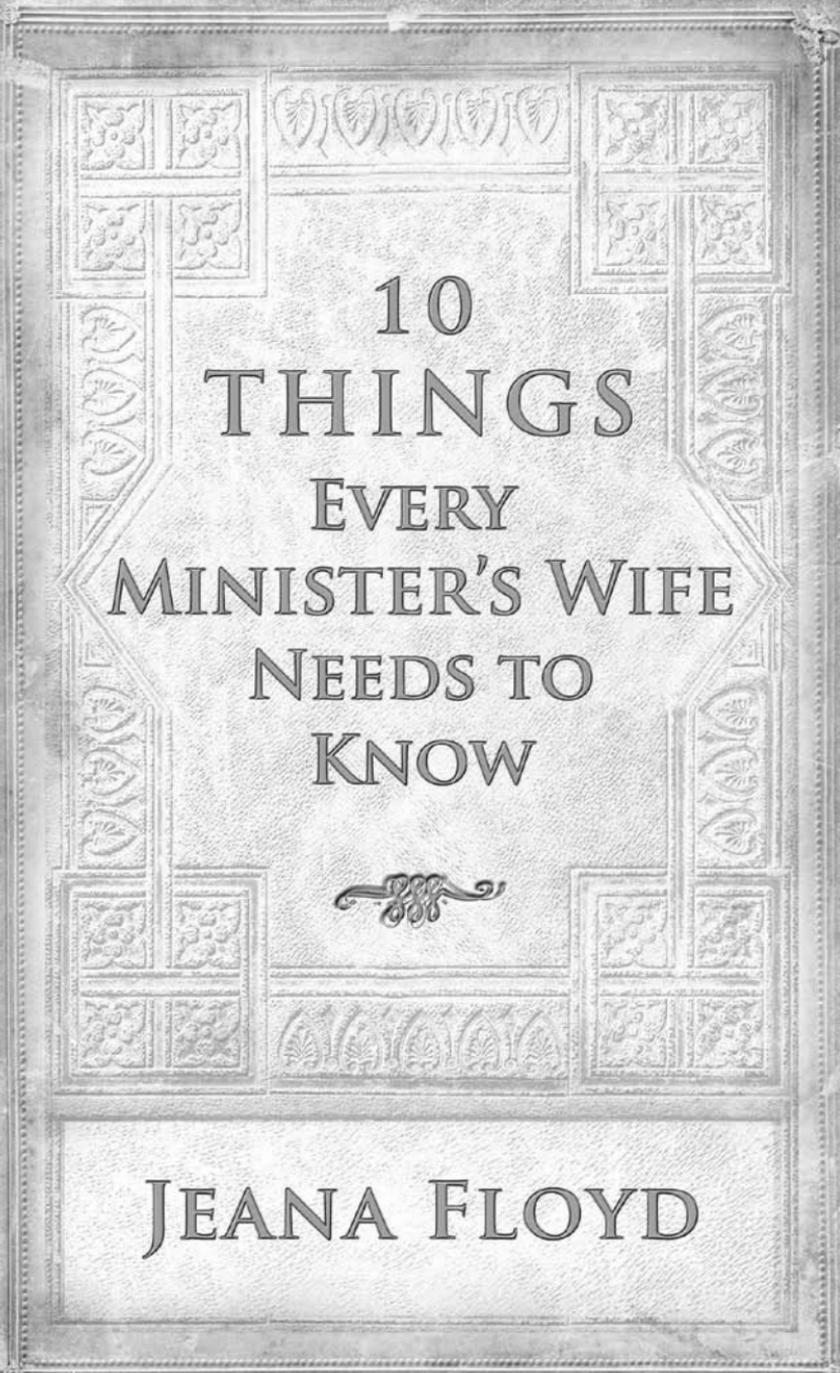


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JEANA FLOYD

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## *DEDICATION*

There have been many women who have influenced my life as a minister's wife, but one in particular immediately comes to my mind — Barbara O'Chester. Barbara greatly influenced my life as a young pastor's wife — along with thousands of others through her retreat ministry and personal example. Barbara has been a blessing to my life for a number of years, and I am grateful to call her friend and mentor. Thank you, Barbara, for living out the model of a godly pastor's wife before many others and me all these years.

