

*My Husband  
wants to be a  
Church Planter...  
So What Will That Make Me?*



Compiled and Edited by John M. Bailey and Sherri Jachelski



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## *An Introduction from Deborah Hammond... Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

Chances are, if you are reading this book, you are either beginning—or have already begun—a journey in church planting. Wherever you are on the road, you're probably searching for some encouragement and perhaps even a few fresh ideas. You've come to the right place for both. In the following chapters, you will hear from church planter wives just like yourself, who understand your struggles, joys and frustrations. None of them would claim to be experts, just willing servants allowing the Lord to use them to share their own journey in hopes of helping another along the way. No one has all the answers for you, but each writer has learned that no one can do this alone. It takes a team effort, surrounded by prayer.



I am very encouraged to know that so many people cared about those coming behind them and took the time to share their hearts with you. Being faithful to the call to plant new churches is one of the most effective ways to win the countless lost people in North America. The challenge is that it's hard work and quite often without recognition. A healthy, growing church doesn't happen overnight by accident. There will be some dark days of discouragement, but the effort is worth it all when you see a soul come to Christ.

As a wife, you've no doubt already learned that your husband is more effective with your help than without it. When God created the woman to be the man's helpmate, He must have had church planters in mind! Your husband has the primary role of developing your new church, but he can never be all the Lord intended him to be without you working beside him. In the days to come, he'll need your support, encouragement and occasionally perhaps even a word of caution. In those early days of church planting, it may be just you and him. He'll need to know you believe in his ministry as much as he does. You have the power to enrich or destroy his endeavor with your attitude. God has called BOTH of you in this adventure called church planting. Don't be shy about using the gifts God blessed you with for this very moment. Don't be afraid to try things you don't consider your strongest ability. You might be pleasantly surprised to see how the Lord gives you His supernatural power to "do all things through Christ who strengthens you."

Be assured of the North American Mission Board's support of you and your husband and your faithfulness to share Christ's love throughout North America. We will be praying that God will use you in a mighty way, far beyond your expectations.

The Lord bless you richly!

*Deborah Hammond*

Deborah Hammond  
Wife of Dr. Geoff Hammond, North American Mission Board President





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# Considering the Journey

By John M. Bailey

# I



*John M. Bailey* serves as Team Leader, Enlistment and Missional Networks Division, in the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) Church Planting Group. Prior to beginning his assignment with NAMB in 2005, John served as an associational missionary in Ohio, a pastor in Kentucky, a youth minister in Tennessee, and has taken an active role in church planting during his ministerial career.

John and his wife, Lori, live in Cumming, Georgia, and have four children.

Let me extend a huge salute to you and your husband as you consider taking the journey of planting a church. Be sure, however, to note the use of the word “journey”—it is your first clue that what you are about to embark on may very well be the ride of your life! And scary as it sounds, it will be a ride marked by uncertainty and filled with opportunities to make adjustments in your life. It will be a ride which unfolds as you move forward—*as you take the journey*. There is not a GPS to chart your course—you will be (or will become) totally dependent upon God. Even if you and your spouse plant church after church after church in every imaginable context every journey will bring with it unique challenges and opportunities for you to grow closer to our heavenly Father. Let me assure you that in spite of the uncertainty and struggles church planting families face, 94 percent of church planter wives say it is worth the cost.

Let's pretend you're headed on a cross-country trip—would you chart out your course using MapQuest, a GPS, or some other sort of navigational strategy? Or would you jump in the car and head in the general direction, believing that the journey is just as important as the destination? Most would chart their course in an effort to

reduce stress. They would identify mile markers to measure their progress. We need to know where we are going and how we plan to get there.

So you are reading this and confusion is setting in. “How can we map the journey of planting a church when you just said that the ride would be filled with uncertainty? How can we plan our work when it appears that the pathway unfolds as you journey?”

May I suggest that the phases of planting a church are much like those of raising a child? You have big dreams, high expectations, and yet you really know little of how this child (or church) will turn out. You know nothing of what struggles you will face as a parent (or a church planter), nor what issues will arise as you prepare this child for adulthood. Lacking the details, you still conceive a child. In spite of the uncertainty, you become parents and begin the day-by-day journey called parenting.

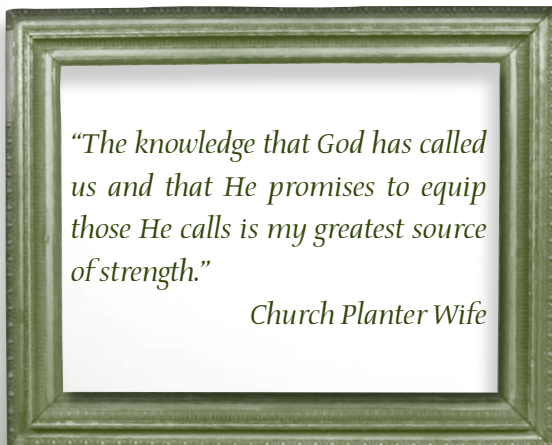
Why? Because you have a fairly clear understanding of the phases of childhood development. You conceive a child because you know of others who have successfully raised children of their own. You have a support system called family.

Planting a church also has phases. As a matter of fact, we can use the phases of childhood development to help you gain a better understanding of the journey on which God may be leading you. Other couples have stepped out in faith and planted churches all across North America. The success of others should bring confidence. There are support systems in place—state conventions, local associations, churches, and the North American Mission Board. You do not have to take this journey alone!

### *A Call to Plant a Church*

In most cases, becoming a parent usually begins with both anticipation and uncertainty. Questions run through your mind. “Should we have a child? Can we handle the pressure? Is this the right time? Can we afford this? Are we ready? Is this God’s will for our lives?”

Replace the words “have a child” with the words “plant a church” and the same questions come to mind. “Are we ready to plant a church? Is this really God’s will for me and my husband? How will we pay our bills? Will we succeed?” These are all legitimate questions, but clarifying a call from God to do this type of ministry is of the utmost importance. The decision to plant a church is a spiritual one. Therefore, establish a network of prayer warriors immediately. Go through a formal church planter assessment process. Most assessments will seek to determine if you and your husband have the characteristics of church planters and will prove to be invaluable. It will affirm your strengths and identify your weaknesses. It will help clarify God’s will regarding your involvement in church planting.



Not only should there be a calling from God to church planting, there must be a calling to a particular people or community. As your call to this ministry is affirmed, begin prayer walking among the people or place to which God might be calling you. Spend time driving or walking around your chosen community and ask God to allow you to fall in love with the people you see on the streets. And remember, this calling is not just for your husband. It is for you also. You will be ministering to the families and especially the women and children of this community. Can you envision it? Can you see yourself living and serving here? Is God calling you to plant *this* church for *these* people?

### *Conception*

The journey begins—you begin to dream, you start making plans and getting things ready for the blessed addition to your family. The questions will intensify! “What will the baby look like? Will it be a boy or girl?” You will begin planning the baby’s room and start picking out names. You determine what adjustments need to be made in your lives and begin the process. You pick a doctor and possibly begin reading books and taking classes. You begin to paint pictures in your mind of your new, expanded family (some of which may be unrealistic). The anticipation becomes a little more intense!

In a church plant this phase is marked by the development of your vision and the beginning of a love relationship with the people God has called you to reach. You determine where you will plant and start dreaming of how your church will function. You establish realistic expectations.

The key is to make sure that your vision comes from God and that it is driven by the context (location or people) where God has called you to plant your church. Invest time in choosing and developing your leadership team. You will labor, cry, and laugh with these people and they need to share your vision and heart for your community. You will seek to get the right partners on board and begin the equipping process.

Attending basic training for church planters will be a critical step. Go together as a couple and take your leadership team with you if you have one. The insight gained through this process will help clarify God’s will for the church, allowing you to begin getting a handle on what this new church will look like and how it will function. In most cases this phase will need to occur in the area where you will plant your church. However, be flexible with your vision. God may change your dreams and plans—your vision for the church. As you get to know your audience and community, adjustments will have to be made. With your husband, write out the vision and dreams God has given you for this church. Document how God has led you to this conclusion. Journal. Times will come when you will need to revisit what God has revealed to you and reaffirm that you are exactly where God wants you.

*Church planter wives who attended  
some sort of training experienced  
less stress in the journey.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

Finances are always a critical area for couples (church planting couples are no different) and a strong part of your feeling of security: Therefore, address the issue of finances early. Will your husband seek to raise support so that

he can work full-time or will he need to be bi-vocational? Few state conventions or denominations provide a pay package that will allow your husband to be full-time. In many cases the support will gradually decline over a two- or three-year period. Although there is not a strong case to support either option, it is suggested that if you are new to an area, your husband should strongly consider working bi-vocationally in the early phases of the plant. This will allow him to connect with the community and may give him an opportunity to delay using the support package supplied by your denomination.

*Sixty-three percent of church planter wives work outside the home or have a home-based business.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

Will you work outside of the home? If you have young children and you and your husband are committed to you being a stay-at-home mom, there may still be ways for you to contribute to the family's finances. As both of you work through the details regarding your finances it is very important that you share your feelings openly with your husband.

### *Prenatal Care*

You have selected your doctor and the regularly scheduled visits begin. Your eating habits may need to be adjusted. Your body goes through changes. You place your life, and the life of your unborn child, into the hands of your doctor. Panic may set in at the realization that you will soon be a parent! Some parents spend so much time getting ready for the birth of their child that they fail to prepare for being a parent! The birth of a child brings with it a whole new set of opportunities for personal growth and skill development. Plan ahead!

*Sixty-three percent of church planting families were involved in an established church in the early stages of their plant.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

By this time in your church plant you have determined where you will plant, identified your audience, written out a foundational vision, and secured partners to support your ministry. Your focus now is on building relationships with the unchurched in your community and learning as much as you can about them. You share your vision with anyone who will listen and want to recruit everyone who breathes! As you spend more time in your community, and with your people, God begins to further reveal the details of His will regarding your plant. Things may be changing rapidly. Your vision and strategy are being adjusted. Like new parents you might even select a name!

Avoid the temptation to launch too soon. Both you and your husband will need to continually focus on building relationships with people. Practice hospitality. Share hamburgers on the grill with a couple, have a game night, host play dates with other children and parents, or have a picnic at the park. Find ways to connect with those you are serving.

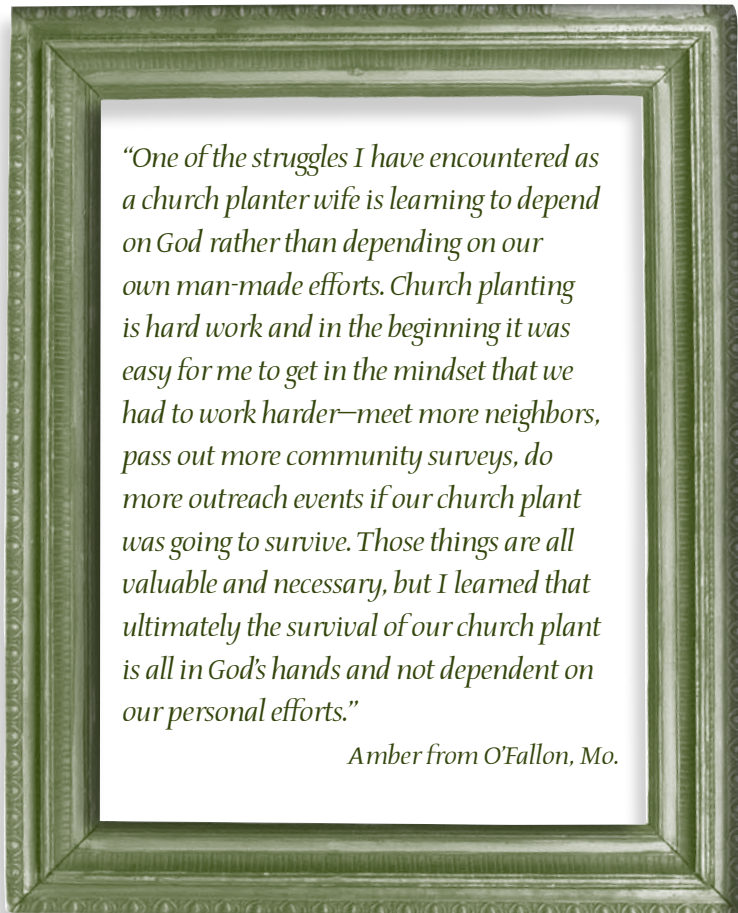
As you and your family (and/or team) work through this stage, connect with a local church and begin meeting with area church planters. A local church can smooth the transition into your new community and can provide much-needed encouragement. Networking with the families of other church planters will prove to be invaluable as well. Many of the things you will experience have been experienced by those who have planted churches. If no other church planters serve in your area, connect with local pastors and their wives who have a heart for church planting.

Church planting can be very lonely, especially if you are at home with children all day or work outside the home. Your husband will be spending a great deal of time building relationships. You may feel like you are on the outside looking in. Ask God to lead you to a mentor who understands your journey and will encourage you, laugh and cry with you, and pray for you.

### *Birth*

The blessed moment arrives. Ten fingers? Ten toes? Boy or girl? Joy. Wonder. An unexpected love. Accomplishment. Peace. Fulfillment. And yes—pain. Your routines are immediately adjusted. Life takes on a whole new pattern! You are exhausted most of the time. Finances get tight. Your house seems to be in total disarray. You learn how to parent as you go. You never know what the next day will bring. At times you will be overwhelmed—even feel out of control. You may panic. You may feel clueless. You will learn to lean upon those who have experience, to give of yourself like never before. Many ladies feel like they have become “mom” instead of a person—their world revolves around the child.

In your church plant this phase is marked by the beginning of public worship or gatherings. New routines are put into place. Exhaustion? Financial struggles? Panic? You learn as you go, making minor adjustments and decisions on the fly. Routines will develop and then be changed abruptly. People will come and people will go. There will be those who break your heart and then those who will cause your heart to explode in celebration.



This will be an exciting time, but with that excitement comes the reality that you have never been down this path before. You will need additional resources. You will give and give and give. There may be a leadership vacuum. Avoid the temptation to do everything yourselves and to invest all your energy into your worship gathering. Keep building relationships and stay focused upon gathering people. Grow smaller as your church grows larger.

It's important to point out that if you are not careful, the church plant will consume every moment of every day. Learn to develop boundaries. Schedule date nights. Dollars will probably be tight so be creative. Swap babysitting with another couple. Take a picnic dinner to the park. Have pizza at the beach. Take vacations. Again, be creative! Keep your marriage alive and your family intact. Keep communication lines open between you and your spouse. Make sure both of you have a day off each week.

Connect regularly with your mentor, other planter wives, your prayer warriors and your network. Do not let your preparation for Bible studies or worship services serve as your quiet time. Stay grounded in God's Word—dwell in His presence. Pray. Maintain your daily quiet time no matter how busy life gets. Let ministry flow out of your relationship with the Father.

### *Early Child Development*

Solid food and first words. Taking steps and falling down.

Personality begins to take shape (where did that temper come from?). Physical features are established. You become fiercely protective. Innocence and learning. The terrible twos arrive in full force. Gentle discipline. New skills are developed. Murmuring and struggles. Frustration. More surprises and on the job training! You'll find yourself questioning your actions and your decisions constantly. Mistakes will occur. Thank God children are resilient!

In a church plant this may be the most frustrating phase. Things will go wrong. People will leave. Growth may be slow. Financial struggles can get worse. You may begin to question your call to plant a church. Although God will continually shape His church, well-intentioned believers will seek to shape the church into something from their past. Begin dreaming of planting a church through your church.

It is critical that you and your husband continue to focus on winning people to Christ and making disciples. Raise up leaders from the harvest who share your passion and vision to relieve you of your responsibilities so that you can begin new ministries. Model the type of lifestyle you want your members to live.

You and your husband will need to keep the lines of communication open. Take a break from ministry. Revisit the dream for your church. Be open and honest about your struggles and frustrations. Talk about your progress. What do you celebrate? What emerging characteristics in the church may be detrimental? How is this impacting your marriage and family? Make corrections as needed.

*Seventy percent of church plants  
are financially self-sufficient after  
five years.*

*Church Plant Survivability and  
Health Study 2007, Center for  
Missional Research, NAMB*

## *Adolescence*

Mood swings and outbursts. Solitude and rebellion. Mistakes—sometimes big mistakes. Your child wants to make decisions on his or her own, like picking out clothes! The quest for independence. Personality traits are fully on display. Awkwardness. Where did that child come from? Smile. This too shall pass! You learn to pick your battles.

In spite of growing pains, in this phase of your plant things should start to click. You will see lives being transformed, leaders developed, and people growing up spiritually. You are really connecting with others in the church. You see the potential in people and you begin to imagine how they could advance God's Kingdom in a new church. You will love these people more than you ever imagined. Your reputation in the community should be fairly established by this time.

It is possible that the support you receive from the denomination and sponsoring churches will be ending soon. You may be in need of a new location because of growth. A leadership vacuum may become obvious. It is important that you and your team focus on the development of leaders early in the journey.

By this time your family should be well adjusted to the life of church planting. Activities should be occurring on your campus or in the homes of your members. Another transition that may occur is that both you and your husband may be mentoring new church planters and their wives. You have become the experts, passing on the wisdom gained from your journey to others.

## *Growth and Maturity*

Middle school? High school? College? When does maturity begin? When does it arrive? Driver's license. First dates and first jobs. Decision-making skills improve and then one day it dawns on you—your baby has grown up! Intensity. Uncertainty still. Learning to laugh at yourself. Deepening faith and personal development. But check with your support group. These may be the hardest days of the journey.

In your church plant things should get better. Stability will come gradually. Leaders will be developed and finances will get stronger. The personality of your church has been formed. Programs have been introduced to meet the needs of your congregation. Additional staff may be hired.

One of the greatest challenges for your church will be to maintain focus on reaching people with the gospel. It is so easy to have your programming and weekly routines capture all of your energy. Challenge your people to build relationships with unchurched people in their lives, but make sure you are modeling it for them—with them.

Many of those who began the journey with you will feel left out as the demands of a growing church consume your time. Leaders may have to be replaced. Feelings will get hurt. Now more than ever, your time with the Father must be a priority. Pray without ceasing for wisdom. Continue learning about your community. Spend a great deal of time with lost people. They will help you understand the need for new ministries and where new churches are needed.

Remember, your goal is not just to grow a great church. Your objective is to reach a great community with the gospel. Releasing members to plant new churches designed to reach specific audiences may be more important than having a second or third worship service.



## *Reproduction*

It's hard to believe but time will fly. Your little baby will become an adult, fall in love and raise a family of his or her own. It's natural. Some say being a grandparent is so much fun that they wish they would have done that first! The cycle of life is repeated. Your children will experience the very same struggles that you did. Guide them—be a friend, not necessarily a parent. (Roles change.)

Early, shortly after conception, a church plant should begin planning for their first church plant. Reproduction needs to be a part of your early DNA. Why? Because new churches reach unchurched people more effectively than established churches. Because our world is changing. New types of churches are needed. Our population is changing and growing. One style of church will not reach all groups of people. Our context demands new churches and the planting of a new church will actually help your church grow.

*Having realistic expectations increases the chance of your church plant surviving by more than 400 percent.*

*Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007, Center for Missional Research, NAMB*

Many church planting families discover that they were designed by God to plant multiple churches. In spite of the pain, sleepless nights, and stretch marks, you may feel a desire to relocate and plant another church. Some, however, become the founding pastor and spend a lifetime among the people God has called them to reach.

The purpose of this book is to give you (and your husband) a glimpse of the world of church planting.

We want to give you an opportunity to develop realistic expectations for your church plant and for your lives. As you read through the pages that follow, our prayer is that this chapter will serve as an outline. Keep in mind that every church plant is different. Every community is different. No one knows the difficulties you will face as you move forward. No one knows what tomorrow will bring.

In childbirth there is usually much pain, but when you look into the eyes of that precious child that God has entrusted to you, all the pain fades. The love you experience at that moment is the most intense you will ever

*Approximately 68 percent of church plants still exist four years after having been started.*

*Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007, Center for Missional Research, NAMB*

experience. The birth of a church can also bring great pain, but just as the child grows and matures, this church (with God's hand upon it) will too, and when you look back years from now there will be little memory of pain—only joy and a sense of fulfillment as you celebrate the work of our Heavenly Father.

Jesus said in John 16:33 that in this world we will have trouble. In the world of church planting you are either in

a problem, coming out of a problem, or headed into a problem! We have identified the top 10 issues faced by the wives of church planters. You will find them listed on the next page. But rest assured, Jesus declares that He will build His church and that it will prevail against the gates of hell.

The remainder of this book has been written to prepare you for the journey. In the pages that follow, we will not only identify the obstacles ahead, but will guide you in the development of healthy practices that will keep your family and ministry healthy.

## *What are the Top Struggles for Church Planter Wives?*

After conducting an online survey and phone interviews with church planter wives, we were able to identify their 10 most common recurring areas of struggle. In an effort to rank those issues, we then conducted an online survey poll of church planters and their wives.

In this online poll, we asked wives of church planters to rank (with 1 being the highest and 10 being the lowest) the issues they struggle with the most. Here is a summary of the results.

1. Personal finances
2. Overwhelmed with needs/responsibilities
3. Time management/priorities
4. Boundaries between home life and church life
5. Effect of church plant on family
6. Lack of time with husband
7. Loneliness/isolation
8. Lack of emotional/spiritual support from local churches
9. Criticism/rejection from individuals
10. Understanding your role as the wife of a church planter

We also asked church planters to rank the issues they think their wives struggle with the most. (Again, 1 is the highest and 10 is the lowest.) Here is a summary of those results.

1. Personal finances
2. Boundaries between home life and church life
3. Overwhelmed with needs/responsibilities
4. Loneliness/isolation
5. Lack of time with her husband
6. Understanding her role as the wife of a church planter
7. Effect of church plant on family
8. Time management/priorities
9. Lack of emotional/spiritual support from local churches
10. Criticism/rejection from individuals

*We asked some church planter wives the question, "If you could give one piece of advice to the wife of a potential church planter, what would it be?" Here are some of their responses.*

*Be flexible! Be your husband's cheerleader. Expect tough times and expect attacks from the enemy but also expect abundant blessings! If you will allow God to be your everything, you will have everything you need. Keep a clear focus with your husband about what God has called you to do.*  
*Angela from Albuquerque, N.M.*

*Keep good communication with your husband and pray a lot. Stay positive and don't be too hard on yourself. Enjoy the journey.*

*Cheryl from Weleetka, Okla.*

*Be ready to give your husband a lot of support! Don't be afraid to not do everything. Commit to what you can handle in the church and God will provide people to fill in the other areas. Find a good friend who does not attend the church, because sometimes you are going to need to vent and you don't want to do this to a church member.*

*Christa from Fellsmere, Fla.*

*My one piece of advice is to pray. Even if all you can do is say His name, say it. Just open your heart up to Him, and watch Him take care of you. The journey ahead is exciting, exhilarating, and exhausting! And it is so worth it!*

*Sharla from Medford, Mass.*

*Resolve that neither you nor your husband are in complete control of the outcome of your efforts. It is God's prerogative to grow a church through you or to grow you through the process of church planting or both.*

*Shannon from Hummelstown, Penn.*

## *The Journey... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

It is my honor to have this time to share with you just a little of what God has taught me through the great adventure of church planting. When my husband first suggested the idea of church planting early in our marriage and ministry, I just laughed and thought to myself, "Who really does that? That lifestyle is so unpredictable and unstable!" Little did I know that the Lord was beginning to lead us, and especially me, on a journey that has forever changed my heart and mind about "the stable and predictable" way to do ministry!

I thank God that there are times He will ease us into things that He means for us to do for His purpose. Had it not been for His timeline and the process of allowing me to do and fall in love with church planting without even realizing it, I'm sure I would still be standing on the sideline thinking how crazy it all seems!

Early on in our church planting experience, the Lord began to break my way of thinking about what church looks like. It doesn't always have to be what people expect. We've met in schools, movie theaters, funeral homes, and warehouses. We've sat on everything from the floor to beautiful upholstered chairs. We've burned up without air conditioning and frozen without heat! However, even in circumstances where I wondered if one person would even dare to come, God has always been faithful and has proven to me that when He means for others to hear His truth, we are simply to do the best we can with what He supplies and let Him take it from there.

Second, God began to change my mind and attitude about people. So many times I would worry about having enough help to get things done, or I would struggle with the attitude of someone He had sent to help us, but mostly I felt a huge sense of concern over those He would bring for us to minister to. Did we (my husband, myself, and the other members of the core group) really have what it takes to effectively share the love of Jesus? And once again, the Lord's answer was a resounding yes.

It never ceases to amaze me to see the growth and change in the core group, myself, and my husband, as God not only prepares the people He is planning to bring, but also prepares those of us who are seeking to share Him. I have often looked at the group of people God assembles around us and thought, "These are not the same people we started with. Yes, they all look the same but we have all been changed and moved closer to the heart of Christ through this process." It is simply amazing.

The other change that has nearly taken my breath away is watching my husband flourish in fulfilling the call of God on his life. The call and pursuit of church planting has been not only a learning and stretching experience for my husband, but also the greatest joy I have ever watched him accomplish. It has helped him to grow in his preaching ability, administrative skills, relationships with others, but mostly in his faith, by realizing that everything that happens in the process of church planting depends on God alone. We are simply to be used by Him to the fullest.

Finally, I have seen the biggest change in me. I have gone from trembling with fear over our lifestyle and security to not being able to imagine “doing church” any other way. Detail by detail God has proven faithful in all things, but especially to me personally. He is my God, who will not leave me or forget me. He has called me to this area of ministry not only to support my husband and share in ministry with him, but even more He has called me so that I can see Him work first-hand, not just in others but in me.

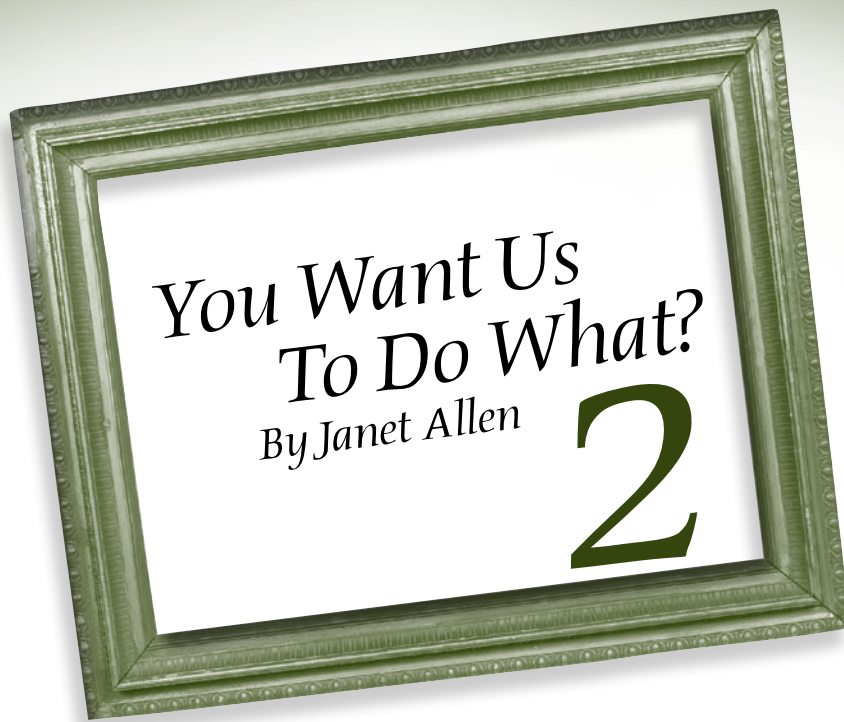
In 1 Peter 1:6-7 we are told that we may face some trials that will test our faith, just like gold is tested in the fire. However, the end result is that we will be proven genuine. Proven genuine. Oh, how I pray that is what will be said of me when I have completed this journey. I want to know that I have been found genuine, authentic, real, not just because I am a church planter wife or because I teach or sing on the praise team. But proven genuine in my love and passion for the one and only God who has continually proven Himself genuine to me.

I pray His best for you and your family in all things. I am so excited for all that He has in store for your church, your husband, but mostly for you, sweet sister. Hang on tight and get ready for the time of your life. This truly is a great adventure!!

*Kim Edmondson*

Kim Edmondson  
Clarksville, Tenn.  
Exit One Church





You Want Us  
To Do What?  
By Janet Allen 2



*Janet Allen* and her husband, Jack, have been married 24 years and have two children in college. Janet currently mentors church planter wives on an informal basis, and Jack directs the Nehemiah Church Planting Center at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to New Orleans in 2004, they planted a church in Albuquerque, N.M. where they served for more than seven years. The Allens are currently helping launch a new church that equips seminary students to serve as missionaries to start new churches.

I used to wonder why I never fit into the traditional pastor's wife crowd. What I discovered is that church planter wives really are different. We are wired differently by God. We're given a unique calling. Consider the difference between working for an established company versus starting your own business. Church planters and their wives love starting something from nothing.

So, how do you *know* if you and your spouse are supposed to start a church? What does God want *you* to do? What can you do to help your husband figure all this out? Relax, figuring out God's will may be the easiest part of your journey.

### *What Is Your Call?*

God has already told you and me what to do. As Christians we are all called to make disciples of all peoples. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT), "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them



in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” And in Acts 1:8 (CEV), “But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me...everywhere in the world.”

- ✘ So, no matter what your gift mix is or your sense of calling, your *mission* is to let others know about Christ. This is what you are supposed to do with your life, plain and simple. You are on God’s path as long as you remember to be *on mission*—as long as your focus is upon making disciples.
- ✘ Beyond your call to be on mission, your calling is to be your husband’s companion and helper. This, and children (if you have any), are your primary responsibilities. Freeing your husband from the responsibilities of the home will help him be a more productive and efficient church planter.
- ✘ Did you marry a man knowing he was called to be a missionary or pastor? If so, you may not understand what the rest of us went through when our husbands said, “Honey, I want to preach,” or “Babe, I want to be a missionary.” My reaction was, “I didn’t sign up to be a (shudder) preacher’s wife!” Oh, what a scary thought! I could have told Jack (my husband), “No way.” I perceived that this new life meant scrutiny, hardship, and ostracism. It meant having the responsibility of taking my Christian walk up several levels.
- ✘ I’m certainly not a typical preacher’s wife but, even now, as I follow my husband’s lead, I find that God doesn’t want us to walk in the footsteps of others. He made us unique, gave us different gifts, so we could do different work. Starting a new church often brings additional pressure from well-intentioned Christians who don’t understand (or agree with) what you are doing. They may question your methodology or even why a new church is needed in the area. God has given us the mission of making disciples. As a wife you are given the unique role of being a helpmate to your husband. He and your children are your primary responsibilities. But has God gifted and called you and your spouse to church planting?

### *You Want to Plant a What?*

Does my husband’s call to church planting have to be mine too? Genesis 2:18,22 (ESV) says, “Then the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him...And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.” So, according to God, you are your husband’s helper and companion. The Bible does not say that you and your husband have to have the same job, but you should be united in your understanding of God’s call for your family in the area of ministry. As your husband’s helper, you are to affirm his call as a church planter and his specific call becomes yours by extension. Because you complete him, he is incomplete attempting to fill his call without you. As you support and partner with him, in time you will discover your call to be as clear and as strong as your husband’s call.

*Eighty-six percent of church planter wives say their calling to plant their church is as strong as their husband’s.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

Church planting is hard work. Nearly 88 percent of church planter wives agree that church planting has placed stress upon their families. Of those ladies who have a sense of calling to their church plant, 94 percent of them believe that the sacrifices they have made were worth the cost. Therefore, make sure you feel called to plant *this* church in *this* place, among *these* people, at *this* time.

### *What About Our Family?*

A few years ago my teenage daughter, Amanda, enjoyed a summer-long mission trip in China. Shortly after she left, God called Jack to be a professor instead of a pastor. We needed to move from New Mexico to New Orleans by the first of August, and Amanda wasn't due home until mid-August. You can imagine my thoughts about how she might handle the news. She had just finished her freshman year of high school. Amanda's response, however, was amazingly mature: "Dad, if God is calling you to New Orleans, I guess He is calling me to New Orleans."

Is this God's will for you and your family? Ultimately, this is your husband's place to decide. Pray before you speak to him about your fears, but make sure you have the conversation. It might be helpful to read chapter seven of this book on how church planting may affect your family. If God wants your husband to go somewhere, you need to support him. God's not going to ask you, however, to do anything He hasn't prepared you to do or won't prepare you to do. God desires our obedience and dependence on Him. If you are still anxious, let your husband know that you need to give God some time to work on you. There is usually no rush to get on the field. Not every lady whose husband has said "Let's plant a church" was excited in the beginning! Both you and your husband should talk to your state convention's church planting team or associational missionary. Enlist people to pray for you. Talk with other church planters in your area. Clarify your call to church planting.

### *You Want Me to Do What?*

You're not the first person to ask God that question! God had huge plans for Mary, the mother of Jesus. You may remember that an angel told Mary God's plans *before* she was pregnant. What if Mary had acted on her fears and had told God to choose another girl? Without her obedience and strong faith, God might have found another, more willing mother for Jesus. We can always refuse to do whatever it is that God puts before us. He doesn't need us to fulfill His mission. It is in obeying and trusting God we clarify His will and experience what is best for us.

God's tasks often involve very big risks. Look at the stories of Rahab, Nehemiah, Esther, and Joshua. They took very big risks and got very big rewards. Life for these biblical characters turned out to be full and blessed. Not every church plant succeeds, but those who live in the Father's will—those who trust and obey Him—experience the life God intended for them.



### *Things Are About to Change—Are You Willing?*

I've noticed an interesting pattern in how God works. I don't see people in the Bible agonizing over God's will for their lives. Some, like Abraham, had a sense of calling but lacked all of the details. I see them just doing their best to live life one day at a time as God took them to a new level of service for Him. Moses and David were both tending sheep when God called each of them to become leaders for Israel. Gideon was threshing wheat when he was selected to save Israel from its oppressors. Elisha was plowing a field when Elijah threw his cloak over him to proclaim him the next prophet. Peter, James, John and Andrew were fishing and Matthew and Levi were at their businesses when Jesus said, "Follow me." Some may have tried to change or get out of the assignment, but God required obedience. To do what God asked meant disrupting their normal lives and enduring hardships. Can you handle change and allow God to teach you, to show you, some new things?

*Forty-six percent of plants occur in areas previously unfamiliar to the couple.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

God may ask your family to move far away from home and far away from what you have always considered your support base. Jessica's husband, Alan, had just completed a seminary degree, when one of his friends asked him to consider being the pastor at a church plant in Arizona. Without any research, or time devoted to prayer, Jessica put her foot down and said, "no." She was tired of living so far away from their families. The couple moved back to Jessica's hometown on the East coast, where Alan now sells insurance. After telling God no, they have never been fulfilled or experienced the blessings of living out their calling.

### *The Cost—Are You Willing to Sacrifice?*

Am I willing to sacrifice? God will test and teach you through sacrifice. You may be asked to give up a higher salary, better schools for your children, proximity to family and friends, job security, peace, time with your spouse, or space in your home. Are you willing to sacrifice so that people in your new community can experience new life in Christ? I've met so many church planters who left their fledgling church because they believe they heard a call to go back home—and the voice sounded a lot like their mother-in-law. If you plant a church, learn to love your new town and its people. Move for a lifetime, not a season. Life will be easier if you find satisfaction in whatever living situation God puts you. Find ways to encourage your husband and maintain a positive attitude. Maybe you've heard the saying, "If momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." You set the tone for your home—good or bad.

*"Be a part of the process. When God calls a man, that includes the complete package—which means the wife, too."*

*Marisusan from Belen, N.M.*

Another thing you will sacrifice is anything called "normal." Church planting definitely requires change and flexibility. Our Sunday morning worship gatherings were at a school. We never knew what we would encounter

when we got there on Sundays. We dealt with broken air conditioners, large sporting events that took up all of our parking, and crowds directed through our children's area. One day we came in to find dozens of dolls hung by their necks in the theater (for a play). Teachers felt free to walk through our classes to get to their room. Administrators often changed our meeting places. One Sunday, Jack had to deal with a school vice principal screaming and cussing out our setup team because they hung a banner in a place she didn't like.

### *This Is Just Temporary, Right?*

My rule is that I do what God says to do until He gives me a new job. Plan on spending at least five years to get your church established—maybe more. Some church planters are just that—planters. They are great at getting a church started. Once the church becomes stable they hand it over to a pastor who can take the church to the next level of growth. Other church planters are called to start a new church and remain as its founding pastor. They will pastor the church while training other leaders who then go out and start other churches.

Depending upon your husband's gift mix, this time of sacrifice may very well become a lifestyle. It is possible that your husband is a catalytic church planter, one who will plant multiple churches. Therefore, sacrifice and uncertainty may be the norm for your lives!

### *Who Are We Supposed to Reach? What Is My Role?*

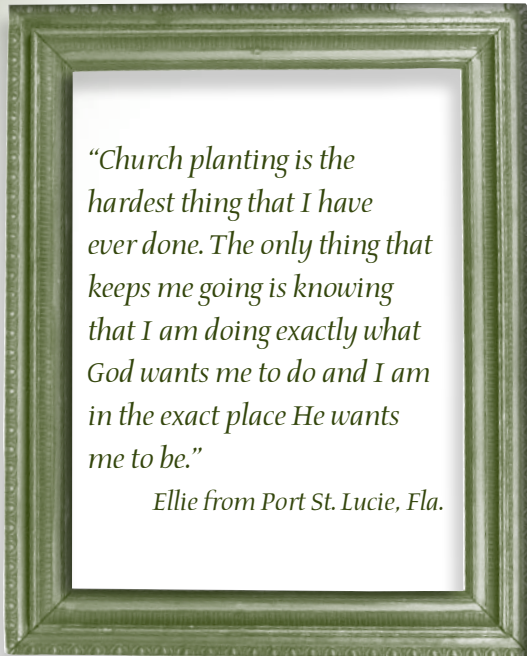
Church planting is focused upon people, people who need Christ. Although we are called to make disciples of all peoples, God may focus your plant upon a particular group of people so that your work can be contextualized to that audience. It may be based upon ethnicity or income. It may be a sub-culture like artisans or cowboys. It may be a place—the inner city or a rural community. Discern His will. Ask Him to give you a heart for those people if you currently do not feel a passion to see them come to know Christ.

The first time Jack and I knew that God was calling us to start a new church, we sat down together and made three lists. The first was a description of what population segment we felt God calling us to: suburban, late twenties to forty-something, middle-income, diverse ethnicity, and college educated. In an effort to determine where we might live, we tried to identify the environment we felt most suited us: sunny, population 150,000-300,000, major university, sports team(s), and outdoor activities. The last list was what our sponsoring church might be like: good track record for sponsoring churches, stable finances, didn't want to re-create themselves, visionary, willing to let new church make its own decisions, no major divisions and a long-term pastor. When we were asked to look at Albuquerque as a place to serve, we visited it and compared it to our lists. Guess what? God matched up all three lists! He spoke loud and clear. While God doesn't always give us our dream place or people and sometimes even pushes us out of our comfort zone, if we are truly seeking to follow His direction for our lives, He will give us a love for the people He calls us to.

