



MINISTERS FORUM NEWSLETTER

INFORMATION MINISTERS CAN USE

MINISTERS MINISTERING TO MINISTERS & FAMILIES

Romans 1:8-10 KJV



THE KING IS BORN!

"For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
Wonderful,
Counsellor, The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"

Isaiah 9:6.

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Precious Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is once again that time of the year when we not only celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ but when we also step back and assess 'how well' we have done what we planned to do for the year. It is also the time when we think about appointment of officers for the New Year and select the 'best fit' for the work ahead. This month's Newsletter is focused on the role of the families (wives/husbands and children) of the ministers/leaders appointed and how these appointments affect them both 'positively and negatively'.

Many Pastors/Ministers struggle with expectations by church members of their spouses and children; dealing with their personal struggles, finding time for families and dealing with members. Amidst all of this is the expectation that they will rise above the challenges, and to not just survive but be encouraged and motivated to empower themselves as they seek to contribute to the empowerment of the people they serve. Let us examine some of the struggles and challenges you face as a Pastor/Minister.

STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES PASTORS FACE

Thoms Rainer writing on "Growing healthy churches" summarized feedback from survey conducted from various social media interactions, emails, and phone calls on identifying the struggles and challenges pastors face, which are summarized as their greatest pain points today - Some of these are outlined below in the order of frequency:

1. **Criticism and conflict** appear most often and seem to be experiencing the greater challenges. Most of the issues of conflict are not doctrinal issues but tend to border on trivial issues. Unfortunately very few pastors are equipped and trained to deal with the steady stream of critics and crises resulting in much stress.
2. **Stress and Depression** is next in line because of the emotional highs and lows in the Pastor's/ministers life to be "all things to all men". This includes both *critics* and *adoring fans*. Expectations from church members can also be just as unreasonable. Stress and Depression are pervasive in pastoral ministry and it is often the "secret" problem.



3. Burnout: Local church ministry can attract two broad types of persons: the lazy and the workaholic. Neither is a good thing because being lazy borders on low productivity and accountability; while being a workaholic is the opposite but cause burnout which can cause serious health risk.

4. Sexual problems: are most often in one of two categories: pornography or marital unfaithfulness. Studies have shown that pornography has become more common than marital unfaithfulness because it is not viewed as adultery/fornication. This is also said to be more prevalent among men whose wives are very active in the church with less time for the marital relationship

6. Financial problem: is always present because few pastors make huge salaries resulting in the majority of pastors struggling financially. This is generally not a good idea because if the basic needs are not met it can be difficult to minister effectively. This seem however to be in conflict with the doctrine that if a minister/pastor is 'called' into ministry the Lord will take care of their needs. Some people have said that this need exist because the people doing God's business are not sensitive to these needs. Of course we know that this is a debatable issue with no 'right or wrong' answers. However, it is not a good idea for the 'needs 'of the pastor/minister to go unmet detracting from his "feeding of the flock". The church should ensure that the full-time minister's **needs** are covered.

*For every
STRUGGLE
in your life
there is a
STRATEGY*

7. Time management: is another challenge identified because the expectations of members and sometimes the pastors him/herself can be unrealistic. There is the expectation to attend multiple meetings, visit countless congregants, prepare sermons with excellence, provide ongoing strategic leadership, conduct weddings and funerals, and to be involved in the community. Part of the problem is that many don't know how or when to say "no."; and many are not good at delegating, or don't have anyone who can handle some of the tasks. Most pastors love their 'callings' and enjoy most of what they do in ministry and wouldn't change their role if they could. Nevertheless many have ongoing challenges and struggles and would gladly receive help from church members if it is just a word of encouragement and the knowledge that they are praying for them.

Biological Family –

a. spouse (wives/husbands)

Biological families of Pastors are important to the work of the minister and by extension the overall ministry. The spouse is an enhancer of the ministry (you too shall be one) because by being joined together they work in harmony in the promulgation of the gospel. If spouses are not on one accord life can be difficult for the pastor/minister as the ministry will not achieve the will of the Lord.

Most of the spouses of pastors/ministers are wives - The Associated Press reported last April that "experts say preachers' wives often struggle with depression and isolation" because they are "expected to be exemplars of Christian virtue while bearing unique pressures on their private and public lives."



