

Lean Into the Grace Place

Carol Kent on Compassion, Stretcher Bearers, Marriage, and Helping the Hurting

Carol Kent

Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Program Summary

In this Wednesday edition of Mark & Friends, Mark continues his Classic Conversation with Carol Kent about living faithfully when life has become a new kind of normal. Carol shares how her parents' evangelistic ministry unexpectedly led to her future husband Gene coming to Jesus, and how their marriage was tested when their only son was arrested for murder. She describes the friends who became their 'stretcher bearers,' surrounding the family with prayer, practical help, yellow flowers, financial support, and faithful presence. Her counsel for helping hurting people is simple: be there, listen, meet tangible needs, and do not overwhelm an aching heart with advice. Carol closes by urging listeners who feel trapped between a rock and a hard place to lean into the grace place - God's Word, worship, Christian community, trusted friends, and most importantly, Jesus.

Key Takeaways

- Crisis can magnify small tensions, so couples need to remember the real issue and face hardship together.
- The body of Christ can become 'stretcher bearers' through sustained prayer, practical help, and faithful presence.
- Tangible compassion may look like flowers, financial help, washing dishes, bringing soup, or simply sitting quietly.
- People in acute pain often need presence before advice.
- It is okay to tell God honestly that I am hurting and ask another person to pray when I cannot find words.
- Serving someone else can become part of my own healing.
- Gene's 'T-shirt ministry' shows that compassion can be creative, observant, and immediately useful.
- God can use comfort I have received to equip me to comfort someone else.
- A grace place can include Scripture, worship, church community, trusted friends, and healthy rest.
- The deepest grace place is a personal relationship with Jesus and the decision to stop carrying life alone.

Scripture References

2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Romans 12:15, Psalm 38:9, Romans 9:33, Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24-25, Matthew 11:28-30

Quote of the Day

"Be there without a lot of words. Help in tangible ways... They need to know somebody cares."

Broadcast Notes

Carol tells how her parents' ministry led Gene and his parents to Jesus, and how she and Gene later learned to protect their marriage from secondary frustrations during their son's crisis. Friends organized a long-term prayer and support network they called 'stretcher bearers.' Yellow roses, cards, financial help, meals, and practical kindness became visible reminders that they were not alone. Carol urges listeners to help hurting people without demanding conversation or offering too much advice. Gene's memorable 'T-shirt ministry' at prison visitation illustrates creative compassion: he kept shirts available for women who otherwise would have been turned away because of clothing rules. Carol closes by encouraging hurting listeners to tell God the truth, reach out to one trusted person, help someone else, and lean into the grace place.

Practical Applications

- Choose one hurting person and offer one specific act of help instead of saying only, 'Let me know if you need anything.'
- Listen before giving advice.
- Thank one of my own 'stretcher bearers.'
- If crisis is magnifying small arguments, name the larger burden and face it together.
- Tell God honestly what hurts and ask a trusted person to pray for me.
- Look for one creative, practical need I can meet immediately.
- Allow comfort I have received to become comfort for someone else.
- Create a personal grace-place plan involving Scripture, worship, trusted friends, and church community.
- When someone is aching, give permission for silence and tears.
- If I am carrying life alone, consciously lean again into the grace of Jesus.

Today's Challenge

Within the next 48 hours, do one specific act of tangible compassion for someone living through a difficult new normal. Then pray 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 and ask God how comfort He has given me can become comfort for someone else.

Closing Prayer

Father of compassion and God of all comfort, thank You for meeting me in my troubles and for placing people around me who can help carry burdens when I am weak. Teach me to receive help without shame and to become a faithful stretcher bearer for someone else. Give me wisdom to know when to speak and when simply to sit, listen, hug, weep, wash the dishes, bring the meal, or meet a practical need. When pain overwhelms me, help me tell You honestly what is in my heart and give me courage to ask a trusted person to pray for me. Protect my closest relationships from the smaller frustrations that crisis can magnify. Open my eyes to creative opportunities for compassion. When I feel trapped between a rock and a hard place, lead me into Your grace place - Your Word, Your people, worship, rest, and above all the love of Jesus. I do not want to carry life by myself. Help me lean into Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Carol Kent