### *Are You Willing to Wait?*

In your heart you have affirmed God's call upon your family to plant a church in a particular place to reach a particular group of people, but things just do not seem to be falling into place. You have resolved to move from family and friends, to step out of your comfort zone, but things are not going according to your plans. Maybe you are having a hard time raising the financial support you will need. Wait. Be patient. Make sure the place and

people are right. Do not give up on what you perceive to be God's call for you and your husband. The timing may not be right. God may be preparing the way.

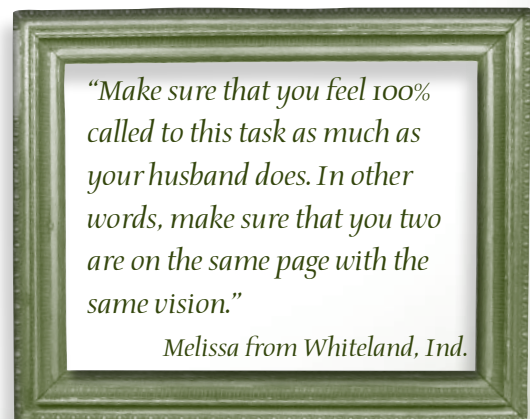


There are times when we have to wait on God to work. In the Old Testament, God told childless Abram that he would have a multitude of descendants. Abram's wife, Sarai, waited a long time and didn't get pregnant. She finally became impatient and tried to help God get things going; she gave Abram her maid to sleep with! Abram fathered a son from that union and gained a very jealous wife. God later gave very old and cynical Sarah a son. He told Abraham (God's new names for Abram and Sarai) that through this second son he would honor His covenant to make Abraham the father of many nations. Don't get ahead of God. Like Sarah, you won't like your results.

Billy and Ellie were at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary studying church planting. They strongly felt God telling them to start a church in a Florida beach community. Overwhelmed by how to finance the endeavor, Billy struggled with how God works. Billy, Ellie, Jack and I met one evening to discuss their concerns. I remember commenting that God would fund whatever He wanted to take place and that I couldn't wait to see how God would creatively pay their way. A couple of weeks later, God used Hurricane Katrina to answer their prayers. After evacuating and losing their New Orleans home, God opened many Florida church pulpits to this young preacher. Able to tell many congregations about the need for starting new churches and how much money it would take to get one started, Billy became inundated with contributions to this new work. The couple witnessed God in action; through His provision, they received enough money to launch a new church and move into the community. Are you willing to wait for God to prepare the way?

### *What's Your Motivation?*

James was the frustrated pastor of a small church. When he was hired, the deacons told James they wanted him to revitalize the church and they were ready to do whatever needed to be done; however, after two years with this church, James discovered that the deacons were not ready to make the necessary changes to reach their community. They stopped every new idea James put forth. James read about starting new churches and knew of a nearby town that needed a new church. He approached his wife and asked if they should move on and start a new church in that community.



The above scenario is a common one. Make sure you are not moving to escape something or because an opportunity exists in a cool place. Just because there is something that needs to be done doesn't mean that God is calling you to do it. You need to plant a church because you have a heart for unreached people—because both of you sense that God is calling you to plant a new church. Ask God to help you examine your motives thoroughly. Ask for wise advice from a teacher, a pastor, or a friend with a good track record of giving advice. Pray without ceasing. Wait upon the Lord to reveal His next step for you and your family.

### *Have You Clarified Your Call?*

God gives church planters a drive to start something new in order to reach people with the gospel. Can you visualize yourself (and your family) in a church start? Are you spiritually mature enough? Are you known for your faith and trust in the Lord? Can you handle change? Do you willingly sacrifice for the good of others? Are you patient? Do you easily connect with unchurched people? Ask your pastor, family, friends and mentors to answer these hard questions about you. Identify those areas in your life that need some work. Celebrate your strengths.

Are you likeable and sociable? Believe it or not, a pastor's wife can hide in an established church better than in a church plant. Starting a church means entertaining people in your home and getting out into the community to know people and to learn the culture. A church planter's wife cannot sit back and let her husband do all the work—it is a team effort. You can't be his helper and not have the same missionary attitude.

The journey before you is one that will require sacrifice and total dependence on our Heavenly Father. Church planting is not just about strategies and getting your “ducks in a row.” This is a spiritual journey—an exercise of faith. You are entering into the enemy's territory. He will come against you and your family. Move forward only if it is the Lord's will for your life—if there is a sense of calling to plant a church.

## *Struggling with the Call...* *From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

I can recall my initial reaction to my husband when he first talked about church planting. Please let me share my journey with you. My feelings were something like this: “You want to *do what?* You want to go *where?* You want *us* to come with you?”

I tried to calmly listen to every word my husband was sharing with me. Through my husband’s words God was whispering, “This is My will, Jodie, and it’s going to be alright.” I tried to focus on being supportive, holding my husband’s hand and smiling prett...you know, all the things they teach you at the “School of Higher Learning for Pastors’ Wives.” I tried to nod and agree with him, but it just wasn’t in me. From the innermost depth of my soul, I rebelled. I could see the difficult road ahead of me and the children, and I inwardly wished that it would not happen.

I should have fallen on my knees and thanked God for choosing us to get involved in His glorious activities in the wonderful state of Indiana. I should have felt the excitement bubbling over with each thought of such a grand adventure with the creator of the universe—the One who made it all, knows it all, and does it all. But at that moment, there was only dread. After a few days of thinking and praying by myself, I knew in my heart this was the path God wanted our family to take. I simply resolved that I would be outwardly agreeable while I would inwardly wait for God to change my heart.

Things began happening quickly as I watched God preparing the way for our family. I noticed changes in my husband as he kept seeking God’s will in every challenge we faced. As his eyes lit up every time he talked about our core group already waiting for us, I began to pray for his excitement. He was so confident we were following God’s leading that I began to pray for his confidence. God was so patient with me. He allowed me to see these characteristics in my husband on my own time. It was an important lesson for me to learn about taking my husband’s lead and respecting his relationship with the Almighty.

Finally, the big moving day had come! Pulling away from our home, our family and our friends, I honestly had a peace about following my Savior’s leading. God had already accomplished so much to get us to our destination it left no doubt that this was exactly what we needed to be doing. But after only a few weeks in our new home, our new city, and our new neighborhood, I began to feel homesick and a little depressed. I needed to be alone. What better place for a woman to work out any emotional issues than to go to Wal-Mart, am I right? My feeble soul was once again faltering and I needed assurance from God that I was in the right place. I needed Him to tell me again that I was doing His will and that all this was for something.

As I made my way towards the check-out counters, I noticed that the only open register was a woman who did not look happy. She had spiked hair, lots of jewelry around her neck, and multiple tattoos up and down her arms.

She started placing my items in bags, and I began to watch her. She looked very, very tired. I asked her if she had a long night of work ahead of her. She replied that every night was a long night. I sensed the Holy Spirit's prompting, and I allowed a moment of silence to pass between us. I quietly asked her if she was doing okay. She shared with me that she was living with her elderly mother who might not have much longer to live and that if her mother died, she would have two mortgages to pay and she'd never be able to handle it. I told her I was sorry her mother wasn't doing well. After a pause, I asked her if I could pray for her and her mother. She stopped and looked at me. She said, "This city could use more prayer and more people like you." As I left the store, my eyes welled up with tears because I knew that God used that hurting woman to speak directly to me. I asked God to forgive me for being so stubborn and I thanked Him for including me in His work and forever changing my heart. To this day, I remain willing to be a church planter's wife. What an awesome privilege God has given me!

Are you unsure of your role as a church planter wife? Have you felt neglected in all the stress and energy it takes to start a church? Has it been a while since God assured you? Be patient and keep praying. God is so faithful to help you and give you what you need to persevere.

*Jodie Harris*

Jodie Harris  
Bloomington, Ind.  
Foot of the Cross Church



## *Struggling with the Call... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the struggles that I have faced as the wife of a church planter was understanding my call. I struggled with knowing exactly where I fit in for about four years. I drove myself into loneliness, isolation and, eventually, depression. It was a very dark period of time for me. But God is always faithful, and He never leaves us. Sometimes the answer is right before our eyes and we don't see it or we overlook it.

I began searching for "my call" during our last year at seminary. Nothing seemed to fit. I didn't feel called to plant a church, which seemed very odd to me since my husband was definitely called. I had absolutely no doubt about his call. I would go through all the different areas that I may be called in searching for the right fit. It always came back to one thing: A wife and a mother. This seemed so lame to me because it didn't have an official church title. I began to think that maybe I had some unconfessed sin in my life, or that maybe God didn't see me worthy enough to be used in ministry. I struggled with that over the next few years, desperately searching for my role in the church planting field.

As a last resort, I called a former pastor's wife and shared with her my struggle. She said, "As your husband's wife, that is your main call. No matter where you are or what you are doing, your call is to serve him." It struck me like a ton of bricks because that's where I felt called. This really was a true call. As my heart became open, I began to see my place from God's view. God called me way back in Genesis 2:18 to be a helper to my husband. I began to read Proverbs 31 and understand the role of the Proverbs 31 woman. Her call in life was to serve her husband and family. She provided for their needs. She made sure they had everything they needed to do what God had called them to do. Because of her call and her faithfulness to her call, her husband was respected at the city gate (Proverbs 31:23). I began to study this woman and see all that she does. She does many different things all related to taking care of her family and reaching out to those in need. Because she was faithful to her call, her children called her blessed and her husband praised her (Proverbs 31:28).

Let me encourage you, as a church planter's wife. You have the greatest call God could ever place upon a woman. Being your husband's wife, his friend, his supporter, and his encourager is the most valuable call a wife can have. Mothering his children and discipling them is the most valuable call a mother can have. Providing a peaceful place for your family to come home to is the most valuable call a homemaker can have. If you are working outside the home, your financial provision and connections are the most valuable call a co-laborer can have.

Your husband needs you and needs to know that you value your call as his wife. This is the call to church planting for a woman. Once you embrace this call and are carrying out this call “as unto the Lord,” God will give you joy and peace as you serve Him.

After I became confident with the fact that wife and mother are calls from God and that those were part of my calling, God showed me that I was also called to church planting with my husband and that the call was on our entire family. He showed me that my husband and I are one and that it will take both of us to complete the task He has planned for us. I saw that God was using me in our church plant in many different ways. God had something very unique for me even though there wasn't an official title. God wanted to use me with my strengths and my weaknesses. I had to quit fearing and trust God that His plan was better than mine.

By Faith,

*Donna Stevens*

Donna Stevens  
Strongsville, Ohio

*Many wives of church planters were not crazy about the idea of their husband being a church planter in the beginning. We asked women how they felt when their husband first came to them with the idea of being a church planter.*

*My husband had the vision for it and he is very transparent. I'm a person who needs details. I could not see it at first. We attended a church planting conference that helped me see the vision. I talked with other church planter wives while I was there and that helped.*  
Christie from Columbia, S.C.

*It was a big adjustment, and it's still an adjustment trying to figure out my role. I've grown into it though. I'm starting to gain a heart for the people in the community now.*

*Cerena from Alberta, Canada*

*I immediately said "no." Then I said, "Let me pray about it." After prayer, it took some time, but God did bring me to that point. I saw friends where the wife was drug into the ministry and watched what that did to the marriage and the ministry—it was stifled. God would not call one without the other.*

*Marisusan from Belen, N.M.*

*Very unsure. I didn't realize how hard it would be. I was not prepared at all. I had to work through the inadequacies I felt. However, once we went through our first assessment, I felt sure I was right where God wanted me.*

*Linda from Belton, Mo.*

*Scared. I knew though, that in trusting in his leadership I would be trusting God's sovereignty in my life. I chose to encourage and support him the best I could.*  
Lydia from Auburn, Calif.

*I was not very enthusiastic about the location. Yes, starting a church from scratch would be exciting, but 2600 miles away from our families just seemed terrible to me.*

*Stephanie from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*





# So I'm Married to a Church Planter...

By Lori Chase

# 3



For the last three years, *Lori Chase* has been church planting in Toronto alongside her husband, Jeff, and their three children. Over the past 15 years she has been involved with Peter Lowe's and Zig Ziglar's motivational events, working alongside former U.S. Presidents, sporting legends and international heads of state. Most recently, she was the creative developer and producer of John Maxwell's THRIVE! Today, a monthly audio-magazine devoted to mentoring women in Christian leadership.

If there is one undeniable truth that I've experienced throughout my spiritual walk, it is this: God has never been entirely predictable. Never has this been more evident than as my husband and I embarked on the journey of church planting. Scripture has made this principle obvious time and time again, but for some reason it is so much more convenient to place God within the confines of my own limited understanding. For example, 10 years ago, if you had told me that my husband and I would be church planters in Canada, like Sarah of old upon the news of her future motherhood, I would have laughed. But as the years have carried on, I am reminded that God is unpredictable.

God is God. His ways are not our ways. As a seasoned believer and even a Bible College graduate, I must allow this amazingly simple truth to penetrate my heart and influence my decisions every single day. If we are willing to trust God's calling upon our lives and anticipate His faithfulness for a productive ministry and rewarding future, our obedience will open God's storehouse of blessings.

Launching a church presents a unique set of challenges. The common expectations of getting up in the morning and going to a steady job or spending a leisurely day shopping or playing golf are generally not within our realm of experience as wives of church planting pastors. Instead, we're faced with a multitude of tasks and responsibilities from organizing community outreach events, planning for Sunday's worship songs, typing bulletins, following up on the upcoming nursery schedules—the list goes on and on. Falling down and getting back up again has been standard practice over our last few years in full-time ministry.

Let's face it—the life of the church planting couple is stressful. Not just everyday all-American stress—we're talking mega-stress.

- ✂ The stress that comes when we understand that our bank-account is dependent on the gifts of faithful supporters.
- ✂ The stress that comes from spreading yourself to the point of personal exhaustion as you attempt to fill the duties that any established church would have had in place with 20 individuals.
- ✂ The stress that comes from finding time in your marriage to cultivate a love relationship when you're pulled like a tug-of-war between the needs of the congregation and the needs of the family.
- ✂ The stress that comes from defending your decision to answer God's calling when friends and family consider your choices irresponsible or irrational.

When you factor in ministering to your congregants, evangelizing your community, and finding your role as mother, wife, counselor, friend, mentor, confidante and general go-to girl, your stress level just might peak off the charts! So how is it possible to face the challenges of church planting while cultivating a healthy marriage? Can we truly “have it all”? In preparation for this project, the North American Mission Board surveyed and interviewed a group of church planter wives regarding their personal experiences as the wives of church planters. Despite being a diverse representation of women in ministry throughout North America, their challenges and comments were strikingly similar. Throughout this chapter, I've included quotes from these ladies.

*More than half of church planter wives surveyed said that church planting has placed stress on their marriage.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

Let's dig deeper into this often-overlooked subject of cultivating a healthy marriage in the midst of planting a church by highlighting the issues raised by church planter wives. We'll examine some authentic feelings that many of us have experienced at one time or another in our church planting ventures and then suggest some practical solutions to help us deal with these challenges should they arise.

*“I feel guilty about not sharing the same intensity of my husband’s calling.”*

This is one of those highly-unspoken but very genuine feelings that many of us as wives of church planters experience. Sometimes in the busyness of putting feet to our ministry plans, we’re often left feeling as though we’re doing our best to keep up with the enthusiasm and passion of our spouses.

After much diligent prayer and soul-searching, my husband was thrilled to share with me his experience of God’s unquestioned calling on his life. His story of intense communication from God was as real to him as if he was blinded by light on the road to Damascus. I’d like to say that at that same split second, God zapped me with a lightning bolt or I heard the voice of Charlton Heston thundering down from the sky telling me how I was called to full-time ministry in the world of church planting. Well, needless to say, that did not happen. So, should my initial level of intensity diminish my partnership in this calling? Absolutely not! In the words of one planter wife, “I immediately said ‘no.’ Then I said, ‘Let me pray about it.’ After prayer, it took some time, but God did bring me to that point. I saw friends where the wife was drug into the ministry and watched what that did to the marriage and the ministry—it was stifled. God would not call one without the other.”

*Here’s what some church planter wives had to say about God’s calling on their life as a couple:*

- ✧ “We are so blessed to be partners in this. I pray for other church planters and wives that they can really be partners in it. If you’re both called, it is so much easier to be understanding and give leeway than when only one feels called.”
- ✧ “Make sure you and your husband are on the same page. You need to make time to pray together and be there for him. Remember, God has put you in it together. Lean on each other and have open communication. It will make all the difference.”

Two individuals bring to a marriage their own personalities and talents as well as their gifts and calling from the Lord. At the end of the day, the intensity and timing of our personal callings to plant a church may not be the same. However, it is critical that before the moving van arrives we both affirm that this is God’s will for us as a couple.

*“Life would be much easier if he had the security and structure of a real job.”*

Every day we’re pummeled with the reality of church-planting life—the good, the bad and everything else in between. While there is no shortage of joy and celebration, the hardships can often be overwhelming—especially when we are faced with the very real issues of security and stability.

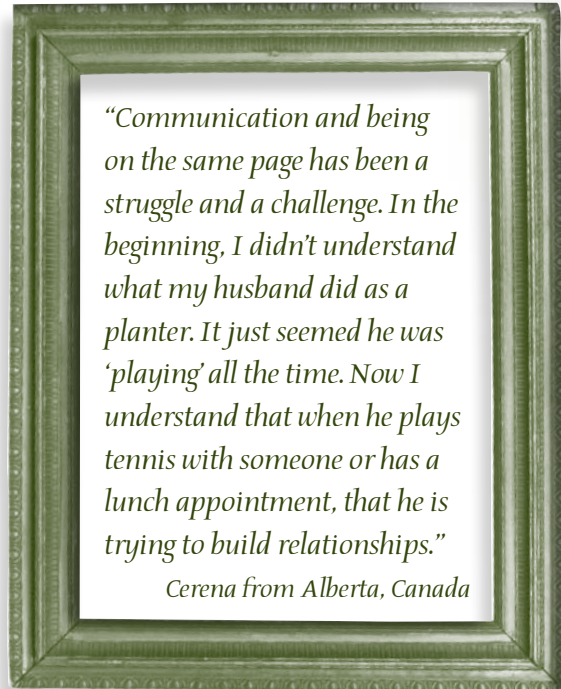
It’s easy to look next door at the neighbor who waves to her husband in the morning as he pulls out in his new car, heading off on his daily commute to the office. When he comes home in time for dinner, he can change out of his suit and tie and spend the evening hanging out with the family, playing sports, or maybe making plans for the next weekend or two. For church planters, this lifestyle is generally not on our radar.



It's difficult sometimes to embrace the choices we've made and the sacrifices that God has asked of us. If we choose instead to focus on the "what-ifs" and "if-onlys," we can unconsciously chip away the validity and value of the calling that God has on our lives as a church-building team. This type of negative thinking has an unhealthy influence on our marriage.

How can we then encourage our husband that his willingness to accept the challenges of full-time ministry is noble and worthwhile while we might be struggling with the issues of security and stability? Here are some comments as shared by church planter wives:

- ✧ "Watch your words. They carry a lot of influence with your spouse. If you need to share with him, remember to prayerfully flavor your words because he needs to know you are on board with him. Any negative thoughts or suggestions can easily deflate him and the work God has called you both to do."
- ✧ "Be your husband's biggest fan! God has called him to do something that a lot of people will never have the faith to step out and do. It is exciting and scary at the same time. Encourage him and allow him to be and do what God wants him to be and do."



While some people may not "get" your husband's job, it's important that you do—and that you make that known. There are advantages of not having a real job—our boss doesn't lay off, downsize or restructure his team of employees. There is no job security that will ever rival the eternal security that God has promised us—and I dare you to compare the benefits!

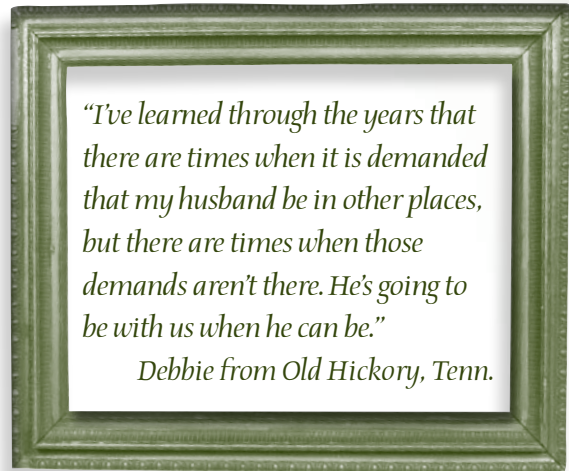
### *"I'm feeling alone as a parent."*

As I sit here writing this chapter, my husband is running to and from the church office, the audio-visual support company, a discipleship meeting, and a weekly staff conference. I am glancing anxiously at my watch because I know that within the next three hours I need to attend a track meet at a neighboring elementary school, take our new kitten in for show-and-tell, follow up on the missing homework assignment outline, and remind my children about the character-building that results from putting away the laundry I folded late into the night.

Raising a child is hard enough without the added responsibilities and commitments of church planting. It's not unusual for church planting moms to have to take on a more intensive role in the time-sapping duties of day-to-day parenting. If left unchecked or not communicated, it can often lead to resentment over feeling the burden of having to "do it all."

For most of us, a nanny, a chauffeur or fairy godmother who can help us pick up the slack is pretty much out of the question. So how can we make sure that we share our parenting duties as best we can, without feeling taken for granted or unappreciated? Here are more thoughts from church planting wives:

- ✘ “I have to let my husband know when the demands on his time drain me and the kids. The key to this area is to appeal to him in love and not accuse him of neglecting us—just to simply let him know what my needs are.”
- ✘ “Growth had to begin with me. Earlier in our marriage, I was jealous of my husband’s time. As we got into church planting, I really faced that. Everything doesn’t fall in to the hours of eight to five. I was so selfish with my time with him. At that particular season it wasn’t good for me to expect that from him.”



Sometimes what we’re truly looking for is just a little positive reinforcement. We see the looks of admiration that our husband receives as he stands in front of an enamored congregation week to week. And although we respect and understand the time that he devotes to the ministry that you both are committed to, it’s easy to feel overlooked and downright unappreciated for all that you do in the background.

I like what speaker and author Tammy Maltby says in her amazing book, *Lifegiving*: “The lifegiving woman does her loving acts of service for His eyes only. This is such a beautiful gift to God. Scripture clearly tells us that these acts of secret service will be rewarded. Every act of service, each lifegiving activity, is like a deposit into this heavenly account. Even the simple and mundane acts of daily giving and loving that are unseen by others are conducted in the full sight of our unseen God. And God, who sees in secret, will be pleased with us and will reward us openly.”<sup>1</sup>

### *“I’m tired of having to ‘share’ him.”*

This one’s a biggie! It’s the unspoken gut-feeling that we rarely give ourselves permission to verbalize. After all, we’re in the business of kingdom building and are doing all for the glory of God, aren’t we? So what gives us the right to feel entitled to our husband’s complete and undistracted devotion in the midst of a busy and overwhelming ministry? We can browbeat ourselves *ad nauseum* with “snap-out-of-it” pep talks, but the truth is—sometimes it’s hard to share.

*Pastors and spouses can attend FamilyLife’s Weekend To Remember marriage conference for free. For more information, go to [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com).*

Church planting and marriage-building can be challenging, even scary. But that doesn’t have to rip your relationship apart. Allow the challenges and uncertainties to become God’s vehicle for

renovating and strengthening your marriage according to His good and perfect will. When we stop desiring things to be the way we think they should be and accept unconditionally whatever God sets before us, we will then be free to receive His best.

*Here are some practical suggestions planter wives shared on dealing with this very personal dilemma:*

- ✧ “We spend time praying together in the morning. A lot of times we have lunch together because I do not work. My husband is very relational. Time is his best source for showing love. Spending time together is a given.”
- ✧ “We try to schedule at least one time a week to have lunch together while the kids are in school. We make that a priority.”
- ✧ “My relationship with my husband has been the most challenged through this. He is needed by everyone, where before he was there for me anytime I needed him. I’m having to share him with everyone else, any time they need him. You have your seasons. A lot of times when the weeks are just crazy, we just go on an errand together. We don’t get a lot of quality time. We’re figuring it out as we go.”

The demands on the church planter wife are as grueling as ever, but I find that if I meet them with humor intact, a spirit of flexibility, a servant’s heart and an unwavering belief that God’s ways are always the best ways, life in the fishbowl is not a burden to be tolerated but a joy to be treasured. When I am able to understand my limitations and admit my weaknesses, I can more adequately contribute to the ministry to which God has called both of us. Raising my family and nurturing my marriage remains a top priority. If that occasionally trumps my involvement in a church function, the sky will not fall—nor will I feel guilty about it.

One of my greatest joys in life has been to labor side-by-side in ministry with my husband and to know that we’re on the same team. It has been my heart’s desire to help and support him. And when life throws us curves and our well-intended plans are altered, our mutual support, friendship, companionship and committed love is the greatest gift we can give each other.

Today, I know what it means to walk by faith more than ever before. And as John 15:5 states, I am painfully aware that apart from God, I can do nothing. With this in mind, I can anticipate the future of church planting with joy, enthusiasm, a hint of trepidation—but with complete faith in God and the promises in His Word.

As you work on cultivating a healthy marriage, keep in mind these principles for keeping your marriage strong in the midst of planting a church.

- ✧ Remain flexible. Church planting is very unpredictable.
- ✧ Make sure you and your husband are on the same page. Be ministry partners.

- ⌘ Watch your words.
- ⌘ Be your husband's biggest fan.
- ⌘ Let your husband know when the demands on his time are draining you.
- ⌘ Spend time together—just the two of you.

<sup>1</sup>Tammy Maltby, *Lifegiving* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2002), p. 65.

## *Supporting Your Husband... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the greatest joys, and also the greatest struggle, I have encountered as a church planter wife is seeing my husband in the role of the church planter.

My husband's greatest gift and passion is helping others "catch the vision" of bringing people into a relationship with Christ. His spirit comes alive when working with small groups of interested participants to plant a church that reaches specific people groups. He has always been a big-picture visionary, and it is one of my joys in life to see his countenance literally glow when he is in that role. Without a doubt, I know he is doing what the Lord created him to do!

But then there's always the proverbial other side of the coin. My husband may be a great visionary, but that also means he is not a detail-oriented person, and starting a church includes a huge amount of detail (e.g., budget, meeting facilities, equipment needs for sound and childcare, volunteer coordination, advertising). So while I see him "light up" when doing the visioning, I see him sag and grow weary from the weight of carrying the load of details involved in a new church plant.

I am called to be my husband's helpmate, sharing all our joys, burdens, victories, and struggles. I believe that the Lord has us together for a reason. Just as in the Body, He also works within relationships to use our gifts and talents to the greatest benefit. So while my husband may be a big picture guy, wouldn't you know that my gift is administration! So our gifts are perfect complements! The Lord is so good! He provided us the gifts necessary to work through us in planting churches. My husband sees the puzzle as a whole; I see all the little pieces.

So my advice and encouragement would be this: Examine yourself and your gifts, individually and as a couple. The Lord has a plan. Ask Him to help you discover what that plan is and how your gifts will fit into it. It is such a blessing to know that I fit into the Lord's great scheme of things as my relationship with Him grows. But there is also another wonderful benefit. Using our gifts together to do the work of church planting strengthens our bond physically, but also spiritually.

So not only is our intimacy with the Lord increased, it is also strengthened between the two of us! We serve a loving Father who gives such unexpected blessings!

Grace and peace on your journey,

*Debbie Toole*

Debbie Toole  
Old Hickory, Tenn.  
Resurrection Fellowship





# The Role of a Church Planter Wife

By Joyce Jackson

# 4



*Joyce Jackson* has served alongside her husband in the ministry for more than 20 years. God called them to church planting, serving first in New England and now in Maryland and Delaware. David has planted churches, parented churches and currently leads church multiplication for the State Convention where Joyce coordinates a planter wives ministry.

They serve with the conviction that starting new churches is the most effective way to reach lost people for Christ.

Did you cringe when you read the title of this chapter? Or perhaps you were hoping for a guide to being the perfect church planter wife. Know this: God created you intentionally and uniquely and cherishes time spent with you. He has a plan for your life. Your uniqueness is part of why you were chosen to plant this church.

### *How Does God See Your Role?*

What does God expect of a church planter wife? What role does He expect you to fulfill? He clearly spells it out in Micah 6:8 (NASB), “What does the Lord require of you: But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Focus on the fact that this is God’s work. He builds His church. You have been invited to join Him.

It is very humbling, yet freeing, to know that God does not need us. He desires to use us, but can accomplish exactly what He wants without us. Understanding this will help you in two ways. First, it will help you as you respond to other Christians, especially those who may put you on a pedestal because your husband is a pastor. You may seem to be local heroes to many people just by virtue of your calling. Little do they know how difficult



and lonely the call can be. Having people puff you up can give you a false sense of autonomy or possibly significance when you get on the field. This may do nothing but set you up for disappointment once you learn firsthand that church planting is all about serving and sacrifice. Be careful not to make the mistake that the title of church planter wife entitles you to anything else but a life of servanthood.

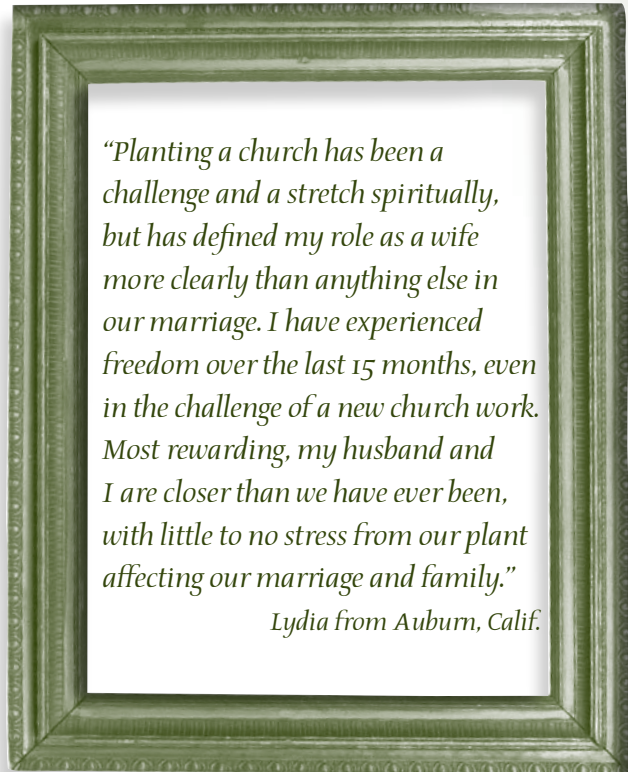
Second, knowing that God doesn't need you will be helpful when you realize how little control you have as God takes you on this journey. Inevitably, feelings of frustration will arise. Remember that it is God who builds His church and that He doesn't need you where He has you. However, your husband does need you and your role is first and foremost to pray and be of assistance to your husband. It is important that we allow our husbands to lead in these uncharted waters according to the vision and purpose God has given them.

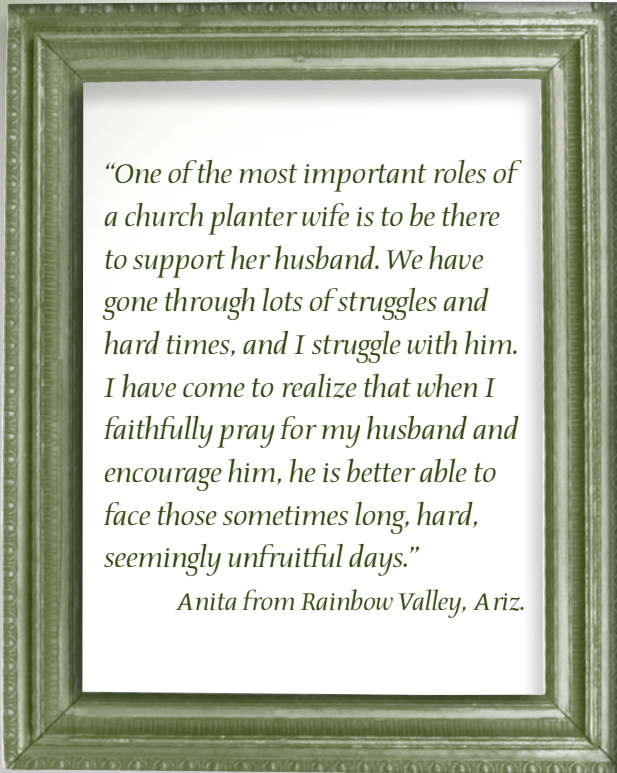
### *Your Role as Wife*

Your role as it relates to your husband centers on your marriage. A healthy marriage matters in a church plant; it is one of the critical factors that will determine the survivability of a new work. Those who attempt a new work with unresolved marital issues only add to their problems. Remember, even a healthy marriage will experience stress resulting from the unique pressures of church planting. Only those church plants started by a couple with a healthy marriage—who understand what it takes to keep their marriage healthy—are prepared for success. Investing time in your marriage relationship will strengthen it for the journey ahead and will give your church a healthy example of what God intended marriage to be.

Some of the very traits that make a planter successful can also lead to his wife's biggest struggles. Most planters are hyper-focused by nature—driven, intently focusing solely on the plant. Beyond that, the drive, energy, thought processes, prayers and finances are all intentionally patterned to sustain this mission of God. The church planter wife needs to be his biggest supporter and yet protect him from being so consumed that he burns out. It is a real tug of war. That struggle still doesn't speak to her need to be loved and nurtured and to be the first lady of her man's heart.

Early in a church plant the mission encompasses the totality of one's life. A church planter wife can feel that she is competing with the church. It is possible for her to feel both selfish and neglected at the same time. Early





in your journey, establish healthy boundaries between your home life and church life. Consider writing them out and revisiting them frequently.

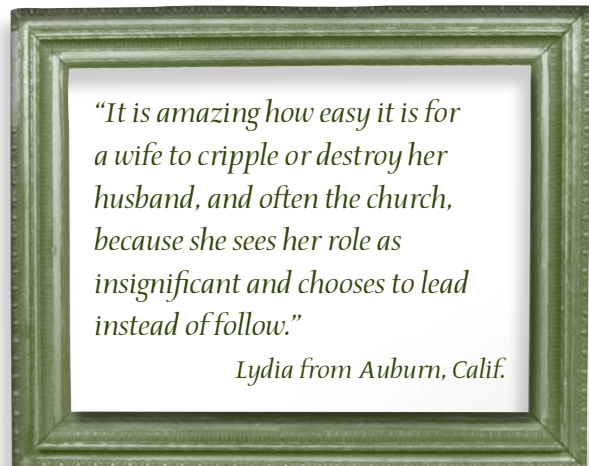
In the broadest terms, each church planter wife should protect her husband. Protect his heart by being the love of his life. Protect him by building in down time and helping him maintain general good health. Protect your husband's sermon prep time from interruption as much as possible. Protect him and his reputation as he meets with members of the opposite sex. Sometimes you need to be present to avoid even the appearance of evil.

Sometimes the effort may seem unreasonable, but there is no substitute for avoiding a wrong impression. My husband was asked to pray a blessing over the new apartment of a single woman. Because she was shy, she didn't want to involve others. We also make a habit of asking God's blessing over each new residence of our

own, so he agreed to her request. The day arrived and although I was very pregnant and tired from the workday, I waddled in and took my place in the circle of prayer. I prayed for her protection and provision while I silently asked for grace that I not lose my temper as the conversation lagged on. Did I question anyone's honor? Not at all. Would considering my discomfort have been reasonable? I tell my teenagers this: "I trust people who are smart enough to avoid situations where their trust is put to the test." My husband protects my heart by keeping the boundaries high. I protect his honor by being available when I am needed.

### *Your Role as It Fits with His*

Creating a fresh perspective on how you work together as a team will help you to appreciate your role as you serve alongside your husband. David and I began our church planting life in New England. During a visit to the Mayflower in Plymouth, Mass., we noticed a sailboat bobbing gently nearby. It was a sturdy little boat with a leeboard (a board that keeps the ship from drifting) extended off one side and sides built high enough to safely carry both people and supplies. The more I reflected on how the sailboat worked the more I realized how David



and I operate together like the little sailboat. David is all rudder and sails; fully extended and eager for every breath of God to direct him onward towards his specific destination. I am the often unnoticed supply chest and leeboard. Always prepared to meet the necessities of the journey, I sometimes feel like an extra accessory. But when the seas are rough or the speed of the boat threatens to capsize itself, the leeboard lends stability and steadiness making the journey possible.

How about you and your spouse? Do you operate together like a bicycle built for two? Or are you behind-the-scenes serving as the clock's inner-workings while your husband shines as the clock face? Find a picture that shows how you and your husband are "one" in service to the Lord even though you have different roles to fill.

### *Your Role as Mom*

Your role regarding other family members revolves around protection as well. The church planter children are in a dubious position. Their own lives have either been transplanted or altered in a fundamental way. The plant grows and morphs needing different kinds of attention and energy at each new phase. Others tend to either judge the church planter children with a critical eye, or give them too much special attention, setting them apart and thus setting them up for trouble. What children need is room to grow and to learn to love the Lord. Protect them from unrealistic expectations. Defend them from any situation that hinders healthy growth. For more about your role as a mom, see chapter seven.

### *How Do You See Yourself?*

How do you define your role as a church planter wife? Do you have a role model who embodies your ideal ministry personality? Do you measure up? Facing your toughest critic requires only a glance in the mirror. Women tend to look for flaws and mentally exaggerate their imperfections. Measuring yourself against anyone else denies God's plan. You are the chosen one, chosen by your husband and chosen by God as the one intended for this time and this place. Besides, God takes joy in shining His glory right through the imperfections of His people. He uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things! It proves that a being greater than any human is at work. Let God love and lead. Your own expectations need to be surrendered in the light of God's leading and how He shaped you.

