



# Mark Riggins

## References



## Candidate Reference — Former Pastor

Campus Pastor for Crossroads Fellowship, Odessa, TX

- 1. How long have you known the candidate, and in what context?**  
I've known Mark about 16 years. Mark and I served together in a church. He was on staff and I was a volunteer and eventually ended up on staff together. We have remained close friends.
- 2. What do you admire most about the heart of the candidate (i.e., who they are)?**  
What I admire most about Mark's heart is he sees the best in people. I've never left a conversation with Mark that I didn't feel empowered and encouraged.
- 3. What are the candidate's primary gifts and strengths/talents (i.e., what they do)?**  
His primary gifts and strengths are building leaders, casting vision, applying God's word, encouragement, and organization.
- 4. How would you characterize the candidate's leadership style (collaborative, visionary, independent, authoritative, decisive, etc.)? Please elaborate.**  
I would say collaborative and visionary are his leadership style. Mark is great at putting all the pieces together from many different people and ideas and casting that vision.
- 5. How do you think the candidate will work with an executive board?**  
I know Mark as a team player with strength and humility so he will work well with an executive board.
- 6. What evidence can you share that would cause you to believe the candidate can overcome potential distrust, leading them to thrive in this role?**  
He wrote a book about overcoming potential distrust... "Stuck".
- 7. Describe his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for the staff?**  
As stated earlier regarding his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for staff, I've never left a meeting with Mark not feeling loved, empowered, and confident to do what was ahead of me.
- 8. Where does the candidate get into trouble or get egg on his/her face?**  
I would say pride is where he can get into trouble, but he's learned that lesson.
- 9. We are all broken people; in what ways have you observed brokenness in the candidate, and how has he/she dealt with it?**  
I saw brokenness in Mark when he and a former Pastor got sideways. He was the one that took the high road, humbled himself and made amends. He wrote a book to help other people not have the same problem he did.
- 10. Given the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, what advice would you give to the elder board as they partner with and oversee the candidate?**  
Honestly, the best advice I have for the board is to trust him. He's honest.
- 11. Are there any last thoughts you'd like to share?**  
I would love to get to work with Mark. I still let him know when we have staff openings. He's a great asset for the Kingdom.

## Candidate Reference — Elder Chair

Elder Chair for Encounter Church, Ventura, CA

1. **How long have you known the candidate, and in what context?**

I have known Mark since the time he came to Encounter Church 7 years ago. He was selected to fill the Community Life Pastor's role after the former Community Life Pastor was selected to be our Lead Pastor. At the time, I was not on the Elder Board; however, was elected to serve as a member approximately two years later. My interaction with Mark is primarily through Encounter, as a member of the congregation and as the current Elder Board Chair.

2. **What do you admire most about the heart of the candidate (i.e., who they are)?**

The thing I admire most about Mark's heart is his passion for our Lord and his commitment to walk in His ways. Mark's commitment is shown daily in the way in which he interacts with others as a deeply caring person as well as the spiritual leadership he shows with his family.

3. **What are the candidate's primary gifts and strengths/talents (i.e., what they do)?**

As noted above, Mark is a deeply caring person and bases his ministry on developing relationships with others. He is easy to talk with and open (transparent) to others. He is also a gifted speaker; all of the Encounter members I have spoken to look forward to Mark's teaching from the pulpit. Another of his strengths is found in his ability to plan, develop and deliver teachings. He had a vision to lead interested members through the entire Bible in something like 8 weeks on Wednesday evenings. Mark had somewhere around 200 people attend this Bible study, during which he helped those in attendance understand the history and complexities of the Bible in an interactive and understandable manner.

4. **How would you characterize the candidate's leadership style (collaborative, visionary, independent, authoritative, decisive, etc.)? Please elaborate.**

I would describe Mark's leadership style as collaborative and visionary. He doesn't shy away from making a decision; however does so after gathering input from others. He does not discount others' input and makes everyone involved feel that they were a valued part of the process. This is once again based on his ability to draw others in and develop relationships with them. As to casting vision, as noted above, he had the idea to lead a Wednesday night Bible study that would take Encounter members through the Bible in about 8 weeks. Mark developed the vision into an executable plan and delivered the study to approximately 200 Encounter members and guests.

