

Behind Every Good Man...

Meet the 'better halves' of 10 well-known ministers

There was a time when the role of a pastor's wife was virtually set in stone: She was expected to serve as pianist, choir director or children's director—or all of the above. She attended every service and sat near the front, carefully groomed to avoid scrutiny. She was required to be part of most midweek meetings and host after-church socials. Remember the day?

Today's booming churches illustrate that times have changed for such women in ministry, whether their husbands are pastors, presidents or founders. The 10 women featured here serve in areas where they are gifted. Though most of them aren't in the pulpit regularly, they have a profound impact on their church's culture. Some were called to be a pastor's wife as a child; others willingly took on the role after marriage. *Charisma* celebrates the way in which they use their God-given talents while honoring their husbands and making a difference for the kingdom.

DEBBIE MORRIS

 Married to: **Robert Morris**

Senior Pastor
Gateway Church
Southlake, Texas

Debbie Hughes was in Robert Morris' fifth-grade class, and the two attended the same Baptist church in east Texas. But they never connected until high school, when Robert rededicated his life. "They told him he needed to date a straight girl, and I was it," says Debbie, 50. On their first date, Debbie was

smitten. The couple got married on May 3, 1980.

Since Robert launched Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas, in 2000, the church has grown to nearly 18,000 attendees. At first, the visibility made Debbie feel like she couldn't be herself when she went to places like the grocery store. "I felt like I had to dress up a little more because I never knew who might see me. Then I just decided, *Me is me, and I don't have to put on pretenses to go to the grocery store.*"

These days, the Morrisises are mindful of their family time. Instead of eating in a restaurant after Sunday services, for example, they pick up food and take it home for lunch, which gives their children more quality time with their dad. When Robert is home, Debbie tries to "really allow Robert to be off and have fun with him."

Debbie serves as pastor of Pink (Gateway women), and women's ministry is one of her passions.

"In some ways I'm challenging the status quo," she says. "For example, I believe women can be godly and be in the workforce and do a good job of raising their kids. I want to do something that's a little different from what I grew up with."

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *swimming, bicycling, taking a walk, doing puzzles, watching football and basketball on TV*

Vacation spot: *Hawaii*

Food: *Mexican*

Music: *Gateway's worship band, Kari Jobe*

MICHELE JACKSON

✖ Married to: **Harry Jackson**

Senior Pastor
Hope Christian Church
Washington, D.C.

Michele Alexander never realized when she was in elementary school that classmate Harry Jackson would one day be her husband. After grade school, Michele didn't see Harry again until 12 years later—in Cleveland, where both of them were working. They dated briefly and became Christians shortly before they got married on Dec. 25, 1976.

Early in their marriage they moved to Corning, N.Y. Harry had a business background, and Michele was involved in education and social work. One day Michele received a call from Harry. "I really feel like I'm supposed to start a church," he told her. Miraculously, the Lord provided a facility in the tiny adjoining town of Painted Post.

Within a few years, they had established television and radio programs and ran a Christian school and Bible college. It was one of the first interracial churches in the area.

Trying to find her place as a pastor's wife was one of Michele's greatest challenges. She soon discovered that she was able to use her education by serving the children of the church, developing programs for the youth and teaching women's Bible studies.

God led them to the Washington, D.C., area in 1998, where they serve at Hope Christian Church. A natural leader, Michele, 58, serves as executive pastor and overseer of Women in Fellowship Inc., a mentoring organization designed to equip women through prayer and Bible study.

In 2007 Michele was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer of the plasma cells. Since then she has been on various kinds of chemotherapy and battled numerous infections.

“The reality of the frailty of life brings a level of sobriety,” she says. “I’m not out of the woods yet, but I’m not nearly as sick as I was when diagnosed. The Lord is my light and salvation, and I don’t have to fear. Even in my frailty, I am strong.”

