

From Section 1: Living in Christ in a Life of Notice

"Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.." Psalm 16:1

Transitioning to a New Ministry:

What to Expect and How to Do It

Transition Has Lots of Layers

When your husband is called to a new ministry situation, you don't just move your furniture. You move your friendships, your lifestyle, your customs, your weather, your children's education, your church style (usually), your sense of direction, your favorite places to eat and shop, your budget, your home, your husband's career... And sometimes even your language. That's a lot of change!

Some of these elements might take just days or weeks to adjust to. Others of them will take months or even years. Some of them might seem like you can never adjust to them. And the more you loved something or someone in the place where you were previously, many times the harder the transition into your current situation will be. Even if you appreciate and are excited about the new life you are beginning, transition can still be very difficult and take quite a while. So here are a few tips to help you through transition.

Cut Yourself Some Slack

You have just experienced a loss of people, places, things that you love... Probably even lots of them! No matter how excited you are about the new situation, you're probably going to have periods when you are just plain sad! It's okay! It's natural.

Borrow from God's Past Goodnesses

Remember back to the last situation: it wasn't always familiar. You probably couldn't have guessed all the great things God was going to do in your life/your husband's life/in the church, and all the things he provided for you in that place, could you? Of course, not! God's goodness will be just as evident one day you in this new situation. He may provide different things and people... Actually, you pretty much can count on that! But he has just as many good works prepared for you in this new situation as he did in that last situation. Thank him now... Even before he does them! Testify to his faithfulness while it is still an act of faith – that is, while it's not by sight yet! And it's okay that you're crying and sad while you're doing this!

Leave and Cleave

Watch your heart for a continued pattern of comparison to your last situation. This new place is like a new wineskin. God plans to do a different work in you, in your husband, and among different people. He has called your whole family to this new situation, not just your husband. God has new things for you all in this place. He will grow you in new ways and usually new ways. Ask for his help to appreciate what you had before, but not to make it a stumbling block and wholeheartedly embracing what God's plans are for you all in this new place.

Pray that God would work in your hearts. Especially what your comparative comments made around your children who are old enough to understand what you are saying. You will be affecting their transition, too. It's okay for them in you both to miss things from where you used to live, but make sure you also point out new things and your faith in God's purpose for you all in this new time and place.

Find a Friend or Two

It's often hard to break into new friendships. Don't wait for people to initiate. See if you can find another woman the same season of life as you who can take you to the grocery store with her... Or go on a walk or hang out while you fold laundry together... Or go for coffee. One caution: the more prominent your husband's position, the more careful you do need to be about who you form deeper friendships with.

Ask your husband if he can think of someone who might be a good person to befriend. You also may find that doing things casually with a number of people for while helps you to know who is safe to talk to about deeper things related to you and your husband, your family, etc. Oftentimes another pastor's wife, staff wife, or elders wife is a good place to start. Even if they are very busy themselves, chances are you can trust her judgment on who might make a good friend to seek out.

Don't Be Surprised If You Feel Lonely

Even if you have lots of people asking to do things with you! There is a level of close friendship that just takes time! Ask God for grace to help you! Keep persevering! It doesn't hurt to call her old friend or two from your previous location. Just watch your heart, that you don't slow down working on making new friendships at your new location because you have stayed dependent upon your old friends too long.

Seize the Day!

You will never get back this day again! Your time in this new place may be shorter than you think. Before you know it, you will be somewhere else in these times in this new place will be the good old days you look fondly back on. Don't waste your time by just thinking about what is different or missing or hard! Enjoy one of those new things... Go get lost trying to find somewhere new... Take a chance on serving someone else. Not sure who to reach out to? Ask your husband or others you're getting to know. They can help you learn some new things to do or some people you could serve that would so appreciate your help this very day! Don't waste it

Get Involved... Just Slowly and Carefully

Seek your husband's advice on where you might serve. Usually, wisdom would have this piece something you all do together – – such as have a couple over to eat, or to do something the doesn't involve leadership for a long-term commitment – – like serving the nursery or helping give out cookies and coffee at the hospitality desk or something else that allows you to meet people, serve people, but not yet lead people. Allow your husband to settle into his ministry first. This will let him know how best your service in a church can support him without burning out your self or the family.

Be Patient with and Supportive of Your Husband

Remember he's in transition, too! He's trying to figure out this new position. He's trying to figure out how to balance care for you, your family, and the church. Even if he's done this and other churches before, there is bound to be enough differences between the two situations that there are things he's trying to figure out.

Be an Asker

During the transition time, one of the best things you can do is ask your husband how you can help them... As he strives to be a godly man, husband, father, pastor. This could be everything from praying to him to helping him figure out how to balance the new pattern of committee meetings was special time at home with you and the kids... Or it might be asking you to meet up with a particular woman in the church. Pray that God would give your husband wisdom answering how you can help them. I've been amazed at the different ways God has answered this in our lives.

Be a Teller

Share with your husband your transition struggles. He needs to know them to help provide for you and your family. I'm not saying make this into a complaint fast, nor am I encouraging you to think that your husband will be able to take away all of your struggles. I'm just saying, let him know what is hard for you. Together you may be able to speak your out some things that help you through these days. If he doesn't know what you're going through, then you can't help you, make changes, or pray for you!

Places Where You Live and Places Where You Visit

In other words, there some things you and/or your husband might do short term but should not do in the long term. Examples: lots of committee meetings night after night, but no date or family time. Lots a long phone calls to old friends, but not much effort towards making new friends. Transition is famous for the "Honey, I'm sorry, but I just God to have his extra meeting about the finances, missions, youth group, whatever. I won't be home until late." In some ways this is okay. There are a lot of new things your husband has to learn – – – and unfortunately, they all take time.

But, if you are still seeing too many of these extra meetings, months after months down the road, it will very likely take its toll on your family. You may need to humbly, winsomely, and respectfully bring up this harmful pattern with your husband. And don't forget to pray for God to go before you and help him see the difficulty before you even bring it up.

Remember that God is in this transition! He has good plans for you, your husband, your family, and the church He has called you to. And not just in the future, but even in this very day of transition. Trust in His goodness. He is always worthy of it!