5. **How do you think the candidate will work with an executive board?**

I truly believe that Mark will interact very well with an executive board. Mark does not need to be micro-managed. The board would have the ability to set policy and feel confident that Mark will accomplish that policy in an effective and collaborative manner.

6. What evidence can you share that would cause you to believe the candidate can overcome potential distrust, leading them to thrive in this role?

As with any change within an organization, when Mark first came to Encounter 7 years ago Encounter members had no idea of who he was or what type of pastor he would be. I wouldn't call it "distrust" let's just say that there were Encounter members that had a "watchful" eye on Mark. Mark's open and honest style coupled with his ability to develop relationships lead to widespread support of his ministry.

7. Describe his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for the staff?

Mark's staff consists of volunteers, which are typically more difficult to motivate and keep engaged than paid staff. As noted above, 7 years ago Mark was hired to be the Community Life Pastor for Encounter (at the time known as Bible Fellowship Church). In this role he was charged with developing, expanding and caring for the small group ministry within our church. Under his leadership, Mark has been able to exponentially expand the number of small groups that meet weekly outside of Saturday/Sunday worship services. Mark's ability to develop volunteer small group leaders and then train and nurture them has lead to this expansion.

8. Where does the candidate get into trouble or get egg on his/her face?

I have not observed or heard of an area that Mark has struggled with in this area.

9. We are all broken people; in what ways have you observed brokenness in the candidate, and how has he/she dealt with it?

I have not observed first hand, areas in which Mark has displayed brokenness. The closest observation of this would be his biblical teachings, during which he talks about his personal struggles and how he has dealt with them.

10. Given the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, what advice would you give to the elder board as they partner with and oversee the candidate?

Although Mark has never been a Lead Pastor, I believe that he is gifted with the skills and abilities to be successful in that role. I would caution the Board against micro-managing Mark; rather, set policy and allow Mark the freedom of accomplishing that policy in his own manner.

11. Are there any last thoughts you'd like to share?

I have watched Mark grow over the past 7 years. Although he was initially hired as the Community Life Pastor, he has developed into a competent assistant pastor (unofficial title). About a year and a half ago Mark went to our Lead Pastor, Daniel, and Executive Pastor, Jack, letting them know that he felt God was leading him to be a lead pastor. Daniel and Jack came to the Elder Board to let us know of Mark's calling. The Board gave approval for Daniel to work with Mark in developing a team teaching plan. Daniel and Mark agreed to an initial 60/30 (approximate) split in teaching time, eventually growing to a 50/50 percentage over whatever time frame seemed appropriate. Mark again came to Daniel and Jack earlier this year, saying that his increased teaching time has also increased his belief that God is calling him to be a lead pastor. Mark came to an Elder Board meeting and shared his heart with us. All of the Elders support Mark's calling and recognize that this will leave a big vacancy in Encounter's leadership; however, we are equally convinced that with God's hand in it another is already being prepared to take his place.

## Candidate Reference — Lead Pastor

Lead Pastor of Encounter Church in Ventura, CA

- 1. How long have you known the candidate, and in what context?**  
I've known Mark for 7 Years. He's been the Community Life Pastor where I am the Lead Pastor on staff.
- 2. What do you admire most about the heart of the candidate (i.e., who they are)?**  
Mark is a true man of God and man of the Word of God. He loves God deeply and seeks to honor Him in all that he does.
- 3. What are the candidate's primary gifts and strengths/talents (i.e., what they do)?**  
Mark's primary gifts are a gifted leader, a visionary, great speaker and good group life organizer.
- 4. How would you characterize the candidate's leadership style (collaborative, visionary, independent, authoritative, decisive, etc.)? Please elaborate.**  
Mark's leadership style is he has great vision but loves collaboration. He is easy to like and easy to get along with.
- 5. How do you think the candidate will work with an executive board?**  
He will work very well with an elder board. He has had no issues here with our board.
- 6. What evidence can you share that would cause you to believe the candidate can overcome potential distrust, leading them to thrive in this role?**  
Mark will be able to overcome potential distrust because he is patient and methodical. He's got thick skin and a tender heart--so I think he would win a real following if given time in a location.
- 7. Describe his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for the staff?**  
He's very caring toward the people he oversees. They love him! He is clear in his direction and thoughtful in his delegation.
- 8. Where does the candidate get into trouble or get egg on his/her face?**  
I have not seen Mark get in any trouble. He navigates even difficult situations with poise and patience.
- 9. We are all broken people; in what ways have you observed brokenness in the candidate, and how has he/she dealt with it?**  
Mark can appear at times to be more focused on the work of the ministry than his own walk with God. I believe that is just a style thing. He walks with God--I know that for a fact. But he can easily move to thinking "strategy" as opposed to communicating the need for prayer and seeking God. This is not a flaw, but style of thinking and communicating.
- 10. Given the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, what advice would you give to the elderboard as they partner with and oversee the candidate?**  
I'd tell the elder board to love Mark and give him wings and he'll serve your fellowship well!
- 11. Are there any last thoughts you'd like to share?**  
My last thoughts are that I'm going to miss him terribly!