FAVORITES

Hobby: *watching basketball*

Vacation spot: *Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Cancun, Mexico*

Food: *chocolate cake*

Scripture: *Psalms 27*

Accomplishment: *founding two Christian schools*

LISA CHAN

 Married to: **Francis Chan**

Former Senior Pastor
Cornerstone Community Church
Simi Valley, Calif.

After conversing with Lisa Chan, you wonder how this mother of four could be so calm and relaxed. (At press time, Lisa was scheduled to give birth to No. 5 in June.)

Lisa’s husband, Francis, pastored Cornerstone Community Church in Simi Valley, Calif., for more than 16 years. In 2010, he announced that he would be stepping down from the role. The Chan family took off two months to travel and went to India, Thailand and China. Upon returning, they unpacked their bags in San Francisco—with all of them living in a two-bedroom apartment for a season.

Lisa and Francis don’t know exactly what the next chapter

holds, but they are praying about establishing a new church in San Francisco.

"We want to know people and disciple people and not have this giant machine that can sometimes blow you over," says Lisa, 39.

At Cornerstone, Lisa's role "changed and morphed" over the years. "I never felt the struggles of a pastor's wife at Cornerstone," she says. "We were able to be honest with a group of people and share the Word of God with them."

One of Lisa's favorite verses is Colossians 3:2: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." She plans to work on a video project that deals with the theme of this Scripture. Tentatively scheduled to release in 2012, it will be produced by the same group that delivered Francis's "Basic" series.

"We don't belong here," Lisa reflects. "We make it about ourselves, our marriage, our kids. ... In the end, it's going to be around what we did for Christ and how well we loved Him."

FAVORITES

Hobby: *bargain-hunting*

Book: *If I Perish by Esther Ahn Kim*

Food: *Mexican*

Scriptures: *Col. 3:2, 2 Chron. 16:9*

ANNA HAYFORD

 Married to: **Jack Hayford**

Former Senior Pastor
The Church On The Way

Van Nuys, Calif.

When Jack Hayford began pastoring at The Church On The Way in Van Nuys, Calif., his wife, Anna, wondered how she would relate to celebrities in the church.

“I was just a farm girl from Nebraska,” she says. It didn’t take her long to realize that these people want to be treated like everyone else, and she was able to relax.

Anna, 78, particularly enjoys the relationships God has brought into her life through her role, though Jack no longer serves as a full-time pastor. Her priority, she says, is taking care of Jack. “I feel that at one time the Lord told me that was my ministry: to make sure home was a good place for him to be.”

As a young girl, Anna sensed that God was calling her to be a pastor’s wife. She met Jack at what is now Life Pacific College in California, and the two were married on July 4, 1954. “Both of us being called was very important to the cohesion of our marriage because we were both dedicated to the same thing,” she says.

Anna has worn many ministry hats over the years. She’s taught classes for children and adults, led songs, overseen women’s ministries and helped do custodial work.

“What I’ve enjoyed the most is not only giving love to the congregation, but how they have returned that love to me,” she says.

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *cross-stitching (until tremors in her hands made it too difficult to do), reading, cooking*

Book: *A Gift From the Sea by Anne Morrow Lindberg. In general, she enjoys Christian fiction and murder mysteries.*

Vacation spots: *The Cotswolds (England) and Switzerland*

Scripture: *Nah. 1:7*

DIANA HAGEE

 Married to: **John Hagee**

Senior Pastor
Cornerstone Church
San Antonio, Texas

Diana Hagee, 59, is the Martha Stewart of pastors' wives. She loves hospitality and is passionate about teaching it to others. "To me, hospitality is a dying art," she says. "I think it's important to train women about the significance of hospitality. The most valuable possession we have today is our time. If we offer our time as unto the Lord, it is a sweet-smelling aroma unto His throne."

Diana coordinates all special events at Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, which is pastored by John Hagee, her husband of 35 years. "Hospitality is the flag we fly at every event," she says, noting that they want Cornerstone to be known as a hospitality church—and for people to experience it as soon as they walk onto the campus. She also serves as chief of staff for John Hagee Ministries' television ministry.

