"Thriving in Pastoral Ministry as a Couple: The Pastor, Ministry and Marriage"

This theological compendium provides a theological overview of how couples can thrive in their marriage.[1]

I. Embrace the Source of your Significance

A. The Source

How can one imperfect person provide ultimate significance and security to another imperfect person? As we are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 12:1-2) we are enabled to properly image God so that Christ permeates every aspect of our life and we then fulfill our created purpose as God's image bearers (Gen 1:26-28; 1 Cor 8:6).

How does imaging God really work?

We Glorify God by manifesting God's *communicable attributes* (Isa 43:7; 42:8, 12; Rom 3:23; 1 Cor 6:20; 8:6). We m*odel Christ* Who is the image (exact nature) of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). We intentionally allow the Spirit of God to manifest *His* collective *Fruit* (not a few virtues) in our life (2 Cor 5:17).

Heart obedience to His will ⇒ Spirit filling ⇒ Fruit of the Spirit

Eph 5:1 Eph 5:18 Gal 5:22

B. Focus on the Blesser and not on the blessings (Deut 8:11-20; Job 1:20; 1 Cor 3)

1. Try new ways to pray as a couple
   - -maintain prayer lists
   - -alternate praying for requests
   - -pray specifically
   - -pray laments/ praise/ intercession/ contrition
   - -ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication)
2. Bible study with *smart* application
3. Personal and private praise and worship
4. Celebrate and worship together
5. Use of ministry gifts together (12-12-4-4 passages)

Specific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**ealistic **T**ime-limited	"I need to pray for missionaries" (too general) or **"I will pray each morning for 20 minutes this month for the requests of our missionaries in Germany (SMART)***

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II. Create the Haven of Home (prioritize the "S" word)

Foster your marriage to image God by reflecting Christ in your marriage through intentionally walking in the Spirit by Faith (Eph 5:1-2, 18-33; Col 3:16-17; Gal 5:22; Heb 13:4; Titus 2:3-6).

A. Implement the "S" words in your relationship as you yield to the Spirit.

Submit to God's view of marriage including the domestic roles in marriage.

Share together in the spiritual discipline of Bible Study, prayer, and confession.

Study one another to learn how to best respond and encourage one another.

Spoil one another as life-long companions: emotional, physical, spiritual.

Sin Confession. Confess sin as sin, forgive one another, and prioritize your relationship.

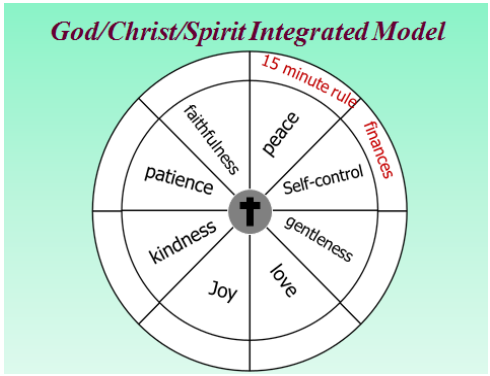
Stewardship of Life.

Solve challenges with biblical wisdom with godly people.

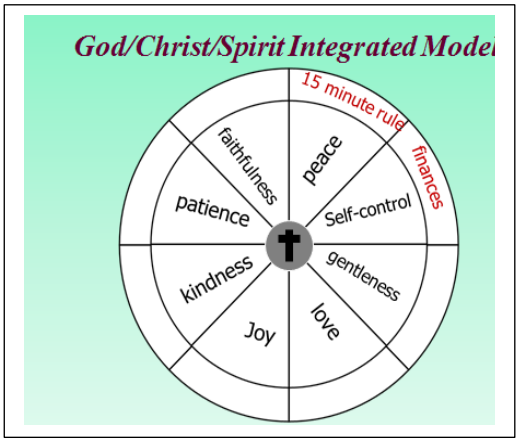
Simple – sincerity. Being assertive without using inflammatory language.

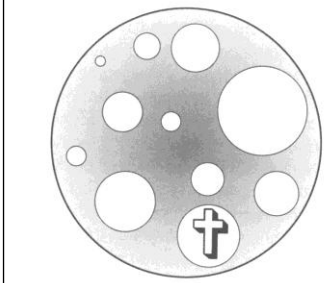
Sexual Fulfillment through full intimacy in marriage.

