

# Dive Deep Interview with Jen & Greg Hill

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**Jill Savage:** Welcome to this edition of No More Perfect Date Night. We are super excited to have an interview with Greg and Jen Hill. Greg and Jen Hill from Peoria, Illinois, which is just down the road from where Mark and I live. They are a family with six kids, so they really want to have this conversation with you as well as we do, because it's 5:45 in the morning, so that we can make sure that we can do this before all six of their children wake up. So, welcome Greg and Jen.

**Mark Savage:** Hi.

**Greg Hill:** Thanks for having us Mark and Jill.

**Jen Hill:** Thank you.

**JS:** Well guys, tell us just a little bit about your family. You have a good sized family there. What are the ages of your kids? And tell us a little bit about them.

**JH:** The oldest just turned 13 in the last couple months. So, a whole new season of parenting.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** And then the youngest just turned three, so they span about a decade there...

**GH:** Yeah 13, 11, 9, 7, 5 and 3. Three boys, three girls, in that order. It worked out.

**JS:** Wow.

[laughter]

**JH:** Yeah, we thought when we had the first girl, we thought it was a miracle. After three boys and we had girl and then it was like, "Oh, there's two more." So...

[laughter]

**JS:** That is great. What do you guys do? Tell us what you do.

**GH:** So I work at Samaritan Ministries International. I'm a manager in what's the equivalent of their sales team, and so we believe in what the Lord Jesus is doing through that ministry in a remarkable way and wanna see it grow, and...

**JS:** Yeah, tell people what Samaritan is.

**GH:** So Samaritan Ministries is an alternative to health insurance and so we're not insurance at all. It really is a crowd funding for healthcare. So we have hundreds of thousands of members. We've been around for more than 25 years, and really we just... The healthcare is a rather important space

to a lot of people, and so what we do is we come around one another with finances, with prayer, with encouragements. Once you go through a medical need, we're there for each other, to help each other through that. And [0:02:32] \_\_\_\_\_ over four years.

**MS:** Oh, good. We're members of Samaritan and we love it.

**JS:** We do. It was a little scary making that switch, I will say.

**GH:** It really is... You feel like you're doing something irresponsible, like, "Man, I'm gonna have to walk on some water here." It's really neat to see the Lord come through.

**MS:** It's been incredible, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah. At first, I was like, "This is wrong." In your head you're like, "Having health insurance is like having car insurance." I almost felt like I was doing something illegal. I wasn't. But it was just so in your brain, but I'll tell you what, we love Samaritan, and we're so...

**JH:** I think we can all acknowledge that the current mainstream system is broken.

**JS:** Yeah. It's really struggling, definitely.

**JH:** As answer to that. It's an answer, an alternative, a different way of thinking about it, a different way of engaging it. And I think it's obviously really important to us. We're passionate about it.

**JS:** Yeah, absolutely.

**GH:** I even work there. And I remember feeling the same way you did, Jill, like, "Man, I hope this works." And I work here now.

[laughter]

**JS:** So I really hope it works.

**GH:** It really was a neat thing to see God come through in that way. Our first need was over \$31,000 and it got reduced to \$24,000 through discounts. We had 53 different families sharing with us, kind of a two-fold thing. So I don't have \$24,000 worth of cash laying around. And not to eclipse that in any way, but 53 different families, praying for us, sending letters of encouragement, counsel, courage, wisdom, through letter mail and electronic mail was really a neat thing to watch. And you kinda have that paradigm shift of "Oh, that's what they're doing over there at Samaritan Ministries." And it makes all the sense in the world once you... Once you're a recipient of it, it creates a different kind of membership.

**JS:** Yeah, I agree.

**MS:** It's really like the body of Christ working together. That's what I've really enjoyed about it.

[background conversation]

**MS:** We actually explained it to a couple doctor friends of ours, and they had heard of it, but didn't really know how it worked, and I remember one doctor, he was in our kitchen and we were telling him about it and he just started tearing up, and he's like, "What?" He just, "This is like the body of Christ." And it was just really precious to hear, or to watch him respond to it.

**GH:** We've had the same experience with one of our children. He's an amputee, and his prosthetist, the first time I was explaining Samaritan to him, he said, "Well, wait a minute. I don't have to get a referral from your doctor? I can just see your son?"

**JH:** There's no middle man. There's no insurance company.

**GH:** It impacted his vocation and he said, "Wait a minute. I don't have to get a prior authorization, I can just give your son the care that I believe he needs?" And I said, "Sir, I need \$300 worth of discounts, an itemized bill and we'll be on our way." And that was when he gave us a \$7000 discount. It really impacted his job, our relation with him, it really restores, I think, even redeems the patient-doctor relationship.

