

## **The ministry wife's home – her marriage**

### **Marriage and ministry: coping when it's hard**

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Marriage and ministry are demanding but I don't believe that God ever calls us to two things that conflict with one another. Our marriage is our first ministry. God will not call us to sacrifice our marriage on the altar of ministry. I have seen where marriages get neglected as women pursue God's work.

Marriage is a huge part of the work God is doing in the world and if we understand this, our marriages would be a light in this world drawing people closer to Him. A lot of us did not realise that as married women, we are in a ministry. It is not about being a pastor or a missionary or a leader in the church.

The lack of understanding of marriage as a ministry has made a lot of us live hypocritical lives. We serve others outside of our homes and then our husbands and children are unattended to.

The outside world and people there are getting all of the love, all of the attention, all of our strength and our service and our ministry, while those in the centre of our homes are dying for our attention.

#### **4 DANGERS IN THE AREA OF MINISTRY.**

1. **Satan would love to destroy our marriage and disqualify us in the ministry.** John 10:10 says the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy.

Here are 2 ways Satan may work to deceive our thoughts;

Firstly, we can be entertaining vain imaginings and confusing thoughts. For example, there was a time in our ministry that my husband was arriving late in the night. The enemy tried to mess up my mind by painting negative pictures, but the trust between us was so strong that I was unable to buy the lies of the enemy.

One of the days we had a week seminar at our headquarters church and I was inspired by the Holy Spirit not to go home directly. So I gave my car to one of the church staff to drop me and my children at the church office and return the car to the house. Fortunately, I saw my husband's car in the park and it was not locked. I stayed in the car with the children till he came out. While he was inside, I used the opportunity to explain to our children why he was always coming late. He was very busy with our international guest ministers. When he came out and found us in the car, he was so encouraged. Throughout the period of the seminar, he directed the staff to always drop us at the church office so that we could all go together as a family. That action silenced the enemy in my home.

Secondly, Satan can twist our thinking and we start to believe that compromising morally won't affect our lives all that much because we can keep it a secret or we can think our husband is not meeting our needs so we have the right to meet our needs some other way. We should never leave any opening for the devil in our homes.

2. **As wives, we can become resentful** of the time our husbands spend in the ministry and use it as an excuse to feed our flesh or sinful behaviour substituting other things for

the lack of our husband's attention i.e. focusing on our kids, our career, shopping or whatever.

We should never take things for granted. When we become resentful the enemy will take advantage and attack. Fast, pray and let the Holy Spirit guide you as you discuss your feelings with your husband.

3. **Marriage is not about one person.** It's about 'us' (you and your husband).

Proverbs 14:1 says " *Every wise woman builds her home, but the foolish tears it down with her hands.*"

Ask God for the grace to build and not to tear down. You need the wisdom of God to build and make wise and prosperous decisions that will make your home stand the test of time. May we not use our hands to scatter what we have gathered in the mighty name of Jesus.

4. **The demands of the ministry**

- a. **Needy people:** In ministry, needy people never go away. Jesus said, " The poor you will always have with you". If we take on the Saviour role or call it " Manager of the universe", our families will pay the price.
- b. **A Noble Task:** The ministry task is gigantic. The question is, How can a wife argue against the nobility of the task of taking the salvation message to those who are lost and will perish with it? Or how can we argue against the time spent on such a noble task?
- c. **Emotional Investment:** The emotional energy it takes to care for the spiritual lives of others is enormous.

It is tiring to work in the front line of spiritual battle while people's souls are in the balance. So how do we hold the enormous task of ministry on one hand and take care of our marriage on the other? I believe God can empower us to have both a healthy ministry and a vibrant marriage.

For example, I started having children after seven years of marriage and by then my husband and I were already in the ministry. My children were born through Caesarean section. Once I come around after the surgery, my husband will say "Fola, in the next 4 weeks you are returning back to the church because you cannot leave me alone there". I had to return back by the 28th day for the children's dedications. Why? Because he needs me. I believe our presence and prayers are always needed in our homes ( our husbands and children). Philippians 4:13 says " *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*". If we cooperate with God, His grace and wisdom will direct us.

