

CHAPTER ONE

THE COMPLEX CHALLENGES AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
ROLE OF A PASTOR’S WIFE

Introduction

Isolated and virtually friendless.¹ Stressed.² Stagnating spiritually, resulting in feeling farther away from the heart of God. Second-guessing God’s vocational call while deeply and seriously considering leaving their church.³ Feeling so physically exhausted that perhaps even if they want to stay, they doubt they are able.⁴ This doubt precipitates deep guilt and personal judgement, “Maybe I’m just not cut out for this after all.”⁵

The above, either in part or in full, describes almost half of all pastors in the United States of America.⁶ This author has spent a good deal of time researching pastoral life, the

¹ H. B. London, Jr. and Dr. Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, Revised. (Regal, 2003).

² Carol Anderson Darling and E. Wayne Hill, “Understanding Boundary-Related Stress in Clergy Families,” *Marriage and Family Review* 35 (2003): 154, https://doi-org.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/10.1300/J002v35n01_09.

³ Linda Hileman, “The Unique Needs of Protestant Clergy Families: Implications for Marriage and Family Counseling,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 131, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349630802081152>.

⁴ Cameron Lee, “Patterns of Stress and Support Among Adventist Clergy: Do Pastors and Their Spouses Differ?,” *Pastoral Psychology* 55, no. 6 (July 1, 2007): 761, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11089-007-0086-x>.

⁵ Anugrah Kumar, “Nearly 3 in 4 Pastors Regularly Consider Leaving Due to Stress, Study Finds,” Christian Informative, *Christian Post*, last modified June 21, 2017, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/nearly-3-in-4-pastors-regularly-consider-leaving-due-to-stress-study-finds-121973/>.

⁶ Stephen Muse, “Clergy in Crisis: When Human Power Isn’t Enough,” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 61, no. 3 (2007): 183–195; Douglas W Turton, *Clergy Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion: A Socio-Psychological Study of Job Stress and Job Satisfaction*, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=494715> (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

original focus of my doctoral work.⁷ (Additionally, I lived it first-hand as a pastor myself.) The breadth of material is generous. The non-profit organizations serving pastors are well documented and forthcoming with information and resources. It was this in-depth journey into pastoral research that brought this author to a shift in doctoral focus.

While the description from the first paragraph describes almost half of all pastors, it also describes almost half of all the women who are married to pastors. For example, roughly half of both pastors and pastors' wives report not having one close friend.⁸ Here is a representative story: Eve has always loved the Lord, at least for as long as she can remember. Lately, however, it is getting harder. She is thirty-five with two young kids and endless laundry. Sometimes she stares into the washing machine and watches the water swirl, back and forth. That is how her life feels: kids, clean, cook, work, church, sleep, repeat. Her college degree didn't prepare her for this. Her husband seems to be rarely home. When he is home in body, he is often not in mind. He has just started his second pastorate, and the demands are high.⁹ He gives so much physically and emotionally to the church that he feels empty by the time he gets home.¹⁰ Who can blame him, and how is she supposed to compete with a calling from God?¹¹

⁷ Lee, "Patterns of Stress and Support," 761.

⁸ *Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Quantitative Long Report*, Research Survey (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Research: Biblical Solutions for Life, September 2017), <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Pastor-Spouse-Quantitative-Long-Report-2017.pdf>. London, Jr. and Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk*.

⁹ "...work-related stressors exacted a heavy toll [on clergy]:... by eroding marital adjustment and quality of life..." Carol Anderson Darling, W. Wayne Hill, and Lenore M. McWey, "Understanding Stress and Quality of Life for Clergy and Clergy Spouses," *Stress and Health* 20, no. 5 (2004): 262, https://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/fui76t/TN_wos000226075400005.

¹⁰ Sandi Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life: A Survey of Pastors' Wives" (master's thesis, Marquette University, 1991), 41, http://www.marquette.edu/library/theses/already_uploaded_to_IR/brune_s_1991.pdf.

¹¹ John Cattich, "Three Models of Clergy Systems: Analysis of Couple Processes and Spiritual Meaning," *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-011-0379-y>.

As the new pastor's wife on the block, she was asked to lead VBS this coming summer. Panic swept over her body, her gut tightened, and her mouth got dry. She knew it would not be her gifting, but those looming expectations from the church and those she had of herself... They were haunting and daunting. Who could she talk to? Who would understand?

Indeed, who would understand? One cannot understand the complexities and implications of being married to a pastor without understanding the complexities of performing in a pastorate. Regardless of the independent nature or independent desires of the spouse, the spillover of being married to a pastor is unique and undeniable.¹² With this in mind, the author's previous research on pastors is invaluable to the focus on pastors' wives.

The role of pastor's wife often involves a wide range of responsibilities, such as emotionally supporting her pastor-husband, conforming to certain congregational expectations of appearance and/or participation (often influenced by the previous pastor's wife), setting an example both personally and within her family and marriage, and remaining silent to keep from making waves.¹³ Research reveals the myriad of challenges and negative impacts that often accompany the role of clergy wife. Women married to pastors frequently and consistently suffer

¹² Ibid., 40.

¹³ Rene Drumm et al., "Love Everybody, Keep Your Mouth Shut, Don't Have an Opinion': Role Expectations among Seventh-Day Adventist Pastor Spouses," *Social Work and Christianity* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 94, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2021690523/abstract/32F22BD36E144A6BPQ/1>; Ryan C. Staley, "An Investigation of the Strategies Employed by Clergy and Their Spouses to Prevent and Cope with Interpersonal Isolation" (PhD diss., George Fox University, 2012): 5, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/psyd/127>; "This spouse shared that she does not feel free to lend her views to discussions of church business and ministry planning: I think, 'I am contributing to the church, you know, and I have just as much say.' I'm a member, but I don't get to... come to a business meeting and voice my opinion on a particular hot item in a church. I don't think that's fair to us as pastors' wives, that we are expected not to say anything or not to even participate in board meetings or business meetings or things like that. I think that is unfair to us as spouses." One wife expressed it this way, "Whether it is fair or not, I have a position that requires me to be an example and whether or not I have chosen to be an example, I am looked at and observed and emulated to some extent." Drumm et al., "Love Everybody," 103, 106.

from isolation, emotional pain, and stress and anxiety that negatively impact their spirituality and quality of life. These negative impacts may be found across multiple life systems, as will be unpacked shortly. The trying situation of ministers' wives prompted the research question, "How can women married to ministers deepen their spirituality and thrive as they navigate the challenges of the role?" The primary resulting answer is a spiritual formation model (SFM) that creates an optimal environment for spiritual growth and leads to an increased quality of life for pastors' wives. The proposed SFM includes three major anchors: individual spiritual practices, cross-affinity spiritual formation small groups, and continued exploration of women's embodied role as a pastor's wife. Women married to pastors who engage in this SFM develop a deeper spirituality, a social support system, better psycho-emotional well-being, and build immunity to stress.

