

3 Keys to Success for Women in Leadership

God never intended pastors' wives to cower in their husbands' shadows.

It's easy for pastors' wives to feel lost in the shuffle of ministry, overlooked for their unique spiritual gifts or pulled in a million directions by members of their congregations. Though the challenges in ministry are not quickly remedied, God wants ministers' wives to know He has a unique purpose for their lives. They were created in God's image—not in their husbands' shadows.

God has invested talents and abilities in all of His children, and He wants us to grow and become all we can be. All believers, regardless of our roles, must know our worth in God's eyes—and that starts by realizing who we are in Christ. When we realize we are filled with His potential, we will be ready to step out and accept responsibility for what God has entrusted to us. All of us must yield and respond to His ability to accomplish His plan in our lives.

For some Christian women, marrying a successful preacher is their secret ambition. Yet they fail to count the cost.

Being a pastor's wife involves learning to share the tension of the ministry. A pastor may be praised one minute and severely criticized the next. A minister's life is filled with ceaseless telephone messages, emergencies at all hours and requests for money or advice. There are countless joys, but there are also thorns.

Ministry couples must work hard to keep their relationships strong. As all couples, they must learn the art of give-and-take and become astute in conflict resolution. A discerning wife who understands the power of prayer and has good

communication skills is invaluable to her partner.

But even more important than building strong relationships with their husbands, pastors' wives must cultivate their relationships with God. Ministry spouses, as well as all believers, should take special care to make these characteristics second nature:

1. Conduct and behavior patterned after the Word. Many Christians disobey and reject God by being set in their ways and refusing to give up their sins. The apostle Paul answered the call of God on the Damascus road by saying, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" Our first step of faith must be our surrendering to His will.

2. Faithfulness in Christian service. We are not saved and set free just for our personal fulfillment, but to further the gospel. To please God, we must work diligently for His kingdom. We must fulfill our callings, even if no one recognizes our contributions.

3. Studying God's Word and knowing His will. Many Christians lack knowledge and wisdom about the things of God and therefore don't make the spiritual progress they should make. John 5:39 instructs us to "search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

In our walk with the Lord, we will encounter many difficulties, disappointments and setbacks. But those who endure will see deliverance. A student who studies hard and completes the assignments will receive a diploma. Let us always remember that serving God pays off both in this life and in the world to come.

Equipped with these traits, ministers' wives will be prepared to exercise their God-given authority within their congregations. Women of authority have hearts that embrace humility and obedience. They don't see submission as an

inhibiting straitjacket; they exercise their authority by carrying out the King's command.

Jesus Christ, who submitted to His Father in everything, manifested all of the greatness of the Godhead. Similarly, Queen Esther's authority came from her relationship to the king. Whenever we act in a way that demonstrates who our King is, we put on our uniform of authority. Then people will realize that the source of our authority is not us, but Jesus Christ.

Juliet White *is a sought-after speaker who assists in ministry with her husband, Bishop Frank O. White, at Church of God in Christ Little Zion in Freeport, New York.*