

## GETTING TO KNOW ME

*H*ELLO, I'M JILL BRISCOE. I'd like to tell you a little about myself. So make a cup of tea, settle down, and enjoy.

I have been in ministry for fifty-six years, a ministry wife for fifty-three last July. I am the wife of a father of three and a grandfather of thirteen; the wife of an ex-banker, and Royal Marine commando. The spouse of a Jesus lover and glory giver, evangelist, youth leader, missionary, author, evangelical leader, preacher and teacher par excellence, a “pastor of pastors” and “minister at large”. I am also the wife of a million- (or two-) mile flyer!

My husband Stuart on the other hand has been the husband of a mother of three and a grandmother of thirteen for approximately the same amount of time! He too has been married fifty-three years come July. He would echo the words of a man learning English as a second language, who, in a job application, described himself as: “A much be-childenized gentleman who had sixteen empty stomachs hanging round his neck and couldn't make both his ends meet!”

Stuart, my heart partner and dearest friend, love of my life, has found himself to be the husband of a youth leader and evangelist, teacher, preacher, mentor of women, author and speaker, and, so importantly, mother of three children in ministry and thirteen grandchildren. He, like me, is also the spouse of a “minister at

large”, and a million- (or two-) mile flyer!

He is also the long-suffering husband of a wife who loses things all over the world. All sorts of things – passports, cars, mobile phones, back rests, Bibles and notes (not copied), and keys are the most common. He told me the other day he was not at all surprised that God gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter and not to Peter’s wife! Stuart and I have been on a mission ever since we met. Simply put, we love the Lord and revel in Him. We both signed up for active duty over fifty years ago.

On 9/11, I found myself in Newfoundland along with all my fellow passengers from flight United 929. (We’d been diverted to Canada when the planes hit the Twin Towers in New York.) As we waited in a Salvation Army hall in Gambo, Newfoundland, I discovered that one of my fellow passengers was from the US armed forces, and she was very distressed about being in the army! This had not been the case before the planes crashed and the Twin Towers came down!

Suddenly she burst into tears and sobbed: “I didn’t join the army to go to war!”

“Why did you join?” I asked, bewildered.

“To get a fully paid education,” she answered without hesitation. “I never anticipated having to fight.”

I thought about that a lot in the six days it took us to get home.

We – Stuart and I – joined the army too: His. But we joined to go to war: God’s. We declared loud and clear we wanted to

honour God, preach the Word, love the people, and make the devil sorry he started the whole mess in the first place.

We have had a ministry marriage that has had its fair share of challenges, joys and sorrows. When we launched out on this grand adventure, this laughing life, this incredibly stretching project, we determined that the ethos of our marriage and family would be service. We agreed: “As for me and my house ‘we’ will serve the Lord.” “We” would serve. Not He would serve or She or They but *We*. We would be an undivided family with one aim in this regard.

If God in grace gifted us with a believing family, each of us would pay whatever price was needed to achieve our goal – to make His heart smile, to experience His kiss on our cheek, His light in our eyes, His work in our hands. *This* is what our family would be about.



We have had the privilege of serving the Lord in mission and church on all seven continents! Amazing! And now at the age of seventy-six I have too much of His business to attend to for months ahead to waste energy worrying about what *might* be. I take courage from looking back at His faithfulness, looking around at the challenge of the work yet to be accomplished, and looking forward to a sprint to the finishing line. There will be battles to come but remember, we *did* join the army to go to war!

I have taken every aspect of my “Wifedom” and “Motherdom” seriously. That is not to say I have always been a successful wife! I have, I am afraid to say (but I must!), been a whiny wife, an impatient wife, a discontented wife, an angry, tired and discouraged wife, a frightened and a timid wife. In the same vein, I have been so very often a less than adequate mother and grandmother too.

In earlier days I struggled with my identity. At our church at first, I resented always being introduced as “the pastor’s wife”. “Don’t these people know my parents gave me a really nice name?” I would mutter into my coffee cup. “After all,” I would gripe, “they don’t address Mrs Smith as the park director’s or zoo keeper’s wife! I have a name. I am a person with gifts to offer, a heart to care, and a life to love away!”

I have handled criticism of my husband and children poorly, and whined when Stuart put the *other* family first. (We have two families, don’t we? The church family and our own?) I have hidden behind a fake smile while saying sweetly: “So glad you could make it to church today, Mrs Gossip. Do come back.” I have prayed too little, talked too much, doubted God could ever make me a

blessing, been unwilling to do things badly as I learned to do them well, and struggled with expectations – the church’s, my husband’s and my own.

I have resisted change, wrestled with loneliness, and lack of friends and resources. I have put on some of the best “pity parties” in town and pouted when nobody I’d invited showed up.

I understand the meaning of the word “stretched”. Paul says he was “stretched but never snapped” (2 Corinthians 4:8, my translation) and I too, in my small way, testify that His divine energy given to me has been equal to the task. He does indeed equip the called (not, as someone has said, call the equipped)!

“It’s a great life if you don’t weaken!” the novelist and historian John Buchan once said; I know there’s no fear of that. I am a wife who knows full well what it is both to *run on* and to *run out*! Run out of energy, sleep, health, safety, wealth, friends, trust, peace, and joy. But I am here to tell you too, I am a ministry wife who *has never run out of God*.

So I am writing this in an English spring, in the midst of the hills just south of England’s Lake District replete with Wordsworth’s golden daffodils “fluttering and dancing in the breeze”. I am at Capernwray Bible School and Conference Centre. It’s a place that played a significant part in our lives when our family lived here working in the “army”.

Early one morning, after a nostalgic walk in the beautiful parklands around the big castle that is Capernwray, I spent time with Him who is my life and wrote this:



*Hey, world,  
Help yourself to my life,  
It is yours.  
Help yourself to my love,  
It is His!  
Help yourself to my time: Jesus taught me I can't keep hours  
like the post office!  
Welcome to my heart.  
Make yourself at home:  
Let's have a cup of tea!*

Why don't you get your Bible, journal, and your heart! Let's have a cup of tea!

Jill  
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