**Jill Savage**

So in the past two years, many of us have found ourselves experiencing a lot more togetherness than ever before.

**Mark Savage**

Yup. You think so?

**Jill Savage**

Absolutely!

**Mark Savage**

Like a pandemic or...

**Jill Savage**

Oh my goodness, there's been a a lot of changes. Retirement, pandemic, for you and I working together even more. It's been a lot. And you know, I mean, really, a lot of spouses are working from home. And so whether we're dealing with retirement or working from home or running a business together, husbands and wives can find themselves spending what may even feel like too much time together. So what do we do with all that together time? And how do we how do we handle it when it starts to feel so challenging? And that's really when we're going to talk about today. Our guest is Cynthia Ruchti. Cynthia is a speaker, a literary agent and the author or coauthor of over 30 books. OK, that makes me tired. Including one that we're going to talk about today: Spouse in the House. And I love the subtitle: Rearranging Our Attitudes to Make Room For Each Other. So welcome, Cynthia. We're so glad to have you.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Thank you so much. It is a joy and a privilege to be here.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah. Well, you know what, this conversation is really personal for us. So you know, whoever's listening or, you know, tuning in for this, we're all glad that you're tuning in, but it's just for Mark and I.

**Mark Savage**

Right! Yeah. Because there is a spouse in the house or two.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah. And we've certainly felt the frustration at times that trying to figure things out the "Hey, you're infringing upon my space." We've really been learning to navigate that ourselves. So we're glad for whoever else can just eavesdrop on this conversation. But it's really a coaching session, Cynthia, between you and Mark. And I just want you to know

**Cynthia Ruchti**

That's great. Or vice versa.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah.

**Jill Savage**

So every book has a story, and I would love to know, now you coauthored this with Becky Melby. Why did you and Becky write spouse in the house?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Because we had spouses in our house. Mostly it was, it was coming out of that idea that we knew that it didn't have to be that we just put up with it. It didn't have to be that we just tolerated the fact that it seemed like the walls were shrinking or that in our cases, my husband had been forced into early retirement at 50.

**Jill Savage**

Oh wow.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

He soon found that was way too soon for that kind of retirement. I've always worked from home or had ministry out of the home, and all of a sudden there was somebody under foot at 50. And he soon found that golfing and fishing and hunting was very enjoyable. But it wasn't everything that it was cracked up to be when you were forced into retirement at 50. So he eventually found a couple of part time jobs that he did for a while, and now he's in the stage where he's in pretty close to full on retirement. Becky's husband had been, and she and her husband had been talking about retirement for a lot of years that they kind of got into the semi retirement stage and then full on retirement. However, what we were noticing is the things we were experiencing we've been experiencing for a lot of years before retirement ever came around, partly because we work from home. And then even though the book was already written when a pandemic or something like that should happen and people are forced into close quarters for longer periods of time and maybe with children too, or there are so many people who have who share a home office now, we realize this isn't just us. There are a lot of people. So as we were trying to navigate that ourselves with our own, in our own households, with that idea of it can be good , right? It doesn't have to be that it's an irritation all the time, right? We realized that we were encouraging one another with truths from God's word and with practical ideas, and realized there probably are some more people out there, too who would appreciate that as well.

**Mark Savage**

For sure. You know, I think so many of us will have that image that togetherness is a good thing.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Bliss!

**Mark Savage**

And we'll be so comfortable and we'll get along and then we don't. And it's like, what? What went wrong with that?

**Jill Savage**

Well, what's at the root of it? What's at the root of that? Being uncomfortable with one another? And what makes that togetherness uncomfortable?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

I believe it's being human. I think because when you think about it, you can trace that to even roommates. College roommates works out great for the first few months, maybe. And then all of a sudden, what happened to the sandwich I was going to have for lunch that disappeared out of the refrigerator? Or we have two completely different styles as roommates, college roommates of what's the definition of clean. And all of this, so I think it really has to do with humans. But then sometimes we let down the common courtesies in marriage because we're married to this person we love. We've committed the rest of our lives to. And if we let down those common courtesies, the common kindnesses and communication glitches get in the way, then we might find ourselves in a situation where this togetherness doesn't have all the aspects of bliss we were hoping for. And we're finding some blisters working their way into our relationship.

