

THE CONCERN...THE CALL TO SUPPORT PASTORS' WIVES

BY MILTON CARTER*

In recent years, there has been a growing discussion related to the needs of pastors' wives and doing something to meet those needs. This discussion has become an intense, focused call to provide "support groups" for pastor's wives. Having spent many years working with an initiative that established more than 100 pastoral covenant and mentoring groups for pastors, the number one concern voiced to me by participating pastors has been, "When are we going to start covenant groups for our wives?"

THE CHALLENGES

Sarah Jane Wessels in her article, *Care for the Pastor's Wives, Too!*, highlights the need for care/support groups for pastors' wives. Wessels describes the pain and hurt pastors' wives often experience in this way: "The pastor's wife is the secondary, innocent, victim of the stress that so badly affects her husband." She summarizes the concern for the 21st century pastor's wife by sharing how role expectations often negatively affect them with emotions such as loneliness, dissatisfaction, frustration, anxiety, guilt, and anger. One recommendation Wessels gives for addressing these stressors is "Pastors wives should form a care-for-one-another (pastor pastorum) system of their own." (See <http://www.torchleader.com/tl/2011/03/the-pastoral-care-of-the-pasto.html>)

Another voice raising our consciousness for the needs of pastors' wives is former pastor Joe McKeever. In recent blogs, he describes the pastor's wife as the most vulnerable person in the church building. Note his pointed observations of a pastor's wife: ". . . she is the single most likely person to become the victim of malicious gossip, sneaky innuendo, impossible expectations, and pastoral frustrations. The pastor's wife can be hurt in a hundred ways—through attacks on her husband, her children, herself. Her pain is magnified by one great reality: She cannot fight back." (See <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/17650-5-things-we-owe-every-pastors-wife.html?>)

THE ANSWER

The success of pastoral covenant groups and mentoring groups for pastors in several denominations in the last ten years is evidence enough that the time is right to establish care-giving, support groups for pastors' wives! As a *Covenant Connections* reader, you are aware that **The Helper: A Genesis 2:18 Ministry**—established in October 2014 by the Center for Spiritual Renewal—helps address the needs of pastors' wives, demonstrating God's timing for this much-needed ministry. The Helper offers a model to remove the aloneness of pastors' wives, heal their relational pain, and provide collaboration as well as resources in the safe place of a Helper covenant group setting.

Training events for future group facilitators are being planned to continue to grow this network and strengthen pastoral homes throughout the nation and in other parts of the world. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** Imagine hundreds of pastors' wives being strengthened, supported, and renewed by becoming involved in a Helper: Genesis 2:18 group! Pray for denominational leaders to embrace this new ministry. Ask God to raise up pastors' wives to serve as group facilitators. Intercede for His provision of financial resources to move this ministry forward.

Isn't it time for ministry to pastors' wives?

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