

# Double Date with Mark and Jill

## Your God-Tool of Acceptance

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**Jill Savage:** Welcome to this month's Double Date with Mark and Jill. This month we are looking at the God-tool of acceptance. And what I've come to understand is that when we use our God-tool of acceptance, it's actually a gift to our spouse because we're letting them be themselves.

**Mark Savage:** And that's powerful. We find truth for this in Romans 15:7. It says, "Therefore accept one another as Christ has accepted you," and one version says, "for the glory of God," another version says, "in order to bring praise to God." And think about this: as Christ accepted us, that glorified God. What a powerful tool we have in that tool of acceptance.

**JS:** And you know, one of the things we've tried to do with some of these God-tools is to think about when that God-tool is absent, what is the condition in the marriage, what does it cause in the marriage? And probably the biggest thing is that when we're not using our God-tool of acceptance in some way, we feel either highly criticized and judged, or even all out rejected by our spouse. So, if it's not being used by either party, then you're going to experience judgment or rejection.

**MS:** I think too it can tap into our lies that some of us might hold that say we're not enough, we're never enough, we're not good enough, I'll *never* be good enough, and it just perpetuates what evil does within our soul.

**JS:** Right. Which is just a reminder to the power of our words. So, the God-tool of acceptance really has a lot to do with our words as well. The words we choose to say to our spouse, as well as the words we choose *not* to say to our spouse. But, let's think about this gift that we can give to our spouse. When we use our God-tool of acceptance, we are resisting the urge to change our spouse. That's one of the first gifts that we get to know. There's nothing more dissatisfying in a marriage than to feel like you're always being told that you do things wrong.

**MS:** Always corrected, always challenged, and bottom line, never accepted. Yeah, it's destructive.

**JS:** Second one is you are actually allowing him or her to do things *differently* than you do them. So, this really requires us to look at where we think that our way is the only way, or our way is the right way, which would really be defined as pride. I know we don't like to think of it that way. Most of us would say, "I'm not prideful," but the truth is we do a lot of demanding that things are done our way. And when we do that, then we are not using our God-tool of acceptance. So, it's such a gift when we actually allow our spouse to do things differently than we would. Load the dishwasher differently, fold laundry differently, put the kids to bed differently.

**MS:** Park our car in a specific location but do that differently.

**JS:** Exactly.

**MS:** There's so many different ways that men and women will challenge one another and demand that our spouse do things the way that we would or the way that we expect. That's not accepting.

**JS:** And we hear it all the time when we do our marriage coaching. We meet with couples who feel parented by the other spouse, and it's not always the women parenting the men, sometimes there are men that parent their wives, and so it works both ways. Most likely the one of you that is more the perfectionist, the one of you that really thinks that things need to be done a certain way, a right way, is probably the one that more often causes the other spouse to feel parented.

**MS:** Correct.

**JS:** Alright, so we're resisting the urge to change them. We're allowing them to do things differently than we do them. We're also allowing our spouse to like things that we don't like and to not like things that we do like. Now I know that sounds kind of funny, but even down to our likes and our dislikes, some couples find themselves in these power struggles. And so, allowing your spouse to not like things that you do like and not forcing that on them.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JS:** So, I'll give an example. I love musical theater. Mark does not particularly enjoy it. And so, he will go with me on occasion, but if I want to do that more often than I know is a loving sacrifice on his part, I will ask one of my girls to go with me, I will ask a friend to go with me, because I recognize that is something that I love. It is something he's willing to do with me on occasion, but if I want to do it more than on occasion, I just have to accept that he doesn't enjoy it in the same way that I do.

**MS:** And that has been a relief for me. We also like our food different. I like coffee, she doesn't. There's just so many differences that we have and in accepting one another it has brought a lot of calm into our marriage.

**JS:** Exactly. Alright, so we're resisting the urge to change them. We're allowing him or her to do things differently than we do them. We are allowing our spouse to like things we don't like and to also not like things we do like. And then finally, we're understanding that our spouse's brain works differently than ours does. And instead of criticizing that they come to a conclusion or a decision differently, or that they process life differently, we embrace that. We recognize that is normal. It's okay. And it's not wrong.

**MS:** Right. And we definitely have made that a part of our conversation because of my brain. If Jill were to understand my brain, or get inside my brain, she would be freaking out.

**JS:** Yeah, I'm sure I would be. [laughter]

**MS:** And hers is much too organized for me. [laughter] I'm kind of random. And so, we've really made it a part of our conversation many times when we're planning, when we're strategizing, and when we're organizing. We talk through that, and allow ourselves to process differently, and not get caught up in a power struggle.

**JS:** You know acceptance has really allowed me to honor my husband and to allow him to be who he is.

**MS:** And acceptance has really allowed me to love my wife by allowing her to be who God made her to be.

**JS:** We just want to leave you with three practical steps to better use your God-tool of acceptance. Alright, so those are: You need to reframe, you need to resist, and you need to rejoice. So, let's take a look at each of those just briefly. The first one is, you need to reframe. You need to reframe what they do. Instead of seeing it as negative, see it as positive.

**MS:** And for me, in the first half of our marriage, I rehearsed the negative over and over again. And then I was totally fueled in my conversation, fueled in my interaction, and fueled in my unwillingness to accept. And so, reframing turns that negative into a positive. What is the good that is coming out of this? What is the good that Jill is doing? What is the good in the way in which Jill is thinking? And I began to focus on that. That was reframing for me.

**JS:** And you know, it drives him nuts that I always have lists in my head. But he also knows that those lists make sure that when we have our kids over for dinner, and all the family's home, everything is thought through to make sure that we enjoy our evening together. So, while my lists drive him nuts, he reframes that and goes, "But those lists make sure that things are taken care of, and that evenings that we have with guests are pretty easy going without a hiccup."

**MS:** Yeah, absolutely. And for Jill, she knows in my creative ways of thinking, that many times when we're stuck either in plans or stuck in a situation, creativity will help think outside of our limitations.

**JS:** And so, even though his random, creative mind drives me nuts sometimes, I recognize that it brings something positive to our relationship as well.

**MS:** Absolutely.

**JS:** Alright, so that's what reframing is. The second one is resist. So, this is where we need to resist unnecessary comments or corrections.

**MS:** And those unnecessary comments can be straight-up loud, verbal comments, or they can be under your breath comments.

**JS:** And they're just not needed. Maybe you need to literally bite your tongue. I know I did when I first started really working on this. And I will probably work on this till my grave, I mean, let's be really honest. But I've made some huge progress. But, I felt like I was biting my tongue all the time because I was in such a habit of making constant comments or criticisms. So, we need to reframe, we need to resist, and then we need to rejoice. Rejoice in those differences. Recognize that your relationship would be boring if you were both exactly alike. And not only that, but it would be very limited in its perspective. But together, you balance each other out. You bring something different to the table. And so, there is something to celebrate and rejoice in.

**MS:** Yes. And for me, I was so driven by my anger over our differences. In my frustration I just felt

so hopeless in them. It wasn't until I found power in moving from that anger and frustration to rejoicing and celebrating those differences and verbalizing them, that I began to transform. And that was the power of using this God-tool of acceptance.

**JS:** So, this is Mark and Jill Savage signing off with a reminder to use that God-tool of acceptance. It's a powerful gift to give to your marriage.