

6 Ways You May Be Hurting Your Pastor's Wife

"Hey, I'm not on the church payroll. Go complain to someone else!"

The moment the words left his mouth, he knew he blew it. His wife was the church's children's minister. Too often he received complaints about the ministry as if it were his responsibility. On that one occasion, he lost his temper after one complaint too many.

We often lose sight of those in churches whose spouses serve on staff. These are the spouses of executive pastors, youth pastors, children's pastors, lead pastors and others. We have heard from these spouses through thousands of comments at .

We want you to see the six issues we have heard most frequently. We want you to be aware of them so you can offer ministry, encouragement and friendship to spouses of those who serve in the church. Sometimes those are among the loneliest people in the church.

Here, then, are six of the most common ways ministry spouses get hurt:

1. Complaints about their spouses. A student ministry spouse heard complaints for months about her husband. The great tragedy was when the head of the personnel committee told her that her husband was about to be fired, the husband had not heard that news.
2. High expectations about ministry involvement. A pastor's wife shared with us about an elder calling her house looking for her husband. Upon informing him her husband was not in, the elder asked her questions about the upcoming elders' meeting. When the wife was not able to answer, the elder complained about her lack of knowledge

about what was going on in the church.

3. Complaints about the children. One of the ways to inflict the greatest pain on someone is to attack his or her children. It is beyond belief how many church members expect a model of behavior for the minister's family well beyond expectations of their own families. Cut a child and the parent bleeds.
4. Isolation. Some church members don't know how to interact with ministry spouses, so they ignore them altogether. Vocational ministry can be lonely. Being the spouse of a vocational minister can be lonely as well.
5. Gossip and murmuring. Some churches have a modest level of gossip and murmuring. Other churches are pretty vocal with gossip and murmuring. At some point, a spouse of a minister will hear something about his or her spouse. That hurts. That hurts a lot.
6. Going to the spouse with problems about the minister. A worship minister shared with us this tragic story. He was caught up in some worship wars, an all-too-common reality. The worship leader, however, was pretty thick-skinned, and moved forward despite the criticisms. When the critics saw they were not making progress with the worship leader, they began to attack his wife with their issues. She went into deep depression, and the worship leader ultimately left the church for his wife and family.

It is indeed tough to be in vocational ministry. But it's also tough to be the spouse of these ministers. Pray for them. Encourage them. Befriend them.

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