International Speaker, Author, Coach, and Bible Teacher

Carol Kent is an international speaker, author, and coach who has spent decades helping women navigate life's challenges with faith and resilience. With humor, empathy, and biblical insight, she encourages women toward deeper faith, lasting joy, and renewed purpose. Her own family's profound crisis has given her a deeply personal understanding of disappointment, grief, vulnerability, and trusting God when life takes an unexpected turn.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns

Host of Mark & Friends

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUI Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. For decades, Mark has been involved in Christian radio and ministry, with a heart for helping listeners know Jesus and grow deeper in God's Word. Through Mark & Friends, he brings pastors, ministry leaders, teachers, missionaries, authors, and everyday believers around the microphone for biblical teaching, testimony,

conversation, and encouragement.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Mark & Friends Welcome Song

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship sweeter.

Knowing you're here. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. Reading from 2 Corinthians 1, verses 3 and 4. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble. That was 2 Corinthians 1, verses 3 and 4. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together.

It's Wednesday, August 26, 2026. Welcome to Mark & Friends. Today we continue right where we left off yesterday with best-selling author and speaker, Carol Kent, in a classic conversation originally recorded about 13 years ago.

Yesterday, Carol shared how an unexpected family crisis introduced her to what she calls a new kind of normal. Today, we'll hear how God used her husband Gene, family, friends, and the body of Christ to surround them with compassion, and how our own pain can sometimes equip us to recognize and minister to someone else. And remember, both days of this conversation are waiting for you under the Mark & Friends tab at greatnewsradio.org and wluj.org, along with transcripts, scriptures, key takeaways, practical applications, today's challenge, and additional resources to help you continue growing in your walk with Jesus.

Now here's part two of my conversation with Carol Kent. With me is Carol Kent, and we'll continue our conversation right where we left off yesterday. Carol Kent is a best-selling author and popular international speaker.

She's been featured on Focus on the Family, Billy Graham Primetime TV specials, Dateline, NBC, CNN Live, Primetime America, Midday Connection, Family Life Today. She's the president of Speak Up Speaker Services. She holds a master's degree in communication arts and a bachelor's degree in speech education, which will become very obvious.

She's such an effective and great communicator. She's authored many books, including Miracle on Hope Hill, Between a Rock and a Grace Place, A New Kind of Normal, When I Lay My Isaac Down, Becoming a Woman of Influence, Mothers Have Angel Wings, many, many others. Well, Carol, thanks again for those that were tuned in yesterday for Mark & Friends.

You graciously stayed on the line. I know you have a pending lunch appointment, and you'll be speaking to some women and some other people, so thanks for carving out a little more time. I was just so impressed and encouraged and blessed by your testimony and your sharing.

You have a lot of ministry resources and books and DVDs, and Bible study helps. Just on the front end, and I'll bring this at the end of our program, but I know people can go to carolkent.org, C-A-R-O-L-K-E-N-T.org, and link up to a lot of ministry resources, purchase books. What else do they need to know when they stop by your website? Well, on the carolkent.org website, there are links to the nonprofit we established that benefits inmates and their families.

That's called Speak Up for Hope. There can be church ministry projects of filling boxes of hope for wives and moms who need encouragement desperately when they have an incarcerated loved one. Some people like to help us supply gifts and games for children to play with in the visitation areas when they have an incarcerated parent, but they'll find all kinds of resources there.

Also, there is a shop that they can go to that will give them some of the resources that they can use in small groups. Both the books, *When I Lay My Isaac Down* and *Between a Rock and a Grace Place*, they have participant guides as well as DVD series, so you can get interaction with people who would like to discuss how they can find hope in the middle of circumstances that are less than ideal. I just look forward to hearing from them.

My blog is posted there, and I try to update people on recent happenings in ministry and just give them a little hope and help and inspiration for every single day. Well, I appreciated yesterday you sharing some of your testimony, and then I started leaving a little teaser because I wanted to hear some of the love story, how you met Gene, and just how God has worked through your marriage with your son's arrest and kind of that trauma and crises. But before you share some of the love story, you shared a part of your testimony growing up with wonderful Christian parents and knowing the Lord at an early age, but when did you come to the point where you really sensed His love, that you knew your sins were forgiven because of His work, not anything you could earn, not because you were a good girl or you attended church or memorized Scripture, but because of His work on your behalf because He cared for you? When did that kind of root into your heart and mind, wow, the sovereign Almighty God loves me as a person? I think when I was 14 years old, that really became front and center in my heart.

