

# When I Said “I Do,” I Didn’t Mean That

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[music]

00:08 Mark Savage: Welcome back. Today we're talking about the slow fade of not accepting, and this has been a struggle for me. I have not accepted circumstances that have been hard. I have not been willing to accept the challenges between Jill and I. In fact, one of the phrases that we would say is that we're not wrong, we're just different and being different is okay. When Jill would say being different is okay, I just wanted to scream. In fact, I think I did on more than one occasion. But I was just not willing to accept all this stuff and all the challenges. I kept wanting that button that you see on TV, the easy button. And what I've learned is that, or what I've had to accept, is that there are differences and there is conflict and that I've had to move away from that slow fade.

01:11 Jill Savage: And I have struggled with this as well. I really, probably the biggest place is, I want you to think more like me. I really do, and I... Because I think that, you know, my way is the right way. Right? [chuckle] Let's be honest.

01:24 MS: You might have said that more than once.

[laughter]

01:26 MS: I don't know. [chuckle]

01:27 JS: But I think honestly, we struggle with that as human beings. We think that our way is the right way and so that causes us to be unaccepting of our partner. And I think it gets us into a dangerous place that begins to draw us away from one another. So what we want to talk about in this session is how easy our hearts get tangled up and how we untangle them, so that we can begin to draw closer to one another and close the distance that often happens in our hearts.

01:58 MS: Yeah. For me, as I began to untangle my heart, I had to address the anger that continued to flow and to seethe and to cook below the surface of my flesh. My brothers and I joke about the Savage DNA is that we're hot heads. And for me, you may not even know that I'm angry, but it's cooking below the surface. And my anger fueled my discontent and my unwillingness to accept Jill and our differences, to accept some of the challenges and circumstances that normal life brings.

02:41 JS: And for me, I struggle with criticism. And I may not even say it verbally, but I'm thinking it in my head, and that is felt. The words may not come out, but the nonverbals communicate that. And I knew that I had to do some heart surgery. I had to begin to dig into that to begin to be more accepting, use my God tool of grace which allows... Well, I like to say that grace is allowing another person to be human, to not get raked over the coals for every mistake that they make, every human thing that they do. That's what grace is and that has helped me. Using that God tool has helped me begin to turn around the slow fade of not accepting and beginning to disassemble the criticism in my heart.

03:31 MS: I feel like the biggest decision I made was to surrender my life completely and to surrender my expectations and to surrender my need to know or to understand. And therefore, I could accept that, in surrendering, I gave up all my rights. And that's really the heart of the gospel, that the Lord is saying, "Trust me." And in reality, I didn't. That the Lord is saying, "I'll lead you. Let me lead you." And in reality, I wouldn't, that I was unwilling to accept and I felt that my way was the best way, that I felt that you should behave the way that I want, the way I expect. And in reality, the picture for me is that I was like a toddler in Toys R Us not getting the little toy that he wanted and throwing a little fit. In surrender, I gave up those rights.

04:41 JS: Right. And I really watched you. And I know for me, become more intentional about untangling our heart, untangling what's going on inside of us. Oftentimes I think as married couples, our tendency is to blame or point the finger, our tendency is to minimize it ourselves, our tendency is also to maybe explain away something or look at the surface and not dig to the root. So there are three ways to become an expert untangler. The first one is don't resign,

instead refine. And when we are refining, what we're doing is we're stopping our tendency to give up too early. When we resign, it's this is too hard. Marriage shouldn't be this hard, and we begin to shut down our heart. No. We need to dig deep and go, "What's going on inside of me?" And we allow God to refine us through this process.

05:43 MS: Those phrases that you just said, those were the phrases that I said all the time. It shouldn't be this hard. It should be easy. If we were really made for each other, we would just know. Of course, I know that those are not true statements. I think that the thing that led me to trust you again was that as you were allowing God to refine you, you were letting God... You were hearing God speak to you, and you were making huge decisions. You were stopping that critical spirit, you were stopping the blame and accepting responsibility for your part. Obviously, we both had parts, but that was huge for me. I could... I was really caught off guard by that.

06:35 JS: And I learned a really important lesson during that time, especially when you were not walking back toward our marriage at all. I determined that it didn't matter whether you did the right thing, I was gonna do the right thing, because even if our marriage didn't make it, I wanted to be stronger, a stronger person, and I wanted to have a stronger faith and a stronger trust through the journey. And so I determined that I needed to do the right thing because it was the right thing, not because it was about winning you back or... But I wanted it to be, and this is a phrase I've often used when I speak, that I wanted it, even though it wasn't well with my circumstances, I wanted it to be well with my soul. And so when we are refining, it's about that soul work. So that first step, to untangle our heart, has to do with allowing God to refine us.

07:32 JS: The second one, don't blame, instead claim, and what we're talking about is it becomes very, very easy to point fingers. And so especially, maybe in a situation where we were dealing with Mark's infidelity, it was very easy for me to point fingers, but what I started to do was I began to claim my own issues, recognize the ones that really weren't contributing to our marriage in a healthy way, and that began to untangle my heart.

08:05 JS: And then the third one is to forgive, and man, forgiveness, it is a choice. It is not a feeling. It will never be a feeling. We have to allow God to do a work in our heart, and it starts by choosing to forgive, and then the feeling of relief begins to take over. You wanna untangle your heart? You wanna get your heart uncluttered? Then begin the process of forgiving and that will unclutter. Really, honestly, forgiving is between you and God, way more than it is between you and another human being, because when you forgive, you clean out the clutter in your heart and you make it available to God. And then God can do what He needs to do inside of you and has much more of an opportunity to do a work in your relationships.

08:53 MS: Yeah. Key for me was I had to forgive myself, and then also to forgive you of the things that you had added to my own hurt, but the list was really more about me. And I had to come to the place where I would accept you for who you are and stop trying to change you. I exhausted myself. I've said before that I spent the first 25 years or more, probably 30...

09:31 JS: Of our marriage?

09:31 MS: Yeah, 30 years of our marriage trying to change you, and that was exhausting.

09:37 JS: It was exhausting to me too. [laughter]

09:38 MS: Oh, I bet. I bet. Here's what Father God has to say, "Therefore, accept one another as Christ has accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

09:51 JS: And that's the truth we want you to take home today, but one last word of encouragement. Today, we encourage you to change your prayer from, "Lord, change her," or, "Change him."

10:01 MS: Yeah.

10:02 JS: To, "Lord, will you change me?"

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