

# Double Date with Mark and Jill

## Loving When It's Hard

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**Jill Savage:** Welcome to this month's Double Date with Mark and Jill. Today, we are taking a look at the Book of Romans, it is Romans 12:9-21. In our story, this was a very, very powerful part of the Bible for me. It was a place that God took me in our dark season. When Mark was gone, we were separated, and I was trying to honestly figure out how to walk in that season. What do you want me to do God? You have to show me what to do. And God began to whisper to my heart in a regular rhythm, "I want you to love Mark. I want you to love him." And man, I was just like, "You are kidding me, right?" I can't even imagine. I remember saying to God one day, "I don't know if you've noticed, but he's not really lovable right now." And I distinctly heard God say back to me, "I don't know if you've noticed, but sometimes you aren't either." And at that point, I remember my prayer of surrender was, "Lord, you're right. You love me when I'm unlovable. You are going to have to show me how to do that, I don't even know."

**JS:** And eventually, he took me to Romans 12:9-21. And we thought we'd actually spend this Double Date just digging in to how to love in a way that goes against what you feel like doing, especially when maybe love is hard. Maybe it's a hard season for you, maybe you're joining us and your spouse isn't joining you. You wished he or she was sitting next to you, watching this video with you, but they're not. So, what can you do? Well, you can love well. If you're watching this as a couple, these are the places where on a regular basis, when our spouse ticks us off, how do we respond to that? We still need to be loving and respond well.

**Mark Savage:** Yeah. And for me, when we were separated, my prayer was, "Lord, you've gotta show me how to love Jill."

**JS:** That wasn't initially.

**MS:** No.

**JS:** That was when you eventually made a recommitment.

**MS:** Right. When I made a recommitment and I made a decision to pursue the Lord with everything I had. I didn't know how to love her. I had loved Jill previously based on what I would get out of it, and what I've realized is, that's not love, that's selfishness. And so, let me read to you Romans 12:9-21 and then we'll talk through it. "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge

yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

**JS:** Right. So, this was very powerful for me. I began to read it daily and this was my marching order. That's what I felt like. And honestly to this day, even in our marriage that's restored, we're in a completely different place, but there are still times that it is hard to love. And I have to go back to this. These verses are also powerful when you struggle loving someone else, like your mother-in-law or your father-in-law, or a sister or a brother, or honestly, sometimes even our kids when they're making poor choices, they are hard to love. And so, this can be a guidance verse for you in those hard seasons.

**JS:** But let's take a look at this because we need to know how the Bible actually gives us direction for real life. And so, when we read this, the first one that I remember realizing I needed to live out was, "Outdo one another in showing honor." It was really easy to want to lash back. I'll be really honest with you. Because during that season, Mark was not being very nice at times. And so, it was very easy to want to do that. And sometimes, quite honestly, I did. I didn't live it out perfectly by any means. And still to this day when there's a place where it's hard to love, it's like, how can I be above reproach in this? How can I outdo one another in showing honor? That's really what my default needs to be.

**MS:** And I think for me, my default needs to let love be genuine because I, by nature, am selfish. I want to look at life and what it's going to give me. Genuine love is going to look very different than what my flesh wants. The Bible talks about our flesh being that which drives our decision. My flesh can be very toxic and selfish. And so, to let my love be genuine means I've got to go to the source of love and that's God himself, and how do I do that? He'll show me how.

**JS:** Exactly. The next one for me that was very powerful was, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." And man, talk about marching orders. Especially when Mark was saying, "I do not want this relationship anymore, I'm throwing it away." It was really hard to still have hope for that and to be patient and ultimately be constant in prayer. And even today, there are times where a situation looks difficult and I can be constant in *worry*, I can be constant in trying to *control*, I can be constant in *anxiety*, when what I *really* need to do is be constant in prayer.

**MS:** Yeah. For me, another verse that stuck out is, "Do not be slothful in zeal, but fervent in spirit, serve the Lord." I had given away all my hope; I had no fervency to keep doing the right thing. I'd completely given up. It's really hard to serve the Lord when you're driven by yourself, and when you're motivated by yourself. So, for me, I had to cling to the hope that God had given, cling to the faith that he'd given, and be fervent no matter what. Because if I trust Him and believe Him, I can stay steady, keep pursuing and be fervent.

