

## Living in Glass Houses (Conclusion)

*(Last week I mentioned some of the issues preachers and their families face. Today's article deals with some other problems but also, some solutions.)*

Loneliness – most preachers and their wives will tell you; they are lonely a lot. Often this is due to living away from family and friends they grew up with. The preacher's wife especially can find it difficult to have "close friends." What do I mean by "close friends"? These are the friends you can confide in and blow off some steam with. They will not react with horror or go and tell everyone else what you tell them. Preachers tend to find other preachers they can talk to but their wives are often not as fortunate. If they confide in someone it may be used against them later on or be passed along the gossip mill. As one member told Regena, "Your job is to not get your husband in trouble." Some brethren think of the preacher and his family as drifters who are here today and will be gone tomorrow. As we were unpacking, we got phone call from a Christian lady. She told us to not bother unpacking all our belongings for we won't be around very long. They don't want to get close to them because they are temporary members. Therefore, their relationships tend to be superficial. Everyone wants to be considered part of the congregation and that includes the preacher and his wife (whatever her name is).

Church problems – when problems arise in the congregation and the preacher is involved, everyone in his family is also affected. Most of the time a problem at the job can be left behind at the work place, but a problem in the congregation goes home with the preacher. Where is his place of escape? I know from personal experience how hard it is to be constantly dealing with criticism and negativism. On two occasions I have had depression due to this reason. The Apostle Paul gives a list of things he had to endure in preaching the Gospel, in 2 Corinthians 11.28 he mentions his deep concern for all the churches. Preachers can relate to this as they want the congregation to do well and are concerned for the souls of its members. His wife feels the pain and the burdens he feels. When someone wants you to leave, they often say, "It's nothing personal." I realize there may be legitimate reasons someone

wants to change preachers but pulling up roots and moving your family is very personal. Your children hear the words of discouragement, they lose their friends, and must adjust to a new congregation and place, so it is very personal.

These are some of the reasons young and older preachers are getting out of the pulpit full time and working secular jobs. Let me state, I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. We need more men willing to "make tents" and preach when they have the opportunity. Personally, I have tried to not encourage or discourage young men from preaching but I know the pitfalls of preaching full time and part time.

Solutions, just be realistic with the preacher and his family. They have to pay their bills like everyone else and there is hidden cost with preaching, such as books, skyrocketing health insurance cost, trying to save up in an IRA or 401k plan, and paying all of their social security tax. If he makes more money than you it is because he often has hidden expenses you don't have. Don't have a clergy/laity standard in your mind. Don't say the members can live or dress or work one way but the preacher's family has to be different than the other Christians. We are all called to the standard of living the Christian life. Be a good listener, especially to the preacher's wife, and don't be judgmental when she has to vent. Understand the turmoil and anguish that moving causes the family of the preacher. His children will be affected the most. In some ways I am amazed at the faithfulness of our children as they have seen and heard some of the worst behavior of some brethren.

Let me also speak a little on the issue of preacher's children. One time we were eating at a restaurant and there was a conversation at a nearby table. We did not know these people but they knew plenty about the previous preachers and their children. They started mentioning all the troubles those PKS were getting into. Finally, they got around to us. They did not know the names of our children but they knew about our children. I wondered how these unknown people knew so much about us? It was through the members talking to non-Christians. Folks preacher's children are not perfect but most are really good and become good Christians. It amazes me the faithfulness

of our children due to the things they have gone through in their lives. Leave the preacher's children alone! They have enough pressure as it is without the members placing more on them. I remember trying out at a congregation and our children were with Regena and I. As we woke up that Sunday morning, I could see the stress on our young children's faces. From that time onward I tried to not take them along. If they did go we developed a system where they could give me a signal and I knew we should leave. Just be fair to the PK's.

I am not writing this for sympathy or to blow off some steam but to build a better understanding of why some younger and older preachers are getting out of the pulpit. As I said before, there are many really loving and encouraging brethren but to many are a thorn in the side of preachers. Hopefully, this writing will help to focus on what we all can do better. – Dennis Tucker