

Five Ways Mark Has Cared for Me in the Ministry, (and You Can Care for Your Wife, Too) Notes from an interview in May, 2026

1. How many years have you had together in marriage and ministry?

This makes 44 years in ministry and marriage. 32 years here at CHBC.

2. Are there any particular struggles you have faced as a pastor's wife in these years?

Two, particularly:

- Fighting the temptation that the best pastor's wife is a "Princess of Wow." Someone who has everything together, knows everyone in the church by name, meets everyone's expectations, and does everything right.
- Fighting the temptation to feel that our family is a "Gospel Blocker" if our needs mean that Mark needs to do less at church or has to turn down a good gospel opportunity, especially those that take him away from home.

3. What has Mark done to help you with these struggles and care well for your family, even as he has cared well for the church?

Five ways:

#1: By being an Ephesians 5 husband, committed to sacrificially loving me as Christ loved the Church.

Being clear to me (and to others) that regardless of what else he does, that I remain, in God's plan and in Mark's life, his top priority of care. He says to me, "They can get another pastor, but you are my wife for life."

#2 By encouraging me to be a Proverbs 31 Bookends wife

Not so much focusing on the middle of that passage, but on the key characteristics found in:
v.12, Bookend #1: "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life."
v. 30, Bookend #2: "a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."

Mark's not-infrequent pep talk to me:

"Look to me. Support me. This is best for me, our family and for the church. There's no one in a position to support me like you. Don't be a Princess of Wow. Be a plain ordinary woman, dependent upon the power of the word. Be my wife and mother to our kids! Be a regular faithful church member. This is what you are called to do, not meet everyone's expectations as a Princess of Wow. This is worth far more "than jewels" to me. I lack "nothing of value" as you do these things. (Prov.31:10-11) This is where "honor" lies (Prov. 31:31).

#3: By being a 1 Timothy 3:1-7 Pastor

1 Timothy 3:1-7 says:

"Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full[a] respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under

the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."

The summary of these 1 Timothy 3 qualifications for a man to become and to STAY a pastor/elder fall into three categories:

- Teach the church and keep it pure.
- Lead with godly character; provide a godly example.
- Manage his own household well.

I remember these better as:

- Nourish the church.
- Furnish godly leadership/example.
- Flourish the family.

The word "manage" definitely includes that a man provides and his family follows his godly leadership. But for me, the biggest take away is that when our family needs lead to a change in when or what Mark does in ministry, that does not mean we are being a Gospel Blocker. Instead, I understand now that Mark caring well for our needs is actually AN INTEGRAL PART OF what he's called to do as a pastor. And to withhold honestly sharing with him about our needs keeps him from being able to good decisions about ministry, as the Lord calls him to. And that is definitely NOT doing him good, but harm!

We've come to call this Marriage-shaped Ministry. The idea that God has woven the needs of our family INTO the shape of Mark's ministry so that he both nourishes the church AND flourishes the family.

By flourishing, it's the idea that the family is in a pattern of well-being, even through the bumps of ministry. It certainly does NOT mean there's no sacrifice involved, or sadness or difficulties. It DOES mean he and I look carefully at the sacrifices our family makes for the sake of ministry and choose them together.

And the amazing thing about this, is that it's not just good for our family and keeps Mark qualified to be a pastor/elder as Mark makes good balanced decisions for us. But it also FURNISHES a wonderful example for the many other men in the church, in the ministry or not, who God is also calling to balance family life with their careers. It's another way that Mark equips the church for works of service to build one another up.

And, we've found that the church is blessed by the time Mark spends in the "crock-pot" of our family life, growing in wisdom, character, dependence upon God that then flows out to bless the church in how he counsels, preaches, and prays, to name just a few things.

#4: Live with Psalm 16:5-8 confidence for God's plan for the Church and for our family

Psalm 16:5-8: "Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

David, who wrote this psalm, had many boundary lines that DIDN'T look pleasant at face value. But because of his knowledge of God and faith in Him, he had confidence that all the boundaries were indeed pleasant in God's sovereign plans.

Mark's complete confidence in God's sovereignty as needs in our family change the boundaries of his ministry has been perhaps the most helpful to me. Even if our needs eventually mean he is to step down

from the ministry in order to care well for me/our family. "Is it time to go?" he has asked me, numerous times in our life in ministry. And while I'm sure that there would be sadness in leaving, what I see in him is confidence that God knows what He's doing. The Church is HIS bride and He will care for her, with or without my husband. This attitude simply grows my love for him and for the church.

Sometimes, the church can feel like a mistress, taking so much a pastor's affection and time. But Mark's confidence in God's sovereignty regarding when and if we should stay in the ministry or not, takes that away. I am my husband's partner FOR the good of the Bride of Christ, not in competition with her. "The boundaries have fallen in pleasant places" because God sets them.

#5: By being an Ephesians 4:11-13 Equipper of the Church

Ephesians 4:11-13: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

This is where the biblical principles Mark calls the 9 Marks of a Healthy Church come in. Pastors equipping a church to build one another up into the fullness of Christ.

Not only is this what God has given pastors to do for their church, but it blesses ministry families. Pastors are not building a church of consumership but one of every member discipleship. There isn't a one man show, but a deep bench of pastor/elders to lead the church. As the church learns to build one another up, it makes room for the pastor to better balance family and ministry, because he's not the one-stop shop for every member's needs.