**Tools that can help to nurture and grow our relationship with our husbands and children.**

1. **Boundary setting:** Set clear boundaries. Boundaries are God's idea. Psalms 74:14 says " It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth". Boundaries are merely the limits we set for ourselves. Because ministry work is so demanding, it is imperative that we set boundaries around our work. "No" can be a good word. Often we find it very difficult to say "No".

If we feel we are letting people down or if we think we are saying NO to 'good things'. There may be times that instead of saying NO, we could just do ministry differently. Remember that saying YES to others all the time means saying NO to your family.

**Find creative ways to spend time** alone with your husband and children.

Schedule lunchtime or breakfast together. Spend time away from phone and the demands of the ministry.

**By living out our priorities the way God intended:**

-God first

-Our family( husband, then children)

-Our Ministry

As we live out this priority, we will set a good example for those under our spiritual care and guidance. We will also teach our children how to set healthy boundaries around involvement in activities outside the house.

- 2. Sharpen Your Communication:** Never allow communication gaps in your home. Always find a way to communicate with your husband and children. If not, the enemy might take an advantage of the gaps created to destroy the home.

- 3. Sexual Intimacy:** The demand for ministry can leave us emotionally and physically drained. So make sure that you have boundaries around your ministry.

Leave time and energy for your husband and time to nurture your sexual relationship. 1 Corinthians 7: 3-5 says our bodies don't just belong to us once we are married but to our husband. For example, years back, I was in charge of the married fellowship in our church. I always challenged couples not to leave gaps in their sexual commitment to one another but I found myself not practising it because my husband was always tired and coupled with the fact that I was nursing my children. I asked God for a way out because I hate to preach what I don't do. I fasted and prayed and the Lord helped us.

- 4. The Love Language:** Work more on your husband's love language. If your communication is good, you will know how to meet his need.
- 5. Everyday Act Of Caring:** Small, frequent acts of caring are the lifeblood of positive relationships because they offer both partners signs that they are valued and the relationship is important.

Never be too busy that you forget your husband's birthday or your children's birthday, marriage anniversary etc. Don't wait for him to remember yours before you show love to him. Remember to celebrate him on his birthday, wedding anniversary, father's day etc. even if he doesn't do it often or at all. Do your part. I learnt something from Kenneth Copeland years back. He said God told him that " it is not what people do to you or did not do for you that matters but what you do to them and for them." I have been using it to guide my attitude towards people around me.

Being in the ministry is a very challenging place to be. There are a lot of real demands both physical and emotional. We have to be careful that we do not have such a singular focus on ministry that we neglect nurturing and building our marriage.

Growing a strong marriage relationship as ministry wives will speak volume to the world we are trying to reach.

**Prayer**

Father, I pray for encounters that will transform our lives, homes and ministry this season and beyond. Holy Spirit, our Helper, we depend on you tonight, have Your way. Break down strongholds of the enemy in our homes and ministry and let the love of God (agape) permeate the atmosphere of every family represented on this platform in the mighty name of Jesus.

In this second session of our seminar, I pray that the Spirit of the living God will show up in a special way in the mighty name of Jesus. We cover our hearts and minds with the blood of Jesus, Father, thank You for answering us in the mighty name of Jesus. Hallelujah!

Other challenges in the ministry that can affect the ministry wife's home

- a. **Criticism:** A pastor's wife must cope with Criticism. In fact, Criticism is inevitable in the ministry. Our Lord Jesus was criticised and He warned us that we too will experience such.

Far too many ministry couples have been hurt by the churches they've served. Prophet Zechariah wrote, *"If someone asks, what are these wounds on your body?" They will answer, "The wounds I was given at the house of my friends"*. (Zechariah 13:6)

When coping with critics, find a wiser or older friend, a discipler, or a confidant outside of the congregation who can pray with you. As you pray together, ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is any truth in the criticism.

Learning to process and pray with your discipler will give you encouragement and accountability for the long haul.

Be careful whom you talk to about your home. If the criticism is about your husband, make sure you pray very well before you approach an external person especially if your husband is guilty. Ask the Holy Spirit for direction. Pray and talk to your husband about it.

