Church Folk

by Michele Andrea Bowen



About the Book

Theophilus Henry Simmons is young, single, sexy, and just about the finest black man any wishful mother and daughter have ever seen in Charleston, Mississippi. He's also a pastor. And when he starts courting the quiet, homespun Essie Lee Lane-and she accepts his marriage proposal-a few of the church folk decide to teach Essie what it really means to be a pastor's wife, and show her how little she knows about them. But as Theophilus gains prominence in his denomination, Essie evolves from a mousy parishioner into an independent and Godly woman. Now sporting an afro and driving her new purple Cadillac, Essie teaches the church folk what it really means to stand by your man-and your beliefs.

Discussion Guide

1. Theophilus's improper relationship with Glodean Benson haunted him for many years, long after the affair was over. How was God's mercy evidenced in Theophilus's life and ministry? Read **2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 41:4-5,12; Jeremiah 3:25-4:2**.

2. Rev. James reminded Theophilus that the Lord had forgiven him for having an affair with Glodean, yet he continued to live in fear of repercussions. Why do believers often have such a hard time believing that God has forgiven them? Read **Psalm 37:23-24**. How can they break free? **Psalm 103:1-13; Proverbs 28:13.**

3. What was your reaction to Theophilus going to an establishment like Pompey's Rib Joint? Do you think ministers should avoid such places? Read **1 Thessalonians 5:22**; **Romans 14:21**. Or do you feel that Theophilus's behavior was entirely acceptable and appropriate? Read **Ecclesiastes 8:15; Matthew 11:19; John 2:1-2.**

4. Theophilus is obviously a very passionate man. How does Theophilus's life and ministry show evidence that he had submitted himself and his passions to godly control? Read **Romans 8:4-6; Galatians 5:16-17;24.**

5. At the beginning of their association with one another, why do you think that Theophilus was so intrigued by Essie, even though she tried to maintain a facade of disdain for him? Read **Ruth 2:1-10; Esther 2:17; Song of Songs 4:12; 6:11-13**.

6. Theophilus chose to marry a woman who did not fit the mold of the typical pastor's wife of that time. How did the Lord use her uniqueness to serve Him by supporting her husband and finding her own place in ministry? Read **Proverbs 18:22; 31:10-20; Song of Songs 6:8-9; Luke 1:5-6.**

7. How did Essie demonstrate confidence in herself and her husband's love, despite the fact that other women were obviously attracted to her handsome, dynamic husband? **Proverbs 31:25-31**. In what ways do you think she discovered that being a minister's wife is a ministry and a special calling of its own?

8. Essie had to cope with people who accepted her only after she became a pastor's wife. Why do people, including Christians, try to rank the worthiness of human beings based on their social standing? **Job 23:18-19**; **Matthew 5:47; Romans 2:11.** Do you think many women have wanted to marry a minister in order to obtain a higher status in their community?

9. Why are many women in the church like Glodean, obsessed with "trapping" a preacher? Why do you think men are enticed by such women? Read **Proverbs 7:4-27.**

10. Both Precious and Saphronia, feeling betrayed, sought their own revenge against Marcel Brown. Why do some Christians seek revenge instead of turning to the Lord when times get tough? **Read Leviticus. 19:18**; **Judges 16:28**. How should they respond instead? Read **Matthew 5:38-48**; **Romans 12:19.**

11. Precious was willing to engage in various unsavory acts because she loved Marcel. How could she ever have hoped that their relationship, given its nature, would prosper? Have you ever found yourself going just a little too far to try and hold on to a relationship? **Read Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 16:3.**

12. Saphronia and her grandmother looked down on those whose speech, skin color, or socio-economic status was viewed as less than her own. Do you believe people who think this way ever stop to consider how God feels about their attitude/beliefs? Read **Matthew 25:40; Romans 12:2-10**. How can black Christians address such behavior within the Black Church?

13. Marcel Brown referred to men like Murcheson James as "high-and-mighties who think God called them just so that they could keep an eye on" the actions of other ministers. Should more ministers concern themselves with the unsavory actions of fellow clergy? **Read Luke 17:3; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Galatians 6:1.**

14. Why are so many ministers-like Marcel Brown, his father Ernest, Sonny Washington, and Bishop Caruthers-able to get away with so much mess in the church? **Jeremiah 5:26-28; Matthew 24:5,11,24; Romans 16:17-18.**

15. For a time it seemed as though corrupt leaders like Otis Caruthers, Ernest and Marcel Brown, and the Senior Bishop, would triumph in their wicked ways. What should be our response be when it seems as if the rotten people in the world seem to always get ahead? **Read Job 21:7-16; Psalm 37:7; Habakkuk 3:17-19.**

16. Corruption among certain bishops and pastors was well known, yet tolerated in silence. Why do some good people stand by silently when theyknow things are not right? **Read Esther 4:14; Psalm 37:14; 39:1-2.**

17. Church Folk affirms that love, passion, and desire, when properly focused, are acceptable feelings/behaviors for God's people and are part of His blessings to His people. Read **Genesis 24:15-27**; Song of Songs. Why do you think this message has become distorted among some church folk, many of whom believe such behavior is improper for Christians?

18. How does the book's ending demonstrate the spiritual truth that wickedness and evil cannot prevail over righteousness? Read **Psalm 37:14-15,25; 94:14-15; Proverbs 10:25; 29:16; 2 Peter 2:9.**

19. Many of the problems that afflicted the Black Church during the 1960s-womanizing preachers, classism, color prejudice, women granting sexual favors to ministers-remain today. How can we move beyond these issues instead of tolerating them or accepting them as the norm? Read **Leviticus 26:40-42; Ezekiel 37:8-14; Jeremiah 5:31; 18:6; 1 John 1:9.**

20. How should Christians respond to persons who shun church membership because of corruption with the ranks of its leadership? Read **Acts 5:29**; **1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 3:4-11; 1 Peter 4:18.**

Author Bio

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