

Dive Deep with Mike and Linda Blaize

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Jill Savage: Welcome to this month's Dive Deep interview. We are doing something a little different this month. We have the opportunity to sit down with Mike and Linda Blaize and, first of all, we want to welcome you to our home. Thank you so much. So, often these interviews are done on Zoom or Skype, and we don't get the chance to be face-to-face, so thank you guys for joining us.

Mark Savage: Yeah, thank you.

Mike Blaize: Our pleasure.

JS: Well, Mike and Linda have a story, and we really want them to share their story with us. But even more, we want to learn from their lessons learned, so that's why we asked them to join us today for this Dive Deep interview. We're going to jump in, and we're going to let you be a fly on the wall, and soak in the wisdom that comes from making mistakes, but then letting God redeem those mistakes.

MS: Well, thank you guys so much for being willing to share your story. Tell us a little bit. Give us a big picture of your marriage journey.

JS: Bird's-eye view.

Linda Blaize: Well, I feel like our story needs to be told. And I tell it over and over again, because it is my pile of rocks in the middle of the Jordan. It really is. And when I say prayer has been answered, that's where I go to and I know prayer has been answered.

JS: For our folks that are maybe early in their faith journey, what is a pile of rocks in the middle of the Jordan mean? Can you explain that a little bit?

LB: Well, when the Israelites were crossing the Jordan, the priests stepped into the Jordan and it dried up so that they could cross on dry land. But when they got to the middle, each of the tribes grabbed a stone from the middle and built it upright. And they said, "When your children see this, they will ask you, 'What are those for?' And you will say, all the miracles that God has brought to you thus far." And this is our miracle.

JS: Wow.

MS: Cool.

JS: Beautiful. So, give us a bird's-eye view. You guys have actually been married twice to each other.

MB: We have. That's right. [laughter]

MB: So, we were first married in 1991. That marriage was 7 years. We had two children during that time and lost two fathers right towards the end of that time. I think that was pretty significant in what was going on in our lives. But in 1998, I left the marriage. When I look back, I think of it as, I was all about me. Most of that time, I was all about me. My career, my success, my happiness, my development in any way possible. And it just really wasn't a marriage. It was what's good for Mike. I heard some guys say this and I copied it, "I loved me, I thought she did, we were a perfect couple." [laughter]

MS: That describes many of us, I think.

JS: Wow.

MB: I had such a strong sense of self, and really what came through this transition period was dying to self. What I learned and what I came to was, "I've been crucified with Christ, it's no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." When that hit home, when that became part of my journey, part of my endeavor, it changed everything with us. Instead of being all about me, it became, "It's all about Him," and then, "It's all about this marriage."

MS: Yeah.

JS: So where were you in your faith journey in that first marriage? Was there any faith journey there?

MS: Definitely. Definitely.

LB: I thought he was a Christian because he went to church.

MB: I had religion. But I didn't have a relationship.

LB: We weren't really following Christ. Both of us.

MS: Ah, okay.

LB: I mean, we were going to church, but we weren't it in the heart.

JS: It was like you went to church, you did your thing and then you left it at church. Would that be accurate?

MB: Absolutely.

LB: I don't even know if we did our thing at church. [laughter] I'm not even sure. But luckily, I was raised in a really solid fundamental home. I knew the Bible, I knew who Jesus was, and I knew where to run when trouble hit. I knew where I had to go. And I knew my way hadn't worked, so I said, "Okay, Jesus, we're gonna do it your way."

MS: Yeah. So, you were married this first time for seven years? And then how long were you separated...

JS: Divorced.

MS: You were divorced. How long were you in that season?

LB: We were four years. Right?

MB: Right.

MS: Okay. Wow. That's a long time. What brought you back together?

LB: I started praying and I had prayer warriors. We had people praying for Michael that didn't know he was my husband, and then the same people who were praying for my husband. But they had met Michael at a different time.

MB: People two doors down in my apartment complex.

LB: Who knew him there, and then they knew me at church.

JS: But they didn't know that the Michael that they were praying for was the same one that was your husband. Oh, my goodness.

LB: No.

