

OUR JOB AS PASTORS' WIVES

By Evelyn B. Bell in "Baptist Leader"

When someone asks you why you married a preacher, you probably have only one answer: "Because I loved him." Certainly a valid reason, and one that, according to St. Paul, never fails. But you have all learned long before this that this love is daily tested in many practical, down-to-earth ways.

Above the stairway of a school where I taught during the first year of my married life were these words: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20:28KJV). I think that is a very good motto for a minister's wife to keep in mind. There are many advantages and honors that you share with your pastor-husband. These also bring responsibilities. The wife who is a true partner must bring to the work the same feeling of consecration and special dedication that is required of a minister. She has to strive to keep the difficult balance of being a capable, faithful home maker and an active sharer in the church program.

One of the most inspiring stories I have read lately was that of a devoted wife's help to her nearly blind husband in his ministry to their church. She could not go everywhere with him because of many household chores under quite primitive living conditions, and the care of their sixteen-months-old baby. But many hours she spent reading aloud to him from Scripture and from reference books, writing down what he then said in his process of thinking aloud. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning she read pages of notes to him until he had them firmly in his mind. The result was good sermons. And his wife was also pleased with the education she was getting.

Through the years I have observed that many wives lag behind their husbands intellectually. In some cases they had lacked equal educational opportunities. This, of course, does not make for a happy relationship. Today there are many night-school classes, home-study courses, and helpful books on all phases of Christian work. Get into the habit of reading some of the books your husband reads, even though you feel certain that you cannot find time for it, because "where there's a will, there's a way." You might start a study club among the church women. Mission study classes afford a broadening outlook to all groups, including young people and children. In whatever way you can manage it, try to keep growing intellectually. Many times you may find it necessary for you to attempt tasks for which you have had no special training. But by study, well-planned effort, and prayer for God's help you will be surprised at what you can do.

At times you will find yourself over-burdened with cares. Perhaps you must do without things you really need. At no time is it easy to love the unlovely, to have patience with those who oppose you, nor to show charity toward those who seek honors for themselves in the church life. I recall a woman in my husband's first pastorate who boasted upon our arrival on the field that she held seventeen different offices in the church. So far as we were able to determine she was not doing a significant work with any one of them, and yet she was reluctant to relinquish any post.

On occasions the most menial tasks seem to require attention, but they should be done in a willing spirit. During my childhood days in a Methodist parsonage there were times when a brother or sister and I went to the church on Saturday to clean the building for Sunday services: In my husband's early pastorates during the depression years in the United States we sometimes found it necessary to do the same thing.

Baptist groups have sometimes tended to draw into themselves somewhat, and have not entered as fully as they might into the community life around them. There are many wholesome activities in which we and our families might share with great benefit. We need this broadening outlook ourselves and the wider community needs our Christian influence.

Our participation in those wider community activities aids greatly in helping our children to lead a normal and full life. They need not be restricted by the criticisms of what a minister's child may or may not do, for life is abundant and more satisfying. It takes great loving wisdom on the part of parents to keep their young people from growing bitter and resentful and critical of all that pertains to the church, since life in a parsonage is somewhat like a fish-bowl existence. Moreover, children are quite sensitive to what goes on in the home, and parents sometimes become so engrossed in their own problems that they don't sense the ones that children face until some emergency arises. We need to help them feel that their wishes and opinions are respected in the family circle. Fortunate are those children who can grow up in a family where there is a spirit of service instead of self-seeking.

In our busy days the most needed and perhaps the most difficult thing to arrange is time for personal private devotion. Yet this is the keystone upon which all else depends. Blessed is that woman who makes a place for it early in life.

I know of no other profession where a man's wife can share so completely in her husband's work. This field affords a life of rich experience and satisfying companionship. I would not exchange these nearly forty advantageous years for any other vocation I know.

A NURSE'S PRAYER

Thelma Rose

O God, Who dwelleth everywhere
With strength to save and love to share,
To Thee I lift my heart in prayer;
Be Thou still near.

The human need! yet, Thou dost see
The task too great that faces me;
My strength and guidance come from Thee;
For Thou art strong.

The gift of patience, O, impart;
May I reveal to every heart
How true, how real, how just Thou art,
O God of Grace.

Help me to serve as "unto Thee"
Each duty void of drudgery,
As did the Man of Galilee,
To those in need.

Teach me to ease the pain and fear
And cause sad hearts to feel Thee near;
May no one doubt Thy tender care,
O God of love.

And, O my Father, grant to me
The grace to lead some soul to Thee
Through Christ Who died on Calvary,
Thine Own Dear Son.

To do my best with every case
That when I see Thee face to face
I'll hear "well done," by Thy grace,
This is my prayer.