

## **How to Change Your Thinking: Double Date with Mark and Jill**

**Jill Savage:** I remember the first time I "should" all over Mark. Oh, goodness. Sounds like a weird thing to say, doesn't it? But it's true. I think we'd probably been married two days, because we were on our honeymoon. I don't even remember what was going on, but I can tell you there was a lot going on up here. He "should" just do this, and he "shouldn't" do that. All of that "shoulding" was going on up here. And those thoughts were affecting my feelings, which were affecting my actions, which were producing results on my honeymoon that was not really what either one of us wanted.

**Mark Savage:** Yeah. Jill and I have really focused a lot of work in our own personal lives, and we're excited for this season as we really lead you to change your thoughts, believing that it will change your marriage.

**JS:** Yeah. Exactly.

**MS:** I have been a guy who has had this active committee in my mind, that creates a negative frenzy of thoughts, which lead to negative feelings, which lead to negative outcomes and negative results.

**JS:** Exactly. What we are really trying to do is ride along with you, because we're still on this journey, but really bring a magnifying glass in a good way and magnifying what's going on up here and becoming aware of it. Seeing it in a way that we haven't seen it before and paying attention to it in a way that we haven't paid attention to it before. In our last video, we challenged you to begin to keep a thought journal, or to pay attention to your thoughts. Make a list of them, particularly negative thoughts. And then, we talked about replacing those thoughts with positive thoughts, recognizing the lens that you're looking through that may not be telling you the truth. But today, what we want to do is go a little step further in helping you to continue to identify thoughts that are not helpful to your marriage.

**MS:** Yeah, and they're thoughts that are pulling you away from your spouse.

**JS:** Probably most of the time we both have the thoughts going on and they're pulling us away from each other. So, here are some specific red flags that you can begin to pay attention to if these kinds of thoughts are going on in your mind, okay? The first one is this, *I deserve*. "I deserve a more thoughtful spouse. I deserve a specific kind of gift." *I deserve* is not going to be helping you and is going to be putting a wall up between you and your spouse, if those I deserve statements relate to marriage in anyway.

**MS:** Another one is, *I want*. "I want a spouse that does A, B, C and D. I want more money. I want a different life." We can I want ourselves into ruin.

**JS:** And it's okay to want something. We're going to talk about that in just a moment. It's okay to desire something. But what happens is when we are fueling the "I wants" and we're not doing anything to communicate them in a healthy way, that's when it causes distance between us.

**MS:** Yup. Another red flag is the statement, *I hate*. When we hate, and then follow that up with anything, what really breeds is not the action or the item, but the word hate. I hate, and hate will

become bitterness.

**JS:** It'll also build a wall. It will cause a distance and it fuels discontentment. That's really what it does. Again, it's okay to hate something about a situation or a circumstance, but it's what we do with that thought that makes the difference. Here's another one, *I do this better* or "He can't ever get it right," or "She can't ever get it right." Those are thoughts that don't help marriage.

**MS:** Yup. Another one is, *I'm better*. So, I'm not just doing this better. I am better. That really fuels pride and that pride and arrogance will create a wall.

**JS:** *It's unfair*. I don't know if you've noticed it, but life isn't fair.

**MS:** No.

**JS:** Not at all. I mean, on this side of heaven it's not fair at all. That is a statement that, man, we have to kind of unwind and recognize is there because it too will fuel discontent.

**MS:** And another statement that fuels discontentment or is a red flag is, *I'm tired of*. "I'm tired of their actions. I'm tired of the way they behave. I'm tired of them not knowing what I need. I'm tired that they can't read my mind."

**JS:** Yeah. And again, it's okay that you're tired of it. It's what you do with that. You see, when we keep it in our head and we then allow it to contaminate our feelings or maybe even hijack our emotions, then that produces actions that really aren't helpful for our marriage. And then we get results that we really don't want, okay? This should, I should, he or she should, that's when we should all over each other. Those are not healthy statements. In fact, anytime that the word should is in your head, it's probably a huge red flag, A, that you probably have some unrealistic expectations. We talk about the slow fades in our book, *No More Perfect Marriages*. One of them is the slow fade of unrealistic expectations, and should is a great red flag for that. But it's also a great red flag for inner dialogue that is pulling your heart away from your spouse.

