

THE ROLE OF PASTOR'S WIFE IN CONTEMPORARY MINISTRY:
A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED PASTORS' WIVES IN LAGOS
BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The entry into the new millennium has come with challenges in ministry of the pastors that the roles of their partners in ministry call for a complete re-appraisal and clarification. This research is therefore an attempt to clarify from the biblical point of view what should constitute the roles of the pastor's wife in meeting some of the contemporary ministry challenges of the local church.

The study reveals that though the place of men seems more pronounced in the number of those who filled leadership offices, there does not appear to be any direct restriction of privilege for women in the Old or New Testament. The pastor's wife does not do the work of the pastor but the pastor and his wife are a team who are "part-owners" in the Gospel ministry, yoked together to do God's work.

The research discloses that the pastors' wives have real identity problem, a situation that has made some of them to have embarked on a search for the "real me" by wanting to take titled office in the church or becoming an executive member of the church. The research also demonstrates that the pastors' wives in Lagos Baptist Conference have a fair understanding of their roles as women as up to seventy three percentage of them do not agree to be known as mere attendees in the church. It shows that spiritual qualities as well as good home making could give a pastor's wife an opportunity to be a woman of influence in her husband's ministry.

The research also shows that most of the pastors' wives have strong harmonious and stable homes. This should be a bed rock for effective family ministry which, as indicated in the study some of them are already involved in. Likewise the positive response of the women leaders shows that the pastors' wives have a unique role to play in local church.

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The church environment is conducive for effective impact as the responses from the women leaders indicated. The fact that these women believe in the uniqueness of and the biblical support for pastors' wives ministry in the church should be seen as a welcome omen. Their little experience in the women ministry should be seen as an opportunity for impactful ministry by the pastors' wives.

A fact that has been established from the literature review is that the pastor's wife and her husband are "part-owners" of the same call of God. It follows therefore that there are no two different ministries for them. God sees them both as one person with one calling. The man has a part in that call and so does the woman. As each of them contributes his or her part, the call becomes a whole. Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, "Two are better than one..." The marital relationship is meant to bring increase to the couple's effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry. Consequently, they will have a good reward for their combined labor. She is made to complement the husband. She is not to be his competitor. Instead of trying to seek for other official ministry the pastor's wife must see her primary call as her husband's ministerial partner. It then might be necessary to seek God's face to discover and actually fit into her own part in that call as the Lord enables her. There is no room scripturally for a woman to have a separate ministerial outfit from that of her husband.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings from the study and the insight gained from the literature review, certain recommendations become inevitable namely:

1. Effort should be made to address the cognitive distortions that may in part be responsible for the identity problem that some of the pastors' wives are experiencing. If little value is placed on the roles being played by the pastors' wives they are vulnerable to identity crisis such as low self-esteem. They need strong encouragement and affirmation from family and friends. Low self-esteem can result from a lack of a sense of identity, because identity is closely associated in our society with what job we do. Like all other Christians, the pastors' wives need to find their primary source of identity in their relationship with God. It is not what we do but who we are—children of God—that gives our lives worth and purpose.
2. It is recommended that submission (Eph 5:22-24, 33; I Pet 3:1-2) should remain an important input that a pastor's wife needs to make in order for her marital relationship to succeed in achieving God's purpose. No matter how sensitive the body is, it lacks identity and direction without the head. Instead of struggling to act apart from their heads, pastors' wives are to submit and give their husbands due respect. It is their responsibility as wives to make their husbands great (Prov 12:4; Prov 31:23). The virtue to make their husbands great in their calling is in wives' life. The supply of the grace of God in the wife's life, into her husband's life is capable of putting a crown on his head and making him to sit among the elders at the gate. The taller the body grows, the higher the head goes. So also it is with a man and his wife. But a woman that causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.
3. It is also recommended that the pastor's wife influence should be based on character and competence. Character transformation is a prerequisite for the pastors' wives leadership in the church. Only out of a transformed

temperament life can we grow a godly leadership manner that will get things done while transforming lives in the process. The pastors' wives must continue to live out of their character regardless of the stated beliefs, opinions or values that they proclaim.

4. It is good that most of the pastors' wives seem to have good family. It is recommended that while it becomes necessary for their husbands to continue to focus on the ministry out there, it is the responsibility as pastors' wives to keep the home front. The care of the husband and children at home as well as maintaining a neat home conducive for healthy living, is their responsibility. A minister's wife must not be found out there as a busy body while the family is left unkempt. More than the physical however, a woman is meant to be a spiritual keeper of the home front. She is to be a watch woman at the home front, watching over the spiritual affairs of the children and the family as a whole so that the enemy does not have any loophole to creep in. It is in doing this that the husband would be able to concentrate on the work which God has committed into his hands.
5. It is also recommended that even though the pastors' wives in Lagos State Baptist Conference seem to have a strong base for ministering in the contemporary world as the findings show that they are involved already in such ministry such as WMU, children ministry and teaching ministry of the church, the depth of their impact could not be measured. It is therefore being recommended that the pastors' wives should work toward having noted impact by becoming active mentors and having a decisive discipleship program for the women folks and the teenagers and not just being merely involved.
6. Finally, it is recommended that the Nigerian Baptist Convention should pay