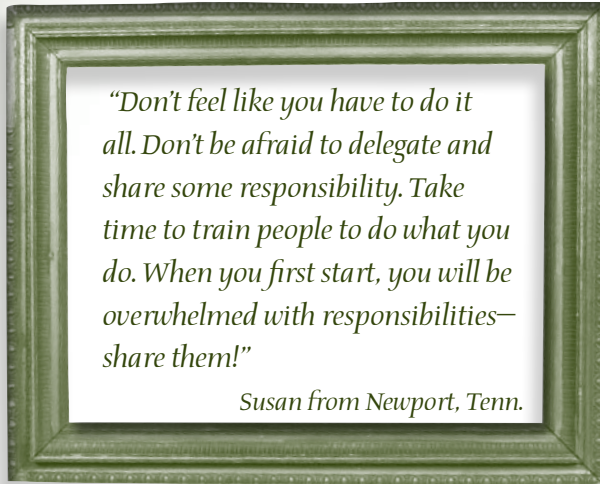
*Three-fourths of planter wives surveyed say they feel obligated to be involved in certain ministries because there's no one else to do it or no one else willing to do it.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

Proactively, you must guard your heart and mind. As women, if we're not careful we can find ourselves bombarded by the messages of the world, often making us feel defeated. Think about where the messages of the world are creeping into your mind (music, magazines, TV, movies, internet) and how those shape the way you think about yourself. Continually draw upon Scripture, letting it feed, protect and correct. Examine your thoughts. Do they build you up or tear you down? The Psalm 19:14 prayer, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer" will help rein in negative thoughts. We won't speak it if we don't think it.

## *Your Role in Ministry*

Clarity of expectations between husband and wife is essential to prevent confusion and a clash of wills. The church plant begins with no definition, no schedule and no roles, and thus it develops in often unexpected ways. As new opportunities present themselves the planter will need to release old responsibilities. Early on, a wife may be eager to help by picking up the added activity. Soon she begins to think, “His cup runneth over, and spills into mine, which is already leaking!” There comes a point where there is no more room in her cup.



While each church planter wife has her own special gifts and abilities, each one finds herself pressed into service to do things she is not particularly gifted to do. Those responsibilities should last for a brief season, until someone else is ready to walk through the ministry door that was opened. Therefore, the early years of ministry development are spent trying to work yourself out of a job by growing others into service. Helping others find their place in church life frees the planter and wife to move on to new opportunities. This transforms disciples into leaders.

Because change in a church plant is constant, communicating the current needs and the current ability to meet those needs is the difference between harmony and an expectation explosion. Make sure that you and your husband have discussed what responsibilities you want to keep and what responsibilities you will fulfill for a season. Then, make sure you have a plan for transitioning out of those roles you are temporarily filling.

Communicating the needs to church members is important. You may have no desire to be in charge of the nursery, but knowing its importance and not having anyone immediately volunteering for that position, you fill that role. A member who loves working with children drops her children off with you each week and sees you loving on the babies and thinks, “She’s great with kids. She must be so happy to be in charge of the nursery.” Little does she know that the whole time you were praying, “God, help me do this with a cheerful, willing heart, even though I would much rather be sitting in the worship service right now.”

Until you are able to hand responsibilities over to those God raises up, flexibility will be an important characteristic for you to cultivate in your life. Sometimes you will have to fill a need in spite of your own desires or needs. Flexibility is all about letting God grow you in areas where you never saw the need or never *wanted* to see the need. A church plant is the perfect place to be stretched spiritually and to learn how to love sacrificially.

## *What Does Everyone Else Think You Should Do?*

My husband, David, and I launched into church planting knowing that God spoke this into our hearts. That “knowing” was a fire that lit the way before us. Leaving an established church to venture into the wilderness was both frightening and freeing. We knew challenges lay ahead but relished the idea of beginning a new church—one that would be free of the expectations of an existing church, or so we thought.

Freedom from expectations was the first of several church planting fallacies to come unraveled. Every new person brought with them their own ideas of how a church should look and sound and what roles the members (staff included) should fill. It was bewildering. We had envisioned a symphony with everyone playing their part

*Ninety-two percent of church planter wives surveyed say that their church respects their level of involvement.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

in a new song to the Lord. The initial experience was more like a band with each person playing their own tune. The only way to peacefully tune hearts is through seeking God together and the continued communication of the vision that God is revealing for His church.

While the church planter's role becomes more obvious with time, the role of his wife is usually not openly addressed. Expectations from others tend to be expressed by innuendo

and comparison. And those measuring sticks are useful only for judging shortcomings. The song lyrics, "All I ever want to be is who You made me, any more or less would be a step out of Your plan," perfectly expresses the real measure of a church planter wife.

How do you respond to the expectation of others? God reminds us to follow Him. "My sheep listen to my voice" (John 10:27, NIV) not the whims of others. While we were still newlyweds, a well-meaning minister's wife remarked that I had nice piano hands. I explained that I didn't play. She was happy to encourage me to take lessons, as she had, so that I could fulfill this role. Her comment triggered a flashback to my one-and-only piano lesson. In second grade, a bearded man came to our home and instructed me to push the keys with my fingers. There I sat, crying those little hiccup sobs, thinking that I was supposed to magically know how to play a song. Even as an adult, I was fairly certain that with added performance anxiety, that scene would be repeated before a larger audience.

*Peace comes in realizing that God doesn't ask you to live beyond your capabilities. Frequently He stretches His children, but in those times He always provides the means and the desire to accomplish His will.*

Often people turn to the kind ear of the church planter wife with their pain or disappointments. The Bible says to bear one another's burdens. Be certain that this trip is a short one, straight to the cross. This is where the burdens and the burdened find rest. They will not find rest by weighing you down.

There are those who demand extraordinary amounts of attention. Is the attention warranted? Is this the proper time? Is this person constantly in turmoil? For those who demand attention when you are pressed for time, always stand at attention. (Sitting signifies that you have the luxury of time.) Find another time or another person (with appropriate boundaries) to build them up so they are not neglected.

### *God's Promise*

Great expectations based upon the lives of others who seem to have it all together can have a paralyzing effect. When faced with the accomplishments and schedules of ladies who appear to be super-wives, two conflicting thoughts arise. First, “Who can ever measure up to that standard?” but also, “What is happening within their family and personal lives in this process?” God does not demand extraordinary service without granting extraordinary spiritual and physical equipping. While sacrifice is part of our service to God, we are called to personal sacrifice—never to personal or family neglect. As we’re reminded in 1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV), “To obey is better than sacrifice.” Some remarkable individuals demonstrate amazing energy and find time to accomplish all the tasks before them with grace. God forms each of us differently to serve His own expectation and purpose.

Peace comes in realizing that God doesn’t ask you to live beyond your capabilities. Frequently He stretches His children, but in those times He always provides the means and the desire to accomplish His will. God knows each woman’s personality and gifts and directs her into filling her place in the kingdom of God.

As you discover and live out the role that God has designed for you, remember His promise, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30, NIV). Each Christian is called to service, but the role won’t look the same for all church planter wives. Let your role flow out of your relationship with your heavenly Father and with your husband. If you resist the urge to compare yourself with others and allow others to define your role, I believe you will discover joy and fulfillment in the journey.

## *The Challenging Role... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

What is the role of the church planter wife? Wouldn't it be easier to list the things that our role is not? That list seems to be much shorter. You see, I believe that the church planting wife is one of the most challenging roles that could ever be imagined. We wear more hats than could ever be counted. The good news is that the fruit of our labor makes the adventure worth all of the effort. So be brave. Stand tall. You are a woman of noble character and God is going to blow you away with the story He is getting ready to write of your life.

First of all, let's get one thing straight. I am not a church PLANTER'S wife. I am a church PLANTING wife. I am not just the wife of the church planter. I am the wingman. The journey is mine just as much as it is my husband's. I was called just as he was called to begin this church. To say I am a church planter's wife almost seems as if my role is less than that of my husband. It is not—not when you are starting a church from scratch. It's just different.

I do not pastor the church. I watch the back of the one who does.

I do not make the decisions. I pray for the wisdom of the ones who do.

I do not play the piano or run the nursery. I keep my hands free so I can help out wherever I might be needed on a Sunday morning. And I do serve in the areas where I am truly passionate.

I do not come to church with the most beautiful Sunday attire. I come to church often in a pair of jeans, a t-shirt and flip flops. No doubt I will be on my hands and knees either loving on a snotty, crying child or sweeping up donut crumbs and spilled coffee from the floor.

I do not get jealous when other women need my husband's counsel. But I do keep a very close tab on every situation. I talk with my husband about boundaries and guidelines that will help to protect our marriage, and he allows me to check up on him and ask him tough questions.

I do date my husband every single week. I do not let conversation turn towards church affairs during our date night (at least not very often).

I do run our home. I am a soccer mom with a mini van. And I do everything that I can to make our home a place of refuge for our family and not a place of stress.

I do help to keep my husband well balanced. I try to make sure that he is always making time for the family and time for himself in the middle of the whirlwind of all God has called him to be.

I do open my house to new families and friends. It is not always the most comfortable thing for me to do. I don't allow myself to feel guilty for that. I am an introvert by nature and the party is my most uncomfortable place to be. But I push myself to step out of my comfort zone more and more.

There are many more things that I do as a church planting wife. I plan and schedule and rearrange my schedule. I wear the big MOM hat 24/7. I give and take and mentor and remain flexible. I smile. I cry. I celebrate and admittedly, sometimes I complain. I get tired. I laugh. I scream. I nurture a deep relationship with at least one godly lady who is not at all a part of our church, for I always end up needing a caring voice on the other end of the phone. And I watch in amazement at what God is doing.

But most of all, I take time to curl up in the lap of the Father as often as I possibly can. I believe this alone is the number one role of the church planting wife. Forget all of the other do's and don'ts. If I fail to do the number one thing, I drown. And believe me, drowning in the middle of starting a church is never where you want to be.

No doubt your hats will be different from mine. God's story for your journey will look quite different in many ways. Embrace the uniqueness of where and what God has called you to do. Discover the place where you can meet with God and all of the rest of the world can melt away. Then make sure that you join him there regularly. That would be my heart's wish for you as you begin the adventure.

Blessings,

*Amy Colón*

Amy Colón  
Superior, Colo.  
Cool River Church



## *The Challenging Role... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

I am so excited about what lies ahead for you and your family. The journey that you are embarking on has the potential to eternally impact men, women and children for multiple generations. As you begin this journey it may help to understand your new role as a church planter wife. When my husband and I planted a church, I quickly discovered three areas that I needed to concentrate on in my new role—first, the importance of supporting my husband privately, second, to support him publicly, and third, to make sure I was recharging spiritually and emotionally.

I found that to support my husband privately I needed to provide times for open, honest and safe communication concerning ministry. These conversations could run the spectrum from struggles, frustrations, fears, hopes, discouragements, and failures to blessings, victories and miracles done by God in the community and church. You will have the opportunity to listen, encourage and offer spiritual objectivity. You will both benefit from these times of communication. Your husband will face challenges that he never dreamed of, good and bad. He may quit on Sunday afternoon, but knowing his wife stands beside him and believes in his God-given vision will help him sign up again on Monday morning.

Recalling those challenging times, God always allowed me to be up when my husband was down and him to be up when I was down. He will need you to help him recognize when he is physically, emotionally or spiritually empty. Help him see when things are out of balance. Encourage him to discover ways to recharge before he is on empty.

When you understand and believe the vision God has given and you have walked with your husband through the struggles and the celebrations, it will be easy to support him publicly. You should be seen as his number one cheerleader. People may attempt to pull you to their way of thinking that is contrary to the vision and seek to get you to choose sides. Publicly there is only one side—that of your husband's. If something needs to be addressed, it should be done in private. In the early days of your church plant you may be called upon to work outside of your giftedness or passion. This request may come from your husband. It's in these times you will discover if you share in the vision and call. Your act of service outside of your passion and giftedness speaks volumes of support to your husband and church family. Hopefully, this will be short-lived as you grow and develop leaders.

Finally, but most importantly, is that you make sure to have a system in place that will recharge you spiritually and emotionally. You will find that as you serve and give of yourself daily, if you are not replenishing spiritually you will no longer be giving from the overflow of your life, but will be operating on your own power. Serving by your own power will quickly deplete you and leave you empty and discouraged. Find a Bible study in the area or in a supporting church that you can attend. If this is not possible, find a good study that you can do on your own.

Additionally, find two Christian women, one who will be your ministry mentor, the other to be a personal accountability partner. You will find great encouragement and support in having a ministry mentor who understand the struggles of church planting and can help you walk through difficulties. Accountability is key to helping you remain real and approachable. They need to be honest with you when you slip into unhealthy behavior or thinking. Life in a church plant moves so fast and requires such flexibility that you may not even recognize wrong attitudes and actions creeping in your life. Having a trusted accountability partner can help you avoid much heartache.

There are many other aspects to the role of the church planter wife, but I believe that being a strong supporter of your husband privately and publicly and ensuring you are being recharged will allow you to avoid the pitfalls of church planting. You have many exciting times ahead of you that I cannot begin to share in a short letter, but let me assure you that some of the sweetest memories and relationships lay just ahead. May God place his hand upon you and your ministry as you begin this journey.

Serving Him,

*Cherryl Hewett*

Cherryl Hewett  
Dawsonville, Ga.





*Tina Cole* is the wife of church planter David Cole, pastor of Cross Trails Cowboy Church in Orange Grove, Texas. David and Tina have been married for 21 years and have five children: Rebekah (20), Ira (18), Seth (16), Joda (13), Abigail (11). Tina is employed full time, teaching students with special needs. Tina has been a women's speaker on the subject of time management, personalities, raising children, and loving your husband.

"What happened to my nicely structured life of menus, schedules, and predictability?" I wondered after many days of complete chaos. I realized that I could no longer go along with the "life as usual" attitude. As church planters of a Cowboy Church, our lives had drastically changed. We weren't attending a church that was already established with regularly scheduled activities that we could participate in and perhaps lead. We didn't have Tuesday night visitation; now we had roping nights at the arena. We didn't have a church office full of equipment to assist with the administrative needs of the church; now we had to find time in and around all the other needs of family and work to use our own computer and printer and do the best we could.

I was trying to handle things and keep my sanity the same way that I had always done it. The Lord began to work in my heart to show me that He had a higher calling for not only my husband as the planter, but for me as his wife and for our family. As the "keeper of the calendar" and the one who is supposed to keep the family on course no matter the conditions around us, I was really struggling with the lack of structure that comes with this calling.

I clearly remember the day that I stomped my foot, looked upward, and said “I didn’t sign up for this!” The Lord replied, “Oh, yes My child, you did. You may not have realized it would be this hard, but I have already given you the means to deal with all of these changes. You did it when you had five children under the age of nine. You did it when you owned your own business. You can make this work. Just surrender your plans to Me and remember that you have been called to reach these people who need Me. I have a relationship with you, and I want to have one with them. They need to see Me in you, but that can only happen if you and your family are available to them and spend time with them and around them.”

I worried that my family would suffer. God promised that they wouldn’t. He helps me keep the balance. As our church grows and our lives get busier, we have to rework the plan. I have to give all of it to Him and know that He has our best interests at heart. As we give more to Him, God makes the tasks easier. All He wants us to do is give Him the reigns. Time management is not a foreign concept for the Lord. He likes “order.” Look at how he handled creation!

### *Plan with Prayer*

The most important part of planning your day is to first spend time with God. As you sit down for your quiet time, bring your calendar or a notepad. Proverbs 19:21 (NIV) says, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

As you start your day or as you are going over your tasks for the week you must seek the Lord’s guidance, asking Him to show you what He would have you do that day, what is most important, and what should be removed from your schedule. What you thought were your priorities may change. Give your list of “to do’s” to the Lord, committing them to Him, and be willing to be flexible. Ask God to give you the graciousness you need to allow your plans to be interrupted and changed as He, in His sovereignty, allows.

### *Plan with Purpose*

“Purpose” seems to be a popular buzz word these days. I discovered its significance for my own life about 10 years ago when we assisted in the planting of a “Purpose-Driven” church in another city. There are a great number of things that can be done, need to be done, and should be done. There are good things, and there are great things. These may or may not fall within the purpose that God has for your life or your role as the wife of a church planter. With this in mind, as with any good self-improvement plan, you need to have incentive. You need to have a “why”—a purpose—for managing your time. When my life is chaotic, I am no longer able to fulfill the call on my life to glorify God, to care for my family, and to serve in ministry in a way that honors Him. As an act of obedience to God, out of love for my husband and family, and a passion for lost people, I choose to be a good steward of my time.

I can’t tell you what your incentive needs to be. Only you can determine your purpose. I seek to manage my time so that my family will enjoy my company. If I feel out of control, I get pretty grumpy. There is so little time to spend with my family and I want that time to be positive.

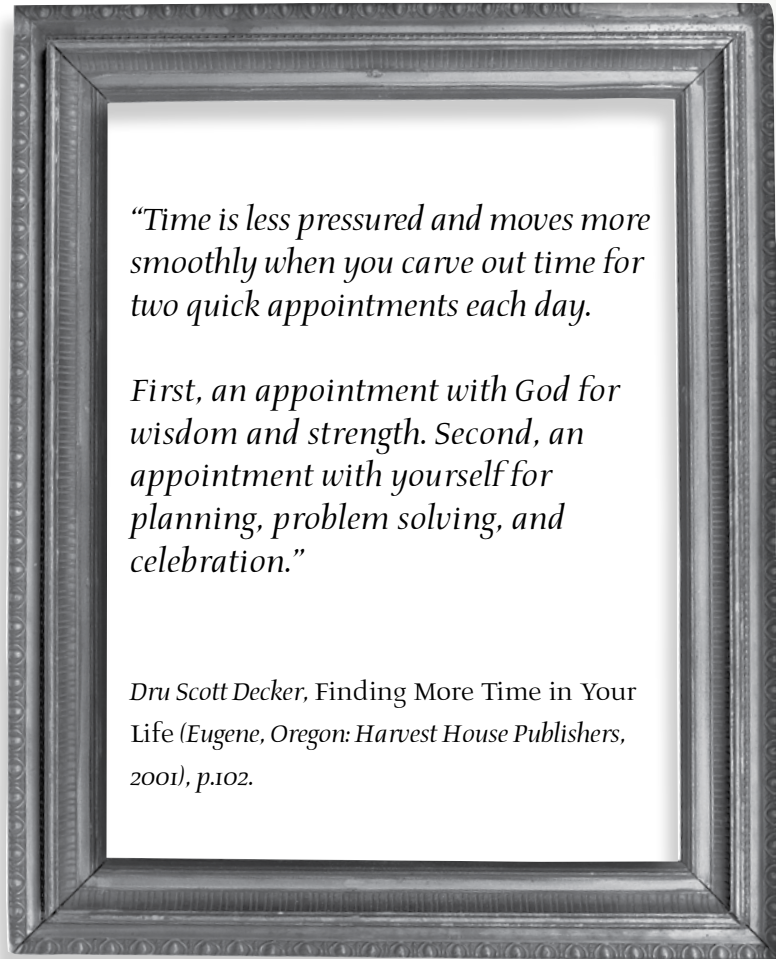
You may be concerned that my “why” is not having more time to help with the church. When I was a young mom and was only involved in church work as a layperson, my mom told me to always consider my family first before I took on any new task. She reminded me that my family was my first mission field. While all of my children know the Lord, they still need to be discipled and nurtured in the Lord. I work very hard even now to be sure that I don’t get so busy serving the Lord that I neglect my family.

### *Plan Around Priorities*

I always have more to do than I can remember to get done. If left to my own memory, things will inevitably be left undone. I have become a “list” person out of sheer survival. I make lists for everything! However, lists need to serve a purpose as well. Sometimes there are so many diversities in my “to do’s” that I can’t figure out which list to put them on. I tend to make lists that are so ambitious that even Wonder Woman couldn’t get it all done. As the wife of a church planter, I can get thrown into doing things that are good, but they don’t really serve the real purpose of the church or even the purpose God has given me as an individual in life. Be selective in the things you do and focus on the “greater” things.

I have a jar filled with rice and walnuts that has had prominence on my kitchen cabinet for the past eight years. I keep it there to serve as a reminder that if you fill your jar with the good things (rice) first, you will not be able to fit in all of the best things (walnuts). But, if you fill the jar with the best things first (walnuts), then you will have room for all of the good things (rice) as well.

My friend and fellow time-manager Sandi Lucas once told me to make a “dump list.” She said to just dump all the tasks in my head out on paper, then sort through them. It is somewhat like cleaning out your purse. Sometimes you just have to dump out the whole thing and cull through the mess! My brain can get as messy and jumbled as my purse, so I have to “dump” it out and get it organized! Once you have written down everything you can think of, begin to prayerfully prioritize, keeping in mind that some of these good things may not be great things.



- ✧ What has to be done immediately?
- ✧ What can be delegated or removed completely?
- ✧ What things impact my family?
- ✧ What things compete with my time/care for my family?
- ✧ What things will have the greatest impact upon the kingdom of God?
- ✧ What things compete with my service in the kingdom of God?

You can use numbers, symbols, or even highlighters to prioritize your list. Some things have to be done today. Some can be done over a period of time. Others can be delegated.

### *Plan by Personality*

Now that you know the “why,” you need to figure out the “who,” as in “who are you?” Although each of us is unique, there are tools which categorize people with similar characteristics into groups or personality types. These characteristics cause individuals to think and act in certain ways. Understanding your personality type may provide you with great insight about your ability to manage time and effectively prioritize your life. *PLACE Ministries* of Alpharetta, Ga., ([www.placeministries.org](http://www.placeministries.org)) offers a wonderful resource to aid you in the discovery process. The PLACE personality assessment, one of five PLACE assessments, is a simplified version of the original “DISC” model and reveals an individual’s personality profile. Everyone will have some characteristics from all four categories, but generally one or two categories will emerge as primary and secondary within the profile.

*PLACE Ministries offers  
5 assessments as part of  
a PLACE Profile:*

- ✧ *Personality Discovery*
- ✧ *Learning Spiritual Gifts*
- ✧ *Abilities Awareness*
- ✧ *Connecting Passion  
with Ministry*
- ✧ *Experiences of Life*

*For more information, visit  
[www.placeministries.org](http://www.placeministries.org).*

Being fascinated with personalities, I tend to “type” people everywhere I go. I even do it as I study my Bible. Are you like Martha (“C” —conscientious personality), content to follow rules, task-oriented, efficient, and like to keep things tidy? Or are you more like Sarah (“I”—inspiring personality), who laughed at life, was adventurous, and maybe a bit selfish? Perhaps you are like King David’s wife Abigail (“D” —driven personality) who was bold, persuasive, and assertive. Then again, you may find more in common with Ruth (“S” —steady personality) who was loyal, protective, and submissive.

*Are you more like Martha,  
Sarah, Abigail, or Ruth?*

*To find out your personality  
type, see the Appendix.*

If you are more like Sarah, making lists may not come so easy for you, so make them short and plan some fun stuff to reward yourself. If you are a Martha, lists may already be part of your

routine. You might benefit from practicing flexibility and scheduling a little fun. If you are an Abigail, then you may enjoy setting goals and having control; you may struggle giving God control. Make a conscious effort to give your plans to Him on a daily basis. As a Ruth, you may have trouble with doing things that others ask you to do instead of determining what God wants you to do. Spend time with God, asking Him to make your schedule. Rely on the Lord and let Him guide you and motivate you.

### *Changing Plans*

Three years ago this month my husband and I sat at a meeting with the pastor of the church that was going to help us launch a new work in our area. We were concerned about finding a pastor who would share our passion for the unchurched people in our area. The pastor asked my husband, "Who has God given the vision for this new work?" He told him, "I guess He gave it to me." The pastor said, "Then I guess you are the pastor." In an instant, with one simple conversation, I became a pastor's wife, and even more complex, a church planter wife. Life as we knew it was about to change.

When you jump into a new church plant, you pretty much plunge in feet first and do everything possible to stay afloat. Management of your time is fundamental to preventing burn-out and frustration. This is not to say that you won't get to this point, but when you do get there, I hope that you will refer to some of the things that the Lord has given me to help keep things on an even keel. As the wife of a church planter, you have a responsibility to care for your home, looking out for the well-being of your husband (which ultimately affects the well-being of the church) and your children. It can be a tall order to fill, but with prayer, finding purpose, prioritizing, and personalizing, it can be done.





*Nocona Koenig* and her husband of 11 years, Darin, have served in ministry together since they were first married, starting in youth ministry until God led them to the pastoral ministry in 2003. After serving in a little country church in South Texas for just over a year, Darin and Nocona felt the call to church planting. They served a year as interns at a church plant in Kyle, Texas, before moving to New Braunfels, Texas, in 2006 to start The Journey Church. Nocona and Darin have three children: Dalton (5), Brighton (2), and Madison (4 months). Nocona balances being Darin's personal assistant, Children's Director of The Journey Church, her home and family while also running a separate business from her house.

### *Time management from another perspective...*

I am passionate about efficiency. The waste of anything—whether it be talent, potential, time, or resources—makes me crazy. Managing time wisely is the key to efficiency. That said, time management and setting up a good system is a work in progress. It is a tool to help you, not a measuring stick to live up to. It is a process that needs tweaking on a daily basis. When you get off track due to the circumstances of life, it gives you a place to get back on track.

I personally did not like to make a schedule for myself and put it on paper. I did not want to see in black and white that I never “got off work;” that my entire day was scheduled, possibly overscheduled! But, when I did write out a schedule I found that was not the case. My kids acted better because they function better on a predictable schedule. I went to bed each night knowing I had given my family what they needed, fulfilled all I had to do for the church, and discovered that I had some time left for myself. With just a little planning, my family gets so much more out of life. Plus, it is wonderful training for our children to help them become productive adults.

### *Practical Time Savers for Busy Lives*

I start out with a visible schedule for myself and my kids to follow for the week. I schedule a time to be dressed and ready for the day, beds made, various activities, lunch, quiet time/nap, and so forth. During the kids' nap time I try to do my devotional. I also do office work for my business and for the church.

I break down the household chores to a daily activity. For example, on Mondays, I change all the sheets in the house. Tuesdays, I clean all of the bathrooms. Wednesdays are for scrubbing the kitchen and Thursdays are for dusting and vacuuming. I also do one load of laundry a day. To motivate myself for household chores, I decide on a time I want it done and set a timer. I play a silly game to try to beat the timer with each project. This also works well with kids and helps develop great habits. I also give myself small goals. If I get everything done, I can read a section of a book. If I get it all done early on Friday, during quiet time I can scrapbook (or work on another hobby that interests me).

If you feel there is never enough time in the day to get it all done, try to determine where you may be wasting time during the day or if your expectations are too high. Take a couple of days and journal the daily activities you do and you will find what you can cut out. How much time is wasted watching TV or talking on the phone? How much time is also wasted procrastinating? Consider that you may be trying to do too much. You may have to learn how to say “no.”

I also have a bin for each person in our house. As I find things laying around the house, I put them in the appropriate bin for that person. Each night we take 30 minutes to clean out our bins and pick up. The timer works great for this and gets everyone ready for the next day. While the rest of the family is picking things up and putting them away, I load the dishwasher and get a load of laundry ready to run as we sleep. Laying out clothes for the next day is something that I have always done and is especially important for Sunday mornings. I get the diaper bag ready and anything I need for the next day to cut down on morning chaos.

Weekly meal plans help make the day run more smoothly and also make grocery shopping easier. If we have a night activity, then it is a casserole night and I cook it at lunch so that it is ready for supper. This really helps with that evening crunch time and craziness. We also clean up after supper together as a family.

One thing I know about myself is that I am very forgetful. (I'll chalk it up to sleep deprivation and wearing too many hats.) If I don't write it down, I will forget it. Each night I make a "to do" list. I break it down by responsibilities at home and responsibilities at church. I write everything down. I keep my list in a spiral notebook so it won't get lost.


On the back of the paper each night I take time to evaluate the day. Writing it down helps me avoid beating myself up over things that went wrong. I simply evaluate it and make a new plan for next time. We are all a work in progress. It also helps me pinpoint where problem areas are starting before they get worse.

The busyness of life distracts us all day long. In the midst of that busyness it is easy to misplace things. To help me stay in control, I have a place for everything. At the store I immediately put the receipts in a certain place. I try not to put things in my pocket. Since I started doing this, I never have to look for my cell phone, keys, or anything else. When my brain fails me, my systems don't, and I don't have to waste time tearing things apart trying to find something. It also trains my family that if everyone takes two extra steps to put things away it saves me a lot more time. When you use a dish, rinse it and put it in the dishwasher. If you get it out, put it up.

### *Making Time for the Important Stuff*

*Family Time.* First, nothing is planned on Sundays after church. We usually come home and crash. Then on Sunday nights we have family night. Our kids do not get much of our attention on Sunday mornings so this serves as our time to reconnect. We have a slumber party in our bedroom and watch a kids' movie.

Don't forget to take time to create memories. Be intentional and plan time to create special things to do as a family and with your kids to create memories. Don't let the television be the only activity that entertains them. (This includes turning off the television during dinner.) Create family traditions.



*"If we are good about keeping God first and always thinking of how something in ministry affects our spouse and our children, we make good decisions with our time."*

*Lydia from Auburn, Calif.*

Don't let the days slip away from you and put things off for "someday." Plan something each week that is creative and fun to do with your kids.

*Spouse Time.* Don't forget to date your husband. Set a time for romance or it will never happen. We have three kids under the age of six, and it seems at times that at least one of them is awake 24 hours a day. Although this is a season we will miss someday, we don't let our marriage get neglected in the process. When the children are grown and on their own, you want to have a friendship and relationship with your husband that you don't have to rebuild. We get a babysitter during the day every other Friday. (You don't always have to hire someone. We trade with other couples or enlist a neighbor's teen as a service to the church.) This is usually pay day and we get lunch together and then get groceries. It may not sound like much, but with three kids any time alone is huge. Plus, lunch prices are cheaper at restaurants during the noon hour.

Communication is crucial for the success of the plant and your relationship with your husband. You cannot let things fester or go unspoken. Scheduling time to "unpack" things is a way to help stay on track. My husband and I spend part of Mondays just talking about the service. We discuss the things that worked well, things that did not, potential problems and ideas. We also spend time addressing how we are feeling. As a woman, I have had a roller coaster of emotions and feelings. The first couple of years of planting a church are hard work, and the wave of emotions that come with planting a church can range from excitement to fear, frustration, anger, disappointment, self-doubt, guilt, and possibly even resentment. Talking about them with your spouse takes their power away and helps you to work through legitimate issues that need to be addressed and to identify the untruths Satan has whispered in your ears.

We have a rule in our marriage that we don't talk about anything serious after about 8:00 p.m., if at all possible. At night when we are tired, we lose perspective and are not as productive in our talks. Emotions run higher and we are more likely to get into an argument or lose sleep. You would be amazed at how much clearer you think about things earlier in the day.

Don't forget that the most important form of communication is prayer—both with your spouse and individually. Pray for each other, for your family, for your church, and the impact you will have on so many lives. When times are hard and there seems to be no one else in the world you can talk to, pour your heart out to Jesus. Find a place in your house that can serve as your place of prayer.

### *The Woman: Taking Care of You*

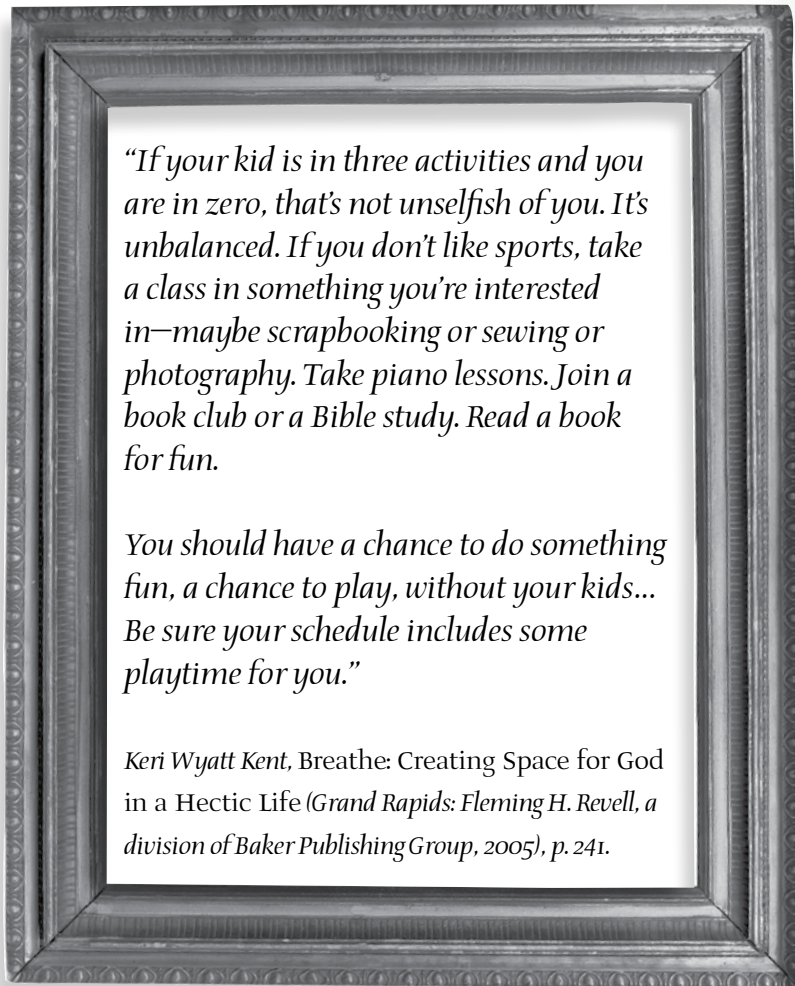
Know yourself. Know if you are a people person or a person who needs solitude to energize. Realize when you are running on empty and need to retreat. Even Jesus did that. Listen to your body and don't push through. Do not push yourself to exhaustion and think you are sacrificing for the Lord. We are to take care of our bodies and treat them as a temple for the Lord. How can you remain strong to fight if you are weary and running on empty? God does not want us to build a church mistreating ourselves or our family in the process. If our lives are in disarray then how can we be a blessing to other families? Schedule time to rest.

Take time for you! Without guilt, do things for yourself. Take a bubble bath alone at night. Try to get enough sleep, eat right, and exercise. Take time for your hobbies and if you don't have one, find one. You are still a person with an individual identity. Who were you before you were cast in the roles of wife and mother? Find that girl with hopes and dreams and things that made her happy.

Take time with your girlfriends. Find a group of friends and go have girl time without kids. Go see that girly movie your husband is not interested in seeing anyway. Take some of the ladies in your church out for girl time. It helps the families in your church when the wives and mothers are rejuvenated too. We have added families to our church because of our weekly ladies' coffee time and our monthly scrapbook night. It is a blessing for them and for me.

Most importantly, take time to be still. Meditate on the Word of the Lord. Let Him fill your cup and feed your soul. You will be dry and withered on the vine if you don't take time to receive from God.

I hope that this helps you keep your sanity as you start your new mission. I have found that these systems help me to have more time to encourage my husband, cuddle my kids, and love the people God brings across my path without losing myself in the process. Remember, if you are not taking care of yourself, you will not be able to serve those who need you.



## *Practicing God's Presence... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

Church planting demands a lot of your time, so developing yourself spiritually has to happen in the craziness. Designated times for prayer and studying God's Word are a good idea and work well for us "Type A" personalities, but in the world of church planting, things do not work on our schedule—they work on a kingdom schedule. Being creative in finding time to develop yourself spiritually is necessary. I wanted a designated time and formula each day for this and "interruptions" consistently happened. God showed me that some of the "interruptions" were His kingdom stuff and I needed to let go of my believed control.

Don't get hung up on your failures. (I tend to do that.) God is still present, even if we lose our thoughts on Him for some time. He still loves us. Growing yourself in Christ is what everyone, including your family, needs in this church plant. Do it! A designated time of praying and studying (getting away from the crowds like Jesus did) is needed, but daily flexibility and creativity in seeking after God is necessary as well.

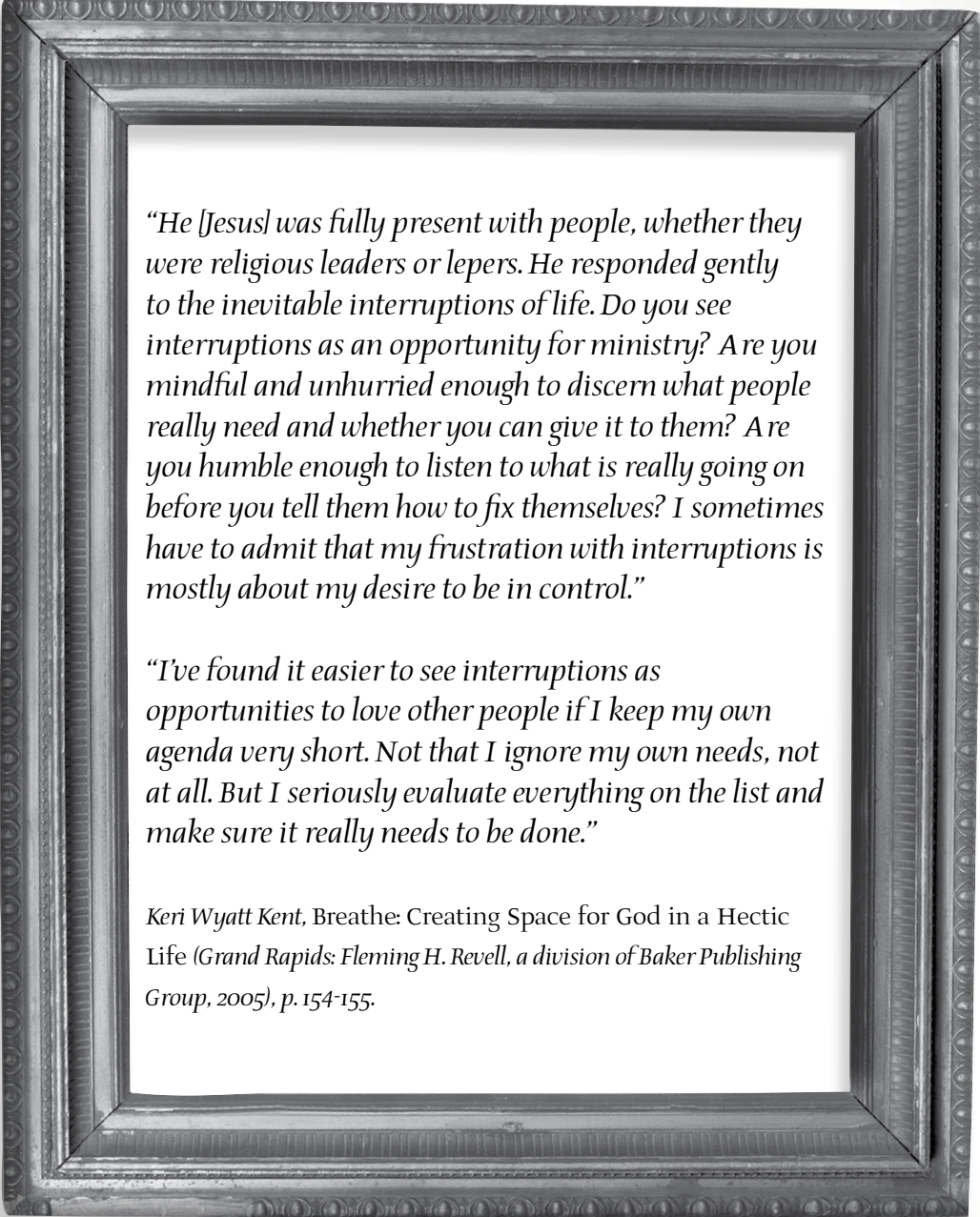
Truths have been spoken to me by non-believers, as well as believers, when I am experiencing God's presence in my daily life. Be aware of the small things that happen throughout the day and listen to the Holy Spirit. I have stories where I have been invited into someone's life for a brief moment because I was aware of my surroundings and practicing God's presence. God wants to use those moments—let Him.