My dad had run away from going into the ministry where he knew God wanted him, and we had gotten a new preacher at our church who preached a series of sermons on Jonah, the guy going the wrong way and the wrong direction. And I remember my dad coming home and saying to my mom, he was crying and I'd never seen him cry before, and he said, I either need to get out of church work completely or comply with God's will and go into the ministry where God wants me. I can't go on like this.

That impacted me greatly because I saw my dad give up a lucrative career in the insurance business to go back to Bible college, and then he took his first church with 42 people in the first congregation and seven of them were in our family. That's how to grow a church, have lots of babies. But we had some exciting times, and as a ninth grader at that time, I watched as my parents went out calling, I was babysitting my younger siblings, and they would come home telling me that men and women had come to faith in Christ and the church began to grow.

And finally we had eight girls in our church youth group and two guys, and my parents said there will be absolutely no dating of non-Christians for our five daughters. So that meant it was slim pickings when it comes to dating. And my dad loved to call in the hospital, and I think it's because people couldn't run away from him.

You know, you have to stay in your hospital bed. And he met a man named Francis Kent, and he sensed that there was spiritual hunger in this man's heart. So on New Year's Day that year, my dad and mom asked if I would babysit my younger siblings.

Well, they called on the Kent family. Mr. Kent was now at home and was recuperating. And while they were there and I was home doing the mundane, ordinary, not much love job of babysitting, my mom and dad sat around a kitchen table and shared the gospel with Mr. and Mrs. Kent, how they could have a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

And just as they were about to pray, their 17-year-old son Gene stuck his head around from the doorway and he said, I hope you don't mind, but I've been listening in on this conversation. Could I become a Christian too? And he joined them and got on his knees and invited Jesus into his life. And mom and dad got home and told me that young Gene Kent had just become a Christian.

And I got motivated. Handsome, dynamic, intelligent, Gene Kent was now a third possibility for a date in this tiny town, in this tiny church. And little did I know that day, Mark, that while I was at home doing what I didn't want to do, babysitting, mom and dad were out winning my future husband to Jesus Christ.

Pretty exciting stuff. What a special story. And Gene is like your forever husband is stuck with you through thick and thin.

And even through your son's arrest, I know that has impacted your marriage. So talk a little about that. So you met, give us a little more of the love story.

Did it just take off right away? No, we actually didn't start dating until our senior year of high school, though we knew each other. And we went to different universities our freshman year and then wound up dating over that four-year period. And we got married two months after we graduated from college in the month of July.

And we didn't have two dimes to rub together, but we had love. And I have a feeling some of our Great News Family radio members got married with no money but love as well. And you can make it if you have helpful family members and friends along the way.

But five years later, we had Jason Paul Kent, our only child. Then we shared on the air yesterday about our son's arrest. And when you have a crisis come into a marriage, that can be very challenging because often little things become magnified and you start bickering over things.

And Gene and I had to come to this point where we said, as we would fall into each other's arms in the middle of a small argument that was growing bigger, that isn't the real issue, is it? We can't let ourselves get bogged down with the small stuff because we have this huge thing to handle, our son's arrest for murder. Then the family of God began to come alongside Mark. And we had Kathy in Arizona, Becky in Dallas.

Then we had another friend in Indiana who said, Gene and Carol, we want to put together a list of what we're going to call your stretcher bearers, and it will be a monthly email update on ways people can pray for your family and meet your tangible needs. And little did these people know, they were signing up for two and a half years and seven postponements of our son's trial, which is a very long time to be reaching a helping hand to people. But I was struggling with depression for the first time in my life.

One afternoon my doorbell rang, and I peaked out because I really didn't want to talk to anybody. My heart was aching so much over my son's arrest and facing charges for murder that just seemed unthinkable to me. And it was the florist, and I opened the door, and he said, Hello, lady, are you Carol Kent? I said, Yes, I am.

He said, Lady, it's your lucky day. Well, I wanted to go tell him to make someone else's day lucky. But when you're depressed, about all you can do is respond.

And he handed me one dozen long-stemmed yellow roses, the most beautiful I had ever seen. And I wondered who had graced my day with this beautiful bouquet. I opened the card, and it was from two of my sisters.