**JS:** Yeah, that's so cool. I love that. And Jen, are you a stay-at-home mom?

**JH:** I am. I stay home with the kids. We homeschool as well. Like I have several full-time jobs. [chuckle]

**JS:** Yes, you do.

**MS:** Yes. Yes. Yup.

**JS:** Yes, I like to say you are a woman committed to the profession of motherhood.

**JH:** Yes, yes.

**JS:** That is important. [chuckle] That's great. Well, thank you guys for taking the time to chat with us. We heard about you from someone else, they were just sharing a little bit of your story. And you've been through a tragedy, and a lot of marriages don't make it through tragedies. And so that's why we wanted to talk with you. We felt like you could really give some wisdom and insight to people going through a really difficult situation. So if you wouldn't mind, would you share a little bit of your story? Because I think that that will lay the groundwork for the rest of our conversation.

**GH:** Sure, and I wanna try to be concise here. When you say "a little bit", that's a really good phrase there Jill, cause there's lots of detail, and it could really dovetail into many different segments. But we're coming up on the six-year anniversary, June 21st, 2014. I was mowing my lawn, and missed a portion of the lawn, and backed up my mower. And my three-year-old boy at the time, he's now nine, his name is Jude, wanted to be with me on the mower, and fell behind the mower. I didn't see him, I didn't hear him, and saw something spit out of the cutting deck in my peripheral, and it was his foot.

**GH:** And so that was the initial trauma, and we've not talked about some of these details for a little bit. And Jen was at the time the trauma happened, was 38 weeks along pregnant with our fifth child at the time. And so we rushed off to Children's Hospital.

[background conversation]

**GH:** So we were rushed off to the hospital. At the time...

[background conversation]

**GH:** We had three boys and a daughter, and Jen was pregnant with our fifth, our second daughter. Our boys were seven, five, three, and then our first starter was 18 months old. We spent 28 days at Children's Hospital. On the 26th day at that stage Jen gave birth to our fifth. Two days later we discharged with a two-day old daughter, and a three-and-a-half year old boy with no feet. So it ended up that his other foot needed to be amputated all the way. It was a very... "Trauma" is the word to use. So we were thrust into a very dark place.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JS:** Yeah, I can imagine.

**MS:** I can too.

**JS:** I can only imagine. Oh my goodness. Thank you for sharing that. I know that's not easy to share. And I know that that is... We shared just a little bit before we got on here, that in my history... Got one of the kiddo's awake?

**GH:** This is Jude.

**JS:** Oh, I love that.

**GH:** Hello, do you wanna play Mr and Mrs Savage?

**JS:** Hello, are you there?

**GH:** You just woke up [chuckle]

**JS:** Yeah, he's probably a little out of it. [chuckle]

**GH:** He's like, "What's going on?"

[background conversation]

**JS:** I love that. Well anyway what I was saying is in my past when I was 12, I had an incident where I had been on the mower, somebody else got on the mower. My little sister who was six had her foot run over by the mower, and I pulled her out from it. So it was quite traumatic, and still something that is difficult to think about for very long. So I really appreciate your willingness to have a conversation about it. But talk about what happened emotionally for you in those first 30, 60 days, what was going on with you emotionally, each of you?

**JH:** [0:11:53] \_\_\_\_.

**GH:** Yeah, yeah.

**JH:** Leading up to the accident we had had, I think what we would call now more normal struggles. And even my pregnancy we had had some... There were some serious concern at various points throughout that pregnancy. And I was very sick too, I just didn't feel well for most of it. And as we hit spring that year, and as you well know the Illinois winter is dreadful.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** Late winter, early spring can be my... I struggle each year a little bit with that. So as we were coming out of that, and then got good reports from the doctor about the baby, there was this sense of "Oh, okay." And I was nesting. It was really, I felt like the last weekend that I had to just feel ready to give birth. So we had a lot of stuff going on in the house that day, in fact I think we had everything pulled out of the garage, the day of that...

**GH:** Yes, that you had everything pulled out of the garage.

[chuckle]

**JH:** I look back and I'm like, "Why did that matter?"

**GH:** It was all in the driveway.

[laughter]

**GH:** I'm not exaggerating, I'm not making that up.

**JH:** Why did that matter so much? And I wrestle a little bit with that. But... We just had come through some hard things, and so we... I think I had the sensation, I felt like, "Okay we... We're coming out..."

**JS:** Yes.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JH:** Of this... Dark season." And I had planted myself in the Word and in Hebrews. I had been studying and reading Hebrews... And just felt like, "Okay, the Lord has been faithful." And I was... I think determined in that way. And one thing that we had always said about our family, and kind of had become like this motto was that, "Come what may, Jesus is enough." We had struggled, we're living on one income... And it always just felt impossible. And we had moved a lot, we moved across the country, we had moved back from Dallas back to where I was born and raised in Illinois and so we just been through some stuff. Family drama, in-laws, and just...