MS: That's awesome. [laughter]

LB: We had prayers going up to God, forward and backward, and he didn't have a chance. [laughter]

MB: So true. Yeah, I can beat you; I can't beat your God.

JS: So even though you guys were divorced, you didn't stop believing in the two of you?

LB: Well...it doesn't go like that. It goes up, then it goes down.

JS: Sure.

LB: I did date a few men, and in my prayer journal, I look back and I wrote, "Thank you so much for that nice dinner and that man that you sent me, and he was very kind and everything, but really, I want my family back." And that would always be the last. Like, "Well, *but* I want my family back, that's what my heart wants, that's what my girls need."

MB: So, Linda invites me to a church service where our daughters are singing, and I think it was...

LB: Choir.

MB: They were in the choir.

MS: Okay.

MB: And it's a message on divorce.

JS: Oh.

MB: I'm sitting in the same pew as Linda, and I don't know if your mom was there, maybe your mom was there at the time, somebody else was there. But this message comes across about divorce and how awful it is and how it's not God's purpose for us, and I get up and accuse her of getting the pastor to write the message and create this because she knew I would be there.

JS: Whoa. [laughter]

MB: I'm like, "Linda, you are so manipulative. I can't believe you coordinated all this," you know? [laughter] Many years later I went, "That's just how God works."

JS: Wow.

MB: It was absolutely unexplainable.

LB: But every time he came, it was almost the same message. And I would be sitting there going, "I'm not that powerful!" [laughter]

MS: Right. Yeah.

MB: I thought, "Man, she's got it going. She's really got it going." But really, it was her church that started this process. They offered a divorce recovery. I went to divorce recovery in her church hearing from all the single moms telling stories that were just like me. I heard this and it just pierced my heart. I'm thinking of it now from her perspective. Because divorce recovery was nine women and two guys. And so, I'm hearing all this and it just started piercing my heart. And then somebody says, "Hey, there's this event called Promise Keepers. Why don't you go?" And by then, we had started to think about, "Are we gonna be able to put this back together?" And I got saved. There's just no other way to say it. I went to Promise Keepers in Indianapolis, it was September 7, 2001, four days before September 11th. I remember thinking how different it was experiencing that tragedy after God was a part of my life. It was just like everything was different. But that started it. And I remember the first thought I had after that Promise Keepers event was, "Can this work out? Can this work out with Linda?" And I remember praying, and I said, "God, just give me some sign that this is the direction I should go." Because at that point, we'd kind of tried, but she's like, "You are the same old guy. There is no way you're gonna change and there's no way this is gonna work if you don't."

MB: After that happened, I was praying all the way home on the bus. I get home, I get to my apartment and I just kept praying, "God, give me some sign about what you want me to do." And she's on my voicemail. She had just said, "I'm not talking to you, I'm not calling you or anything." Now, she's on my voicemail saying, "Hey, just wondered how it went." That was all it was, just wondered how it went. I just broke down and I'm just like, "Boy, I could see, this is what God wants to do. He wants to take this marriage and put it back together." And part of the challenge, I don't know if you guys know, what's his name, the guy who ran Promise Keepers for so many years?

McCarthy? McCartney? Something like that. But he gave a challenge to the whole group, this is 15,000 guys, "I want you to pray for an hour for 30 days, an hour a day for 30 days." I'm like goofy-endurance-athlete guy. You give me a challenge like that, I'm gonna do it. So, my first experience as a believer was every morning for one hour for a month, I got up and spent an hour in prayer.

JS: Wow.

MB: And to me, God just laid the groundwork to say, "This is who you're gonna be, and this is how you're gonna make this happen."

LB: And it's an endurance event.

MB: That's right. Now, I can't say I've ever gone back to that habit. My prayer life is... It could be better.

MS: Up and down, yeah.

MB: But it was like God said, "This is where you need to spend your time. On your knees." I remember, literally, I got up from my hour of prayer time, turned on the radio, and they were talking about the planes flying into buildings. And it was four days after getting saved.

JS: Wow. Now, how old were your girls when the divorce went through?

LB: They were...

MB: Seven and five.

