

Love the Real

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[music]

Jill Savage: We'd like to start today by sharing with you a story from a date night we had many, many years ago. We often would trade babysitting with other couples. So we'd watch their kids so they could go out, they'd watch our kids so we could go out. And so this particular night was our date night. We'd taken our kids over to our friend's house. We'd picked up some Chinese takeout and we were coming back to our empty house. We decided that we were gonna rent a movie and just enjoy watching a movie at home.

JS: And so we spread a blanket out on the floor and began to watch the movie and eat our takeout. And we had lit some candles around, they were sitting around on the floor. And at one point, I reached over to actually grab another egg roll and I didn't realize that I had reached over a candle. And as I went over the candle, my sweater lit on fire and it was flammable. Immediately, my arm like almost went whoosh. And immediately, my husband remembered stop, drop, and roll.

Mark Savage: Well, it was crazy. All of a sudden, Jill's engulfed. And I'm like, I stop, drop, and roll. And she's sitting there smoldering. And I laughed, I was like, "I expected tonight to be hot, but not this way." So think what you will about that. But our night kind of changed a little bit.

JS: But we think that that's a great story to talk about expectations because oftentimes, expectations are one of those slow fades. We don't even realize that we have expectations. Sometimes we know we have them. But a lot of times, they're unknown. And if they're unknown, then what begins to happen is our heart becomes discontent, disillusioned because our expectations weren't met and then we begin that slow fade of pulling apart from one another. And so we have to begin to identify expectations. And one of the best places that we can start looking at expectations is back to that home internship.

MS: It is in our home internship that we develop expectations that we have for ourselves and for our spouses. Some of those expectations can be healthy, but some are not. What happens is that when we've not talked about them with our spouse, our spouse doesn't understand those expectations and our spouse has expectations of their own based upon their home. And so there's the clash or the gap, and those expectations become unrealistic.

JS: And what often happens is it's kind of that moment of, "Wait a minute, your normal isn't my normal? What's normal to me, that's not normal to you?" And I remember the first time you and I had this situation, it was when we dealt with your birthday party, the first time that you had a birthday after we were married. And I worked so hard to make a homemade cake because that's what my mother always did. And I worked so hard to make sure that we had all the family come over for dinner that night.

MS: Yeah. But I grew up very differently. For our birthdays, we'd go out to our favorite restaurant and then there was a store-bought cake with little candies that said happy birthday on it. And I love those little candies. And so we just... It was unrealistic because we hadn't talked or planned for what we expected.

JS: Right. And so oftentimes, that's where we run into conflict. And we have to understand that there are expectations that we need to be talking about. The other piece of expectations is that we expect our spouse to think the way that we think. So we have a certain personality, we have a certain temperament and therefore we see life through a certain lens. And yet what happens is when we expect our spouse to see life through that same lens and they don't, then again, we run into conflict. And so we have to deal with our expectations, we have to begin to unravel those, to peel away the layers of those, to be able to have conversation with one another. To say, "You know what? I just realized that I went into that trip or I went into that situation expecting these things and you had no way of knowing that."

JS: And so a lot of times, what we have found is you're unraveling those expectations after the situation happens

because you don't even realize that going in, but that fosters a deeper intimacy as you're talking about. Not only the things that you desire, but also the disappointments that you have. And it's not any fault of you if I go into something when I have certain expectations and you don't know those. So one of the things you and I have also learned to do is to start talking about those desires upfront.

MS: Yes. We talk about those desires trying to be on the front side so that we're not arguing and fighting on the back side.

JS: Right. So I remember recently, it was another birthday celebration for you and I said to you, "What are you hoping for your birthday?" Because I just wanted to know what you had going on in your head. And your response was interesting to me because you are the extrovert and you always are up for a good party.

MS: Right, right. But this time, I just wanted to be around family. We had been through a very busy season in life, very interactive with people. And I think too, as I'm aging, I sometimes don't wanna be around as many people. And I just felt like I wanted a break, I just wanted the family. And so I know that was confusing to you...

JS: But I'm glad I asked.

MS: Right.

JS: Because I think you had some expectations that you didn't want a big party this year, but I didn't know that. So one of the things that we need to do as couples is we need to be getting ahead of that by asking about desires, asking about what the hopes or the dreams are that you have for whatever it is that you're getting ready to do together. And then in those times where you forget to have those conversations, to make sure and have kind of debriefing conversations afterwards, to talk about it in a safe environment, not in a way that's accusing because your spouse doesn't know what they don't know if you don't tell them. And so to go through some debriefing. And that helps us to put away the expectations that are beginning to cause us to pull apart from one another, to close our heart off to one another because we're disappointed or we're disillusioned, because something didn't happen the way that we thought it would.

MS: I remember a story as we're talking about birthdays, we're newly married. And for me, I love surprise parties. So I thought this would be great for Jill. She would, I'm sure, love a good surprise party. So I arranged all this. I had people kind of driving her around town and we had this huge party for her. And when she got there, she didn't have the reaction that I thought she would.

JS: I tried to be appreciative, but I don't like surprises.

MS: Yes, I learned that then. [laughter]

JS: And so I told him he can throw a surprise party for me anytime he would like as long as he tells me ahead of time.

MS: That kind of takes the surprise out of it.

JS: It does, it does. But we have to know our spouse and we have to understand that. And so part of that is knowing ourselves and then being on the front end of explaining those kind of things; our wants, our desires. But also sometimes being on the back end and being able to have that honest conversation.

MS: Yeah. I think what fuels the unrealistic expectations, too, is our culture and media and the lie that we should... If we love each other, we should just know.

JS: Right. And oftentimes, that's what we see in the movies we watch, the romance novels that we read. This is where the perfection infection really comes into play. And without realizing it, you're watching movies, you're reading stories, you're watching television shows and it sets up expectations in your head and your heart. And then your real life doesn't match up to what's on the screen or in the book or even in a story. That you look at your neighbors and you think, "They don't have the problems we have." Again, we're comparing our insides to other people's outsides, but that begins to affect our expectations. So we've got to be able to pick up the right guide tools to begin to disassemble the unrealistic expectations in our marriage.

MS: And if we don't pick up the right guide tools, what happens is, from Ephesians 4:27, that we give the devil a

foothold because he is looking for ways to divide us. And even Jesus talked about the very fact that our spirit is willing, but our flesh is weak. And so if we continue to foster or fuel those unrealistic expectations, we create an environment that's right for our flesh to become dissatisfied and disillusioned and for Satan himself to be a wedge. And so we wanna stop that.

JS: So as we close today, it's a good reminder that a real marriage isn't perfect, a real marriage is two people being perfected.