**GH:** Outlaws.

[laughter]

**MS:** Yeah.

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** More laws.

[laughter]

**JH:** And so, I think my heart was settled in that, but I also had hope that we were coming out of some of those darker things and... Then, we always kind of have really no other way to articulate it. But that day, that accident, was like a nuclear bomb going off in our family, and everything about our world, everything about our family was just unrecognizable.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JH:** And it's not... Something like that is not a quick recovery.

**JS:** No.

**JH:** And initially, we're in survival mode, which is... I think... Something... A gift from God that our bodies and our... The way that he's created us and wired us, is that... We can endure some really incredibly hard things.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** And you kind of... Momma Bear and Poppa Bear come out, and... You're focused on... Our child surviving this. And also having a baby at the same time. Greg has always been really involved in the birth. Like a doula. [chuckle] A husband coach, child-birth is kind of our angle, and so he was always there. I always joke that he needed like a whistle.

[laughter]

**JH:** Because he would get me up and moving, and keep me going...

**JS:** He's a coach.

**JH:** Yeah, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah, definitely.

**JH:** And so he was always really involved with each of the births, and I'm thankful for that. And I think that, that was a in a sense God's... It was a blessing, because it helped him kind of re-engage even in the midst of the trauma. Because he knew that I was gonna have a baby. And we had to fight for our son, and we had to fight for the other kids. And so we were focused, there was just this intense focus in the hospital. And we would even... Our minds would wander, we would think about, "What is... What about this? How will we ever financially... "

**JS:** Yeah.

**JH:** "Manage life? How will we physically and mentally handle this? How will we juggle all of this?" And in my own concerns of, "How will I have a baby? How do I leave my three-year-old son and go have a baby?" I was supposed to deliver across the street at a different hospital, and that changed, of course, because I wasn't going to leave...

**JS:** Yes.

**GH:** We had a "not now" compartment.

**JH:** We had these things that would come, these thoughts of, "What about this, and what about that?" And we would look at each other and say, "Well that goes in the... "

**GH:** Not right now.

**JH:** "Not right now compartment." We would picture this...

**JS:** Wow.

**JH:** This crane coming and picking up that thought, or that worry and taking it. Because we knew that when you're in the pediatric ICU, it's like a moment-by-moment... Life. And the doctors and the nurses will tell you that like, "This is moment by moment, we're just focused on the right now." And we adopted that, which is kind of biblical in a sense...

**MS:** Right.

**JH:** To where, this is what... The Lord is enough for right now. And he's providing for this moment, and so we really were diligent to adopt that. To focus on, "What do we need right now? How do we manage this situation right now, and not getting too far head of ourselves?" And that really protected us from a lot of... I mean, it could have been worse I guess is what I'm saying. [chuckle]

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** It protected us. It protected our hearts and our minds, and allowed us to remain focused and united in that moment.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** And I'm thankful for that... That was God's he... And I think that came through some of those earlier hardships, there was a discipline that God had formed and created in us.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** Within our marriage and within us individually, to where we were able to lean into that. So, I'm also quite thankful for those earlier harder times, because I think it equipped us. And Hebrews... Is it Hebrews 12 kind of...

**GH:** Yeah, 12:28.

**JH:** Well... Is it the next chapter? Thirteen...

**GH:** Kingdom that can't be shaken.

**JH:** Well that, but there was... But the discipline of the Lord, and running the race. And so, all of that, that I had studied leading up to the accident, was really...

**JS:** That really was an anchor for you, is what I'm hearing.

**JH:** Yeah.

**GH:** Yeah, initially... The emotion was terror.

**JS:** Oh, I can...

**GH:** The emotion was panic, terror... It's probably one of the most challenging things in communicating our story, is like the impact and a bomb going off. It impacted every compartment of our lives and really just laid us out.

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** And what's... One of the most beautiful things about our story, and it's such... Probably the most pithy thing you can say is that he is faithful. And I honestly don't know why... To us, like when you say, "Hey, marriages fall apart," they do. We're part of a [0:21:04] \_\_\_\_ community now, and we see families that really struggle, we've seen marriages that really struggle to lean in into this. And I honestly don't have an answer other than the Lord is faithful to himself and faithful to us. We had a lot of people engaging us initially, in the months to come, and would testify to us kind of, they would... Just out of encouragement to us, say "Hey you guys are so strong, and so faithful and committed and courageous... " And just all these beautiful parts of the witness that were happening. And after a little bit, it began to frustrate us.

