



LIZA KITTLE

## THE MASTERS—A VIEW FROM AUGUSTA

The 2010 Masters Golf Tournament is over and provided a lot of drama as Phil Mickelson won his third green jacket, the coveted prize of the tournament. The Masters, considered by some to be the most prestigious tournament played on the most beautiful course in golf, is held in my hometown of Augusta, Georgia. Preparation for the event is intense—not only for the Augusta National Golf Club but for the entire community. Everyone cleans up their homes, spruces up their yards, gets out their spring sportswear, and revels in the explosion of activity culminating in one very special week each year. Visitors from all over the world and media personnel converge on the “Garden City” to enjoy the festivities and cover every conceivable angle of the tournament.

This year offered even more attention because it was Tiger Woods’ return to tournament play after the very public incident in November that changed his life forever. A late night car crash, stories of multiple affairs with all the tawdry details, a shattered marriage, and a stay in rehab played out in tabloids and on televisions across the world. The private world of golf’s greatest player had become very public.

Many speculated that Woods chose the Masters for his return to competitive golf because of the tightly controlled security at the event. A Masters badge is one of the most coveted tickets in sports and entrance onto the grounds of the Augusta National is very restricted.

Woods held a press conference after his first practice round and for 40 minutes answered questions about the past five months of his life. Tiger was open and candid while explaining that he had “lost his center and balance,” digressed from the moral teachings of his parents, and felt entitled that somehow he had come to believe he “was above it all.”

Woods described the forgiving and polite response he had received from golf fans and colleagues that day, and promised to move forward with a new respect for the game and the fans. He said that family and faith would take precedence over winning golf championships. Noticeably absent from the crowd during the week was Tiger’s wife Elin and their two children. Tiger Woods would be making his very

public debut without his family by his side.

Woods played well, but it was a different family story that ended in victory at the Masters this year. Phil Mickelson played an exceptional tournament, executing some incredible shots, and culminating in his triumphant victory in Augusta. His victory would come after a year of family trauma as both his wife Amy and mother battled breast cancer. Amy and their three children were in Augusta, and were waiting for him near the eighteenth green as Mickelson completed his final round with another birdie putt. Their emotional embrace and tears said it all, evidence of the strong marriage and family that has long characterized the Mickelsons.

The irony of this victory was not lost on the crowd or the press. All the early attention given to Tiger Woods, a great golfer whose poor moral choices led to the breakdown of his marriage and family, was now focused on Phil Mickelson, a great golfer whose devotion and love for his wife and family had led to the pinnacle moment of his career. Marriage and family had trumped infidelity and heartbreak.

Hopefully, we all learned a few lessons from the 2010 Masters. First, our behaviors and choices in life can have dramatic consequences on those around us. Second, true repentance takes time and guidance from the one true God who provides the only path for forgiveness and redemption. And third, marriage and family are gifts from God and are meant to be our anchor in times of suffering, our hope in times of doubt, and our blessings in times of joy. The relationships of marriage and family were beautifully designed by God to mirror the relationships of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and of the love of Christ for his church.

At RENEW, we believe in helping women to have strong marriages and families. This has never been more important as it is in our culture today. Let’s pray that the message of love and devotion in the marriage and family of Phil and Amy Mickelson is seen as a far greater prize than any green jacket, and that troubled marriages can be healed and restored when we put our trust and faith in Jesus Christ, the true Master of our hearts and lives.

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