The focus of this paper is women married to male pastors in the U.S.; these women thereby function in the role of pastor's wife.¹⁴ These women, as they function in this role, are here equally referenced as any of the following: pastors' wives, ministers' wives, clergy wives. The research surveyed spans multiple Christian faith traditions, which is significant considering that similar challenges and impacts were seen across such a wide variety of Protestant faiths.¹⁵ The experiences of a woman married to a male pastor vs. a man married to a female pastor are very different, due to the gender expectations and cultural norms still strongly at play in the U.S. and most American churches. Thus, her needs are unique and require a gender focus. As a

¹⁴ These women may be married to solo pastors, senior pastors, associate pastors or youth pastors.

¹⁵ Faith traditions include: both mainline and evangelical Protestant, American Baptist, Baptist, Assemblies of God, Church of Christ, Church of God, Evangelical Covenant Church, Evangelical Free, Christian Missionary Alliance, Foursquare, Free Methodist Church, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Lutheran, Lutheran Missouri Synod, Methodist, Nazarene, Non-denominational, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Presbyterian Church USA, Seventh Day Adventist, Southern Baptist, United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist, Wesleyan.

pastor's spouse, men are "significantly more likely to be nontraditional than their female counterparts."¹⁶ Here is the point-of-view from one non-clergy pastor's husband who participated in a study with thirty-nine pastor's wives:

I don't have those stereotypic expectations of the [female] pastor's spouse. Are there expectations? Sure, but they are dramatically different, it feels like. And so, I am blessed.¹⁷

Compared to the research on clergy, there is a small amount of research focused directly on spouses of clergy in the U.S. and even less in areas outside of the U.S. such as South Africa.¹⁸ In the small amount of research that exists, the responses from men married to pastors is statistically insignificant due to the still very small number of female pastors.¹⁹ Therefore, limiting the focus to women married to pastors "is common" in research.²⁰ While there are many reported intrinsic rewards for women married to clergy, this paper is not about those.²¹ This

¹⁶ Gail E. Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister: The Status of the Clergy Spouse as Part of a Two-Person Single Career," *Journal of Family Issues* 32, no. 7 (2011): 932, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X10396660>.

¹⁷ Drumm et al., "Love Everybody," 98.

¹⁸ "Most of the research has been conducted using the individual responses of male pastors. Comparatively little empirical research has been done with pastors' wives, and still less where both the husbands' and the wives' responses are matched and compared." Lee, "Patterns of Stress and Support," 761; "The research, which is limited, has focused on...the minister... Little has been devoted to clergy spouses, and less still to clergy children." Hileman, "Unique Needs," 120; Amy Luedtke, "The Lived Experience of Being a Wesleyan Clergy Wife: A Phenomenological Study" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Capella University, 2011): 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/883984031/?pq-origsite=primo>. Leschenne Darmé Rebuli, "The Biblical Role of the Pastor's Wife in the Local Church: A Case Study of Churches in Somerset West, Western Cape" (master's thesis, South African Theological Seminary, 2008): 10, <https://www.sats.edu.za/userfiles/Rebuli%20L%20Full%20Thesis%20FINAL%2021%20Oct%2008.pdf>.

¹⁹ Drumm et al., "Love Everybody," 96; *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, 48; Darling et al., "Understanding Stress," 264; In some instances the male-spouse response is as small as 2.5% - 4%, and in some cases the male-spouse response is ejected from data analysis for varying reasons which include the male-spouse being clergy himself. Yet in other research, the number of female pastors is so small that they are not included in the samples at all.

²⁰ Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 937.

²¹ To note a few: Many wives acknowledge the good and bad of the church, "including appreciation for the church as their healer and sustainer." *Ibid.*; Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life." Wives

paper is about isolating some of the major difficulties and furthering understanding with an eye toward spiritually directed approaches to ease them.

Challenges and Negative Impacts Divided by Systems

The struggles of women married to pastors create a complex ministry problem including a wide range of stressors: lack of social support, loneliness, lack of time/time pressures, role expectations/confusion, lack of privacy/fishbowl effect, financial strain, boundary issues, etc. These women live in a web of overlapping and interconnected systems with one influencing the other in constant feedback and modification. Three of these systems here addressed are: the *self system* (spiritual, mental, psycho-emotional), the *family system* (household functioning, marriage, time management), and the *church system* (expectations and demands both congregationally and denominationally).²² A breakdown in any of these systems can instigate similar negative emotions in any of the others. Thus, when one or more systems is precipitating a negative

find meaning and self-fulfillment in their participation in the church and contributing to other's lives, interacting with a wide range of people and they deeply appreciate the gratitude and respect that may be shown them. Amy C. Luedtke and Katti J. Sneed, "Voice of the Clergy Wife: A Phenomenological Study," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 72, no. 1 (March 2018): 63–72, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1542305018762212>. Wives express enjoyment when they are able to direct the activities and responsibilities they endeavor, mention how some congregants support them like extended family and mention their appreciation for the influence they have in their role. Sarah Pierson Kerrick, "Positive Coping Practices Among Wives of Male Christian Clergy: Translating Qualitative Findings for a Lay Audience" (PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2010), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/755662258/?pq-origsite=primo>. Many wives report a thanksgiving at seeing God at work up-close, find joy in loving others, feel rewarded when they are able to function in their gifting and find their faith and sensing God's presence to be a solace in the difficult times. "85 percent [of clergy wives] feel cared for by their church." Kara Bettis, "Survey: Pastors' Wives Often Feel Disconnected, Isolated," Academic Resource Library, *The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*, last modified September 20, 2017, <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/survey-pastors-wives-often-feel-disconnected-isolated>.

²² In the church system, it is here duly noted that many Christian churches do not exist within denominations but rather associations or networks. In this paper, the term *faith traditions* or *denominations* is utilized with this understanding and inclusion of such Christian associations or networks.

impact, such as loneliness, the feeling experienced by the woman may be intensified by the input from multiple systems. Therefore, the repercussions from the breakdown of one particular system can be difficult to parlay.