LB: When the divorce went through? No, they weren't even in kindergarten yet.

MB: Well, they were three and five in '98. So, when the divorce went through about 2000, they would have been about seven and five.

JS: Okay. So, they're pretty young.

LB: Yeah. I kept putting the divorce off because I didn't want one. I was uncooperative. [laughter] I didn't have anything to gain. I had moved out of the house, I had lost our house. We sold it. I had to move in with my mother with the two girls and put my daughter in a kindergarten there, which was a great thing because I then went back to school. I was able to be kind of a stay-at-home mom and go to school, and his mom helped me a lot during that time, and my mom helped a lot, and everybody just came in and supported us. So yeah, I didn't really want the divorce and [chuckle] my mom had cut out of the paper this lady who had been separated for 18 years. And Michael saw that in the girl's room on the—because we shared a room—on the mirror and he's like, "What's this?" [laughter] And I'm like...

JS: "I got 16 more years." [laughter]

MB: I'm in for the endurance.

JS: So, Michael, part of what also took you out of that marriage is you were unfaithful, correct?

MB: That's right.

JS: It's a part of your challenge. So how long was that relationship in place and at what point did you determine that relationship wasn't the answer either? Were there any moments of realization in there for you?

MB: Yes. So, the other person was somebody I worked with. As a trial lawyer, you spend long hours with people. She was a paralegal, so there were cases that we spent lots and lots of time together. She was also somebody that would play in co-ed sports leagues, so we had that whole element.

JS: And you love sports.

MS: I love sports and then you go out to drink afterwards and you're in an atmosphere where those sorts of things happen, you know? And I look back and I'm like, "What a moron. Why would you, as a married man, put yourself in that situation?" But it was the culture. It was the culture of the law firm, it was the culture I lived in.

JS: And you didn't really have True North...

MB: No, no.

JS: To guide you in making different decisions?

MB: Nothing. Again, it was all about what makes Michael happy. Those were things I liked and those were my friends and I just didn't see it as a big issue. And we had little babies, and poor Linda's at home taking care of the little babies, and I'm like, "Well, it's time to have fun. Let's go!"

JS: And he'd say, "We're not on the same page," and I am looking under the diapers and under the toys going, "Where's the book? I didn't know we were reading a book!" [laughter] Now we'll quote verses to each other, and I'm like, "Oh, we're even on the same verse." [laughter]

MB: Same book, same page. [laughter]

MS: That's awesome.

JS: I love that. Same book, same page, same verse. That's good.

MB: Yeah. But it was a long relationship, secretively. And then when it came out in the open, it was a couple of years probably. And again, I don't know all the times, but I had started the divorce with the intention that this was gonna be my life. I got engaged. We had not actually set any dates or anything, but we got engaged, and so that was gonna be my new direction. And pretty soon, I started figuring out, "This is not good either." You can just tell. I was just like, "This is not gonna work." And I remember sitting...

LB: Can I break in?

MB: You got the baseball bat comment? Is that where you're going?

LB: No.

MB: Oh, okay. [laughter]

LB: They had gotten engaged and they wanted the girls to be in the wedding. Well, our one daughter freaked out in the saddest way. She's in, I think, first grade by then. And I had a dining room table with a big table cloth over it. She started living under there. And she would have like seven blankets on herself at all times, insulating herself.

JS: This is some emotional pain, big time.

LB: Yes. And, "Mommy, I love this woman, and she's very nice, but why do we have to marry her?" And they did some psychological things, like they kept re-enacting *The Parent Trap*, my two kids. That was their game. They didn't play house, they didn't play cars, they didn't play dolls, they re-enacted that movie over and over. And I'm like, "Okay. We have stopped watching that movie. We have to get over that idea." I'm just trying to be a proactive parent, and we have a meeting at the school because they had programs at the school for divorced children, and I called in the social worker and I called in the therapist and the teacher, and I said, "I just want you to know what's going on. I'm not placing blame. This is the situation we're in. Help me. I don't know what to do. I don't know where to go. But this is weird. I know it's weird." [laughter]

LB: So, we were sitting outside on a bench and we hadn't been able to talk other than, "What time are you picking up the kids? You picking up the kids at 6:00? Great. They'll be ready." Or, "No, you can't pick them up till 7:00," or, "I can't be there this Wednesday. I can be there Thursday." That was our bridge of conversation. But you couldn't get off the bridge.

