growing. It is important, therefore, to examine the significant areas of concern. This paper will basically deal with the negative aspects associated with living in a parsonage. An attempt will be made to identify the major problems which pastors' wives are experiencing and offer certain suggestions for improvement and correction.

It must be stated that most of the research dealt with surveys and opinions taken from material written about pastors' wives in general throughout various Christian denominations in the United States. All the statistics and percentages will not match exactly what the wives of our Wisconsin Synod ministers are experiencing. Yet, there is enough similarity in the position to make the information relevant and beneficial. May this essay serve as a positive influence for good, starting with the essayist's own marriage, for none of us is immune from marital struggles and subpar marriages.

Part One: Pastors' Families are Hurting

St. Paul warns us in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Christians who have experienced the pardon and love of God are not to adopt the mannerisms, speech, expressions, styles and habits of this sinful world. However, to be in the world but not grow worldly is one tall order. The truth is Christians are not capable of avoiding the world's deadly influence because of their sinful nature. It will only be in heaven that we will no longer feel the world's harmful pull on our life.

One piece of evidence that Christians are being influenced more and more by their sinful neighbors is the growing rate of divorce in the church. A recent article in *Family Circle* puts it this way: "A kind of moral backlash seems to have set in. Divorce isn't just being sanctioned now, it's virtually being sponsored. A

profusion of books and articles is making the argument that lasting commitments aren't viable, that the risks involved in splitting up are manageable and the people's personal selves are likely to thrive on dissolution."

Christians once watched the climbing divorce rate with a certain degree of smugness. However, the problem that was mainly outside of the church door has now deeply penetrated many congregations. Divorce has reached an epidemic stage and what a serious epidemic it is, as one person explains: "Divorce is emotionally like a massive heart attack that leaves you disabled and in pain."

An even greater sign that the church is being influenced by society comes in the alarming number of clergy divorces. Lucille Lavender, author of *They Cry, Too!*, writes: "The dangerous practice of becoming all things to all people, and conforming to roles which are not real, can all have a devastating effect on marriage. So much so, that among professionals, clergymen rank third in the number of divorces granted each year." Robert Stout, professor of psychology, writes in the February, 1982, issue of *Christianity Today*:

Lyle Schaller believes the divorce rate for ministers has at least quadrupled since 1960. G. Lloyd Rediger's statistics point out that 37 percent of the clergy with whom his organization works are seriously considering divorce; based on precedent, 15 percent will dissolve their relationship. Over 60 percent of his population deal with problems serious enough to make divorce a distinct possibility. David and Vera Mace bring the current situation into perspective when they write: "The clergy has remained in a state of supposedly blissful obscurity ... until now ... broken clergy marriages have ... become an issue to be reckoned with, and ecclesiastical officials are addressing themselves to the perplexing task of formulating policies for appropriate action." There appears to be little doubt that there has been a recent trend toward divorce among clergy of all denominations. Like it or not, we have a tiger by the tail. There may be a strong desire to 'let go' Or to ignore it, but it is obvious the problem will not just go away. It should command the attention of the church; it cries out for workable solutions.

Mrs. Mary LaGrand Bouman, author of *Divorce In the Parsonage*, writes: "Someone has said that Catholic priests leave the priesthood to get married, while Protestant ministers leave the ministry to get divorced."

Why the upward trend? There are many factors to consider. It is clear, however, that clergy families are being affected, especially the wife, who shares in the good and bad times. An unhappy husband leads to an unhappy wife. Or, an unhappy wife who is experiencing problems will surely affect the ministry of her husband. Carried to an extreme, both situations could result in one of the greatest failures in life, a broken marriage. How many clergy families are being adversely influenced today? Rev. Joel Sauer in his paper entitled "Why Pastors Are Leaving The Ministry" noted that six pastors listed "family problems" as their reason for leaving the WELS ministry in recent years. Other pastors might have left for the same reason but officially attributed their departure to some other cause. Also, it is becoming apparent that more and more of our fellow clergy and laity are able to cite pastors' wives who are experiencing emotional and marital problems. The numbers seem to be growing. I wrote to all of the District Presidents in our Synod asking them to list the number of pastors' wives who have had some struggles relating to their role as a minister's wife in the last two years. Five presidents responded to my letter. The five presidents said that totally they have either dealt with or knew about 14 such cases. Like many such statistics, the number of cases not known about are probably greater than those which have become known. It could well be that there are many more wives going through some turmoil because of their portion in the parsonage. Certainly, the problems should be addressed and dealt with in Christian love and concern.

Part Two: What are the Requirements for a Pastor's Wife?

All this talk about the stresses a pastor's wife faces might lead us to conclude that the Lord has given her a tough job description which should be rewritten. However, the Lord has virtually set nothing down about the

role of the pastor's wife. We all know about the requirements of a pastor as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–7. About the only thing mentioned in Scripture about ministers' wives is simply the declaration that pastors may marry. Luke 4:38, 39 talks about Peter's wife's mother. St. Paul discusses the right of ministers to marry and to take their wives along with them on their missionary endeavors in 1 Corinthians 9:5. Nothing is stated about the requirements of a pastor's wife other than the general statements concerning all Christian wives.

Professors Schuetze and Habeck mention the following in their book *The Shepherd Under Christ*:

It is significant that no qualifications or regulations are set up for the pastor's wife. This indicates that essentially she is a private person and not directly involved in the public ministry of her husband. It is for that reason that we have been averse to instituting special courses for the wives or prospective wives of seminary students lest they receive the impression that they will be incumbents of a special office. We consider it the duty of their husbands or prospective husbands to acquaint them with the uniqueness of a pastor's position. It will need to be a pastor's continuing concern to counteract the idea that by virtue of her marriage to him his wife has a position of leadership. Her calling lies in the area of being wife, homemaker, and mother. In these respects she is to set a good example, all the more so since the parsonage is in the public eye.

The point of this statement is that a congregation is calling one public minister not two. They are calling one man, not a husband-and-wife team. The wife's main responsibility is to her husband and family. She is to be another member of the church with the same rights and freedom of choice the other women in the congregation enjoy. Her involvement should be determined by her gifts, interest and available time.