**MS:** I want to share a verse with you from Romans 8, "So letting your sinful nature control your mind, leads to death." So, our sinful nature is our flesh or the way that we think and function...

**JS:** Outside of Christ.

**MS:** Outside of Christ. "But letting the spirit control your mind, leads to life and peace." And so, what we are really working hard to help lead you to is that we don't want death in your marriage. We want life and peace in your marriage. Your mind, who's controlling it? Your mind controls your thoughts, which controls your feelings, which controls your actions, which controls your results.

**JS:** Correct. We're talking about two different results, okay? The first result is death. The second result is life and peace. I think all of us would say, "Well, I don't want the result of death. I want the result of life and peace." So, we have to learn the only way that we get life and peace is by letting the spirit control us. Okay? That's really why we're taking this journey together, because we need to learn to allow God into our thoughts. We need to learn how to push our thoughts in the right direction. We need to learn how to even recognize the thoughts that are not serving us or our marriage well.

**MS:** Yeah. I think for myself, when I have not followed the Spirit's lead but followed my own lead, I have produced ruin. I've produced death. Death in relationship, death in activities, and deadly results.

**JS:** What does death in activities mean?

**MS:** Just wrong actions, wrong decisions, wrong activities, negative activities.

**JS:** So, choices of things to do?

**MS:** Yep.

**JS:** Okay. So, when we begin to move our thoughts in the right direction, this is what begins to take place. **Shame turns into surrender.** Shame is something that many of us struggle with and shame is when we move from conviction to condemnation. So, conviction says, "I did a bad thing." Condemnation says, "Therefore, I'm a bad person. I always get it wrong." That's shame versus surrender says, "You know what, Lord, I can't do this without you. I'm throwing up the white flag of surrender, and I'm letting you be the leader in my life." And so, shame turns into surrender.

**MS:** And **grumbling becomes grateful.** So, how do we grumble? We mutter under our breath. We're always fueling a sense of bitterness in our speech or a sense of anger and hostility in our interaction. We're walking into the house and slamming doors or cabinets.

**JS:** Well, not only that, but the grumbling can even happen inside our head and doesn't even have to exit our mouth. So, when we replace grumbling thoughts with grateful thoughts, what a difference it can make.

**MS:** Absolutely.

**JS:** Several months ago, we did an interview with Tricia Goyer and her husband. Tricia's written a book called, *The Grumble-Free Year*. And so, we did it on the grumble-free marriage. So, if that's a place where you begin to recognize that you do a lot of grumbling up here as it relates to your marriage, you might want to catch that interview. Go back to that dive deep interview and find it with John and Tricia Goyer.

**MS:** Yeah. Another way is when we change critical thoughts or **criticizing thoughts to appreciating thoughts.** So, it's very easy up here to be very critical, to have that criticalness going and going and going like a feeding frenzy. But we can stop that by appreciating the good things in other people. We can stop that by appreciating in our mind the true things, the honorable things that we read about in Philippians.

**JS:** It moves criticism to appreciation. **Hoarding hurts to communicating.** Okay, so this is where we go back and we were talking about, it's okay to want something different. It's okay to say, "I'm tired of blank." But if we just hoard those hurts, if we just hoard them in our head or if we even express them in unhealthy ways, that's not helpful to our marriage. What we need to do is stop hoarding the hurts and start communicating in a kind, God-honoring way, what our desires are, what are dreams are, what we want or what we need.

**JS:** This just happened the other day. We had company and I was feeling like I had, I don't know, five things to do to get ready and our company was here in 10 minutes. Mark had helped with several things throughout the afternoon, but I was starting to be really frustrated because I was the one in the kitchen, and he was in the other room sitting on the couch on his phone. What I realized is, "Woah, woah, woah, Jill. You're hoarding your hurts. You've got move it to communicating." I literally caught myself and went, "Uh-uh", and I went, "Hey babe, can you come in here and do X." "Yeah, yeah, absolutely." We just headed off conflict because I took my thoughts captive. I resisted fueling that feeding frenzy. Okay, I was starting it, but I caught myself and then I turned that into communication, and we were fine. What a difference that makes.