For example, the *self system*'s negative impacts include, but are not limited to, interpersonal isolation, family stress, and unmet expectations of the wife.²³ However, these negative impacts may be found in the *church system* as well. The breakdown and clash of these systems often leaves the wife feeling lonely and fearful to share her loneliness or other negative feelings including burn-out, anxiety or suffering, from either languishing spirituality or declining health, or both.²⁴ A vicious complication is the general lack of resources for wives and the reluctance of many wives to seek the resources that are available, even though research has shown that "spiritual resources had the greatest total effect on their quality of life."²⁵

We will now examine the three systems mentioned above, exploring the challenges and negative impacts for each.

²³ Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 933; Staley, "Strategies," 4; Drumm et al., "Love Everybody," 94; Lenore M. Knight-Johnson, "Models of Clergy Spouse Involvement in Protestant Christian Congregations," *Review of Religious Research* 54, no. 1 (November 20, 2011): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-011-0038-x>; Hileman, "Unique Needs," 122; Ervin L. Shirey, Jr., "The Use of Support Systems by Pastors of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church as a Means of Maintaining Spiritual Well-Being and Coping with Burnout" (DMin. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001): 126, <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/ecommonsatsdissertations/435/>; Lee, "Patterns of Stress and Support," 35.

²⁴ Cattich, "Three Models of Clergy Systems," 180; Darling et al., "Understanding Stress," 262; Staley, "Strategies," 1; Hileman, "Unique Needs," 138; Kenneth R Pelletier, *Sound Mind, Sound Body: A New Model for Lifelong Health* (New York: Fireside, 1995); Kathleen A Kendall-Tackett, *The Psychoneuroimmunology of Chronic Disease: Exploring the Links Between Inflammation, Stress, and Illness*, (Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association, 2010).

²⁵ Darling et al., "Understanding Stress," 261; Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life," 21; Drumm et al., "Love Everybody" 107; Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 945; Staley, "Strategies," 5; Marsha Wiggins Frame, "Relocation and Well-Being in United Methodist Clergy and Their Spouses: What Pastoral Counselors Need to Know," *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 6 (July 1, 1998): 415, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023098120436>; "Counseling can be a drain on an already strained budget of many clergy families." Hileman, "Unique Needs," 137, 141.

The Self System: Spiritual, Mental, Psycho-Emotional

Table 1.1. Statistical data for the self system: clergy wives report struggling to some degree

Data Reported	Respondents	Source, Page #
		<i>Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Quantitative Long Report</i>
Having enough emotionally connected relationships	72%	27
Finding relationships where they can simply be themselves	69%	27
Counting on friends in church when stressed	68%	19
Counting on friends outside church when stressed	65%	19
Percent who count on a counselor	15%	20
Those who do spend “regular time with friends”	28%	47
Having confidants	80%	27
		<i>“His Job, Her Life”</i>
Few personal friends/lack of social support	50%	76
Hard to be yourself (especially women 41-50)	49%	53
Report being close to burn-out	33%	75

Would like help overcoming discouragement	43%	75
Need help coping with stress	60%	75

Sources: *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, LifeWay; Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life."

The first system here examined is the self system. This system highlights the internal workings of the woman, how the Spirit is moving in her life, how she is processing her feelings, the status of her psychological development, etc. Women married to ministers face challenges such as varying types of loneliness combined with little to no social support system, all working together to compromise both emotional and physical health and function.

"Humans have an innate need to engage with others, to communicate interpersonally, and to participate in mutually satisfying relationships..."²⁶ When engagement with others is not mutually satisfying, interpersonal isolation occurs. It is a defining attribute of loneliness, a condition where there is a gap between one's desired social connectedness and one's actual level of social connectedness.²⁷ Sadly, loneliness has been consistently and pervasively reported by women married to ministers throughout each and every published report on clergy wives.²⁸ "It is important to note that interpersonal isolation refers to a feeling, and that even one with many social connections may still experience loneliness."²⁹ Additionally, research shows that lonely people still engage in many social activities and do not necessarily spend more time alone.³⁰ That

²⁶ Julie Leming, "The Emotional Toll of End-Stage Renal Disease: Differentiating Between Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Disengagement," *Canadian Association of Nephrology Nurses and Technologists* (July 1, 2016): 1, https://www.thefreelibrary.com/_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=470369585.

²⁷Elliot A. Layden, John T. Cacioppo, and Stephanie Cacioppo, "Loneliness Predicts a Preference for Larger Interpersonal Distance within Intimate Space," *PLoS One* 13, no. 9 (2018): 1, <http://dx.doi.org.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203491>.

²⁸ Staley, "Strategies," 8. Staley alone notes over five studies. Each study found in this bibliography notes loneliness as a leading issue as well.

²⁹ Leming, "Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Disengagement," 4.

³⁰ Tara L. Queen et al., "Loneliness in a Day: Activity Engagement, Time Alone, and

is the situation of most pastors' wives, as gleaned from the statistics above.³¹ Lonely people are still engaging, still eating the ice cream...it is just not satisfying, not tasting as good.³²

One wife explains, "The loneliest feeling in the world can be sitting on a pew by yourself in a sanctuary full of people where your spouse is preaching."³³ Yet even in their loneliness, many wives feel guilty about sharing the depths of their need even to their husbands; many believe it would be selfish or might pull their husbands away from "the Lord's work."³⁴

Alienation is a specific type of loneliness: feeling different, separated, misunderstood, and having no close friends."³⁵ Many clergy wives believe they are perceived by others as being different and believe that those not in ministry do not understand their situation, yet due to factors within the church system, they do not typically connect with other pastors' wives either.³⁶ Alienation may be exacerbated by the sensitive information the wife must keep in confidence.³⁷ This vigilance can create a habitual state of being guarded.³⁸

Experienced Emotions," *Psychology and Aging* 29, no. 2 (2014): 10, <http://doi.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/a0036889>.

³¹ Staley, "Strategies," 8.

³² Queen et al., "Loneliness in a Day," 10-11.

³³ Hileman, "Unique Needs," 123.

³⁴ Cattich, "Three Models of Clergy Systems," 125.