Also, I would like to dedicate this book to all ministry wives who have ever served with Ronnie and me on our staff. You have made ministry life richer and I consider it one of God's greatest blessings in my life to be called your pastor's wife. May you be blessed as you continue in service to our Lord.



*I WANT TO THANK . . .*

**MY HUSBAND, RONNIE, IS ALWAYS** the one who gently nudges me to go beyond my comfort zone — and once again, he’s encouraged me to share some of our experience in ministry life through this book. It was his encouragement that led me to write this companion book to his *10 Things Every Minister Needs to Know* from the minister’s wife lens. Thanks for the “nudge,” Ronnie.

I am appreciative to Tim Dudley and Laura Welch from New Leaf Press for believing this is a needed voice for ministers’ wives. Thanks to my friend for over 23 years, Debby Thompson, for helping me frame the chapters and giving me a “starting place.” The ministers’ wives that I chose to help with the interactive testimonies are living examples of what I share in the book. These are special women who I love dearly, and I respect their walks as ministers’ wives.

I am grateful for those ministers’ wives who so willingly shared their wisdom in the interactive testimonies at the end of each chapter. Thanks to Susie Hawkins, Kathy Ferguson-Litton, Barbara O’Chester, Donna Gaines, Leigh Lowery, Janice Thomas, Carol Young, Jennifer Landrith, Meredith Floyd, Charlotte Akin, and Tracey Smith. Their words added real life experience to each chapter.

I couldn't fail to mention my mom — a pastor's wife for over 40 years. Thanks, Mom, for being an example of a quiet and gentle spirit before me. Ten ladies committed to pray for me through this project. They prayed me through schedule challenges, word counts, deadlines, and the many highs and lows of writing a book. I am grateful for their prayer support and encouragement along the way. Thanks to Dana Tanner, Mona Elliott, Kate Floyd, Meredith Floyd, Kathy Ferguson-Litton, Susie Hawkins, Tracey Smith, Vickie White, Cheyrl Lyall, and Becky Wilson.

Last but not least, I want to thank my precious staff wives of the church that I have the privilege of being their pastors' wife — the staff wives of the First Baptist Church and the Church at Pinnacle Hills. You gave great input and a fresh look at ministry through young eyes!

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# FOREWORD

**KNOWING THAT THE BIBLE IS** the best handbook by which a minister's wife should model her life, it is also important and beneficial to seek wise counsel from one who has already experienced some of the joys and pitfalls of this most treasured position.

I have personally known Jeana for more than 15 years as the wife of a godly pastor and as a good friend. In this book, she has pinpointed what I believe are key elements that can be a tremendous help for the wife of a minister.

Throughout the last 18 years of mentoring ministers' wives, many doors of discussion have been opened and many questions have been asked that only another minister's wife can answer with confidence.

From my experiences, I believe Jeana has chosen the topics that are of greatest concern among ministers' wives and addressed them with biblical insight, personal experience, and practical advice.

Thank you, Jeana, for providing an official handbook for the helpmeet of the minister. I could not have said it better myself!

— Janet Hunt (wife of Dr. Johnny Hunt,  
current president of the Southern Baptist  
Convention, and pastor at First Baptist  
Church of Woodstock, Georgia)





# INTRODUCTION

**AFTER SERVING BY MY** husband's side in ministry now for over 30 years, I can still say that I love being in ministry and love being a pastor's wife. It would be a blessing for me to know that this book has encouraged other wives to make ministry life not just tolerable and bearable but enjoyable and fulfilling.