MS: Right. Okay.

LB: And even in the house, we had a little foyer, and he couldn't come off the foyer. We were not doing well together. But we sat on a park bench after that meeting and Anna and Abby played on the swing set. And we talked. I'm sorry, wait a minute, *he* talked, for 45 minutes. He had never talked to me for 45 minutes. And the Holy Spirit came over me. I know it's the Holy Spirit because I was quiet for 45 minutes. [laughter] I was, and I kept thinking, "I'm quiet, this is weird. It must be the Holy Spirit. Okay. Just let him keep talking." And that was the first time we talked. Nothing was resolved, but the conversations started. He was still engaged, he was still going towards that goal, but he was talking to me.

JS: Wow.

LB: And I'll never forget that day. That was a real breakthrough for us.

MS: Do you remember that day?

MB: Oh, yeah. I remember it very well.

MS: What was happening there? Do you know?

MB: I think it was supernatural, for sure, because I was just, I can't use the term that people would call me, but a cold-hearted kind of guy. And so, I had that going. But I just remember feeling that day that somebody's breaking the ice a bit. It wasn't her.

MS: Right.

MB: But I just remember feeling it. And it's so funny, I have tears in my eyes now, but it's like I was a hard dude, man. And Christ came into my life and I'm like. "I'm a teary dude now." [laughter] I'm crying all the time. It's like God freed my heart to actually feel emotions. I remember her telling me, one time she was like "No, that's an emotion. That's what you're feeling. It's an emotion." [laughter] "Oh, okay!" That's a whole other story.

MS: Yeah.

MB: And again, the church was involved and these people praying for us. And I'm starting down this journey, down this understanding of how to live a life connected to God. And, of course, once that really took hold, it became so obvious that my path and what I was doing was so, so wrong.

LB: Right.

MB: So wrong. And you've always told me, it was like I got hit in the head with a baseball bat. I remember the moment, sitting at her house on the back deck, feeling like God hit me in the head going, "Okay, U-turn time." I'm starting to understand what repentance means. Not this way, back this way, turn around. I just remember the language I used was, "I have to do this. I gotta do this." You know, walking away, "This is over. I'm sorry." And I felt badly about hurting her, but I'm like, hurting everybody around me.

JS: Right.

MB: So, I'm like, "I gotta do this. This is my path." I remember calling her and saying, "Hey, meet me at Wicker Park. We're gonna sit in the car," and she was just like...

JS: Arm's length.

MB: "Yeah, I'm not buying this for a minute, I'll give you a shot." Because I was listening to Moody Radio, and Joe Stowell had preached on the Prodigal Son right during that time, and I just remembered...

LB: And he thought I was gonna be the father. [laughter]

JS: Oh!

MB: But I'm like, "You know, I have left home. I've gone on this wild ride. I've wasted everything. It's time to come home." And I remember, that was my entree, that, "Look, I'm like the Prodigal. I need to come home." And she's looking at me like, "Yeah, I'll believe this when I see it happen," but there was a slight opening that, "Okay. We'll give this a try," and that's where we started things. And

then it was very bumpy. There were some, take a few steps back, take six steps the other way.
[laughter]

MS: Right.

MB: 'Cause we had to really figure out what this new thing looked like. And I had so much learning to do. I could look back at just several people, guys that were in this church, they took me to see this one preacher that I still love to death, that I listen to all the time, but he's a guy that just values marriage and brags about his wife all the time. Things I'd never heard before. But he was a believer who said, "This is what I think marriage should be," and I started learning about that. Because, that just wasn't the culture I was in at all. You complain about your wife, you talk about these things that she did or didn't do, and this was completely... It was just like a paradigm shift into, "This is how I have to think about that."

JS: So, Linda, at what point did you begin to realize that maybe this was for real?