³⁵ Carin Rubenstein and Phillip Shaver, "The Experience of Loneliness," in *Loneliness: A Sourcebook of Current Theory, Research, and Therapy*, eds. Letitia Anne Peplau and Daniel Perlman, Wiley Series on Personality Processes (New York: Wiley, 1982), 213; Staley, "Strategies," 1. Some refer to alienation as isolation.

³⁶ Hileman, "Unique Needs," 123; Only 9% count on other ministers' wives when they are under stress or feeling bad. *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, 5.

³⁷ "Loneliness. One hundred percent of the participants talked about how their relationships are affected because of their position. Whether they have to be extra guarded within the church because of confidential information being held inside or being treated differently than an average peer at church, the women sensed a difference." Luedtke and Sneed, "Voice of the Clergy Wife," 68.

³⁸ "Because they have practiced being guarded in their communication with those outside the family, it may be difficult for clergy couples to learn the same self-disclosing behaviors." Hileman, "Unique Needs," 136, 138.

Most clergy wives lack enough emotionally connected relationships where they can simply be themselves. When humans are not able to engage in personal authenticity (be themselves), symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress occur, which have been linked to physical illness.³⁹ For example, congregants invite the wife to birthday parties or showers and fail to understand that while this event may be a *social outlet* for the church member, it is essentially an *at work* event for the wife, as she is still seen as and must maintain the position of a representative of the church.⁴⁰ Research explains this as separating social networks from social support; it is the quality and depth of the relational interaction, not the number and frequency of contacts, that provides social support.⁴¹ Social support is vital because it serves as a buffer for loneliness of all types and promotes both physiological and emotional well-being.⁴² Loneliness is hazardous to wives on several fronts, negatively impacting multiple health systems: mental health, depression, cardiovascular health, high cholesterol, immunological health, chronic disease, diabetes, obesity, poor sleep, alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, suicidal ideation, and all-cause mortality.⁴³ Since clergy wives have a greater difficulty developing deep, intimate and

³⁹ Drumm et al., "Love Everybody," 107; Lee, "Patterns of Stress and Support," 418.

⁴⁰ Hileman, "Unique Needs," 127.

⁴¹ Laura Alejandra Rico-Urbe et al., "Loneliness, Social Networks, and Health: A Cross-Sectional Study in Three Countries," ed. Stephen E Gilman, *PLOS One* 11, no. 1 (January 13, 2016): 1-2, <https://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0145264>.

⁴² Michael Morris and Priscilla Blanton, "Predictors of Family Functioning Among Clergy and Spouses: Influences of Social Context and Perceptions of Work-Related Stressors," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 38, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022955912433>.

⁴³ Rico-Urbe et al., "Loneliness, Social Networks, and Health," 2; Chris Segrin, Tricia J. Burke, and Michelle Dunivan, "Loneliness and Poor Health within Families," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 29, no. 5 (August 2012): 660, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0265407512443434>; Queen et al., "Loneliness in a Day," 1; Aline Richard et al., "Loneliness Is Adversely Associated with Physical and Mental Health and Lifestyle Factors: Results from a Swiss National Survey," ed. Antony Bayer, *PLOS One* 12, no. 7 (July 17, 2017): 1, <https://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181442>.

mutually satisfying relationships...establishing social support...feelings of loneliness are no small matter and can be no small hurdle.⁴⁴

Christine Hoover, author and clergy spouse, states, “The deepest truth is that what I really want is friendship. I’m surrounded by lovely people and countless relationships, but relationships don’t always equate to friendship.”⁴⁵ Research data from 1962 to 2017, across multiple faith traditions, all report a common trend of clergy wives struggling to find and maintain fruitful friendships and confidants. This creates a weak social support system for these women, as they often are left to rely solely on their overworked clergy-husband.

This lack of friendship has led these women to be described as “impoverished”: having an inability to find “friends/support networks whether inside or outside of the church.”⁴⁶ Some of this inability is due to the fact that others have an expectation “that clergy couples do not need to have close friends.”⁴⁷ Another mitigating factor is that congregants often become jealous when the clergy wife becomes close to certain other church members, causing conflict and grief for the clergy couple.⁴⁸ If the wife lacks a social support system, she has no safe space to share her burdens; she is often left “to work this all out for herself, reading, writing, crying, and getting away alone.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 38; Staley, “Strategies,” 12.

⁴⁵ Bettis, “Survey: Pastor’s Wives,” 1.

⁴⁶ Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life,” 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 124.

⁴⁹ William O. Douglas, *Ministers’ Wives* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 41.

The Family System: Household Functioning, Marriage, Time Management

Table 1.2. Statistical data for the family system: clergy wives report struggling to some degree

Data Reported	Respondents	Source, Page #
		<i>Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Quantitative Long Report</i>
Family is negatively affected by the clergy husband's relocation	68%	28
Relocation created financial concerns	67%	28
Just making ends meet each month	48%	25
Need more than just husband's salary	70%	25
Church's needs are met and theirs are not	57%	31
Husband works 50 or more hrs/wk	46%	38
Spending "quality time" alone with husband 3x/month or less	69%	38
Demands of the church interfere with family time	74%	29
		"Understanding Stress and Quality of Life for Clergy and Clergy Spouses"

Pastors who spend 10 hours or less with family/week	50%	275
Wives and husbands at risk for compassion fatigue	27%	266
Wives at risk for burn-out	21%	266
Pastors at risk for burn-out	22%	266
		“His Job, Her Life”
Need more time with husband	74%	43
Need more time as a family	72%	43
Lack of communication with husband	40%	43

Sources: *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, LifeWay; Darling et al., “Understanding Stress”; Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life.”

The second system here examined is the family system. This system highlights the interplay of ministry on family function. Women married to ministers face challenges, such as family relocation, financial strain, time management between the family as a whole and ministry, and compassion fatigue. Even one of these stressors is enough to throw a family into dysfunction, and clergy families often face more than one simultaneously, which can compromise the health of the family unit.

Clergy families face many stressors; one highly impactful one is relocation. Relocation “can disrupt family functioning, be a significant source of stress, and adversely affect overall life satisfaction,” not to mention create additional financial strain.⁵⁰ These moves may generate a particular type of loneliness for the family: dislocation.⁵¹ Relocation and dislocation stressors are

⁵⁰ Staley, “Strategies,” 6; Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 38.

