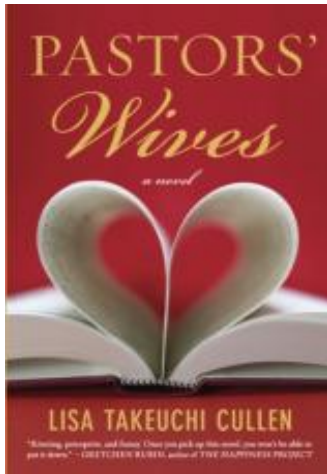


Pastors' Wives

by Lisa Takeuchi Cullen



About the Book

"Riveting, perceptive, and funny. Once you pick up this novel, you won't be able to put it down."

—Gretchen Rubin, author of *THE HAPPINESS PROJECT*

Lisa Takeuchi Cullen's debut novel, *PASTORS' WIVES*, follows three women whose lives converge and intertwine at a Southern evangelical megachurch. Ruthie follows her Wall Street husband from New York to Magnolia, a fictional suburb of Atlanta, when he hears a calling to serve at a megachurch called Greenleaf. Candace is Greenleaf's "First Lady," a force of nature who will stop at nothing to protect her church and her superstar husband. Ginger, married to Candace's son, struggles to play dutiful wife and mother while burying her calamitous past. All their roads collide in one chaotic event that exposes their true selves.

Inspired by Cullen's reporting as a staff writer for *Time* magazine, *PASTORS' WIVES* is a well-drawn portrayal of the private lives of three women caught between the demands of marriage, duty and love.

More Praise for *PASTORS' WIVES*:

"Hilarious and moving. The characters are so real, I want to friend them on Facebook."

—A.J. Jacobs, author of *THE YEAR OF LIVING BIBLICALLY*

"With a reporter's eye for detail and a writer's heart for the everyday truths we all face...a terrific first novel, fast-paced and fresh, full of sly wit and compassion."

—Laura Zigman, author of *ANIMAL HUSBANDRY* and *PIECE OF WORK*

"*PASTORS' WIVES* is often surprising yet always emotional, set in a world most of us know only from the outside."

—*USA Today*

Discussion Guide

1. The novel opens with what Ruthie calls "an act of defiance" -- the purchase of a *Star* magazine. How does this set the tone for the novel? Why is it important for her to assert that she hasn't changed? What does it tell you about her?
2. What is your first impression of Candace? What does her initial interaction with the church elders tell you about her? Did your opinion of her change over the course of the book?
3. Consider Aaron's interfaith ministry. How does the novel represent Baptists, Catholics, Muslims, and Jews? Do you think that these faiths have more in common than some might assume? How so?
4. Though this book tackles some serious subjects, it's also lighthearted and humorous. How does the author's wit inform the novel? How does she use humor to tell her story?
5. One of the questions that the novel asks repeatedly is "what is it like when the man you married decides to marry God?" What is it like for the women in the novel? Can you imagine yourself in such a role?
6. Ginger notes that she regularly dreams about Timothy's death. What do these dreams mean to her? Why do you think she has dreams like this?
7. Aaron's sermon about fear affects Ruthie deeply. What is it about his call to "fear not" that strikes such a nerve in her? Does it have anything to do with the recent death of her mother?
8. What do you make of Candace's appraisals of the people around her? The Matterses? Her own children? How does she find them wanting? She thinks to herself that she does not judge people, but is that true? Does she view herself with the same critical eye?
9. What does the retreat for PASTORS' WIVES offer to Ginger? To Kaycee? How does it help them grow? Do you think Kaycee and Ginger would have found the strength to make the changes they needed to make in their lives without it? What does the novel have to say about camaraderie between women on the whole?
10. What do you make of Ruthie's relationship with Juan? Does her need for a friend outside the Greenleaf community blind her to his intentions? On the other hand, what do you think about Jerry's relationship with Gee?
11. Were you surprised by the lengths Candace went to in order to protect Ginger? Was that truly what she was doing? Why doesn't she tell Ginger about it?
12. "Let me take care of it" becomes a motif of the book. How do the characters take care of each other? Of themselves? Consider Ruthie's relationships with her siblings, her dad, and Jerry.

13. Do you think that Ruthie's mother's death has affected her in ways she isn't truly aware of? What effect does it have on her faith? On her father's faith?

14. Does the shooting change Candace? How so?

15. What were your thoughts on the end of the novel? Has Ruthie taken her dad's advice to have faith in anything at all? What do you make of her father's advice? What do you think the novel is trying to say about faith? Is it important, regardless of whether or not it's religious?

Author Bio

Lisa Takeuchi Cullen was a foreign correspondent and staff writer for Time magazine, covering social trends, news, arts, and business in the U.S. and Asia. She now writes novels and develops television pilots. Cullen grew up in Kobe, Japan, and lives in New Jersey with her husband and two daughters. Her first book, REMEMBER ME: A LIVELY TOUR OF THE NEW AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH, was about the year she spent crashing funerals and was a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers pick. PASTORS' WIVES is her first novel.

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