**Mark Savage**

Oh, I love that from bliss to blisters. I know for me that I really had to ramp up my sensitivity because I knew that I was really moving in a sense into Jill's world and for years, the whole house was her office.

**Jill Savage**

And I'm an introvert.

**Mark Savage**

Yes. Yeah.

**Jill Savage**

And introverts like to be alone.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Yeah, we do. We love quiet.

**Mark Savage**

Yeah. And as extroverts have to learn how to cooperate with introverts and that we don't always love quiet. In fact, I like to listen to music and Jill's like, can you turn that down? It's it's annoying me.

**Jill Savage**

I can't write a blog post if there's music going on. I cannot do that. I can't work on a book if there's music. But if you're doing something like that, you want music to be on.

**Mark Savage**

Well and so that whole idea of from bliss to blisters, it's like we have to really be conscious and make a decision about how we're going to interact with each other because we truly can have bliss. Or we can have blisters.

**Jill Savage**

Mm hmm. Well, I would say, you know, we were just coaching a couple right before we got on this interview with you. And they've been married 30 years and they were like, why are we having so many issues? And our wording to them was, you've become really sloppy in your relationship. You become, you know, just taking things for granted. And that's what you were talking about, right, Cynthia, when you were just saying that I think we get so at ease with one another that we stop being kind or gentle or careful.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

And oftentimes we we run into the situation where maybe there's been there have been issues small or large in our marriages, where maybe the woman hasn't felt that she has gotten what she needed, what her heart needed or vice versa. And so that too can come in. So then we start to fight for what we want, even if we're not saying it out loud. There's this wrestling match going on in our own hearts to where, where if I needed space rather than saying, "Honey, you need some space right now", I would just fume instead or let it fester underneath instead of having a conversation and respecting each other's needs and boundaries and preferences. And if he if my husband, for instance, likes to watch television more than I do, sometimes it meant that I would rearrange my time schedule around that, or he would rearrange his. If I'm having an interview like now, I probably should have told him not to run the four-wheeler in the background right outside the window. Well, while we were interviewing, but I didn't think about that. But those things that we were adjusting for and rearranging around all the time, it's not that we're giving in to that. We're respecting one another's needs. We're taking a look at: I realize he needs this rest time in the afternoon, and he gets so much joy out of that, a rest time, every afternoon and I'm go, go, go until the end of the day when I crash then. But not taking a look at that and saying he's wrong and I'm right but saying this is what he needs and this is what I need. How are we going to make that work? How are we going to work around that in our particular situation, part of it meant an actual real life remodeling we had in our home.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

We had had this four square American, four square American. I think that's what they're called home. That has a for basically the same sized rooms on the first floor, second floor and a chimney that went from the basement through the first floor, through the second floor, through the attic, up through the roof. That meant that at the bottom of the stairs to the second floor of this old old old farmhouse, we had 18 inches of wax space, which isn't to code in any country, right? So but we've lived in this house. I love to move. My husband does not. So we've lived here for 44 years and the that walk space then was a one way traffic for all those years, even when we had small kids, toddlers, when each of us had an operation that necessitated crutches or a walker or something. Oh my goodness that that was an irritation spot, a pinch point in our marriage, as well as in just the flow of the house. The day came when we got a new furnace that wasn't going to need that chimney, and it wasn't all that long ago that we tore the chimney down and made an open plan and so much space I could drive my tractor if I wanted to from the kitchen, into the dining room, into the office. That pinch point was at the point of the bottom of the stairs, the kitchen flow to the dining room and my office. All of that was affected by it. When we made that actual physical change, it changed things, but something had to change in us first before. I think the Lord was ready to allow us to have that remodeling, and that was that we had done this single file thing, but usually with a sigh or with a kind of attitude.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

And one day my husband just decided that instead of saying, excuse me, he would say, Excuse me, my love. And he added that little term of endearment at the end of that, excuse me, the excuse me was wonderful because he wasn't just barreling his way through.