It said, Dear Carol, you once gave us some decorating advice. You told us that yellow flowers will brighten any room. We thought you needed a little yellow in your life right now.

Love, Bonnie, and Joy. Well, Mark, I wept like a baby. I had never been so needy, but I had never felt so loved.

And then people began helping us in ways financially that would help us to make the payments for a very expensive trial. And then they found out that my favorite color was yellow because of those yellow roses. And they sent cards in yellow envelopes and gifts in yellow packages.

And my daughter-in-law's favorite color was purple. They sent purple candles, purple Kleenex. I didn't know it came in that color.

And they just loved us in such precious, precious ways. And even yesterday I had a friend call, and she said, Carol, I have a very close friend from church whose son is home after serving in Afghanistan, and he did the unthinkable, and he's taken the life of another person here in the States. And these people are hurting so much.

What can I do? And a lot of people want to know when they are walking with friends through a new kind of normal, what can they do to help? And I just said to her, be there without a lot of words. Help in tangible ways. If there are dishes in the sink, wash the dishes.

Bring over a pot of soup because they're hurting. They don't even feel like cooking. And don't give too much advice.

Hug them and be there, but don't give a 15-minute sermon because their heart can't hold any more preaching or teaching right now. They're aching too much. They need to know somebody cares.

And that's what people did for us. So anytime we can show tangible compassion, that's pretty powerful. The second part of my talk at the conference that I'm doing for the women in your area is going to be on becoming a woman of influence.

And one of those points that Jesus demonstrates is compassion. And I tell them, think about what Corrie Ten Boom said. What did you do today that only a Christian would have done? And then take action and do it.

I appreciate all the just personal examples you have given and the ideas because we, as a radio ministry, we have a singing men's choir. And recently, well, last month we sang a full concert at the Rockville Prison and then earlier last month at the Danville Prison. And next month we'll be in the Decatur Women's Prison.

And I love just some of these ideas for us that we can simply implement for those that have loved ones that are incarcerated. Like you said, doing the dishes or just showing up with a gift card, not having them feel obligated they have to sit with you through a meal. Just give them a gift card.

Let them do it at their own time or not give them the Bible verse. Just be a great listening ear. Yes, that is really the beginning of showing real compassion.

They don't need more advice right now. They just need somebody to sit with them or cry with them. And they need to know that you're a friend who doesn't have to require interaction constantly because sometimes you're aching too much to be able to talk about it.

And I love how you have found contentment and gratitude through God's grace and peace and through these friendships. But maybe for that listener right now that's just struggling with a heartache or just doesn't have that sense that God loves or cares for them, how would you speak truth or comfort into their hearts? Well, I just want to say that I ache with those of you who ache because I know what it's like to live with a broken heart or a disappointment in a relationship or to feel that you just don't have anybody who's on your side. And I want you to know that it is okay to tell God you're hurting, that He is a God who listens and He cares and He knows those secret sorrows of your heart, so verbalize those to Him.

And then I want to encourage you to be willing to reach out to at least one other person you trust and to share out of the vulnerability of your heart what you're going through and ask them to pray for you. And you might not feel you can even pray for yourself, but ask them to pray for you. And then ask God to give you one person who needs help worse than you do that you can reach out to.

Mark, one of the most powerful things that happened to me is that I began to understand that when I started doing a tangible act of kindness for somebody who needed it, it blessed me. And my husband Gene is a great illustrator of this point. When we were standing in line waiting to go into visitation, we would sometimes see women who were turned away from visiting their spouse or their fathers, and they were sobbing.

And it might be because the rules changed on what they could wear inside the prison, and they might have driven five or six hours to be there. The nearest Walmart is 20 minutes away, so you can imagine how much time that takes away from a visit if you're not dressed appropriately. And a new rule had gone through that women could not wear sleeveless blouses into the prison.

Then after we had noticed all of this, I noticed my husband's pile of T-shirts. He likes black T-shirts, and they'd been disappearing. Now I know dryers eat socks, but T-shirts, hello, that doesn't make any sense to me.

And I was standing in line to get through security, which sometimes takes up to two hours shortly after that time, and I saw one of these women sobbing, leaving. And then I noticed that Gene had left my side, and he had gone out to the parking lot, and I saw him emerging from our trunk with a black T-shirt. And he walked over to the woman, and he said, Ma'am, put this on and go to the front of the line.

