

Pastor Natalie Francisco:

FROM THE FAITH OF A LITTLE GIRL TO A WOMAN WALKING IN EXCELLENCE!

by
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Pastor Natalie Francisco serves as pastor, along with her husband Bishop Leslie W. Francisco III, of Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Virginia. She wears many hats in her service to the Lord. Whether she is ministering alongside her husband, serving as Minister of Music, or administrator of programs and personnel to Calvary Christian Academy and Calvary Bible College, this mighty woman of God balances ministering to her husband, motherhood, ministry to the congregation, and quality time with the Lord seamlessly. I had the honor and privilege of spending time with this anointed woman of God as she shares her life and her secrets to walking in excellence. At only 37, her life and wisdom has earned her the title of spiritual mother to all women who enter her presence.

BEGINNING OF MINISTRY

Natalie's ministry began in music. She desired to play piano as early as age five. She had formal lessons for only a couple of months when a car accident destroyed the family's only means of transportation. Although the lessons stopped, her desire to play didn't. At that time Pastor Leslie Francisco II (who would later become Natalie's father-in-law) was teaching about the anointing. Natalie didn't understand about this 'anointing' and 'using your gifts for the Lord.' However with the faith of a little child, she went to the pastor's home and asked him to pray and anoint her hands with oil.

The gift did not manifest right away and fear began to enter her spirit. Those fears were extinguished when Natalie's mother purchased a piano in faith and Mother

Naomi (pastor's wife) encouraged her to play. In three months time the Lord allowed the gift to manifest. From then on Natalie could play any song by ear. "I promised God that if He gave me the gift, I would use it only for Him by playing for the church. At that time I had no idea I would serve as Minister of Music, but He did. I know why he gave me the desire at [age] five because He knew my destiny. It was an unquenchable thirst to play the piano . . . the playing came through the anointing."

MINISTRY WITH HUSBAND

Partnership in ministry between Leslie and Natalie began long before their call to full-time ministry. Leslie began his business career as a roofer, which evolved to a successful business in general contracting. Natalie worked alongside her husband by managing the books. Business was good and so was the money. Even at the pinnacle of their career in business, God had a better plan. Imagine the Lord taking this young couple from a struggling business to a successful one, then calling them out of that successful business and forcing them to make a decision to continue to build homes or start building lives.

The time was October 1990. Leslie and Natalie attended a Pastor's conference in St. Louis. At one of the sessions, the Holy Spirit interrupted the speaker from his message in order to speak a Word from the Lord. Pastor Natalie recalled that time as if it happened yesterday. "The Pastor just stopped the message and said, 'I have a Word from the Lord. I don't know who it's for . . . God said that you are making a decision to leave your job or whether to serve God full-

time. He wanted to let you know that He didn't want any part-time preachers. ' We knew that the Word was for us. It was at that time we decided to give up the business and work full-time in ministry.'"

The decision to leave a successful business was truly a faith walk. The lifestyle as they knew it would change dramatically. At the time church membership was only 45 and the church could only afford to pay the salary of the senior pastor, who was Pastor Natalie's father-in-law. After the conference Leslie needed confirmation from Natalie about selling the business. He would not go into ministry unless she was in total agreement. Natalie's response: "If God called you to pastor, I believe that and I'll support you 100%." (Although the Lord called her husband as pastor of Calvary Community, Natalie was called to serve as pastor alongside her husband at a later time.)

God moved miraculously in their lives throughout their ministry. Pastor Natalie prayed for specific needs for their children and God honored those prayers. Whether it be clothes, money, or support, the family was never forsaken nor did they beg for anything. People came to Calvary who felt it was their specific assignment to care for their children. "It was clear that God meant for us to be in ministry because all of our needs were met."



EVOLUTION OF PASTOR NATALIE'S MINISTRY

Before her official title of Minister of Music, Pastor Natalie operated in that gift. She played piano for every choir that was birthed in the ministry. Later she began teaching harmony, sharpening the gifts of the choir members. The praise team and mass choir of Calvary Community Church were birthed under her ministry.