LB: Well, when God wants you to hear a message, you hear it from everybody, even the grocery store checkout lady. [laughter] You turn on the radio, you hear a song, you hear a speaker, your friend gives you a pamphlet unsolicited about this and it's in there, and she had no idea. He just hits you every which way. So I *knew* that God wanted our marriage back together. I knew it. I knew it was the best for my children. I had to put it on the scales. I love my family so much, and what he did, I hated so much, but the love was way more. And he was part of the family.

MS: Right.

LB: The girls needed him so bad. And God was pushing us. Everything was pointing that way. And it was just obedience for a long time, like eight years, I would still have nightmares. I finally asked the counselor when are these nightmares gonna stop?

JS: Wow.

LB: And at around eight or nine years, they did stop.

JS: This is like eight years from the infidelity in particular or the divorce?

LB: The re-marriage.

JS: The re-marriage, okay.

LB: But, God had a lot of work for me too, though.

MS: Sure.

LB: I was a little self-gratifying in the first marriage too, and I had a lot going on in my head too, so God had a lot of work to do with me.

MS: You made a statement that I want everybody to stop and hear again. It was bumpy. I think in our culture, we expect the easy button. We push it, and think that it's gonna be great, but it was hard

is what I'm hearing you say.

MB: Yeah.

MS: And it was really one decision.

JS: One right decision at a time.

MS: Yeah.

JS: And I do know, because our story is somewhat similar to yours. We went through a separation, not a divorce. But, Mark had his own personal resurrection on Easter Sunday, we often call it. And that day I was like, "I don't know about this." Kind of like you were. "I don't know." But I saw him begin to walk it out, not perfectly, and certainly it was bumpy, and it was messy. But in time, I began to realize, "Wow, he's becoming a different person."

LB: Totally different person. And I say that's one of the blessings that the Lord has given me, is that I was in the church at a young, young age. Accepted Christ young. And my development has just been a low arc. His was, "Woah!" The scales are off and he's saying the weirdest stuff to me. [laughter] It was such a blessing to get to see that God changes lives.

JS: You had a Damascus Road experience like when Saul became Paul. The scales came off on Easter morning, and I saw it for what it was. I almost had the opportunity to witness it in front of me. I still didn't trust it. [laughter]

MS: Sure. Yeah.

LB: Because you know they do slide back and they're...he's human still.

MS: Right.

JS: Exactly. And you don't want to risk and get hurt again, and all of that. You don't want your kids to get hurt again.

LB: And then your pride steps in too, "I deserve better than this. I deserve better than that." And you're like, "Well, maybe I don't."

MS: Mm-hmm.

LB: Maybe I don't deserve what I think I deserve. Maybe I deserve death. The wages of sin...

MS: Sin is Death.

LB: Right. And then I started thinking, "Well, maybe you just need to work on some stuff too."

JS: Mmm. So, it was quite a...

LB: Humbling.

JS: Yeah.

MS: I think that's true for Jill and I too, that we both had to trust each other.

JS: There were places I had to begin to change. And I was seeing those things. I was starting to apologize for them or recognize them. Like you said, it's like, everywhere you turn you see them. It's like, "Alright, Lord. I'm getting it." [chuckle]

MB: Right.

JS: "Okay," [laughter] "I need to look at this."

MS: "I'm getting it already." [laughter] "No, you're not." [laughter]

JS: Yeah.

MB: I think for me too, one of the changes from first marriage to second marriage was, instead of constantly looking at Linda, and thinking, "If you can only do this," or, "You didn't do that," or all of that, it became like, "Mike, what can you do?" I don't have any control over her and I used to say things like, "Oh, gosh. When you do such and such, it just makes me so mad." And then I came to a point where I would say, "When you do such, it makes me so mad, just like when I do such and such, and it makes you so mad."

JS: Oh!

MB: And so, it was like, my realization that, "Oh, dude. You're doing all that stuff too that drive her crazy and you know what, she's just loving you anyway." So, it became this thing that, "Oh, that's what I'm supposed to do. I'm supposed to not worry about that stuff, and just love her for who she is. And not think about, or try to..."

JS: Change...