Many ministry homes have been destroyed because the women lacked wisdom and understanding.

1 Peter 3:1-4

Chances are that if your husband's relationship with God is not right, you won't win him back by exhorting or criticising him, but your character can have a tremendous influence. In fact, for example - what 1 Peter calls "The hidden person of the heart evidenced by a gentle and quiet spirit" - will do more to encourage and influence him than anything else.

For example, the pastor's wife of a church brought the ministry down when she discovered that her husband was having sexual affairs with some ladies in the church. Instead of asking for direction from the Holy Spirit, she informed the head of the church intercessors to join her to pray for the pastor and before she knew it, it went viral and the church was destabilized. Pastor's wives who want to thrive in the long marathon of ministry life need to learn the art of defending their homes even when critics are right.

Looking to God for intervention will do a better job than involving a wrong person in the situation.

**b. Another one is LONELINESS. The feeling of isolation and loneliness as a ministry wife.**

Loneliness is one of the biggest struggles ministry wives face. From my own experience, I believe a pastor's spouse is more likely to feel lonely and be without close friendships than other people in the congregation.

They have very few people they can confide in about the really important matters of life. Often it is the wife who is the main sounding board.

As the pastor processes the criticism, stresses and hurt of the ministry life, it's easy for his wife to absorb all those feelings. As a result of the stress, she may build protective walls around her heart.

However, authentic friendships are essential for you as a ministry wife. You need people that will stand with you in prayer when the heat is too much for you and your husband to bear. The pressure can affect your relationship with your husband and children.

Protect your home.

Ask God to show you a supportive network of friends (preferably outside the church) where you can be authentic and share your heart. If you have built walls, dare to open your heart again and seek to connect with those who have a common interest with you.

The effort you put into building true friendship will sustain you through the ups and downs of ministry life.

**c. Another challenge is the Children**

Proverbs 10:1 says "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother".

Our children are our first disciples. The father is the spiritual priest in the home, but because the mother spends more time with the children, God entrusts a lot of their training and education to us as mothers. Timothy's mother and grandmother were already having a ministry in his life. (2 Timothy 3:15)

Be there for your children. They are our future. "Don't rub Peter to pay Paul". Give them adequate attention. Eli and his wife never gave attention to their children.

A man of God was asked about his greatest achievement in ministry. He said, he has 5000 members in his church but his greatest achievement is that all his children are saved and serving with him in the ministry.

My sisters, we are the unifying factor in our homes. Protect your home from invaders. (Isaiah 65:22-23). Take care of your husband. Disciple your children and they will in turn disciple the next generation.

### Session 3

#### How To Cope As A Ministry Wife When Your Husband Is Not Following The Lord

**a. Focus on being the wife you need to be.**

Don't try to make your husband what you want. Isaiah 59:1, Romans 8:1. God is the God of forgiveness and restoration.

**2. Recommit to loving and serving your husband more, and not less.**

Your husband's spiritual condition is not an excuse to criticise or judge his actions or assume yours as superior because you are following the Lord. God still sees him as the head of your home and joyfully acknowledging this opens the door for God to bless your marriage.

For example, a classmate of mine married a Muslim before she got born again. Some years after her conversion, she was called into the ministry. Her husband is not yet saved up till now but he did not disturb her. She said something that touched me. During the time Muslims fast, she joins him. She asks for his request and she prays over them. While she is not in promoting being Muslim or the Muslim fast, rather as a wise woman she used the season to fast and pray to her living God, She's trusting God for his salvation and I believe God will show up for her.

There is always a way out if we seek the face of God. Your husband's lack of faith is a call to love unselfishly. It will be painful at times, but this is how he will see Christ in you. You don't have to agree with every decision and it is okay to express your concerns or offer counsel. But do so in a way that shows respect. At times, you may have to apologise for things you didn't really think you had done to keep peace, being loving and kind even if he wasn't.

When your husband is not following the Lord, you can't be his personal Holy Spirit. It will only create a stumbling block for the Gospel. 1 Peter 3:1-2.

Ask God daily for the strength to be this kind of wife because you won't have it within yourself.

