

Double Date with Mark and Jill: *Contentment, Freedom, and Hope*

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Mark Savage: Recently, Jill and I went out to dinner with some close friends of ours, and they asked us, "What's different in your marriage today?" As Jill and I were talking through that, my answer was this, "There's a whole lot more God in me now than there used to be." For me, that means that there's a whole lot more God because I have surrendered. I've gotten out of the way and I've surrendered my demand to know, I've surrendered my demand to understand, and bottom line I've surrendered my demand to be God. I've let Him be who He is and that's God. In having a whole lot more God in me, I've humbled myself and been willing to follow His lead and to the best of my ability, not that I do it perfectly, I want to humbly follow the Lord and be His servant. In Romans we're told this, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." You see, before the affair I had no hope. I just want to reiterate that the affair didn't give me hope, it brought tremendous ruin, but in the midst of all of that God has restored and brought hope.

Jill Savage: Doing the hard work of marriage is difficult, it's challenging, but when we dig into that hard, emotional work, it's some of the most rewarding work we will ever do. What I've come to understand is that marriage isn't just about marrying the right person, but it's more about becoming the right partner. It is that process of God shaping and molding us to become more like Him each and every day as we tackle the "perfection infection" in our marriage—that place where we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves, of our loved ones, and then we unfairly compare ourselves and our loved ones to those around us. When we begin to tackle that and we began to turn the slow fades around and instead of walking away from each other we're walking toward one another, it is some of the most rewarding work we can do. I don't know where you are today. Maybe you've spent the last 10 weeks with us and it's not been wonderful. In fact, it's been frustrating. Maybe you've done these videos on your own, you've been reading the book on your own, you're feeling very isolated, and you're feeling very alone in your marriage.

JS: Maybe you've been doing them with your spouse, but honestly you are finding that this is bringing about conflict, because you're talking about things that haven't been talked about that have been very deep inside of your relationship and you're just beginning to unearth them. I don't know if it's maybe a time where you need to ask for help, where you realize we can't get the conversation, we can't get beyond the arguing and the conflict, and we need to ask for help. But what I want you to know is that it's worth it. It's worth it. It's worth it to ask for help, it's worth it to dig deep, it's worth it to push through awkward to get to a new normal, because the rewards are out of this world. Our marriage was broken and now we have a beautiful relationship. We have an imperfect but beautiful relationship today because we were willing to do the hard work, the hard, emotional work of marriage, and we want to encourage you to do the same.

MS: Yeah. I think of the rewards for the hard work that I want to emphasize. Before I left Jill, I was convinced in my mind that we would never have the type of marriage or the depth of marriage that I dreamt of, and I thought I needed to go elsewhere to find it. Yet just within the last year I have said to Jill repeatedly that I am living the marriage of my dreams, and that did not come because of us,

that came because of the Lord and yet our willingness to work hard. So, one reward is that you work hard and your experiences can be different. Secondly, Jill and I have a level of conversation, an honest depth of conversation that we've never experienced before as we have learned to talk about those hard things, but more importantly not just talking about them, but hearing each other.

MS: A next reward is that we trust each other to a level that we have never trusted before. Both of us have experienced a depth of trust that we had only dreamt of, but now we experience. Last of all, is that we both are loving well. When I was in the midst of the affair and I had left the family, Jill loved me incredibly well. It was supernatural. It was unhumanable, as we talked about earlier. Jill modeled that, and now I have the opportunity to love her well, and I think together, both of us are working to intently keep deepening in our ability to love well, because that love that we share only comes from God. We get to give that to one another. So friends, no matter where you are in your marriage, if you will stay committed and work hard, you are going to experience rewards that you had never thought possible.

JS: And even when Mark wasn't loving me back, one of the things that I knew that I had to do is I had to be the right person for an audience of one. All that mattered was what God thought. All that mattered is what God asked me to do, and He asked me to love, so I tried to do that. I didn't do it perfectly. I remember several nights that there were exchanges of words that were not loving but at the same time, it was a place that God was growing me and perfecting me. I'm glad that I went that journey, and even if our marriage hadn't ended where we ended, I know that I would be a better person because of that. So, we leave you where we started. A real marriage isn't perfect, a real marriage is two people being perfected.

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