

Sometimes we have to let each other fail

By [Beth Merrill Neel](#)

January 12, 2016

My spouse and I are four-and-a-half years into our adventure of co-pastoring. Will it be our last such adventure? I have no idea. Other married co-pastors have written great things in the last four-and-a-half years, and I am grateful for the wisdom they have shared. As we move further along in this relationship, new and subtle facets of working together emerge, and I think about them, and sometimes share them my husband.

There's a meeting today with the city about some of our building issues, and one of our great members is going and said one of us needed to go with him. It's in an area I've been working in. As my husband and I were going over the calendar, he said, "I think both of us should go." It seemed a reasonable statement.

And then I started wondering. Does he think I can't manage it? Because it deals with money and property, which are more his areas, does he want to be there? Or really, does he think I can't manage it? When I told our member that both of us would be there, he said only one of us needed to be. So I told my husband I would go, since this involves a project I've been working on. But a larger question looms.

One of the benefits (I think) about having co-pastors is that you get people with complementary gifts and skills. In a nutshell, he does numbers and I do words. More than 15 minutes on a financial statement and my head starts to spin. Writing a sermon or a newsletter article or an annual report is his idea of hell. You get the picture.

Still, it occurred to me that for the sake of our pastorate—and probably our marriage—sometimes we need to let the other one fail, or not do as great a job, or work in those areas where we're not as strong. We won't learn if we always let the other do the heavy lifting, whatever the area of work may be. It may also be a good model for the larger staff or congregation, to explore what it means to be not-gifted at something, to struggle with something, or even to deal with that which is usually tedious or confusing.

Maybe it's just that none of us can be strong and talented all the time; if we were, we'd be walking around like arrogant snobs. Maybe. Or maybe we would get out of touch with what it means to be ignorant (in the best sense of that word) or an amateur. Maybe it would help us expect less and encourage more.

So failure is an option. But so is grace.

*Originally posted at [Hold Fast to What Is Good](#)*