The Associated Baptist Press, using Christian Counselor Tony Rankin as a source, reported that Pastors' wives have as high a level of stress and burnout as their husbands do and sometimes engage in an unattainable quest for perfection, often isolating themselves and losing a sense of reality along the way. He also pointed out that the late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ and the Global Pastors Network report the following from various sources a few years ago:

- 80% of pastors and 84 % of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their roles.
- 80% of pastors' spouses feel their spouse is overworked.
- Almost 40% of pastors polled said they have had an extramarital affair since beginning their ministry.
- 80% of pastors' wives feel left out and unappreciated by the church members.

The study also pointed out that when pastors' wives have problems, they often go undetected because they become isolated and lonely. *Pastornet.net* reported in 2001 that 56% of pastors' wives had no close friends in the church. Often these women, looked up to as leaders, are reluctant to approach members of their congregations for help.

The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity (Baker Press).

b. Children

The children of Pastors/Ministers are often said to be 'living in a glass bubble' and expectations of them are said to be high. Members of congregations have a habit of forgetting that all children are born in sin, including these children and can be very hard on the children of leaders in the church.

Ministers need to be aware that their *children are in many ways on trial*, not only among church members but in the community as well. Congregations need to be reminded that these children are human-subjected to sin and in need of God's grace to help thwart any problems they may have.

Ministers must be careful never to fall into the trap of requiring children to live up to other people's expectations but God's and that They must not be too busy that their children feel abandoned. Abandonment of children takes place when ministry lives are too full of other things, or are out of sync-Being there means we are not only physically there, but our eyes, our affection, and our interest are there too. We must be real enough to occasionally have a good time with the children.

A wonderful **benefit of Ministers children have is the opportunity to see God work**. When children frequently participate in parent's ministry, they see faith at work in the lives of others. When God moves in your lives and in the congregation, the extra spiritual exposure spills off onto the children. Nothing has been more gratifying in ministry than to see God's Holy Spirit, not only sweep over a congregation but to your children caught up in earnest worship.

Increased Opportunities also exist for children who participate in church life to discover their giftedness in areas of music, hospitality, verbal communication skills, and leadership skills. Many of today's well-known Christian music artists were raised in ministers' homes. On the flip side of this is the fact that



many walk away from the church – raising the **Question** of "Why do so many Ministers children walk away from the faith?" ¹

Answer: *When ministers/pastors children walk away from the faith* (at least for a period of time) in which they have been brought up, it is a sad thing and a poor testimony to the truth of Christianity. Children who leave the faith may do so for a variety of reasons, many are deeply hurt by the way church members treat their parents and see the anger and conflict that can arise in even the best of congregations, and they conclude that the "religion" these people profess can't be real. Young people see these conflicts as hypocrisy and many begin to question their own faith.

Children are often under a lot of pressure to be perfect, or at least to act like it so they won't disgrace the family and the church. So they try to live up to everyone's expectations, and this can lead them to practice the very hypocrisy they see in others. This is especially evident in smaller churches where the family is put on a pedestal with everyone watching their every move.

The **children of pastors often believe the church is stealing their parents**, (especially father's) time away from them leaving them fighting for attention. Statistically, a number of pastors change churches often [especially in organizations where their churches were built by the organization and not by the deep involvement of the pastor per se]. This can mean a child moves 3-4 times during his or her childhood. They experience the stress of losing their homes, their schools, and their friends, and they intuitively blame God or the religion for the upheaval of their families.

These children often have no one to turn to, because their parents are dealing with their own stresses and not wanting to add to the stress, children tend to keep their anger and frustration hidden. This ***resentment built up against God and the faith play into the natural rebelliousness of the teenage years***, which is why many children leave the faith during that time or immediately upon entering college where this freedom brings reject of the hypocrisy of their own lives and their faith along with it.

What can be done to stem children leaving the faith?

First, it's important to realize that this is part of Satan's overall strategy against the church. When ministers' children leave the faith, the church loses future leaders. The families of those closest to the spiritual battles are prime targets to attack. If the world sees pastors' families in shambles, it doesn't speak well of the faith they profess.

To counter this situation, there must be scheduled time for families and children that members cannot interrupt. When children know that their time with parent is a priority, outweighing all else, the sense of security they attain from it is enormous. The congregation must also be made aware that their pastor's time with family will make a more effective pastor, and safeguards against incursion into family time

¹ While this answer might be true for all Christians children, the focus at this Newsletter is on Pastors/Ministers children



must be strictly enforced.

