

PROJECT 24

Executive Interview Series

Summer 2016

Spotlighting: Ministry Executive

Mark Shull

Employer: Northpoint Ministries

Position: Pastor and Director of Men's Group-Buckhead Church; Attorney

Mark Shull serves as Buckhead Church's Director of Men's Groups where he ministers to men of all ages while directing the church's men's programming, classes, and small groups. Buckhead Church is one of six churches under the massive umbrella called North Point Ministries. North Point Ministries, Inc., was founded in 1995 with the vision of creating churches that un-churched people love to attend. Since its inception, North Point Ministries (NPM) has grown from one church to six in metro Atlanta and has developed a global network of more than thirty strategic partner churches. Each week, more than 30,000 people attend services at NPM churches, and each month sermons and leadership messages are accessed over one million times via North Point websites. As the ministry continues to evolve, its mission remains the same: to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Shull began his career as an attorney with Chase & Zraik Law Firm based in Toledo, Ohio. After years practicing law, Shull transitioned to full-time ministry, joining the world-wide Young Life ministry where he focused on developing the Young Life program in Ohio and then in the NYC Tri-State Region. In 2009, he became Buckhead Church's Director of Men's Groups.

Shull received his undergraduate degree in History from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. He received his JD, law degree from the University of Toledo College of Law.



11 Years Married

2 Children

Favorite Family
Vacation Spot?

Charleston,
South Carolina

Attorney turned full-time ministry leader

are words rarely seen together, yet fitting for former Ohio native, Mark Shull. Married to wife Chris, whom he met while working and living in Greenwich, Connecticut, the Shulls work together to juggle dual careers with their schedules often revolving around their two school-aged children: Jackson, a rising fourth grader, and Cooper, a rising second grader. Their favorite family activities include shooting hoops, taking joy rides in Mark's jeep, and spending summers at their lake home in Alabama. A true 'coach' in every sense of the word, Mark relishes the time he is able to spend coaching his sons' many baseball and basketball teams.

Northpoint's Roots

- **The Early Days**

In November 1995, Andy Stanley, Northpoint Founder and Lead Pastor, stood in front of a gathering of believers at a North Atlanta convention center and cast the vision for a new church. He said, "Atlanta does not need another church. What Atlanta does need is a safe environment where the unchurched can come and hear the life-changing truth that Jesus Christ cares for them and died for their sins." So began North Point Community Church.

- **Explosive Growth**

In December 1996, North Point purchased an 83-acre site in Alpharetta. Six months later, construction began on the first of three building phases. The first construction phase included a 2,700-seat auditorium, along with a small theater, offices, and education space for pre-schoolers and children. In 1998, North Point Community Church moved into its new home. On its first opening Sunday, over 2,000 adults attended two morning worship services. By Christmas, attendance had grown to 3,000. By the end of the first year, North Point was averaging over 4,000 in worship. Currently, North Point is able to accommodate over 5,000 worshippers at one time.

- **Satellite Church Locations**

In an effort to reach additional Atlanta communities, Northpoint Ministries has grown with multiple satellite locations including: Buckhead Church, Browns Bridge Church, Decatur City Church, Gwinnett Church, and Woodstock City Church.



Coach Mark Shull, Eastside Baseball Runners-Up Coach, 2016

Q: How do you stay on top of your game as a parent?

A: "Two words: Other parents! In addition to reading a slew of parenting books, my wife and I talk to other parents. I also credit our church small group with helping my wife and I navigate parenting challenges. Chris and I get invaluable insight from other couples in our small group. These couples are in the same season of life as us and these relationships have been incredibly important in helping improve our parenting skills. We discuss discipline, appropriate consequences, dealing with entitlement, etc. To have such a rich and diverse set of opinions on a regular basis is invaluable."

Q: What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing demands at the office and home?

A: "I struggle daily with protecting against giving my family 'seconds.' I give my co-workers my all at work, but when I come home, I'm exhausted and find it hard to give them my best. It is easy to say, 'Tomorrow I will give them my best' only to find myself saying this again the next day."

Q: What is the greatest challenge in parenting today's youth?

A: "I believe the greatest challenge is combating a sense of entitlement that seems to be present in so many children today — including my own! Kids today are inundated with the sense that they are the best, including 'participation' trophies. While I think it is important to encourage and build up my sons' sense of self-esteem, I don't want it done artificially. I want them to have to *earn* their esteem through achieving — but not necessarily winning. Additionally, I can't tell you how many youth I've mentored who believe they will have a \$75,000—\$100,000 job waiting for them upon college graduation. Their opinion is that a high salary is something 'owed' to them — regardless of GPA earned, activities they participated in, etc."

“The single
biggest
challenge in
parenting today’s
youth is
combatting their
sense of
entitlement.”

- Mark Shull



Shull with wife Chris and sons Cooper and Jackson

Q: With demands for your time in both your personal and professional life, how do you prioritize everything? Are there tips, techniques or habits you've developed to manage how you spend your time?

A: “I think it is incredibly important to have a conversation with your spouse to find out what is important to him/her. Of particular importance is to understand your spouse’s feelings regarding the amount of time you spend at home. For instance, my wife doesn’t care what time I leave for work in the morning, as long as I am home by dinner. I’ve made it a priority to put down my phone and computer once I get home at night. I have found that my kids hate anything that competes with my attention and even the simple task of sending a quick text makes my kids resentful. Once the kids are in bed, I work. Additionally, a colleague challenged me to set simple goals on the way home from work each night. I am very challenge-oriented, so this spoke to me. For example, my goal may be to make my kids laugh at dinner. Another goal may be to have a 15-minute conversation with both of my sons individually. Another goal could be to fix dinner and clean up the kitchen. The key is to set a goal that honors and contributes to my obligations as a father and husband and to help me become fully present.”

Q: What secrets can you share that have helped you both protect and grow your marriage while balancing career demands?

A: “Chris and I schedule vacations and date nights six months in advance. Having these on the calendar gives us something to look forward to. Also, I limit my nights out per week. There are many great things to be part of — especially for our kids—but if that means we are out every night of the week, we both feel drained and separated. We have learned to say no to some great activities, but we’ve found it’s worth it for our marriage and our family.”

Q: If there's one "life lesson" you can choose to pass on to your children, what would it be and why?

A: “Know what you stand for and always take risks. Kids are natural risk takers until their mid-20’s and then they suffer a couple defeats or have people tell them their dreams are impossible. This leads them to stop shooting for the stars. I always want my kids shooting for the impossible. If they shoot for the impossible but fall short, they have inevitably achieved much. The world will always offer the latest and greatest, the shortcut to success and financial peace, and they will need to balance that against what they believe so as to steer their lives and the lives of their family on a steady course.”