Have a great visit with your family. He came back to my place in the line, and I was already smiling. I said, So that's what's been happening to your T-shirts.

And he chuckled. He said, Oh, it's my T-shirt ministry. Well, I shared that story at an event in Wisconsin, and a month later I found a package on my front porch, and it was filled with black T-shirts.

And the note inside said, Dear Carol, I heard you share about what happened at the prison with your husband giving his T-shirts to women who needed to cover up a little more before they could make it through security. She said, I work for Jansport, and I can get T-shirts very inexpensively, so this is my contribution to your husband's T-shirt ministry through his trunk distribution program. I hope women will be blessed.

But don't you love the way God just gives us creative ways to show compassion to others when they are living in a new kind of normal, Mark? It is amazing to me. Amen. In case you just tuned in, I have Carol Kent on the line with me.

Actually, this is day two of our conversation. You can listen to this program and yesterday's edition of Mark & Friends at greatnewsradio.org, greatnewsradio.org. Carol Kent is a best-selling author, popular international speaker, best known for many different books and being enthusiastic and humorous and biblical. And, Carol, it's been great having you for this lengthy conversation.

I know you have appointments and need to be on the road quickly. There are so many great books in your website. All the resources at carolkent.org are available to our listeners.

You've written *When I Lay My Isaac Down*, *A New Kind of Normal*, and then your recent book *Between a Rock and a Grace Place*. Maybe just in our closing few minutes, because I know you've got to go, what advice would you give to somebody who's stuck between a rock and a grace place? Well, sometimes when we meet obstacles along the way, we really feel so stopped in our tracks. And I was sitting at my computer one day, and my sister sent me a scripture, Romans 9, 33.

And in a paraphrase, it says, On the road to Mount Zion there's a rock in the road, and you can't get around it, but the rock is me. If you look for me, you will find me on the way, not in the way. Now, to the Gentiles at that time in history, Jesus himself was a barrier for them.

They just did not get him. But when we face obstacles today, I want to encourage every listener in the Great News Radio family audience to lean into the grace place. Find a place of comfort, of safety, of unconditional love, and a place where you can get healing for your heart.

That might mean through calling a friend. It might mean going to a church service. And maybe you haven't been in church in a long time, and you haven't heard anything having to do with what the Bible says about dealing with your area of hurt.

And it's such a great place to find hope, digging into God's Word. Then I want to encourage you to listen to worship music. And you might say, well, I don't even really know what that is.

Go to a Christian bookstore and ask the person working there, what would be a great worship CD? When you put that on in the background, and you begin to hear music that lifts the spirit and heals the heart, your spirits are lifted tremendously. And probably the most important part of leaning into the grace place is getting to know Jesus Christ personally in a way that says, Lord, I'm tired of doing it my own way. I want to find hope and help through knowing you personally.

And it's very easy. It's saying yes to Jesus. And it's saying, I'm tired of trying to pick myself up by my own bootstraps.

I want to know Jesus personally. And anybody at Great News Radio would be able to help you to make that step if God is just nudging you right now saying, this is the day. Stop trying to make it on your own and lean into the grace place, the love of Jesus Christ.

Carol, I know you've got to be out the door right now. So thanks for being available for today and yesterday's edition of Mark & Friends. We'll be praying you up, Carol.

Thanks so much. It's been great to be on the air with you, Mark. Have a blessed day.

Thanks. Take care. Bye-bye.

Well, isn't Carol Kent just a sweetie? She's gifted, enthusiastic, knows her scriptures, has a heart for the Lord, and a very effective communicator. Thank you, Carol Kent. And what a wonderful reminder for all of us, when life places a rock in our road, lean into the grace place.

Find hope in God's Word, in the body of Christ, through trusted friends, and most importantly, through a personal relationship with Jesus. This two-day classic conversation was originally recorded about 13 years ago, but God's truth doesn't have an expiration date. And today, there's even more waiting for you.

Visit greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org and click on the Mark & Friends tab. You can hear both programs again, share them with someone who needs encouragement, read the transcripts, explore the scriptures and key takeaways, consider practical applications and today's challenge, and find additional resources to help you continue growing in your walk with Jesus. Thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you and have a great day and night.