



A Letter to Children's Pastors—

Partners in Pastoring

by Carla Ellis

Note

It is understood that not all children's pastors are male with a wife. Many of you are female with a husband. Others of you are single. Regardless of your situation, there are things to learn from these letters. As you read them, pray for the Holy Spirit to minister to you.

Other than finding Christ, there is no greater joy than finding your partner for life. I met my husband 13 years ago at Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God. I knew he was the one for me when I realized that we both had the same desires in ministry. We both had a love for children and a desire to reach them for the Kingdom of God. Since we met, we have been a team. As we minister together, we have learned many ways to keep our marriage strong.

The best advice I have been given about marriage was from a very dear minister's wife. She told me to always remember the four Ps of life:

Partnership with God

The first *P* stands for partnership with God. Matthew 6:33

(NKJV) says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." God must be our first priority. If we are too busy to keep Him first, then we are too busy!

I love to wake up in the morning and see a light on in our living room. It tells me my husband is beginning the day by preparing himself spiritually on the Word of God. Also, it tells me he is interceding for our children and me. You can give your wife confidence in your marriage just by showing her you are striving to say: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Partnership with Your Spouse

The second partnership must be your partnership with your spouse. Pastors, to keep a marriage strong, it is important to always put your wives above your children or your ministry. It is easy to get so caught up in the business of ministry that we feel it is all right to neglect our spouses because we are working for the Lord.

However, we must remember that our spouses are our teammates. As a team, we must take "time-outs" to communicate to

one another and to encourage one another. Be creative with finding ways to be alone. As ministers, it is not always easy to find a free Friday night to go out on a date. Maybe going to lunch together while the kids are in school would be a better option, or surprise her and come home for lunch one day.

Whatever it takes, promise one another to take "time-outs" together. Remember, just like in sports, "time-outs" are not meant to tear each other down. They are meant to plan ways to encourage each other. Realize that as a pastor's wife, your spouse lives in a "fish bowl." She is constantly being watched and evaluated by those to whom she ministers.

Be sure to take "mini" vacations. Get away, out of town, for a few weekends a year. Also, take a week or two each year to escape together as a couple or as a family. The demands of ministry are great. If you want your ministry to survive and thrive for many years, you must take time to get away mentally and physically.

Help your wife avoid feeling like a single mom. There are many occasions when your wife will miss special events that you attend in order to take care of the children. Many pastor's wives are "stay-at-home" moms. Be

considerate of this. If your wife has been home alone for a long period of time, give her a break. Take the kids to the park so she can have some time alone at home to read or take a long bath. If you have a sick child, allow your wife to get out of the house while you “play nurse.”

Be sensitive and watch for signs of fatigue. If you want a winning marriage, keep the partnership with your wife the second priority in life. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church.” Let her know you love her more than you love your ministry.

Partnership with Your Children

The third *P* to remember is partnership with your children. As children’s pastors, this is probably one of the most difficult priorities to keep. If we are not careful, we can get so caught up in taking care of all the children in our ministry that we neglect our own.

We must remember, our children are very different from the children to whom we minister each week. They see everything about us. If our “walk” is not consistent with our “talk” at home, then our children will become confused and possibly rebel against us.

There is a beautiful song that says, “Lord help me to be more

like You because he wants to be just like me.” If we want to produce godly descendants who will portray God’s character and deliver His message of salvation to the lost world, we must begin by showing our children the importance of having a good marriage. Show your children how to love their spouses and care for their spouses by setting the example for their marriages.

Partnership with Your Ministry

To keep your marriage strong, the fourth principle should be partnership with your ministry. Your ministry must take a back seat to your partnership with God, your wife, and your children.

One way to make this happen is to involve your family in your ministry. Genesis 2:18 says, “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”

Involve your wife in your ministry. She is your helpmate. She is not just there to care for your home and your children. Yes, she should care for them. However, allow her to be part of your ministry. Listen to her ideas. You’ll be surprised. God may be trying to speak to you through her. Set goals together. Have a vision you share together.

Intercede for each other. We pray every night together as a

family. We share our burdens and needs and we encourage each other with answers to prayer. As a family, we give our ministry to the Lord. By praying together as a family for our ministry, it lets me and our kids know we are on the team with dad as he ministers.

Also, involve your kids in your ministry. Our son would wake up every Sunday morning at 5:30 to go to church with his dad. He is only eight years old, but we have already given him small jobs to do, such as turning on the stage lights and cleaning up around the set. Now he is ministering on the drama team. Our daughter is five, but even she likes to feel needed when we are getting ready for a big event. Make your ministry a team effort.

As ministers, we must realize that the best way to minister is by role modeling. The children to whom you minister watch everything you do. They watch how you treat your wife and how you treat your children. If you want the children to whom you minister each week to know the characteristics of a godly marriage, show them by example. Your wife will love you for it!



This article is reprinted from the Fall 2000 issue of *Fanning the Flame*, a quarterly newsletter for children’s workers produced by the National Children’s Ministries Agency. *Fanning the Flame* is mailed free to children’s pastors and directors in the local church. For additional copies and back issues contact GPH at 1-800-641-4310.