[laughter]

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** But well, they meant well, and their intent was to build up and to edify, but really, it seemed like they were putting us on a pedestal we didn't belong on. Because, we were scared people, we were tired people. I remember being here in Peoria, at the Chief's game it was a faith and family night, and man we must have been like two weeks into the trauma at that point when our church was going there, it was very early, we were still in the intensive care unit and the PICU. Jen had not given birth yet, and Jen looked at me and said, "Hey Mike and Clay, our two oldest sons, are gonna be at the game and we're gonna have some friends take them to the game."

**GH:** I wasn't gonna leave Jen in the PICU by herself, like full term pregnant. Jude's right foot at this point had not been amputated surgically. And because she's my help mate and full of wisdom, she



influenced me to go to the game and said, "Hey your sons need you as their dad, your two older sons need you there." I went to the game, had a beverage and a hot dog in hand, and I had one of the church members approach me and this was another example and to my face said, "Hey you guys are so strong and faithful and courageous and committed and enduring and persevering." And in the moment, I asked this person I said "Please would you... The first thing I need you to do, to try to identify with me, is just imagine that you've just seen one of your child's foot spit out of the cutting deck of your lawn mower, what type of emotion would it elicit from you?"

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** And that's terror, that's panic, that is horrific, that is trauma, and so once that person was there, I said, "Okay, the second thing and not the first thing, but the second thing, is that any of those characteristics that you notice, witness, see in faith in courage in commitment... That's Jesus. [chuckle] Not a suggestive thing, but it surely is him. I have never said, "Well it must be the Lord." No, it is the Lord that is him through us, because I, even today, almost six years later, am a tired, weary, scared little man. My frame is very thin, and I am a very weak individual. And so that's the beauty of the gospel and the essence of the gospel, and that's the beauty of our testimony, is that it puts our weakness on display all the time.

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** So all of these things that people are witnessing, are the Lord. And so, emotionally, it was terror and panic. Your question was, "Hey first three to six months... " it really extends beyond that, but that's...

**MS:** Yeah. That makes sense.

**JS:** It does make sense and one of the things that it makes me think of... In our book, No More Perfect Marriages we talk about the God tool of compassion. That in our marriages, we really need to be far more compassionate with one another than what we often are. And what I'm wondering, the other thing we talk about is that sometimes we need to feel, and not fix. Did you feel like when people were saying those kind of things to you, they were in an essence, trying to build you up and fix... And really what you needed them to do was sit in the pain with you?

**JH:** Absolutely.

**GH:** Do you want to speak...

**JH:** Yes.

[laughter]

**JH:** I think there is a tendency... I'll pick on American Christianity because I feel like that's what I can speak to that. I can't speak to...

**MS:** Right.

**JH:** Chinese Christians, but I can speak to American Christians, I've experienced it. I think there's a

tendency to avoid pain, and our story really shocks people and I think it's really hard to process it.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** And I get it. [chuckle] More than anyone else outside of Greg, of course, I get it, it's hard. But we have needed... And there have been a few, there's been those few people that are just God's grace to you, who have understood our need for continued lament and grief...

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** And something like this, you don't just bounce back. If there's anything I've learned in the last six years, it's that. It's hard, and it's gonna probably be a life long journey. We have to watch, and we get to watch, and it's good and hard... We get to watch Jude grow up. But each phase and each season brings about a pronounced sense of...

**JS:** Reminder.

**JH:** Loss, and grief, and sorrow that I don't think is ever gonna go away this side of heaven. And so yeah, we've needed people to join in that lament, and to sit with us in the grief and the trauma. And there have been some of those people, but there's also...

**GH:** Those people are few.

**JH:** There's also been a lot of people that have been unable to do that. And that causes another secondary trauma and grief that we have had to work through too. And then still have to process to this day, especially as we approach the anniversary. And I'm always surprised at the few people who will realize the significance of that day for us.

**JS:** Yes. Yes.

**JH:** I imagine it's a lot like that for people who've lost a loved one, that they need their community to remember that loss regularly, but especially on that anniversary. And that probably never really goes away. And so you kinda have to process that too. There's shifts and relationships around you, and disappointments, and discouragements because of that.

**GH:** Yeah, you learn to have grace on people. You learn... What's interesting about the perseverance of the saints is again, the strength of Christ in us. And when people would see us persevere, they would say, "Well... " In essence implicitly... This wasn't explicit, but implicitly they would say, " Oh, they haven't lost their faith, they're doing fine, they're all better."

**JH:** All good.

**GH:** And no, no, no, no, no, this... And there's such... There's things, and this happens each year, that in year three we were getting to things that we weren't supposed to get to in years one and two, and couldn't have gotten to in years one and two. And so on with year four, five and six. And so it's interesting, lament Jen mentioned, really a biblical God-honoring appropriate grieving. It just takes time, and it's not anything fast and...