⁵¹ Rubenstein and Shaver, “The Experience of Loneliness,” 35.

a high concern because of the frequency of pastorate moves: “clergy families move, on average, every 4-5 years” across multiple faith traditions.⁵² Clergy relocation has its own unique stressors, especially: if the constraints of a parsonage are involved (although their use is on the decline), if the size of the town or city is a radical change/adjustment for the family, if they will be removed from extended family, and due to the loss of control over the place the family must worship and the congregants with whom they must socialize.⁵³ Relocation and dislocation may create feelings of powerlessness, regardless of denominational polity or whether the move was pastor initiated.⁵⁴ Relocation disrupts family routines, severs support systems, and may lead to loss of employment for the wife, leading to personal sadness and loss of income.⁵⁵ Research shows that the clergy spouse suffers a stronger negative impact from relocation and reports significantly lower rates of well-being due to relocations, possibly manifesting “depression, sadness, loneliness, and alienation from the community.”⁵⁶ If the wife is separated from her extended family, she may lose the positive impact of a significant coping mechanism, as close and satisfying family relationships “have been found to contribute significantly to overall quality of life.”⁵⁷

Grief and loss are major hurdles faced by clergy wives.⁵⁸ She and the family endure loss during relocation and are expected by the new congregation to be overjoyed with their new situation, which often forces grief to go unprocessed.⁵⁹ This unprocessed grief may linger for

⁵² Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 121.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 125; Frame, “Relocation and Well-Being,” 418.

⁵⁵ Frame, “Relocation and Well-Being,” 415; Murphy-Geiss, “Married to the Minister,” 951.

⁵⁶ Staley, “Strategies,” 6; Darling et al., “Understanding Stress,” 263; Frame, “Relocation and Well-Being,” 417, 422.

⁵⁷ Darling et al., “Understanding Stress,” 263.

⁵⁸ Frame, “Relocation and Well-Being,” 426.

⁵⁹ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 127.

many years, as many families are reluctant to seek counseling or other assistance.⁶⁰ To complicate the adjustment of relocation, the wives often bear the greatest burden in adapting the family into the new home and community.⁶¹

In some situations, the new church may be a welcomed change due to conflicts from the previous church. However, those hurts may go unprocessed as well: 59 percent of wives struggle to some degree with still feeling pain from previous ministry conflicts.⁶² Most pastors' wives carry the pain not only of previous congregational injuries but from previous relocations as well.⁶³ This pain has kept some from investing in new friendships.⁶⁴

There is a lengthy history of clergymen receiving less than adequate pay, regardless of the biblical mandate, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."⁶⁵ Research from the 1980s through 2017 all reflect the same struggle and conflict finances bring to the majority of pastors and their wives.⁶⁶ In fact, a full 68 percent of wives are concerned the family will not have enough for retirement.⁶⁷ Indeed, low income is one of the reasons often given by wives for working outside of the home.⁶⁸ Early in the Protestant movement, many wives worked domestic or educational

⁶⁰ Frame, "Relocation and Well-Being," 426.

⁶¹ Knight-Johnson, "Clergy Spouse Involvement," 38.

⁶² *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁴ Staley, "Strategies," 9.

⁶⁵ 1 Timothy 5:18; all Scripture references are NAS unless otherwise noted.

⁶⁶ Staley, "Strategies," 7; Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life," 76; Hileman, "Unique Needs," 121; Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 945; *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, 14.

⁶⁷ *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, 6.

⁶⁸ Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 945. In 2008, the average annual compensation for one conference of a mainline denomination was \$56,044, which is lower than the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau's median family income of \$60,374. Hileman, "Unique Needs," 121. The median value of clergy compensation at large in 2008 was \$38,214, much lower than the 2004 U.S median compensation for workers with a master's degree, which was \$77,935 (which most clergy possess).

jobs to provide additional income. While this trend dropped off in the nineteenth century, the number of clergy wives working at least part-time outside the home has been climbing steadily since the 1960s, as noted below in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3. Percentage of clergy wives working outside the home

Year	Full-Time Employment	Part-Time Employment	Total Employment
1965	10%	19%	29%
1987	30%	35%	65%
1990	34%	36%	70%
1997	—	—	80%

Sources: Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life,” 24; Brunette-Hill, “A Life of Her Own: Role Change Among Clergy Wives,” *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 10 (1999): 85, https://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/fui76t/TN_proquest61440428.

This stands to reason in light of the 1982 report stating that while pastors ranked in the top 10 percent of the population for educational achievement, they ranked 325 out of 432 professional occupations in terms of financial compensation.⁶⁹ It is no wonder that 70 percent of pastors believe that their lack of compensation contributes to marital and family stress and conflict.⁷⁰ Part of the poor compensation for pastors includes poor insurance: medical, dental, counseling.⁷¹ This may provide one reason why so many clergy families fail to seek professional counseling.

There are only twenty-four hours in a day. No amount of spirituality or wishing will change that. Since the hours in a day were set by God, we must trust that in God’s infinite

⁶⁹ Staley, “Strategies,” 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 39.

⁷¹ Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life,” 21.

wisdom they are enough. However, most pastors might disagree. It is one of their greatest struggles: to manage the time allotment between ministry and family. As such, it is one of their wives' most painful and pressing concerns.⁷² From 1960 to 2017 the trend has continued. As husbands work long hours to meet the needs of the church, the wives' needs are often left unmet. Between multiple pastoral obligations and clergy working nights and weekends, clergy wives struggle to connect with their husbands.⁷³ The couple fails to schedule regular time together to talk, and intimacy fades.⁷⁴ It is crucial to clarify that *regular time to talk* does not include discussing ministry business or plans. For many pastors, their wife is their only confidant; this creates a great deal of strain on the marriage.⁷⁵

Part of the time management obstacle is “the lack of boundaries clergy families encounter.”⁷⁶ Ministry time blends into family time and the family often feels compelled to attend all church events.⁷⁷ One wife explains: “We no longer have the time, energy, or the opportunity for any social life beyond the two of us together. I miss having family close (they all reside in another state) and I miss having friends.”⁷⁸

⁷² Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 128; Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life,” 34; Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 39.

⁷³ Lee, “Patterns of Stress and Support,” 761.

⁷⁴ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 139.

⁷⁵ Staley, “Strategies,” 9; Shirey, Jr., “Support Systems,” 65; Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 129; There are organizations that facilitate pastoral support groups where pastors can freely and confidentially discuss ministry burdens; these organizations have had extremely positive impacts on clergy marriages. Barnabas Ministries, Inc., John1723.net.

