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## SHEPHERDESS

# Who Do We Think She Is?

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**W**HO do we think she is, anyway? Solver of church problems, paragon of virtue, ideal wife, model mother, immaculate housekeeper, impeccable dresser, meticulous budgeteer, leader of the Dorcas, cradle roll, choir, and United Fund, Sabbath school pianist and prayer meeting organist, all rolled into one.

Impossible. Of course it is. Yet we have painted just about this picture when we have tried to describe the ideal minister's wife. You have read some of those books. And asked your wife to read them. If she did she may have cried herself to sleep.

And that's not all. Many a fine coed has read them, too, told herself, "That's not for me; I'm not sufficient for these things," and directed her interest elsewhere. In many cases maybe she should have. But do we not do these women, and the ministry, and our churches an injustice by creating this artificial image?

The standard is a high one. It is for the minister, and it must be for his wife. Indeed, for him to be a leader in a Christian community his wife must stand beside him in a unique way. However, the reason ministers are moved from one district to another is because no one man is strong in every facet of the ministry. Therefore they are rotated so that each man takes his strengths from one place to another. Also his weaknesses do not make permanent havoc of his present district.

But to his dear wife a different hand is extended. Someone may say, "Well, in this church the pastor's wife usually leads out in the primary room." Now maybe that's her long suit, and she takes the job. But someone else suggests, "In our church the pastor's wife usually plays the organ." And by the time she is barraged by all of the things "the pastor's wife usually does," she is suffering either from exhaustion or from guilt.

Perhaps the situation is a bit like the man who asked a hotel porter what the average tip was for carrying suitcases up to a room. The porter replied that the average was about five

dollars. The tourist thought that it was a little high, but he paid it. Whereupon the porter looked at the bill and said, "Thanks, mister, you're the first one yet that has come up to the average."

Perhaps the "In our church the pastor's wife usually . . ." is an accumulation of pastor's wives who have served in various capacities, all within their abilities. But the church can find itself expecting each succeeding wife to fill all the holes left by all the preceding wives.

As church members, as workers, as educators, we surely owe it to these young women—and to the older ones—to present a more realistic picture of their lifework.


The first responsibility of a pastor's wife is to her husband. His program makes unusual demands on her anyway. He is gone often. His evenings are seldom his own. His phone rings incessantly.

If she can increase his efficiency, be both dad and mother when he is gone, provide a haven in his multipressured world, what greater contribution need she make?


If beyond this she has the ability, the desire, the time, and the stamina to do more, well and good. Her church will rise up and call her blessed. But let us not demand more.

And is it not likely that if we demand less of her we will receive more from him? If she is the pastor's helpmate at the level of his deepest needs, then as she meets those needs she is extending his ministry in the highest sense.

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