We are always wise to learn from others — gleaning from their mistakes as well as the things done “right.” I've tried to take a practical, authentic, transparent, and realistic view of my life as a pastor's wife and many of the issues we face. Maybe something I say will save another from grief or heartache. Maybe it will encourage someone to continue in faithfulness when they are weary in the ministry God has called them to. Maybe it will resonate with a resounding, “I've felt that way before, too!”

Regardless, my desire for this book would be that after serving many years in ministry — amidst the joys and sorrows, the challenges and triumphs — one could say as I do after all these years, “I love my job as pastor's wife and consider it a high calling and privilege to walk by my husband's side in ministry.” May you be blessed and encouraged as you read this journey of mine.



# 1



## THE “SECRET” TO SURVIVAL

I WAS JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE. What once seemed so easy was now difficult. How could that be? As a pastor’s wife, how could I be struggling with something so basic? I burdened myself with guilt, personal expectations, and other emotions, wondering what people in my congregation would think of me if they knew how I struggled.

With two small boys, a busy schedule, and a very busy husband leading a growing, thriving ministry, I definitely felt overwhelmed. I certainly didn’t feel like I “had it all together.”

However, as the years have passed, my children have grown up, and other situations of my life have changed, I have learned that there will always be a reason *not* to spend time every day with our Father. Distractions don’t end with the age of your children, the dynamics of your church, or your personal obligations. But what must be realized above all else is that daily time with the Lord is the secret to “survival,” regardless of the circumstances of your life.

In ministry, survival can mean a lot of things. It can be everything from not being fired to spending many gratifying years of ministry in one location. Survival can mean the difference between “existing” and “thriving” in a place of ministry. It can mean you enduring your husband’s job joyfully or grudgingly. The definition of survival in ministry can be relative — depending on where you are and how you feel about ministry. One thing is for sure: your survival and the way you feel about ministry are critical to your husband’s success. After 30-plus years in ministry, I have observed that rarely is a minister successful in ministry when his wife is miserable.

Survival in ministry is easier when you remember what it is and what it is not. It’s not a numbers game, and it’s not about total expenditure of yourself in an unhealthy way. It’s not about serving in positions that you may or may not feel called to or being available to every person who has a critical need. It’s not about being the perfect pastor’s wife to the perfect pastor with perfect children. Survival in ministry to me is knowing that I have a personal relationship with Christ, who knows every detail of my life, and gives me the awesome privilege of coming before Him — in the “secret place.”

## WHERE DO YOU LEARN TO SURVIVE?

Psalm 91:1 says, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (NKJV). The psalm goes on to list the things God will do for you when you dwell in that secret place: He will be your refuge and your fortress; He will deliver you; He will cover you with His feathers and keep you under His wings; He will keep you from being afraid; He will let no

evil befall you or any plague come near your dwelling; He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways; He will set you on high; He will answer you; He will be with you in trouble; He will satisfy you with long life and show you His salvation.

Understanding the meaning of two phrases gives tremendous insight into this passage. The phrase “in the secret place” is the Hebrew word *sether*, which means “in the secret,” “a covering,” “a hiding place,” or “a protective place.” Then the words “to dwell” are the Hebrew word *yashab*, meaning “to sit down, remain, settle, even to be a constant guest of God.” Therefore, when we remain in and settle in the secret place, we will experience the covering and the protective care of God. What great words of promise, comfort, and peace!

The secret to your survival is your “secret place,” where you learn how to practice the presence of God and rely on Him alone, every moment of every day. It is learning to “abide under His shadow.” If you learn to do that, you will be a survivor — a woman who pleases and honors God, a woman God cares for and protects as He promised in Psalm 91.