All this can be easily stated. However, the trick is to remain just a mother and wife. In reality, she will find that it is very hard to maintain a "normal home." The pastor's wife, like the wife of almost any professional person, is affected by her husband's vocation. She will be drawn into the joys and struggles which her husband will experience. Demands will be placed on her that are not put on other wives simply because she is the minister's wife.

Lucille Lavender describes in this way her position in the parsonage:

Two summers ago, at a conference for pastors and their wives, one of the speakers was a psychologist. He saved some significant comments for pastors' wives. The gist of his remarks was that, although the stress factors of the pastor were way beyond those of any other professional occupation, the stress was greater for the wife. He suggested that this might be so because the pastor is there, at the 'front,' while she stands by and must quietly accept whatever comes his way, be it good, happy, unpleasant, mundane, wearying, or the emotional strain in gearshifting discussed in an earlier chapter.

Mrs. Bouma writes: "The women who are married to ministers are usually also among the walking wounded. Some are nursing serious injuries; others have received only minor cuts and scrapes which seem to have healed easily without leaving any scars. Few escape completely unscathed." The ministry can be filled with many trials as the Lord said it would be. We have to be aware that all of the pressure is not just on the pastor, but there is enough to go around for his family members.

Part Three: What are Some of the Problems Facing a Pastor's Wife?

The field of counseling pastors' wives is relatively new. There isn't much written about their position in our circles. Therefore, one must rely on material written mostly by those outside our denomination. In order to discover what is happening in the lives of our pastors' wives, the writer decided to seek their comments directly by means of a survey. Every pastor's wife in our conference was sent a questionnaire. It listed 19 disadvantages

of a clergy marriage most frequently mentioned in a survey taken by David and Vera Mace, authors of *What Is Happening to Clergy Marriages?*. Each wife was asked to list the top six disadvantages she felt in her life. Each wife was requested to add any personal comments she might have which could be used in this paper. Each District President was also asked to list the most common problems facing pastors' wives from the background ground of their personal counseling experiences or conversations with other pastors.

The following section lists the top ten disadvantages as noted by the 14 wives who responded to the questionnaire. The first one on the list represents the greatest disadvantage, the second one the second greatest and so on down the line.

1. Time pressures due to husband's heavy schedule
2. Husband, serving others, neglects own family
3. Financial stress
4. No one ministers to clergy family
5. Lack of family privacy—a goldfish bowl existence
6. Children expected to model church's expectations
7. No in-depth sharing with other church couples
8. Lack of personal friends
9. Emotional stress caused by crisis situations
10. Husband must work when others are free

It is interesting to note that the wives from our circles selected 7 of the same top 10 disadvantages listed by the wives interviewed by David and Vera Mace.

Next will be supplied the number of votes each disadvantage received. Please remember that each wife was asked to list the top six disadvantages.

Disadvantages

Total Number of Votes

- 11 Time pressures due to husband's heavy schedule
- 10 Husband, serving others, neglects own family
- 7 Financial stress
- 7 Children expected to model church's expectations
- 7 No in-depth sharing with other church couples
- 6 No one ministers to clergy family
- 6 Lack of family privacy—a goldfish bowl existence
- 5 Emotional stress caused by crisis situations
- 5 Lack of personal friends
- 4 Wife's duties assigned by the congregation
- 4 Husband must work when others are free
- 3 Confusion about wife's identity and roles
- 2 Frequent moves; no permanent roots
- 2 Husband on call throughout the 24 hours of a day
- 1 Marriage expected to be model of perfection
- 1 Dissatisfaction with housing arrangements
- 1 Peer pressure to conform and compete
- 0 Family belongs to congregation

This survey seems to agree with the findings of Mrs. Charlotte Ross who writes in *Who Is the Minister's Wife?*: “The pressures that lead to frustration and discord in the life of a clergy wife can be divided into four main categories: Time, Friends, Money, Housing. Although stress related to these broad designations is not limited to the clergy marriage, their manifestation is peculiar to and aggravated by life in the ministry.” It seems that our wives are not too concerned about housing but very concerned about the other three areas. All this seems to indicate that Wisconsin Synod pastors’ wives have about the same opinions as their counterparts in other Christian denominations.

Part Four: Examining the Problems Faced by a Pastor’s Wife

As the main problems are examined individually, relevant quotations will be supplied along with certain suggestions to help correct the situation in question. At times, some of the disadvantages will be combined because of their similarity.

The First Problem: Time Pressure and Husband Neglects Family

Dr. James Dobson, a noted Christian psychologist, was asked what he considered to be the most serious interference with meaningful family life today. He writes: “I think the most damaging factor, the one that I hear the most about, the one I feel is the most destructive, is often overlooked when you’re making a list of this nature. It has to do with fatigue and time pressure.”

Dr. Dobson had taken a survey attempting to discover the most common sources of depression in women. He writes:

The second most common source of depression on that entire list was “fatigue and time pressure,” and it ranked very close to number one which was “low self-esteem.” The reason it ranked so close is that those things are related. The faster you run the less family life there is; the less meaning there is between husbands and wives; the less the wife is inclined to know who she is and what her worth is, particularly if she’s there at home taking care of small children and trying to hold the home together.

Dr. Dobson was also asked why we run so fast and crowd our lives so full. His answer was:

Husbands, I think, do it for different reasons than wives do. Husbands are hooked, I think, by their ego. This is not an attack on husbands. I’m speaking from my own point of view as well. We get satisfaction, emotionally, from doing a good job, from building an empire, building a business, from earning money. Those things meet emotional needs for husbands. They build self-esteem. So it’s very easy for a man who’s feeling successful and good about his work to find himself working six or seven days a week.

He goes on to say that a woman, on the other hand, gets most of her satisfaction and sense of personal worth (self-esteem) from her husband. She looks to him for a sense of value and importance. If he is never around, if he is never there to commend her, she can develop a deep sense of low self-worth. Too many husbands believe that both spouses should get the same satisfaction from their work. He concludes that he gets his from his vocation and she should from her work in the home. Dr. Dobson tells us that it doesn’t work that way.

