

THE PASTORS' FAMILY
By Dr. Hal Webb, Evangelist

I am sitting here looking at a sad letter from a precious pastor friend. Since you do not know him, with his permission I want to share some excerpts from his letter.

"I have lived under the influence of this phrase: "If you take care of God's business God will take care of your business." I lived my life thinking that being busy in the ministry even at the expense of my wife and family, would work out. I felt He knew that I was doing His work and He would take care of my family. Please tell pastors wherever you go that that is **WRONG THINKING**. My first ministry is to my wife and family and if I don't take care of them, for whatever reason, I don't have a ministry. If I am the greatest preacher in the world and lose my wife and family; my ministry has failed. "If a man will not provide for his own, he is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith". I feel so displaced or non functional. I don't know how God can use me in the ministry any more. All I ever wanted to do is preach and that door seems closed."

My heart is broken over the tragedy. As a teen he was my special friend and we wrote many letters to encourage his college days and early ministry. Now all seems gone to him. His wife of 27 years has divorced him saying she never did really love him, and has remarried. One of his kids had a baby out of wedlock and the other two are trying to cope as they try to hold together in some semblance as a family. What a sad price he has had to pay and the amazing thing is that he knows where he went wrong. Oh, please let us all wrap him and what's left of the family in our prayers. Please do it.

Now what is there for us to learn from the heartbroken words of this dear ex-pastor.

Allow me to share some thoughts. First to the many dear pastors I know, **DON'T NEGLECT YOUR FAMILY!** Lay down your appointment book and regulate your activities. Make time to be father and husband. Snuggle up to your kids and be sure to demonstrate your love to them. Plan family outings and zero in on the needs of each of your children. They desperately need you, they want you and must have you. You must be there for them in their activities, helping with their maturing process, sharing in their tears and joys and being a strong arm on which they can lean. Without that, your prayers and hopes for your family will be dashed to pieces. Your greatest earthly physical achievement is your own kids. You must give them plenty of time. I can still hear the pastors daughter who said, "Every time I need to get help or advice from dad I have to get an appointment like all the others from the church secretary." How very, very sad.. Remember dear men, if you lose your family you will lose your ministry.

Be sure to keep the love fire burning in your heart towards your wife. She has an extremely difficult job. She stretches the family budget, puts up with endless comments from the members and tries to please them all. She becomes involved in all you do and can burn out alongside of you. She hungers for personal attention, loving affection and time for her interests also. Get off alone together, make much of your families special days and build a lasting memory of happy family times spent together.

To all of you who do not stand in the full time ranks of the ministry let me say in closing. No occupation is harder than the ministry. Whatever you do, you can go home and relax at the end of your work day. Your pastor cannot. You are not under the microscope of community and church scrutiny as is the pastoral family. They are watched constantly.

Why not seek to lift some of his load and show appreciation for all his wife does for the church family. Borrow their kids for an outing with yours, and deacons be sure your pastor has time to spend with his family. Please, everyone, wrap your pastor, his wife and kids in the mantle of your love and appreciation. It is hard to raise a personal family while attending to the church family. Understand this and each week be sure each member of your pastor's family knows they are loved.

Dear Pastor, please do not tire in the battle and don't fail to wrap your family around you like a warm cloak. You brought your family one by one into the world. You must not lose them but lovingly demonstrate daily your love and personal interest. You will stand no higher than the family around you. You must practice what you preach. Take time to preserve and lift them all together as a family unit. They can be a millstone around your neck or a jewel in your crown. The choice is yours.