**JS:** No, and it's messy.

**GH:** You have to contend for that space. And I think people... What was that you said Jill, that the room for compassion and to not fix?

**JS:** Not fix. They need to...

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** That's, something that Jen... And we've given that to each other. But initially she was the caregiver for the entire family, and gave me all the room in the world just to break. Because I was broken, I really didn't have a choice in the matter.

**JS:** I'm sure you were. Well you know what, our friends... Speak for a moment. Our friends that shared your story with us, said there was a moment... And I don't know if I have the timing right. This was right when it happened, where Jen took your face in her hands. What happened there?

**GH:** Yeah. By the time I got Jude back to the house, it was a really bloody, bony, fleshy mess. Covered in blood, I lay him down on the ground, and Jen kneels down on the other side of him. And so we're facing one another...

**JH:** Can I back up just a second? So I was in the garage and heard Greg scream. And it was one of those moments where you're moving in slow motion.

**JS:** Oh I bet, yes.

**GH:** Trauma is a very interesting thing. It took forever to travel like 75 feet.

**JS:** Right.

**MS:** Oh, I bet.

**JH:** I heard it, I didn't see anything yet. But just hearing the terror in Greg's scream, it's like I knew in that instant that our lives had completely changed. It was just this awful, awful moment. And I came out, and I saw Greg was running to me with Jude facing outwards. And I remember as any human being, as any mom, I remember screaming too.

**JS:** Yes.

**JH:** Who wouldn't? It was like a war scene in a beautiful 70 degree sunny, first day of summer, beautiful day. And I remember screaming, but at the very same time, I just had this massive Holy Spirit moment where I felt impressed upon. And we got Jude down on the ground, and Greg was like...

**GH:** I was beside myself, I had lost my mind.

**JS:** Oh yes, anyone would.

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** I remember hearing my mind kind of snap.

**JH:** And I had always thought, because of a couple other minor incidents growing up, when something traumatic happens I freeze. And I just kind of felt like that's who I am as a person. And so in this moment I didn't. The Lord just equipped me to do what I kinda thought that I never would be able to, and I grabbed Greg, by the face leaning over Jude and I said, "God is writing a story," and that's all I could think in my mind was that, "God was in control." And I didn't... Nothing seems like that, it seemed so chaotic and so, like, "What is going on?" That it was clearly the Holy Spirit just impressing upon me, that he was there, and...

**GH:** The fog of war had set in.

**JH:** And so there was that moment where I wanted Greg to know that God was in control. Just like me saying, "I give it all, I give it all. I don't know what's gonna happen here, but I know that God is with us." And I remember saying to Jude, I think nearly in the same moment, "Jesus is with us," and he... Little three, three and a half Jude cried out and said, "I need Jesus." And I think at that point there were just, it was... I wonder sometimes if it was like a yard full of angels. I, to this day, I don't know, but it just seemed like there were...

**GH:** There were several people in our yard... Like out of nowhere, it was strange.

**JH:** People came from everywhere...

**JS:** Really?

**JH:** And there was this crowd gathered, so many people were out doing yard work that day and...

**GH:** I would guess eight or 10 people.

**JH:** And in my mind it seemed like an army of people praying. What else do you do in that moment? And I always believed that they had trauma too, they had to witness what we saw, it just breaks my heart.

**GH:** Our neighbor across the street. He was in a different neighborhood and heard me scream, and months later, he would tell me, "Greg, it was like you had a bullhorn in my ear it was so loud." And he came over, he lived across the street from us at that time and came over and picked Jude's foot up out of the yard, and asked "What do you want me to do with this?" They were experiencing the trauma with us.

**JH:** I was... I wrestle with that like, "Ohh... " 'cause I know what it did to us. But it was just, it was like an anchor for us.

**GH:** That was the anchor. The Lord, that was right at about nine years of marriage. We're coming up on 15 this September. And the Lord really had grown us up, he had done a remarkable job, teaching us about sound doctrine, sound theology and one of those things was sovereignty. And then at that moment, he had really brought to life a theology of suffering, with that sovereignty. What it

means for God to be sovereign, what it means for suffering. For that sovereignty to really interact with suffering.

**JH:** And define for those who are somewhat young in the faith, what does the word "sovereign" mean?

**GH:** That he is in total and utter control.

**JS:** Okay.

**GH:** Over the heavens, over the earth, there's not a moment that he is not in control over, he has complete foreknowledge, he knows every... He knew that day was coming. He is all-powerful. He could have prevented that moment from happening and did not. Those are... That's how his sovereignty kinda plays out in that moment. And Jen said that to me, that he is writing a story for us. It really was an anchor, it really, it really anchored me, us in that moment.