Expect failure and loneliness—those are places where God is waiting to touch a part of you that He could not touch without these struggles. So live in those places for a time and seek God. (Henri Nouwen's writings have been a great resource for me.) Continue to seek even when it is a struggle and no one is there with you. This is the example Christ showed us.

Sincerely,

*Cathy Johnson*

Cathy Johnson  
Oxford, Ohio  
Veritas Church

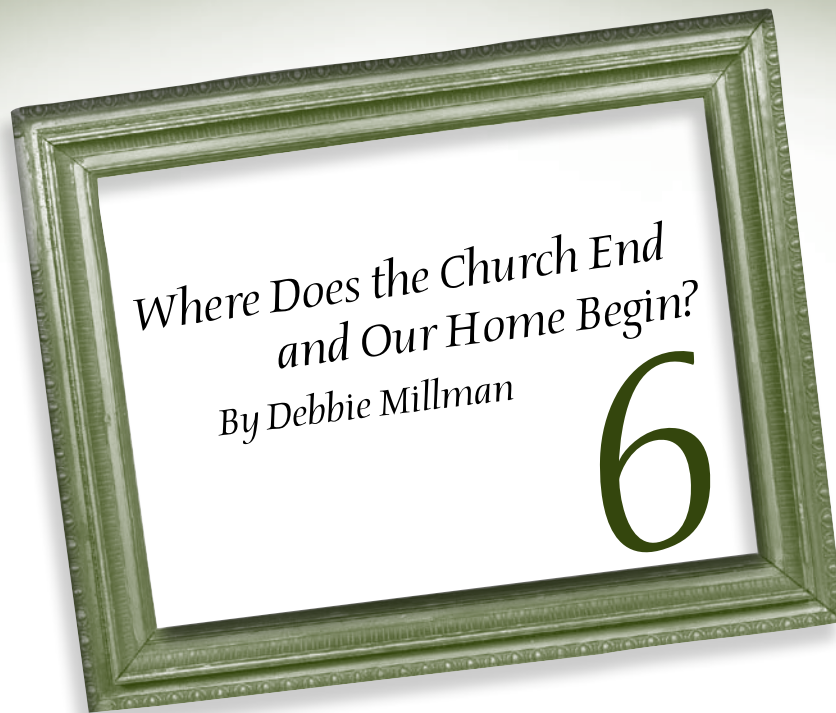


*“He [Jesus] was fully present with people, whether they were religious leaders or lepers. He responded gently to the inevitable interruptions of life. Do you see interruptions as an opportunity for ministry? Are you mindful and unhurried enough to discern what people really need and whether you can give it to them? Are you humble enough to listen to what is really going on before you tell them how to fix themselves? I sometimes have to admit that my frustration with interruptions is mostly about my desire to be in control.”*

*“I’ve found it easier to see interruptions as opportunities to love other people if I keep my own agenda very short. Not that I ignore my own needs, not at all. But I seriously evaluate everything on the list and make sure it really needs to be done.”*

*Keri Wyatt Kent, Breathe: Creating Space for God in a Hectic Life (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2005), p. 154-155.*





*Debbie Millman* is a Christian counselor who also teaches high school students with learning disabilities. She and her husband, Mark, are appointed missionaries with the North American Mission Board. Mark serves as the Director of Missions and Church Planting Strategist in Southern Wisconsin. Debbie has assisted with the assessment of church planting couples. Debbie also enjoys connecting with and ministering to the pastors' wives in their association. Mark and Debbie have been married since 1993 and have two children.

My husband is a big picture guy. It's amazing. He can envision a plan big enough to fill any state. The details are what bog him down. One day he came home and said, "So, we have this punk rock band in town to do an outreach for our youth this weekend. It's no big deal if they crash in our basement tonight, is it?" Eight months pregnant and highly hormonal, my response was less than godly. A little notice would have been nice! He's literally thinking "crash" in our basement. I'm thinking, "Let's at least give them a soft spot to land after traveling all day." So, to me, that means putting out clean sheets, making sure there are enough pillows for everyone, and maybe even cleaning the bathroom down there for an extra touch. We did graciously host the band, and they cleaned out every box of cereal we had in our cupboards. Great guys—and our youth loved them!

In ministry, sometimes the boundary lines between family life and the church can get fuzzy. Where does the church end and our home begin? What is a boundary, anyway? In their book, *Boundaries*, Henry Cloud and John Townsend say it like this: "Boundaries define *what is me* and *what is not me*. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership."<sup>1</sup>



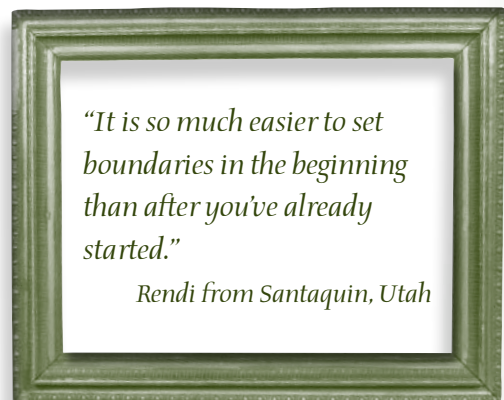
Healthy boundaries draw a line that defines where my space ends and another person's space begins. They establish a limit or an extent. They protect us from burnout and allow us to be fully who God intended us to be and to do what He created us to do. They allow us to grow in our relationships and improve our performance. In ministry people place heavy demands upon us because they see us as caregivers. Boundaries protect us from being overwhelmed by the massive demands placed upon us by others or even ourselves.

Over the years, my husband and I have learned to clarify some of these boundaries in ministry. We haven't "arrived" yet. We still have so many things coming at us from so many different directions, and it can be difficult at times to *live* everything I'm writing about in this chapter. In fact, if I had mastered the art of living within my boundaries, I probably would have said "no" to writing this chapter in the middle of an insane month for us! You and I are traveling this road together as we try to figure out where the "fine line" or "balance" is in our family, marriage and church lives. We do know now that the more we have decided and figured out ahead of time, the less likely we are to sink in a sea of busyness and chaos. In this chapter, I'm going to share some reasons for having boundaries, as well as a few steps that have helped us to put healthy boundaries in place in our ministry, in our parenting, in our home, and in our marriage.

### *Biblical Basis for Boundaries*

Jesus had a huge impact on the world. We are living proof! But He didn't do it by doing ministry 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He withdrew to lonely places and prayed (see Luke 5:16). He made time to be alone and listen to the Father. He gave ministry away to those with whom He entrusted great things. Jesus had healthy boundaries to make sure there was still something left of Him when His Father had something else for Him to do. He stayed calm. He knew when to say "no," and He knew when to rest. He wasn't ruled by the tyranny of the urgent. He wasn't scrambling from place to place, arriving breathless at the next crisis. I really want—need—to be like Jesus.

God has boundaries for our lives. He goes into detail in His Word about what He will and what He will not accept from us. He tells us who He is and who He is not. He lays out ground rules. Lucky for us, He provides a way back to Him through Jesus if we don't get it right.



### *Why Boundaries?*

Whenever I fly on an airplane, the flight attendant reminds me, "Please place the oxygen mask over your own mouth before assisting children and others with their masks." As much as our giving hearts want to put others first, we aren't much good to the rest of the world if our own lives are at risk. We put boundaries in place so that we can be healthy—healthy enough to be a help to someone else in their time of need.

Early in our ministry, my husband and I knew a couple who planted a church. They put everything they had into it. The church met in their home for the first year. Eventually, they started meeting in a local school, but the pastor's office was still at the house. His cell phone and pager were always on just in case anything might come up. (And a lot came up!) He barely took a day off. The family income was used to finance many aspects of the church. His wife worked full-time, served as the church secretary, and directed the children's ministry. Their hearts for lost people were as big as Texas, so they gave it their all. She felt neglected. He went into a deep depression. Today, our friends are divorced.

They forgot to make time for each other. They forgot to take family vacations and long walks together. *They failed to establish boundaries.* They got lost in the busyness of ministry and planting a church and never came up for air. Satan must have been doing a jig! If you're doing anything worth mentioning for God, make no mistake about it, he wants to destroy your marriage and your family. He's smart enough to know that no one is going to follow someone whose life is a train wreck.

Boundaries aren't just psycho-babble. Boundaries are important. They are vital to you and your husband having a healthy, vibrant ministry that has a lasting impact on the lives of people. As I heard a conference speaker once say, "Let's learn this lesson on paper so we don't have to take the field trip, ladies!" Let's be smart about the way we move forward with any ministry plan and make sure our families factor into the equation in a way that honors God.

### *Giving Ministry Away*

When God uses you and your husband to plant a church, there can be a subtle sense of personal ownership or pride that comes along with it. If things are going well, we know in our heads "God did this," but we can begin to see the project as "our baby"—as a result of *our* labors. For this reason it can be very difficult to start giving ministry away as the church begins to grow. We need to establish boundaries in our lives to keep the demands of ministry from consuming us. As the church grows, so does the amount of ministry that needs to be done. People may not do it the way you would or even as good as you did. You still have to start giving things away and letting people take responsibility for their ministry areas. Decide who will be their supervisor, and if that person is not you, do your best to restrain yourself from giving unsolicited advice.

### *Kids on Mission Who Have Choices*

My seven-year-old son cringed at the idea of singing in front of the church for the Christmas musical. His crocodile tears rolled down his cheeks as he made his case for why he shouldn't have to sing just because his Dad worked at the church. "He feels this so deeply," I thought.

When he was smaller, he went up reluctantly for performances to go along with the rest of his Sunday School class. As his parents, we assumed this was normal stage fright and some level of shyness on his part. It seemed good to challenge him in this way and help him grow in his confidence level.

But now, at seven, this was different. As his personality began to emerge, it was clear that singing and performing at church were not in his DNA. The music director let us know she was counting on Kenny to play an important

part in the musical. We were faced with a decision. Was it more important to meet the expectations of others at church (letting them determine our boundaries) or more important to let our son be who he was (and not be forced to be who he was not)?

Ultimately, we decided to let Kenny make the decision. He agreed to participate in practice for the musical respectfully during Sunday School, but decided he really did not want to be in the final show. The music director was disappointed. We got questions from more than a few people in our small church about why Kenny was not in the musical. Looking back, I doubt the people involved even remember the event or that Kenny wasn't a part of it. Kenny remembers it. He remembers that we let him be who he was. He learned the safety in knowing that he was loved unconditionally by his parents.

*Over three-fourths of church planter wives surveyed said that they practice healthy boundaries between their home life and their church life.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

It is common for couples in ministry to find themselves in parenting situations that require a choice between people-pleasing and God-pleasing. If you grew up in a dysfunctional home, the pull you feel towards people-pleasing will be especially strong. Having healthy boundaries in ministry is something we've all heard about, but do we realize how important it is to our children and their development to see us model for them an attitude of God-pleasing over people-pleasing? We have found several ways to model this to our children.

- ✧ *Free Passes.* For older kids who are reluctant church goers, allow a few "free passes" a year to use on Sundays when they need space. This is empowering and gives them some level of choice in the matter. We let our 10-year-old son do this twice a year with the understanding that he spends at least some of the time reading his Bible or devotional at home.
- ✧ *Allow Choices.* As appointed missionaries with the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, our kids are well aware that we are "on mission." Every time we get an e-mail from someone we've never met who is sharing how they are praying for us and our work in Wisconsin, we share that with our boys. They like to be a part of what God has us doing here, but we allow some level of choice in what that looks like for them.

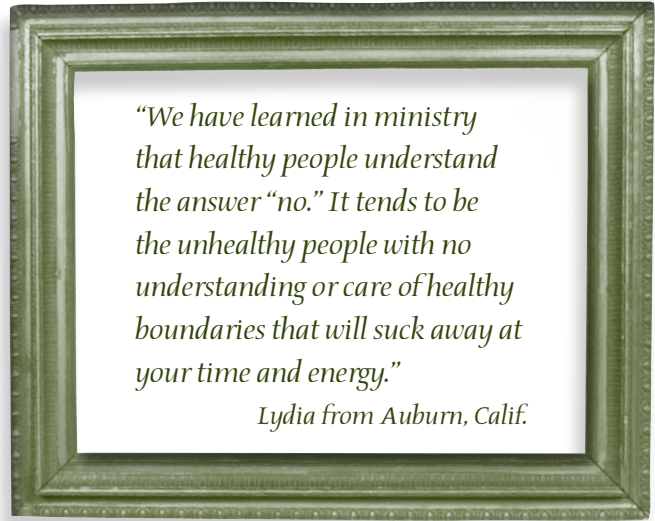
Kenny likes to make balloon animals, so anytime there is an outreach event that involves balloon animals, he's on it. Josh is attached to certain pastors that his Dad works with in our area. So, whenever Mark is going to help "Pastor Chad" with something, Josh is making his case to come along and help.

- ✧ *Family Night.* With so many things going on in our family, this is one of the non-negotiable items in our schedule. If this cannot happen on Friday night, we make sure it happens on Saturday night. We draw a boundary line around one night a week to protect our family time. This is something our kids look forward to and count on from us. It always involves having dinner together, usually at home. We may watch a movie together or play board games. Our ministry, for the night, is each other.

## *Healthy Boundaries in the Home*

The goal of a church planter is to reach people with the gospel—to make disciples. To reach people, you have to spend time with them and get involved in their lives. In doing so you will discover that people—Christians and non-Christians—tend to have problems. You may fall on the more nurturing side when compared to your husband. If this is true, then these people may want to talk to you about their problems.

Because of the way my personality is wired, I tend to be a magnet for needy people. As a result, our home was a revolving door of needy people. My husband was becoming drained with the constant parade of crisis intervention. The counselor in me thrives on the crisis! I had to change my ways before “we” became the next crisis.



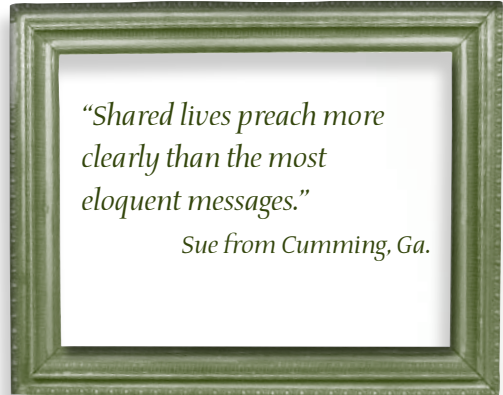
While this opportunity for ministry is a blessing, *beware!* If you’re not careful, you could get the life sucked right out of you by people who need a lot. You can protect yourself, your family and your marriage by putting some boundaries in place.

- ✧ *Use the marvels of modern technology, such as caller ID and voice mail.* Many will disagree with this because they feel the pastor and his wife should always be available to take their phone calls. That’s okay. Let them disagree. *You* need to be the one to decide when the “counselor is in.” You want to help them when you’re at your best. You want to take their call when you are able to listen and give their concerns the sincere attention they are asking for. This is simply not always possible in the middle of homework, diapers, laundry, and planning the next outreach event. However, as important as it is to be discerning in when to answer the phone, it is equally as important to return phone calls. You will be perceived as uncaring and rude if you do not return calls promptly.
  
- ✧ *Set a time limit.* When I return a call, I’ve found it helps to say something like, “I got your message. I’ve got about 20 minutes free, so I wanted to check in and see how you are.” I listen, ask questions when appropriate, and am as “present” as I can be for those 20 minutes. About 15 minutes into the conversation, I’ll find a break in a sentence and say, “I’ve got about five more minutes. Can I pray for you?” That might sound really scripted, because it is. But you get the idea. Use your own style and personality, but put some kind of limit on your time to keep from getting caught in a two-hour conversation when you need to be doing homework with the kids or taking a walk with your husband.

✧ *Refer! Refer! Refer!* Keep a list of local counselors handy. You might even ask for a stack of their business cards to hand out. When serious marital issues or personal problems seem to need ongoing support, suggest professional help. (Go to [www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net) to search for Christian counselors in your area.)

✧ *Please, call first!* We had a church member who liked to stop in when she was in the neighborhood—a few times a week. I politely asked her to call and let us know she was coming over before she stopped by. She seemed confused. “But, if I see your car in the driveway, then I know you’re home,” she said.

“Yes, but if you want to catch me with my clothes on, you should probably call first.” She turned about three shades of red, but she started calling first.



✧ *Be Proactive.* Make it a regular habit to invite people into your home. Share meals together. Study the Bible and pray together. Play checkers and laugh. Some pastors do this on a rotating basis. We enjoy letting it happen more naturally. Do what works for you. When you are intentional about making time for the people in your church, they will know you care and will be less likely to feel slighted when you ask them to call before coming over. The church member I described earlier who liked to stop by—we had her over regularly. We love her to this day. I am so glad we were able to truly enjoy our times with her rather than be drained by her frequent surprise visits.

### *Not Your Average House*

Many of today’s vibrant, healthy churches started out as a small band of believers who met in the pastor’s home. If you and your husband are going to plant a church, the chances are high that your home will be used for a variety of church purposes, especially in the early stages of the church. How much or how little church activity goes on at your house depends largely on what you and your husband decide ahead of time. As I heard a wise teacher once say, “If you don’t have a plan for your students, they’ll have a plan for you.” In the same way, if you and your husband don’t have this area somewhat figured out before the church-planting begins, a “plan” will emerge that you may not be happy with in the long run.

Not every couple is wired the same way, so the way one pastor and his wife do this may not suit another couple in a similar situation. For this reason, there are no absolute boundaries for everyone to follow, but here are two main questions to discuss as you begin to think about how planting a church will look for your family.

*Where will the pastor's office be located?* For many church planters, the office will, at least for the first few years, be in the family home. For others, church start-up funds will be used to rent office space right away. There are pros and cons to both choices.

*Pro:* Having the office in the home can be convenient for the pastor and his family, because then he is always accessible.

*Con:* He is always accessible, and not just to his family.

*Pro:* The rent is “free.”

*Con:* Valuable living space is used and is often cluttered with everything from small group curriculum to the latest worship choruses.

*Pro:* Lots of family time.

*Con:* Constant family interruptions and noise can keep the pastor from being productive.

As one pastor's wife said, “We had to set up office hours. At first, we weren't respecting his office hours so he had to give us office hours that we could respect.” Another church planter's wife said, “In the past, our house was used for my husband's office. I hated it. It was very hard to draw boundaries, especially for the children. Draw the line and if at all possible, don't do it.” You and your husband will have to make this call based on the way your family is wired. Your decision may also have a lot to do with the size of your house.

*More than half of church planter wives surveyed said that their husband's office is in their home. Of those, half said they are glad that it is and the other half said they sometimes wish it wasn't.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

*How many church functions will you host at your house each week?* From Bible studies to worship services to housing the punk rock band for the youth group, your home could potentially be used in many ways to reach lost people and help people grow in their faith. Many pastors' families see this as a blessing. Their children have a front row seat as ministry happens before their eyes. Indeed, it is a blessing to dedicate our homes to the Lord and use them for His purposes.

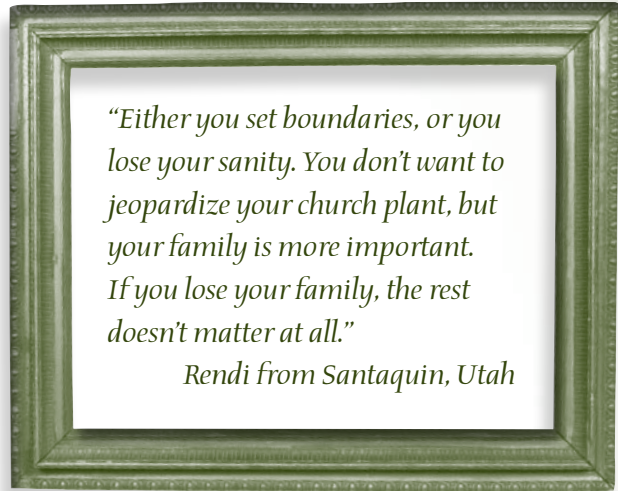
However, (You heard that coming, didn't you?) be careful not to burn yourselves (and your children) out in this area. Give other members of your core group the opportunity to open their homes to out of town church guests or weekly Bible studies. If and when you do decide to use your home for the worship service or any other function, make an effort to keep personal property and church property separate. For example, use the church budget to purchase coffee, snacks, juice and crackers for the children. Resentment can set in if your family is constantly sacrificing personal property for the church. Your children will appreciate it if church toys are purchased and brought out for church functions. One church planter's wife shared, “When we used our house for our service

it was the hardest on our kids. The other kids would come over and think that all of the stuff there belonged to them.” Ministry can be very draining when your children dread having people from the church in your home. If they are old enough, get their input about what would make this aspect of ministry a more positive experience for them.

We usually go into ministry because we love Jesus and we love people. We want to use what He’s given us to glorify Him, including our homes. May we do this in a way that honors Him while also honoring and respecting those we call family.

### *Marriage or Mayhem?*

As I mentioned earlier, if you are doing anything worth mentioning for God, then Satan really wants to destroy your marriage. This seems to be one of his favorite places to attack, because he knows if he can destroy the family, then the family isn’t “on mission” together anymore. Be on your guard! Put boundaries in place to protect your marriage from the very beginning.



- ✘ *Disengage.* Take time to pull back from the church planting table from time to time as a couple. Go somewhere together and do something that has nothing to do with the church. Talk about other stuff. Try to do this every week—even if all you do is sit on your back porch and gaze at a corn field together. Make time to stay connected with each other emotionally and spiritually.
- ✘ *Ask for help.* My husband and I have had times in our marriage when we have felt disconnected. It was difficult for us to find our way back to each other again. It was going to be a stretch to get there on our own, so we asked for help. Sitting down with a counselor for a few sessions provided the accountability and encouragement we needed to reconnect with each other again. If at all possible, find someone who is familiar with life in ministry and the unique challenges it brings.
- ✘ *Have a staff meeting.* You and your husband will be on this journey of church planting together. At least in the beginning stages, the reality is that you will be the staff. If you have children, get a babysitter for a few hours and go somewhere to meet about church issues and business. Bring your planners and a list of things that need to be decided or acted upon. As church items come up throughout the week, put the things that cannot be resolved or decided on in a few minutes on the agenda for the staff meeting.
- ✘ *Plan something to look forward to.* We always try to have a date on our calendars to look forward to as a couple. We try to plan at least 24 hours when we know we’re going to get away together alone.

The anticipation of that time together will keep the romance alive in your marriage and provide a chance to recharge your batteries. Being away from the responsibilities of parenting and ministry will go a long way in fueling your tank for the ministry God calls you to.

### *Conclusion*

As you and your husband consider planting a church together, remember the importance of establishing clear, healthy boundaries to protect your marriage and family life. Planting the church will be a big part of your daily lives and a key source of social support and friendships. The lines between “work” and simply doing life with others will become fuzzy. Work together to establish healthy boundaries as you begin your church plant. Write them down and review them regularly. It is my hope that the issues explored in this chapter will inspire, even challenge you to strive diligently to protect your family, your marriage, and your home from being controlled by others or life itself. Honor each other and therefore, honor God.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), p. 29.



## *Boundaries... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the struggles I have encountered as a church planter wife is having our home used for the church plant. The first church plant we were involved with was a complete learning experience. We initially conducted a Bible study in our home. We were so eager to have people attend that we had little to no boundaries when it came to our home. Every room of our home was open to the church. We were so concerned with offending people that we let them have free reign over our home. I would spend all day cleaning before church, and after church I would spend the next day getting my house back in order. My children's toys were broken and their rooms were a disaster after the Bible study. Every week, there were those who would stay well into the night and a few past midnight. The lack of boundaries on our part led to resentment of the church plant. My family and I love the people dearly from our first church plant, but it was clearly a struggle using our home.

In our second church plant, we were determined to set up boundaries from the very beginning. We set a goal for the amount of time the church would be held in our home until we moved it to a public place. We talked as a family and decided what we could live with and what was not negotiable. In this church plant we were blessed with a home that had a basement, so we decided the Bible study would be held downstairs and the children would stay in the living room upstairs.

The bedrooms were off limits. There were toys purchased for the church that the children could play with and no toys were removed from our children's rooms. We were also up front with those attending the Bible study about sticking around after it had ended. My husband gave everyone a card with his name and number and told them to call and he would be happy to speak with them. We were more than happy to talk with them after Bible study, but we told them that our family went to bed at 10:00 and that we intended to honor that schedule except in cases of emergency.

The best part about setting up boundaries is that the church is doing great, we are not resentful of having the church in our home, and not one person has been offended by our boundaries.

*Rendi Kelly*

Rendi Kelly  
Santaquin, Utah  
Crossings Church

## *Boundaries... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the struggles I have encountered as a church planter wife is having our home used for so many aspects of the church plant. We have lived in homes as small as a 400-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment to a comfortable three-bedroom home. During the times we church planted in the very small apartment, our living room, office, dining room, and guest bedroom were all one tiny room. We could cram 10 people in the room if we all knew one another really well! So we tried to have creative meeting spaces in parks, restaurants, coffee shops, and our apartment courtyard. This was actually fun because our church was more visible to the community.

When we moved to town 18 months ago, we rented a small apartment for three months while praying about the neighborhood to live in. As we prayed about the neighborhood that God had for us to minister in, we also prayed that He would provide the right house for us. We knew that certain aspects of the house could be very beneficial for us as church planters. And we feel that He gave us a great house in the best neighborhood for our church plant.

Currently, our house is used daily as a church office and business office (for my bi-vocational husband). On a weekly basis, it is used for our worship gatherings and meetings, which also means part of the house is the nursery for the young kids. And monthly, we host neighborhood parties and a cooperative kitchen where we get together with neighbors and cook several meals at one time. Last, but not least, our house is a home to our family of three (plus the dog). I keep everything we use for church events separate from our personal things, especially in the kitchen. I've given free reign to a few people who know their way around my kitchen so that they can help prepare food or drinks while I'm hosting or with my child.

The home office is a double edged sword. In some aspects it has been great for obvious reasons. But it also gives more opportunities for my husband to choose work over family. As a church planter and a business owner, there is always work to be done. He became more structured in how he spent his time, which helped. But a few months ago, we began to pray that office space outside the home would come available. In the last month, our team has been offered free office space for the church and my husband has been offered a separate free office for his business. Hallelujah!

I cannot lie and tell you that I've had a giving and loving spirit every time we've shared our home with the church. But most times, the Lord has given me the patience and enthusiasm that is needed to be a host. I have learned that for me, it is best to commit to this type of intense hospitality for a short season. We will still host things on occasion, but for now, we are handing over most of our hospitality duties to other families.

May the Lord bless you and your home in your church planting endeavors!

*Mandy Grisham*

Mandy Grisham  
Memphis, Tenn.  
Neighborhood Church





Living in Atlanta with husband, Randy, *Sue Ferguson* delights in seeking God as she writes, speaks, cares for her home, and parents three adult children.

Her first book, *Becoming a Woman of Joy: A Scrapbooker Looks at Proverbs 31*, is illustrated with family photos; each chapter begins with a letter to one or both of her daughters.

Visit [www.WomanofJoy.com](http://www.WomanofJoy.com) for additional information.

My husband, at last feeling he could retreat to the privacy of our bedroom, called to give me his evaluation of the evening's family meeting. Praying (and fidgeting) in my hotel room, I jumped when the anticipated ring tone finally sounded. His announcement had gone as well as could be expected. Two hearts had skipped a beat, and the other one was broken.

This gathering was the second of two such meetings. Actually we had assembled our three children together for discussions on numerous occasions, but I assure you, if you asked them about our family meetings, they would only recall two. The memory of all others is erased. They simply don't compare in significance to the two unforgettable ones.

This time I wasn't at my husband's side. I was traveling for business. He sat with our children, ages 15, 18, and 20,

in the living room and explained that the next morning's trip had two purposes; one we hadn't yet shared. They weren't just traveling to be reunited with me to attend a wedding; he would also be finalizing plans to plant a new church. We were moving. My husband and I had been praying and considering the invitation for some time but the children were stunned when our secret became theirs too! Hoping to protect them from unnecessary stress, we had waited until plans were nearly complete and the time to keep the news from their friends was brief.

Taking turns driving the next day, my husband and son listened to sobs coming from the backseat for hours as they crossed one state line after another. Who could blame the only child that wasn't heading off to college in the fall for her disappointment and heartache? The other two would feel the distant effects, but they had elected to go away to college. She certainly would never have chosen, at this time, to leave her

*Eighty-five percent of church planter wives surveyed believe that church planting has had a positive effect on their children.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

friends and change high schools, especially without the companionship of her best friends, her siblings. During that stressful travel day, her brother was sitting in the front seat and her sister was in the backseat beside her, but their presence offered little comfort as she considered an uncertain, and unwanted, future! "Why do we need to plant a church anyway?" she surely must have thought. "Aren't there enough churches already?"

Imagining her despair from afar, I couldn't help but wonder if we weren't a bit crazy. My thoughts reflected back on the last move, eight years earlier, that followed the first unforgettable family meeting. Tears had poured down the children's faces as they realized some of the obvious changes coming—like saying goodbye to their friends. We had uprooted two grade-schoolers and one in middle school then. None of us had known just how much our lives would change. We had followed God's call when He led my husband to accept the pastorate of a small, young church. Hadn't the adjustments been hard enough that time? They had seemed endless.

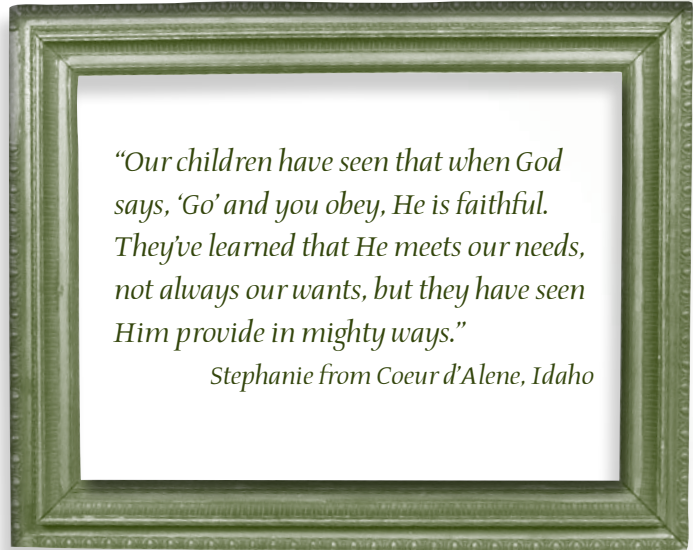
We left the only city our three children had ever called home, passing the white playground, covered with snow, and drove until we were surrounded by emerald green hills. That change was a welcome one to me, but the children couldn't imagine winter without snowmen, snowballs, and forts. Winter to them was a wonderland—tubing and sledding provided the perfect outing before warming up by a crackling fire, drinking hot chocolate, and playing a competitive board game. And how would Christmas be Christmas when there was no chance it could be white? Fortunately, the transition was somewhat inviting since our temporary rental house promised a swimming pool, complete with a diving board and slide.

Leaving an established church with exciting programs and phenomenal facilities to lead a church with no building meant our church's average weekly attendance went from over 3,000 to just shy of 100. Providentially, we had previously opened our home often for fellowship because, following that move, several church events met in our home every week. The children didn't even miss the programs and opportunities of a big church because our house was filled with fun!

Moving to an area with a much higher cost of living and a smaller church budget required that we downsize our house by nearly 1,000 square feet at the stage many families are looking for more space. Instead of getting their own bedrooms, the girls had to share an even smaller room, and this time there was no basement playroom! The children didn't feel these sacrifices as much as my husband and I, since his office was now located in our master bedroom. The futon served as a couch facing his desk during the day; at night it converted into a bed.

Shortly before the move the children had entered a Christian school after three years of home schooling. Now they transferred into public schools for the first time. After living on the fringe of the Bible Belt their entire lives, we transplanted them to a very diverse and populated area where

only three percent of the population called themselves Christians. There weren't any peers like them. Quickly, more than ever before, they realized their need for each other.



Needing to supplement my husband's earnings, we went from a single income to two. The hobbies that previously had produced a little money on the side weren't adequate. I had to take a real job. Since their father was present in the home a great deal of the time, this change affected the children little, but sent me spinning with disappointment. I don't recall a conscious effort to protect our children from my despair, but I'm grateful now. When we look back together, they are surprised at how agonizing that transition was for me. It would have been quite painful, and unnecessary, for them to realize the depth of my distress.

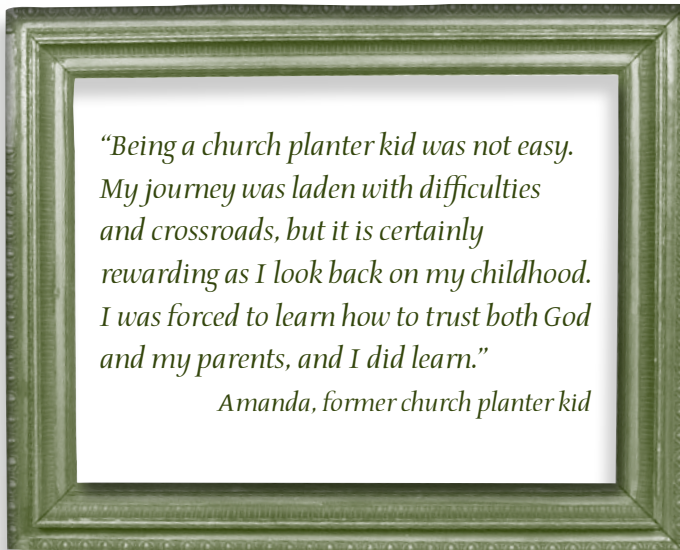
That first move had created changes in every area of our lives, but after eight years our family was healthy and happy, and our faith had grown in spite of, or because of, the various experiences. By the world's standards, my husband had taken a foolish career step, and even a few vocal Christians had expressed doubts, but we had followed God's call. There were some anxious days, but they sent me running to the Father and motivated many positive life changes for all of us. But could we do it again? Would what we'd learned before carry us through another move?

Through that move I'd learned these important life lessons:

1. Pray for your children constantly. Allow your worries and fears for them to remind you of the need to take their issues to God. (Read Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17.)
2. Allow God to lead you as you fulfill your primary ministry role of wife and mother. You're better equipped to meet your family's needs when God is your guide. (Read Prov. 3:5-6.)

3. Encourage family members of all ages to contribute their unique gifts to the body of Christ in active and consistent service. (Read Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 14:12.)
4. Realize some unwanted changes are gifts God will use to benefit your children. Your perspective is limited. (Read Isaiah 55:8-9.)
5. Have fun! Purpose to create favorable memories for your children. (Read Prov. 15:13; 17:22.)
6. Look for the positives in every situation. An optimistic attitude is contagious. (Read Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:8.)

- ✧ Small houses are easier and faster to clean than large houses if you eliminate enough stuff!
- ✧ Opening your home for church events provides modeling opportunities: hospitality training, loving parenting skills, and an example of a respectful and caring marriage. The best instructions in Christian living may come from your life example instead of a prepared lesson, and your children will be constant participants!
- ✧ Having no church office space and limited access to a building allows your husband to spend more time with his family.
- ✧ A tight budget necessitates trust in God and provides incentive for you and your children to learn wise stewardship.
- ✧ New experiences broaden your children's world perspective and create a foundation for their own personal ministries.



My thoughts brought me back to the present. I had learned so much—no, we had learned so much. The children matured as the lessons I learned filtered into their lives. Memories of God's faithfulness in the past helped me look ahead to this new calling with faith and hope. With the children nearly grown and the added privilege of working from a home office, I was eager for us to pour ourselves totally into a new church start! I knew all our children had made great contributions to our previous ministry, and we would miss the two who were going to college immensely.

The initial growth was rapid and exciting. It looked like our church plant would be a model for others to follow. Soon, though, we faced one major crisis after another, both personally and publicly. In an effort to promote their own personal preferences, three church members methodically and secretly magnified my husband's weaknesses. They disregarded his leadership, effectiveness, and Christlike character. Their slander created an undercurrent of distrust during a time when both my husband and I were going through life-threatening health issues.

Our only child at home felt her parents' pain while struggling to deal with her own. Feeling alone and frightened, she floundered as she searched for new friends and a new identity in a new place. The two away at college were overwrought as they tried to understand why their parents, previously so respected, faced persecution from within the church. Our family had worked as a team, and even those members away suffered.

Our ideal dream was hit head on and hard with the ugly side of reality. Had God deserted us, or were there new lessons to be learned? Most assuredly God used seemingly bad circumstances to teach valuable and beneficial truths. Once again the lessons learned weren't just for my husband and me; they made their way to the children too!

I may never understand some things about that tumultuous time when the pain seemed unbearable, but God has more than made up for the hurt inflicted by His people with a generous outpouring of Himself and many related ministry opportunities! I would never have chosen that path, but God knew what would best equip our entire family to effectively serve Him. I am grateful for healing, and I am humbled that we had the privilege of joining in His suffering. We are forever changed. Anything that others meant for evil, God has definitely used for good.

Prior to our experience I had an unrealistic vision. I expected to work hard and watch the "perfect" church automatically grow up healthy and strong before our very eyes. It wasn't until we were in the midst of our crisis that I learned many church plants struggle; we had not been singled out.

*Whether your church plant thrives or barely survives, it will greatly impact your children. But your reaction to each situation will affect them much more than the actual circumstances.*

Whether your church plant thrives or barely survives, it will greatly impact your children. But your reaction to each situation will affect them much more than the actual circumstances. During that difficult time I made a

business trip near the city where my older two kids attended college. Seated around a restaurant table our son began to ask me questions: "Why is this happening? Who could say negative things about Dad?"

Leaning forward, speaking softly as tears filled my eyes, I replied, "I don't understand the whys, but I know it won't do you or anyone else any good if I tell you who."