## Candidate Reference — Executive Pastor

Executive Pastor for Encounter Church in Ventura, CA

- 1. How long have you known the candidate, and in what context?**  
I have known Mark for 7 years. I'm the Executive Pastor and he reported to me.
- 2. What do you admire most about the heart of the candidate (i.e., who they are)?**  
I admire his genuine love for people and his compassion for those hurting. He has an ability to develop productive strategies for ministry and has a heart to keep learning. He is an avid reader and listens to outstanding leaders through podcasts. His passion to see people mobilized for ministry.
- 3. What are the candidate's primary gifts and strengths/talents (i.e., what they do)?**  
His primary gifts and strengths are he is an excellent speaker, teacher, leadership recruiter and trainer, strategic planner, and able to effectively involve volunteers in ministry.
- 4. How would you characterize the candidate's leadership style (collaborative, visionary, independent, authoritative, decisive, etc.)? Please elaborate.**  
Mark's leadership style is a combination of visionary and collaborative. He develops a vision, and then uses collaboration to firm it up, modify as needed, and determine steps to achieve the vision.
- 5. How do you think the candidate will work with an executive board?**  
He will be able to provide vision and will take initiative by staying in close communication and collaboration with the board. He will seek a unity of spirit when decisions are made. And he will listen carefully to feedback and ideas given by board members.
- 6. What evidence can you share that would cause you to believe the candidate can overcome potential distrust, leading them to thrive in this role?**  
He has a strong ability to navigate levels of conflict. He is a careful listener who will do all he can to encourage members to be transparent, even when there is disagreement. He understands that building a trusting environment on the board is essential and that ideas can flow freely in that kind of atmosphere. I have seen him work with individuals who were not happy with some decisions or changes in a way that allowed them to ultimately be willing to try a new direction.
- 7. Describe his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for the staff?**  
Mark cares about people as people and not just their work. He makes it easy for staff to talk with him about their ministry challenges as well as their personal struggles.
- 8. Where does the candidate get into trouble or get egg on his/her face?**  
I have not observed any examples of Mark getting into trouble.

9. We are all broken people; in what ways have you observed brokenness in the candidate, and how has he/she dealt with it?

Mark came to us broken because of a church planting experience that did not work out as he hoped. As a result he grew in his humility and this also contributed to his sincere desire to listen to the counsel of others. He sought out individuals as mentors and counselors to help him work through the hurts and disappointments of a failed vision. I have been personally amazed and challenged by the way he worked through his death of a vision with such maturity. He is a stronger leader because of it.

10. Given the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, what advice would you give to the elder board as they partner with and oversee the candidate?

To the elder board, provide him with encouragement, support, advice when needed, and protection as critics will certainly surface from time to time. And once directions and decisions have been made, allow him the freedom to work with the staff and volunteers to carry them out. Avoid as much as possible the temptation to micromanage him.

11. Are there any last thoughts you'd like to share?

I believe God's call for Mark to become a Lead Pastor is very real and appropriate at this time in His life. He will be an excellent leader in this role. The church that he is led to serve will surely be blessed!

## Candidate Reference — Director of Care and Woman's Ministry

Director of Care and Women's Ministry for Encounter Church in Ventura, CA

1. **How long have you known the candidate, and in what context?**

I joined the lead team at ENCOUNTER almost 6 1/2 years ago. Mark has been my direct supervisor the entire time. He is so much more than a boss. He is my pastor, my collaborator, my mentor and my dear friend.