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** Kind of established a sovereign stake in the ground as it were.

**JS:** Yeah. Talk for a moment, you guys haven't used this word at all, but I can only imagine that it was swirling and that would be the word blame. Talk about that, what did you struggle with that? Personally, as a couple [laughter] there was a knowing look, there. [laughter]

**GH:** Yeah. Well, we both wanna speak to it.

**JH:** Yeah, I'll say what I wanna say... It was never an issue for me. I was always surprised maybe still, and a little bit... That people assume that I blamed him, or even... I remember my mother-in-law telling me that they were just so thankful that I didn't blame Greg. And I remember thinking... It's odd to me. I mean I guess I understand to a degree but it just never was part of it. Now, this is what maybe I haven't been able to share too much publicly about but I have my own sense of blame. That I should have been watching him more closely. Or maybe if I hadn't been so concerned about nesting or cleaning out that stupid garage or... I don't know, I just there's a... That dogs me a little bit. And sometimes it's been hard because no one ever concerns themselves with that. They just assume that I blame him or that I struggled with that and not necessarily that I wrestle with my own guilt.

**JS:** Yeah, I can only imagine...

**MS:** Yeah.

**JH:** That wasn't hard.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JH:** But I just I knew, I knew... I knew Greg's love for his children. And I knew that this was not something he ever would have wanted or imagined as a possibility, and I just knew his heart as a dad [0:39:26] \_\_\_\_\_. And then also, like, you know, really, I'm the one home most with the kids as a

stay-at-home mom, and homeschooling and all of that. Potentially it was more likely that something like that would happen with me.

**JS:** Sure. On your watch.

**JH:** Right. And so, even that morning. We had had a busy Saturday the day of the accident, we had actually ran to get the mower blades sharpened that morning.

**GH:** It is a sovereign detail...

**JH:** I can't...

**GH:** The week... The Saturday before I mowed the lawn and the lawn looked terrible. I called Jen, I said, "I'm not going to mow the lawn again, we need to get the blade sharpened." And that very morning, we took the blades in. I was really excited about how sharp they were, they were like very blunt and dull before that, and about \$9 later, they were ready.

**JH:** And we went to Costco we got groceries and ice cream sandwiches because they had the samples out and they always get you with the samples. And it was like Carmel sea salt ice cream sandwiches, I mean they were totally for Greg and I but we kept telling the kids once we got all the yardwork done and the chores, then we would have ice cream when dad was done mowing. And so we were just minutes away from that.

**GH:** And when we came from the hospital, we had ice cream sandwiches.

[laughter]

**JH:** Our neighbor had ice cream... Anyways, so what were we saying?

**JS:** Talking about blame.

**GH:** Let's talk about blame for a moment. I think it's a miracle, blame, embarrassment, shame... Like those three terms were pretty rich for me like the first 24 to 48 hours, yeah.

**JS:** I can only imagine, an enemy. This is where spiritual warfare happens too.

**GH:** I was drowning in it. And this is the Lord, I mean, somehow, two days into it. I looked at Jen, in the PICU and I said I have to go home. I need to see my sons and face that yard. Man, that was a really hard day.

**JS:** I bet.

**MS:** I bet.

[pause]

**MS:** Just the courage that that took...

**GH:** I called my dad and I said, "Dad, I need you to come get me, I need to go home." And I went home and my now 13-year-old and my 11-year-old were seven and five, and they were six or 10 feet away from us when it happened. So they witnessed it too. And I got down on one knee when I got home and I said, "Boys, we lock arms and we weather this together or we don't make it. So any fear, any anger, anything you ever need to talk about, you got a blank check." And so...

**MS:** Precious.

**GH:** I mean that was the Lord saying, "Greg, do not fear, you must be courageous." And that's where I point to him, it's like okay, that's all the Lord.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** Yeah, and so that day, it was another beautiful day and I stood on the edge of the driveway and faced that yard and man the grief was overwhelming.

**JS:** I'm sure.

**GH:** And I walked out to where it had happened. And I was out of control, weeping, and by the time I got to where we laid Jude in the yard. This is where I describe that his, his sovereignty and his redemption kind of went from like this black and white experience to this technicolor. That by the time I got to where we laid Jude in the grass. I sensed him saying to me, "Greg, I am here. I've not gone anywhere and I am making this new. I'm redeeming this." And I really, as much as I understand, shalom to be the absolute peace of the Lord, I experienced it in that moment. And I went from this sobbing, grievous weep to calm.