**Jill Savage**

Sure.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

But that little term of endearment meant so much to me, and it turned it into something where that pinch point became almost like walking under the mistletoe. Where it was a sweet spot.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

And then God said, OK, now you can have your wide-open spaces because you learned how to navigate this with kindness and courtesy and caring about one another.

**Mark Savage**

I love that.

**Jill Savage**

I love that too. And what that illustrates is sometimes all we need is the tiniest tweak.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Yeah.

**Jill Savage**

I mean, all he did was added two words, but those two words informed his heart, right?

**Mark Savage**

And yours.

**Jill Savage**

And touched yours. So, it yeah, so powerful. I love that. That is very cool. And I love that it was when you had the heart change, you were able then really to probably even better navigate the house change.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Oh, definitely. So in fact, we had a lot of time together while we were working on the house and filling in the spot in the floor that had been left empty where a chimney had been. It's an old floor with old maple floorboards. My husband, a tree, had fallen in our north yard 25 years ago. My husband, the scavenger, had saved the wood from that tree and had it made into boards and saved that out in the machine shed for 25 years. And when we went to replace the floorboards, we use that wood to patch in with the rest of the floor in it. It turned out beautifully, but we were kneeling down side by side working to try to figure this out and how to get old burnt floorboards out because they'd had a fire at one time that we didn't know about (the previous owners) and patch that in and measure and sand, and when he would pry something up, I would be there with the shop vac to try to vacuum out all the dirt and the saddest and everything underneath. So even the process of making that change, yeah, took the both of us. It took the both of us and which I think there was a big, powerful life lesson in that as well.

**Mark Savage**

Oh, no kidding. Yeah.

**Jill Savage**

So powerful.

**Mark Savage**

Yeah.

**Jill Savage**

So let's turn the corner to some real practical’s of when couples need to spend more time together. What are some initial conversations that you need to have with your spouse in the beginning about expectations dealing with time, space boundaries? All of that. Let's talk about some practical’s that a couple can do if they are already spending time together or they find out they're, you know, they're going to.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

We often liken it, Becky and I both have talked often about the idea that there's plenty of or not plenty, but there's preparation before marriage There's premarital counseling. They talk about everything from Are we going to have children or not? And how many and who's going to handle the finances, who will be writing the checks, which doesn't happen much anymore. And it's a different method. Who's going to be on the computer to figure out our finances? All those things that we do before marriage. And there is financial discussion that often happens between a couple when they're preparing for retirement. Let's use that as an example. But very little emotional or practical workings out of how are we going to navigate this? Are you going to empty the dishwasher now sometimes? Because you're home more. You have a little more free time. In both Becky's and my situation, the wife kept working and the husband had retired, but the husband had retired from a job that he then felt what he was given as a gift in retirement then was the freedom to not have to have a big list of chores, not have to have that. So now we're navigating is what I'm asking of my husband, something that he was happy to give up.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Funny story, because this is one of the things that we have found is that if we don't find the humor in the relationship, we're going to wind up tanking pretty fast. But it wasn't until I think we'd been married 27 or 28 years. It's been much longer than that now, but that I asked my husband if he would kindly clean the toilet. And I expected to need to teach him how to do that. And he said, Oh no, that's been part of my job at work every day. I said for 27 years, and you never told me that you knew how to clean a toilet. OK. OK, good to know, though. I know you have this skill. This is wonderful. But so sometimes it's that division of labor. Who's going to do what. Typically, no matter who it is that's going to be home alot.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