⁷⁶ Knight-Johnson, “Clergy Spouse Involvement,” 20; Darling et al., “Understanding Stress,” 263; Staley, “Strategies,” 3; Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 130.

⁷⁷ These types of stressors may be felt uniquely by pastoral children, as the small amount of completed research for them has indicated. However, the scope of this paper will not include their specific needs.

⁷⁸ Brunette-Hill, “His Job, Her Life,” 40.

Pastoral couples experience “significantly more loneliness and diminished marital adjustment” compared to non-pastoral couples. The isolation pastoral couples feel socially often creeps into their marriage relationship, as both emotional and physical intimacy wane.⁷⁹ This risk of marital isolation is a particular concern when the family has young children, and this can be especially painful for the wife.⁸⁰ If intimacy is lost, it becomes more and more difficult to recapture as the children grow older. Pastoral couples, especially the wives, report fewer support resources, and all of the above-mentioned stressors (intrusiveness of ministry, mobility, time demands, lack of social support) negatively impact family functioning across multiple dimensions, with wives being more negatively affected.⁸¹ All things considered, being a pastoral couple is ““risky business” for all spouses and particularly for nonclergy spouses.”⁸²

In this “risky business” of pastoral life, compassion fatigue is a risk for both wife and husband. How much empathy and compassion can a couple provide “before their emotional reservoir becomes bankrupt?”⁸³ Compassion fatigue in ministry is understood as the spiritual, mental, and physical exhaustion experienced by those who care for others.⁸⁴ The more commonly known condition, *burnout*, is actually an aspect of compassion fatigue “that is characterized by feelings of depression, disconnectedness, and anxiety in the workplace environment.”⁸⁵ Clergy

⁷⁹ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 138.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸¹ Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 37-38.

⁸² Darling et al., “Understanding Stress,” 262.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸⁴ “Compassion fatigue is a more user-friendly term for secondary traumatic stress disorder. It is related to the cognitive schema of the therapist or caregiver (social and interpersonal perceptions of the morale).” Daniël Louw, “Compassion Fatigue: Spiritual Exhaustion and the Cost of Caring in the Pastoral Ministry. Towards a ‘Pastoral Diagnosis’ in Caregiving,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies; Pretoria* 71, no. 2 (2015): 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1737514616/abstract/A73AF2C8D0A64678PQ/1>.

⁸⁵ Tifani-Crystal Enid Hanley, “Compassion Fatigue, Self-Care, and Clergy Members: How Social Workers Can Help” (master’s thesis, California State University San Bernardino, 2019): 1, <https://>

exhibit high levels of burnout across multiple faith traditions, but pastoral burnout does not occur in a vacuum, and pastoral families also suffer.⁸⁶

The pastorate can create the perfect compassion fatigue storm for families, especially when the following are at play: high pastoral expectations/demands from the congregation; minimal family training in clinical, mental health and spiritual practices; exposure to the pain experienced by congregants.⁸⁷ Wives are often exposed to both the pain of congregants and the pain of their pastor-husbands, and an overexposure to pain can prompt compassion fatigue.⁸⁸ Clergy wives may be exposed to compassion fatigue's general symptoms of feeling emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically drained.⁸⁹ Those in the midst of compassion fatigue grow less and less able to exhibit compassion, less able to care for others and less able to experience joy.⁹⁰ A wife is at risk when she expends a great deal of energy and compassion yet feels little internal peace or receives little positive feedback.⁹¹

Compassion fatigue is mitigated by *compassion satisfaction*:

scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/820/?utm_source=scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu%2Fetd%2F820&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

⁸⁶ C.A. Lewis, D.W. Turton, and L.J. Francis, "Clergy Work-Related Psychological Health, Stress, and Burnout: An Introduction to This Special Issue of Mental Health, Religion and Culture," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10, no. 1 (January 2007): 1,5, <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=c8h&AN=106109873&scope=site>.

⁸⁷ Hanley, "Compassion Fatigue, Self-Care, and Clergy" 2.

⁸⁸ Darling et al., "Understanding Stress," 263.

⁸⁹ Hanley, "Compassion Fatigue, Self-Care, and Clergy," 2.

⁹⁰ Robin John Snelgar, Michelle Renard, and Stacy Shelton, "Preventing Compassion Fatigue Amongst Pastors: The Influence of Spiritual Intelligence and Intrinsic Motivation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology; La Mirada* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 248, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2085005112/abstract/8C2DE507AD294EB7PQ/1>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

...positive cognitive and emotional consequences as a result of feeling empathy. These consequences include feeling strengthened by having been able to help, satisfied with one's own situation, developed as a person, and the like.⁹²

The needed ingredients for compassion satisfaction are listed below in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4. Critical ingredients for compassion satisfaction

Factor	Description(s)	
Efficacy	How efficient is my input?	
Beneficiary	How beneficial is the helping relationship?	Did the person benefit?
Healing	Did the helping relationship instigate change?	Did it make any difference (result)?
Experience of fulfillment	Do I have a feeling of being content with my work (success).	
Constructive feedback	The experience of being competent and acknowledged by peers in the field.	

Source: Louw, "Compassion Fatigue," 6.

Unfortunately, 52 percent of clergy wives have a "low to modest potential for compassion satisfaction." This places them at greater risk for suffering fatigue, especially as compared to their pastor-husbands, who have a much greater capacity for compassion satisfaction.⁹³ All of these contributing negative impacts can stack up on clergy families: compassion fatigue, loneliness, unprocessed grief or anger, depression. In 2005 one mainline denomination, in

⁹² Eric M. Hansen et al., "Does Feeling Empathy Lead to Compassion Fatigue or Compassion Satisfaction? The Role of Time Perspective," *The Journal of Psychology* 152, no. 8 (November 17, 2018): 632, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00223980.2018.1495170>.

⁹³ Darling et al., "Understanding Stress," 266.

conjunction with their insurance agency, found that clergy and clergy families were treated for mood disorders at a rate 40 percent higher than the general population.⁹⁴

With so much stress on the family system, it is understandable that families struggle with their satisfaction in ministry. A couple or family’s unhappiness, disappointment or dissatisfaction with ministry life may result in guilt, as they wonder if they are being selfish and may begin questioning their call or if they are fit for the task.⁹⁵ While researchers and reporters disagree on the numbers of pastors leaving the ministry and the numbers of pastoral couples getting divorced, it is evident that many more are leaving and divorcing than need be. With increased support, more would be able to stay married in ministry.