MB: Change her or guide her a little bit. It's like, "You've got so much to deal with, buddy."

MS: Yeah, yeah. Keep your eyes on you. [laughter]

MB: And it really did, it just became part of that... just love her. And I saw a difference. I think there was a difference when I stopped being that critical jerk. Then she changed too. It was like, she didn't resist. Then there were things that she did, and I'm like, "Oh, wow. Look at that." All those things that bugged me she's not doing those anymore. And it just became this transformation of, "Who am I? Who am I in the Lord? Who am I as her mate, as her partner?"

JS: Yeah. What you just said is huge. One of the things we talk about, and I just want to speak for a moment to those of you that are maybe watching this without your spouse, because I know some of you have become a No More Perfect Date Night member because you want your marriage to become better. And we tell you that if you change, your marriage can change, even if you're the only one changing. You have just illustrated that, and I am so grateful for that because when we

change in the way that we respond to each other, when we learn to button our lips and stop nitpicking our partner, it actually does change the dynamics of the relationship. And oftentimes, the other person begins to respond to that change in a positive way. So, I think that's huge. And if you're here, I want you to hear that and to know that it makes a difference when you are choosing the way that you respond. So powerful.

LB: And there was one point, I think he went to a men's group or something, and they must have told him, "If she asks you to do something, drop what you're doing and do it, every time." So, I noticed he was doing that, [laughter] and I was started thinking, "Well, I'm not gonna ask him to do that, 'cause I'll ask him to do this other big thing later." I saw how it worked because I respected him more than to nag him about things. It was very interesting, psychologically, how that worked on me. That changed me with his servanthood.

JS: So, he was serving you, and then in turn, you were finding it much easier to even respect him, which is what he longs for. Wow, that's really powerful.

MS: I could see that on a T-shirt. Servanthood is sexy. [laughter]

MB: That's right.

MS: It is. [laughter]

JS: That is great. So, when you think about the old marriage and the new marriage, you've talked about a couple of differences and you've identified. Is there anything else that comes to your mind? When you think about lessons learned, the way that you operate now in your now, is it 17-year-marriage? Can you think of anything else that you would add?

LB: Well, when we got married, even that day we got married the second time, it was out of obedience to God, not to Michael so much, but obedience to God. And those seeds that I sowed are coming back now as an unbelievable love for him, that isn't of me. It's gotta be from God. So just stepping out in faith and obedience.

JS: So, the feelings have grown. They were nothing like they are now.

LB: We're best friends now, which is really weird. [laughter]

JS: Can you think about things that you had conflict with in the first marriage and you do not anymore, and why that is?

MB: For me, I have an accounting background. I'm a lawyer. So, I can get immersed...

JS: I'm sorry, Linda. [laughter]

MB: Isn't it terrible? Poor thing. We did financial counseling for three years or something. And Linda just kept saying, "Did you see her sweater? The sweater for the coach. You know, it's so pretty and everything." I'm like, "You missed all the stuff about budgeting?" [laughter] She would talk about her clothes. Poor thing. But anyway, so to me, I think I was a person that was very focused on achieving and making money. I was in a private firm for a while, and I left the private

firm and went to State Farm and that changed the whole financial picture. But I was just so immersed and focused on finances and gaining net worth and being, not responsible, but *successful* with money.

JS: Gotcha.

MB: And God just really flipped that around to, "Everything you have, buddy, you got it from me. It's mine. And the only reason you are capable of making what you make or having it is because I have gifted you." And so, from my perspective, it was, "How do we responsibly manage what we have and give and try to be a part of the ministry, rather than just how much can I make? How much can I have?"

JS: And then that made you a team to decide, "How do we responsibly manage this in some way?" Like choosing together, "What are we gonna do? What are we gonna give to? What are we gonna support?" which is way different than, "I gotta be successful."

MB: Yes. And actually, again, I stole this term too. I steal a lot of sayings.

JS: A lot of good sayings.

MB: Good stuff. But I heard this guy say something like, "I don't have much, but I have a great marriage." And man, I'm down for this. I don't have a lot of material things. I don't care about not having a lot of material things. I'm not taking it when I go anyway, right?