**JS:** Wow.

**GH:** And that's where the that's...

[overlapping conversation]

**JS:** That have this understanding...

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** Mother's writing a story for us and that anchor was there again. And it's ongoing too, the blame, I would say, mostly it's not there, but it comes in... So Jude's growing and he's had surgeries and there's refitting for prosthesis and Jude is growing up and so he's starting to ask some very mature, old soul, Christian questions.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** And so for me and Jen we've really been resolute to say, "Hey, you can talk to us about this. We want you to know you're safe, we want you to know that mom and dad are here." This is with all of our children. And so at times, Jude... For both of us has looked at us and said, "Hey I want my

feet back. I don't have feet and you guys do have feet. It's not fair. I'm a little boy, I want feet, what's the deal?" And so that's been a really difficult thing to hear him say. This was a good two years ago I'm guessing at this point, it really is a blur. Time is a blur. He would say, "I want my feet back."

**GH:** And at one point I was alone with him in his bedroom at bedtime. He shares a room with his brothers, but his brothers weren't there for some reason and he looked at me and he said, "Dad, I want my feet back." And I... One of my largest fears is that he's going to hate me. And it's just ongoing, it's not a broken bone, he doesn't have any feet and so he said that to me while alone, and I had to know. And I said, "Buddy. Do you..." right after he said that to me, I said "Do you hate dad?" And man, the single most powerful moment I've had with him, he leaned in toward me, without hesitation, and said, "No, I love you. And that was an accident." And he was modeling, he was reciprocating the love that he knew his dad had for him. And so, man I... Just through tears said, "Buddy, I know that one day you're gonna meet your Lord face-to-face, and he's gonna say, 'Jude look down. Glorified pair of feet, brother.'" That blame thing kinda comes and goes. I don't interpret it as blame, it's just this grief, and I don't know. Yeah, maybe it is blame?

**JH:** It's an ongoing process.

**JS:** Oh I'm sure.

**MS:** Oh it is. It's multi-faceted, I'm sure. I love as you keep talking about anchor, you got an anchor on your wall behind you. It's so fun!

**JS:** Oh my goodness, I hadn't even seen that! [laughter]

**GH:** That was not planned.

[laughter]

**MS:** I know! That's what's so awesome about it I think.

**JS:** It's perfect. It is, it's so powerful.

**MS:** I'm sure it's just so multifaceted and ongoing. And the pain is just indescribable for you. And then for others who haven't even begun to come close to experiencing it, they just don't have a clue and it's really... It's tough but early on...

**JS:** No, go ahead.

**MS:** Early on, when we were talking earlier, you said that there was someone who really stepped into your life, that brought you comfort, who was it? Besides the Lord Jesus himself. [chuckle]

[overlapping conversation]

**JS:** Yeah, somebody that kinda inserted themselves in your life and...

**GH:** There's a handful of people that, I think for reasons of spiritual maturity, that are able to enter into that trauma, grief, sorrow... Affliction, and kinda sit with you and are okay with an ongoing



unpacking of the gory details. But there was, I think you're referring to the person that told you about us.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Yes we are.

[laughter]

**JS:** Well, you said she was quite, she played quite a role in that season of life.

**GH:** We didn't know her initially.

**JH:** She was a total stranger. We didn't know her until the day or two days after we came home from the hospital. She showed up and...

**GH:** It was like a...

[noise]

**GH:** "Somebody's at the door." [chuckle]

**JH:** She'd already, I think, been to our house, she had dropped stuff off for my mom, who was staying with the other kids, and had already organized local support group and... I think the girls just woke up. You guys can head downstairs, okay?

**GH:** Hey sweetie! This is our 6th. We call her "Gummy Bear".

[laughter]

**JS:** I love that. Good morning!

**MS:** Good morning!

**GH:** Sweetie...

[laughter]

**JS:** She's like, "What are you guys doing, talking on the computer? I don't get this."

**JH:** So Connie...

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** Whoops!

[laughter]

**JH:** So she shows up and just becomes this mainstay, and she would pop in and barely knock, which I'm super introverted.

**GH:** Was unusual.

**JH:** I'm super introverted and we've never really had that kind of community, but it was exactly what I needed. She would just insert herself and say, "I'm gonna fold laundry. I'm going to... "

[background conversation]

**JH:** We were very thankful for her, just her steady presence. And it was just so strange to me, the people that you think are your people in [0:51:00] \_\_\_\_ that sometimes aren't. And then the Lord just brings these people out of the blue, and they become your people. And that was honestly, in most cases, it was just these unexpected people who became essential and we're just really thankful for the way that the Lord provided for us in that time, through his people.

[overlapping conversation]

**JS:** Yeah. It reminds me of... I went through breast cancer six years ago, and... What I walked out with was the people that had the most impact didn't ask, they just did. They didn't ask.

**GH:** She told herself, "I'm going to do something." And that was it.

**JH:** I think when you're going through something hard, all of your energy, mental energy, everything is going towards that. And so, when someone approaches you and says, "What can I do?"