The Church System: Congregationally and Denominationally

Table 1.5. Statistical data for the church system: clergy wives report struggling to some degree

Data Reported	Respondents	Source, Page #
		<i>Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Quantitative Long Report</i>
Have experienced personal attacks at their current church	59%	25
Not willing to confide in congregant because of multiple past betrayal	66%	32
If they were honest at church about prayer needs, they would become gossip	68%	32

⁹⁴ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 139.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 131.

Feel that congregation expects her to have a model family	87%	21
Feel congregation expects family needs to be secondary	64%	21
Feel congregation believes marriage should be a role model	93%	23
Feel they live in a “fishbowl”	89%	24
They do not get the attention they need from their pastor-husband because the church needs so much attention	76%	31
Church events interrupt marriage time	69%	30
Congregational demands interfere with family time during the week	74%	29

“Understanding
Stress and Quality of
Life for Clergy and
Clergy Spouses”

Evenings/Weekends are especially hard	86%	43
Competing with congregational demand on husband	62%	43
Expected to have ideal marriage	69%	53
Congregants confronted them with personal complaints about the pastor’s wife herself	55%	54
Congregants complained about wife to pastor	54%	58
Congregants complained about pastor to wife	67%	61
Pastors cannot minister to wife’s spiritual needs	50%	69

Congregation intrudes on time-off	66%	77
Buffered children from congregation	36%	78
Need more emotional support from their Association	46%	91

Sources: *Pastor Spouse Quantitative*, LifeWay; Darling et al., “Understanding Stress”;

The third and final system here examined is the church system. This system highlights the interplay of the congregation, faith tradition, and the clergy family. Women married to ministers face challenges, such as ministry intrusion, lack of support or resources, and the demands of congregational expectations. These challenges can negatively impact the woman’s spiritual growth and development, turning an intended sanctuary of love and nurturing into a maze of anxiety and withdrawal.

One clergy member explains, “Learning to set boundaries and learning to protect my family’s privacy have been our biggest stressors.”⁹⁶ When the lines between congregation and pastoral family are breached, intrusion occurs.⁹⁷ Intrusion comes in all shapes and sizes from members showing up unannounced, to the congregational interruption of family vacations, to members telling the pastoral family how to raise their children.⁹⁸ Pastors’ wives feel as though multiple aspects of their lives are on display for the congregation to see: their marriage, their children, their spirituality, etc. This is commonly referred to as the “fishbowl” effect and fosters stress related to the perceived expectation of perfection in the areas of life observed by the congregation.⁹⁹ To complicate matters, the congregation may have an exalted view of the

⁹⁶ Darling and Hill, “Boundary-Related Stress,” 158.

⁹⁷ Cameron Lee and Jack O. Balswick, *Life in a Glass House: The Minister’s Family in Its Unique Social Context* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Ministry Resources Library, 1989), 180.

⁹⁸ Darling and Hill, “Boundary-Related Stress,” 158.

⁹⁹ Staley, “Strategies,” 4-5; Morris and Blanton, “Predictors,” 38; Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 132.

pastoral family, particularly of the pastor and wife; this view may limit the congregation's willingness to view or experience the couple outside of their church roles.¹⁰⁰ As such, the congregation consistently crosses boundaries when they fail to recognize the needed time for the couple to function both as individuals and in intimacy as simply husband and wife. When these intrusions occur, family functioning is compromised, and the wife and family may feel taken advantage of.¹⁰¹ This may be felt deeply by the family in times of congregational conflict; the family may feel the congregation is treating a family member badly but feel pressured to continue to attend worship and present a friendly face...since "everyone" is watching.¹⁰²

Feelings of constant scrutiny can make pastoral families hesitant to seek the help and support they need, fearing it will negatively impact the pastor-husband's career.¹⁰³ A wife may feel as though no one outside the ministry can really understand, but she fears seeking help within the ministry for fear of hurting her husband's vocation or becoming gossip, or both.¹⁰⁴ Yet even in their trepidation, "the majority of clergy and their wives expressed the perception that their denominations did not provide the services which were important to enhance the lives of the clergy family system."¹⁰⁵ Additionally, some congregations have a false impression that a pastor's wife should have such a deep personal faith that she does not require additional support.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Brunette-Hill, "His Job, Her Life," 63; Staley, "Strategies," 19.

¹⁰¹ Morris and Blanton, "Predictors," 38.

¹⁰² Hileman, "Unique Needs," 134.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, "Patterns of Stress and Support," 769.

¹⁰⁵ Hileman, "Unique Needs," 137.

¹⁰⁶ Shirey, Jr., "Support Systems," 59.

Yet, the woman married to the pastor and the pastorate family's children do indeed need additional support. They have been referred to as "a people without a pastor."¹⁰⁷ Research indicates that the younger generation of wives are even more likely to report that their personal pastor is someone other than their husband or no one at all.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, pastoring one's own family feels like a conflict of interest. We certainly would not expect a psychologist to counsel his own child or a heart surgeon to perform bypass on her own child. Yet many faith traditions expect these families to surmount this steep obstacle of the pastor cross functioning in the roles of pastor-husband-father. In the roughly 500 years since the Reformation, Protestantism has still not completely deciphered how to fully serve the families of pastors.¹⁰⁹

Congregations and leaders of various faith traditions, both regional and national, bear some responsibility in providing support for clergy and their families.¹¹⁰ The state of the woman married to the pastor affects the pastor, as he serves the congregation. As such, if the spiritual health of one of them is compromised, the ministry to the congregation itself is compromised. The widespread effects of stress and burnout for pastors is a concern for church leaders, as "the particular circumstances related to spiritual and religious leaders in the community have a special and unique dynamic."¹¹¹ This dynamic includes the pastor's wife and family. Many congregations place a double bind on a pastor: when two contradictory expectations are placed upon one person whereas it is impossible to meet both; often one, or both, of the expectations is unspoken.¹¹² For example, a congregation might simultaneously think of a pastor, "You should

¹⁰⁷ D.P. Troost, "The Minister's Family," *Reformed Review*, no. 31 (1978): 71–77.

¹⁰⁸ Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 945.

¹⁰⁹ Hileman, "Unique Needs," 140.

