



**Mark and Mary Bonham** | 1992 Quail Run Dr. | Kalamazoo, MI 49009

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Dear Friends and Family,

Isaiah the prophet spoke of a time to come that sounds like today's news. He foresaw people distressed and hungry roaming through the land. Famished, they become enraged. "They will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness." (Isaiah 8:21-22) Into this darkness God intervenes. A great light dawns, oppression is lifted, and warriors' boots are used for fuel for fire. The catalyst for all of this is the coming of the one called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace who will establish justice and uphold righteousness. (Isaiah 9:2-7)

As we look back to Christ's birth we also look forward to his kingdom reign on earth. This is what gives us hope and purpose amid an increasingly dysfunctional world dominated by pride, arrogance, and suffering. Christmas calls us to look back and to look forward, so that we are prepared for phase two of the fulfillment of God's promise. Hold on, for that day is coming!



In the meantime, we move forward. Here are 2023 highlights:

I continue to work with singles and couples. This year I counseled 15 people in 141 appointments. In addition to in-person counseling I met online with people on three continents: South America, Asia, and Europe.

In January I started to write Loving Well 2 by request from leaders using Loving Well 1. It is now at the stage

of layout and graphic design and the plan is to publish this marriage manual in the first quarter of 2024. The subtitle is "Navigating the Crucible of Marriage", which consists of twelve sessions accompanied by small group exercises and homework. A leader's guide is also being prepared.

Through the year I conducted worship services on the first Sunday of every other month at Park Village Pines, a local Christian assisted living facility. I also served as an elder at our church. I am



also the Growth Group Coordinator there, providing quarterly training for small group leaders. Mary participates in one of these groups and coordinates kitchen hospitality.

Over the past year I have met every two weeks with three other men in a "Legacy Cohort". This is for Christian men recently retired who want to be fruitful in their personal, marriage, family, and ministry life. It provides encouragement and accountability for men to press on so that their legacy is seen through the lives they invest in.

In April Mary and I conducted a four day Loving Well 1 intensive that involved four other couples in Scottsdale, Arizona. These couples were bilingual Spanish speakers, and, with the assistance of Wally and Karen DeSmet, our Mission Associates in Phoenix, important steps were taken to deepen their marriage relationships.

In August we travelled to Medellin, Colombia, to lead a pilot group of seven couples from five countries who had either led or participated in Loving Well 1, using the new Loving Well 2 manual. The responses and feedback were very encouraging, and it was a great week of discussing marriage ministry as well as working on leaders' marriages. Loving Well groups are having great impact in Argentina and Arizona, and interest is growing in surrounding areas.



In September Mary had her first surgery for breast cancer, which had been discovered in August. She was hopeful that the surgery would be adequate to deal with the cancer, but tests revealed that the cancer had spread to surrounding lymph nodes. She was diagnosed with stage three cancer and in November she had further surgery to remove more lymph nodes. She is to start chemotherapy later this month, to be followed by radiation. Her doctor feels her prognosis is good with the additional measures, which should be completed around Easter.

In October I spent a week serving at Open Heart's Ministry at the Maranatha Bible Conference Center at Norton Shores, Michigan. I conducted a training session for leaders on

understanding shame and served as group leader with participants from eastern Canada, Florida, Texas, and Washington state. Plans are in the making for a local Men's Story Group with participants in the Kalamazoo area starting in January using OHM's curriculum.

Shepherd's Heart helps cover our ministry and travel expenses and provides supplemental income through a minister's housing allowance. We are very grateful for our partners that help us continue to minister at home and abroad. Your prayers are especially appreciated for Mary's full recovery and for Loving Well to continue to impact marriages nationally and internationally.



Our daughter, Marci and her family are in Hungary this month. She enjoys showing her boys where she lived when she was their age. She keeps sending pictures of food, so I know they are having a great culinary experience. She's visiting friends from our ministry there from 1984-1997.

Our son, Matt and his family are busily involved with their Christian homeschool, managing the facility where they meet, teaching, and taking part in all the theatrical productions that the school put on.



From all of us, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Love, Mark and Mary