

WALK of a faithful wife

Her husband's story has been told around the world, but **Ginger Whitacre** shares the hard lesson of faithfulness in adversity.

by CORNÈL WARREN photos CORNÈL WARREN

For better or for worse. Ginger Gilbert promised, before God, to stand by her high school sweetheart, Mark Whitacre when they married at just twenty years of age. And she did. She stood by him as he earned his PhD from Cornell University, she uprooted her life to follow him to Europe, where they lived for nearly four years, adopted a biological brother and sister and had a baby just twelve months later, and she stood by him as he rose to riches and fourth-in-command at global food processing and commodities trading company, Archer Daniels Midland.

"From the world's perspective we had it all," remembers Ginger over a cool glass of water on a warm June day.

She was a faithful wife and a faithful mother. She was also faithful to God, and when she discovered that ADM was involved in a global price-fixing scheme that was robbing the public of billions of dollars, she could not stay silent.

"It was Ginger who was the true whistle-blower of the ADM case," Mark says when he shares his story. "If it was not for a 34-year-old stay-at-home mom of three young children, the largest price-fixing scheme in U.S. history may never have been exposed."

Ginger remained faithful to her husband as he turned himself in to the FBI and served as an undercover informant for three years. Every morning at 5 AM, as her beloved spouse was being fitted with a wire, she listened to the agents telling him that this day might be his last, that if he were found out he

would probably be murdered. Because of the psychological toll on Mark, the FBI no longer allows people to act as informants for more than a year.

Mark faltered under the pressure and secured a golden parachute of nine million dollars for himself, and that landed him in the FBI's bad book. He went from the inner circle to the witness stand, and was eventually sentenced to nine years in federal prison.

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"Our youngest probably struggled the most. When Mark went undercover Alex was six, he was twelve when Mark went to prison and he was 21 and a Junior in college, when Mark was released," shares Ginger. Her commitment to her family was unwavering: "If we could financially afford to do it, I decided that we would move wherever Mark was transferred while serving his sentence, so the boys could have time with their dad every weekend." And they did. Ginger returned to school at forty to earn a degree in Psychology with a minor in teaching, while working as a teacher's assistant in the competitive Chapel Hill school district. She saw the Lord's hand clearly in the opportunity: "God was there along the way. I would never have gotten a job teaching at a school in Chapel Hill because it is so competitive. Most teacher's assistants ►

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Sharing my heart



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◀ there already had degrees.”

God continued to provide her with work every time Mark was transferred and she and the boys found themselves in a new city, first in South Carolina, then in Pensacola, Florida. These opportunities supported her family for the nine years while her husband was in prison, and in His faithfulness, God brought positions to Ginger that would allow her to be a blessing to others faced with difficulty. “Upon graduation I began my teaching career in South Carolina teaching kindergarten in an at-risk school. From there we moved to Florida and I continued teaching kindergarten in an at-risk school. I loved working with at-risk students to give back through nurturing them and their families.”

The story of Ginger Whitacre is a story of enduring faithfulness, even during the toughest times. She could see God’s hand providing for her, and she could see the

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transformational impact of redemption in her husband, especially when he surrendered his life to Christ as a result of mentoring from Chuck Colson and Ian Howes from CBMC (Christian Business Men’s Connection).

Ginger relied heavily on Scripture during what she refers to as ‘the ordeal.’ She clung to the Word and also found tremendous consolation and clarity in Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. She drew inspiration from her sister, a woman who stuck by Ginger as a powerful prayer warrior throughout the decade of intense difficulty, always reminding her to return to prayer, to cry out to God and to expect His faithfulness. And He didn’t fail her.

“During the whole process I learned so much about faith in the different sense. As much as I loved Mark, I loved God more. Because I had to know that no matter what happens God is always there. My focus has to be on the Lord.”

With feet planted firmly on the ground, Ginger understands



that not every marital obstacle comes to the happy resolution that hers did. But as far as it depended on her, she stayed true to her commitment to her husband, her family and her Father.

She spoke candidly about the peaks and valleys of her faith: “I thought I had done the right thing telling Mark to turn himself in, and then questioning that when he was sent off to prison for nine years and I was left a single parent, practically speaking. This was not anything like the journey I thought I would be on.”

After his release from prison, Mark Whitacre returned to his roots in biochemistry, having originally earned his PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry from Cornell University. He became Chief Operating Officer and Chief Science Officer at Cypress Systems, a California-based nutrition company.

Mark and Ginger’s three children have all gone on to establish successful lives for themselves after the ordeal, another grace from the Father: Tanya lives in Chapel Hill, Bill lives in Florence and Alex and his wife, Cindi, live in Independence, Kentucky.

Mark and Ginger reside in Florence, Kentucky. She travels with Mark as he shares the story of Christ’s redemption and grace, and addresses corporate ethics with audiences around the world. They have been married 37 years as of June. ■

Read more about Mark and Ginger’s story in Stevin Hoover’s book *Mark Whitacre Against All Odds*, or visit www.markwhitacre.com