It might be that both working from home, you're seeing things that you maybe didn't see before, that you're now both working from home or you're retired. You're aware of certain needs. You might have had expectations or the bottom line of it is every single thing needs to be talked about. Not all in one big meeting, because that would overwhelm just about anybody. But over the course of time, everything would need to be talked about. What time are you comfortable getting up in the morning now that our situation is the way it is now? Is that different? If it is, what are we going to do about it? Is one of us going to, are we going to like one week we will get up at the time you want to in the next week will change?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

No, that doesn't work too awfully well because of our circadian rhythms. But figuring out, OK, that's great. I'll make my own breakfast you sleep in because that's what you prefer. Or it might flip, then there will be something else within the relationship where we realize I don't have the appetite for television that you do. So part of our budget will include some great Bose noise canceling headphones for me, and I'll happily knit, or write blog posts or something else while you're watching your favorite show this week. We realized early on that to him, basketball is just a joy to watch on television. To me, it, the squeaky sneakers on the floor is like bamboo shoots underneath the finger nails. But once we understood that and we could talk about it, not talking about it as if we're throwing dodge balls at one another, but instead talking about it, because this is where our situation is what adjustments can we make?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

If you think about just about any other pinch point, let's use that again in life. Let's say there's a there's a propensity for one of our children...maybe one of our children has dyslexia. We can either say, Oh, that's awful. Or we can find ways to compensate. All right. This is what we will do. So in our marriage, we can either look at a pinch point and say, Oh, that's awful. Or we can find ways to compensate. And if we are creative in finding those ways to compensate. And in honor preferring one another, we're going to find that that not only smooths out those rough places in those conversations, we have to have those real practical conversations. Are you going to still be the one to pay the bills or would you like me to do that now? I have more time. You are more skilled, which makes more sense. Let's have the one who is more skilled at it do it. And instead, I in exchange, not even stephen exchange, but just because you're handling that, I will handle this. And oftentimes it's conversations. Very practical conversations, too about how much free time do you need? Just how much free time does your soul require?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

What do you want your quiet time with the Lord to look like? Is that something we can share together in the same room? Or is yours going to be full of music and mine's going to be very quiet? So then we'll have our quiet times alone, but we'll come back together to pray together in the evenings or to pray together in the mornings before we start our day. My husband and I have devotions together every morning on the days when I'm up early enough to make him breakfast and then we pray together at night. But that praying together at night, together, at night together lots of togethers in their. Togetherness, that's the subject. My heart longed for it for 24 years before it happened. And I knew that if I forced it, it wasn't going to be pretty.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

So I told Jesus Lord, I would really love to have an evening prayer time with my husband. Just a short prayer time with my husband. I would really love that and year after year passed without that happening. And there were times when I would try to take it in my own hands and fail miserably. And then the day came when out of the blue, he asked if we could pray together at the end of the evening. And now that has become a routine that has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. One of my favorite spots is sitting beside him on the couch with my head on his shoulder, listening to his heartbeat and then listening to his words of prayer or mine. We, we kind of take turns doing that, and the Lord is really bonded us together in that way, but that was another thing we needed to talk about very practically. What's our spiritual life look like together if we have a lot of time in the same space?

**Jill Savage**

Oh my goodness. You know, a couple of things come to my mind as you've been sharing some of these things that we need to talk about is one of the things it becomes. Every married couple struggles with differences because we're very different people, you know, and you just talked about lots of places where we can be very different and if we're not careful, those differences look wrong to us or label them as wrong instead of. I know that you really enjoy watching television. We can say you watch entirely too much television. And so we have to. I know early in marriage, as I was learning how to deal with differences, I often would say to myself, he's not wrong, he's just different. He's not wrong. He's just different. And I'm thinking that that is a phrase that probably needs to be resurfaced when there is a spouse in the house. She's not wrong. She's just different. And that is going to help us to honor those differences and recognize that God made us very different people and we can learn to work with those differences, right?