¹¹⁰ Lewis et al., "Clergy Work-Related Psychological Health, Stress, and Burnout," 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹² Kevin A. Miller, "Ministry's Double Binds: Sometimes, No Matter What You Do, You End

have a model family, but we also want you to pick up when we call and be present at evening meetings.”¹¹³ The double bind of wanting a pastor-husband who dedicates time to his family so that they are all healthy and at the same time wanting a pastor who is on call twenty-four hours a day with an open-door policy creates an untenable situation for both clergy and clergy families.¹¹⁴ The same type of a double bind may be placed on the wife or children, causing stress and conflict. For example, the congregation may think, “We want you to sustain a healthy nuclear family, but we cannot really afford to pay you enough to support that nuclear family.”

The expectations of a double bind may be unspoken or unrecognized. In the example above, the congregation may not realize that the two expectations create a double bind. Likewise, often the clergy family has high, unspoken expectations which may also create a double bind.¹¹⁵ For example, the wife may want/financially need to have a full-time career and want/congregationally need to lead church ministry. She may want to have personal friends in the congregation and be fearful of showing any cracks in her marriage or faith. Women also have internalized expectations of what they believe is their role as clergy wives.¹¹⁶ With so many expectations swirling, there will be many that go unmet, leaving pain in the wake.

Some congregational expectations may be influenced by the previous pastor’s wife; the congregation may want the new pastor’s wife to be *just like* or *anything but* the previous woman.¹¹⁷ Role expectations may also be mitigated by the size of the congregation, where the

Up in the Wrong,” *Leadership Journal*, no. Summer 2002 (June 22, 2002): 12, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A89812343/AONE?sid=lms>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Hileman, “Unique Needs,” 133.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 123-131.

¹¹⁶ Drumm et al., “Love Everybody,” 98.

¹¹⁷ Knight-Johnson, “Clergy Spouse Involvement,” 35.

family is less publicly prominent in larger settings.¹¹⁸ Some role expectations are carried down with tradition through the history of the church or faith tradition, with little consideration given to the woman's gifts or desires.¹¹⁹ Some churches are clinging to a strong nineteenth-century model of the "two-person single career," where the wife serves as an unpaid assistant.¹²⁰ However, with more women working outside of the home or church, congregations seeking the two-for-one deal are having a more difficult time filling their pulpit.

In John Cattich's work, congregational expectations place churches in one of two general categories: family-sensitive congregations or family-insensitive congregations. Congregational expectations have the strongest influence over time management of the clergy family.¹²¹ Family-sensitive congregations, for example, proactively take responsibility for ministry tasks, allowing the pastor-husband to prioritize his family and encourage him to keep sabbath and vacation days.¹²² This allows both clergy and wife to have more freedom in defining their embodied roles, increasing the possibility of a wife taking a highly independent approach to her role. Family-insensitive congregations may be seen as "either inconsiderate or oblivious to the personal and relational needs of the pastor and their family."¹²³ These congregations can create double binds on the pastoral family, creating conflict and burnout. The sensitivity of a congregation's time expectations of a couple (how involved in church events they are) reflects their level of understanding that both clergy and wife need time for support outside of their church roles.

¹¹⁸ Lee and Balswick, *Life in a Glass House*, 36.

¹¹⁹ Debra D. Benoit, "The Changing Role of the Pastor's Wife in Today's Evangelical Church" (DMIN diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010): 9, https://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/fui76t/TN_proquest864030139.

¹²⁰ Murphy-Geiss, "Married to the Minister," 933.

¹²¹ Knight-Johnson, "Clergy Spouse Involvement," 34.

¹²² Cattich, "Three Models of Clergy Systems," 189.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 190.

When a church is highly insensitive, the family may begin to feel as though the church actually believes their needs *should* be secondary. However, the interaction of pastor, wife, and congregation is always fluid, adjusting to new or changing stimuli; a sensitive, or sensitively growing, congregation can contribute to healthy time management and ministry satisfaction.¹²⁴ In correlation, how a clergy family navigates the stressors of the church system influences the well-being of the congregation.¹²⁵

Conclusion

The role of pastor's wife comes with many stressors and challenges. The above-noted data, from LifeWay's *Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Quantitative Long Report*, communicates some of these. However, the situation may actually be worse than the numbers reveal. A recent Barna study revealed that 50 percent of pastors are age fifty-six or older.¹²⁶ This falls in line with LifeWay's survey demographics, where 46 percent of the respondents (pastor spouses) were age fifty-five or older.¹²⁷ Additionally, in the LifeWay survey 51 percent of respondents have been a clergy spouse for more than twenty years. These numbers are significant as evidenced by the additional analysis summaries provided by LifeWay in its summative document *Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Research Study Report*, as noted below in Table 1.6.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 190 - 191.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 189.

¹²⁶ *The Aging of America's Pastors, Leaders & Pastors* (Barna, March 1, 2017): <https://www.barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors/>.

¹²⁷ *Survey of American Pastors' Spouses Research Study Report*, Research Survey (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Research: Biblical Solutions for Life, September 2018): 144, <http://lifewayresearch.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/09/Pastor-Spouse-Research-Report-Sept-2017.pdf>.

Table 1.6. Additional analysis from LifeWay’s *Survey of American Pastors’ Spouses Research Study Report*

Demographic	Focused Challenges	Positive Reports	Page #
Without children at home		More happiness and positive feelings in both ministry work and daily life	11
Older age groups		More happiness and positive feelings in both ministry work and daily life	11
With children at home	More financial challenges		13
Younger age groups	Fewer safe, emotionally connected relationships		13
	More conflicts and emotional pain within church		13
	More financial challenges		15
	Less time for marriage due to ministry demands		17
Younger and with children at home	Stronger lack of trust and “fishbowl” effects		13
	Less time for marriage due to financial constraints		17

When taking into account the high percentage of older respondents and the higher percentage of focused challenges skewing toward the younger families, the picture for women age fifty-four and younger may actually be worse. This is a serious ministry problem, as “churches say they are struggling to find young Christians who want to become future pastors.”¹²⁸ With the state of these younger women married to pastors trending with more challenges and stressors, faith traditions may find it harder to recruit and keep younger families in pastorates.

¹²⁸ Aaron Earls, “How Old Are America’s Pastors?” *LifeWay: Facts & Trends*, last modified March 9, 2017, <https://factsandtrends.net/2017/03/09/how-old-are-americas-pastors/>.

Because of the struggles pastor's wives of all ages experience in the three major systems of their life—self, family, church—they need social and spiritual support in navigating and embodying their role, however they feel called to define it.