JS: Right.

MB: You better send it ahead to heaven or you're never gonna have it, right?

MS: Right.

MB: I started saying that and then I started believing it. As I first started saying it, I don't know that I really got it, but now it's like, "Oh, the money and the finances, all that stuff, whatever." I have this terrific relationship with this beautiful woman and God has blessed us. It was like, "What else do you need?"

MS: Right.

MB: "Really, what else do you need?" It's like all that stuff is just in my mind, it's just in the past. I don't think I worry about it as much anymore, do I?

LB: No. Now you say, "I can't get her to spend money." [laughter] He'd say, "Do you have any money?" I'm like, "No." [laughter]

MB: That's right.

LB: So strange. But I always said it in the first marriage, we had that Quicken Loans Program on the computers. Remember, when we all got a computer and then we got that Quicken Loan thing?

MS: It was Quicken.

JS: Just Quicken.

MS: QuickBooks or Quicken.

LB: And it had that pie chart?

JS: Yes.

LB: Well, I was the stay-at-home mom with the two kids going to the doctor's, buying diapers, buying formula, buying what the kids needed, and that pie chart was my color. And he had like one sliver of what he spent. But he would bring the money home and I was doing it all so I would say, "Quicken just ruined my marriage." He thought I was spending all the money, but it had to be spent.

JS: You were in charge of the budget categories of life.

LB: I know. And he kept saying, "You're spending all the money." I go, "Yes, I am. I can't get around it." So now we look at it differently.

MS: Sure, that's cool.

LB: But we've gone through how many different...Crown Financial, and what's the other one?

MB: Dave Ramsey.

LB: Dave Ramsey.

JS: Financial Peace.

LB: He drives me into them all. [laughter]

JS: They're good.

LB: I try.

JS: And those are great places. One of the things we find is, when you take classes or courses like that together, you learn together. Then it's not my way and it's not your way, but it's... Oh, the new way or at least we put our heads together and go, "What part of that... "

LB: "Could you bring?"

MS: You have a common language.

JS: Yeah, that's a good way to put it.

MB: Well, I'll give you a good quick example. So, we had the event at church a couple of weeks ago. Money is given out. What are you gonna do with it? You know the modern-day parable.

JS: So, our church did a reverse offering. They gave out \$50,000. Now it's a large church. There's about 6000 members. They gave it out in 5s, 10s and 20s, or something like that.

MB: And 50s. I got a 50.

JS: Oh, you got a 50, okay.

MS: Did you really? Oh!

JS: We weren't there that Sunday, we didn't get any. But the idea was, you take that and you multiply it. You invest it and you multiply it, and then bring it back.

MB: So, investor-lawyer guy says, "We gotta put it in some sort of instrument right away." Linda's like, "Are you kidding? No way. I'm getting on Facebook. I'm gonna advertise that I'm gonna sell camo cupcakes because..."

LB: 'Cause it was War on Money. Get it?

MB: "I'm gonna make camo cupcakes with this \$50, and I'm gonna sell them." She had it on Facebook. In 10 minutes, we had \$300 worth of orders.

MS: Wow!

MB: Many of whom don't even live here! 'Cause we were gonna deliver them, right?

JS: Right.

MB: So, these people said, "I love the idea, I wanna support you. Just go donate the cupcakes to the homeless or whoever you want." So, we got to go bless Home Sweet Home Ministries.

MS: Wow!

JS: With the camo cupcakes.

MB: With forty-five camo cupcakes. And they're terrific, by the way. They're really good. But she made \$300.

LB: In 10 minutes.

JS: I love it.

MB: We made six times the amount that we were given. And I'm like, "I'm giving all this to her, man, she's..." [laughter]

MS: She's got it going!

MB: Yeah, my little thing would've made what, about six bucks over a month?

MS: Yeah.

JS: Right. 'Cause you're thinking the interest.

MB: Yes, I I'm like, "Don't waste anything. You gotta make sure you're making money." And then she's like, "Oh, give me this, man. I got this." It was so cool.