Now, many might conclude that the ministry should be easy on the wife since the pastor is at home a lot. The impression among a number of people is that the pastor does not have to work very much, that he only has to put in time on Sunday. But we know that a tremendous amount of time is involved. A number of studies have shown this to be true. One of the reasons a pastor has such a heavy workload is that he has so many roles.

Samuel W. Blizzard made a study of 690 clergymen and concluded that the pastor has the following six major roles: 1) administrator; 2) organizer; 3) pastor; 4) preacher; 5) priest (performing religious functions—baptisms, etc.); 6) teacher. “Blizzard found that the professional working day averaged just under ten hours ... and divided up as follows: as administrator, 40 percent; as pastor, 25 percent; as preacher and priest, 20 percent; as organizer, 10 percent; as teacher 5 percent. Notice that over half of his total time goes to administration and organization.”

John G. Koehler studied the work habits of 119 American Baptist ministers in order to determine how much time they spent in the office and at home. He writes: “The mean was about twenty-six hours (a week), or under four waking hours a day. This of course included meals at home, dressing, undressing, washing and shaving; household and family duties; reading and personal hobbies and pursuits; watching TV; in some cases, sermon preparation and entertaining parishioners and guests.”

The heavy workload not only takes the pastor out of the home far too often, but emotionally drains him so that he has little to offer his wife and children. He is at home in body only. His mind is a million miles away on someone’s problems. Or, a pastor may feel the call to duty supersedes all others and he turns into a “workaholic.” David and Vera Mace write: “This urge to drive himself produces ministers who, in the vivid term coined by Wayne Oates, become ‘workaholics’; who feel virtuous as long as they keep relentlessly going and unworthy if they stop for a break. As one wife expressed it, her husband developed a ‘guilty conscience’ if he spent time relaxing at home.”

The pastor’s wife and children need him. He isn’t around very much. What he finds hardest to give is himself. Therein lies the source of much frustration, depression and resentment. This vicious cycle produces many a poor marriage which hurts everyone involved. The Maces describe the situation thus:

The married minister with an unhappy marriage is therefore crippled in the performance of his task. He knows that the message he is proclaiming isn’t working for him in his own inner personal life. He is not getting, in his home, the healing and support he needs in order to share the burdens of human need and tragedy that are daily brought to him. He suffers from disappointment, guilt, and a sense of failure that leave him inwardly tortured and emotionally drained. His wife also is in trouble. She must either put on an act before the outside world or risk ruining her husband’s career by letting the sad truth be known. They both face a grim choice between hypocrisy and public humiliation.

Is time pressure and neglect affecting the marriages and households of our pastors? These are some of the comments received in the questionnaire:

What Do the Wives Say?

- a. “There is just never enough time. You sometimes feel like you are on a merry-go-round and can’t get off.”
- b. “It is awfully hard for a pastor’s wife to want more of her husband. It seems as if you are competing against God. I feel guilty as a result.”
- c. “Sometimes we so desperately feel the need to get out of town and get away, but we can’t find a time when our schedules permit it.”
- d. “A hectic life leads to impatience which leads to a feeling of indifference towards one another.”
- e. “Often he has little or no time and energy left to spend on family activities or just relaxing. It is difficult to find time to really communicate and feel like he will take the time to listen.”
- f. “He is not ‘tuned-in’ to what is really happening at home. It seems his work is always on his mind.”
- g. “This really bugs me sometimes. First comes the church, next the children, then personal recreation for himself and fourthly me (which amounts to very little time).”

- h. “Children need and want Dad to spend more time with them. When young children see how busy their Dad is most of the time, they feel neglected. The children feel resentful and that instills negative ideas toward a desire of becoming a pastor like Dad.”

What Could Be Done To Help?

Pastors must establish the proper priorities. We have to arrange correctly the “big three: God, family and the ministry.” Certainly we are to “fear, love and trust in God above all things.” The question is what do you do with the other two? There are some clergy who believe that the minister’s duty to the church must come before his duty to his family. Some pastors are saying by their words and deeds that they have a God-given right to neglect their family because they are doing “the Lord’s work.” On the other hand, you have other clergy who believe that the minister was equally called to serve his church and his family.

The latter view is the correct one for a number of reasons. First of all, everyone who gets married, pastors included, must be able and willing to assume the responsibilities of that relationship. For the husband, this means he is to follow St. Paul’s advice when he says in Ephesians 5:28: “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.” How many times have we not told those about to be married that this means the husband is to view his wife as an extension of himself. He is to care for his wife’s needs as if they were his own. Her desire for love, affection and support are to be his personal responsibility. God nowhere tells pastors that they can neglect this very basic element in marriage. A pastor should remain unmarried like St. Paul if he is not willing to assume the physical and emotional involvements which come with marriage.

Paul also says that a pastor must “manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)” (1 Tm 3:4, 5). Paul’s statement represents one of the basic requirements for the ministry. How can a pastor neglect his family using the excuse it is the “Lord’s work” when the Lord tells him that he must manage his family properly if he wants to be a minister? The pastor’s family is truly the “Lord’s work.” Roger C. Palms writes in the Fall 1981 issue of *Leadership*:

Clergy tend to start staying home more as they begin to realize their family is a special God-given congregation. A pastor said, “I have to continually remind myself I am not indispensable, not personally responsible for the salvation of the world. I am responsible for touching those lives around me. I find that being a minister is not radically different from being a parent. The serving, care-taking, listening/counseling, being-there kind of ministry at home is as important as pastoral counseling.” Each of us can minister effectively and still have time for our family. Someday we will stand before God and hear those words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” We will hear those words not only because we have faithfully served the church; we will hear those words because we have also served the ones God has placed closest to us—our family. They are our ministry too.

Also, a pastor has no right to neglect his family because he is to be the “head of the house.” He is to be in charge. The minister who is never around because he is busy with his work is shirking his responsibility and forcing his wife into “headship” in such areas of their relationship as child-rearing. He is making her take over the task of running that household when he should be in charge. The pastor as husband and father must practice what he preaches. Doctrine and practice must go hand in hand. If he tells other husbands and fathers to be the head of the household, then he must be the head of his also.