Raised Roman Catholic, Diana never dreamed she would one day be a pastor's wife. "The biggest challenge was finding my place," she says. "Once I realized that God had already filled me with a talent of hospitality, I began to blossom in the position of a pastor's wife and lose many of my insecurities."

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *cooking, looking at cookbooks ("I have a stack by my bed.")*

Vacation spot: *Anywhere her family is (the couple has five children and 12 grandchildren)*

Food: *Mexican*

Scripture: *Deut. 28:1*

EVA RODRIGUEZ

 Married to: **Sam Rodriguez**

Pastor—New Season
Christian Church
Sacramento, Calif.

President—National
Hispanic Christian
Leadership Conference

Eva Rodriguez's ministry in many ways mirrors her husband's. She pastors Centro Cristiano de Adoración, a Hispanic congregation of about 700 people in Sacramento, Calif. Her husband, Sam, does much of the administration while she preaches.

Meanwhile, her husband pastors the church's English-speaking congregation, New Season Christian Worship Center. His main role is preaching, while Eva handles the administrative tasks.

"We're best friends, so we're able to talk a lot," says Eva, 39, who met Sam at an Assemblies of God church they attended in Allentown, Pa., during their youth. They married on Sept. 2, 1989.

With busy schedules and two children still at home (one is in college), the Rodriguez family focuses on time management and communication.

“Sam and I make each other accountable for our actions,” she says. “We’re partners in everything we do—at church, at home [and] in our personal lives.”

Both Eva and Sam have key roles outside the church. She serves as president of the National Hispanic Evangelical Women, and Sam is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

“A commitment to holiness and humility has made us who we are today,” Eva says. “It’s the way we run our lives and ministry—absolutely no compromise.”

FAVORITES

Hobby: *Zumba and Spin class*

Vacation spot: *Mexico*

Books: *Anything by R.T. Kendall; The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell*

Food: *Puerto Rican*

Song/band: *“I Exalt Thee”/Hillsong United*

Accomplishment: *being the first Hispanic clergy member to give the benediction at the Republican National Convention*

DEE EASTMAN

 Married to: **Dick Eastman**

President

Every Home for Christ

Colorado Springs, Colo.

As a seasoned minister’s wife, Dee Eastman has learned to redefine “normal”—and this is one of her key messages to young

leaders' wives.

"Normal is living with what is necessary for God to do [what He wants] in and through you," she explains.

For her, "normal" means keeping a suitcase packed with all the essentials in case she and her husband, Dick Eastman, need to leave for the other side of the world in a moment's notice.

Dick is president of Every Home for Christ, whose goal is to reach every home on earth with the gospel. To date, the organization has reached a staggering billion homes over the last 64 years, with more than 97 million people responding to the gospel.

The couple met while attending Bible college in Minneapolis and married on Dec. 19, 1964. To date, they've traveled around the world about 100 times.

Now 67, Dee notes their marriage is better today than ever. Dick is the visionary, and she is the "functionary"—meaning that she helps put all of the pieces together to implement Dick's visions.

For the Eastmans, ministry is a joint venture. Dee has always worked alongside her husband and served as an administrative assistant.

"The staff calls me their 'union rep,'" she says, "because I represent them so many times to the board of directors and the president [her husband] by drawing attention to their workload, needs and desires."

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *reading, knitting*

Place to be: *home*

Life verse: *Matt. 6:33*

CAROLINE BARNETT

☒ Married to: **Matthew Barnett**

Senior Pastor
The Dream Center
Los Angeles

At the age of 18, ministry volunteer Caroline Olsson caught the eye of Matthew Barnett, founder of the Dream Center in Los Angeles. He asked her out on a date and they set a place to meet.

But the unthinkable happened: They both stood waiting on separate corners, feeling certain they'd been stood up.