2. **What do you admire most about the heart of the candidate (i.e., who they are)?**

I admire his humility and his genuine care to help people connect with others and with Jesus. I, like Mark, am a pastor's kid so I like to think I am a pretty good judge of character and quality when it comes to someone serving in the role of a pastor. My dad's leadership, preaching and pastoral care set a high bar for what I sought in a pastor of my own. It wasn't until I was 35 and joined the team at ENCOUNTER that I connected with a pastor of my own. That pastor was/is Mark Riggins.

3. **What are the candidate's primary gifts and strengths/talents (i.e., what they do)?**

He is an exceptional teacher, leader, mobilizer and encourager. His preaching style reflects his deep knowledge of the Word of God and his passion for relational connection. His preaching brings scripture alive and practically relates it to our lives. His preaching not only provides knowledge, history and biblical context, he always provides practical steps for growth and deeper connection with each other and God. He has a charismatic personality and is a natural leader. Because people are drawn to him, he is able to cast vision and mobilize others to connect and serve. He is able to engender the loyalty of those who serve with him as colleagues and volunteers because of his gift of encouraging others. He pours into others and makes them feel care for, listened to and valued.

4. **How would you characterize the candidate's leadership style (collaborative, visionary, independent, authoritative, decisive, etc.)? Please elaborate.**

Mark is visionary leader with a collaborative style. One of the many things I value about him is his excitement to dream, cast vision and think through the systems (relational aspects and programming) needed to carry the vision out. I also love to do these things, so it has been a tremendous gift to have him as a partner to wrestle through ideas, strategies and conflicts. He encourages new ideas and provides plenty of room for growth (failure). He has also been there to help me process many "failed" ministry initiatives and provide encouragement and identify ways we can grow. When our team is working through decisions, big or small, Mark always listens intently, processes and then shares his thoughts. He doesn't feel that he has to have a say in everything and is happy to see those with more experience lead in their strengths. Because of this, our team trusts him and deeply values his input on matters. He is not afraid to say the "hard things", the things no one wants to talk about AND that makes him an asset to any team.



5. [How do you think the candidate will work with an executive board?](#)

Mark values accountability and the support of his team. He is a good listener and thoughtful contributor. He values feedback from those with more experience and knowledge and actively seeks out wise counsel through coaching and mentoring. He will value the board's input on big picture decisions and conflicts, but will not need to lean on them for every minute detail. He will need room to try new ideas, but will take ample time to learn about the board's vision, history and values first. He has a great sense of humor and he doesn't take himself too seriously. He will want to develop relationships that go beyond the business matters of ministry, but respects boundaries in leadership and doesn't let personal friendships or conflicts get in the way of his own ability to lead.

6. [What evidence can you share that would cause you to believe the candidate can overcome potential distrust, leading them to thrive in this role?](#)

I think what Mark does best to engender trust is "seeking to understand, then to be understood". He does this naturally. I believe when people feel listened to and cared for, trust develops. I can share a personal example.

I was originally hired into the position of Director of Care & Recovery on a part time basis. Over the years as I grew in my role and developed interest and passion for other areas of ministry, I expressed my desire to serve in a full time role if the opportunity arose. A little over a year ago, our Director of Women's Small Groups, Lori, was planning to step back from some of her responsibilities so that she could focus more on Global Outreach and embrace her new, more important role as Grandma. At the time I was serving at ENCOUNTER, but I was also serving part time as the executive director for Ventura Center for Dispute Settlement, a community-based non-profit that trains volunteer mediators for the courts and provides mediation services to the public. So I was working more than full time. It was announced in one of our lead team meetings that Lori was going to be stepping back from some of her duties after the first of the year and that two women who served in volunteer ministry would be joining the staff to oversee MOPS and women's small groups and assimilation.

I felt incredibly blindsided by this announcement. I was troubled that the transition was not discussed with the lead team and that potential candidates were not vetted. From my perspective, the woman hired to oversee MOPS was a good fit for that role, but the woman they were going to hire to oversee women's small groups was not. She lacked experience for the role and frankly would not have been taken seriously by many of our seasoned leaders.

I was also hurt that I wasn't considered to take on women's small groups. I had the experience, the trust and relationships to lead in that area of ministry. I know that I wasn't on their radar because I already had a full plate with 2 jobs and my family, but I still had hurt feelings that they never even had a conversation with me.