In service to her husband and the ministry, her pastoral gifts began to manifest. She doesn't consider herself to be co-pastor, but a partner in ministry with her husband. Bishop is the visionary and Pastor Natalie is the administrator / manager, magnifying whatever God called him to do. Whether it is developing the church's first manual, to establishing Calvary Christian Academy (the first African-American Christian School in the Hampton Roads area), to assisting in the establishment of Calvary Bible College, Pastor Natalie makes the vision a reality. This dynamic couple represents not only a partnership in ministry, but a holistic partnership in life as well.

ADVICE FOR THE PASTOR'S WIFE

Pastor Natalie has over 11 blessed years in ministry with her husband. By knowing who she is in Christ, recognizing her God given gifts, and caring for her first ministry (her family), Pastor Natalie has proven to be a successful wife and minister. For a new pastor's wife, she advises the importance in knowing your calling: "Spend time in prayer and discern what God has called you to do. Don't try to be someone else. Others will render their opinion on what a pastor's wife should do. Know who you are, know what your gifts are, operate in that area, and stay where you are anointed."

Membership at Calvary Community Church began at 45 in 1990 to over 1,800 in 2003. The key to this abundance begins with ministering to her husband. “Don’t get so busy doing ‘church work’ that you forget each other. If my husband can’t minister at home, he has no business ministering at church because he will be ineffective. As we minister unto each other and our relationship is in tact, that same anointing will fall upon those in the congregation. People are drawn to strong marriages and strong families. This is the key to our exploding church growth. You can’t fake an anointed marriage with your spouse and an anointed relationship with your children. God has called us to be an example of how to apply biblical principles to everyday life.”

MAKING TIME FOR GOD

If one is not careful, a prayer life can be easily weakened in a busy lifestyle. Pastor Natalie admits she is not an early morning person, yet she sets intimate time in her day with the Lord before leaving home. Her time begins with a devotional, which includes two chapters in the Old Testament, two chapters of Psalms, the Proverb of the day, and two chapters in the New Testament. She then spends time in worship and praise before praying. Pastor Natalie emphasizes the need to pray before leaving home: “If you put it [prayer] off until later, later never comes. Give God the first fruits of your time.”

CARING FOR THE TEMPLE

In addition to all that Pastor Natalie is called to do, she also takes time to care for her physical needs. The admonition to do so came from a health-focused fast, an annual event that Calvary’s congregation participates in 21 days preceding Easter. Since March of 2001, Pastor Natalie has shed a total of almost 50 pounds and dropped 6 dress sizes! She serves as a motivational and inspirational mentor to many women, particularly during

Calvary’s weekly strength training and aerobics classes held each Tuesday and Friday at 6 p.m. The energy and enthusiasm exuding from Pastor Natalie, in addition to her new physique, have come as a result of making wiser choices regarding food consumption and exercise. “I believe that God gave us our bodies to glorify Him. That means we should be careful of what we put inside them, and how we treat them, if He is to dwell within us. I’ve learned that I can’t fulfill my purpose and destiny if my temple isn’t as healthy and whole as my spirit. So, as a part of my daily routine, I keep a health journal with daily entries of my breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner choices as well as activities or exercise for the day. I try to drink plenty of water and stay away from a lot of starches, white flour and enriched foods and too much sugar, and I exercise at least 3 to 5 days a week for 45 minutes with cardiovascular activities and free weights. Consistency and moderation are important factors in maintaining my health and balancing my life.”

WALKING IN EXCELLENCE

Pastor Natalie’s lifestyle exemplifies the blessings of walking in excellence through service and commitment to the Lord. By keeping God/family/ministry priorities in order, anyone can achieve a balanced lifestyle. And it all begins with the faith of a little child!