**MS:** Another way is that we move from **minimizing in our mind to listening**. We intently listen to hear. Listen to understand. That's a shift because so often we'll minimize. "Well, that's not important. They're just overreacting. I don't know why she would do this, or he would do this." We're minimizing, and minimizing is not honoring or respectful. What we want to do is shift from minimizing in our mind to listening; to intently deciding in our head to listen, to comprehend, to understand.

**JS:** We talked also, in our book, about the slow fades. The slow fade of minimizing is a place where hearts get pulled apart. We can either self-minimize like, "My voice doesn't matter. Nothing I say matters. I'm just going to shut up." Okay, that's self-minimizing. Or we can minimize others, "He's just overreacting. I'm not going to pay attention to anything he's saying." That is externally minimizing. And so, what we need to do is stop that and listen to the heart. This is also that place where we can easily take the bait and we start arguing some aspect of it and not really hearing the heart.

**MS:** So, Jill and I, we just really want to help you understand how to retrain your brain.

**JS:** Yes.

**MS:** These things are part of the retraining. Another step we can take is to move from **demanding to delighting**. So often when we're demanding that others perform or do or be what we want, that's destructive and that is prideful. Let's move from demanding to delighting in the help they're giving, delighting in who they are in their personality, delighting in how we think of them, and in delighting in who they are as a person.

**JS:** Yeah, exactly. We also need to move from **comparing to accepting**, and comparing really does a number. I mean you talk about feeding frenzy. We get going up here. "Well, her husband... Well, his wife..." We do that whole comparison thing and what we need to do is really recognize that we need to accept our spouse for who they are. They're not going to be just like the neighbors. They're not going to be like some of the other people that we see at church. And quite frankly, we're comparing our insides to other people's outsides. Not fair comparison.

**MS:** No.

**JS:** And then, finally, we need to move from **pride to humility**. When we pay attention to inner dialogue here, we move from pride to humility because that inner dialogue helps us. Instead of seeing things through a prideful heart, we recognize the pride that's there, and we are like, "Uh-uh, no, no, no, no." Let's just say your spouse made a mistake about something and you're paying the

cost of their mistake. Maybe even just stupid little things, like you asked them to do something and they didn't do it. Now, you're stuck doing it because they're gone. So then, pride can start that feeding frenzy. We're talking about paying attention to your thoughts, paying attention to your inner dialogue, and you know what, sometimes you forget things too, right? So that's how you move pride to humility. That pride, if it stays there, it fuels feelings of, "I'm better. They're worse." That pride fuels feelings of...

**MS:** "I'm right and they're always wrong."

**JS:** Right.

**MS:** "I'm always right and they're always wrong."

**JS:** And then those feelings will produce actions. Maybe you will just give your spouse the cold shoulder. Maybe you'll offer sharp responses. Then the actions produce results that you really don't want, because if you speak unkindly to your spouse, it's probably going to start a crazy cycle. Then they're going to be disrespectful and unloving, and we're just going to keep going like crazy and it's not helpful. So, if we can grab those prideful thoughts and you're like, "I asked him to do this and he didn't. You know what, sometimes I forget to do things too. Okay. Lord, I'm going to forgive. I'm going to let go." That fuels a heart of forgiveness, a heart of compassion, and then that fuels actions that are loving and kind and grace-filled. Then, that produces results that are what we talked about in God's word. Peace-filled.

**MS:** Yeah, life and peace.

**JS:** Hopefully this has helped you to begin to even identify more thoughts that aren't being helpful in your marriage, and quite frankly, in other relationships that you have as well. This is Mark and Jill Savage, signing off with a reminder that if you change your mind, you actually can...

**MS:** Change your marriage.