**Mark Savage**

Yes.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

So true that the one flesh idea doesn't mean that I don't have my own fingernails and my own hair. The one flesh is a deep. It's a deep soul connection. But we still have our own ideas and opinions. The things that make that our entertainment to me may not be to him. We have our our favorite means of recreating. And part of that will be that we join the other person and then may be discovered that we like their recreation as well. I know one of my husband's passions is watching baseball and our team was doing pretty well this year, so I knew that if I wanted to be with him in the evenings, there would be baseball regarding it. But my heart had resisted it for a long time. And then this year I decided I'm going to find what I connect with in this, and I connected with the stories I connected, even with the stats. I connected with the great victories that came when it looked like all was lost because I love a good redemption story

**Cynthia Ruchti**

So I began to find what it was in his enjoyment, his recreation that I liked, too. And all of a sudden, I'm cheering for the team. One night he went to bed early before the game was over, and I left the game on. In the morning I said, You will not believe the move that the shortstop made in that last couple of minutes of. I just it was so exciting. Here I'll find it for you. And I found that scene on the computer and showed it to him and played it for him, and he still stood back and said, You just made me so happy.

**Mark Savage**

That's so neat.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah!

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Did that cost me much? It didn't cost me much at all. But it lifted his heart. And yeah, that's the kind of thing. If we're if we just take it, if we're rearranging our attitudes about these things, we're going to find that it makes a huge difference. And like you said, Jill, often it doesn't take much, not much tweak.

**Mark Savage**

And I think just as we in a sense, calm down and step into one another's world and respect it and try to find, like what you said, try to find our place in it or in your case, the story, and it can be enjoyable. I believe Jill and I both have made definite changes in that way.

**Jill Savage**

I would agree. The other thing that came to my mind as you were talking about, you know, being one flesh but also being separate and being individuals within marriage and needing maybe some space away from each other because you have your own life too. And if you are married to an introvert and you're not an introvert yourself, that introvert needs space and that space is there filling station. It's where they pull up and they get emotionally refueled so they can be there for you. But one thing that we have navigated in our relationship is that when you didn't understand that, because Mark's an extrovert, I'm an introvert. When when Mark didn't understand that he took that space as rejection.

**Mark Savage**

Right.

**Jill Savage**

And so I think that that can happen when suddenly, you know, you're either working together, you're in retirement, and one of you is saying I need some space and the other one is not understanding that that isn't about them. It's not about I need space away from you.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Right.

**Jill Savage**

I need space to fill me up.

**Mark Savage**

So it gives it gives them permission to, uh, to really take care of themselves. And it gives us, in a sense, permission to not take things personal that really aren't about us.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

To be comfortable with that.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

It is amazing to me that we might talk about love languages and gifts and our particular spiritual giftings, our individual gifts and needs and desires, but sometimes even just learning styles. If we think about the other person's learning style, it may be completely different than our own. And what I came to realize and it was, I don't even want to admit how far into marriage I was when I started to realize this.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

But I think quickly and in three point plans, I just that's how they come out of my mouth and and my husband, I came to realize loves to have three days to ponder. So if I was, if I was accepting his silence as, Oh, that's a no huh? OK, right, reasons why it needs to be a yes. Instead, if I would allow him the space, introduce the idea and then say, I'll check back with you in a couple of days and see how you feel about it. About that idea. That was so much smoother for our relationship, if we both had been the kind of people that needed to ponder for a long time . That's a different story. If we both were the kind of people that thought fast and had an instant reaction, we probably have World War III. But realizing how each other even processes information and being respectful of that makes a huge difference too. Changed everything for us. It was no longer my idea against his idea, its what do we think about this idea?

**Jill Savage**

So you're really functioning and operating as a team?