The world is a hard place for Christian believers to grow up in, especially in societies where materialism and all its glamour easily satisfy the senses of the carnal nature. This is all the more true for ministers' children who have perhaps been brought up with some degree of naiveté because their parents would have them be spared the excesses of this life. Children naturally want to inquire into the things once forbidden by their parents. Therefore, it's all the more crucial for parents to spend time preparing their own children for the temptations they will face, and this can only be achieved by spending adequate time with them.

c. Your Church Family

The church family is also very important to the pastor/minister that it depends on for spiritual food and overall support leading to stagnation, starvation, 'being lost in the house' and ultimate falling away of the members who might be in search of ways to maximize their God-given potential in Christ.

James Emery white in his article on reasons ***why your church might not be growing*** provided what he called a "shopping list" compiled from nearly thirty years of experience in the trenches as to why church family might not be growing' all to the glory of God. Let's explore the 'shopping' list below:

- 1 Aren't praying for growth.
- 2 Unresolved divisions, tensions and discord within the staff and/or congregation.
- 3 You are methodologically, stylistically and strategically out of date.
- 4 Leaders do not have the spiritual gift of leadership.
- 5 Watering down of the message of the gospel.
- 6 Church structure stifles leadership, innovation and front-line decision-making.
- 7 Have not taught, challenged or led the church to provide adequate financial resources.
- 8 Atmosphere is one of condemnation, exclusion, awkwardness or rejection instead of understanding, sensitivity, acceptance and grace.
- 9 Not attempting to connect with the next generation.
- 10 Mentality is oriented toward the already convinced and those "in-house," not turned outward toward the skeptic and the unchurched.
- 11 Attention not sufficiently or appropriately given to staffing of Children's Ministry.
- 12 Effective strategizing as to how to break through growth barrier not done.
- 13 The mindset that everything has to be done by the pastor and to be at the center of every story, (micro-manage) resulting in bottle-necks.
- 14 Being an "8" on a scale of 1-10. But instead of hiring "9's" and "10's", insecurity leads you to hire "6's" and "7's" resulting in goals not being achieved.
- 15 Not making it easy to connect with others and get plugged-in.
- 16 Your vision has not exceeded your reality.

But again, remember the question; it's not how to grow your church, but what is keeping it from growing.



Finally, the importance of prayer cannot be overstated; both pastors/ministers and the congregations they serve should make it a priority to pray continually for the Pastor's family. Pastor and their families must be brought to the throne of grace regularly, asking that they be protected from the evil-one by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–17). By doing so, they remain “strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”.

Prayer for Pastors/Ministers Families for the New Year



*Dear Lord Jesus Christ: We thank you for our Pastors and Ministers who many have said are burning out at an alarming rate! As Christians, we should feel deep agony over this, especially since the main reason for it appears to be . . . **US!** Christians who comprise the congregations of Pastors and are in most cases, the cause for it.*

God we know that you have not called us to criticize or damage our Pastors but to love them (1 Cor. 13:1-13), to be submissive to their leadership (Heb. 13:17), and to pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2) who Lord we know that Pastors and their families sometimes feel very alone in the midst of their churches and they don't necessarily have close friends in the congregation to whom they can go with burdens. I know that they may feel that they can't share needs because they, of all people, should have everything running smoothly, but Lord help us to see that Pastors and Ministers families are just like ours and struggle with similar issues and problems.

Dear Lord we desperately need to commit to fervent, continuous prayer so that the enemy won't have the opportunity to do damage. Help us to be conscious that pastor's ministry will only be as effective as the prayer that fuels it in making your servant a joyful, Spirit-filled shepherd, who confidently leads the congregation into a deeper relationship with you, Lord Jesus Christ, and demonstrate a passion for revival and for reaching the lost.

Help them to minister to themselves and their families effectively as they enter the New Year and beyond. This we ask in your precious name Jesus –

AMEN!

You're a Counselor and Friend To the people that you lead. You're a source of inspiration, You're a help to those in need , and at Christmas time, this brings a wish that all the good you do Will return to you in blessings In the years ahead of you.

“DESERVE” is not a pre-requisite of GRACE because none of us deserve God's grace - it is a question of God's “FAVOUR”