

Encouragements for Pastors' Wives

Ruby Conway | *illbehonest.com*

Well, this is a huge privilege and I really don't know why I'm up here other than God has plans and purposes, but I feel real inadequate, especially as I look around this room. We're all in the same boat. Mandy, what is it that you just told me?

Mandy: Women in need of grace helping women in need of grace.

Ruby: So that's basically what's happening here. I'm in desperate need of grace and we all are. We're all in the same boat. I just wanted to share after considering lots of different things I would like to say and share in hopes of encouraging; I just thought I would share three things that have been very critically helpful for me that I've learned over the years and I'm still learning and growing. Bethany and Michelle, these are things that you have heard repeatedly from me. They're very basic fundamental, can be perhaps like Peter, just reminders, and hopefully it will encourage you to press on in what you already know and just to excel and abound in these good things.

So, these things happen to all start with "H's." It just worked out that way. I didn't plan it. But it's three things that I narrowed down. And I left one out, but if I have time, I'll include that. I only have twenty minutes, so I'm going to speak really quickly and make things very brief, hopefully concise. Hopefully, they'll be some help. It's humility, helper, and heaven. And those three things kept in right perspective in our lives and kept in the forefront of our lives as pastor's wives - really it's just as a wife, it's really as a woman if you're married. We happen to be married to pastors. So we're called pastor's wives, but we're all in need again of the same grace, whether you're a pastor's wife or what not, but these three things apply to any woman across the board. I think we just have as pastor's wives, we have unique challenges and unique blessings as well.

Humility

So I considered all these things in light of what we go through. And there's a number of things Dale and I were talking about the other night. I actually looked online for a list of what pastor's wives struggle with. I had to look for a list. I cheated. (incomplete thought) You know, we go through really difficult things in different seasons in a church body. There's division. There can be slander. We have to endure sometimes things - maybe members that are discontent; they don't like the way the leadership is making their decisions; coming to their conclusions; the way the sermon went; the color of the carpet. Whatever people can come up with. In light of all those things and also I thought too, I guess, depending on everybody's relationship - your relationship with your husband - we know more than anybody else in the church pretty much. If you have a plurality of elders, well, the elders will equally know everything, but I know my husband and I are extremely close, and he shares and we share and we work very, very closely together. And so that takes a lot of grace. And that takes humility. And to be a good helper, we have to respond well in light of all that we know. And then ultimately, the last stage being heaven, we have to keep an eternal perspective at all times, or else, we can just be crushed under the burdens that we know and that we experience and we endure.

Two verses that are very real to me, and I remember them because they both have the word "apart" in them. I'm sure they're very familiar to you as well. John 15:5, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." And Psalm 16:2, it starts, "You are my Lord..." the second part, "I have no good apart from You." And so, that should be our disposition, that we have a real sense of our ability to do absolutely nothing apart from Christ. And that needs to go in really deep and the Lord is very faithful to cause us to experience certain things, big things, daily little trials, whatever it might be. In His love as our Father to His children, He's faithful to bring things so that this goes deeper and deeper, that we're nothing and we can do nothing apart from Him. So it's very, very, very important that we live in light of this reality that Christ is everything. And in His power, through the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we can do all things. All things through Christ who strengthens us I think we heard this morning.

So, another thing in regards to humility in Romans 15:1, it says, "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves, and let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For Christ didn't please Himself..." So, another thing is Christ being our example to follow. He was humility personified. We know we walked perfectly. Perfectly humble every moment of His existence. So, He is our example to imitate. He was patient. He was longsuffering. And as pastor's wives, this is the way we need to deal with all that we know and all the different situations that come about in the church life.

And it takes a lot of grace and it takes a lot of humility because there can be sometimes maybe a temptation to be frustrated when brother or sister so-and-so did that again? Or how could they have said that? Or how could this have happened? But we're all in different places, and we need to really, really be sensitive to God's dealings with His children, and never think that we're beyond doing anything that that person is doing that you feel perturbed or frustrated with. There's no place in the heart of a pastor's wife or anybody - I'm going to say pastor's wives because this is who I'm addressing - but there's no place in a Christian's heart for frustration, impatience, disgust, when we understand who we are. It's only by God's grace if we're doing anything right in a moment. He gives us the strength and the power to obey and walk obediently in the Spirit. And that way in our lives, He gets all the glory. So we are to live a supernatural life in the Spirit - not a natural life. And the natural responses to the difficulties we encounter in the ministry would be frustration - all these sinful responses. But God is glorified in us when we respond in a not natural way - a supernatural way. And so then He gets all the glory. And that, again, maybe I'll just go right into that is how we can help our husbands.

