

Husband and Wife Ministry Teams



The Delicate Balance of Combining Marriage and Ministry

by Brenda Everman

Pastors and their spouses are well accustomed to ministering together. But what about those rare instances where both spouses actually are ministers? Following are comparisons of two such couples. All four of these people are licensed ministers of the Word, who also happen to be married to each other.

Our first couple is Doug and Rosemary Lowery, senior pastors at Maranatha Assemblies of God. Doug has been licensed and ordained with the Assemblies of God since 1979. Rosemary was licensed and ordained in 1993 with the Congregational Churches of America.

The couple dated as teenagers and traveled on the road with the Son Rays Quartet. Doug says that he “begged Rosemary to be their accompanist.” Then, when Doug and Rosemary became the Gospel Tones, Doug sang lead and Rosemary sang harmony and played piano accompaniment. They sang together for youth groups,



Doug and Rosemary Lowery

churches, youth conferences, youth did revivals, where Doug would also preach.

Their plan was for Doug to become a pastor and Rosemary to be a pastor's wife. But as the ministry and years moved forward, Rosemary began to want to be ordained in order to “be able to minister with more credibility. Basically, getting ordained was recognition of what I was already doing,” says

Rosemary. “Dr. Bill Stephens, a spiritual father to both of us, encouraged her to become ordained,” adds Doug.

From Doug and Rosemary's perspective, the entire family has been in ministry. “There's a lot of pastors' wives out there doing ministry, and their kids are sacrificing,” Doug observes. “With Rosemary's ordination, the key difference was that we started to refer to each other as ‘Pastor’ in the office and on Sunday,” says Doug. “When we cross the line at the driveway on Imboden (Maranatha Church), we become Pastors. Anything we do at Maranatha is for ministry. Sometimes that's really hard to do. You have to divide these things. We don't call each other Pastor at home, but at church we do, out of respect for the office.”

There was a season when Rosemary worked outside the church at Zexel, for almost 3 years. Doug asked her to come back, realizing that “I work better with her. We're more of a Pricilla/Aquila team. Her organizational skills are better than mine. I have pastor friends who say they couldn't possibly work with their mates. I think it depends upon your gift mix and personalities.”

Rosemary says, “I was glad when he asked me back. I was doing well at Zexel, but my husband needed me. It was a good time for both of us to realize my gifts. I did get to meet people, who later came to Maranatha and got saved. The two of us had grown apart, and we had some real retooling to do in our marriage. It's been quite a journey, but I think that's where I've grown. It's been the hard times that have caused us to grow. That's when we made the decision that NOTHING is going to get between us, period.”

Doug says, “I think there's some obvious advantages (to both being pastors): if I need to be gone, Rosemary is capable of stepping in to counsel or do a service. We have a daughter church in Atlanta, Illinois, where Rosemary has preached. I think that not everybody can do this, but it's normal for us.” Both observe that in the Assemblies of God Church, they are encouraging many pastors' wives to get their license and become ordained, “if they feel they have the calling.”

Reflecting upon their most memorable times of ministry together, Pastor Doug says, "That would have to be India for me, because during the day, Rosemary preaches to the women. We're busy over there sometimes speaking 3 times a day, taking turns doing that." Pastors Doug and Rosemary began Church Planting International to plant churches in the remote areas of India in 2007. For Pastor Rosemary, her more memorable time of ministry has been, "when I got to be one of the speakers in Poland at a Pastors' Conference. I actually spoke there on the role of women in ministry. And now we get to do it together in India."

"That is another benefit of us being a team, there have been times that I have not been able to handle a funeral service and Rosemary can take over. I was supposed to do a wedding once, but our neighbor across the street passed away. So we were able to divide our resources that day. I married the couple and Rosemary did the funeral," Doug reflects.

In an interesting contrast, Rodrigo and Beth Soares are both licensed pastors, working as associate pastors at GT (Glad Tidings Assemblies of God) Church.