Mark knows me and could tell in the meeting that I was not thrilled with this decision, but didn't immediately say anything to me. I had a few days to pray and talk to my husband about my feelings and decided I needed to say something and hear more about why they made this decision. I went to Mark first. I trust him implicitly and I know without a doubt that he would listen, comfort me and give wise counsel. He did exactly that and I felt so cared for. Towards the end of our meeting, he asked if he could share what I told him with Jack, our executive pastor. I thought about it and told him "yes". I told him which parts of what I shared with him I was

comfortable with him passing along and which parts I would like to remain between the two of us. I knew I could trust him to honor me by keeping my confidence about the parts of our conversation that I felt embarrassed about or that I thought would hurt others.

Well, because of his loyalty and care, the staffing decision was reexamined and ultimately the board decided that I was a better fit for the role. I left my non-profit position to serve at ENCOUNTER full time as Director of Care and Women's Small Groups.

I share this example because I believe Mark is uniquely gifted at creating a safe space for vulnerability. This is so valuable in a leader. He leads with his heart and models vulnerability to foster an environment of trust. He will thrive if he is surrounded by others who are willing to be vulnerable and real.

7. Describe his giftedness in leading, developing and caring for the staff?

Mark is my supervisor, but he has never felt like a "boss". As I mentioned in a previous answer, he is the first person my husband and I have considered to be our pastor. I trust him implicitly with professional and personal matters. He will ALWAYS ask me how I am doing, how my family is doing, etc. before discussing ministry matters. He is invested in growing his team personally, spiritually and professionally.

He has cared for our family during some difficult seasons. He has lovingly coached me through sticky situations and times when I could have done things better. He has mentored me and helped me develop my passion for helping people find connection through small groups, local resources and ministries. We have studied books together, shared ideas and attended conferences together so that we could grow as a team.

While I will miss his sense of humor and amazing teaching, I will miss our mentoring relationship the most. I have learned so much from Mark and have grown spiritually, personally and professionally because of him. He speaks the truth in love better than anyone I have ever met.

8. Where does the candidate get into trouble or get egg on his/her face?

Sometimes he is TOO neutral. He's not afraid to speak up against the flow, but at times he seems hesitant to voice his opinion. Because I know him well, I can usually tell when he disagrees with something, but if someone else voices it before him, he will usually stay quiet. This is a strength and a weakness. It's a strength because he doesn't feel like he always has to have a say in everything, but it's a weakness because sometimes it would be nice to hear where he stands. I usually see this in more trivial matters, but at times felt some frustration by his neutral responses. Like I said, this is a blessing and a curse, but I believe in the context of leadership, he exercises discernment of when to go against the flow and when to let it go.

9. We are all broken people; in what ways have you observed brokenness in the candidate, and how has he/she dealt with it?

When Mark first came to ENCOUNTER he was still hurting from a broken relationship with a former colleague. He shared his struggle, sought counsel from a trusted team member and prayerfully embarked on the path of reconciliation. He has written a book on forgiveness and he practices what he preaches. He admits when he is hurting or struggling and I know he has a few men he trusts with sensitive personal and professional matters. I also know that he has sought out professional counseling when needed to work through personal issues or marital conflict. He is not ashamed of his brokenness and many times I have seen him leverage his experiences of pain in a way that provokes others to wrestle with their own pain, shame and brokenness.

10. Given the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, what advice would you give to the elder board as they partner with and oversee the candidate?

As I've mentioned previously, Mark's strengths are found in his teaching, leadership, vision casting and pastoral care. His weaknesses surface in how he exercises his perceived neutrality. To Mark's new elder board, I say "Congratulations!" You have just hired my first choice for lead pastor. He will lead you, your team and church family well and will eagerly grow under your leadership. Give him room to try new things, room to fail and authentic, meaningful encouragement.

11. Are there any last thoughts you'd like to share?

Oh I am going to miss my friend, my mentor and colleague, but I am so grateful to have served alongside him for the past almost 7 years. He has inspired me to be a better Christ-follower, pastor, mom and wife. I am excited for the church and community who God will ultimately call Mark to pastor. He and his family will be a tremendous gift to you all. It is a privilege serving with him.