Marriage requires time. It can’t survive or live up to its potential on leftover bits of time here and there. A clergyman’s marriage is not a guaranteed thing just because he is in the ministry. If he neglects to abide by the guidelines established by the Lord, he will reap what he has sown, just like anyone else.

Where is the pastor going to find the time? Previously attention was drawn to the heavy workload he has. All of us should seriously be involved in time management. Our family deserves the “first fruits” of our

schedule. We should arrange our week so that we plan time for our family. Another important principle in order to free ourselves for our family is to: delegate, delegate, delegate!

Ed Dayton says there are three kinds of things you should delegate to others: “those things you can’t do because you really don’t know how, ... those things others can do better, ... and those things you shouldn’t be doing because they aren’t part of your primary goals.” This is excellent advice. However, in the case of the pastor a fourth category might be added: delegate some of the things which you do know how to do and which no one really can do better, but which you do not have enough time for.

We might be very good managers of our time. Yet, there are some positions where there is simply too much for one man to do. Then efforts should be made to help the congregation understand that additional help is needed. This might take the form of “preaching help” once a month, a vicar or a second pastor. If this help cannot be obtained for various reasons, it might be advisable to take a call to a congregation where you can better balance your time between your family and the church. Certainly, we must take all of this to the Lord in prayer, seeking his guidance.

Finally, husband and wife have to examine the role a wife’s job has in making life more hectic. The combination of both spouses’ working can mean no time at all for each other and the children. You really have to weigh the disadvantages of such a busy life.

The Second Problem: Financial Stress

The Lord declares that it is proper and right for pastors to be paid a living wage. “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). “For the Scripture says, ‘do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘the worker deserves his wages’” (1 Tm 5:18).

Financial worries cause many problems in marriage, also in clergy marriages. Just what is the financial status of clergy in general? Lucille Lavender quotes from a pamphlet issued by the U. S. Department of Labor. She writes:

Out of 432 occupations listed, clergymen ranked number 316 (from the top-paying job). Clergy rank with the lowest-paying occupations and with unskilled labor—library attendants, teacher aides, waiters and waitresses, cooks, farm laborers and file clerks. Though they rank next to the bottom economically, educationally they rank with the ten top earning occupations. Most of the 107 below their earning rank did not graduate from high school, while many did not go beyond the eighth grade. What is more disturbing is that the clergy showed the lowest percentage of salary increase among their professional peers in a ten-year period. The generally low salary for the clergy is accompanied by a shocking lack of fringe benefits, taken for granted by most American workers.

An inadequate salary can lead to: 1) interference with the way the pastor ministers; 2) negative attitude toward the congregation; 3) financial problems because of the combination of low pay and high inflation; 4) more ministers’ wives working before they should; 5) poor insurance coverage; no savings and inadequate preparations for retirement; 6) an imbalance in sharing the cost of financially supporting the “work of the Lord.”

As has been stated, an inadequate salary does affect the pastor’s family. It affects especially the wife who must make do or do without. As a result, many pastors’ wives have to go to work. Lucille Lavender writes: “Wives must go to work. 42 percent of married women in the general population work, while 45 percent of clergymen’s wives work. Two-thirds of these work out of economic necessity, while still expected to take an active part in church functions.”

Many pastors' wives feel the stress of an inadequate salary because they often have to deal with the physical needs of the family. She might be more concerned about appearance than her husband. The husband might contribute to her stress by not dealing with their financial needs. Instead, he might just dump the whole accounting system into her lap, thus freeing himself so that he can devote more time to the ministry. Also, there are times when a wife is more keenly aware that they are surrounded by a certain affluence in which they cannot share. The difference in life-styles between members and their way of living is quite obvious. This difference can cause some strain, especially when she feels her children cannot enjoy many of the items that other children take for granted.

What Do The Wives Say?

- a. "I needed to work outside of the home. This caused stress because a wife cannot hold a full-time job, do justice to her housework, and most importantly, be a true helpmate to her husband."
- b. "It is easy to get depressed over money. Then, we always tend to think that it is the other one who's spending too much."
- c. "Our salary has not been adequate since he has been in the ministry. Asking for raises can be very difficult due to repercussions from members."
- d. "When the pastor must worry that much about his finances, his most important work is not being carried out effectively because there is a resentment toward the congregation for not seeing or filling his needs, thereby causing a disturbance within the household because we have to operate on such a tight budget."
- e. "We live comfortably. I'm not complaining. But I feel guilty about how our livelihood depends on donated money. Also, I hate to keep the house too warm, use the clothes dryer, or damage something in the house. I hate the fact that everyone knows just how much we make."

What Could Be Done To Help?

Certainly it is necessary to examine one's life-style. Some families might be living way beyond their means. They might have to reexamine their priorities and tastes. We are all to carefully consider the words of St. Paul who tells us: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Tm 6:6-8).

If there are legitimate financial needs, these concerns should be brought before the people who have the responsibility of caring for your physical support. It might be advantageous to have a "salary review committee." This group could annually review the called worker's salary. Hopefully, the people will respond adequately.

In some cases a pastor can take some pressure off his wife by assuming a more active role in money management. Husbands and wives should be working together to handle the financial affairs of the household.

It might be very necessary for the pastor's wife to work outside of the home. This must be carefully thought out. If the wife does work, it might be necessary for the husband to assume a few more responsibilities in the home while at the same time not allowing his wife's job to interfere with his ministry to both the congregation and the other members of the family. Such interference will surely cancel out any monetary gain husband and wife might receive from her job.

We simply must take our physical needs and concerns to our Lord. He is very interested in providing our "daily bread." Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:32, 33: "For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

The Third Problem: No One Ministers To The Clergy Family

Lucille Lavender makes the following observation:

Ironically, one of your pastor's wife's greatest needs is for a pastor. She probably is not aware of it. Her husband may be the most wonderful pastor in the world. But he cannot be a pastor to his wife. She may think it possible but he will always be, first, a husband. If he pleases her when she comes to him for counsel, she may regard him as a pastor. But if he feels compelled to give sound but hard-to-swallow advice, he suddenly will become a husband. In reality, the wife of a pastor has no pastor. To whom should she go to confide feelings, hurts, and distresses? From whom can she get spiritual help? No one, unless she feels free to go to another pastor in the community. Because these wives know too well the demands upon a pastor's time, few, if any, will seek help there. Then too, they feel ashamed and self-conscious about needing help.