For example, a sister in our church was stopped by her husband from travelling abroad for meetings despite the fact that he was the one that first revealed to the wife that she will be travelling abroad frequently for international meetings, but because he listened to the criticism of his friends. The sister obeyed him and kept believing in God for intervention.

She did not neglect her duties at home but was praying. After 3 years, God appeared to the man in a dream to release his wife, which he did.

If we are patient enough, everything will work for our good. Reserve time for church, but be present for your husband. It is easy for resentment to take root when you are constantly ditching your husband for a church function or Christian friends. Particularly those of us who are the ones at the forefront of ministry than our husbands, we must serve the Lord in the right order.

One of your husband's needs is companionship. When you give the situation over to God, He will give you peace. Nurture your relationship with God so that He can provide you with the strength and wisdom needed to love your husband.

Release your husband to God. His relationship with Christ is God's responsibility, not yours. You can be the perfect wife but your husband will not come to Christ until he is drawn by the Holy Spirit, and then responds to the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:14. Your responsibility is to love God and pray for him. God will bless your commitment to love your husband. Love him unselfishly, unconditionally, with joy all in. Then let God work. Not you but God. Titus 3:5.

NLT Bible. Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.*

### **Question: What To Do If Your Husband Leaves The Church?**

Pray, Pray, Pray. Your responsibility is to love and pray for him. Ask the Lord to give you the strength to help your husband through encouraging words, deeds, and building him up and encouraging him in his purpose. I believe your husband will appreciate your support during this trying time.

When situations like this arise, please don't give up. 1 Peter 3:1-4.

Give the situation over to God and ask him to work in your husband's life. Ask God to do whatever it takes to change your husband's decision. Ask, then leave it in God's capable hands.

You can also ask God "What is next?" He may take you down a journey you never expected. I believe that "*All things work together for good for those who love God*". Romans 8: 28. Be faithful! Never, Never, Never give up!

Proverbs 3: 5-7 (Msg)

*Don't lose your grip on Love and Loyalty. Tie them around your neck; carve their initials on your heart. Earn a reputation for living well in God's eyes and the eyes of the people. Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own.*

### **Question: How should I respond to threats from the senior pastor? When I say threat, I mean situations when the senior pastor drew my husband closer and made me look as if I am the evil one.**

Response 1: I think the first thing is earnestly going to God in prayers for help on how to manage such and also important is to win your husband's confidence so that no one can come between you and your husband this is very important, when you are one with your husband it will be difficult for anyone to come between. ...A cord of three is not easily broken Ecc4vs12

Back to sister Folasade's response: I had a similar experience almost 30 years ago. My husband's friend had a church very close to our residence then. His friend wanted us to leave our church and join his, but I was not convinced that we should leave. The man gave me names which did not bother me. One day, he invited my husband and some other people to his church to give them assignments. There was a woman among them, he told the woman to leave her husband

since he was not following her to church. While he was talking to the woman, my husband said, he was scared that the man would tell him to leave his wife too and that was the last time he entered the church. My sisters, we have to fight for our marriage and not against our marriage. It is the devil that is the destroyer (John 10:10) and he would use anyone to carry out his mission.

**Question: How can a ministry wife handle a marriage where she is physically abused? And in some cases the congregations are aware.**

Honestly, when I read through the question, I had a witness in me that some boundaries must have been broken before the situation got to physical abuse.

Sometimes, I love to hear from both sides before taking sides. When I met my husband, we were not Pastors then but colleagues at work. Before we got married, he gave me two instructions: when he is angry, I must not get angry or argue with him. I should wait for him to calm down before saying anything even if he is wrong. Secondly, I should respect him before his people because they value respect.

My sisters, when I heard his instructions, I ran to God to confirm the relationship and to give me strength for the journey which He did. Throughout our journey, I avoided provoking him to the glory of God.

God does not want a husband to ruin his wife's reputation neither does he want the woman to ruin her husband's reputation.

I want whoever has this issue to look inward to see what they were doing right before the abuse started. If she cannot trace it, she should ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what went wrong. Jeremiah 33:3 says *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

The Holy Spirit will reveal some secret to her. It could be diabolical. It could be the issue of the tongue. James 3:8-10 KJV says the tongue can be used for great blessing or for great destruction.