## THE SECRET PLACE

How do you practice the presence of God? You find your “secret place” with Him every day. For years, time with God has been referred to as “quiet time,” but I would like for you to think of it as your “secret place.” The secret place is not so much a physical location as it is a place in your heart and spirit where you spend time with God. Time in your secret place is the secret to survival in ministry. This secret place is your personal private sanctuary with God. It is where you study the Word of God and listen to

what He is saying to you in His Word. It is where you pour out your heart to your Father. You alone with God — that’s the secret place. No husband, no children, no extended family, no friends, no distractions of any kind — just you and God.

## WHY THE SECRET PLACE?

Today’s world affords all of us many opportunities and distractions. You have opportunities to serve in your church in various roles, to get involved in community activities and the activities of your children, and the list goes on and on. In order to keep all of life’s challenges and opportunities in perspective, it is crucial that you spend time with Christ.

In my personal life, I go to my secret place early in my day, before I get heavily involved in anything else. That is not to say that my way is the best or only way, it is just what works best for me. I know if I waited until the end of the day to visit the secret place, it just wouldn’t happen. I need to begin my day in the secret place, armed with God’s Word in my heart and mind. Only then am I ready to face the challenges of the day, both known and unknown.

*Overwhelmed* is a word I often use in my times with the Lord. Life can be busy, demanding, and uncertain. When I have that feeling, I ask the Lord to multiply my hours, to set my feet on level ground, and to guide my steps. I ask Him to help me not to fear the “what if’s” in life. I need His direction in my life before I do anything else — before I talk to others, read e-mails, make appointments, or leave for the day. As the Scripture says, “I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. . . . Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings!” (Ps. 61:2–4).

When you commit your daily plans to Him, He promises to make your plans successful (Prov. 16:3). I just cannot overemphasize the importance of spending time in the secret place. It is crucial to your survival, and success, in ministry.

## IN YOUR SECRET PLACE

Basically, the secret place is where you talk to God and He talks to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead in your time with the Father, and I suggest you include the following things.

### *Read God's Word*

Reading the Word is one way you can really know God and hear His voice. He speaks to us through His Word — that's His method of communication with us. Don't get caught up in the amount of Scripture you read each day. I would encourage you, however, to give yourself as much time as you can to “soak up” the truth He has for you each day. When you meditate or think about what you have read, ask God to bring it to life for you. Maybe God has spoken audibly to you, but I'll tell you how God speaks to me — it's through His Word, and sometimes it's so profound to my life that it seems audible.

### *Spend Time Talking to God*

There is no one, including your husband, who is *always* available, and who wants to hear from you and listen to your cares like the Lord Jesus. Prayer simply means talking to God, and it is our privilege to do so because of what Christ did for us on the Cross. This is your opportunity to praise Him for who He is and to thank Him for every blessing and circumstance in your life. He wants to hear your heart's cry. He's pleased to hear your intercession for others and your personal requests. Don't you love it when your husband

or your children share their hearts with you? Our Heavenly Father loves it when we share our hearts with Him.

## HOW TO DWELL IN THE SECRET PLACE

There is no right or wrong way to spend time with the Lord. The elements of reading the Word, meditating on the Word, and talking to God should all be included, but how you go about that is up to you and the Lord. However, in the event that my “plan” might help you enhance or improve your secret place, I want to share some ways I spend my time with the Lord. Let me add, also, that I do not always do the same thing. It depends on what is happening in my life, but I am consistent in going to my secret place on a daily basis. Be careful not to impose undue guilt on yourself about your methods, and don’t compare your secret place with others’ time with the Lord. The most important thing is that you are faithful every day to meet God in your secret place.

I have followed different plans of reading God’s Word in my secret place. Some years, I have incorporated reading the Bible through in one year — something my husband does every year. Other times, I may focus on a single Bible verse that I read that day or the Scripture given to me in a devotional book. When I am involved in a Bible study group at church, I include that as part of my time in the secret place. As I am reading the Word and after I have finished reading it, I think about how it applies to my life, what it means for me that day, and how I can incorporate it into my day. That process may take more time on some days than others, but I consider that to be God’s message to me on that day.