It is not easy for a husband to be the pastor of his family especially when it comes to dealing with certain struggles which his wife might be facing. He can become so preoccupied with the problems of his parishioners that he finds it hard to deal with his own. The pastor can become emotionally spent because of the troubles of his members. Therefore, he is just too tired then to turn an attentive ear to his wife's concerns. He might not expressly say that he doesn't want to be bothered by her problems, but that might be the nonverbal message he is getting across by his attitude. There are some pastors who are basically saying that their family comes second to the needs of the church. The wife can feel that her concerns are not important enough to her husband and she decides to keep quiet.

A pastor might be so sensitive to his "image" or "role" that he might not be able to deal realistically with "family problems." He might feel so pressured by the type of image he is to maintain that he would be the last person who would recognize certain stresses. The pastor might be afraid to deal with any disturbances in the home because that would be an admission of personal responsibility or guilt which would be a reflection on his ministry. As a result, he might turn away from anything which would seem to say that he is having problems controlling his own household.

The wife on the other hand might think that she has to shield her husband from household or marital troubles. She might feel that he has enough to handle with his church duties and it is her job not to add to his case load. For this reason, she might keep quiet about her hurts and pains. Then nothing is resolved. This condition can and will cause problems as Lucille Lavender points out:

What happens to the wife? She knows he listens to the problems of many women, and she feels threatened because he has no time or energy to listen to her. Since he is overburdened, she conditions herself not to add additional burdens or to engage in light talk. He is all talked out and listened out. As a result, husband and wife push down layer upon layer of feelings, which remain there and petrify. All communication—talking, loving, laughing, inconsequential—grind to a hopeless halt. They both know they are losing touch with the only person in the world they love and care about. They are lonely, hurt, empty. By habitually deferring to the needs or nonneeds of others, and neglecting those who love them the most, pastors pay a terrible price.

And, one could add, pastors' wives have to pay a terrible price also.

What Do The Wives Say?

- a. "There are times when you want an objective opinion or some advice from someone outside the family. To whom does the minister and his family go as their minister?"
- b. "At times our families need help. Our faith, too, is weak at times. We face deaths, surgeries and crises. Not often, but more than once, I could have used a pastor other than my husband to strengthen my faith and lead me."

- c. “I have guilt feelings when I want him to stop for a while. He cites more pressing problems that must be taken care of in the church.”

What Could Be Done To Help?

Both husband and wife have to be aware of the stresses which can develop in the parsonage. They have to work on communicating their feelings to one another. Both a certain quality and quantity of time has to be spent in their relationship. A good marriage doesn't just happen. Two people have to work at it with the help of the Lord. This is something we are constantly preaching. We have to take the words of St. Paul in Ephesians 5 to heart. A pastor has to recognize that he must provide a time when he will be emotionally able to listen to his wife's feelings and needs. Being “emotionally drained” is no excuse for neglecting your wife. The pastor simply has to find the time to minister to his family as well as the members of his church.

More should probably be done in each circuit to make certain a pastor's wife has someone she can turn to when an outside opinion is needed. Perhaps the circuit pastor could personally inform the pastors' wives in his circuit that he would be available for consultation. Perhaps conferences could set up more marriage enrichment seminars specifically directed at clergy marriages. The Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service might be involved in such a project.

More should be done to encourage more contact with other pastors' wives. Apparently there is a newly formed group consisting of clergy wives in the Milwaukee area. There might be a need for such an organization in other areas. It could serve as a good support group, aiding other wives as they deal with their struggles in the parsonage. It might be advisable to appoint someone to explore this whole field and make suggestions which could be followed in each district.

Any support which we can give to our pastors' families will pay tremendous dividends. Certainly such concern is in keeping with the Lord's command to “love one another.” Let us not forget that our family needs as much care and concern as any other family in the church, maybe even more because of the additional pressures on it. David and Vera Mace write:

An issue that has frequently come to our attention is that clergy couples, in their relationship with their denominational colleagues and superiors, face the real or imagined risk of losing caste if they admit having marital difficulties. Again and again, we have found, they avoid making any open acknowledgment of their marital troubles until the conflicts have so far advanced that they may be beyond resolution. If some way could be found of providing regular contacts with a kind of ‘pastor pastorum,’ someone who could be pledged to confidence and yet could guide them to an appropriate source of help, early detection of marital trouble could be greatly facilitated.

The Fourth Problem: Lack of Family Privacy—A Goldfish Bowl Existence

A Methodist minister's wife was recently asked: “Is the pastor's family so different from other families?” Her answer was: “Yes, it is. A couple going into the ministry get that feeling from the first time they step inside the door of the parsonage. In a sense, the parsonage is symbolic of the problem: you look around and see a house someone else owns, someone else has decorated, and someone else maintains. It makes you feel you belong to someone else. You begin to suspect the pieces of your life are already cut out for you, that your life is pre fabricated.”

It seems that today, as in the past, there is one standard for the minister's family and another for the laity. Many a minister's wife feels that people expect her to be good at everything she does. She should be, they think, an excellent housewife who can keep a spotless home. She should be able to control her children during the worship service or at church meals better than anyone else in the church. She should be able to make do on her husband's salary without any complaints. She should be able to manage all her duties both inside and outside of the home without difficulty. Many times we find that her daily activities are being watched and

judged by a different set of standards than apply to others. She is expected to be superhuman and provide an ideal model for the congregation and community. These idealistic expectations can easily generate feelings in her of guilt and rebellion which are depressing and at times paralyzing.

The parsonage can be viewed as public property. Therefore, some parishioners might feel they can come into the pastor's home whenever they want. In some situations, it is necessary to use the parsonage for various meetings, worship services, meals, counseling sessions and a host of other activities. Such a situation can cut deeply into a family's privacy.