**JS:** That's beautiful. Verse 14, "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them." Oh, that's hard, because what we want to do is to lash back or we want to give back what they just gave to us. And this pairs up with the verse that says turn the other cheek. It's not that we aren't to have boundaries, it's okay to have boundaries. Jesus had boundaries! But at the same time, when we're talking about recognizing the power of forgiveness and grace and not taking vengeance, later in that

verse, the Lord says vengeance is mine, so it's really important for us to bless those that persecute us.

**JS:** Oftentimes, we throw people off-kilter with kindness. That's a beautiful thing to do. And in our dark season, that was one of the things that Mark even said. We were having a conversation one night late in our journey, and he said, "Why do you treat me so kindly when I've treated you so poorly?" And I said to him, "I don't know, Mark, it's unhumanable." We both laughed because neither one of us had ever heard the word unhumanable. Honestly, I felt like the Holy Spirit gave it to me in that moment. I now have that written in my Bible. I don't know if you can even see it in red, but it says "key to unhumanable" next to this. This was my Bible I was using back then, and I came home that night and literally wrote that next to there. That is how God's word is living and breathing and gives us direction for our marriage.

**MS:** Yep. The next verse, it actually reminds me of the tool of compassion that we've written about in *No More Perfect Marriages* and we've spoken about here on No More Perfect Date Night, but, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." So often we want to come in and demand that someone change, or stop weeping, or calm down in your rejoicing, but compassion says, "Hey, I wanna join you in that. I wanna step alongside you in the life that you're living." And it's truly powerful. It's a way in which we grow in our intimacy with our spouse; to rejoice with our spouse, to weep with our spouse, to sit there in the pain with our spouse, whatever it is, to do that together.

**JS:** Mm-hmm. Verse 16, the end of it is, "Never be wise in your own sight." Some versions of the Bible say, "Never be wise in your own eyes." This is really addressing pride. When our pride raises up inside of us, we become wise in our own eyes. Our way is the right way, and that makes it very difficult to love and to love well, because we don't have any room for anyone else's ways, we don't have room for anyone else's thoughts. That's why it is so key to deal with that inside of our heart so that we can love better.

**MS:** Yeah. Verse 17 and 18 for me personally, they go together, "Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." What I found so often for me was, if Jill wasn't doing what I wanted, I began to feel as though it was evil, and then I'd want to pay her back. I wasn't giving any credence or thought to doing what was honorable in the sight of all. Doing what's honorable in the sight of God, in the sight of Jill, in the sight of others, in the sight of my kids. And I don't know if anybody would have really been able to say that wasn't honorable, but deep down, I knew it wasn't. Deep down the Spirit was really working within me to say, "This isn't right." The Spirit calls us to live peaceably with all. And it would be real easy for me to say, "Well, I'm not at peace because it's Jill's fault." Well, it wasn't Jill's fault, it was mine. It was my responsibility to live peaceably in my marriage, to live peaceably with all.

**JS:** And then really, the rest of the verse deals with the whole vengeance thing. It says, "Never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God for it's written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy's hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him something to drink. For by doing so, you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." And when I shared this with Mark, after he returned home, and we got to that part about by doing this you will heap burning coals upon his head, he said...

**MS:** "That's what you did." [laughter]

**JS:** He did, he was like, "That's what you did to me," and I'm like, "What do you mean?" I said, "I don't even know what that part of the verse means." And he said, "You treated me better than I deserved to be treated." And I sensed that, I felt that. And I pulled out The Message Bible. I love sometimes seeing how The Message Bible will give just a slightly different way to work the words. And it says for that one, "Your generosity will surprise him with goodness." And I love that. Sometimes we have to give our spouse something they don't deserve in that moment, and that's where we do not become overcome by evil, but we overcome evil with good. And that's a beautiful gift that we can give to each other. There's a couple other places in verses 9-21 that I love in The Message version. One says, "Don't hit back." Don't hit back. And it's talking about that place where we have the tendency to want to have vengeance or to react back. And we're not talking about literally hitting. I hope that you're not hitting each other in your marriage. But too often, we hit each other with words, and we need to not hit back with our words.

**MS:** With our words, with our attitudes, with our manipulation, all that.

**JS:** And then that follows with, "Don't insist on getting even, that is not for you to do." There is *no* place to keep score in marriage. We cannot keep score because that begins to damage. There's no way to do that. God asked us to give 100%. Each of us 100%. And there are times where you're not able to give that, but we're still called to do that to the best of our ability.

**MS:** As we bring this to a close, will you commit to love unhumanably well?