Rodrigo is from Brazil. Inspired by a Kenneth Hagin book his father had read ten years previously, his entire family came to America in 1999 to go to school at RHEMA Bible Training Center in Oklahoma. "We didn't have income, no partners supporting us, but some how we lived well and made it through abundantly," Rodrigo remembers.

Born in Decatur, Beth amazingly attended the same school, the same year as Rodrigo. She was in a Bible college in Maryland when she sensed God calling her to go to RHEMA. The two did not meet until their second year there, when they broke into their majors. Rodrigo's major was helps, Beth's was missions. Beth's calling was specifically to South America. A mutual friend invited the Soares family over for lunch one Sunday. She invited Beth, as well, because of her major.

After many ups and downs, including numerous trips back and forth between America and Brazil, the couple was married in 2002. Rodrigo was plugged into a large church's Bible school in Brazil. Beth quickly learned Portuguese and taught at the same school. Because of the large numbers of people they were working with, the couple was able to apply for credentials rather quickly. Both were licensed through RHEMA Ministerial Association International at the same time. The couple was content to live and minister in Brazil, with plans to come home to America each year for Christmas. God had other plans.

In January 2006, out of obedience to the Lord, they moved back to Mt. Zion with basically nothing. No work. No jobs. No place to live, except to move in with Beth's mom. GT



Rodrigo and Beth Soares with Daniel and Anna

was Beth's home church, so they started attending church there. One week Pastor BG Nevitt, Senior Pastor at GT, and his wife, Brenda, invited them out to dinner. They shared the desires of their hearts and Pastor BG was like, "That's great! Good for you." remembers Rodrigo.

Beth and Rodrigo made many contacts with ministries and churches in the United States. Beth was expecting, so Rodrigo worked as a maintenance man at the Mt. Zion McDonalds. A couple months later, Pastor BG called Rodrigo and asked him if he would be interested

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in working as LifeBuilders (Small Group) Pastor at GT. "Can I start NOW?" was Rodrigo's response. Rodrigo is still working in that position and also as a drummer in the worship team.

A few months after their son, Daniel, was born, Beth began working at EliteCare Center. Beth loved her job there, but knew God still had a calling on her life. Because of her patience and good attitude, God then opened the door for her to return to full-time ministry. During Beth's time at EliteCare, she gave birth to their daughter, Anna. Beth was thrilled when GT offered her the position of Outreach Pastor. "When we moved back to the U.S., I was shocked, because I thought I was going to be a missionary forever! Now I can do missions on such a larger spectrum. If I can mobilize, say 15 people, and not just me going, then I can really have an impact."

The good thing about working "together" at GT is that "it's easier to just go home and be home without having to discuss what goes on at the church. "When we're home, we're home." Beth says, "This is our family. When a parent of someone dies in our church, they are our friends and our family. I think it helps that we're both in it. As we go home, it's easier to lay aside."

Rodrigo remembers people suggesting that both he and Beth could share an office together. "No way!" said Rodrigo. "It just wouldn't work." Beth and Rodrigo have very different callings on each of their lives. Rodrigo says, "Here at GT, we haven't yet joined the potential. Beth is still getting up to speed with the church. We haven't really worked much together, yet." Beth adds, "I would like to work more together, but our visions are different. GT is a team, everything really works together, all the way down to the message on Sunday morning, it's a team effort. As support staff our end goal is to serve Pastor BG."

As God knits the lives and hearts of Pastors Beth and Rodrigo together, it will be interesting to see how He works through them: separately and together. They are still in the very beginning stages of their lives together.

As more seasoned pastors with grown children and small grandchildren, Pastors Doug and Rosemary admit, "the only thing that kept us together was our love of the Lord. We had to work at it and get things back in order. We still have to make sure a date night is in place. Every six weeks our goal is to get away together. It's a struggle to find the time, but we have to. If somebody's having surgery on our day off, it's just part of the ministry. You can't always plan on things happening." Rosemary agrees, "We have to love people and show that in any way we can. Doug always took us on vacation, because our kids sacrificed so much for us to minister the rest of the year."



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