



Men's Golf Fellowship

Speaker Discussion Questions

Dr. David Cook
LEADERS GUIDE

Spiritual Topics: Life's Pressures, Spiritual Preparedness, Trust and Eternity

About the Talk

Sports psychologist David Cook shared several principles that he uses to help professional athletes overcome their barriers to success, such as “Embracing the Pressure” and “Practicing for the Emergencies”, as well as encouraging them in the areas of trust and perseverance. These same principles are important in your walk and relationship with God. Let's take some time today to reflect on how they can help us as well.

Discussion Questions

- David spoke of the first principle he uses in sports psychology as “Embracing the Pressure”. The idea is that pressure is actually not a bad thing, just something to be confronted and used to make you better at your sport. He used the example of a young pole-vaulter named Scott who would get up every morning and “put his feet on some heat because where he wanted to go was a place of fire”. What do you think of this principle of confronting your fears? Do you think that pressure can actually make you better? If so, can you think of an example where this was true. Now as a group, let's think of the pressures of life. What are some of the general life pressures that everyone faces and feels? What are specific pressures that you have felt in your business career or family? Is there a particular time in your life that you felt more intense pressure than at other times?

Related Scripture: James 1:2-4 – Embracing the Pressure

- *Where we're going: Life's pressures used by God.* The purpose of this discussion is to get men talking about the pressures of life and then turn the conversation toward how God uses those pressures and trials to help them depend on and trust in Him.
- *Going Deeper:* Keying off the verse above, how do life's pressures and difficulties actually refine and mature you? We are looking for things like: pressures and difficulties in life make me 1) depend on others more, 2) See my own weaknesses more clearly, 3) Make me more aware that I am

not in control of everything, etc. The idea here is to get the men to see that life's difficulties should not only build us up but also, and possibly more importantly, highlight our weaknesses as well. Ask the group if they think that part of becoming more mature in dealing with pressure, life's difficulties, and trials is growing in your dependence on others. In our culture, we prize self-sufficiency. The purpose here is to draw out the principle of asking for help and depending on others. Who do you turn to, or depend on when life gets tough? Would it be a good friend, your wife, or golf buddies? Is it possible that God uses the pressures and difficulties of life to draw you closer to Him?

- *Deeper Yet:* David said that the great underlying issue of pressure is fear. Brainstorm as a group some of the common fears we have at this stage of life (i.e. career failure, relationship failure, stock market downturns, debilitating strokes, other health issues, death, etc.). David uses 1 John 4:18 to challenge the people he coaches. Read 1 John 4:18 together and discuss how the love of God through what Christ did for humanity on the cross eases our fears. Read the following quote by John Newton who wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace": "If the Lord be with us, we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, His arm over us, His ear open to our prayer, His grace sufficient, His promise unchangeable." If these are indeed true, how does it comfort us? If death is the ultimate fear, how does what Jesus did for us on the cross cast out that fear? You could lead men to discuss their fears of dying and then bring them to understand that if what Jesus said in John 11:25-26 is true, they have absolutely nothing to fear from death.
- David started out his talk this way: "Thank you for inviting me here. It's so good to be here. This is what I love to do. I like to share some things that might help you in life, but also help you understand that there is a bigger game." What do you think he meant by that? What could be bigger or more important than the things of this life? (*Leader's Note: The idea here is to lead men in discussion to the conclusion that this life is relatively short in comparison to eternity and that where they are in eternity is bigger and more important than anything in this life.*) What are your thoughts on eternity? Is there something beyond this life? If so, describe the best you can what you think eternity is like. If there is an eternity beyond this life, how should that affect the way we live our lives now? (*Leader's Note: Paul describes one effect of eternity in 1 Corinthians 15:32. If this life is all there is, it makes sense to pursue personal pleasure and all this life has to offer with abandon. If the group is mature enough, ask how each person lives a 1 Corinthians 15:32 fashion in their own lives right now; (i.e. consider the priority we put on extravagant vacations, dining out at fine restaurants, having large comfortable homes, having enough money to buy anything that pleases us,*

having the power and prestige we want from others, etc.) **Related Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:11 – Eternity**