As part of my prayer time, I write in a journal a one-page prayer to God each day. That prayer usually includes the urgent

prayer needs in my life and the lives of those close to me for that day.

In addition to the above, I keep a three-ring notebook that includes specific ongoing prayer requests, Scriptures I claim for individuals, and recorded answered prayers. I have sections for family, our staff and their families, friends, church members, our country and its leaders, and any ministry I am involved in. I break these up into days of the week so that I am not actually praying for everyone or everything every day.

I have shared with you the plan I use and the tools that help me to accomplish my time in the secret place. Here are those simple steps that might help guide you in your time with the Lord.

1. Pause and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and give you an understanding of His Word and its application to your life for that day.
2. Read and meditate on Scripture, as He leads you, whether it is a single verse, a chapter, or a passage in His Word.
3. Write a one-page letter to God in a journal, thanking and praising Him for who He is and what He has done for you, confessing your sins to Him, and sharing your concerns for that particular day with Him.
4. Talk to God about your needs and the needs of others. (Here you might want to use the three-ring notebook binder.)
5. Give your day to God.

The key to your secret place is finding out what works best for you and practicing it habitually. I cannot dictate to you a set amount of time to spend in the secret place. At this stage of my life, I spend about an hour daily — sometimes more, sometimes less. A

preschool mom may be fortunate to grab ten minutes. The focus should not be the amount of time you spend. The focus should be the attitude of your heart to recognize that strength for the day will come only through spending time in the secret place.

## I FOUND THE SECRET

I found the secret to survival in the secret place. It is only when I enter into that secret place that I find the peace, the joy, and the strength to meet the demands of daily life and ministry. What I have learned is that every time I abide in that secret place I gain perspective, find joy in the blessings and strength for the difficulties, knowing that I am not alone. Every uncertainty, every heartache, every personal or ministry concern always leads me back to the same place — dwelling in the secret place, on my knees before the Father. For a number of years now, I have practiced pouring out my heart to God. I take extreme comfort in knowing that God knows *all* the details of the concerns of my life — those injustices, real or imagined. I can tell Him how I feel when I am sad or hurt or lonely or any number of other emotions! He is always available. He hears all my requests, and He will never repeat anything I tell Him. When you consider all the benefits to being a minister's wife, why wouldn't you want to "dwell" there? Also, when my heart is full of praise and thanksgiving — and giving God all the glory knowing He alone is worthy of all my praise — that, too, is entering the secret place! I do praise Him for the honor of being a minister's wife — and the privilege to walk by my husband's side in ministry.

## ARE YOU . . .

Overwhelmed?

Discouraged?

Fearful of the future?

Depressed?

Worried?

Experiencing other emotions I may not have mentioned?

The secret to your survival in ministry is found in the secret place. God is waiting on you right now. One of my favorite devotional books is *Nearer to Jesus* by Sarah Young. I love the following quote; it states so well how important our time in the secret place is — definitely a wise investment of our time daily.

Time with Me cannot be rushed. When you are in a hurry, your mind flitters back and forth between Me and the tasks ahead of you. Push back the demands pressing in on you; create a safe space around you, a haven in which you can rest with Me. I also desire this time of focused attention and I use it to bless you, strengthening and equipping you for the day ahead. Thus, spending time with Me is a wise investment. Bring Me the sacrifice of your precious time. This creates sacred space around you — space permeated with My Presence and My Peace.<sup>1</sup>

Another powerful quote from Vance Pittman, senior pastor of Hope Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, so adequately states what our motive should be in our call to Christ and His ministry:

The primary call on my life is not a call to ministry, it is a call to intimacy. Ministry is what He does out of the overflow of intimacy. Everything Jesus desires to do through my life He will do as the overflow of His love relationship with me.”<sup>2</sup>

May we dwell in the secret place — having “intimacy” with the Father so that ministry will flow through our lives as a result of our relationship with Him. That is the secret to survival.

