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## **TOGETHER: Retreat can aid ministers' marriages**

Rosemary and I have worked on our marriage. Through the years, it has been more than worth it!

For 42 years, we have experienced both the joys and the difficulties pastoral ministry places on marriage. We still are learning how to communicate with each other and how to improve our understanding of each other. Some days are incredible joys. Other days can be very trying and difficult. Being in ministry is a wonderful privilege, but it can be tough on a marriage. Sometimes the balance is hard to find.

We have to make time to invest in our relationship. One of the ways we plan to do that this year is by attending the Celebrating Marriage in Ministry Retreat in San Antonio, Sept. 11-13, sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. This event takes an intentional and proactive approach in encouraging healthy marriages. An event like this can help to remind us how to keep our romance alive, how to connect with each other even in conflict and how to pray more effectively together.

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Marriage is a wonderful gift. Our partner can be a cheerleader, confidant, comforter, companion and best friend. But those aspects of our relationships do not come automatically. Relationships take time and the investment of the best and deepest parts of ourselves. Marriage is work, and sometimes it is very hard work.

The storms of life wash over us like waves. Many marriages survive those storms and are stronger because of them. Sometimes the storms come when resources are depleted, and the conflict proves to be too much for empty relationships to survive. What can be done to replenish those resources, to renew and strengthen marriages?

We need to make our marriages a priority. Ministers need to take time away to attend events like this one in San Antonio. Congregations can help in this process and help their ministers' marriages thrive and succeed. One way to make that happen is for your congregation to give this weekend to your minister and spouse as a gift. This could be a wonderful way to show appreciation to your minister for the great investment the pastor (or minister) has made to your congregation. Ministers, put this on your calendar and make it a priority for you and your spouse.

Ministers' marriages are not immune to the temptations and wear and tear from living in a world that sees less and less value in marriage. According to the Barna Research Group, the divorce rate in ministry marriages has risen 65 percent in the last 25 years. That is a startling statistic. For our

ministry families, little time off and living under constant scrutiny puts additional pressure and strains on the marriage relationship.

Ministers can be the very ones modeling healthy marriages. When the minister takes time with his or her spouse for a date night, husbands and wives in the congregation find encouragement to invest similar time in their own marriages. Our convention wants to give our ministers the tools they need to replenish their resources and invest their time and energy into their own marriages. I believe that can be one of the best ways we can encourage healthier marriages among all our church families.

For more information on this event, call toll-free (888) 447-5143 or go to [www.bgct.org/marriageretreat](http://www.bgct.org/marriageretreat) or e-mail [cavin@bgct.org](mailto:cavin@bgct.org).

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