Our words should be used to build others up and not to tear others down as the Scriptures command us to do.

Ephesians 4:29 KJV "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Fight for your marriage my sister and God will make you a name and praise where you have been put to shame. Zephaniah 3:20

**Question: How can a ministry wife respond to a court summon for divorce by her pastor husband?**

So sorry to say that many of us don't really take time to focus on our home/marriage because of ministry work. This person here should have seen the divorce coming but we take things for granted thinking God will resolve it or it cannot happen because we are pastors. Place a value on your husband, if he's worth much to you, fight on your knees. Spread the paper before God. He hates divorce. He will grant you your heart's desires for your marriage in the mighty name of Jesus.

It is easy for someone else to tell you to quit when the going gets tough, but only you are responsible for your decisions. And if you will choose to fight for your marriage, God will fight with you.

### **Other responses to the question on an abusive husband**

Response 1: I just want to quickly address the matter of abuse and women being rescued out of the home.

This is a very controversial and sensitive issue, and particularly because of what we have seen going on in the church recently. However, the events happening in many so-called Christian homes are not the standard of God. As it was said, the issue of handling an abusive marriage for us as ministry wives must be handled with care and prayers.

We must not be quick to give a one-way solution. We must listen, ask questions and pray. Let us not quickly ask a woman to leave her matrimony, on the other hand, get to know what is going on. Separation must be our last option.

While I know that sometimes, it becomes necessary to remove a woman from an abusive marriage atmosphere, I always advocate that this should be done with the oversight of the church elders. This is because the man needs help, and the abusive woman also needs help. Even when she is removed, you will discover that there are issues that linger on and if not dealt with she struggles through life.

There are situations when church elders stepped in and the woman is removed, the husband is also helped, and prayer was constantly made, and today the marriage is now a platform to help many other marriages as the couples are deeply entrenched in marriage ministry.

We need to look beyond our pains and gains, and look at the glory of God and make sure things are done to glorify God whether we need to be removed from an abusive marriage atmosphere, or whether we want to stay.

One problem in the church of today is the lack of accountability. Everybody is a leader of themselves, so a pastor has no one he or she is accountable to, and pastors' wives are also not accountable to anyone. We need to go back to the right order of having the presence of an older Christian who takes accountability for us so that if things are going wrong, they will be there to offer help and hope by the grace of God.

Response 2: The bottom line is, they have free will of choice and they choose to treat you dirty. And there is nothing you did that should be an excuse for your spouse to hit you.

If the beating continues, kindly talk to someone, perhaps they may need to temporarily remove you from the home and pray for your spouse from afar, there is no distance in the spiritual realm.

Call on God and He would fight for you. Pray for your spouse for a change of heart. People change for one biblical reason: *“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Praying for somebody puts them in God’s hands, prayers seek to release — to God, for God’s will to be done...for their salvation first and foremost. What would it profit them for God to save their relationship but not their soul? If at all they should change for God, Jesus or fear of hell. God’s plans are to prosper you and not harm you.

**Question: What should be the response of a ministry wife whose husband is not giving her the privilege to help in ministry?**

Let me share Papa Idahosa's story that he shared in our church before he died. When he started his ministry, he did not involve his wife. He preferred other people to work with him. His wife will sit quietly at the back not complaining, but I believe she was praying to God.

One day, Bishop Idahosa was not at rest with his decisions, he travelled to see Pa Elton at Ilesha then. The elderly man painted a picture before him. He said he should imagine him, the elderly one to be on top of a building with a rope and he, Idahosa on the ground. If they are to pull the rope, who will come down first? Is it Idahosa or the elderly man? Papa Idahosa replied that he would pull the elderly man down because he was on the ground. The elderly man opened his eyes to what he was doing to his wife. He told him to carry his wife along as he moves up, if not she will pull him down. He learnt his lessons and repositioned his wife. Today, the woman has kept the fire of the ministry burning after his death.

Psalm 27:13-14 says we should wait on the Lord. We were also admonished that God makes everything beautiful in His own time. Mama Idahosa waited prayerfully!

My sister, tell God your desires about the ministry and your involvement, I trust Him to vindicate you.