

Ministry wives inspire love for the Bride of Christ

By Lindsey Williams

Writing Specialist

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's (MBCB) Leadership Department hosted a Ministry Wives Conference on the afternoon of Oct. 23, in conjunction with the Pastor's Conference at First Church, Jackson. Speaking on the theme of *Loving the Church*, Lisa Ray – a ministry wife of 15 years – led both new and seasoned wives in tackling lies about church ministry with biblical truths. Approximately 70 women attended the conference.

Lisa Ray teaches New Testament, and Understanding the Grand Narrative of Scripture, in the Thrive Ministry Wives Program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), where she received her Master of Divinity. Twenty years ago, in her Old Testament class, she met her husband Charlie Ray, with whom she has journeyed the mountains and valleys of ministry and family.

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Lisa Ray (Photo credit: Bart Lambright)

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For the theme of *Loving the Church*, Lisa turned to Acts 20:17-38.

“This is a message from a pastor, church planter, missionary – however you want to categorize Paul – to a group of pastors, elders, overseers. Our husbands might be able to take a direct application of this passage... but we share in that life with them,” Lisa expressed. “When we hear instruction to pastors in the Scripture, it’s important for us to take special note of

that, in order to be a better partner to our husbands, to know what their call is, to help them, to support them, to encourage them in that call, but then also to understand what our *life* calling is.

“When you join together with your husband, whether you knew he was going to be a minister when you married him or whether that was a surprise gift later, this is all a part of the life that you share with him.”

“But also, the two main components of Paul’s message here to the Ephesian elders is to proclaim the Gospel and lay your life down in doing so, and to love and protect the church. Those are calls to every believer. Those are things that we should all desire to do and want to be faithful in doing,” Lisa exhorted.

“What led me to want to talk about this today and what led me to this passage is that in some ministry-wife circles, in some contexts, we are hearing an alternative narrative to what we have just heard. Acts 20 calls us to lay down our life for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the love of the church... But one of the things that I’m hearing is that the church is the enemy of the ministry wife, that the church is the root of our problem... This is a lie. It flies in the face of everything that Scripture tells us about the church, but there are times when that can be easy to believe.”



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Women gather around Lisa Ray to pray for her. (Photo credit: S

John Pace)

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“If you find moments of disappointment in your church, remember the Holy Spirit is not done transforming that child of God yet, or these children of God, or this child of God,” Lisa pointed to herself, “and that the Lord will have a beautiful bride join Him at His wedding feast.”

In the closing of the afternoon, a member of the audience asked to pray for Lisa as she and Charlie prayerfully wrestled with a family burden. Rising to encircle her, the group of ministry wives laid hands on Lisa and prayed together.