**Jill Savage**

Yeah, yeah. And really, I mean, OK, what does God's word say about this? What does God's word say about so many of the things that we've been talking about here? Because really, our faith can come into play and needs to come into play.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

For me, I was convicted, I have to say, but in a very good way by the idea that so much of what God had to say in his word that had to do with any kind of other relationship, church relationship, our relationship with the Lord, relationship with family members. With people, with our enemies. Everything. So much of what he says. If we look for what he's saying to marriages in that verse, we're going to find it. For one thing, I mean, another conviction thing here is confession time here, I guess tonight, is that I really had to intentionally realize that my husband was not just my husband, he was my brother in Christ.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

How would I treat a brother in Christ in this particular situation? Or if we disagreed on this item or if I was looking for space or I was looking for something that I thought was going to fulfill me in this particular arena or looking for a kind word, how would I treat a brother in Christ? Because he's both my spouse and my brother in Christ. I know not every marriage can they say that. And that has its own set of complications, too. But once I did and realized that what's happening in our household, what's happening in our family, where are we butting heads?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

God has something to say about it. Not I wonder if he does. He does. What might that be? One of my favorites is from Philippians II, when it talked, and it's really interesting. Just picture it from this excuse me in this light, if it's OK, if I share this.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah, please.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Picture it in this light as considering it having to do with marriage. Therefore, if you have any encouragement for being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility value others above yourselves not looking to your own interests only. But each of you to the interest of the others in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

I knew that well in regard to other relationships within the church. But when I began to apply that sort of thing to my relationship with my husband, it made a huge difference. The gems are there for the taking. They're laying all over the pages of scripture. And God is inviting us to come see what he has to say about marriage.

**Mark Savage**

I love that.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So very, very powerful. Oh, Cynthia, this has been delightful. Thank you so much for taking time to share your journey and the wisdom that you've learned. The hard-earned wisdom along that journey.

**Mark Savage**

Thank you for the confessions too, because honestly, they lead all of us too. We all have those, uh, those challenges in relationship. And uh, and for many of us, they're the same. And so I appreciate you taking the lead in that.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Yeah, thank you. I think it also gives hope.

**Jill Savage**

Yep.

**Cynthia Ruchti**

Because knowing that there are couples that have been together for many, many years that didn't have it all ironed out in week one. Gives hope to those who are walking through it now.

**Mark Savage**

Absolutely.

**Jill Savage**

Yeah, it does. So Cynthia, where's the best place that people can learn more about you, your book? Pick up spouse in the House, where can they find you online?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

They can find me probably the best way is my website, which is CynthiaRuchti.com. Not an easy name to spell or pronounce, but they can reach the very same website through hemmedinhope.com. It will divert right to that very same website and all the information about the books, how to get on to the social media connections with me, or sign up for the newsletter. All those things they can find in that one spot.

**Jill Savage**

OK. well name of the book again is Spouse in the House: Rearranging Our Attitudes to Make Room For Each Other. So important.

**Mark Savage**

Love it!

**Jill Savage**

Cynthia, would you be willing to close us in prayer?

**Cynthia Ruchti**

I'd be happy to. Father, God, we are so grateful that you did not abandon us in our relationships that rather that you wanted to be in the very center. That you chose to be in the very center and invited us to come and join you in that. We thank you, Lord, for the time that we have had together to look at, just a different angle, maybe of what you've been speaking to various hearts in this special time now. But in a time when many of us have found ourselves for work reasons or any other reasons in a in a what seems like too tight situation. Lord God. Author of Our Faith. And author of The Concept of Marriage, we ask you now to take us on in whatever you want us to individually gain from the discussion that we've had together that little fine point or that major point that you would like us to muse on a little bit more and find you there, discover you in the middle of it. We open ourselves up and surrender ourselves to what you want. Continue to speak to us even after this time closes in the name of Jesus, our savior, the redeemer of everything, including relationships. We ask this. Amen.

**Jill Savage**

Amen.

**Mark Savage**

Amen. So good. Thank you. Thank you.