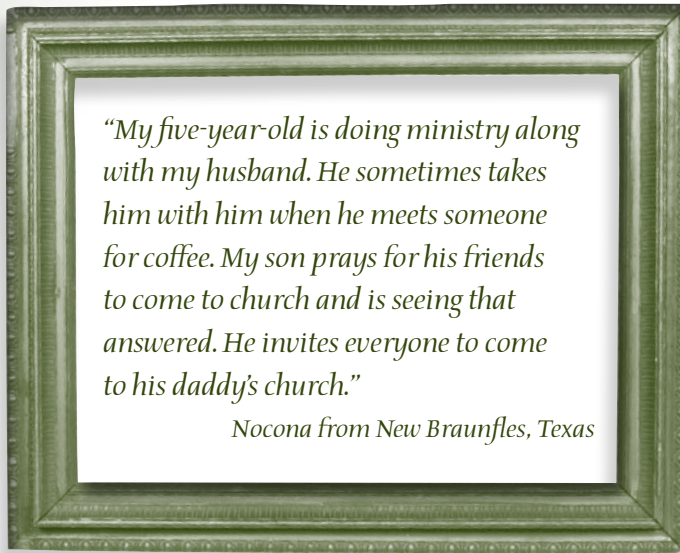
He was insistent, "But who would do this? I just don't understand. I want to know."

"It's not necessary or beneficial to anyone for me to tell you. Even though I can't keep it from happening, I can choose not to add more wrong to the situation. The best thing for you to do is to pray."

Several years have passed, but occasionally one of the children mentions a name from those days, retelling some positive memory. Not often, but once in a while, it is someone that contributed to our pain. I can't help but whisper a prayer of thanks each time, grateful that my lips didn't give my children cause to look back at any person with resentment or dislike.



You have a choice when you encounter the blessings and hardships associated with church planting. Will you respond appropriately, seeing every aspect as an opportunity to see God work out His plan and train your children wisely? I hope so! If you do, church planting is likely to be the best thing that ever happened to you and your family!



These days my husband and I worship in a local church plant and reach out to those serving tirelessly to grow new churches. He creates resources and builds networks for church planters, and I encourage women. Our now-adult children have pleasant memories of those years growing up with a church-planting father. Thanks to their input, a watchful eye toward others in church planting, and more reflection on our family's experience, I've made these additional observations:

1. Older children are more greatly affected by church planting than younger ones. Preschoolers adjust quickly and easily.
2. Each child should have the privilege of putting some treasured possessions away for safety when others are coming over. Assisting younger children as they choose what to remove will help them feel your love and protection of their things!
3. Children with natural leadership skills seem to thrive in a church plant environment, while hesitant and quiet ones are more likely to struggle.
4. Children mirror the attitudes of their parents. Use caution: don't blame your negative circumstances, even in jest, on being church planters.
5. Use discernment when you encounter difficulties. Don't unnecessarily give your children reason to resent anyone, especially not God.
6. Realize that part of your ministry is drawing your children to a close relationship with Christ and preparing them for future ministry roles.
7. Be kind and considerate, but don't expect to please everyone. Focus on pleasing the Master.
8. Value your children's contributions to the church and help them develop their individual skills.
9. Appreciate your children's willingness to help, and join them in activities that are important to them too!
10. Allow your children to see some of the pain others experience from sin so they will want to avoid those same unnecessary consequences.
11. Pray, pray, pray!


All five members of our family look back with delight at the ways God used our joint efforts in church planting to draw many individuals to a dynamic and committed relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Benefiting from hindsight, I see how God answered those fear-prompted-prayers that I consistently brought to the Father on behalf of our children. God allowed the experiences to draw them closer to Him rather than push them away. Our marriage was tested and strengthened through some dark days, and even that serves as a model for our children. Our family is close; we love Jesus and others. Church planting contributed to the person we have each become.

The oldest of our children, Nathan, is a graphic designer now. During discretionary time he uses his talents to create promotional pieces for his local church and other ministry organizations. He also teaches a group of fifth-grade boys and helps coordinate church athletic teams.

Our middle child and her husband are members of a church plant while he attends seminary. Karissa plays the keyboard and sings on the worship team, and her husband helps set up each week and works with audio-visuals during worship. A small group meets in their home regularly. Anticipating graduation and celebrating the birth of their first baby, they have begun the application process for overseas missions.

Audri, our youngest and a recent college graduate, is volunteering her services to a missionary couple in the Dominican Republic for six months. As the children serve in a variety of ministry roles, they have a realistic understanding of the built-in challenges, but, more importantly, they have a first-hand testimony of God's faithfulness and sufficiency in the midst of them. They've experienced the generous outpouring of His good gifts.

Church planting isn't easy, but following God's leadership will be best for every family member! Love your children and look forward with confident trust that the God who has called you will use everything for good as He works in your family. Sure it will be tough at times, but I can't imagine a life more worth living!



*“Our children are involved in everything. We tried to encourage them to take an active role where we feel their gifts are. We want them to be involved, but we also want them to have choices.”*

*Marisusan from Belen, N.M.*

## *From one of Sue's daughters...*

Dear future church planter wife,

Church planting is an amazing journey and adventure, one that I pray leads your home to become a place of rich family ministry. When I was ten, my dad resigned as pastor of a 3,000 member mega-church and moved our family 2,000 miles away to a new church with only about 100 members. My excitement was short-lived when I realized I was now in a dark place with no friends. I felt like a freak—a believer in an area with only three percent of the population professing to be Christian. I was mad at God. I didn't understand why He would take me out of my "perfect" life and put me into a lonely and difficult situation. Praise the Lord—my parents were praying for me and God used this transition to make me ready to respond to Him.

Ministry in a small, young church amazingly becomes a family ministry and not simply Dad's job. My parents developed my strengths as a part of the ministry. I ministered as I never would have as a child in an established church. I played keyboard and sang in the praise team each week as an 8th grader. Later, my youth pastor, seeing a heart for God's Word and desire for others to grow, gave me a group of high school girls to disciple. I graduated and left for college knowing who I was in the Lord and seeking after Him whole-heartedly. God had directed my heart to ministry as I ministered with my family, so I knew God would provide a husband with a heart for ministry. My husband and I are beginning our last semester of seminary and plan to move overseas as missionaries after graduating.

Only recently has my mom made me aware of some of the challenges we faced in those years. Church planting is lonely and difficult. The enemy does not want our success; he attacks the ministry, the church, and the family. Praise the Lord for giving my parents wisdom concerning what and when to share about the persecution they faced. They were careful to protect me from the politics and personal attacks that can come with planting a church. It was important to them that I didn't resent Christians, the Church or our ministry.

As a former church planter kid, and now a wife and mother involved in ministry, I encourage you—pray for your children. As God calls you into His ministry He has their best in mind. Their best place is where He places you. Be sensitive to your children. Allow this ministry to draw your family together rather than drain what energy mom and dad could have left for their children. You know your children's abilities. Focus on their strengths and give them ways to minister with their gifts. I contributed with worship and teaching, my sister with drama and children's ministry, and my brother with audiovisual and sports ministry.

Whenever I share my testimony I discuss my initial anger with God for moving me out of my "perfect" life into a dark place. Then I share that it was that very move and shift in family ministry that drew me closer to Him. Had I spent my teen years complacently in that mega-church, I am certain I would not have been equipped for ministry as I was

in our church plant. Pray for your children. Don't leave them behind; give them active roles in family ministry. As a 24-year-old wife and mother, I gratefully reflect on the years my parents were church planters. I can clearly see how God used the challenges to draw me closer to Him and to shape me into the woman I am. May God richly bless you as you seek to glorify Him in the life of your family.

In Christ,

*Daughter of a Church Planter*

Daughter of a Church Planter





*Dave Ramsey*, a personal money management expert, is a popular national radio personality and author of the *New York Times* best-sellers *The Total Money Makeover*, *Financial Peace* and *More Than Enough*. Ramsey knows first-hand what financial peace means in his own life. By age 26 he had established a four-million-dollar real estate portfolio, only to lose it by age 30. He has since rebuilt his financial life and now devotes himself full-time to helping ordinary people understand the forces behind their financial distress and how to set things right—financially, emotionally and spiritually. He resides with his wife, Sharon, and their three children in Nashville, Tennessee.

In Acts 1:8 Christ commands us to be a witness in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He challenges us as Christians in Matthew 28:19-20 to go forth and make disciples, baptizing and teaching them all that Christ has commanded. It is a mandate, a call for us to leave the comfort and security of the known, and possibly travel both physically and emotionally to another place.

Your husband has felt that call in his heart, and is responding. Perhaps you have felt it, too. At the very least, your love and loyalty for Christ and your husband have led you to become an equal partner in this unfolding adventure. This is a commitment which you and your husband must share, for even though he may be the one who carries the title of pastor, both of you—and your children—will be venturing into the unknown, overcoming fear, dealing with doubt, and ultimately making incredible sacrifices—some of which will be financial—to lead people to the foot of the cross.

The call you and your husband are considering is really terrific. Way to go! My prayer is that you will let God be in charge, and that the Holy Spirit will rain down upon both of you and flow through you into the hearts of those to whom you minister.

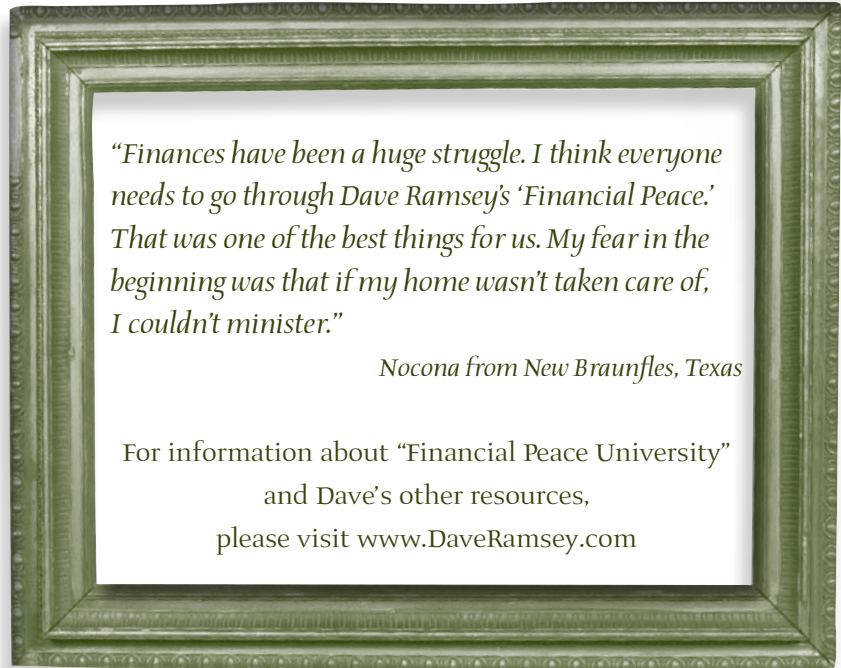
Many of the problems that pastoral families face in their everyday existence will be greatly magnified in your case because of your willingness to plow new fields. Such will be the case with your personal finances. There will be plenty of stress in your lives apart from the burden of making ends meet. As a family, you may already be facing extraordinary financial uncertainty; this isn't uncommon among those whose calling leads them to this kind of mission.

It is also not unusual for the wife of a church planter to be the one actually dealing with finances on a day-to-day basis. Finding solutions to financial problems and learning how to handle situations for which there is no ready solution will be that much more vital for you.

I know what it's like to face an uncertain financial future. By the time I was 26 I had a net worth of more than a million dollars and a monthly income greater than I ever dreamed of having, but I was heavily in debt. Then life happened. The details aren't important, but credit tightened, my loans were all called, and by the time I was 30, I was broke and bankrupt.

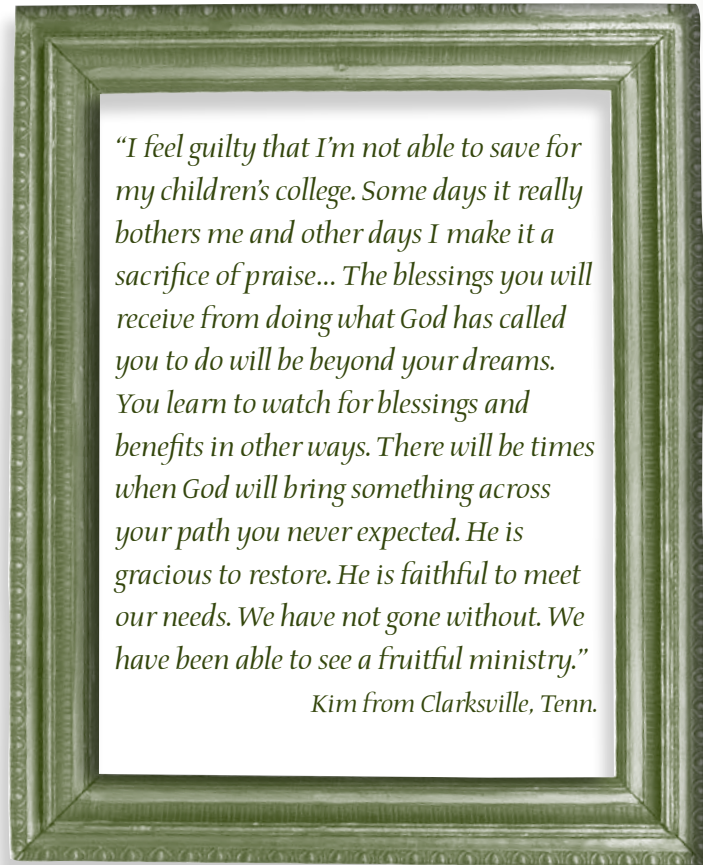
My wife and I lost everything. We had no choice but to start over. We decided we would never again owe anybody anything. No banker would ever have his foot on our necks again. No creditor would ever be able to bully us, shame us, threaten us, or harass us again. Don't get me wrong, my problems weren't their fault. I'm the guy who signed up for the trip, but that's what ended up happening. I learned first hand the sad truth of Proverbs 22:7—the borrower truly is a slave to the lender. Well, my wife and I decided we would be slaves no more!

Life without debt was hard at first. We both had to mature as individuals. Children do what feels good; adults devise a plan and stick with it. We had to become adults, live on what we earned, learn the difference between needs and wants, and take steps to provide for our future and that of our children.



For more than 14 years now, I have been teaching debt-free living to thousands of families in “Financial Peace University” classes all over the United States. “The Dave Ramsey Show” reaches more than three million listeners over 300+ radio stations, three hours a day, five days a week. My bestselling books, including *Financial Peace Revisited* and *The Total Money Makeover*, have topped the charts. In this chapter I want to share with you some of what I teach. I can’t cover everything, so I have tried to select those topics which are most likely to help you in your unique situation. I am accustomed to dealing with problems common to a cross-section of American families. There is no “average” financial situation, but I have been able to develop some principles over the years that generally serve the needs of my listeners and class attendees. Your situation presents unique challenges, and some of my teachings will have less—or greater—relevance in your case. I will try to allude to that when appropriate. I urge you to take what works for you and leave the rest. My prayer is that this chapter will speak to your needs and give you real hope for the future.

Everything I teach, I have actually done. And I have counseled thousands of others who have learned to win with money. This program works. What I hope to do is increase your understanding and change your behavior so as to reduce the financial stress in your home and free you to face the challenges of your family’s mission.



*Kim from Clarksville, Tenn.*

### *The Problem*

If you are already facing financial difficulties, or if they occur later, consider the possibility that money is not the only problem. Sure, more money always helps, but handling what you have in a responsible manner will go a long way toward relieving stress. Personal finance is 20 percent head knowledge and 80 percent behavior. Learning what to do is important, but that will only provide temporary relief. Learning how to live is far more important.

### *Understanding Money*

Money has some philosophical properties that you simply have to understand if you want to win with it.

First, money is amoral. It doesn’t have any morals. The Bible doesn’t say that money is the root of all evil. It says the “love of money” is the root of all evil (see 1 Tim. 6:10).



Money is not evil. I like to illustrate that by comparing money to a brick. You can throw a brick through a window, or you can use that brick to build a hospital or a church. Money is the same way. There's nothing inherently evil or inherently good about it. You're neither good nor bad if you have some; you're neither good nor bad if you don't.

Money is amoral, but when you place it in the hands of a human, it takes on that human's characteristics. Sometimes we see jerks with money and we blame the money. That's wrong. They're just jerks. It's not a money problem. I know plenty of rich jerks, and I know plenty of poor jerks. I don't like being around any of them.

Money is amoral, and it is active. It moves all the time, and most of the time it moves away from people who give it little or no attention, and toward people who make it behave. That's why they call it currency, a word which comes from the Latin *currentum*, meaning "to run." Currency is a term that was first applied to the circulation of money by John Locke in 1699, and it has been used that way ever since.

Money flows. It has a life of its own, and one thing is certain: you will either learn to manage money or the lack of it will always manage you. You must be proactive with money. You will either tell it what to do, or it will leave you and go to someone else who will manage it. That is a universal law.

### *Relationships and Money*

Relationships and money affect each other to a serious degree, and nowhere is this more apparent than in a marriage. When husbands and wives aren't on the same page financially, trouble is just around the corner. When outgo consistently exceeds income, when debt piles up, when collectors start calling, stress eats away at the ties that are supposed to bind.

Whether the amount of money is or is not an immediate issue, the manner in which you deal with what you have reveals a great deal about your commitment to each other. Do you and your husband consider your money as being jointly owned? Do you plan together and work toward common goals, or do you have separate accounts, separate funds, or secrets around money?

A *Worth* magazine survey says the number one thing we fight about in our marriages is money. Citibank did a study that found that 57 percent of divorces were caused by money problems. Scripps Howard News Service put that number at 70 percent. But the other side of the coin is that when money is going good, it helps the relationship. Power, priorities, dreams, and passions—they all show up in how we handle money. The cool thing is that when you agree on money decisions, you're agreeing on your value system, and you reach a level of unity in your marriage that you will get no other way. So, the bottom line is this:

*When you agree on money decisions, you're agreeing on your value system, and you reach a level of unity in your marriage that you will get no other way.*

marriage partners need to be financial partners. In the marriage relationship, one plus one does not equal two. One plus one equals a bigger, better one—a couple with shared goals, shared dreams, and shared struggles.

## *Begin with the Truth*

Do you know how much money you actually have available to you right now? Would you be able to find out for certain within a short period of time? You could if you balanced your checkbook.

You'd be surprised how many people cannot answer that question even by looking at their account balances. Why not? Because they haven't balanced (or reconciled) their checking accounts! They may know how much is in their account at a given moment, but they have no idea how much is actually available for their use, and how much is already accounted for because of checks that have been written or automatic drafts that have been authorized. In short, they have no idea how big a check they could write without having it bounce.

Balance your checkbook every month, as soon as possible after the statement arrives or, if it's on a computer, after the statement is accessible. Don't be open-ended about it. Set a goal to accomplish that task by a set number of days after the information is available, and do that consistently, every single month.

If you've never balanced your checkbook and don't know how, welcome to the club. There is no shame in not knowing. There is shame in not putting your foot down, right now, and deciding that enough is enough.

You're going to be surprised at how easy it is. It's not rocket science. It's just a matter of adding up the checks and deposits that don't yet appear on your latest statement, and then adding (in the case of the deposits) or subtracting (in the case of the checks) those totals from the statement's ending balance. Of course if you don't keep a record of the checks you write and the deposits you make, that's going to be next to impossible. If you aren't used to keeping good records, try getting one of those checkbooks that make automatic carbon copies of your transactions.

You'll also be surprised at how easy it is to get help. Your bank statement has a step-by-step set of instructions on the back, and if that doesn't get the job done, you can go to my books or my website ([www.DaveRamsey.com](http://www.DaveRamsey.com)) and find the same information.

When you get into this habit on a regular basis, you'll realize how much you need to be careful when using an ATM or debit card. All of those thrown-away receipts that pile up around most ATMs are a sure sign that people aren't keeping up with their withdrawals. Do I really need to tell you what the consequences of such laziness and irresponsibility would be? Only use ATM and debit cards as a part of your overall game plan, and always keep accurate records of their use.

*"Budget" isn't a four-letter word. Your budget doesn't decide what to do with your money. You decide.*

Once you've gotten into the habit of balancing your checkbook on time every month, never ever in your lifetime write a check until the money is actually in the bank. Bounced checks are a sign of crisis living and sloppy, lazy money habits. Checks don't bounce by accident. Writing bad checks—no matter how innocently motivated—is a matter of choice. Never doing it again is also a matter of choice.

## *The Dreaded B-Word!*

The next step after getting control of your recordkeeping is—dare I say it—to start living on a budget. “Budget” isn’t a four-letter word. Even so, it turns some people off for a whole lot of predictable reasons. Let’s take a look at some of those reasons and explain why they should not, and will not, keep you from taking this important step.

*Reason number one:* a budget is a straightjacket. It’s a list of inflexible “don’ts.” Not so. Your budget doesn’t decide what to do with your money. You decide.

If the word itself bothers you, call it a cash flow plan, or a spending plan. Whatever you call it, do it. Giving every dollar a name before the month begins will put you in charge of your financial future, and that’s the way it should be.

*Reason number two:* a budget has been used in the past to abuse you and control you. Okay, so what if it has? Are you going to let an unfortunate past destroy the promise of your future? Budgeting is not a tool by which you make people behave. Budgeting is a tool you use to make your money behave.

*Reason number three:* you’ve never had a budget that really worked. Again, welcome to the club. This doesn’t mean there is something wrong with the concept. In all likelihood, it means there was something wrong with the process. Whatever went wrong in the past, the same thing doesn’t have to go wrong in the present. The formula is this: Keep it simple. Make it complete. Agree on it. Live by it as it is written, or agree to change it to match your reality, and then live by it. There’s no limit to how often it can be changed if both of you agree to do so.

*Reason number four:* you fear the truth. You don’t want to admit how you’ve messed up, how much “stupid tax” you have actually paid. Stupid tax, of course, is when you do something stupid that costs you money. I have paid stupid tax with zeros on the end. I understand. We’re all humans. We’re in this together.

You may be afraid of knowing how daunting the challenge is that you are facing. This would be especially true if your mission is under- or irregularly-funded, if financial support is still being sought, or if you simply aren’t sure where your support is going to come from or how long it is going to continue. These are genuinely frightening possibilities. Even so, I believe the truth never hurts as much as deception, whether you are trying to fool yourself or someone else. I know from the experience of others that you’ll actually feel relieved when you put it all down on paper and deal with it. You cannot begin to solve a problem that you don’t know exists.

The bottom line? You really ought to do a written cash flow plan.

Consider the benefits. Managed money will work harder and accomplish more. Time and time again people have told me that getting on a budget is like getting a raise. You have more money than you thought you had, because it is no longer slipping through your fingers and flowing out of the door.

Managing by crisis must come to an end. A written plan reduces or eliminates money fights. When you’ve agreed on your values and priorities in advance, there’s no need to argue about them. When you’re forced to choose between priorities, budgeting will enable you to make an intelligent decision rather than simply throwing what little money there is at whatever problem happens to rear its ugly head at a given time.

If you don't believe what I'm telling you, believe what God tells you. Jesus said in Luke 14:28-30 (NIV): "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'" Have a plan. Stick with it. Live by it.

### *The Budget Committee*

Family finance is a team sport. Remember, children do what feels good. Adults devise a plan and follow it. Husbands and wives must be on the same page when it comes to their money. It doesn't matter who earns it—the husband and wife together own it. A man who doesn't acknowledge the economic value of a faithful stay-at-home wife and mother is ignorant at best, and foolish at worse.

The Bible reminds us that opposites attract. This is certainly true in marriage. I have found that most are made up of one nerd and one free spirit. I recommend that the partner with the natural gift for minute detail and mathematical concepts—the "nerd," if you will—prepare the budget. Sometimes the nerd is the wife. Sometimes it's the husband. Either is okay.

The nerd prepares the first draft and brings it to the meeting. But then he or she stops talking and starts listening. No preaching, no teaching, no statement of the case; just silence and sincere interest.

The free spirit must come to the meeting and must express an opinion—not condescension, not concession, not resignation, but a real opinion. The nerd not only has to listen, he or she has to let the free spirit ask questions and suggest reasonable changes. What kind of questions? They will run the gamut. How have the amounts for each category been determined? What better things can be accomplished with the available funds? Where do charitable giving and tithing fit into the picture? What does the budget say about you as a couple and as a family? How do the choices reflected in the budget make each of you feel? I can't begin to imagine all of the questions that might come up. All I know is that there must be a willingness to share and a willingness to listen by both parties, so that the final product can accurately reflect who you are as children of God called by Him to go on a worthy mission.

When the cart is in the ditch, two shoulders are needed to push it out. When the road is smooth, two shoulders are still needed. At the risk of repeating myself, one plus one equals far more than two, but only if the two are in sync and in tandem.

### *The Envelope System*

Once you're on a budget, this should be your next move. It is nothing more than a return to your grandmother's old method of handling cash. It worked for her, and it will work for you.

Normally, you deposit your paycheck, go to the grocery store, and write a check. The envelope system adds a step. Deposit your check, write a check for the budgeted amount in a category, cash it, and put the cash in an envelope marked for that category. Then, for that month you only use the money in that envelope for that category. When the money runs out, you're through in that category.

This is an effective way to control impulse spending. It's also an excellent method for reminding yourself of, and enforcing, the decisions you made during the budgeting process.

Once again, this will take some trial-and-error experience. Start out with a few simple categories, maybe even just one—food. Over-fund it, because the likelihood is that you are wrong. But after two or three months you'll get a good fix on what you need to budget in the food category. This is a great way to impose discipline on yourself and keep your family operating within self-designated limits.

### *Start Saving Money*

Proverbs 21:20 (NIV) says, "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has."

How do you save money? The big thing is to start. Right now, that may be more of a dream than a possibility for your family. The need to save should be part of your mindset even now, however.

*Baby Step One:  
Have \$1,000 in the  
bank as a beginning  
emergency fund.*

You see, there is a psychology to saving. If it's not a priority, it won't ever happen. If it doesn't come off the top, you'll never do it. Saving is a matter of emotion. You won't save money when you get a raise. You won't save money when you get a debt paid off. You will save money when it becomes very, very important to you, and that will happen when you are fed up with living from paycheck to paycheck, when you get sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Pay yourself first. Give, save and then pay bills. Again, that sounds like something your grandmother might have done. Well, the old gal had common sense.

Emotion is the key to saving money, but timing and persistence are the keys to making your savings grow. A little bit steady makes a lot. A lot unsteady doesn't make much. The marathoners win. The sprinters lose. The plodders, the people who just never quit, they're the ones that win, because they take advantage of the mathematical explosion known as compound interest. If you understand the power of compound interest, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish with a regular saving plan, no matter how small. The key is to start as soon as you can, and be persistent.

In its simplest terms, I recommend that you save money for three purposes: emergencies, purchases, and building wealth. The latter—building wealth—is beyond the scope of this chapter. The wisdom of saving for purchases should be obvious. It is the first of those three reasons for saving money—being able to handle emergencies—that has the greatest relevance to you and your family. Chances are there will be little margin for error in your finances for the immediate future. Your mission is noble and your God is powerful, but the natural ebb and flow of life will affect you nonetheless. Life will continue to happen, and sometimes it will bring unexpected, unavoidable expenses. "Be prepared" is more than a motto. It is really good advice.

That leads me to The Seven Baby Steps.

## *The Seven Baby Steps*

Over the years I have developed a set of simple steps which, if pursued diligently, will lead to financial peace. I borrowed this “baby steps” idea from Bill Murray’s character in the movie “What About Bob.” He played an emotionally needy man who tried to make recovery simple by only taking baby steps. Bill Murray got a lot of laughs by using a ridiculously abbreviated small step shuffle. Even so, the concept has merit. The Seven Baby Steps are intentionally simple. Small victories add up. They lead to major triumphs.

Baby Step One is to have \$1,000 in the bank as a beginning emergency fund. Seventy-eight percent of families will have a major negative financial event in any given ten year period. So the very first thing we suggest you do is to put \$1,000 in the bank. Life is going to happen, and the rest of your plans won’t ever work out if you don’t have a cushion to accept the blows when life comes. And it will come.

Baby Step Two is to work the debt snowball. More about that later.

*Baby Step Two:  
Get out of debt using the  
debt snowball. But you  
must begin by learning  
to say “no!”*

Baby Step Three is to finish your emergency fund. It should equal three to six months of your living expenses. Put your emergency fund money in a good money market account with check writing privileges. Remember, these funds are for protection only.

Baby Steps Four through Seven are: put 15 percent of your income toward your retirement; save for college; pay off your home mortgage; and build wealth and give a bunch of it away. You can learn more about these steps in my books or by taking the Financial Peace University class.

Let’s spend a minute on Baby Step Two.

*Despising Debt:* Baby Step Two is to get out of debt using the debt snowball. But you must begin by learning to say “no!” You have to quit borrowing money! You’ve just got to stop. You must draw a line in the sand.

Debt is a product. It has been marketed to us so aggressively since the late 1960’s that to even imagine living without debt requires a complete paradigm shift. You have to completely change the way you look at things.

The Sears catalog from 1910 says that “buying on credit is folly.” J. C. Penny never allowed credit to be offered in his stores while he was alive. Henry Ford hated debt so much that he made Ford Motor Company wait ten years to offer financing after his rivals started doing that. Our great-grandparents thought debt was a sin. Our grandparents thought it was really dumb.

A fellow named Frank X. McNamara opened a company in 1950 and convinced stores in New York City to accept a little piece of plastic called a credit card instead of demanding cash. His company was called Diners’ Club. In 1958, the Bank of America in San Francisco offered its customers a piece of plastic called the Bank Americard.

That same year American Express was born. Now, American “Excess” is a way of life.

As recently as 1970, only 15 percent of Americans carried plastic. In 1976, Bank Americard changed its name to Visa. In 1986, Sears decided to take on Visa by offering the Discover card. It quickly became the most profitable division of Sears.

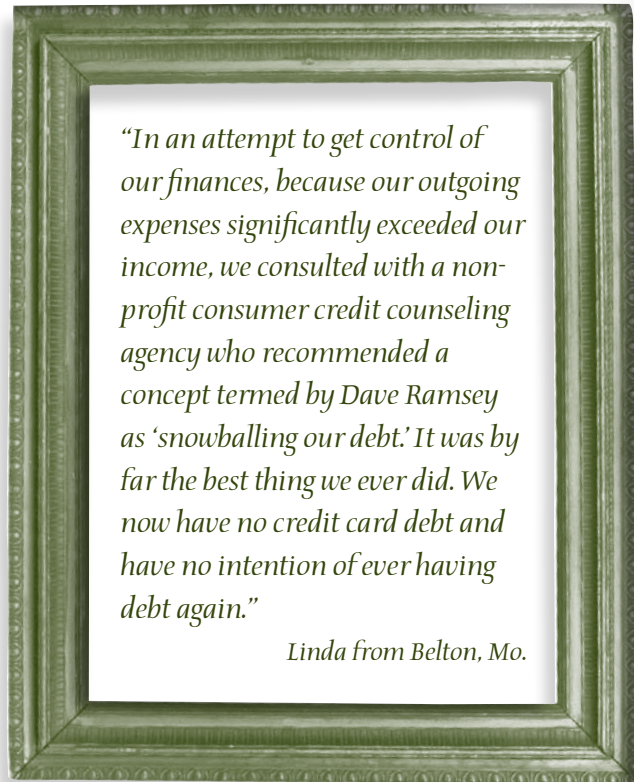
There's a credit card epidemic going around. The diagnosis? You're in debt! The cure? Plastic surgery! No, you don't have your nose fixed—you have your life fixed! I call it a "plasectomy." No Novocain is required. You cut them up. Destroy them. Rid yourself of the temptation. And you don't keep one just in case. A debit card will do everything a credit card does.

It won't be easy. If you attended one of my Total Money Makeover live events or one of my Financial Peace University classes, you would have the support of those around you and the excitement of the moment. In your case, you've got to do it on your own. But you've got to do it!

Another thing you can do is sell something. Sell so much stuff the kids are afraid they're next. Have a garage sale. Fill up the classified ads. You've got enough junk in your life to knock off a bunch of your debt.

I often suggest that people who are working the debt snowball get a part-time job to help fund that effort and accelerate the process. My grandmother always said, "There's a great place to go when you're broke—to work!" That's a sure-fire money-making scheme, but I acknowledge that it may not be one that will work for you now. Pastoral ministry is a life-consuming challenge which leaves little time for other choices. Keeping a church planter's family intact and functioning is also demanding and time-consuming. This may be another idea which deserves to be part of your mindset, yet not necessarily something you can do right away. But when the time is right, bringing in extra income by way of a temporary job can help your family become debt free.

*The Debt Snowball:* Over the years I have developed a plan for getting out of debt patterned after the way a snowball picks up snow as you roll it along. You list your debts, smallest to largest. You make minimum payments on all but the smallest; you attack that small one with everything you can spare. When it is paid off, you take the money you were paying on the smallest, add that amount to your monthly payment on the next smallest, and attack that one until it is gone. Then you repeat that process with the next smallest, and so on down the list.



Why do I suggest attacking the smallest one first instead of the one with the highest interest rate? Remember, this is all about changing your behavior! You need the sweet smell of success. You need to know what victory feels like. Put your list on your refrigerator. Knock out that little one, and then put a big red line through it. Pump your fist, and claim your victory! And when your list is nothing but red lines, then call me on the radio and yell out “We’re debt free!!!!” We’ll both love it!

*A Healthy Financial Plan:* There are other important elements to a healthy financial plan that deserve more than a passing mention, but they can’t be dealt with in any detail in this chapter. The resources I’ve already mentioned will fill in the gaps.

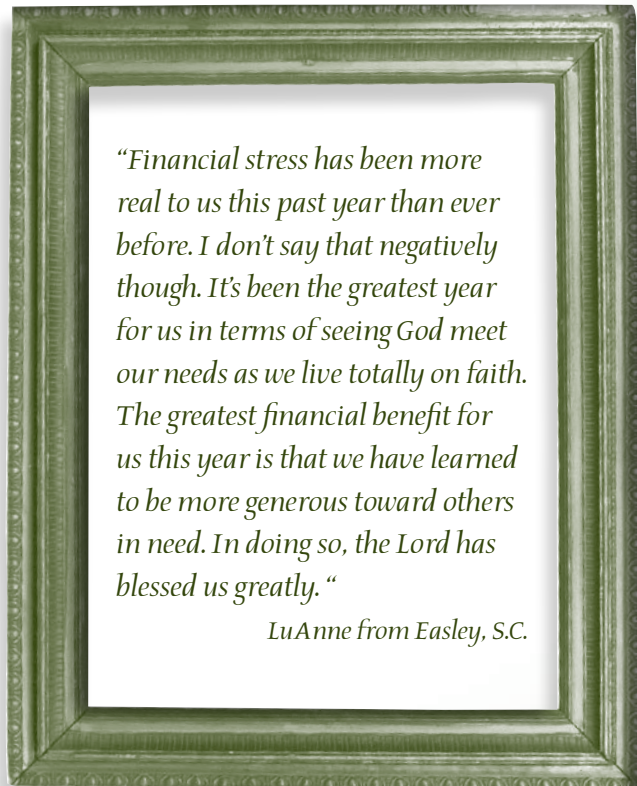
You and your husband both need a will. If you really hate the people in your life, die without a will, because you’re going to tie them up for years. Seventy-five percent of wives will outlive their husbands. Make him get a will, too.

Insurance must be part of a healthy financial plan—term life, long-term disability, auto and home owner’s—you need all of these. Don’t wait until it’s too late. But stay away from whole life or universal life policies. Never buy life insurance that claims to build up cash or be an investment. Term life costs a fraction of whole life. Buy term and do your own investing. You’ll come out way ahead.

*The Power of Prayer:* Don’t leave God out of this financial planning process. I almost feel apologetic even suggesting such a thing to someone who has heard God’s call and is probably more in touch with His spirit than most. Even so, it doesn’t hurt to be reminded that you can face life’s challenges alone and possibly overcome them by sheer will and strength, but it’s much better when God is in charge, and the truth is, He’s going to be in charge whether you like it or not, or whether you include Him or not.

God cares. You already know that, so stay in touch.

*The Great Misunderstanding:* The Great Misunderstanding is the belief that the way to have more is to hold on tightly to what we have. This is simply not true. You can do everything I teach, and you may even prosper, but if you don’t get this, you will never have Financial Peace.





Psalm 24:1 (NIV) reminds us that “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.” You and I are merely asset managers for the Lord, so if we view it properly, when we give money away, we aren’t really giving anything that is ours to begin with.

In Genesis 14, Abraham—then called Abram—took 381 trained men and went to rescue Lot. Not only did Abram bring Lot back home, he also routed the enemy and plundered his stores. Then, on the way home, Abram encountered Melchizidek, a priest. “Abram gave him a tenth of everything,” the Bible tells us. (Gen. 14:20, NIV) This is the first biblical illustration of the tithe: the first, but far from the last.

A tithe is 10 percent of your increase. Gross or net—that’s a matter for the individual’s heart. Personally, I tithe on the gross, so either way, I’m covered!

Your tithe goes to your local church, which serves the same function as the storehouse in biblical times in taking care of widows and orphans, single moms, military spouses, pastors, and others. Offerings are gifts from surplus, separate from tithes.

Giving enables us to become less selfish, and less selfish people have more of a tendency to prosper in relationships and in wealth. But make no mistake—motive matters. Giving with a thought of gain serves no one well.

God encourages us to give, and a spiritually mature Christian does just that. Giving makes us more Christ-like. Because we are designed in God’s image, we are happiest and most fulfilled when we are serving and giving. And at the end of the day, isn’t that kind of Financial Peace what we are really after?

### *Conclusion*

The Bible says that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. The good news is He also owns the hills. And when you start handling money right and you start talking to Him about it, you know what? He’ll start blessing your effort and honoring your effort. If you keep on handling money the wrong way, He’s going to keep it away from you to keep you from messing things up even worse.

God loves you. He’s crazy about you. Talk to Him about it. He’s just waiting, like a parent waits on a wayward child to grow up a little bit, so He can trust you with a little bit more responsibility. He’s waiting to hear from you. In some cases He’s been waiting a long, long time, but don’t worry. He’s not going to quit waiting.



If you manage His stuff well, He will give you more to manage. You have to be faithful in the little things. I know that's tough. I know it's hard. It's not a natural thing. Natural is to just go out and enjoy life. But over time I got sick and tired of being broke, of being in debt, of being normal. So I became weird.

Don't build a tower without first counting the cost, lest you get halfway up and you're unable to finish because you didn't plan, and all who see you begin to mock you, saying, "You're normal."

Don't be normal. Be weird. God bless you!

## *Financial Struggles... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

As spiritually-minded people, it would sometimes seem that money should never be our focus. However, it is amazing how our finances really affect us. The Lord often asks us to make sacrifices in our finances when we choose to follow Him in obedience.

No matter what the size or seeming success of a church plant, there are always struggles and temptation to take our eyes off of Jesus. When we first moved into our new area we visited a few homes of people who were helping to get the mission started. They all had newer, very organized, and well decorated homes. I somehow felt that this was something that would be expected of me. With a newborn and a budget that just covered the essentials this was not a realistic goal. My husband and I continued to trust in the Lord to provide for us. We learned to do without the extras.