The pastor's study in his home can put extra pressures on the family and make the members feel uncomfortable. The wife feels that she always has to keep the house clean because members can drop in at any time. Or, when a member is with the pastor in his study, she has to keep the children quiet or they might disturb the counseling session. There are extra pressures on the wife because she can't always do what she wants with her home because it "doesn't belong to them." She might feel guilty if the children wreck something in the parsonage since it isn't their home.

Many a pastor's wife just does not feel at ease around her home because of what others might say or think. This lack of personal privacy can cause certain problems. It is so very important to "feel at home." That is not always so easy in a parsonage. Being in the "public eye" certainly has its drawbacks.

What Do The Wives Say?

- a. "It doesn't seem to matter what the family does, you feel that the congregation is watching every move you make. You may not do anything differently than some of the members of the congregation, but because you live in the parsonage, it sets you apart."
- b. "I try to keep some privacy. I'm not sure how much some people know. But I'm getting over this a little. If I want to sunbathe, I'll do it. I still feel I have to apologize for a messy house when people walk in unexpectedly, but I'd probably feel this way no matter what my husband's work is."

What Could Be Done To Help?

Both husband and wife have to work very hard at maintaining a certain amount of privacy in their home and in their life. Some couples demand more than others. A lot simply depends upon the personality make-up of the husband and wife. It is especially the responsibility of the husband to make certain that his family receives the privacy that it needs to feel comfortable. If there are situations where people are intruding too much into the affairs of his home, he will have to work at correcting that problem. Some congregations have to be educated in the "care and feeding" of the pastor's family. It might also mean moving your office from the house to the church. Many congregations would understand the problem and comply if the request came from the pastor.

Some families put too many pressures upon themselves by unduly worrying about "what other people might think." The pastor's family might only feel that others are watching them all of the time when that is not the case at all. There are some situations where husband and wife restrict themselves too much as they try not to "offend" their members. Couples have to be able to maintain a certain standard and not worry about what others think or this can cause undue strain.

The trend these days seems to be toward pastors buying their own homes. This means that they normally are not living right next to the church any more. As a result, certain pressures are removed. There are advantages and disadvantages to this situation. If a pastor is going to buy his own home, he has to weigh carefully all the circumstances and determine whether or not such a decision is truly for the best.

Problem Five: The Children Are Expected To Model The Church's Expectations

If the pastor and his wife feel various pressures because of the ministry, it only stands to reason that some of these same strains will be felt by their children. One of the problems frequently encountered is unfair

expectations. There seems to be a double standard being employed. At times, “PK’s” are expected to be better than other kids, smarter than other kids, and know more answers than other kids. Such pressures can come from many sources. Even the child’s peers can expect more from him. Or, they can be subject to criticism because they are accused of receiving special favors and privileges because they are the pastor’s children.

The congregation can get into the act by expecting too much from them. Pat Valeriano writes in the Fall 1981 issue of *Leadership*: “Many people expect instant maturity from our children and won’t give them the chance to go through the process of growing up. When the child realizes he or she cannot maintain the expected lifestyle of perfection, scars are left.”

You can have the unpleasant situation of comparing the present family with the members of the previous pastor’s family. The son of a clergyman once commented: “I wish people wouldn’t expect us to be perfect. Mrs. Smith said I wasn’t like the previous pastor’s son at all; he was so clean and neat all the time.”

Then you can have the pressure of expectations placed upon the children by father and mother. The writer seems to have a different set of standards and values for his children when members are around than when others are in his home. He feels more pressure to have them behave before parishioners. This seems to fall into place with what Pat Valeriano writes: “Unrealistic expectations demanded of preachers’ kids cause ministers’ wives to be overcautious about their children’s behavior, not to mention the pressures that fall on the children themselves.” Mrs. Mary LaGrand Bouma writes in *Divorce In The Parsonage*:

Unfortunately even the ministers and wives often put undue pressure on their children. They themselves are under pressure to perform, to be superspiritual, to give leadership, etc., and they pass these same pressures onto their children by extension. They consider their families to be part of themselves, so, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, they demand that their children measure up to the same standard that they are trying to meet. Sometimes these standards are fair and good, perhaps as often they are not.

This can lead the child to conclude that his parents are more concerned about his image than they are about him personally. All these strains come at a time when the child lacks maturity and ability to do something to lessen the load. Many a pastor’s child has rejected the ministry as a calling and discipleship as a way of life because of the high expectations placed on him. He simply longs for a different life-style once he gets older.

What Do The Wives Say?

- a. “Our children resent other children referring to them as the ‘pastor’s daughter’ or ‘pastor’s son.’ Children say, ‘Your dad must be so holy.’ They think pastor’s children are supposed to be and act perfect and holy. A person hates to disappoint them ... but it isn’t like that. We are no different than other families. Where does this idea originate? Children resent being placed on a pedestal.”
- b. “The children in the parsonage are always held up as examples as to how other people should act which is fine. But they should not be ridiculed when a child does waver from the Christian path, as all sinners do. It makes life in school very difficult for them at times.”
- c. “Sometimes I think we do this more to ourselves in an attempt to please the congregation.”
- d. “Our children are in the elementary grades in the church’s day school. There are within our day school some negative feelings toward our children from their peers because they are the pastor’s kids. I feel the day school teachers at times are unduly critical because our children aren’t the way they think the pastor’s children should be. One of our children feels very alone. The other has a close friend from outside the congregation. Time will change this problem. In the meantime, we’ll just hang in there. We know that the Lord, the Master-planner, is using these years for his purpose.”

What Could Be Done To Help?

The people who are in the best position to work on these problems are Mother and Dad. They must be aware of the high expectations which come from the outside. They must develop an open channel with their children and find out if these pressures are adversely influencing them. Then they must work at trying to help their children adjust. This might mean talking with those people who are expecting too much from their children. You are the child's defender on earth.