Helper

The number one ministry that we have as pastor's wives is to be our husband's help. His helper. And that started way back in Genesis, we know. With Adam, God was very gracious to bring Adam a helper, and that is our number one ministry. Don't let any other women's ministries - things that are very, very good, and there's nothing wrong with those things. It's fine to lead a Bible study, lead a book study, get together for coffee - all those things can be in their place with your husband's approval after you've prayed about it. It can be very profitable. But always filter these types of decisions with: is this going to take me away or hinder my ministry in helping my husband? Because if you don't have that in order and you're ministering outside your home or with other women doing good things, but your husband is left to fend for himself or he's having

to bear more work himself because you're neglecting the home, then that's wrong. Because the number one ministry is to help your husband. We're helpers.

And again, we have gifts and God gives opportunities and so there's nothing wrong in serving and doing. Women are very useful in the kingdom. They have gifts just like men do. But we have to, as wives - and particularly, I am going to say particularly pastor's wives, have to be careful because our husbands bear an enormous load, an enormous amount of weight. Mack said it last night and I had that in my notes. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:28, the second part, "...the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." And I see that firsthand in my husband. It's not just his family - the Conway family, but then, it's the Grace Community Church, and then the church plants, and then out-of-the-country works. These things weigh real heavy. And even when we have set a church plant to have their independence and have a pastor, it's typically a very young man that's over that work, and so he's still very much in need and very much in contact. And that's not always the case, even older, new in the ministry, whatever it might be, he gets phone calls almost daily of things pertaining to what's going on in all the different church plants. So I see the weight that my husband bears on a daily basis. So I try to keep my life as simple as possible for his sake because he is my number one priority. And I want to maintain that. There's so much need, and I do try to reach out to the women as much as I can without violating this priority, or just keeping my husband the priority.

So he's the number one ministry. And the number one way of helping him is abiding in Christ, because it doesn't matter what we're doing or not doing, if we're not cultivating a close, intimate walk with the Lord, self-controlled, disciplined time with the Lord on a daily basis; time set aside for communing with the Lord; time set aside for prayer, for meditation. You're cultivating a real relationship. And then you're just walking with the Lord through the rest of the day, but it's something very real. And you're praying all day as you're thinking of the needs of your husband, your children, the church body. You're just walking, praying, it's very real.

As Tim and I were talking with a younger couple yesterday, they're wondering how do you make this real like through the day? Well, it takes effort, like any relationship we know. I know this is not new to this group here, but I just want to encourage that in the busyness of life and ministry and little ones, that you maintain and cultivate and grow in your relationship with the Lord. And that you enter into the power there is to be had by walking close to the Lord, and removing unnecessary things in your life that can hinder you from this close intimacy with the Lord. And that really is helping your husband tremendously because in the course of your life as a pastor's wife, like I said earlier, there's going to be things that will come on a daily basis, and you will respond very differently to the very challenging things depending on your walk with the Lord. And if your husband brings home news that's difficult to receive - something that took place in the church - if you're not walking with the Lord and it's very fresh in your mind that God is sovereign, this is the body of Christ, this is not our thing, this is not our doing. We did not build this church. We're just observing what God is doing as He's building and removing and purging.

As women, we can be very emotional and we can respond if our thinking is not right and we haven't been in the Word. And there is something very supernatural we all know about times in the Word when you're communing with the Lord in prayer and you leave that time, like I said, and you have the fragrance of Christ following you. You have this sense that He's with you. And so when you're faced with things maybe later in the day, instead of freaking out, getting all

emotional, responding in a panic, you can be a help by staying calm and thinking biblically and being an encouragement, and just that your confidence is in God and His Word and His promises. You have to have these things very fresh in your mind in order to be the help that your husband needs.

And then in Proverbs, I just thought of Proverbs 31:23. "Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land." And I think that's really special because the wife has a lot to do with the husband's reputation and who he is. He had a reputation in the gates among the elders because of her. And so we want to be that type of help to our husband. We have a lot of influence in our husband's life and we have the power if I can use that word to really build him up to be a better leader that he could not be without us. And so if he has somebody that's submitting, encouraging, following, walking close with the Lord, helping in that way, he can be a better leader than he could be like I said without us. And conversely, we can also crush our husbands. We have to be very, very careful how we communicate, what we communicate with our husbands. If, again, like what we say should be filtered though: what does God's Word say? What does God's Word say? If you're going to be a help, you're going to need to be a woman of wisdom and wisdom comes from God. So, we want to have our thinking aligned with God's Word and His will. And that will truly, truly help him.

Heaven

And the final H was heaven. Again, as we go through the different - I'm speaking a lot on the challenges and the difficulties, but we all know here that there are unspeakable joys being part of the ministry as helpers to our husbands. I feel spoiled - the blessings that we get to be involved in, while you do know a lot of every single person in the church and their struggles, you also know of all the joys and the victories and the counseling sessions that turn out with a happy ending that nobody else knows about. And so we bear the weight, but we also enjoy the time of rejoicing as well.