God always provided for all our needs. Even when it came time for us to vacation, the Lord provided caring Christians who let us stay in their summer homes so we could have time with our family. We did not know how God would provide, but we found it very exciting to wait and see. I believe that this became a wonderful testimony to those around us to see the Lord provide.

It can be difficult to help our children understand why they can't have many of the new things like their friends. When we realize that this is a wonderful, teachable moment for our children, we can rejoice at this opportunity. We can show our children that they have all that they really need. It is ok to wait a while for some of the things that we want. Our children have developed character and patience and they have also learned how to be creative. It is amazing how quickly they get bored with a \$30 toy but will play all day and even for weeks with a large cardboard box.

We did not have much financially when we started church planting but we also did not have any debt and this really freed us to focus on ministry. I do not claim to have everything figured out, but I feel that the Lord has blessed us in this area. Here are some of the principles that we use to guide our finances:

- ✧ First of all, we put the Lord first in our finances and give our full tithe to our church.
- ✧ Next we prioritize what our real needs are and take care of those in our budget.
- ✧ Then we set aside savings for unexpected expenses. Sometimes we could not save money from our regular income but when extra income like tax refunds would come in we would take a good part of that and "hide" it away.
- ✧ When we have fun times with our family we are careful. We make it a game to find the best deals. It's not the money or the place; it is the people that count.

- ⌘ We also have learned not to be too proud to accept or ask for help. I've learned to accept hand-me-downs and graciously let the givers know that if I cannot use it I will pass it on to someone else.
- ⌘ Being careful with our finances has also given us the blessing of being able to be generous with others in their time of need.
- ⌘ We are very careful in our discussions of finances. We don't talk about our personal finances in front of others because it makes the situation uncomfortable for those we minister to.

I've seen several church plant couples strain themselves financially in trying to fit into an imaginary mold for their church plant. Unfortunately, their debt and financial needs distracted and eventually disabled them from being able to serve in the ministry they were called to. As "pioneering" church planting wives, I believe we need to free ourselves from the world's mold. We do not need to have everything but we should keep our finances in order and choose to be content with what is really important. Our careful use of finances can be a wonderful testimony of the Lord's work and an example to others.

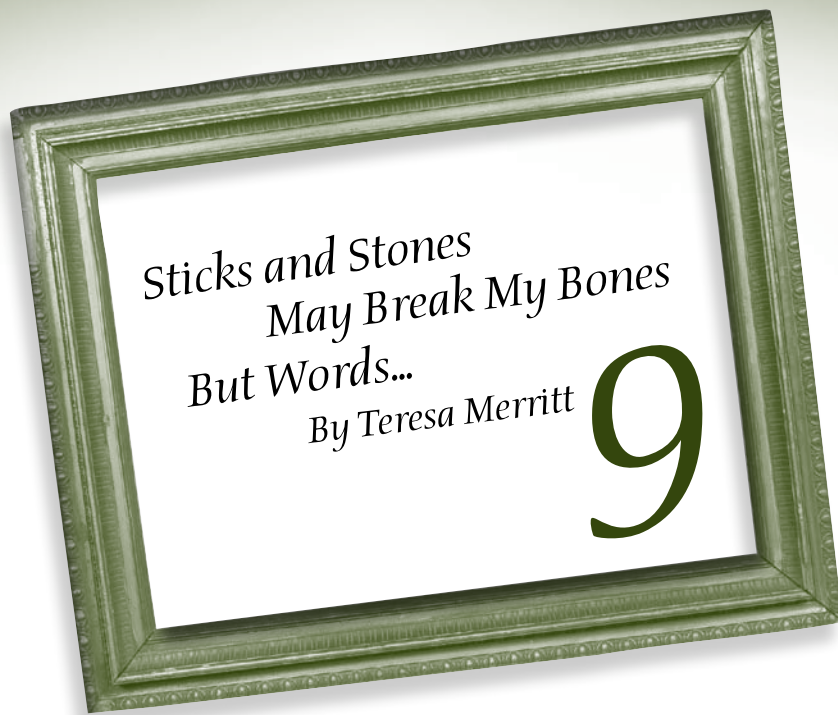
May the Lord's blessing and strength be upon you!

In His Service,

*Anita Eddingfield*

Anita Eddingfield  
Rainbow Valley, Ariz.  
Victory Baptist Church





Sticks and Stones  
May Break My Bones  
But Words...  
By Teresa Merritt

# 9



*Teresa Merritt* is the wife of Dr. James Merritt, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. She is also the mother of three boys. Nearly five years ago, she and her husband planted Cross Pointe, The Church at Gwinnett Center, in Duluth, Ga.

Teresa has written and contributed to projects such as: *Free to Soar: How you can love the church, serve with your husband, and fulfill your destiny as a woman in ministry* (Regal Books); and *HeartCall: The Call to Prayer* (NAMB).

Some things in life are inevitable and unavoidable. Pain, heartache, tough times—these are all going to happen. The question is, “Will you learn from these things?” When faced with life’s curveballs and letdowns, you can run from them or grow through them. I agree with motivational speaker and author Zig Ziglar who once remarked to my husband, “Make failure your teacher, not your undertaker.”

Criticism is one of life’s unavoidable realities. You don’t have to upgrade, or downgrade as it were, to a life of criticism. It comes standard on all models. This is especially true for those of us involved in church leadership and church planting. Questions will pop up and decisions will be made that some people don’t fully understand or with which they don’t particularly agree. In these moments, the spotlight of your ministry will start humming and its light will shine down on both you and your husband. How will you respond? Will you just wing it?

Less than five years ago, God threw a wrench into my comfortable, turbulence-free life. God gave my husband a vision for a church plant in Duluth, Ga., less than 20 miles from where we had been serving for 18 years.

I remember raising an eyebrow when my husband told me about his vision. “Things are fine where we are,” I thought. “Why would God want us to stop ministering here and move out into the world of the unknown?” At the time, I didn’t see the vision my husband saw. But soon God lit the same fire in my soul, and now Cross Pointe stands as God’s confirmation that in the world of the unknown and uncomfortable, radical growth takes place. You can imagine what it was like standing up to tell your longtime church family that you would soon be leaving to start a new church. We were asked all kinds of questions, some of them genuine and some of them loaded, and a few people criticized our surrender to God’s call. The ministry can be a criticism-filled, question-wrought life at times, but I believe that with the right perspective it can be a great time of growth for you and your husband.

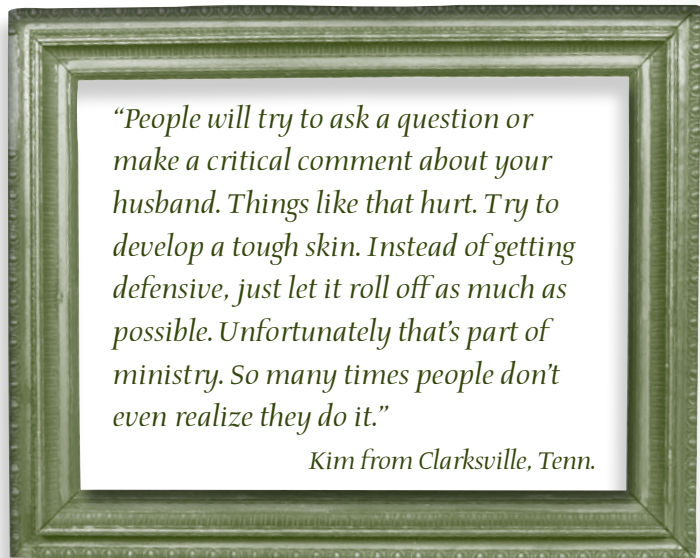
### *Personal Criticism: Take a Breather*

Perhaps the most hurtful type of criticism is personal criticism. Because personal criticism is so . . . well . . . personal, it can hit hard and strike deep into the most sensitive part of your soul. As we’re reminded in James 1:19, we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. For this reason, always take a breath before answering criticism. You can’t imagine how God will minister to your heart and change your response to one of love instead of hurt when you take a little breather.

This is one lesson I learned the hard way. In one of our first churches, a woman made a personal comment about my husband in the worst way. (“Momma Bear” will emerge most ferociously against criticism of her husband or children.) My claws quickly came out and I let the woman know that not only was she wrong, but if she knew what was good for her from now on she would be wrong in private. Because my husband was not there to defend himself, I felt justified in responding for him. After I said my piece with this lady, I immediately felt disappointed in myself. I knew that I let the devil take control instead of letting God take control of my life at that moment. What a difference a day would have made.

I have to be honest and say I feel a little bit hypocritical writing this chapter. Often times, I am not the best at handling criticism. (That last story may have given me away.) Sometimes I run from criticism

like a marathon runner on a power bar because I am so afraid that what others will say will be negative and hurt my feelings. I can relate to Job who said, “Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong. How painful are honest words” (Job 6:24-25, NIV). Job knew what I know: honest criticism hurts!



Ladies, we cannot run from criticism. It will find us wherever we go, wherever we hide. Interestingly enough, criticism—even what you perceive as venomous personal attacks—is not useless. Though it can be hurtful, personal criticism may also be helpful. Often times, other people perceive you and your actions more accurately than you do yourself. Even if we don't want criticism, sometimes we *need* it.

One of the things that amazes me about God is how He carefully hides opportunity in the most trying problems of life. Many—perhaps all—“problems” in life are nothing but a divinely-hidden opportunity; and criticism in your church is no exception. It is an opportunity to respond correctly, to reflect Christ, to grow in wisdom, or just to thank God that you aren't as sour and jaded as your assailant! We serve an amazing God who has beautifully disguised each problem as an opportunity to bring Him glory.

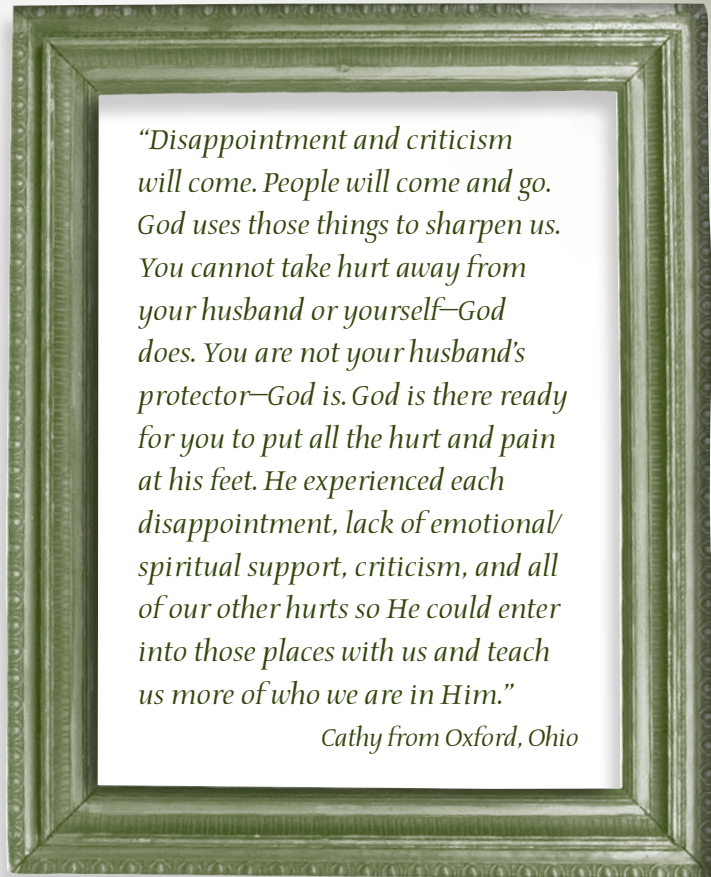
So, while you are taking some cool-down time, determine whether there is any validity to what has been said. Take what may have been a nasty, bruised, rotten orange and see if you can squeeze some juice out. It may take a hurtful opportunity for you to make some constructive changes.

By backing away from the personal criticism, you will help yourself in two very important ways. First, you will prevent the devil from pushing you into the flesh. Second, you will allow God to use evil words for positive, personal growth in your life. If there is truth to the criticism, then your criticsizers have done you a favor; if they are wrong, then they are accountable to God, and He will deal with them much more proficiently than you will.

### *Professional Criticism: Speak Rightly*

Professional criticism is unique in that you may be totally unequipped to answer it. If someone is tearing down church administration, management or ministry decisions, it makes me feel helpless. After all, I don't have a seminary degree hanging on my wall. I don't have any *direct*, vocational ministry experience. I have never sat in on a business meeting or worked on a yearly budget. But, I love my husband and I love my church, and it is very difficult to listen to professional criticism.

For this reason, one of the wisest principles you can adhere to is what I call *Rule #1: Remember your role.*





You are not the pastor—your husband IS. You are not on staff—there are other individuals whom God has placed in authority. Professional criticism should be deflected to the appropriate figure of authority. If someone is jawing negatively about the youth ministry, they need to speak to the Youth Leader. If someone is seething because they don't like the music, direct them to the Worship Leader. Since God has placed each member of your team in their respective place of influence, you are simply making a public proclamation that you trust God's human resource skills.

This gets really sticky when it is a personal friend leading the charge. When this happens, the first thought I have is "You are my friend, and you are to be supportive of me and my feelings." Also, I get concerned that they might leave the church if things don't work out the way they think they should.

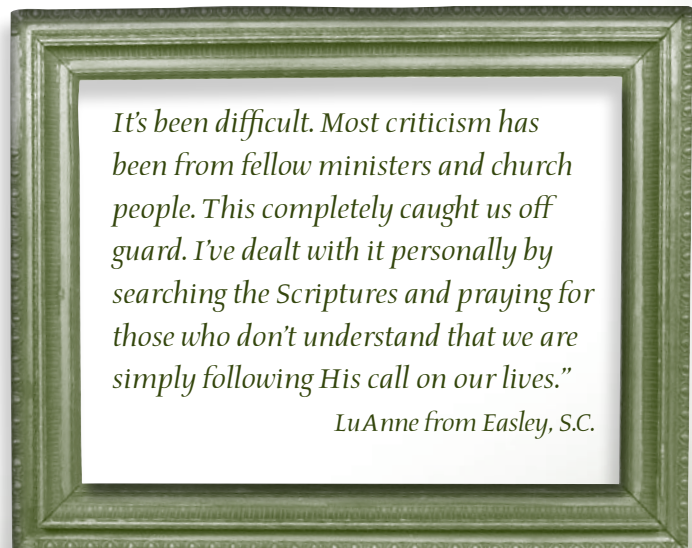
Many of these problems will be solved by keeping Rule #1 plastered to the back of your eyelids. However, there have been times when the persistent nature of a friend moves criticism beyond Rule #1. If this happens, rest in the nature of your friendship. Close friendship means that you should be able to speak to each other frankly and share your feelings (no matter how ugly). So speak honestly, but in love, realizing that you can't be responsible for whether or not they stay or leave your church. I try to comment with a positive remark and if they persist, then I just remind them that church is not about us and what we want for our church. It is about God and what God wants for His church.

Even Christ couldn't please everyone! Commit yourself to pleasing the Lord in both your role and your response.

### *Peripheral Criticism: Promote Community*

Five years ago I learned that being a pastor's wife of a church plant is much different than an established church. As a church planter, you are the new kid on the block. As a result, you may experience peripheral criticism from outside of your church.

For example, you may be planting a church in a community that is not as friendly to a movement of God. You may be like the Chiltons, who planted a church in Hamtramck, Mich. Hamtramck is one of three cities in the United States where the Islamic call to prayer is broadcast throughout the community over loudspeakers. When Pastor Chilton and his family began Real Church, they had to prepare for intense, looming resistance from the community.



I talked to a young pastor's wife from another state and she was amazed that she did not get more support from the church they were leaving to go follow God's leadership at the new work. It was almost as if they were saying, "Oh honey, you poor thing. I know you are only going because you have to." There was tremendous jealousy of the people who were leaving to help with the new church plant. They were treated like "betrayers."

She would constantly hear comments from friends or family who would share with her second-hand information about what people were saying. They just couldn't stand the fact that the new church was growing very rapidly while they seemed to be standing still in their growth.

They also looked down on the different style of worship, the fact that they did not have a choir, and that it was casual attire and not suit-and-tie by saying that "It just doesn't feel like church." How is church supposed to feel—aside from souls being saved and the dynamic preaching of God's Word?

Why is it that neighboring churches feel you are competing with them instead of working with them? They may think of you as a contender rather than teammate. This is unfortunate and surprising because you expect people from other churches to respond with more camaraderie.

If you experience peripheral criticism, don't fight back. Instead, try to educate them and let them see how God is using the church to help the community and to win people to Christ. Make sure your words build up the community rather than tear it down.

*More than half of planter wives surveyed have felt that local pastors have not embraced them as they've planted a church in the community.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

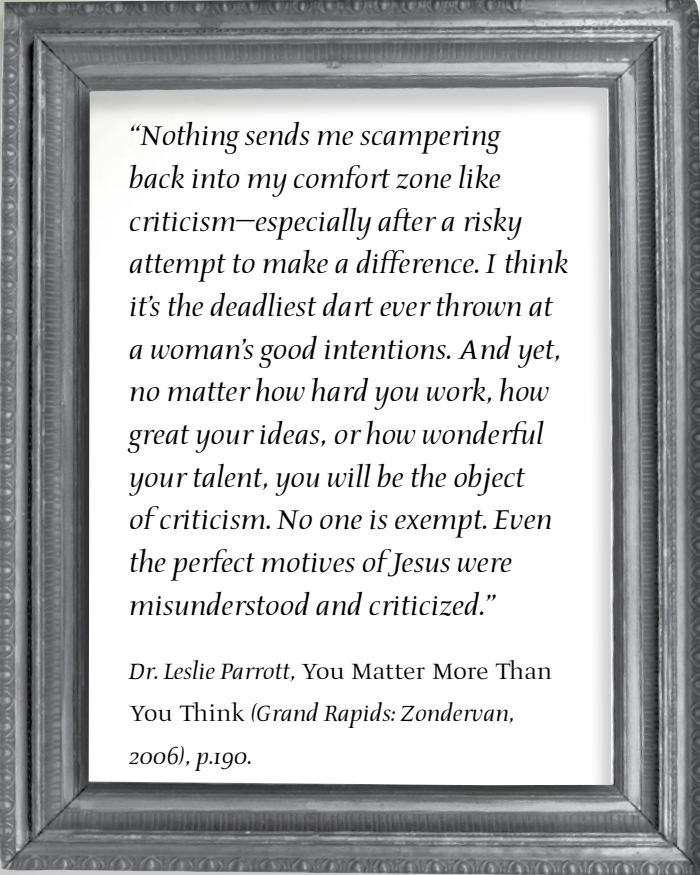
When it comes to sister churches, you want them to understand that like a human body, it takes a leg, arm, hand, foot, and so forth to make up a body. All the parts function differently and all are equally important. We have different ministries in the community and we work together—not against each other. Most importantly, we are all under one head—Jesus Christ. Our head desires for us to work together to promote His kingdom in your shared community.

### *Handling Criticism Practically: Let it Go*

"Okay, Teresa," you say. "Why should I listen to you?" I am so glad you asked. If you don't deal with criticism in a positive way, you will give the enemy a foothold by which to rob you of the joy of your ministry.

Don't allow something like criticism to distract you from your ministry. Decide what is the main purpose or calling for your life in your new church and make it your focus. As a friend of ours in seminary used to say, "Keep the main thing the main thing." Keep your focus on what is important, and let the rest roll off your back. This is especially important with your home life.

I am a "fixer" by nature. I always want to fix everything and make it better. I remember when my husband and I were going through a particularly tough time at one of our churches. He would come home so exhausted

A quote by Dr. Leslie Parrott is presented within a decorative, dark grey frame with intricate scrollwork. The text is centered and written in a black, serif font. The quote reads: "Nothing sends me scampering back into my comfort zone like criticism—especially after a risky attempt to make a difference. I think it's the deadliest dart ever thrown at a woman's good intentions. And yet, no matter how hard you work, how great your ideas, or how wonderful your talent, you will be the object of criticism. No one is exempt. Even the perfect motives of Jesus were misunderstood and criticized."

*"Nothing sends me scampering back into my comfort zone like criticism—especially after a risky attempt to make a difference. I think it's the deadliest dart ever thrown at a woman's good intentions. And yet, no matter how hard you work, how great your ideas, or how wonderful your talent, you will be the object of criticism. No one is exempt. Even the perfect motives of Jesus were misunderstood and criticized."*

*Dr. Leslie Parrott, You Matter More Than You Think (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), p.190.*

from dealing with church problems that he could hardly put a sentence together. When I realized that Mrs. Fix-it wouldn't be able to take care of everything with a wave of my manicured fingers, I decided we needed to get away for a while. I got a babysitter, made a reservation at a nearby hotel and we spent the night away. In fact, we spent the whole next day away in the nearby town. We wandered without agenda, browsing through antique stores and enjoying a wonderful, romantic dinner before coming back home. It was like a mini-vacation and it helped us to face and deal with the next day. Often, problems need to be left at the office, and sometimes you both need to step away to regain perspective.

If you are "under fire," make sure your home is also a safe haven. I understand that I must make our home a happy place where my husband can escape the church and take a breath. Don't be

consumed with talking about the church at home all the time. If you are consumed with your issues at home, simply resolve to pray about it together and truly give it to God. Simply say your "Amen," and leave it there. You may have heard it said, "When a couple kneels together before God, they can stand up against anything."

Here is some real encouragement. No matter how brutal the attack, no matter how destructive the rhetoric, no matter how hurtful the intention, our God has empowered each of us to stand tall, persevere, and overcome. Think about the apostle John. He was a target for criticism, ridicule, and persecution—much worse than your average church planter, I assure you. Toward the end of his ministry, reflecting on all that he had endured in the ministry of Jesus Christ, he encouraged other believers with these words: "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NIV). No matter what the adversary hurls at you and no matter whom he uses to deliver it, you possess the power to overcome. Jesus will lead you through no matter what you might face.

*Some Practical Advice from a Church Planter Wife for Dealing with Criticism*

- ✧ *You must force your mind to not focus on the criticism, but instead on God's goodness and His Word. Criticism will eat your lunch!*
- ✧ *Don't give up! God's calling is greater than those moments of discouragement. God is doing something great through your obedience, even when you can't see it.*
- ✧ *Surround yourself with the most positive people in your church. Be careful who you listen to.*
- ✧ *Talk to other ministers' wives, preferably a church planter's wife who can encourage you. I'm encouraged each time that God is greater than these criticisms and trials. He comes throueach time and never fails! People will let you down, but God never will.*

*Gena from McKinney, Texas*

## *Rejection... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the struggles I have encountered as a church planter wife is dealing with the rejection I feel when people leave the church. It's hard not to take it personally and feel rejected, and it hurts even more when you have loved them, served them, and/or befriended them. It is easy to become cynical and not want to get close to people, thinking "What's the use, since they'll just end up leaving anyway?" I used to think that way, because people would come for a while, grow spiritually, and then leave over the silliest reason.

When my closest friend in the church left, I walked around with a sizable "hole" in my gut for a while. It didn't help that she and her husband lived right next door and I still had to see them as neighbors! But God met me there with a very comforting thought: Philippians 3:10 talks about how Paul wanted to "know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings..." I felt a taste of the rejection Jesus felt, to have served and loved and then to have been abandoned. I knew that He knew exactly what I was feeling, and for some reason He and I were "fellowshipping" as we shared this painful experience.

The other thought that encouraged me was that God wasn't calling me to "keep" all the sheep He leads to our church. Rather, He is calling me to be faithful to Him, to invest my time and energy wisely for His kingdom, and leave the results to Him. That frees me to invest without fear of "What if they just leave anyway?" Whether they stay or not is really not my business.

If you experience this type of pain as I did when people leave, I highly recommend you find a ministry wife to mentor you along in the process. If you can't find such a person, then a trained counselor who can be impartial will be an invaluable asset to help you process the pain. Counseling might be expensive, but how can you put a price on emotional health?

God bless you in your ministry!

*Cindy Minnich*

Cindy Minnich  
Mechanicsburg, Penn.

## *Rejection... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the greatest fears I had in becoming a pastor's wife was having people leave our church. I grew up as a pastor's kid and when I married, I let my husband know that I would serve the Lord anywhere, even in a hut in Africa, but that I never wanted to be a pastor's wife. After ten years as a youth pastor's wife, God called us to plant a church and now I have been a church planter wife (a.k.a. pastor's wife) for almost three years.

After one year, our church plant was going strong and we were excited. Yet we felt the tension and knew something wasn't right. After an intense ministry month, my husband took our family on four days of vacation. When we returned most of the church had left! One man spread awful lies about our family, which ranged from escaping lawsuits to embezzlement. Many of his friends left with him, to "support him" during this time.

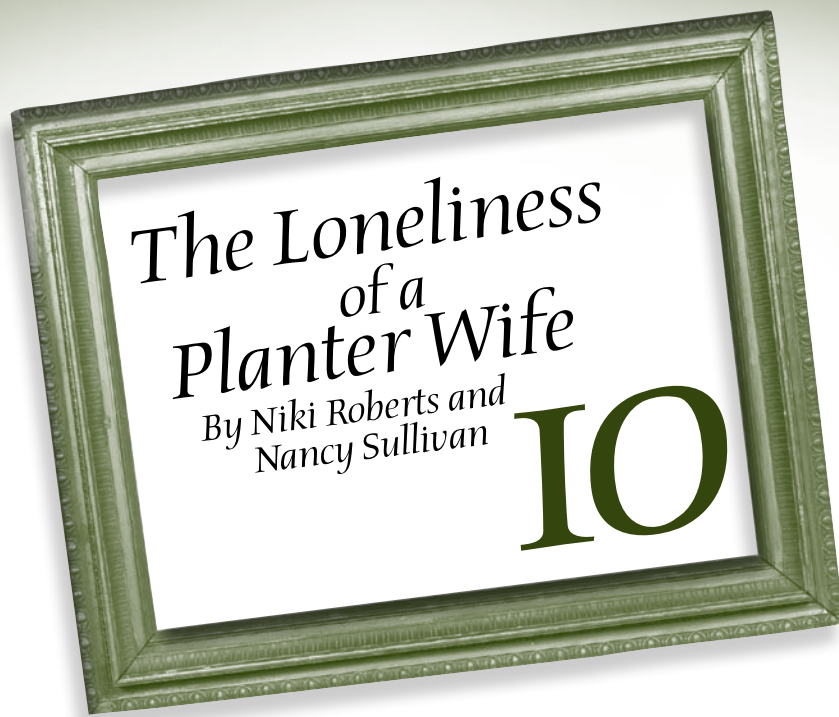
We were shell shocked. We felt like we had failed God, but weren't sure how we'd failed. I remember searching church planting web sites for comfort. We received comfort when we remembered that nearly all church plants lose most of their core within two years. We were left with 15 core people and 10 others who came once in a while. God greatly comforted me during this time by showing me that the removal of the people was His doing. That summer God brought a new family to our church *every* week!

Now a year later, God has continued to grow our church. He has brought people from all over. Our church is now vibrant, healthy and inviting. When people want to leave, don't fight, don't cling. Trust God. Your church plant is not yours, it is God's ministry. He will bring the people in. He will save them. He knows who should be there. I praise God that He has chosen my husband and I to do this work. I am so glad that I am a pastor's wife!

*Sacha Hasenyager*

Sacha Hasenyager  
Huson, Mont.  
Outdoorsmen Church





*Niki Roberts* is the wife of Bob Roberts, author and pastor of NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas, which they started in 1985. After teaching in public schools for 19 years, Niki answered God's call and left the public schools to minister to church planter wives. She now leads retreats for church planter wives in various locations across the United States and abroad. She and Bob have been married for 27 years and have two children.

Even though it might be difficult to understand, a church planter wife can often be in a crowded room and still feel alone and isolated. Bob and I moved to Fort Worth, Texas to start NorthWood Church 22 years ago. While it was an exciting time, it also brought with it some unique challenges. One of the challenges we faced was moving to a new city where we had very few acquaintances. We were a young couple with a small baby (our first child, Ben) and a small number of committed believers to serve alongside us.

There was a lot of knocking on doors in the community to get word out about the new church. Bob was given office space in an established church where he would take care of the administrative work during the day. In the evening, he would go out and knock on doors. Since we had a small baby and lived on a tight budget, we couldn't afford to get a babysitter, so I stayed home while my husband went visiting. We thought it best not to take our baby visiting because of the distraction. Bob made it a priority to come home for a while each afternoon to spend time with me and Ben because he would be out all evening. Sometimes I felt lonely in the evenings—especially after Ben was down for the night. Even though I knew I was doing the best thing for our family and felt called to



do whatever it took to plant the church, I still longed for adult interaction. As you think about planting a church, understand that much of the work will occur when families are at home, which may—because of your family responsibilities—leave you feeling alone or possibly isolated from your husband.

### *When Your Choices Make You Unpopular*

Feelings of isolation and loneliness may come when well-intentioned people criticize you or your husband for doing things a little differently. You may feel led to try new ways to reach people in the local community and in the world. Some people may be slow to embrace these changes. I remember facing criticism when, as a church, we decided to take the word “Baptist” out of our name, and again when we chose to require people to take a new members class before joining our church. At the time these were major changes for us, even though now they seem trivial. We had a similar experience when we moved from the church building that we had outgrown to a shopping center. The church voted unanimously to make the move but once we moved, we “grew” from 500 down to 350 in attendance. It was a quick growth in reverse! (You can read more about this in *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* by my husband, Bob Roberts Jr., published by Zondervan, 2006.)

It takes courage to step out, be different and do things in a new way. Because opposites seem to attract, often in a church planting couple the husband is more of the risk-taker and the wife is the cautious one. This may leave her feeling like she is out on a limb without a safety net or others cheering her on. I have always believed that Bob can slay dragons. I believe in him. I support him. I follow his leadership because I know he has a heart for God and diligently seeks to follow His will. He is a man of integrity and courage, willing to step out and be different when called to do so. That is one of the things I love most about him. This same courage that I admire so much forces me out of my comfort zone. Realizing that some people don’t necessarily agree with our methods or decisions leaves me with a feeling of being isolated as well.

### *Keeping Secrets*

Many times, church planter wives know what goes on behind the scenes and yet cannot discuss the information with others. Proverbs 10:19 (NIV) says, “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.” A church planter wife must be careful about information that is shared with others. When you have a heavy heart but are not able to share with anyone, you may find yourself in a room full of people and still feel really lonely. At times like this, the familiar children’s song resonates in my heart, “My best friend is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus...” There are times when we deal with issues of the heart and need to discuss it with no one but Jesus.

*“When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”*

*Proverbs 10:19 (NIV)*

A church planter wife told me of an experience she had with an accountability group that she once met with in her church. The group consisted of three women who were strong in their faith, and all were a part of the leadership team. They met every Saturday morning to encourage one another and pray for one another. One week the church planter wife was sharing about a challenging week for her and her husband. They had a spat during the week and she was struggling with letting go of the lingering attitude.

They all prayed together and went their separate ways. A few days later word was circulating about what the “pastor” had said and done. What was shared in confidence was not kept in confidence. The comments were not that big of a deal, but they were incriminating to the pastor and his ministry. A little thing can get blown out of proportion so quickly. As church planter wives we need to be very careful about what we share with others.

### *Pulled Apart by Service*

There are times when a church planter wife is so busy, but busy in different areas than her husband. This busyness can even leave us feeling lonely as we serve “together” in the ministry. Here is a journal entry of mine that I recently re-read. “We are so busy doing our own ‘stuff’ that sometimes we don’t connect. And the ‘stuff’ points in the same direction. I just read a chapter on loneliness that pastors’ wives feel and it hit so many chords for me. Today I feel lonely. I must be sure my heart and attitude are pleasing to God. I must remember Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV), ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.’”

I was visiting with a wife who was serving in the children’s ministry. She and her husband had two small children. They were able to structure most of their schedules where one of them would be free to have the children home and in bed each evening at a decent hour. But even then, only one of them would be home and the other one out “doing ministry.” When they were finally both home for an evening, they would be exhausted. Red flags went up for them. They realized they needed to be more intentional toward the ministry of their own marriage. It takes a lot of sacrifice to begin a new church—time being one of the sacrifices—but we must be careful to seek God in all that we do and let Him guide us in the ministry areas in which we serve. Serving in our own strength will lead to burnout and discontentment. Proverbs 16:2-3 (ESV) says, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”

### *Not All Friends Are the Same*

One of the best ways to fight some of these feelings of isolation and loneliness is to have a true heart friend. The best gift a woman can give herself is a close girlfriend. When close friends spend time together, they are not only encouraged but also energized and ready to continue with the responsibilities of life. When you find a real heart friend, you have truly received a gift from God. While your husband may be your best friend, you can’t expect him to meet all your needs. There are times you just need to have a good heart-to-heart talk with another woman, one who loves you and cares about you.

Where can you go to find this kind of friend? I am often asked such questions from church planter wives. Can you go to others in the church plant to make friends? Yes, you can have close friends in the church! Our relationships should be governed by godly living. If we are living in a way that pleases God, then we will not damage the work for the kingdom in our relationships. At NorthWood, we are encouraged to live “kingdom in, kingdom out.” If we are seeking God and growing in our relationship with Him (kingdom in), then we will exhibit a life of godly character (kingdom out). Our time with God will affect how we live in our community and how we relate to others in our lives. It isn’t a question of where to find a friend, but rather, how to live a life that exhibits the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Proverbs 31 woman lived a virtuous life that glorified God and brought honor to her family. We, too, are to live a life that brings glory to God and supports our husband and the ministry to which we have been called. Healthy friendships will help us in this quest.

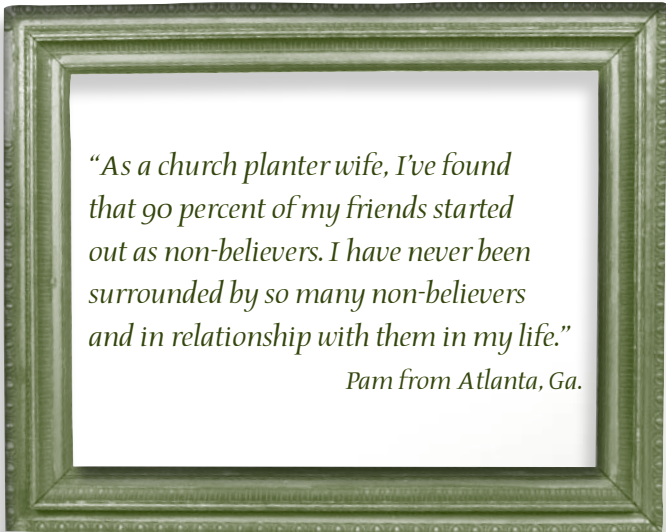
There are different types of friends who come into our lives. Not all friends are going to be close heart friends, and we need to recognize these differences. You will have many friends, but only one or two really close ones. Know the difference! Know whom you can confide in and with whom you can share. Recognize and respect this. Be careful not to pour your heart out to everyone who calls herself a friend. Give yourself time to get to know these women. You will connect at a deeper level with some more than with others.

There is great value in connecting with the women you worship with every week. One way to make good friends in the church is by ministering together. When you use your gifts in service, you will connect with others who share similar gifts and passions. Serving alongside others will bring you together in friendship. Enjoy this relationship. Another very important way to connect is by having a prayer partner. Praying together over life issues brings you close. Sharing prayer concerns opens you to a deeper relationship. Also, get involved in a Bible study with women in your church. There is an element of endearment when you study God's Word together and share how God is revealing Himself to you. It is very important in the life of the church plant for the church planter wife to connect with women of the church.

Don't be too fearful to be friends with women in your church, but know there is a high value in having a close friend outside the church as well. I have one such friend, and our friendship has stood the test of time and passed the test of experience. We don't always agree with one another. Rather, we challenge each other to think differently about some things. I can share more things with her because she doesn't live in our community. She is a confidant to me, a true blessing. She has been a part of my life for nearly three decades. She was only a phone call away when we began NorthWood, when we raised our children, when I decided to resign my teaching position in the public schools, and when we made other life decisions.

### *Unbelieving Friends*

Don't forget to include those who are unbelievers in your friendships. If you don't have friends who are lost, then how are you shining light in the darkness? Make friends you can influence for the kingdom. We are commanded to be salt and light. Often we find ourselves taking our flashlights to the picnic on a sunny day. I have found that many Christians want to live in a "believers' bubble" where they go to Christian merchants and to Christian

A quote is presented within a decorative green frame. The text is in an italicized serif font and reads: "As a church planter wife, I've found that go percent of my friends started out as non-believers. I have never been surrounded by so many non-believers and in relationship with them in my life."

*"As a church planter wife, I've found that go percent of my friends started out as non-believers. I have never been surrounded by so many non-believers and in relationship with them in my life."*

*Pam from Atlanta, Ga.*

private schools, and everything they do is done within the context of the like-minded audience. How can we reach a lost community when we live in such isolation?

We are friends with a church planting couple who have a heart for the lost world. The wife tells of a time when a lost friend came over for a visit. The visiting friend got so excited when telling of a circumstance in her life that she let her natural language spew forth, using inappropriate words. Their elementary-aged son was in the room and heard all of these colorful words. When the friend left, the mother sat her son down and explained to him that their friend said those things and acted that way because she had a hole in her heart that needed to be filled with Jesus. She told him they would love her and pray for her to know Jesus.

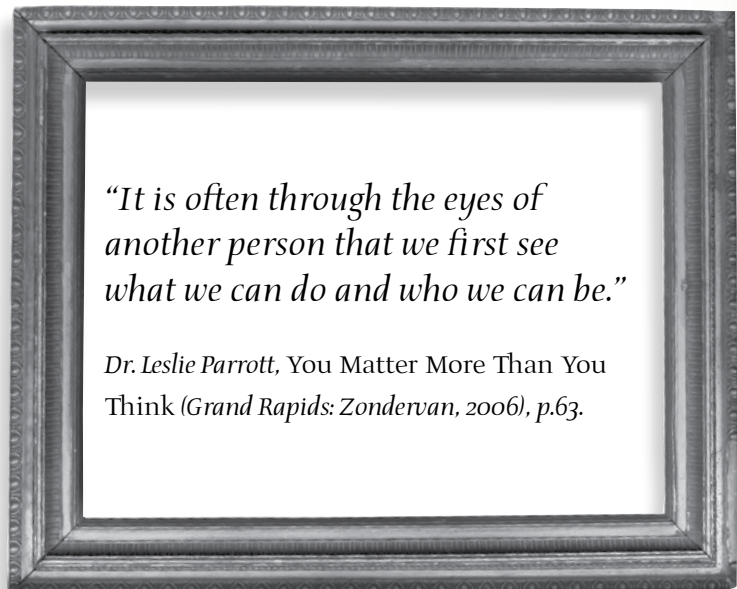
This church planter wife's life exhibits her belief that we should teach our children to love lost people and at the same time teach them how to pray for those friends. She also has a strong message for her children and friends that those who are not believers are not our enemies. They simply don't know Jesus yet. That is the way we should live, not expecting lost people to live like believers, but accepting them where they are and loving them to Jesus.

