

Confessions of a Pastor's Wife: When I Don't Like Church

There are Sundays I would rather stay home in my pajamas. On those days, I go to church because I want to support my husband and because I feel like I have to.

I usually enjoy going to church. It is a place of renewal, encouragement and support. Nonetheless, there have been times in life when I would like to pull away and do my own thing—but I can't because I am a pastor's wife.

So I have dragged my children to church after having a rotten morning, put on my happy face and answered, "Good!" with a big smile when people ask, "How are you this morning?" Because I know people don't really care. It has been years since someone stopped me at church and asked, "How are you really doing?" As a matter of fact, this has only happened once in my 10 years in ministry.

It happened three years ago. We had been home for only a couple of months after adopting Nina. I left church early and had the girls buckled in the car when my dear friends approached me in the parking lot.

"Ellen, we are worried about you. How are you really doing?"

I couldn't even answer them. I broke down and began sobbing. I literally fell into their arms and cried and cried. I was not doing well at all emotionally. They helped me come up with a plan where I could do some self-care and they could help our family, along with our "adoptive grandparents." That was God lifting me up through other people.

Ministry can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be hard.

When I don't like church, it is because of several reasons:

- **The lack of authentic relationships.** Sometimes it feels like there is a lot of pretending at church—like we all have it figured out. Well, I don't!
- **The pressure of being the perfect wife, mom and Bible study leader extraordinaire.** I might be a pastor's wife, but I am a person facing the same struggles and challenges all women face. Some people find it uncomfortable when the pastor's wife admits to shortcomings.
- **Doing it all.** I have certain gifts and passions, but when I become the designated leader of whatever ministry needs to be filled, I minister outside of my gifting and feel emotionally drained.
- **People who don't like my husband or his choices.** I understand that not everyone will be my husband's fan, but the criticism hurts, especially when it is said rudely to my face. Or when people make assumptions with no willingness to talk things through.
- **The lack of support as a wife, mom and special-needs mom.** Maybe we are supposed to have it all together, being a pastor's family, and maybe people assume we don't need help. We do.
- **If I am not doing well emotionally or spiritually, it is difficult to attend church.** I am a broken person with much need for grace and mercy like everyone else. I have a big and amazing God who carries me through these times and holds me in His arms while I wrestle and question and cry.

You might not be a pastor's wife, but maybe you can identify with me. There is no perfect church, perfect family or perfect

people. So, for now, I hold on to the promise that even through the hard times in ministry, God is good. And good doesn't mean easy. It means that God has it all figured out, and I need to trust in Him alone.

*Adapted from **Ellen Stumbo's** blog at . Ellen is a pastor's wife, and she writes about finding beauty in brokenness with gritty honesty and openness. She is passionate about sharing the real—sometimes beautiful and sometimes ugly—aspects of faith, parenting, special needs and adoption. She has been published by Focus on the Family, LifeWay, MomSense, Not Alone and Mamapedia among others.*