Neither one said anything about the mishap until they reconnected more than two years later. After their first date, they both knew it was meant to be. They married within six months on Sept. 10, 1999.

Caroline, now 32, is as passionate about the Dream Center as Matthew is. With the help of a close friend, she launched a mobile food bank years ago that now feeds up to 50,000 people a month.

One of her favorite things to do is to take their two children, Mia and Caden, to the site.

"I love to go down the line and pray for people," Caroline says. "You go there to give, and you get so much more in return."

Matthew and Caroline serve as senior pastors of the Los Angeles Dream Center, which has met in the historic Angelus Temple since 2001. Caroline's primary role is to oversee the

outreach ministry and women's ministry. One significant way she helps her husband is to not be demanding of his time.

"I've released Matthew to do whatever he needs to do for the ministry," she says.

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *working out, watching cooking shows*

Vacation spot: *Hawaii*

Scripture: *Psalms 39*

Book: *The Cause Within You by Matthew Barnett; Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Meyer*

Food: *Mexican*

BENI JOHNSON

 Married to: **Bill Johnson**

Senior Pastor
Bethel Church
Redding, Calif.

Being a pastor's wife has been a natural fit for Beni Johnson, whose parents were active in church leadership throughout her childhood. They attended Bethel Church in Redding, Calif., pastored at the time by Earl Johnson, and Beni dated the pastor's son, Bill. Although she didn't know whether he would become a pastor, she knew he had a heart for ministry. Beni and Bill attended Bible training school in Santa Rosa, Calif., and were married on April 14, 1973, three months before they graduated.

"When I grew up as a girl, my dream was to become a wife and a mommy," says Beni, 56. "Throughout the years, my husband has

covered and protected me from some of the challenges that come along with being a pastor's wife. Under that protection, it has been really fun."

About 15 years ago, Beni found her niche: intercessory prayer. She has a passion for intercession and now serves as prayer pastor at Bethel.

She also tries to keep the atmosphere at home fun and lighthearted: "We really enjoy each other's company and try not to keep our private life too serious."

FAVORITES

Hobby: *visiting spas*

Book: *Dreaming With God by Bill Johnson; The Ecstasy of Loving God by John Crowder*

Food: *anything organic and healthy*

Scripture: *Luke 9:54-55*

Song/Band: *"God I Look to You" by Jenn Johnson/Bethel Band*

Hidden Talent: *matchmaker (Beni enjoys setting up some of the single students who attend Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry)*

DEBBIE MCPHERSON

 Married to: **Miles McPherson**

Senior Pastor
The Rock Church
San Diego, Calif.

Debbie McPherson's life took a different turn just two years after she married Miles in 1984. Her husband's professional

football career came to a halt due to an injury, and he began working in full-time ministry. Debbie, now 52, wondered how she would fit into the picture.

“I had only been around pastors whose wives were just as much in the limelight as their husbands were, and I wasn’t comfortable with that role,” says the soft-spoken, behind-the-scenes mother of three. The book *Married to a Pastor* by H.B. London and Neil B. Wiseman helped Debbie realize that there’s no set job description for a pastor’s wife.

“I see my role as being a supportive, praying, loving wife—a good mother and a homemaker. It’s very important for me to create a place of refuge for Miles to come home to, where he can feel loved unconditionally, where he can recharge and be encouraged,” Debbie says.

Miles founded The Rock Church in San Diego in 2000. Today, at least 12,000 people attend the church’s five weekly services. Every year the church holds a marriage retreat, and Debbie enjoys contributing. Her passion, she says, is working with preschoolers.

“Should God give me a role outside of what it is now, I think it will probably be with children in some shape or form.”

FAVORITES

Hobbies: *working out at home, learning about nutrition and supplements*

Vacation spot: *Maui, Hawaii*

Movie: Remember the Titans

Food: *Italian*

Scripture: *Prov. 3:5-6*

Carol Chapman Stertz is a freelance journalist living in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

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