Also, parents are to examine the pressures they might be placing on their offspring. Are they being realistic in their demands? Are they expecting too much? Are they transferring too many of their own frustrations and desires to their children? Are parents more interested in their image rather than in the personal feelings of their youngsters? These are very important questions to consider as you raise your children in the parsonage.

Parents have to work very hard at allowing their children to live as normal a life as possible. This means pastors must be doing what other parents are expected to do. We have to spend time with each child. We have to express and show our love for them. We have to give one of the most precious gifts one can give, that is, ourselves. We must let our children know that our love for them is lasting, without any strings attached. We are to say we care for them even when they do something wrong. We are to love them as Christ loves us.

Finally, we have to watch out that our preaching and public image matches what our children know about us from at home. They are quick to spot hypocrisy in a parent. When a father's public image is seriously out of line with his private family life, he is bound to fail with his children. The "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" personality will do a great deal of damage in the home. Our confession and life-style must match or else our children will find it very hard to accept what we are teaching.

Problem Six: No In-Depth Sharing With Other Church Couples—Lack of Personal Friends

We are beginning to understand more and more about the damage that loneliness can cause in the life of the elderly and divorced. Numerous articles have been written on that very subject. It is interesting to note that there are many pastors' wives who feel very alone. Many wives would have to confess that they have no, or very few, close friends in the area where they live. This is a very harmful situation. Mrs. Mary LaGrand Bouma writes:

A large proportion of ministers' wives, then, have no real friends. They have many acquaintances with whom they are friendly. Perhaps, they even spend a lot of time with some of these people. But there is no one with whom they can let their hair down. There is no baring of the soul—no feeling of being known, flaws and all, and still being accepted. This is an important psychic need that is being unmet. A basic psychological tenet is that everyone needs at least one person who knows him very well, including his weaknesses, and still loves him with no strings attached.

Why is this the case? One reason is frequent moves. About 20 percent of the American population moves each year. Traditionally, pastors have transferred more often than those in other professions. Mrs. Lucille Lavender writes:

The survey revealed that our national religious life reflects an unusually great degree of restlessness within the clergy itself. The average length of time a pastor spends in a given parish is three to five years. There are several hundred thousand pastors serving parishes in the United States. A conservative estimate is that 25 percent move annually, or well over a hundred pastors a day. Some religious leaders believe that one-third would be a more accurate figure—or nearly two hundred pastors moving every day of every year.

Certainly, some pastor's wives do not have many or any lasting friends because they are not around long enough to establish close relationships.

Another situation which adds to this problem is that it is often inadvisable to have close friends in the congregation. The advice is often given not to establish friendships with members. There are definite disadvantages to such relationships. There have been times when a friend violated the trust placed in her by the pastor's wife. You can imagine how damaging that was to everyone involved. Where do you find friends? A great deal depends upon your location. If you are living in a small town or in the country, it is very hard to get acquainted. Also, others do shy away from making an effort to become a friend with the pastor's wife. She is looked upon as neither clergy nor laity. Some wives have commented that people treat them differently once they learned that they are married to a minister. Pat Valeriano writes: "The general pain brought about because of friendship struggles often has its roots in false expectations parishioners place on the pastor's wife. Many people immediately put up a wall as soon as they discover we're the spouse of a 'holy' man. More than 20 percent of the wives agreed with the statement: 'I feel people shy away from me because I'm a pastor's wife.' "

It might be very difficult to develop a close relationship with another pastor's wife. The wives might live quite a distance from each other. Or, wives might be of a different age, background, temperament and personality which might make it hard to be close friends. Some wives feel out of place in the company of other pastors' wives because they didn't go through one of our Christian school systems.

A lot depends upon the husband when it comes to the social life of the wife. Sometimes a clergy husband is not willing actively to build social relationships. He is dealing with people each and every day. When he has some time off, he may just as soon not be around other people. This is sometimes understandable. But where does that leave the wife? Many wives feel that they would like to do more with others. Some husbands, however, are not interested in pursuing such social endeavors. It can lead to frustration and loneliness in the life of the pastor's wife.

The husband might be tempted to wonder why his wife doesn't consider him her "best friend." It is true that a good relationship will go a long way in easing loneliness. We mentioned that neglect of family is one of the greatest problems faced by the pastor's wife. This means that her husband is not always around enough or interested enough in being a close friend. Besides, it is probably a healthier situation when the husband is not the only real friend a wife has in her life. Women need "girl friends" simply because a woman can best understand another woman's feelings in certain areas of life. A member of the same sex can be a friend in a way that a spouse never can be, no matter how good the marriage.

What Do The Wives Say?

- a. "We are always afraid that others will be offended if we get too close to some in the congregation."
- b. "I don't really feel a lack of personal friends. I feel a lack of friends close-by. We have dear friends but they are so scattered. I feel that in this area the clergy and families could work to be more social with one another. The people whom we know to be supportive are too far away when we need support. We are close to some of the members but always there is a kind of barrier. In part the problem is our own fault. We may be depriving ourselves of the blessing of more friends by being too busy to be more sociable. I don't regard this as a serious problem, but sometimes we'd like to be with another couple, and no one's handy."
- c. "I think it's important to also get together with other pastors and their wives especially some who are closer friends. At those times you find there are others with the same problems and it's good to talk about them and that can make a person feel better. I don't think that problems should be discussed with members of the congregation because I think that could make them discouraged and maybe make them feel that the pastor and his wife don't like the congregation."
- d. "At times I feel a lack because most of my personal friends live many miles away from me and we perhaps hear from each other at Christmas time. Getting together with other pastors' wives also helps one to see problems and experiences of others and to know that your own are not unique."

- e. “Sometimes you feel as though people tend to shy away because we are the pastor’s family. They are friendly and nice, but you feel you are not accepted as others are—that people keep a certain distance.”

What Could Be Done To Help?

There is a saying that you “have to be a friend in order to make friends.” I think that pastors and wives have to work harder at times at it because of their position in the church and community. You might have to become more socially active as a couple and not just rely upon church events to fill your calendar.

A husband can help his wife by encouraging her to seek friends outside of the church. The wife might have to join other organizations in order to increase her circle of friends. The husband should be willing to assume some household duties in order to allow his wife some free time to be with others.