JS: What a beautiful picture, though, of the two shall become one.

MS: Yeah and working together.

JS: And this putting your heads together on this.

MB: I did buy the groceries though.

JS: Oh, there you go. Yes.

MB: The flour and the sugar.

JS: You went and spent the 50 bucks. [laughter] That was very kind of you. [laughter]

MB: She made those cupcakes.

MS: Awesome.

LB: He's my taster.

JS: I love it. Wow.

MS: That's cool.

JS: Oh, you guys, this has been so rich.

MS: Yeah, it's been great.

JS: Thank you! Okay, we have one other question. We did not prepare you for this one. Hopefully, you can respond to it. But since we call this No More Perfect Date Night, do you have a favorite date night that you guys like to do? Do you have something that you enjoy doing together on a regular basis? [laughter]

LB: One thing that we didn't do in the first marriage and we do now is that we serve together. We were like, "Okay. The church is not gonna ever tear us apart." We've seen that in our relationships. She's engulfed in this ministry, and he's engulfed in this ministry, and they don't see each other. So, we always sign up together.

MS: Okay.

LB: Twenty years of, "Nope, we're together when we serve. When we serve, we're together." So even this morning we were up serving at Home Sweet Home... no...

MB: Safe Harbor.

LB: Safe Harbor serving breakfast.

MS: Oh, fun!

LB: And that binds us.

MS: Yeah, that's cool.

LB: It is cool and it is fun!

MB: I don't think we think of it as dates but I'm glad you thought of that because it really is so enriching for me to sit with my wife. And just putting our stuff aside...

JS: Yeah.

MS: Right.

MB: And just go and helping other people. Before we were getting ready, I'm just like, "Thank you for doing that." And Linda's not a morning person.

LB: [chuckle]

MB: She was up at 5:15.

MS: Oh!

MB: We were there at 6:00.

LB: I smile about 6:30. [laughter]

MB: And then she's engaging every person that came up to that window with that big, beautiful smile.

MS: Yeah.

MB: And she's like, "I think I got a fan over there. That guy can't stop looking. I'm like, "Yeah, I don't blame him, you know?" [laughter]

MB: But really that is what we truly enjoy most, I think. I don't think we have like an entertainment kind of date necessarily...

JS: Well, you guys just were talking about, you just went white water rafting.

LB: He drags me to all of those things.

JS: I was gonna say.

MS: Yeah.

MB: Poor thing, I'm so active.

LB: No, I have a great time doing it and my children love it, so that's great.

JS: So, you've learned to step into his world.

LB: He's accommodated me quite a bit. He did get me the little trailer now and...[laughter]

JS: Instead of camping in a tent.

LB: I had to put an end to the tent. [laughter]

MB: But I could say one thing. For a long time, when Linda and I met each other, she was at American Airlines. She was a flight attendant, and she was on the American ski club team.

MS: Wow.

MB: So, several times, we got to go on these really great ski vacations on American Airlines. It was very inexpensive and was just a great thing to do. So, we got to know each other on the ski slopes. It had probably been 10 years since we had skied together, just because of kids. We got to ski together this year. We had more fun and more laughs, sitting on that chair lift, and hitting the restaurant at the top of the mountain for lunch. You know, we just sat there going, "Why haven't we done this before?" So that really reinforced with me that it's just something that we...

JS: You need to prioritize. Put in your...

MS: Budget.

JS: Budget and your calendar...

MB: It was so fun.

LB: But I really like just sitting on our back porch in the evening. I love that.

JS: I would agree. We love to sit out in the summer on our porch.

LB: Yes.

JS: And that to me, it's just life. But there's just something very refreshing about that.

LB: And looking at God's beauty. It's just so beautiful.

JS: Yep, agreed. Well, good.

MS: Thank you guys.

JS: Thank you guys for your honesty, your openness.

MS: Yeah, your willingness.

JS: Sharing wisdom. It was good.

JS: So, this is Mark and Jill Savage and we are signing off with a reminder that a real marriage isn't perfect. A real marriage, as Mike and Linda have told us today, is two people being perfected. Thanks for joining us.

MS: Yep. See you.