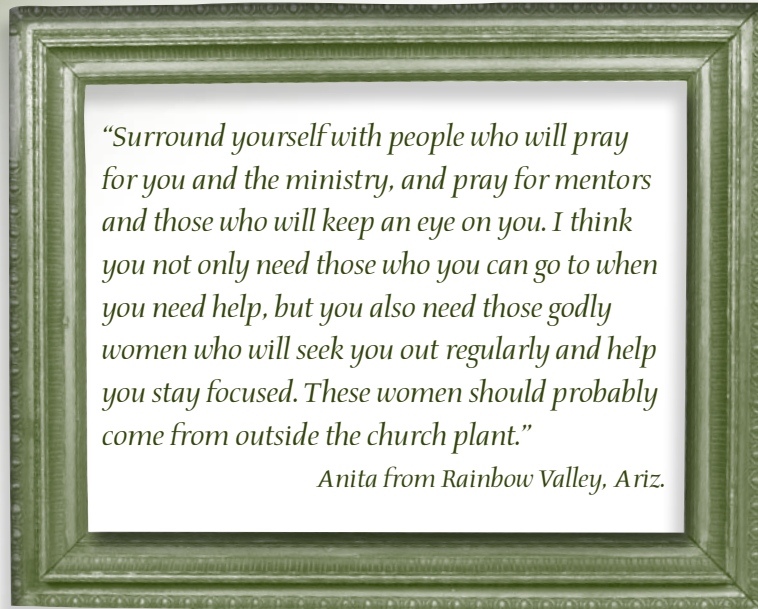
#### *Have a Mentor, Be a Mentor*

Titus 2:3-5 (NIV) says, "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject

to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of God." It is very important for every woman to have a mentor and to be a mentor. Every woman should be learning from another who is farther down the road. Find a mentor and glean all you can from her life's experiences. Find someone who shares a similar life calling and is willing to pass on lessons learned along the way.

Many church planter wives have asked me how to go about finding a mentor, and I'm not sure there is a formula for finding this person. One way is to be open to others God puts in your path and watch for relationships to develop. I have a mentor who might be surprised to know I view her in such a light. I trust her. I respect and admire her more than anyone I know. I never have asked her to be my mentor, she just is. I think if we try to make the arrangement too formal then the relationship might seem a little forced and not natural. There has to be a natural flow to the friendship for it to be effective. Find someone you trust, respect and admire, and learn all you can from her experiences. Allow her to pour into your life.





Anita from Rainbow Valley, Ariz.

Having a mentor is such a huge blessing, but be sure you are mentoring someone yourself. Let someone behind you benefit from the lessons you've learned in life. We can always find someone ahead of us and someone behind us. We have a responsibility on both sides. If we are living our life hungry for God, spending time with Him and putting Him first, then He will use us in other women's lives. If you are truly living for Him, being a mentor is not taking on a different character. It is just being you and letting another woman close enough to see who you are

inside and out. God wants you to be the best you can be and to share yourself with others. You must be genuine and authentic. To be a wise mentor requires a growing relationship with God and a willingness to let someone else get close to you. To be a wise mentor also requires that you listen—really listen. Remember that you can learn from them, as well. Don't let pride prevent you from doing this.

### *You're Not Alone*

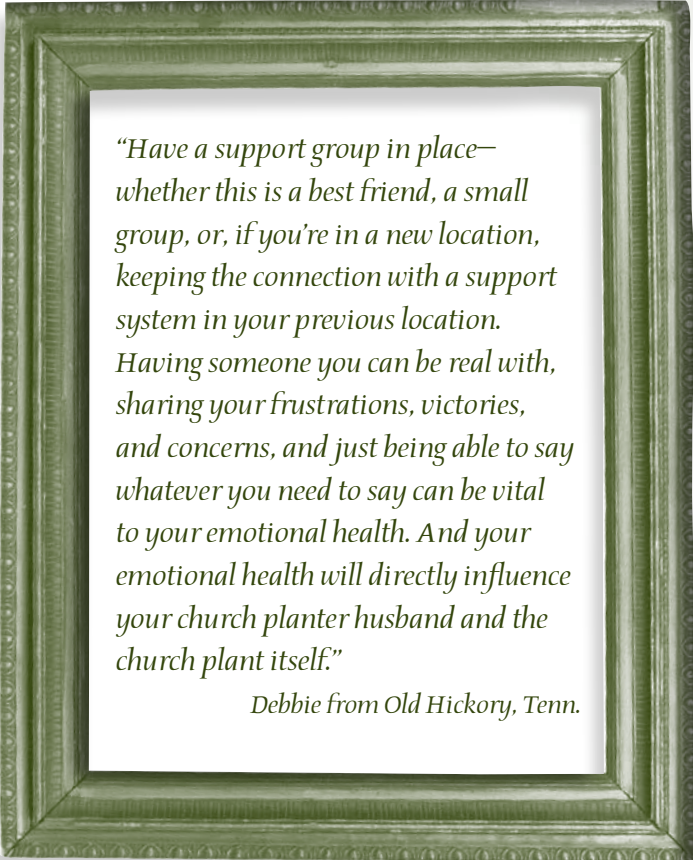
When finding a mentor, look for opportunities to get to know other church planter wives who have traveled farther down the road than you. Spend time with them, sharing ministry experiences. It is very beneficial to spend time with others who really understand your circumstances in life. Who can do this better than another church planter wife? You might have a loving extended family and be really close to them. But even then, they won't really understand what you are going through as you and your husband are beginning a new church. Only someone who has traveled down this road will be able to really connect with you. Pray that God would bring this person into your life and build that relationship with her.

Seek encouragement by finding a gathering of church planter wives to get involved with by participating in interactive blogs and attending conferences or retreats. Interacting with other women who share similar circumstances in life can be very encouraging and energizing.

Several years ago, I found myself presented with an opportunity to attend a forum. It was to be held in Colorado and the event was for the wives of senior pastors. I eagerly sent in my registration form and got my bags packed. When time approached for me to leave, I felt very nervous about leaving my family and flying out of state to attend an event where I knew no one. I would have backed out if it had not been for the plane ticket that we had purchased. When I arrived, I met 25 other wives just like me! Well, not exactly like me, but we connected because

we shared similar circumstances in life. They encouraged me and I left feeling re-energized for the ministry to which God had called me. God even used this experience in placing a heart-felt need to provide such a gathering for wives of church planters. (For information about my annual Church Planter Wives Retreat, see [www.glocal.net/cp-wives](http://www.glocal.net/cp-wives).)

When you make a connection with a girlfriend, a mentor, and a true heart friend you have given yourself a great gift. But as a church planter wife, even though you have this gift, you will still have times of loneliness and feelings of isolation. Do allow others to be close enough to you so that during those times you will have friends that will help you through. Pray for God to send you a mentor, someone who has already walked where you are walking that can offer you true encouragement. Trust God for these friendships and relationships. Value them, cherish them, and nurture them. Together encourage one another and enjoy the life God has called you to live in service to Him.



*“Have a support group in place—whether this is a best friend, a small group, or, if you’re in a new location, keeping the connection with a support system in your previous location. Having someone you can be real with, sharing your frustrations, victories, and concerns, and just being able to say whatever you need to say can be vital to your emotional health. And your emotional health will directly influence your church planter husband and the church plant itself.”*

*Debbie from Old Hickory, Tenn.*



*Nancy Sullivan* married her high school sweetheart, Kevin, in 1987. Kevin worked as a CPA before being called to the ministry in 1992. They have two daughters, Lauren (18) and Audrey (15). They moved from their hometown of Houston, Texas in 1999 to Puyallup, Wash., to plant High Pointe Community Church. Nancy works part-time as a claims adjuster, loves to read and is a soccer mom.

### *Getting Off the Pedestal*

My husband and I were called to plant a church in the Seattle area about eight years ago when we lived in Houston, Texas. He was one of more than 30 pastors on staff at a “mega-church.” Big church, big budget, free private school education for our two elementary age daughters—life was good! We lived within a one-hour drive of both of our extended families and were able to celebrate every holiday and birthday with them. Still, we had no doubt that God was calling us to church planting. We had laid out our “fleece” (see Judges 6) on several occasions and God confirmed the call over and over.

When we arrived in the Seattle area, we were one of the first sets of families to come to this area to plant a church. Yes, there were other local pastors’ wives around, but I did not have any contact with a wife of a church planter. Although the other pastors’ wives were a blessing, I did not feel they could connect with what I was going through—leaving my “home” and settling in this “foreign” land. We were pioneers, somewhat, as are most church planters.

I had been advised to completely acclimate myself to this new community and show that we were there “for the long haul.” To do this, I felt like I needed to disassociate myself from our life in Houston as much as possible so that the members of our community would not see us as outsiders. As much as I wanted to reach out to my new community, I could not deny to myself how much I missed Houston, the people there, and the life I had there.

I had no contact with other church planter wives, so I felt that surely I must be the only wife who was struggling with this new life to which God had called me. I berated myself for struggling with accepting this new “adventure” God had for me. As a Christian, I knew God had a plan for my life and that I was in the middle of His will, but that did not mean it wasn’t hard. I felt so alone, and I condemned myself for not liking the life God had chosen for me. I was sure all of the other church planter wives were not struggling like I was and I was the only unfaithful one.

### *Hitting Bottom*

After about a year, what started out as mild discontent had grown into full-blown despair. I realized I had fallen into depression and entered counseling. With God’s help and mercy I was able to make some sense out of all that I was going through and deal with my anger towards God and my sense of isolation. I experienced great relief and joy knowing that God was very loving and although I was mad at Him, He would never stop loving me and would never abandon me.

Self pity is the root of much depression and that is exactly where I was. “You are what you think,” and all I was thinking about was “woe is me.” Once my thinking life started changing, I was able to deal with the changes in front of me and begin embracing the life God had for me.

### *It's Not Just Me*

It was then that my husband and I were given the opportunity to meet with other church planters and their wives for “Basic Training,” a three-to four-day training course planters and their wives typically attend very early in the church planting process. There we took part in roundtable sessions, in which planters and their wives were given the opportunity to ask questions about the realities of church planting. All of the husbands asked questions, rightfully so, about the process of church planting, and all the wives seemed to ask questions about how church planting affects the family.

After many conversations with other wives, I learned that they were struggling, too, most with the same things that I had struggled with—happiness that God was working in our lives, yet sadness at what we were having to leave behind, fear of the unknown, anxiety about our kids adjusting, and so forth. Only then did I realize that I was not alone. Almost every other wife I met struggled with the same feelings. For me, just knowing that there was a “community” of women who understood the church planting experience and shared my fears and feelings was a relief, and many of the other women expressed the same sentiment. It again reinforced in my mind the importance of community—even if community is not about people you see every day, but those you connect with because of your life experience.

### *Taking Off the Mask*

When we moved to Seattle, my husband asked me to start a women’s small group Bible study. We would always have a time for sharing prayer requests, but I never felt like I could share my struggles with others. During one of our studies, after we’d been meeting together for about a year, one of the ladies confessed, “I feel like I cannot get close to you because you never share a prayer request.” I had never opened up because I was the pastor’s wife—wasn’t life supposed to be perfect for me, and wasn’t living in God’s will supposed to be perfect? And speaking of perfect, as a pastor’s wife, aren’t I supposed to always serve joyfully by playing the piano in church and working in the children’s ministry, with my perfectly dressed and behaved children at my side? And of course I have no pain because I just give it all to God and He takes it all away, right?

I had entirely too many unrealistic expectations of myself, most of which no one else had for me. It was then that I realized I had cheated myself by not being real with my new community of fellow church members. I could have been sharing (instead of constantly blubbing), and they could have prayed for me and been a blessing to me in my pain, but because I was trying to live up to my “perfect pastor’s wife” persona, I felt that I could not be transparent with them. I realized then that when people asked me, “Don’t you miss your family?” and I answered “no,” thinking they would accept me more as one of them, I was really distancing myself from the new

*For help connecting with church planter wives in your area, contact your state convention or e-mail us at [planterwives@namb.net](mailto:planterwives@namb.net).*



community God had lovingly given me. Of course I missed my family, and deep down my friends knew it, but my mask isolated me from others even more.

Now that I am transparent and open with my church family, I have been amazed at how God has blessed my circumstances and my authenticity. People in my church tell me they find me “real” and “approachable.” My friends inside and outside of the church do not put me on a pedestal, and I feel like they look at me as a friend and not just a pastor’s wife. They see that I have struggles and triumphs just like they do. I can be real with others and find comfort and joy in knowing that people really love me for who I am. Because I am real with them, they can be real with me.

As you begin your journey, understand that the path will become difficult. (See page 18 for the top 10 struggles of church planter wives.) However, you do not have to take this journey alone. Please know there is a “community” of church planter wives who share your thoughts and feelings and know what you’re going through. God does not call us to walk alone. If possible, I would encourage you to connect with another church planter wife whose personality is a lot like yours. Be real with her and let her be real with you. Pray specifically for each other, support one another in the hard times and rejoice with one another in the good times. Indeed, we are all in this together.

## *Loneliness... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

The world may have thought that Thomas Wolfe had it right when he said, “Loneliness is and always has been the central and inevitable experience of every man.” However, that does not have to be true about your experience as a church planter wife.

You are about to embark on an exciting and sometimes overwhelming position as a church planter wife. You and your husband will be starting a church in an area that desperately needs to hear about the love of Christ. There will be a lot of behind the scenes work that will often leave you exhausted and lonely. You need to, with the help of the Lord, take care of yourself both physically and emotionally. Satan desires nothing more than to see you lonely, frustrated and tired. God knows your needs, adores you and wants to provide for you.

When my husband and I started our first church in 1986, I was extremely lonely. I missed my friends from our former church, and I had a newborn baby that kept me home most days. I desperately needed a girlfriend. Women thrive on relationships with one another—God made us that way. I began to pray for a friend. I joined a Bible study outside of the church. I knew that God would provide that special woman for me and He did in His time. I thought she would be taking care of me and my needs, but I found that we both ministered to each other. That is what a true friendship is about, caring for one another.

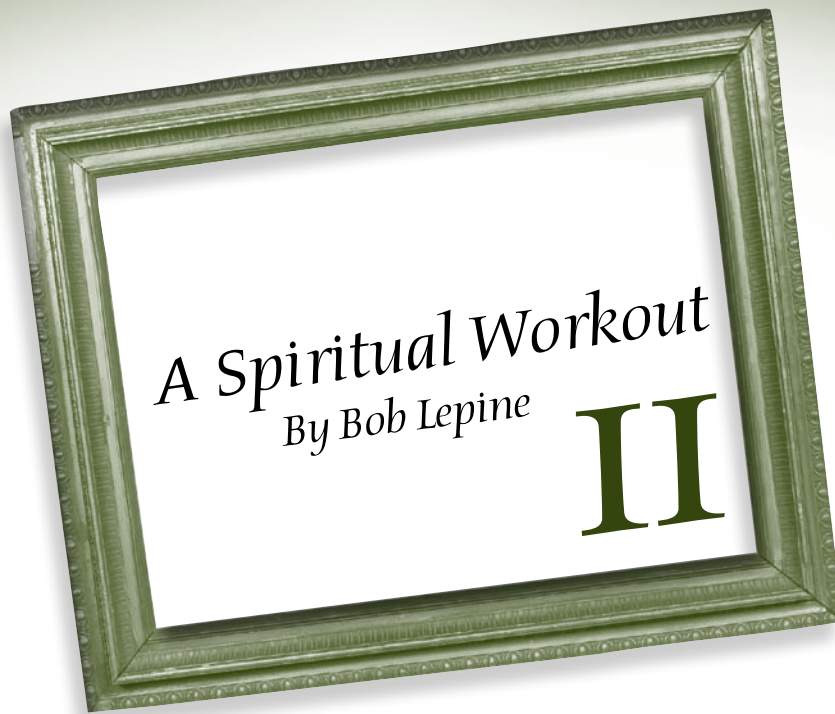
As a church planter wife, you need someone in addition to your husband to meet your emotional needs. Start praying now for that special woman. Let God surprise you with someone who will love you, pray for you, and be there for you when you need a listening ear. Allow her to mentor you and encourage you as you take this incredible journey with your husband. Starting a church is hard but rewarding work. Don't try to do it alone. Allow others to help you along the way. One day when you look back on all of your experiences, remember to thank the Lord for providing that dear friend for you.

The world may have thought that Thomas Wolfe had it right, but I believe that David had it right when he said, “A friend loves at all times.” Find that friend and watch the Lord bless you and your relationship.

*Marybeth Culbreth*

Marybeth Culbreth  
Cumming, Ga.





*Bob Lepine* is the co-host of the popular daily radio program, "FamilyLife Today" with Dennis Rainey. Bob is also the author of *The Christian Husband* (Regal Publishing, 1999) and *Helping Your Children Know God* (Group Publishing, 2004). He speaks on marriage and family at conferences and events worldwide. He serves on the Board of Directors for the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB).

Bob and his wife, Mary Ann, have been married since 1979 and have five children. They make their home in Little Rock, Arkansas.

How would you like nice, firm abs without having to do any exercise? Who wouldn't, right?

That's what the ad I read years ago promised. The amazing Ab Blaster 2000 would deliver washboard abs in just a few weeks with no crunches and no sweat. Actually, I have no idea what the name of the product was, but I remember the way the contraption was designed to work. All I had to do was attach the four electrodes to my mid section, turn on the machine, and let the mild electric shock cause my ab muscles to tighten and relax. "It's like doing 3000 sit ups an hour" the ad said. In no time, I would have a flat stomach and pretty girls would yearn for me. Just send \$99.99 (plus shipping and handling, of course), and the amazing Ab Blaster 2000 would be rushed to my door.

I am living proof today that there is no shortcut to rock hard abs. The fitness guys are right. If you want to be in shape, there is sweat in your future.

There is no shortcut to spiritual health either. If you're going to be ready for the challenges that come with church planting— while at the same time cultivating a strong marriage and a healthy, growing family—you're going to have to set aside time for “conditioning.” Church planting is not for the spiritually flabby!

A spiritually disciplined life is the key to personal fulfillment and fruitfulness in ministry. Just as a professional athlete has to work out to keep his or her body in shape for competition, a follower of Jesus has to set aside time for spiritual training. Without it, your spiritual muscles get flabby or atrophy. You get weak. The opposition turns up the heat, and before long, you can find yourself out of the game.

A few years ago, as my wife was approaching a milestone birthday (notice I'm not being too specific here), she decided that she would celebrate by doing something age-defying. Months before her birthday, she began training for a marathon. Mary Ann has always stayed fit, but in anticipation of the 26.2 mile run, her workout regimen took on a new level of discipline. On her calendar she plotted out the number of miles required each day, with the long runs scheduled on Saturdays. Everything else in her life didn't stop—as a wife and a mother of five children, it couldn't. But she knew if she was going to be ready for the race, her day had to include her training run. She had a goal, and the workouts had to be done each day.



Like a marathon, church planting can be both grueling and exhilarating. Without a workout plan to keep you in good shape spiritually, you will find yourself physically and emotionally challenged. Maintaining a healthy marriage and family takes work. And the extraordinary demands of ministry can be draining. Many church planting wives see no available margin, and as a result, the time for regular spiritual workouts is squeezed out by “more pressing” responsibilities. As a result, after months of neglecting their

own personal walk with God, church planting wives often find themselves dry, frustrated, burned out, and ready to throw in the towel on something—the church, their marriage and family, even their Christian faith.

I'm not going to recommend a specific spiritual workout plan for you. You're going to need to customize the plan that fits your personality and your schedule. What I will do is lay out four elements that ought to be part of your regular workout plan. Get your calendar, map out a strategy, and customize a routine to fit your lifestyle. Here's what to include:

*Time in God's Word.* This is the core of any workout plan. You need to schedule six 30-minute times in the Word each week. Choose from the following kinds of exercises you can do to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God:

- ✘ Bible reading
- ✘ Bible study

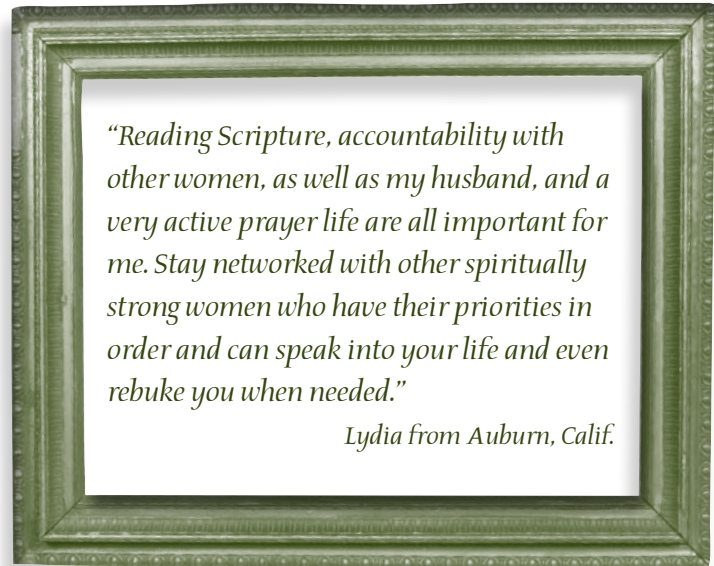
- ✧ Scripture memorization
- ✧ Listening to the Bible on CD
- ✧ Hearing God's Word preached, using CDs or downloaded sermons
- ✧ Time in regular Bible study with others
- ✧ Spending time reading books that help you better understand the Scriptures

You may find it's good to vary your workout. Instead of following a "read through the Bible in a year" plan, take a month and read the same four or five chapters over and over again three to five times a week. Listen to the same chapters on CD ten times in that same month. Find a book that deals with the same passages of Scripture, and read it at the same time. See if you can find online sermon transcripts or MP3 files you can download that address those passages. Find two or three friends who will agree to read the same chapters during the month, and plan a lunch together to talk about what you've learned. Make a photocopy of the passage you're reading, and keep the papers in your purse or in your car, so you can always read them or work on memorization when you have a few spare minutes during your day.

Time in the Word is essential. Just like situps or bench presses at the gym, there may be days when you just don't want to show up! But this is one spiritual discipline that cannot be ignored. There will be times when you may think that preparing for a small group lesson meets your daily requirement for interaction with God's Word. No. Dig into His Word for you—for your needs—then prepare for your study.

*Prayer.* Perhaps the greatest of all church planters, the Apostle Paul had a life fueled by prayer. When he instructed

the church at Ephesus on spiritual warfare, he concluded his instruction with the encouragement to pray "at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication" (Eph. 6:18, ESV). He told the believers in Thessalonica to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, ESV). He told Timothy that his desire was that men in every place would "pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (1 Tim. 2:8, ESV). Throughout his letters, he encouraged the churches he had planted by reminding them that he was praying for them, and he asked them to pray for him faithfully as he continued his own church planting efforts.



*Not making prayer a part of your regular spiritual workouts is like trying to run a cross-country race barefoot.*

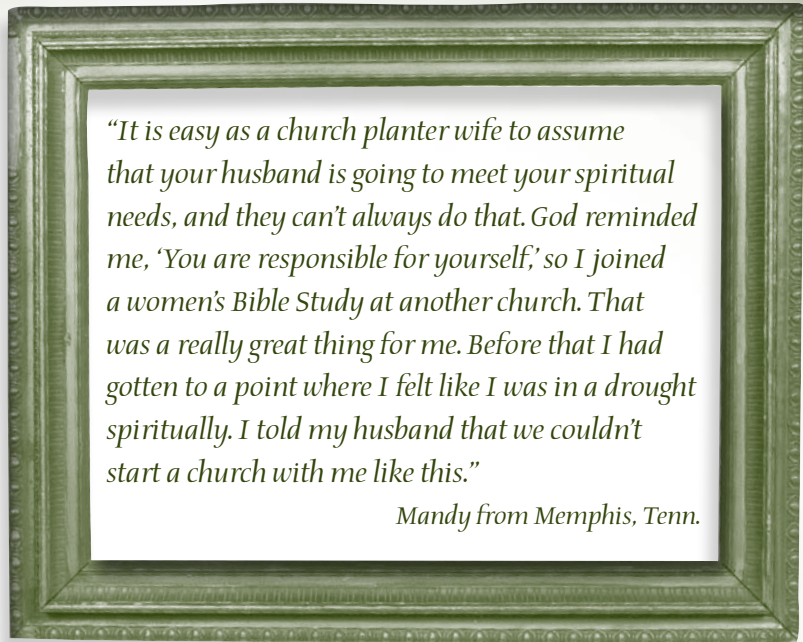
Your efforts in church planting will not succeed without prayer. The same is true for your marriage and your family. Not making prayer a part of your regular spiritual workouts is like trying to run a cross-country race barefoot.

Here are some suggestions for keeping the spiritual workout of prayer fresh.

- ✘ Pray the Scriptures. When you're not sure what to pray for, take a passage from the Bible—one of the Psalms or a passage from one of the epistles—and use that as the framework for your prayers. A helpful book of examples is Beth Moore's *Praying God's Word*. (B&H Publishing Group, 2000).
- ✘ Have a regular time to meet and pray with others. Strongly consider forming a prayer group with the wives of other church planters. Rather than sharing requests before you start to pray, have each person share a request, and then take time to pray for that person before you move onto someone else. That way, your prayer time doesn't turn into social time.
- ✘ Take a prayer walk. This was the regular practice of George Mueller who said that he recorded fifty thousand specific answers to prayer throughout his life—thirty thousand answered on the same day he prayed! Prayer walk your community, asking God to reveal Himself to you among the people He has called you and your family to reach with the gospel.
- ✘ Use the Lord's Prayer in Matt. 6:9-13 as your model for daily prayer. This prayer gives us an outline for how we ought to pray. Without an outline like this, we can too often move straight to our requests, without ever spending time in expressing thanksgiving, confessing sin, or extolling the greatness of God in our prayers.
- ✘ Keep a prayer journal. Use it to remind you of certain categories for prayer (praying for extended family members, for lost people, for missionaries, for government leaders, etc.). Journal what God is doing through your church plant, focusing on His provision and intervention into the lives of the unchurched. Journal what God is doing in your life as you and your husband plant your church. How is He shaping you? What is He teaching you? These will become valuable reminders of God's faithfulness in the future. And make sure to record answers to specific prayers.
- ✘ Form an intercessory prayer team. Your team could include your parents, an old friend from college, and an elderly lady from your sponsoring church, just to name a few. Communicate monthly with your intercessory prayer team, providing updates and requests for you personally, your family, and the church plant.

While you ought to have specific time set aside for prayer throughout the week, prayer should be part of your pattern of life, throughout your day. Train yourself to respond with a quick prayer any time you hear about the needs of another person. When you hear good news, respond by quickly thanking God for His blessing. If someone shares a prayer request, take time right then and there to pray with the person. In this way, the discipline of prayer becomes part of the fabric of your life.

*Rest.* For many of us, one of the hardest spiritual exercises we face is the discipline of rest. As your family plants the church you will find your days filled with endless activities and ever increasing demands. Slowing down, relaxing, and finding time to refresh our body and spirit can seem self indulgent or lazy. The truth is, without the discipline of rest, our effectiveness in ministry will be hindered.



Think for a minute about how God highlights our need for the discipline of rest. After

creating the world in six days, God rested. Was He tired? No. Did the God who never slumbers or sleeps need a day off? No. But God set up the pattern of a seven day week, with six days of work and a day of rest in creation so that we would make this part of the rhythm of our lives. And when God handed down the Ten Commandments to Moses, He included the command to have a weekly Sabbath as part of the law.

*One-third of church planter wives surveyed said that their husband doesn't take off even one day a week from ministry responsibilities.*


*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

The day of rest is a gift from God. Imagine an employer saying to an employee on a Friday afternoon, "I want you to take the next two weeks off, with pay," only to find the man at his desk the following Monday morning. Would the employer be pleased that the person is such a dedicated employee? I don't think so. But many Americans don't use all their vacation time each year, and many employees don't know how to slow down when they do have a break. God, who knows our needs and who made us, has commanded us to make rest a part of our week.

Since Sunday is a work day for church planters, there must be another day of the week set aside for rest. But many of us will come to a day of rest and think, "What do I do?" Here are some suggestions.

- ✕ Sleep. Most of us don't get the seven to eight hours of sleep each night that we need. Science has shown that we can actually refill our sleep tank with a longer than normal night of sleep or a nap. Rest your body.





*“If I want to show the love of Christ to my family, don’t I need to set aside some time to be with Christ and soak in His love so I can then share that love? If I am running around saying yes to all kinds of other things and pouring myself out for other people, I could easily end up depleted. How will I share the love of God with my family if my heart is depleted?”*

*I wouldn’t intentionally give strangers my best self and my family the leftovers, but if I’m not careful, that can happen.*

*Sometimes the best thing you can do for your kids is to say no to the needs of others, set aside some time to be alone with God, and pace yourself so that your family gets your best.*

*On the other hand, sometimes saying yes to outside interests, whether they are employment, ministry, or just a friendship that feeds your soul, can give you energy and renewal that will help you be a better mom.*

*The key is listening and paying attention. Before saying yes or no to anything, ask yourself whether it will help or hinder your mission.”*

*Keri Wyatt Kent, Breathe: Creating Space for God in a Hectic Life  
(Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2005), p.159.*

- ⌘ Read. You know the pile of books that you just don't have time to read? Your day of rest can be a day when you find that time. One couple I know takes their weekly Sabbath on Mondays, has a baby sitter lined up for each Monday at lunch time, and takes three hours to get lunch, coffee, and to read aloud to each other in the big stuffed chairs at the Barnes and Noble.
- ⌘ Write. Journal. Write letters to friends. Update your blog or MySpace page (or start one). Write letters to your children that you will give them when they get married. Start working on the book you've always wanted to write. Don't use the time fulfilling assignments or tasks, but use it as a break from the regular routine.
- ⌘ Be still. One thing a day of rest should provide for us is a regular reminder that God is the One in control of the world, not us. We can take a day and cease striving, and He will not only bless us with refreshment and renewal, He will get along fine without our assistance!

Recently, I spent time with a pastor and his wife. This man had been living life at full speed for years with no rest during his week and no extended periods of rest throughout the year. It all caught up with him in 2006 when he was hospitalized and diagnosed with clinical depression. He described the experience as a period where he was consumed by feelings of despair, hopelessness and pain. Life came to a screeching halt for him for the next five months as he had to nurse his body and spirit back to physical and emotional health.

The whole experience had taken him completely by surprise. "I never knew you could get depressed by doing too much of something you love," he said. Today, he is back in full-time ministry. But full-time looks very different today than it did

*More than half of church planter wives surveyed admitted that they do not regularly take family vacations.*

*Church Planter Wives  
Research Project 2007*

*Many church planting wives long for the opportunity to have relationships with other women where they can just be themselves.*

before his hospitalization. He says he is very careful to keep margin in his schedule and to force himself to rest. He does not want to ever again find himself in the valley of the shadow where he lived for those five months.

Make the rhythm of rest a part of the regular cycle of your life.

**Community.** One of the things that will drain the energy and excitement out of the task of church planting is for a couple or a family to become isolated. We were created for relationships, and when we find ourselves cut off from the support, encouragement and friendship of others, we wither.

But as church planters, spending time in fellowship with others is often part of the job. Practicing hospitality and spending time with people in your church can be draining instead of being life-giving, especially when the people with whom you're spending time see you as a pastor and his wife instead of knowing you as people and as friends. You find yourself playing a part and doing your job instead of relaxing and being real.

As a result, many church planting wives long for the opportunity to have relationships with other women where they can just be themselves and be transparent about marriage issues, parenting challenges, or life struggles. But having that kind of a relationship with other women in the church doesn't often work. You need to develop a network of friendships with a handful of women you can "do life" with. Here are some suggestions.

- ⌘ Initiate relationships. You may be able to cultivate real community with other couples who have the potential for leadership. If you're part of a church planting team, the other couples on the team are an obvious first choice for this kind of relationship. If it's just you and your husband, you should work to identify lay couples who seem to share your heart and passion for the church and for ministry and initiate time with them. Or you might contact a group of planters' wives in your area and invite them over for lunch one day. (For help identifying planter wives in your area, connect with your state convention or e-mail [PlanterWives@namb.net](mailto:PlanterWives@namb.net).) The point is, you need to take the initiative to begin developing relationships with other women where you can be transparent and honest with each other.
- ⌘ Establish an environment of trust. The advertising campaign for Las Vegas needs to apply to your network of relationships: "What happens here, stays here." In other words, everyone needs to understand that there is freedom to share whatever is on your heart without any concern that others outside the group will somehow hear about it. You need relationships with other women where it's safe to be yourself.
- ⌘ Find mentors. Undoubtedly you have observed older women who have been models of grace and godliness. Approach one of these women and ask if you can fix lunch for her once a month, in exchange for conversation. Don't ask her to be your mentor—that may seem intimidating to her. But use the lunchtime opportunities to pick her brain on questions related to marriage, family, spiritual growth—all areas of life. Consider doing the same with the wife of a seasoned church planter.
- ⌘ Tap into a virtual network. Thanks to the internet, there are opportunities for online interaction with church planting wives in other cities. See about establishing a virtual network for small group interaction.

Isolation leads to frustration, bitterness, depression and anger. Having a community of women who can help you share the burdens of life will bring strength and joy to your life as you plant a church.

These four spiritual disciplines—time in God's Word, prayer, rest and community—are the essential ingredients of a healthy spiritual life. Without them, you will be vulnerable to attacks from Satan (who is committed to thwarting your efforts). You will find yourself dry and empty. You will be trying to do spiritual work in your own power and strength, and that is a sure formula for failure. But if you keep up with a regular regimen of workouts in these four key areas, you will find your strength renewed. The burdens of church planting will be lighter.

*For information on how to  
create a virtual network, see  
[www.SBCnetworksites.com](http://www.SBCnetworksites.com)*

## *Spiritual Starvation... From Someone Who's Been There*

Dear future church planter wife,

One of the struggles I have encountered as a church planter wife is spiritual starvation. As a church planter wife and mother of two young sons, it sometimes seems impossible to find quiet time to sit down, read the Word of God, and pray. I have had to discipline myself to set aside time each day to spend with God. However, quiet time is not the only area of my spiritual life that has been on the thin side at times.

As the wife of a church planter you are very involved in various aspects of the plant. You are not only partnering with your husband, but most likely other responsibilities will fall to you as well. In the beginning I was the only one who worked with the children in our church, so I NEVER was in the worship service. (Even now I am only in the service about once a month.) I was not being fed spiritually at all! To remedy this starvation, I started downloading messages and listening to them while I was cleaning the house or out on a walk. It was so refreshing to hear the Word of God being taught.

My quiet time with God is still a work in progress. I have set aside time in the afternoon after I put the boys down for their naps to spend reading the Bible and praying. My husband and I have just started studying the Bible together as well. After the boys go to bed, before the TV comes on, e-mails are sent, or calls are returned, we read God's Word, discuss it, and then pray together. We have both grown spiritually as a result of our time together in God's Word.

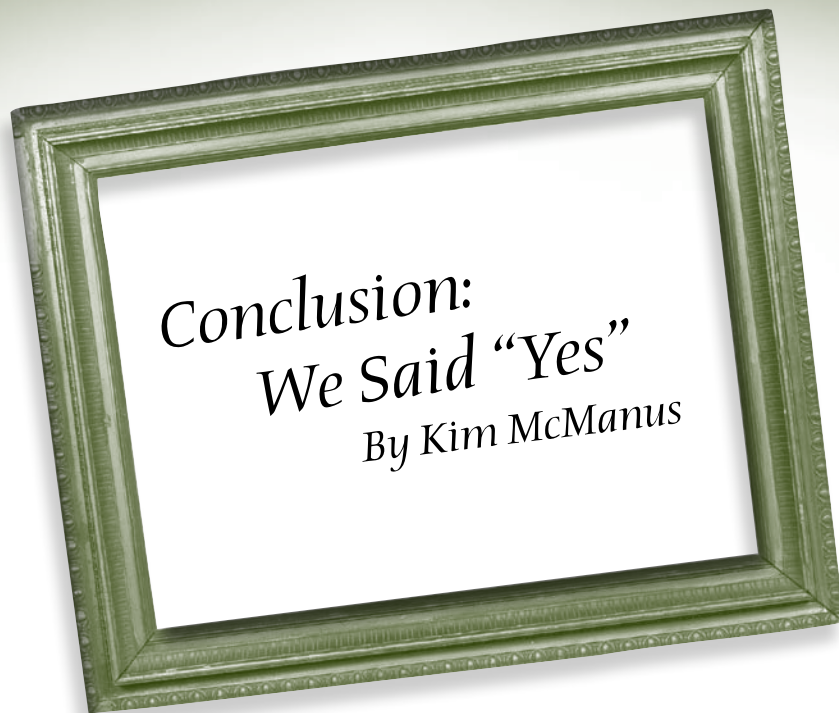
Having a strong spiritual walk with the Lord is important when you are working to increase His Kingdom. I always notice that when I am slipping in my time with Him, my faith is small and I doubt whether or not church planting is what we should be doing. But, when I am spending time with Him on a consistent basis, my faith is increased and I am confident that He will help us through this time in our lives. Even though it may be a struggle to maintain a healthy spiritual diet during the early stages of church planting, it is not impossible, and it is vital.

Sincerely,

*Christa Goldsmith*

Christa Goldsmith  
Sebastian, Fla.  
Coastal Community Church





Conclusion:  
We Said “Yes”  
By Kim McManus



*Kim McManus* is married to Erwin, author, speaker, lead pastor and cultural architect of Mosaic, a uniquely innovative and diverse congregation based in Los Angeles. Erwin and Kim have two children, Aaron and Mariah, and a foster daughter Paty. At Mosaic, Kim leads SHE Community—a force of women at Mosaic who desire to voice a message of faith, hope, and love to Los Angeles and to all women on this planet. They are passionate about Jesus Christ and His transformation of lives. They offer Bible focus, mentoring, connection events, Mom2Mom Talks, service projects, and more to empower women to a closer relationship with God and connection with other women so they can then serve others.

So we said “yes.” Erwin and I agreed to go. I sat at the top of the stairs in my beautiful home outside of Dallas, Texas with its vaulted ceilings and windows that touched the heavens. I stared at the 100 boxes that contained the sum of my life. I was pregnant. It was a classic scenario for chaos. I wept but could not identify where the tears were coming from. What generated the sadness I felt? I sat there until I understood.

I knew it could not be from the calling. *The calling was not exclusive to Erwin, but it was mine as well.*

Equally mine.

God gave us Luke 14, different verses, but nevertheless the call was brilliantly the voice of God loud in my heart. My call was to a grand party. It was God who knew He could get me anywhere with the prospects of delicious food. I would go gladly but the tears were not of joy. I had been in transition for what was becoming a full year.

