

Caring for Ministry Spouses

Tales of ministry burnout are sad and sobering. The stories of leaders who struggle with burnout often become well-known. However, an often-hidden area of ministry stress is spouse burnout. What do we do when the husband or wife of a ministry leader is struggling? What are the best practices for caring for ministry spouses? Every ministry family is different, but there is hope for those walking through a challenging season. There are guardrails that can be put in place to support and encourage every member of our ministry teams, including the spouses of our leaders.

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1. Symptoms: Why is care needed?

- Loneliness
- Conflict
- Burnout

2. Diagnosis: What are the deeper issues?

- The Pendulum of Expectations
 - The Two-Person Career
 - The Challenge of “No Expectations”
- Resilience

3. Prescription: How can we help?

- Caring
 - Spiritual Health
 - Emotional Health
- Cultivating
 - Appreciation
 - Life and Ministry Balance
- Coaching
 - Through Brokenness
 - Toward Health
 - For Growth
 - Grow in Meaning
 - Grow in Maturity
 - Grow in Ministry

4. Action Plan: Where do we begin?

- As Spouses
 - *Guiding Principle: Connect*
 - Biblical Foundation: John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 4:9
Remember your relationship is more important than your role.
Acknowledge the challenges. Celebrate the joys.
Serve together, when possible.

- As Ministry Leaders
 - *Guiding Principle: Protect*
 - Biblical Foundation: 1 Timothy 5:18
Honor time that is set aside for family connection.
Celebrate their gifting.
Express interest in their life and encourage their endeavors.

- As Friends
 - *Guiding Principle: Relate*
 - Biblical Foundation: Romans 15:7, 14; Galatians 5:13
Assume the best.
Encourage and affirm.
Ask and invite, even if you think you know what they will say.

Additional Resources

Tod Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2020),

Cordeiro, Wayne. *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010.

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.