



# Men's Golf Fellowship

## Speaker Discussion Questions

### Mark Whitacre (Part One)

### Leaders Guide

#### Spiritual Topics: Greed, Success, Self-Centeredness, Living a Dual Life

#### About the Talk

Mark spoke at length about his time as an undercover agent for the FBI. Through that experience and his subsequent imprisonment, Mark not only came to a personal relationship with God, but learned many life lessons such as the destructive nature of greed, the allure of success, narcissism and the destructive struggle of living a dual life. We will use Mark's experience as a platform to talk with each other about these topics on a personal level.

#### Discussion Questions

- Mark told of a green lamp that was actually an FBI video monitoring system that he placed in meeting rooms all over the world in order to tape the price fixing meetings and gather evidence against ADM. He commented on how stunned he was that no one ever noticed it. His explanation was very simple, yet profound: greed blinds you. He said "the executives in those meetings were so consumed with money that they did not even notice the same green lamp in the room in different hotels across the globe." What do you think of his statement "greed blinds you"? Is it true? If so, how does it blind people? (*Leader Note: The idea is that greed is blinding in that it makes you sacrifice things that are more important for the pursuit of money, such as sacrificing relationships with family & friends, time for yourself, etc. You might want to develop a list of sacrifices that someone they know has made for the pursuit of money*). Greed can often lead to lying and cheating. Have you ever seen greed blind someone in your life? (*Leader Note: If the group seems like it can handle it, make this personal and ask if they have ever been blinded by money/greed and what did it look like.*) **Related Scripture: Luke 12:15 – The danger of greed**
  - *Where we're going: Freedom from greed.* This section is designed to understand the blinding nature of money and greed. Men will then begin to

unearth where their blind spots might be concerning how to gain freedom from greed.

- *Going Deeper:* Read 2 Kings 5. We want to explore the two themes of this story. First, the greed of Gehazi. Ask the group to identify what greed does to Gehazi's character (i.e. causes him to do things in secret, forces him to lie, etc.). What other parts of a person's character could greed taint? Now compare that to the grace, generosity, and freedom from greed of Elisha. He could have asked for anything from Namaan, yet he asked for nothing. Where does that kind of generosity and freedom come from? The answer: Matthew 13:44-46. When you finally find the treasure that is Jesus Christ, everything else begins to pale in comparison. When you have everything (hope in this life, peace and acceptance with God and the promise of eternal life, etc.), you begin to desire the things of this world less and less.
  
- Mark was wildly successful at an early age and admitted quite frankly that he did not handle it well. What does it mean to not handle success well? Think of and share some examples. Another way to approach this is: how does one handle success well? What does that look like? Now think of the success you have had in your life (i.e. business, sports, relational, etc.). Have you handled success well? If so, how? Have you or someone you know not handled success well? In what way(s)? In hindsight, if you had your success to do over again, what would you change? ***Related Scripture: Genesis 39:2-5 – Success***
  - *Where we're going: The idol of success.* Where we want to lead the group is to begin to understand that success can be an idol like any other and that our desire to be successful has its root in the very first sin of mankind (Genesis 3:4-6).
  - *Going Deeper:* Read the following quote by Pastor Tim Keller from his book "Counterfeit Gods" and then ask the questions that follow. "*More than other idols, personal success and achievement lead to a sense that we ourselves are God and that our security and value rest in our own wisdom, strength and performance. To be the very best at what you do, to be at the top of the heap, means no one is like you. You are supreme.*" Do you agree with this quote? Did the success you have achieved make you feel supreme (i.e. that you are in control)? Note: One common definition of an idol is anything that fulfills your meaning, value and purpose other than God.
  
- Mark said that people come out of prison in one of two ways: either bitter or better. He explained that the difference between the two is the "I" in the word "bitter" and that if a person is self-absorbed they most likely will become bitter,

but if they are other-centered they will come out free from bitterness. His conclusion from his experience was the realization that life is actually not about us. What do you think of that statement? How do we live life as though it was all about us? When talking and acting how do we show that we think about ourselves more than others? Think of one personal example where you (a) acted in the interests of others first and then, (b) where you thought of yourself first and others second. (*Leader Note: be prepared to “prime-the-pump” by giving an example of each response yourself from your life in order to show the way.*)

**Related Scripture: Philippians 2:3-4 – Other-centeredness**

- *Where we're going: Considering others first.* The point here is to try to get men to realize that we all think of ourselves first many times more than we think of others. Also, living a life that is pleasing to God slowly transforms our hearts and minds to the correct understanding that life is NOT all about us.
- *Going Deeper:* Charles Dickens classic “A Christmas Carol” has been re-made probably more than any other book in history. Ask the group to offer their favorite version of the Scrooge classic. After a few minutes draw the group back by asking them how the self-centeredness of Ebenezer Scrooge was characterized in each version. How did Scrooge live for himself? In what ways did Scrooge think of himself first? What were the effects of that lifestyle ideology in Scrooge’s life? Now the hard question: are there any similarities between your life and Scrooge’s? What were the factors in his transformation? (*Leader Note: among the major factors, Scrooge’s self-centered life affects the life and death of Tiny Tim.*) If the group is mature enough, consider reading Philippians 2:5-8 aloud together and allow discussion around the depth of Jesus’ other-centeredness. (Additional Scripture: Romans 12:10-16).
- Mark lived a dual life for 3 years while he was undercover. He knew what his job was with the FBI, yet he acted as if he had no ties to them when he went into work at ADM each day. There is a temptation for everyone who believes in God to live a dual life, to live and speak one way at work or on the golf course and another at home or at church. What are some of the areas that people tend to compartmentalize when living a dual life? (*Leader Note: our conversations, such as the words we use, or don’t use, our behavior such as our tempers, our values, etc.*) Why do you think there is this tendency in each of us? Is it ever a positive thing to compartmentalize? Have you ever known a person that seemed to live two very different lives? **Related Scripture: Matthew 5:14-15 – Living a dual life**

- *Where we're going: **Compartmentalization***. The point of these questions is to get men thinking about how they may have lived a dual life where Christ is concerned and/or how they should live differently going forward. There may have been instances where they have pursued a dual life and they may have compartmentalized their interaction with others.
- *Going Deeper:* Read Matthew 23:1-39. This gets at the heart of compartmentalization. Have the group work together to identify the various areas that the Pharisees lived dual lives (giving, wealth, actions, etc.) What areas have you compartmentalized? How have you lived a dual life with regard to God and the world? Think of two distinct areas of your life (work and family, golf club and church, board room and with your wife, etc.) and consider a couple of ways that you live or act differently in each and then share them with the group. A good litmus test to find out where people compartmentalize their faith is to ask in which group (family, work colleagues, wife, golf friends, fellow board members, etc.) is it hardest for you to speak about God/Jesus?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, give me the conviction to place you first in my life and to never put you aside for the things of this world. Give me strength to begin to involve you in all aspects of my life and to not relegate you to convenient areas of my life. Lord, give me the humility to allow you to guide me and to trust that wherever you lead is good.