These are again very familiar Scriptures. Colossians 3:2 that we're to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. Philippians 3:20 - our citizenship is in heaven. And we're eagerly awaiting our Savior from there - the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is where we have to, again, very intentionally set our mind on things above. We are living in the realm of sight here and the "seen," but we know that that which is seen is transient. It's passing. And so we have to keep our minds on things above. So no matter how difficult things can be; how challenging, whatever we endure, there is an end. Tim spoke on Wednesday here the verse that says from Romans, "...rejoicing in hope." Like we of all people, out of the mass of humanity, this little remnant that Christ shed His blood for, we truly have reason and cause to rejoice - to rejoice in the Lord. And to have a hope, like Tim was saying. Everybody has a hope. They're hoping in this, that, and the other that is guaranteed to lead them to disappointment until they find Christ. And then that's when we're truly satisfied like we heard about today. Satisfaction can only be found in Christ and that's what we should be experiencing in a very real way every day. Our mind, our heart, and affections set on things above where Christ is, where our inheritance is. And when we do have that mindset, again, life is much easier to deal with. When you think, we're just passing through, there is a reward at the end. Don't feel like the way you're living right now making the sacrifices that you are making and suffering to whatever degree you're suffering

- we all go through different things to different degrees, different seasons. But it's not for naught. There is a reward at the end. In fact, I was just reading this morning (incomplete thought). I'm going to just pass because it will take time to remember where I read it.

But anyway, it's basically, we're heading towards a judgment day. And we will receive what is due. Because of Christ, we can really look forward to that day and live in light of that day. And we know that God has told us this life is just a vapor. It's here and then gone. So, we need to live in light of that. Not to waste time. We live in a day and age with all this technology and electronics and social media where it is such an enormous temptation to waste time. And we all really need to be really careful to redeem our time and be good stewards of our time. The time we have has been given to us. Like, we all have an appointment. We came in and we're going out. So we want to be faithful with the time that we have. I don't know what time I started. Is it time? Has it been 20?

Real quick, the last H, in light of time. Real quick, other Scriptures, 2 Peter 3:11 in light of what we know that everything's burning up. We're heading towards everything burning up. What sort of people ought we to be to live lives of holiness and godliness? And 2 Corinthians 4:17 - we're familiar with this. Light, momentary affliction - whatever we're going through, it's preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. So there's those contrasts of light vs. weight and momentary vs. eternal. So we have to live in light of that and not get caught up in the moment of difficulties. Like, this is so hard. No, actually, it feels that way, but compared to what we're heading to it's light and momentary. And we have to have this perspective very clear in our minds. And 1 Peter 1:4 We're heading towards an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us. And then lastly, Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name and that you have ministered to the saints and do minister." So, that's very encouraging that God remembers everything. Our deeds follow us. Everything that we do, there is coming a day when there will be a reward and it's okay to be reward motivated for what you're doing right now because in the end, the reward is Christ. And so, do everything you can now to get the most then. There is a reality to that.

Holiness

Real quickly, the last H was holiness. And I think we as pastor's wives - sometimes, a pastor's wife can maybe not really appreciate the position of being an example as a wife, as a mother, as a family, as a husband and wife. And sometimes it can even be something that a woman can resent. Like, why do they look at us all the time? Why are they always observing us? Eagle eyes always on us. But I think that's good. I think that our husbands are leaders and they should be examples, and there should be, obviously, a level of maturity where they are examples, not perfect, but exemplary, worthy of imitating. And I think in like manner that pastor's wife should also be striving. Every woman, like I said in the very beginning, should be striving for this. But because we're in a leadership position, I think that it's a loving thing to do, to live in such a way - and we have a very young church, 20's, 30's, young single, young married, young mothers, young everything. And so I count it a privilege to strive for that life that I can say follow me or imitate me because I know it's all of grace. And I know that I've made countless mistakes to this point. And God has been very faithful.

So, I think that it's like I said a very loving thing for us to live in such a way. And even in the mistakes that we make, we can be examples in how we respond in the mistakes that we make. So it's not like we have this pressure to live these perfect lives, because everybody's watching us. It's not like that at all. We love the Lord Jesus. And so we want to please and obey Him and in so doing, our lives should be examples and an encouragement that wow, you can go through a trial and actually have peace. You can go through a trial and remain unwavering in your faith and have confidence in the Lord. And you can lose a loved one and grieve well and glorify God in doing all these things. So, those are the four things that have been extremely helpful for me that God's taught me and continues to teach me.