

Alumni Spotlight: Rachel Hastings (MAOT & MANT '20)



Current title: Associate Academic Editor

Family: Husband: Matt (MAOT '17, MANT '19), children: Hope, Ian, and Asher

Favorite professor: Dr. Donald Fairbairn

Favorite class: Exegesis of Hebrew Narratives (Dr. Christine Palmer)

What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and what are you doing now?

Upon graduation, I took a job at InterVarsity Press (IVP) as an Assistant Project Editor. Our family moved across the country to the Chicago suburbs.

A few months after starting at IVP, I took on management responsibilities and was promoted to an Associate Project Editor, focusing on editorial operations and developing manuscripts that we had contracted. In May 2022, I took a position as Associate Academic Editor for IVP Academic. In my current position, I acquire and develop all our books on the academic line that fall within the discipline of biblical studies.

What do you love about your work?

Editorial work, particularly in acquisitions and development, is fast-paced and a perfect mix of both outward and inward facing work. Of course, I get to read quite a bit, but there is also quite a bit of project management and problem solving, which I also love. My favorite part is that I get to work with faculty at institutions all around the world and help them bring their ideas to a larger audience. It's so fun to sit with an author and dream about an idea and finally see the finished book arrive in the warehouse!

What are the joys and challenges of serving in the business/for-profit world in general and in your specific context?

I love being in the business/for-profit world. It's fast-paced and has a lot of the support structures that allow me to focus on what I do best. This is quite different from my experience in full-time ministry. I was a pastor's wife for thirteen years, and I witnessed the challenges my husband experienced in having to be a generalist rather than a specialist in full time ministry. There was very little space to develop his craft because of the tyranny of the urgent. I still experience



the tyranny of the urgent, but I have a lot of support in my organization to become a better editor, which I love.

The ecosystem of the church, higher education, and publishing is one that is rapidly changing, and I feel like I can support and serve Christian higher ed and the church in exciting ways. I love hearing what authors are thinking about and see how their research connects to a broader audience. I have the privilege of leveraging my own position in that ecosystem to advocate for diverse voices in the world of biblical studies.

How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now? How did you come to be doing your current work?

As a student at the Charlotte campus, I had the privilege of experiencing a unique educational dialectic that is different than a classical graduate on-campus education. The concepts I was learning at Gordon-Conwell were not just ideas I would use one day upon graduation. For me, I'd walk out of class on a Saturday and immediately put what I had learned to use on a Sunday morning.

As I had questions about my faith, the faculty patiently guided me through those questions so that I had the strength to return to ministry the next day. As I experienced frustrations with pastoral leadership, I had classmates to support me through my own challenges in the church. The questions that we grappled with in class weren't only intellectual exercises, but rather, they were the insights that I immediately took back and contextualized for our own congregation as a pastor's wife.

This all matters to my current job because the pain and frustration of ministry coupled with the immediate need to contextualize my seminary education has deeply shaped the way that I edit and develop manuscripts. The academy is an important part of the landscape of evangelicalism, and Christianity as a whole, but the academy is at its best when it is communicating in ways that enliven the people of God. It is that unique juxtaposition of my seminary education and the pains of ministry that moves me to acquire and develop manuscripts that speak to the needs of the people that I know and love within the walls of our churches.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

Gordon-Conwell provided me with both the breadth and depth that I needed to be able to do my job effectively. As an acquisitions editor, I don't have to be an expert in every sub-discipline in which I work, but I do need to be aware of what is going on in the world of biblical studies. Having training in subjects like Aramaic, LXX (Septuagint) studies, hermeneutics, and church history has been integral in my ability to understand the landscape surrounding the books that I acquire and develop. I use my degrees every day at my job. I may not be reciting verb paradigms on a daily basis, but I pull heavily both from the content that I learned as well as the tools and skills that I acquired while in seminary.

What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are considering serving in the business world?

Jobs in the business world adjacent to ministry can be incredibly fulfilling, and they often have wonderful support structures and opportunities for professional development. For those who knew me when I was at Gordon-Conwell, they will probably remember a young mom who was fixated on getting a PhD. I knew it was the credential I needed in order to do what God called me to do. I have a very clear memory of the semester when I had the courage to grapple with the idea that maybe a PhD wasn't actually for me and loosen my grip a bit on the dream. I am grateful for many friends who loved and supported me in the process.

It can feel very lonely when things don't play out the way you expect. My advice would simply be to be brave. Neither my husband nor I are doing what we anticipated we'd be doing post-seminary (in fact, we're both in the business world now), but we are both deeply grateful for our time at Gordon-Conwell and how it has shaped us as people. As you discern what God calls you to, be brave and open to options that you might never have considered before.