4. What happened in 2025 that particularly challenged Mark and you to maintain the balance between family needs and ministry?

In January 2025, I developed an extremely rare, very debilitating autoimmune condition that first attacked my kidneys and then the nerves in my arms and legs leading to complete paralysis. I spent 100 days in the hospital over seven stays as they searched for the cause and tried to get control or find a cure for it. And perhaps not surprisingly, last year's difficulties lead to Mark discussing with me and others as to whether it was time for him to completely step down from ministry at beloved Capitol Hill Baptist in order to care for me.

But by the grace of God, the support of our church, and some very smart doctors, we made it through the year, I responded to a drug, which gives me four months relief at a time, instead of two weeks. Yes, I'm still in a wheelchair and using a walker. My hospital bed is in our living room and just a few days ago was the first time in almost a year that I was able to climb stairs. I can only walk for five minutes at a time. But I can do dishes, make dinner, and other household basics. With the help of able-legged friends, I've continued to hold kids' outreach events in our front yard and Children's Ministry workshops during the Pastor Weekenders we hold three times a year. It's not what life used to be, but together, we have found a new balance and a way to flourish our family while Mark continues to nourish the members of Capitol Hill Baptist as their pastor.

5. How did the church help you through this?

In so many ways! Here are but some:

- Elders telling Mark to do less and helping him do less by stepping up to take on leading worship service/offering to preach, etc.
- A host of women members taking turns feeding me, caring for me in hospital/at home.
- Pastors coming to sing songs to me.
- Men driving Mark downtown and just waiting in the car while he visited me. (almost no parking downtown DC)
- Many people praying and sending encouragements.
- Others offering to help pay for what became some hefty medical bills.

6. How did the church's help to you and Mark last year enrich your thoughts about the church?

I've always been a fan of the 9 Marks because I do believe they are biblical principles that make churches healthy. But last year, I think I came to see more than ever what a BEAUTIFUL CHURCH is a healthy church. It glistens with God's glory and shows off His love for those who call on His name. And it is like a beacon to those who do not know Him, to come, taste and see.

When you spend one hundred days in the hospital, people get to know you. In my case, because of the church's support for us at the hospital, they didn't just get to know me. They got to know Mark and so many others from our church. And as they were amazed at how they selflessly served me, they asked about Jesus. And it amazes me to realize that if I hadn't had so many hospital stays and if I hadn't gone down to paralysis so that I could not care for myself, the church's beautiful display would not have been so amazing. Praise God! Suffering is never for nothing, as Elizabeth Elliot used to say. On this side of heaven, where we will still know suffering, may the Lord fill every occasion of it with His grace and an opportunity to display His love, up to Him and out to the church and to the world.

"And this is how all men will know you are my disciples when you have love for one another."

-- John 13:35

7. What did you reflect on from God's truth that helped you through your sufferings?

Two "Surely's" were so helpful:

#1: Isaiah 53:4

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

There were some very dark times, when I could not move my arms or legs at all. No one knew if they would ever find a way to control this condition. At first, all I could see was a deep pit of suffering.

But one night, the Lord reminded me of something that Betsey ten Boom once said to her despairing sister, Corrie, while they were in Ravensbrück concentration camp: "There is no pit that God is not deeper still." I began to stop thinking of my paralysis, and how intensely awful it was, as a yardstick measuring down into the depths of my suffering, but as a flagpole pointing upward, being a display of me the height of God's love. That He would bear the full force of this suffering and so much more for all of God's people when He died on the cross for us! Absolutely amazing!

#2: Psalm 23:6

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

By looking for the Lord's goodness and mercy each day, the Lord helped me to be grateful and joyful. He helped me know that He would help me be grace-full and faith-full for whatever purposes He had for my suffering BECAUSE He is the giver of grace and He is always faithful.

8. How did what you went through last year impact Mark's ministry to the church?

In some ways, Mark did less at the church. He cancelled going on a big trip to Turkey to host a conference celebrating 1700-year anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Other pastors took on some of the things he usually did at our church. He found substitutes to step in for his role in the Nicaea conference. I know he certainly was more tired than usual trying to do everything and also just because he was concerned about me. He juggled a lot, but always took time away from other things to come visit me at the hospital.

But the Lord used these difficulties to enrich Mark's preaching and prayers and that was a positive impact upon the church. Many members mentioned that to me. Once more, there's the Lord using what is happening in our lives to make Mark a better pastor for the church!

9. Any last words to pastors with wives who are discouraged because of limitations from chronic illness?

The Lord doesn't waste anything! Even if He doesn't take away your suffering, you can know that He will always fill it with His good purposes. And, in my years in the ministry next to Mark, I've come to see that it hasn't been the "Princess of Wow" pastor's wife that has been an encouragement to the church, but the "Princess of Weakness." The blessings that have come from my struggles far outweigh everything else. There are only two kinds of days: good days and good fighting days. We LOVE good days of sunshine and roses, but God loves good fighting days to grow us to depend upon Him more and to reflect His all-surpassing greatness, goodness, and faithfulness.

(This was turned into two 9Marks podcasts available through 9marks.org.)