

# **SESSION 8: WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

- **Welcome & Review the Core Value Exercise: 15 minutes**
- **Session #8 Teaching: Work-Life Balance: 15 minutes**

God blessed Mark Smith with the opportunity and ability to start his own business nearly 25 years ago. At the time, he didn't see it as the best move financially or for his career. He'd been promoted to President of a software company with about 20 employees that was successful and growing. His business partners, who were not all Christians, thought we were really onto something and wanted to bring additional partners in and move the business closer to DC with the goal of becoming a much larger company. Mark had already been asked to make moral compromises in some areas by his partners, and wasn't comfortable with the character of the two new guys coming on as new partners. So he made the decision to resign and start his own business, thinking that it was the best thing for his family and that he would be better able to serve the Lord with a clear conscience if he wasn't unequally yoked with unbelieving partners in business.

It turned out not only to be a good thing for Mark's family, but God blessed them financially too! The Lord used it to expose things in his heart that needed to be worked on, to heal his marriage in ways that needed healing, and to give Mark and his wife the bandwidth to raise six children and homeschool them. Interestingly enough, the company that Mark had previously run, went out of business within two years. 25 years later, Mark thanks God for his faithfulness. There's never been a day where Mark and his family worried about paying for food, or clothing, or our home, and the flexibility of working in his own company has allowed him to spend extended periods of time overseas, on mission trips, to serve in the church and ministry in various ways, and ultimately to see God providing all their needs very directly. Mark has the freedom to pray with and for employees, for workflow, for customers, for problem-solving abilities, and for wisdom. He's prayed over computers and business situations: for hard drives that were failing and for servers that were unresponsive, for frustrated customers and difficult employee situations.

Men, especially, find so much of our identity in our work. Work is a great thing! It predates the fall. God created and designed us for work. But like any good thing, work can become an idol. And when work becomes an idol we end up sacrificing to it. We sacrifice our families; we sacrifice our health; we sacrifice our hearts, our time, and our joy.

Consider Paul's admonition to slaves in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord..." Individualistic Americans tend to hear the "work at it with all your heart" part of that verse and think I need to go go go and do do do. But the key mindset we need instead is to view our work "as working for the Lord." When we shift our focus this way, we begin to make decisions about tithing, and hiring, and integrity, and faithfulness which completely shift our work-life balance. We all have a master, "but you my brothers are called to be free!" We can choose to live as slaves to our human masters (whether employers or customers); or we can work "as for the Lord" for our employers and customers, since "you know that when you do you will receive an inheritance from the Lord." If you are a Christian, it is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving - no matter what you do for a living. And the sooner we learn to accept and recognize that fact, the better our work quality and the fruit of our labor becomes for us and for everyone we know and love.

## **Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes**

- *Read Colossians 3:23-24, and discuss how you can apply those verses to lead your life moving forward?*
- *Mark made a fairly "radical" decision and started his own company, talk about what you think about his story.*
- *Back in Session #5, we did the "integrity" exercise and talked about balance. Readdress that topic after hearing Mark's story.*

*•How is YOUR work-life balance? How would your family answer that question. Ask them this week.*

### **Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes**

- What were the biggest take-aways and personal commitment from your small group time?*
- What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?*

### **Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes**

- Read Colossians 3:23-24, Galatians 5:13-14, Exodus 20:3-5, 2 Corinthians 6:14-16: and rethink what you heard in Mark's story and how that story effects come current (or future) decisions you may need to make in order to have a better work-life balance.*
- Ask your family about your work-life balance and be ready to report back to your group.*