*TRANSITION:* That time between home and the great UNKNOWN. All that space in between is fuzzy and furious. The whole of my world was completely shifted in the moment of “yes.”

“Yes...” How could we say “no” any longer when the adventure of our future, our passions, and our loves had all lined up with the will of a God who had constructed a highway leading west to Los Angeles. Nothing would ever be the same again. Thank God.

Our transition included this new Mariah baby born as the most beautiful part of the journey began. Paty, who was now finishing high school, had lived with us for three years and made us instant parents to a teenager one month before having our first baby, Aaron. Erwin finished his Dallas job and now there was a new job waiting in LA with no salary. That was it. The sadness was in the knowledge that I would now go back to poor. The poor place was too familiar to me as a child. I did not want a life without resources, yet I heard God say, “Come to the table,” and to His table I would go. Those verses were not describing want. They were a portrait of provision—that I would go, God would be there, His table would be set and prepared, and I would enjoy His plenty. I quit seeing my need and we flew out of Dallas with the fullness of knowing God would fill in all the spaces with Himself.

Now I am looking at this new century and our Mariah is 15. Our son is now in college and our Paty is serving in Indonesia as a missionary with her husband, Steve, and two kids. How in the world did we get here?

So far down the starting of the road and so quickly. What beautiful years they have been...my life.

I am young in my belief that God can take a “yes” heart and do the impossible. Can you believe that God is completely invested in you and what He has called you to?

If “he” is your husband and “you” are you and “it” is church planting, here are my questions.

Can he do it alone? *No.*

Do you want to do it, really? *No, yes, no, yes. YES! Or NO!*

Can you stop him? *Yes.* Can you make him miserable? *Yes.*

Can your marriage thrive? *Big yes.*

Can you plant this church and love it? *Yes.*

Can you move away from security and even safety? *Yes.*

Are you stronger than you think? *Yes.*

Are you strong enough to burn the bridges back to home? *Yes.*

Are you scared? *I was.*

Is it wild and unknown? *Yes.*

Can you live with the discomfort and inconvenience of a whole new life? *Absolutely.*

Can you move at the speed of light? *Yes.....with naps.*

Can you be way out front—the place where in Matthew 11:12 (NIV) it says that “The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it”? You are one of those who are on the frontlines watching the

miracles, the birth, the battle all happening right in front of you. You get to be on the first row and the screen is full HD 3-D real life. This is absolutely exciting—that our God would call your name from heaven and ask you to assist Him with a new work in a new land. How big is that? It is the heart of the New Testament. God wants the world. You are the plan. Maybe hard and overwhelming but you are the plan. Can you do it? Without a doubt.

Nobody is asking for you to morph into some superhumanoidbionicwondercreature. Relax. Be the very woman you are in all your glory. Stay in your skin and operate from that place. The worst thing for the church is for you to fake being a supermodel church planter wife of the year. There is no such thing. You make the image. If you are having fun, people around you will have fun. That's how it works. If you know who you are, women will follow you, and they will also have the freedom to be who they are. This life is completely too brief to waste trying to convince people you are exactly like them in every way. Be true to yourself—to your best, most selfless self.

### *My Front Door*

*My front door is open.* In Los Angeles it stays open most of the time. Not because the weather is so lovely, but mostly because I remember my days in North Carolina—the farm and the mountains. And the door was always open. I want to have an open life, and this philosophy has aided me a thousand times in ministry. An open life says “come in.” I meet so many women who are closed and locked down with no easy access at all. It is impossible to get an honestly revealing conversation out of them. I know why. It takes one big, bad church conflict to close the heart door shut. I fight to stay “easy access” even right now. I have found greater honesty in others when I stay open-hearted. It is profoundly difficult each time someone who I have loved, welcomed, and trusted disappoints me. That is the ugly side of the front lines. You will not believe what you can see in people that is so contrary to the teachings of our Heavenly Father.

*I don't try to hide myself.* I know God put me together and that is what I share. It comes out true and real or that is my deepest desire—that at the end I stayed honest. If my front door is open, I want my hands open as well. Poverty was always what I wore, and it was my identity. So to move to generosity is a miracle and comes from a place of being completely drenched in the love of God. Proverbs 18:16 (NIV), says that “a gift opens the way.” That's what we are trying to do. . . make a way in. The gifts to be given are everywhere and all over the place. If you have time, give it. If your gift is a peanut butter sandwich, give it. Let people in your home and let them hear you laugh and be ridiculous. Let them help you cook and clean up and see you serve and learn to serve. Let them see you as real and in that reality see you work out your relationship with your husband and your God. They will see it and be amazed.

Stay open by taking people with you as you drive around town, pick up the kids, go to the bank. Stay open by taking people with you as you do ministry. I am always wanting to be replaced. I always want to train someone in the natural context of everyday life to do what I am doing. It's where your values are communicated and grasped best. I love traveling with other women so we can experience what God is doing together. Your open door allows women to do ministry together because no one likes doing anything with great purpose alone.

Let your front door stay wide open and love wildly. It is my belief that all people are desperate to be loved and valued. If it is in your power to do, then do just that. If God brings a woman into your life to love, do it.



*Hard things can be said when love is the motivation and it is served up with a beautiful dose of authenticity.* Your mess of a life, your message, is meant for someone else's healing. You get to change lives as you love the life you are in. What a privilege. And even when your love is rejected or ignored or not received, you get to hang on to the big purpose of God. Remember, you are doing the hard work and hard hurting because of His anointing and calling on your life.

That same principle of being generous applies in the church and in the home. Love wildly the man you married and stay open and totally truthful with him. Proverbs 24:26 says that honesty is like a kiss on the lips. Women love honesty, and they love being kissed.

### *Thinking*

In the first years of ministry while serving downtown in the poorest neighborhood of South Dallas, I found myself with some stupid, illogical, self-defeating beliefs. *Ridiculously, I believed that I was the best person for the job* no matter what the ministry position. I accepted the idea that I was at church to do everything and be anything that was needed. If it was teaching, I was the only capable teacher. Where did this come from? *I also believed I was irreplaceable.* When I finally realized that I was in the way of raising up teachers, I stopped teaching. When I finally realized I was replaceable, I let another woman take my place. It was a beautiful learning moment. The kingdom of God is forcefully advancing, and it means I have to move out of the way and allow others to lead freely. I do not have to do it all. I operate from two beliefs now. *I am to obey God as I hear His voice and do what He is calling me to do in the church.*

*And I am to serve out of my giftings and strengths.* I found my gifts through the Scriptures, identifying how I am wired, what I get excited about, where my passions lie, and even those things that make me truly happy. There are things I do with all my heart without trying and can be completely and perfectly exhausted and truly satisfied. Those things I love to do and could do all day. I found my strengths through the StrengthFinders Profile<sup>1</sup> and a book entitled, *Living your Strengths.*<sup>2</sup> (Want help in understanding just who you are? Go get that book.) I could then begin to be specific in what I was wired to do. At the beginning in any church plant, you end up doing many things you are neither called nor gifted to do. You do them because they must be done, and there is no one else. Move to the place where you can serve out of your talents and strengths. Everybody will have a place, and the best way for them to find their place is for you to have found yours.

The illogical, self-defeating belief systems that became me also involved *my misperception that I had to please every single human being on the planet.* By the time we left south Dallas, I was exhausted from all the effort it took to make people happy. I had to let go because all the pleasing mania stopped me from speaking truth. It was the little girl inside me who wanted acceptance and approval, and nobody was served or helped in the midst of trying to get people to love me. Few got the "Everybody love Kim" message.

*Through the lack of success and utter exhaustion of the work required to be accepted, popularity moved out of the top ten on my ministry goals, and I had to become comfortable with the love of fewer people.*

The fourth and *most embarrassing illogical belief system that I embraced was the conviction that my husband would be “The Everything I Need Man.”* He was most excellently equipped to supply all my needs and was responsible for making me happy each day of my life. I was disappointed when my expectations were not met. Once I realized the elephant I had asked him to carry was killing our relationship and hurting everything we loved together, I grew up a bit and took my load back. I create the beauty and joy in my personal space, my workplace, my home and in the sanctuary of my relationship with my husband. I get to choose if our relationship will be based on our circumstances or my ability to be creative with our challenges. Daily I choose, and with those choices comes wisdom in knowing a home is better suited for creativity than chaos. Understand that you are one powerful creature whose joy is generative and completely contagious. My joy serves my family in invisible ways and creates the sanctuary I so longed for as a child and have given as a gift to my children. This joy is a prescription of health for my husband and our marriage. My husband is not overwhelmed when he sees me overjoyed. It doesn't work everyday, but it works out most days.

### *Here's to all the FIRSTS*

*Here's to the first Sunday* when everyone is together in one historical service. The hard work, the sacrifice, the love and the teamwork is beautiful to behold. Nothing is comparable to that first Sunday of the birth of a new church. It is the compilation of dreaming and the movement of the Spirit of God that is glorious to experience. It makes that solo guitar sound orchestral. All resources and hearts have been pooled to this one experience of faith and hope, God and future. Wow. Drink it in because not all Sundays will be like the first, but let that special one set the standard of excellence for all the rest. Being on a team, one that works and is ready to risk everything, is luxurious. I love every minute of a team that serves together because their core is the same. That's what I want from my marriage and my ministry.

*Here's to the first time you have to say good-bye.* I find myself ripped open when someone leaves the church. It is as though they left me personally. “They must not like us anymore,” is the swirling thought in my head. I had to learn some lessons of church and relationships. *Not all the people that you start with will stay to the end.* That was a disconcerting idea to me since I believed myself to be a lifer—leave-when-you-die kind of person. “Where is loyalty? Where is perseverance?” Those are my questions and most people are not asking my questions. “Hey, where are you going?” Because I am restorative by nature, I wanted to have full closure on the relationships before they were allowed to leave, which in each instance proved to be a difficult and heart-wrenching task. Now I understand that people leave not because of doctrinal issues, the lack of facilities, or the preaching, but almost always due to relationships. They do not feel loved or valued enough. I will never fill those relationship needs for everyone, so I must learn to be at ease with what God is doing in the world and with people. Learn to let people leave with grace and not with bitterness or resentment.

*Here's to the first church conflict.* Yes, it is inevitable and much depends on your husband as to the magnitude. If he hates conflict, he might avoid it and thus it will grow. If he seeks approval and harmony, he might choose to defer to the principal player. Ouch. Nevertheless, some conflict will happen as long as we are working with humans. It inevitably will find its way into the holy sanctuary of our home. It is there that the black cloud of sadness and disbelief rule every conversation.

For Erwin and I, the first real conflict involved a fellow staff person and friend. Erwin had loved the idea that someone else would sacrifice everything to be in the inner city of Dallas. He loved this guy for his devotion until the red flags started flying and all the questions swirled in the air. We would sit in our home in the dark having no clue how to deal with the issues that were escalating and how to rescue the relationship and not destroy the church. Erwin always erred on the side of relationship and was always hurt. We lost the friendship, the staff person, the dreams, and the truth. *We learned that Erwin was right in hiding nothing to save face or church reputation. He was wrong in not dealing with it quickly.* Conflict is a good thermometer for health, and the church and our relationship grew stronger through it. I have learned the most and best lessons in the middle of the ugliest ministry moments.

*I have learned that nothing can change God's will for my life,* not one angry person or his personal agenda or a failed project or lack of finances—nothing is that powerful. God's purpose for me is indestructible. In the stinkiness, I have learned that *there is a big picture that I must consistently be aware of.* There is a tendency in small moments to give into the idea that this is all about me. My pain, my friendships, my needs. In reality, in each case there was a serious spiritual war being waged against us—most often happening simultaneously with major breakthroughs in the city or in the church. Now I am aware of the atmosphere of spiritual warfare and try to prepare myself for what will surely break loose. Your family needs you to be sensitive and ready spiritually during times when God's Spirit is working dramatically. Keeping a big-picture mindset is helpful in not taking the conflict personally.

*I have learned that I must be my husband's greatest advocate.* No one must question my loyalty to him. I first understood why this would be an essential tool in our marriage when I was positioned to stand against him by one of his family members. Repeatedly, I was called upon to take a stand with the family member against him and from that moment on, I decided that Erwin would know that I would always be for him. Mine was the first face he would see when he was looking up from the pit. I would pull him out. During other challenges in church, I planted myself firmly beside him and stood as his biggest fan, even in the bewildering maze of church life.

*Here's to the first weather report.* It is true that you and I control the climate in our homes. We say we have little power, but I find all over the world that women create the weather in their homes. I experienced a major revelation when I understood that Saturday nights and Sunday mornings were the most vulnerable times for our home. Even after 24 years of marriage, strange things still happen on Saturdays that try to affect the message and messenger on Sunday. I had to be careful with what I said or did on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The atmosphere seemed to be prime for a big fight early on Sunday morning. Inevitably one or both of us would storm off to church just to fake our love when we arrived. One Sunday, Erwin used the not-yet-resolved conflict as an illustration in one of his messages. Everyone looked at me to see my reaction. I decided that morning to be absolutely honest in my expression of disapproval. After the long blank stare toward the pulpit, the message continued. I failed US miserably that day. The goal was to hurt and embarrass, and there is no nobility in that cause. *Keeping watch over my emotions and reactions is key to being sensitive spiritually.*

We have had to train our children to look for the signs of evil trying to invade our home and teach them that we must pray instead of react. Attack the problem instead of each other. In other arenas, I have had to keep watch over the arsenal called my mouth. When Erwin was late, I used to write a script in my head and then would use it to devastate him when he returned home. I knew what hurt him and had to reverse the destructive patterns I learned early in our relationship. There were seasons of true melancholy where I relied on Erwin to create happiness for me. The lack of fulfillment in the early parenting years of our marriage left me creating storms and blistering winds. I needed to grow up. I can make torrential storms or tropical breezes. *Most people work better with tropical breezes. Our marriage does and I can give that to him. You can give that to your marriage.*

Tropical breezes create a climate that represents a calm spirit in the chaos of the schedules.

It is having the control to stop a conflict before it becomes volcanic.

It is being invested enough in the marriage to listen to what he is not saying but is desperate to communicate.

I want four things from Erwin as I look deeply into my heart. I wonder if it is not a universal list because I hear it so often among those of us who are deeply committed to our marriages or those who desperately want a husband to commit to.

1. I want to know that he will stay to the end. Not the end of the marriage, as though I was expecting that it could go either way. No, I want him to stay until the end of our lives.
2. I want to know that his whole heart is in this marriage—that I have his heart.
3. I want him to know that I am safe. He can trust me. I want his trust in return.
4. I want him to choose me. Not in the sea of other women, but in the ocean of other choices that he has. I just want to be chosen by him in the midst of the reality that most days I have little of his time and attention. With an unexpected compliment, a complete stop and look in the eyes, and the words “I love you”—in those moments I am satisfied.

*As church planters, agree up front that there are non-negotiables in your marriage. List what they are and be careful to make them a boundary that you both protect. Learn to guard your affections, and let them be directed only towards him with the full knowledge that none of us are exempt from temptations that attempt to rob our love.*

There have been four questions I have had to answer in our ministry-focused marriage:

1. *Who do I listen to?* A painful statement was made by one of our parents, “Well, Erwin, maybe someday you will get a real church.” Of all the committee members who have taken up residency in my head over the years, I have to decide who will have power. What statements get to stick in my heart? What words are allowed power? I now ask of things that come to us in comments or blogs or conversations, “Will I let that in my heart?” I have to decide each time. I have decided that the voice of my husband is the sexiest, most beautiful one in the world. However, his will never take the place of the voice of God in my life. I will die when I stop hearing His voice. I have found it to be the center of my existence. I trust the voice of God in my life, and I am convinced He wants my victory. Psalm 36:6-8 (NIV) says, “O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, you give them drink from your river of delights.”

While in Zambia, we visited Victoria Falls, the largest waterfall in the world. From the helicopter, it was massive but distant. Not until I walked up to it and went face to face with the falls did I understand its power. I was drenched from its spray. That is God—He is excessive in His love toward us. We are drenched.

I can be overwhelmed by everything else called ministry, but I choose to be overwhelmed by the unfailing love of God.

2. *Where is the sanctuary?* For us, the sanctuary is our home and specifically our bedroom. The sign beside the bed reads “Sanctuary. Come away to a secret place and rest for a while.” I guard that place from thieves and intruders. The thieves are those things that rob the purity of our sanctuary. When I was a child, my father would take me to the spring house. The spring house was a small structure that guarded the precious water source that flowed from the mountain. On the hottest of North Carolina’s summers I would beg to jump in its cold waters and was quickly reprimanded and warned to maintain its purity. I think of that spring when I am reminded that Satan desires to steal, kill and destroy the love that we have. We have to keep that protected. The intruders became the church. Our conversations before sleep would flow in one direction, “What was so and so doing and saying or being?” One night I yelled, “Will everyone from the church get out of our bed!” It was a call for change. We limit those weighty conversations to other times of the day.
3. *What do I do with the loneliness?* Much of the time, I found myself by myself. What was I becoming? Some days the answer was a bitter, miserable old lady. I had to change that. *The loneliness issue is real. What we do with it is a choice.* An absent husband is not tolerable for very long. Erwin has never been absent. He is there in some form. We have had to make the sacrifice of paying large telephone bills for the sake of communication.

We always stay connected no matter where in the world he is, if at all possible. When there is loneliness due to negligence in the relationship, that has to be dealt with immediately. When the kids do not have time with their dad, that has to be addressed also. When there is no intimacy due to him being away, he needs to show up more. For us, we had to find our livable space. What can we live with happily? There were seasons when the children would be out of control, and he had to adjust his schedule. There were times when I felt this overwhelming sense of needing him. He would adjust his schedule. Expecting a 9-to-5 family? *Many nights are given to ministry, so we have to have family time during the day. We would steal away and make it happen.*

It is okay to reinvent what a happy family looks like. It will not look like the “others.” I am independent so I plan my projects when my husband is gone. I try to maximize the time and space. It works.

I am honest with myself when I cannot take it anymore. I usually let him know when I have reached my limit. Sometimes we can make changes, and other times we have to breathe and deal with it. I am very involved, so I have friends and stay connected with people.

4. *When do you end and where do we begin?* This whole thing can focus on him and his talents and his leadership style and his life goals. You can get lost. I know there have been issues that I have had to deal with concerning my own identity because of living with such a looming personality. After finishing a sermon series entitled “Romance Unwrapped” at Mosaic, I asked my husband, “Where do we begin?” Is there anything that we have that is distinctively ours? No one else is privileged to be included. It was a simple statement, but it weighs on me as our children are getting older. Knowing who we are, I want something uniquely us. We have seen the world together and that is part of who we are, but there are missing elements. The challenge and excitement in the years to come is discovering what those parts are that keep identifying who we are together. Not losing US is the scariest part of our journey.

The excitement comes in the experiments that we share in finding the US...me and him. What a great adventure. I wish you many passionate days and nights in finding how ministry and marriage melt together.

May your days be filled with the tropical breezes, the word “yes,” romance, imagination, and supportive love. Be a storm of love all of your precious days on earth and do it with all your heart.

*Kim McManus*

Kim McManus

<sup>1</sup>Gallup's Clifton StrengthsFinder Profile. For more information see

<https://www.strengthsfinder.com/> and [http://gmj.gallup.com/book\\_center/strengthsfinder/default.aspx](http://gmj.gallup.com/book_center/strengthsfinder/default.aspx).

<sup>2</sup>Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton, and Curt Liesveld, *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Gallup Press, 2004).







## *How Do I Understand My Personality Profile?*

A personality profile is a way of categorizing people with similar characteristics into groups. These characteristics cause individuals to think and act in certain ways. An individual's profile is compiled by reviewing past beliefs, values, attitudes, actions, and behaviors. Looking at an individual's past thinking and behavior generally indicates that an individual will behave in similar patterns (ways) in the future.

For centuries people have studied personality and its impact on behavior. The first person credited with classifying personality types was Hippocrates, around 370 B.C. He categorized four personality temperaments according to bodily fluids. He called them choleric, melancholy, phlegmatic, and sanguine. His theory of bodily fluids determining behavior has been discredited, but the terminology has remained in classifying personality. During the 1900s, dozens of names have been used to describe the four basic personality types that Hippocrates developed hundreds of years ago.

In the 1920s and 30s, William Marston, a professor at Columbia University, developed the "DISC" model of human behavior to describe personality types. This model, like Hippocrates', was built around four personality types. There have been many adaptations of the "DISC" model since Marston's original work. What is presented in this appendix from PLACE Ministries of Alpharetta, Ga.,<sup>1</sup> is a simplified version of the original "DISC" model.

Everyone will have some characteristics from all four categories, but generally one or two categories will emerge as primary and secondary within a profile. There are no good or bad personality profiles. It is how we use our personality that makes it positive or negative. There are strengths and growth areas within each blend of the personality profiles. By understanding ourselves, we can maximize our strengths and minimize our weaknesses. Also, we will be able to understand others better and improve our relationship with all kinds of people.

**KEY THOUGHTS:** Personality assessments do not account for the Holy Spirit living in and controlling a Christian's life. Also, they do not allow for emotional maturity, and skills that develop through training, and/or life experiences which all combine to teach us how to behave in situations.

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<sup>1</sup> This resource has been provided by PLACE Ministries of Alpharetta, Ga. Copyright © 2004 by Jay McSwain. Reprint 2007. All rights reserved. No portion of this Appendix may be reproduced in any form, except for brief quotations in reviews, without written permission from the publisher. All scripture references are quoted from the New International Version of the Holy Bible, unless otherwise noted.

## *Personality Assessment*

INSTRUCTIONS: Every person is unique because of the Personality they have. This assessment can help guide you in the process of identifying your Personality. Read each of the following sets of responses to the numbered statements. Circle the one that most often describes you. When more than one applies, circle the one that would best describe you in your home, church, school, or work environment.

Example:

1. When it comes to thinking...

- A. My keen mind knows what decisive actions to take.
- B. I'm never overloaded, and I doubt there's such a thing as too much!
- C. I know how to take someone else's idea and come up with concrete ways to put it to use.
- D. I always search all possibilities in order to get to the bottom of things.

Once you have chosen your best response to each question, please follow the instructions on the scoring sheet at the end of the assessment.

1. When it comes to working on tasks...

- A. I know I need your help, but I prefer to operate independently.
- B. I love coming up with the ideas, but I prefer not to have to make it happen.
- C. I know I'm idealistic and theoretical. My perfectionism may drive you nuts or make you glad I'm on the team.
- D. My goal is to be as fair and inoffensive to others as possible.

2. The phrase I might repeat most often is...

- A. "I'll do it myself."
- B. "Why can't everyone get involved?"
- C. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right."
- D. "The more the merrier."

3. My favorite verse from Proverbs could be...

- A. 17:22: "Being cheerful keeps you healthy."
- B. 27:12: "A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them..."
- C. 15:4: "Gentle words cause life and health..."
- D. 11:14: "Without wise leadership, a nation is in trouble..."

4. It makes my day...

- A. To know that I kept my cool when others were losing theirs.
- B. To win. I just love beating the competition.
- C. To make someone laugh, or to have someone appreciate my story.
- D. To have everything in perfect order.

5. I absolutely hate...

- A. Not being able to effect changes.
- B. Feeling like I need to be “up” all the time.
- C. Being pushed.
- D. Being alone or not being able to talk.

6. In my overall attitude, I am more...

- A. Unemotional and action-oriented than most.
- B. Introverted and reflective than most.
- C. Low-key and accepting than most.
- D. Extroverted and optimistic than most.

7. Of course...

- A. They must be upset with me—they passed me at church this morning and didn’t even speak!
- B. I would never get impatient if others would just do what I told them to do when I told them to do it!
- C. I am excited. This is just how excited looks on me.
- D. It’s not a lie! Well, maybe just a teeny bit of an exaggeration!

8. When it comes to working on tasks...

- A. I create lots of energy and excitement, even on the boring tasks.
- B. I tend to know the best way to accomplish things and don’t hesitate to tell others how to do it.
- C. I often get so bogged down in the details that I can get frustrated and indifferent about the project.
- D. I usually sense how to do things, but am hesitant about sharing my ideas.

9. My fantasy job would be...

- A. Any job where I’m president or CEO.
- B. Renting myself out as the “perfect party guest.”
- C. A mediator or counselor.
- D. One that requires bringing organization and structure to a group.

10. Two weaknesses I have are...

- A. Lack of follow-through and over-committing.
- B. Being moody and pessimistic.
- C. Being overbearing and pushy.
- D. Lack of organization and discipline.

11. At work...

- A. I often set the standards too high for myself and others.
- B. I'm easily distracted, and find it difficult to prioritize.
- C. I often lack motivation and find it difficult to set goals.
- D. I tend to be a workaholic, and get bored easily with details.

12. A hallmark I'm known for is my...

- A. Inability to accept change quickly.
- B. Adventurous spirit and willingness to take more risks than the average person.
- C. Deep thinking and cautiousness before making a decision.
- D. Animation and storytelling.

13. One thing you should know about me is...

- A. I'm warm, engaging, and fun to be around.
- B. At times I can be too forceful in trying to get something done.
- C. If I tell you I will do something, you can rest assured I'll do it!
- D. As much as I love making new friends, I often need the other person to make the first move.

14. If you watch me in a crowded situation, you'll probably see me standing...

- A. Wherever I'm told to stand.
- B. Alone, or moving the crowd over to where I am.
- C. On the fringes, just outside of the action.
- D. In the center of the crowd.

15. As a friend...

- A. I'm usually popular, but might dominate conversations.
- B. I have many casual relationships, and might tend to use people.
- C. I'm fairly loyal, and may seem insecure socially.
- D. I have deep relationships and struggle making new friends.

16. As far as my leadership of people...

- A. I enjoy being part of a team and making sure no one gets their feelings hurt.
- B. I prefer to loosen things up on the team- help people relax and have a good time.
- C. I thrive in leadership roles and am very independent and self-confident.
- D. I make a better follower than a leader, and actually prefer it that way.

17. The most common phrase I hear about myself is...

- A. "He/She is always thinking and planning."
- B. "He/She is just a blast to be around."
- C. "He/She is so patient and calm."
- D. "Don't worry, he/she will handle everything."

18. I really thrive on...

- A. Creating fun and excitement for others.
- B. Taking special care with the details and logistics.
- C. Leading others to a mutual goal.
- D. Harmony and absence of conflict.

19. My family, friends, and co-workers would likely describe me as being...

- A. Persuasive about things I believe in.
- B. Playful and spontaneous.
- C. Non-confrontational about issues.
- D. Persistent when I am sure about something.

20. People admire me most for..

- A. My warmth, enthusiasm, humor, and people skills.
- B. My deep concern and compassion, and for being cautious and economical.
- C. My staying calm, cool, and collected, and being happy and well-balanced.
- D. My strong-willed leadership, decisiveness, and being goal-oriented.

21. People probably like this about the way I communicate with them...

- A. I am direct and don't mind speaking the truth.
- B. I can listen well and give good counsel.
- C. I express my thoughts and opinions in a precise and detailed way.
- D. They love my stories, and when I am in a positive mood, it gives them a lift.

22. If someone tells me my idea can't be done...

- A. I just can't wait to prove them wrong, and I proceed with even more determination.
- B. I get discouraged, and worry about all of the time I've wasted in planning.
- C. I'm usually glad, because it sounded like too much work anyway.
- D. I just thank them profusely and cheerfully quit.

23. When someone offends me, the first thought that might run through my head would be...

- A. I'm sure they didn't mean to do that to me ...
- B. Oh, it doesn't matter... really!
- C. They're not going to get away with that!
- D. Why do they keep doing that to me?

24. My philosophy about forgiveness is...

- A. "So ... what's there to forgive anyway?"
- B. "That was unforgivable..."
- C. "An eye for an eye."
- D. "Whatever ... don't worry about it."

## Personality Profile Scoring

### INSTRUCTIONS:

On the Personality Chart below, circle the letter you chose from the appropriate numbered question on the Personality Assessment. Add up the columns by counting how many times you circled a letter in that specific column. Transfer your totals to the graph below.

QUESTION	D	I	S	C
1	A	B	D	C
2	A	D	B	C
3	D	A	C	B
4	B	C	A	D
5	A	D	C	B
6	A	D	C	B
7	B	D	C	A
8	B	A	D	C
9	A	B	C	D
10	C	A	D	B
11	D	B	C	A
12	B	D	A	C
13	B	A	D	C
14	B	D	A	C
15	B	A	D	C
16	C	B	A	D
17	D	B	C	A
18	C	A	D	B
19	A	B	C	D
20	D	A	C	B
21	A	D	B	C
22	A	D	C	B
23	C	A	B	D
24	C	A	D	B
Totals				

Looking at the above table, insert your scores below.

D \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

S \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

Identify your highest score (or highest scores if the top two are close). In the following pages you will discover what it means to be a D, I, S, or C personality and what God says about each personality type.

*What does it mean to be a...?*

## *D Personality (Choleric) Driven*

- adventuresome
- aggressive
- arrogant
- authoritative
- blunt
- bold
- bossy
- brash
- career-driven
- confident
- controlling
- crafty
- decisive
- determined
- disciplined
- doer
- dominates a group
- domineering
- driven
- effective
- emphatic
- fast
- firm
- focused
- hard
- harsh
- hostile
- hot-tempered
- impatient
- impetuous
- impulsive
- initiating
- insensitive
- intense
- intuitive
- manipulative
- opportunist
- optimistic
- outgoing
- over-bearing
- persuasive
- practical
- productive
- quick
- restless
- self-confident
- self-disciplined
- self-sufficient
- single-minded
- short-tempered
- strong-willed
- task-oriented
- temperamental
- tenacious
- thick-skinned
- bull-headed
- unaffectionate
- unemotional



# *I Personality (Sanguine) Inspiring*

- bubbly
- carefree
- changeable
- charismatic
- charming
- childlike
- compassionate
- compromising
- conversation has a contagious quality that induces similar mood in hearers
- curious
- disorganized
- easily distracted
- easygoing
- emotional
- enjoys life
- enthusiastic
- exaggerates
- expressive
- extroverted
- eye for nature and art
- friendly
- impractical
- impulsive
- influencing
- insecure (masked by apparent self-confidence)
- insensitive
- inspiring
- lacks coherence in life because too “now” focused and too open to impressions
- lively
- loves being in the limelight
- natural magnetic grace
- optimistic
- outgoing
- people-centered
- persuasive
- popular
- positive
- responsive
- restless
- self-indulgent
- spontaneous
- superficial
- talkative
- tender
- undependable meeting deadlines
- undisciplined
- warm
- weak-willed

# S Personality (Phlegmatic) Steady

- avoids risk
- calm
- cautious
- compromising
- consistent
- cool-headed
- cooperative
- dependable
- desires security
- diplomatic
- easily influenced
- efficient
- encourager
- faithful
- fearful
- flexible
- follows rules
- free-spirited
- good-natured
- indecisive
- kind
- lacks confidence
- lacks drive
- loyal
- naive
- needs affirmation
- non-confrontational
- not brittle under stress
- not easily aroused or disturbed
- passive
- patient
- peaceful
- people-oriented
- persistent
- placid
- planner
- practical
- protective
- puts down and limits feelings
- reserved
- self-protective
- sensitive
- shy
- sincere
- slow to change
- specialist
- stable
- steady
- stubborn regarding change
- submissive
- sweet
- team-oriented
- thoughtful
- timid
- unambitious
- unassertive

# C *Personality (Melancholy)* *Conscientious*

- artistic
- calculating
- cheerless
- competent
- concise
- conscientious
- conservative
- consistent
- controlling
- correct
- creative
- critical
- dependable
- depressed
- depressing
- detailed
- dissatisfied
- dissects self
- efficient
- faithful
- feels unapproved
- follows rules
- hard to get along with
- idealistic
- impatient
- impossible to please
- impractical
- inflexible
- intolerant
- introverted
- intelligent
- investigative
- irritable
- knowledgeable
- loyal
- methodical
- moody
- negative
- opinionated
- organized
- overly self-critical
- perfectionist
- pessimistic
- precise
- proud
- quality centered
- reserved
- revengeful
- rigid
- sacrificial
- self-centered
- contemplation leads to paralysis
- self-examining
- self-sacrificing
- self-torturous
- sensitive
- structured
- suspicious
- task-oriented
- theoretical
- thin-skinned
- traditional
- uncompromising
- unemotional
- not talkative

## *What Does God Say About My Personality...?*

**D** personalities need to learn to listen and not always speak their own opinions.

James 1:19 ...Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...

**D** personalities need to be aware of their tendency to be angry.

Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

**D** personalities need to learn that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are not options for a Christian.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...

**D** personalities need to forgive others.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

**D** personalities must place their faith in God and not in their own self-sufficiency.

Mark 11:22 '...Have faith in God,' Jesus answered.

**D** personalities are generally successful because of their strong will and determination.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 ...Run in such a way to get the prize...

**D** personalities are aggressive and display leadership qualities.

Acts 17:4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul...

**I** personalities need to learn that there is a time to be still.

Psalms 46:10 ...be still and know that I am God.

**I** personalities need to learn to listen to others.

Proverbs 19:20 Listen to counsel...

**I** personalities need to recognize the need for structure and organization.

I Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

**I** personalities need to learn to be sensitive to the feelings of others.

Colossians 1:12 ...put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

**I** personalities must work to have discipline in their lives.

II Timothy 2:15 Study to present yourself approved to God...

**I** personalities are bold in sharing their faith.

Acts 4:20 ...for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.

**I** personalities look for opportunities to help others.

Galatians 6:10 ...let us do good to all men.

**I** personalities do not waver between God's call and immediate action once they understand it.

Mark 1:17-18 'Follow Me'... And they immediately left...

**I** personalities do not find it hard to obey God's command to assemble together.

Hebrews 10:25 ...not forsaking our own assembling together...

**S** personalities use their soft, sensitive words to resolve conflict.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath.

**S** personalities stay loyal even when someone has failed them.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times...

**S** personalities are able to bring peace to unsettled situations by their words and attitude.

Ephesians 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**S** personalities often lack confidence.

Exodus 4:1 What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say?

**S** personalities must learn not everyone is sincere and truthful.

Ephesians 4:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words...

**S** personalities need to have confidence in the gifts God has given them.

Romans 12:3 ...God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

**S** personalities shy away from responsibilities that require exposure of wrong/harsh action.

Ephesians 4:11 ...do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness,  
but instead even expose them.

**C** personalities must recognize that much of the Christian life has to be lived by faith.

I Corinthians 12:12 ...now I know in part...

**C** personalities struggle with forgiving those who have wronged them.

Ephesians 4:32 ...forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

**C** personalities often allow their thinking to be negative and can allow this negative thinking to lead to depression.

Philippians 4:8 ...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

**C** personalities need to guard against using words to criticize others.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

**C** personalities do not struggle with being humble.

**C** personalities set the example when it comes to having things done properly and in order.

I Corinthians 14:40 But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

**C** personalities strive to keep doctrine pure and unadulterated.

II Timothy 2:15 ...handling accurately the word of truth to show thyself approved, rightly dividing the word.

**C** personalities do not struggle with the command to correct wrongs when they are obvious.

II Timothy 4:2 ...reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience.

## *A word from PLACE Ministries' President and Founder, Jay McSwain...*

Today, more than any other time in history, people have more choices as to how to give their time. They find themselves asking, "Where do I fit in?" "Why am I here?" "What can I do to make a lasting difference in my life and the lives of others?"

This assessment tool is part of a self-discovery process called PLACE. PLACE begins with a comprehensive exploration of the unique gifts and talents of each individual. This Bible-based curriculum can bring about radical transformations by helping people discover their personality, spiritual gifts, abilities, life passions and experiences, understand them, and put them to work.

- P Personality Discovery*
- L Learning Spiritual Gifts*
- A Abilities Awareness*
- C Connecting Passion with Ministry*
- E Experiences of Life*

God created each of us for a purpose. "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Part of His purpose for us is to edify the church and to serve in its ministries. "...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). The PLACE process can help you discover how God has uniquely designed you, and it will help you realize His purpose for your life.

*PLACE* is a valuable tool in assisting churches and church staff members as they help people in their journey with God and each other. This tool will give you a great understanding of your unique God-given design. If you would like to understand and experience the teaching that goes along with the tool, you may order the Finding Your PLACE in Ministry Personal Discovery Set, attend a workshop hosted by PLACE Ministries and a local church, or help introduce the PLACE process in your church. To find out more about the latest resources for ministry, please contact us. Call toll free 1-877-463-2863 or visit [www.placeministries.org](http://www.placeministries.org).

### *Special Offer for Church Planters*

PLACE Ministries, in partnership with the North American Mission Board, will provide every Southern Baptist church planter in North America 25 free access codes for the on-line assessment. To request access codes, planters should complete the "Field Partner Registration" form found here: [www.churchplantingvillage.net/fpr](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/fpr).

## Additional Resources

For additional resources, including an accompanying discussion guide, and to connect with some of our writers, please visit our web site:  
[www.churchplantingvillage.net/wives](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/wives)

For questions or additional copies of this book, please e-mail us at [planterwives@namb.net](mailto:planterwives@namb.net)



To learn more about church planting and to connect with other resources designed to prepare you and your husband for church planting, please visit [www.discoverchurchplanting.net](http://www.discoverchurchplanting.net)

North American Mission Board Church Planting Group  
Enlistment and Missional Networks Team  
Phone: (770) 410-6123





When your husband brought up the idea of planting a church how did you respond? A little less than enthusiastically? Don't worry—the majority of planter wives needed some time to process the idea! You're in good company. In *My Husband wants to be a Church Planter... So What Will That Make Me?* you will learn from experienced church planter wives about the struggles and tremendous fulfillment that come with planting a church. Within its pages you will...

- ✘ Gain an understanding of the process
- ✘ Learn the importance of setting boundaries
- ✘ Discover how to manage your finances
- ✘ Develop skills to manage your time
- ✘ Find ways to maintain a healthy marriage and family life

Enjoy the journey and relax—more than 92 percent of planter wives say that even though church planting requires sacrifices, it is worth the cost!

## *Here's What Church Planter Wives Are Saying...*

"I am so excited about this new book! Since we are in the throes of starting a new church, I can relate so well to this book!"

*Ellie Mitchell, Port St. Lucie, Florida*

"I wish I had been able to read this as we were entering the church planting field. It is touching and honest."

*Stephanie Hanberry, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*

"I am so excited about what God is going to do through this project."

*Linda Pinion, Belton, Missouri*

"Your book for wives of church planters gives me so much hope! I'm excited for the future of church planting wives and ultimately new church plants!"

*Donna Stevens, Strongsville, Ohio*

"I wish this would have been available to us four years ago!"

*Marisusan Kennedy, Belen, New Mexico*

"I can see this as an amazing help to so many women."

*Cerena Melazzo, Alberta, Canada*



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