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty* (Ps. 91:1; NKJV).

## INTERACTIVE TESTMONY

Donna Gaines is married to Dr. Steve Gaines, pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee. In addition to her roles as wife and pastor’s wife, she’s also a mother, grandmother, and author. Donna is a woman of the Word, prayer, and great faith to see God move in all areas of her life. I believe that whatever conversation Donna and I have had through the years, on many different subjects, Donna always seems to bring the conversation back to God’s working in her life — whether it’s a son coming back to God after a season of rebellion, the blessing of the birth of a grandchild, or struggles in ministry that we all experience. In Donna’s book *There’s Gotta Be More!*<sup>3</sup> she shares about the Spirit-filled life. Without a doubt, the reason that Donna is able to walk in ministry not only surviving, but thriving, is because of her personal walk with Christ. Donna has been a blessing to my life for a number of years now, and I can’t think of a better woman of God to share her thoughts on “dwelling in the secret place.”

*Jeana:* When did you realize the importance of “dwelling in the secret place”?

*Donna:* In college the Lord ignited a passion in my heart to know Him. I began to search the Scriptures and observe people. In our first pastorate there were two women who walked with God at a

level I had never experienced. It was through their vibrant prayer lives that I began to understand not only the significance of communing with God through prayer, but that prayer and God's Word were the lifelines for living the Christian life.

*Jeana:* What brought you to know that without that personal designated daily time with God, you wouldn't survive?

*Donna:* You don't have to be in ministry very long before you realize how inadequate you are for the task. As I continued to grow in my relationship with the Lord, I realized the significance of living life "in the Spirit." I also realized that it was impossible to be filled with the Spirit and the flesh at the same time. I had to take the words of Christ seriously and die daily to my flesh. It is in offering myself to the Lord as a living sacrifice on a daily basis that He is able to fill me and use me for His glory. Then as I spend time sitting at the feet of my Lord, He gives life and wisdom. I long to be like Mary of Bethany, who chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His words. Jesus said she had chosen the "good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42; NKJV).

*Jeana:* How has your personal walk with Christ (habitually residing in the "secret place") benefitted your husband's ministry?

*Donna:* It is through daily deposits into your spirit that you are strengthened in your inner man. God's ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts our thoughts. The only way I can be in tune with Him is through spending time with Him in His Word and prayer. Then when the crisis hits, or the difficulty in ministry arises, your stronghold is the Lord. You find that He truly is your refuge and that He will sustain you as you walk through any valley. During a dark

time in our own ministry, the Lord used His Word to enable me to encourage my husband. Immersing yourself in the Word of God by systematically reading, memorizing, and meditating upon it is what grants you God's perspective. It is a constant reminder that this life is not about us — it is His story — and in His grace and mercy He has chosen to write us in. I am to simply “dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness” (Ps. 37:3; NASB) wherever He places me.

*Jeana:* As a minister's wife, what advice would you give other ministers' wives about making their time in the “secret place” a priority in their lives?

*Donna:* As ministers' wives we are called upon to care for, pray with, and counsel many in our congregations. We are woefully inadequate apart from the Lord. We must rely upon His wisdom that is imparted through His Word and prayer. My advice would be to have a place and a time that you meet with the Lord every day. Prepare the place. None of us would think about going to an appointment late or unprepared. Do not miss your appointment with the Almighty. It will initially be a choice of the will that will turn into a relationship that you will value above all others! Your special place will become a holy place. From that place you will go out filled with His Spirit, having had your perspective adjusted and able to more accurately reflect Christ to your family and a lost world.

### **Endnotes**

1. Sarah Young, *Nearer to Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2008), p. 30.
2. This impressive quote was made in my presence, and I asked him to write it down exactly as he said it.
3. Donna Gaines, *There's Gotta Be More!* (Nashville, TN: B&H Pub. Group, 2008).