Also, more of an effort should be made to get together with other clergy families. Or, pastors’ wives should organize and have monthly meetings. All of us can be used as a support group for one another. We might be missing a great deal of entertainment by not getting together with other clergy families.

Part Five: What is being done in Our Synodical Schools in Premarital Counseling?

There is a great deal of emphasis these days on premarital counseling. The object of such counseling is to help prepare a young couple for marriage. We want to have the bride and groom understand their roles and the role of God in their relationship.

There is a definite need to counsel those entering the public ministry. The role of a pastor’s wife is very important. Any future pastor should take great care in selecting a wife. In *Shepherd Under Christ* we are told: “We consider it the duty of their husbands or prospective husbands to acquaint them [wives] with the uniqueness of a pastor’s position.” The book also goes on to say that our Synod “has been averse to instituting special courses for the wives or prospective wives of seminary students....” The writer believes that some very definite counseling should be done, not only for the student’s sake, but also for the wife’s sake. She should be told about the unique pressures and unique opportunities she will experience as a pastor’s wife.

Just what is being done to counsel our future pastors and their wives? Letters were written to the presidents of Northwestern College and our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. President Toppe of Northwestern mentioned that he talks to the sophomores about marriage and the qualities to look for in a pastor’s wife. If a student wishes to marry during his college years, President Toppe will talk to him once more about the struggles of marriage at that stage of his training. He also will invite married seniors from the Seminary to come and discuss what it means to be married while the student is attending school.

President Schuetze of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary pointed out that consultation is required with a student before he marries while at the Seminary. These consultations are only with the student and “pertain to questions that concern marriage while a student is at the Seminary.” He feels that premarital counseling with both the man and the woman is the responsibility of the young man’s pastor, the bride’s pastor or the pastor who performs the marriage. At certain times in the Pastoral Theology course the role of the pastor’s wife is discussed. Only the young men are present for the discussion.

There is a Sem Gems organization consisting of students’ wives and fiancées which meets monthly and has programs dealing with the role of the pastor’s wife. President Schuetze mentioned that the seniors and their wives or fiancées meet on two evenings with the representatives of the Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service for a workshop on “life in the parsonage.” The faculty from the Pastoral Theology department also participates in these workshops. Attendance is not mandatory.

There is a definite interest in counseling our future pastors. There is also the chance that certain students are not involved in premarital counseling as couples. The pressures of school, an outside job and the location of the future spouse might mean that some couples are not receiving such counseling. Perhaps more of an effort should be made to make certain each couple is counseled before marriage.

The writer hesitates to agree thoroughly that our schools should not counsel couples. Marriage has a definite influence on the work of the pastor in his church. A poor marriage can do a great deal of damage and cause a loss of talent to the church. Therefore, it might be very important to have a more uniform system of counseling couples. If clergy divorces increase in our Synod, we will very likely be forced to become more active in the area of premarital counseling. Now might be a good time to become more involved in the counseling process.

Part Six: a Few More Suggestions for our Training Schools

Marriage Enrichment: Much more could be done in the area of family enrichment. It could be very valuable to conduct seminars for clergy couples after they spend a number of years in the ministry. It takes some time to understand and encounter the pressures which come from living in the parsonage.

Wives Helping Themselves: More encouragement should be given to pastors' wives to establish organizations and gatherings which could deal with topics of interest and importance to the wives. There are many pastors' wives who have the skill and talent to set up such organizations. Some consideration should be given to starting a newsletter written by pastors' wives for pastors' wives. A pastor could serve as the spiritual adviser for this publication.

The Family Altar: All human marriages need the help of the Lord to succeed. The pastor and his wife must turn to their loving God for guidance. We can all learn from the Lord's saving relationship to us what it means truly to be loving, committed, caring and concerned. Therefore, one must encourage attendance at the family altar where both husband and wife turn to the Lord seeking his love, pardon and the desire to live up to the vows they spoke on their wedding day. Husband and wife should prayerfully consider together the passages from the Bible which talk about a Christian marriage. They should also seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit to help them want to follow God's Word on this subject motivated by God's love for them as expressed through Christ's suffering and death.

In conclusion, Jesus told us a long time ago that the ministry could be hazardous to our health. He warned us that we might have to suffer because we trust in him. Many of these hazards such as persecutions, rejection and ridicule cannot always be avoided. There are other problems which can be worked on and resolved. Many of the family problems encountered by the pastor's family fall into this last group.

The difficulties and stresses faced by the pastor's wife and children are very real. They can bring families down and thus waste talent and human resources. The pressures of living in the parsonage can lead to hatred, depression, the weakening of the faith and divorce. Pastor's families are not immune from the traps and pitfalls of life. We cannot take our families for granted. We cannot ignore the basic requirements for a healthy marriage. We, too, must live by the principles which God has established in his Word. We also will "reap what we have sown."

God nowhere gives pastors the right to neglect their families. He has placed the pastor over his household and told him to be the head of the house just like every other husband. The Lord wants the minister to preach about love from the pulpit and to show love to his family. Our public witness is diminished when we fail to take our words to heart and do not put what we have preached into practice in our home.

This paper has sought to identify certain of the more serious problems facing clergy wives today. We must, however, recognize that identification is only one step on the road to improvement. Much effort has to be put into solving and correcting those situations which have the potential for family harm. This effort must come from the people who are putting on the pressure and from those in the best position to correct the set of circumstances which are bringing on the pain. The husband is in the best position to make improvements. He, as the head of the family, must provide the climate in his house for the discussion of various issues and must work diligently with his family and congregation to solve any problems which might arise. If husband and wife cannot successfully deal with their troubles, they should seek the counsel and aid of others.

We should not conclude that just being together under one roof is good enough. We must strive with the help of the Lord to make our marriage the best we can so that the Lord can channel more blessings into our lives

and the lives of those around us. It takes two deeply committed people who trust in each other and their God to have a good relationship. The family is one of the most important earthly institutions which God has devised. May God grant us the desire and ability to carry out one of the most important assignments which he has given to us and that is to care for our family! May the Lord continue to bless our marriages!

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