- *Where we're going: Considering eternity.* The purpose of this discussion is to help men to explore the possibility that eternity is a reality and how that truth absolutely should shape our day-to-day lives.
- *Going Deeper:* Read Job 1:21. Then read the following quote from 19th century Scottish pastor Alexander MacLaren: “Transiency is stamped on all our possessions, occupations, and delights. We have the hunger for eternity in our souls, the thought of eternity in our hearts, the destination for eternity written on our inmost being, and the need to ally ourselves with eternity proclaimed by the most short-lived trifles of time. Either these things will be the blessing or the curse of our lives. Which do you mean that they shall be for you?” Let’s unpack this step-by-step. Have you ever considered the temporary nature of the things of this life? If all the cars, homes, fine meals and finances of this life are truly transient and temporary, why do we put such a high priority on them? How should knowing that the “things” in this life are ultimately rust and dust temper your desire to accumulate them? MacLaren also stated that we each intrinsically and deep down, know that eternity is real (see Ecclesiastes 3:11 above). Do you agree with that? How is that true for you? How do you innately know that there is something beyond this life? MacLaren brings things to a head when he states that our possessions, occupations and delights can either be a blessing or a curse. What do you think he meant by that? (The idea is to get men to understand that these things can become more important than their relationship with God and thus actually separate them from Him.) How do those things keep us away from thinking about God and eternity? Read Hebrews 9:27. If God judged your life right now, where would you stand regarding spending eternity with him?
- David talked about another major principle he uses in coaching called “Practice for the Emergency”. He told of the time when he was getting his pilot’s license and the instructor reached over and shut down the engine. After dealing with that simulated emergency, the instructor told David that he could never sign off on his license unless he was prepared to handle in-flight emergencies. Have you ever thought of this principle in your own life? What are some of the emergencies that happen in life generally? What emergencies have happened in your life? Were you prepared for them? How did you respond both positively and negatively during the emergency? Are there ways in which you could have been more prepared? **Related Scripture: Matthew 7:24-27 – Preparing in advance**

- *Where we're going: Spiritually preparing for the emergencies of life.* The purpose of this discussion is to lead men to begin considering not just financial and emotional preparedness, but how they can spiritually prepare for emergencies of life.
- *Going Deeper:* Read 2 Kings 20:1. Have you ever known a person that was terminally ill? What did the last few months and weeks of their life look like? How did they live and act differently? What if you knew you were going to die soon, how would that change your day-to-day life? What choices would you make and what things would you spend your time on? What would preparing for that emergency look like? (You want to get past the financial and emotional preparedness that we all default to and lead the men to start thinking and even talking about being spiritually prepared and what that would look like.)
- *Deeper Yet:* Now read 2 Kings 20:2-3. What does walking in faithfulness to God and doing good in His sight look like? How have you walked in faithfulness to God? In what ways have you done what is good in God's sight? Or perhaps brainstorm as a group on what walking faithfully with God and doing godly good would look like going forward in life.
- David told the story of Kate on the Nebraska girls' volleyball team. She was the "weak link" and the coach was considering replacing her in the rotation for the national title game. David suggested that the coach not replace her, but rather sow seeds of trust by telling Kate that he trusted her and wanted her to start the game. Kate went on to have the game of her career and almost singlehandedly win the national title. The message...trust is powerful. Can you recall a time when someone trusted or had faith in you? How did it make you feel? How did it affect your attitude and performance? Has your trust in someone ever been broken? (*Leader's Note: If you feel it is appropriate, ask if anyone has ever broken a trust given to them.*) Can a broken trust relationship ever be re-established? How? In your opinion, what are the factors that need to be there for you to trust someone deeply? **Related Scripture: Psalm 20:7 – Trusting God**
 - *Where we're going: Exploring trust.* This discussion is designed to help men start grappling with what trust is, the issues they may have with trusting someone and ultimately to explore what trusting God looks like and the basis of trusting Jesus.
 - *Going Deeper:* Read John 14:1. How can you trust God, whom you cannot see? What does it mean to trust God? What does that look like in someone's life? (It is believing in God's existence to start, but then believing that God's Word, the Bible is trustworthy, trusting that God is good and desires the best for you, trusting that God is for you and not

against you, obeying God and living life the way He describes in the Bible, etc.) Is trust in God something earned or given? (Actually, it is both. God has earned our trust through all the promises He has kept as well as through sending his Son to live and die sacrificially for us. It is given in that God will never force a person to trust him.) Has God earned your trust or not? If not, why?

- *Deeper Yet:* Read John 3:16. Now consider Jesus. How has God earned our trust in what Jesus did for us? (It might be helpful to read Romans 5:6-11 and prepare yourself as a leader to explain what Jesus did for each of them while they may not have been giving Him a second thought.)

Closing Prayer

Lord, I ask that you help me prepare spiritually for the emergencies of life. I have sometimes sought after the things that delighted me alone without regard for You. Please forgive me and help me to consistently live life as Hezekiah did and remain faithful and trusting in You.