Follow God's pattern of headship & submission in marriage
See marriage and home as platform for your ministry
Spoil and enjoy one another
Prioritize and practice the one-another passages
See marriage and family as legitimate ministry
Watch-out for and guard your spouse
Foster an environment for your own personal growth
Avoid publicly criticizing spouse & choose confidants wisely
Honestly, discuss ministry expectations and difficulties
Delight in Spiritual disciplines together
Express concerns without inflammatory language



B. Identify flawed models of spirituality in your life, marriage and ministry





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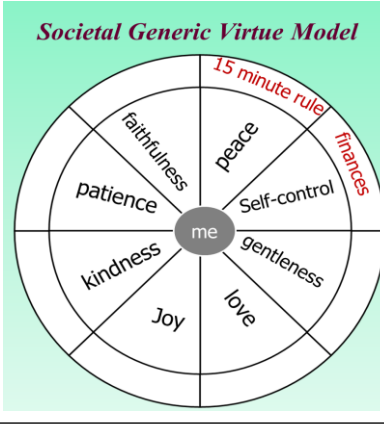

III. Apprehend the True Nature of Ministry

A. Maintain Appropriate Ministry Expectations Viewing the Church as God's Representative. Ministry entails *divine enablement* to **feed, lead and clean-up** after God's sheep.

> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church (20:18). Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood (20:28-29). See Acts 13:1-4 and Mat 16:15-18; Heb 13:7, 17
>
> Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and consider the result of their conduct, imitate their faith (Heb 13:7). Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief; for this would be unprofitable for you (Heb 13:17)

B. Maintain God's *Mercy* in *Ministry* through developing a tough skin and soft heart (1 Tim 1:1-3; 2 Cor 4:1, 7-12).

C. *Prepare for Unique Family* Challenges (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Heb 13:7, 17).

1. sharing vs. dumping
2. sensitivity vs. snooping
3. confiding vs. breaching confidentiality
4. ministry partner vs. ministry lackey
5. gifted believer-priest vs. Mr. or Mrs. Super Saint

> *Pastoral Confidentiality*-the ethical and moral responsibility to *not disclose information* unless specific and certain criteria are met. Confidentiality is never a promise of unqualified non-disclosure. The key issue remains however that individuals need the right of privacy regarding the exchange and sharing of information unless specific and certain conditions exist.

D. Pray for *Wisdom* (James 1:5; Proverbs): *Mappesism*-"you may not know what to do but you do know what you should not do- don't make it worse."

E. *Realize* We Live in a Cursed and Fallen World ("It's just an is"--life in a fallen world (Heb 12:1-2). Be an easy learner of lessons (James 1:2-12; 2 Peter 2:19-25; Jn 14:27-31).

> "If ministers are to see any fruit from their ministry, they must first sanctify themselves and cleanse their hearts by repentance before they presume to stand up to rebuke sin in others. Let them not think that their golden words will do as much good as their dead lives will do harm." William Perkins (1592), *The Art of Prophesying* p. 151).

F. *Beat* the percentage:

When asked "What is the greatest frustration you face in church ministry" the majority of pastor's wives indicated: 1) loneliness; 2) single parenting; 3) power women in church bossing husband; 4) lack of finances; 5) identity crisis; 6) complete weariness.

G. Maintain a long-term *balanced life*:

Proper diet; exercise; family relationships; friendships outside ministry; continuing education/ seminars; read broadly; develop healthy outside interests; avoid consumer indebtedness; learning to "work smarter not always harder;" disengage/ vacations; compartmentalize conflicts; realize ministry and life has different "seasons."

E. Remember to **defer praise** and **depersonalize criticism** by framing ministry through the Lamb metaphor (Jesus died for the sins of opponents and persecutors so the goal is never simply to win a dispute) and the Lion metaphor (Jesus will roar and make things right in His return and the judgement seat of Christ).[2]

> "The priest [pastor] should [view] treat those whom he rules as a father [views] treats very young children. We are not disturbed by children's insults or blows or tears; nor do we think much of their laughter and approval and so with these people, we should not be much elevated by their praise nor much dejected by their censure . . ." John Chrysostom (347-407) *On the Priesthood*, 129.

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*SMART rubric taken from Daniel Estes, *Learning and Living God's Word* (Schamburg: Regular Baptist Pres, 1993). For further interaction see "Moral Virtues Associated with Eldership" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June, 2003): 202-18 by David Mappes (esp. last half of article) and "What is Balance?" in *Inspire: The Cedarville University Alumni Magazine* (Summer 2006), 15 by Dr. David Mappes.

** Image from *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* by Kenneth Boa (Zondervan, 2001), 222 (Fair Use 1-11-17).