**JS:** You don't have an answer.

**JH:** "I don't know... I don't even know."

**GH:** I still don't know how to answer that question.

**JS:** You're exactly right. I think that we mean well, but it is the most ineffective thing that we can do, and the best thing that we can do is literally just to do, to show up with food, to fold laundry, whatever is needed for just the everyday stuff of life. Well we need to bring this to a close. Your family is waking up.

**JH:** Do you want to get them situated downstairs really quick? And then...

**GH:** Yeah, I'll be right back.

[background conversation]

**JS:** Okay.

**MS:** I think, for me, that statement about, you have your people or you think that they're your people and then they end up not being your people, it's almost like they vanish... And that adds to

the trauma in the hurt. It's like, "Where'd you go?" And I can definitely relate to that. When I was pastoring, I had all these people that I assumed were my people, and they were nowhere and so that was devastating.

**JH:** Those wounds can be really deep.

**MS:** Yeah, yeah.

**JH:** And having to learn to trust the Lord with that as well.

**MS:** Right.

**JH:** That, he is enough and to continue to process those losses.

**MS:** Yes.

**JH:** It's loss.

**JS:** It is, yeah.

**JH:** Make your mind, turn in on itself.

**MS:** Oh I know.

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, well, and the other thing I really want, I wanna affirm you guys on only because you... When I hear you saying, Greg, that day that you went home two days later and you sat with your boys and "You have a blank check, you can ask anything. We can talk about anything," that didn't happen in my family. After the accident, which in our case my sister had her foot run over, I carried her in the house, the girl that was on the lawn mower freaked out and couldn't figure out how to stop it, jumped off and got her foot under the lawn mower.

**GH:** Oh my goodness.

**JS:** So she screams I run back out and carry her in the house.

**MS:** And you're 12.

**JS:** I'm 12.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JS:** So really, that day, three people were hurt, two physically and one emotionally. And it was never ever discussed with me what that experience was like... Like it was just...

**MS:** It was never talked about again.

**JS:** Never talked about again, the focus was my sister in the hospital, her friend in the hospital. We went to the hospital every day... And so, in what it did for me is, feelings don't matter, feelings don't

matter, only facts matter. And so, that I carried that into adulthood, I carried that into my marriage. So you're actually giving your children a beautiful gift by engaging them and making it safe for them to be able to really talk about, the hard stuff, and the messy stuff, emotionally and all.

**GH:** What I find to be true is the Lord is waiting for us in those places.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** He's waiting for us in the darkness. And my life verse... So this was Tom Murphy, was it...

**JH:** In the hospital.

**GH:** Within a week of the trauma, the guy that we had met in Dallas.

**JH:** He had been in our Small Group...

**GH:** He had been in our Small Group in Dallas, texted me Isaiah 45:3, and the Lord says, "I will give you the treasures of darkness, and the hoards and the secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel who call you by name." And so he gives us something and he calls it a treasure of darkness. And so that trauma was absolute darkness but there's treasure in it, and the treasure is him. And the key phrase in there, is that "you may know" what would we know from this? That he is God, that the Lord is calling us by name. And so, in those dark places as Jen said earlier, it's the good and the hard.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** It's a treasure. And for us, I'm always inviting people to talk about things that are hard. 'Cause hey, who are we kidding? Like what... [chuckle]

**MS:** Right.

**GH:** I don't think anyone has immunity from...

[laughter]

**MS:** No, no from hard.

**GH:** It's not if you're going to suffer, but when and how?

**MS:** Yeah. No kidding.

**GH:** Praise God. I'm really... Man, I just have an immense amount of gratitude to him for not just myself, but Jen and I having this mutual, "Hey, we can talk about this and we need to talk about this."

**MS:** Right.

**GH:** That's where we need to go. And it's not that... It's not a morbid thing... I think it's just a very

Gospel-Centric Biblical thing to say, "Hey there is suffering and there's a God who is sovereign over it all, and man, I don't have all the answers and I'm okay with that, I kinda like that he's sovereign, and I'm not. I really enjoyed being liberated from myself to know that I'm just another guy and it's okay that I'm not in control.

**JS:** And part of that sovereignty, sometimes we demand answers and part of sovereignty is sometimes there aren't answers on this side of heaven.

**GH:** Yeah, one of the things I hear this refrain is, well, why God? I don't know why, but I have never asked that question.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** I have never shaken my fist at him, and said, "I'm a good Christian, I tithe... " Or whatever, like...

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** And I hear a lot of people in different circumstances, in different problems and trials say, "Well why did God do this?" Well, he's God and he does all that he pleases. And sometimes, the really hard pill to swallow, is that sometimes that means we suffer. And I don't have an answer for that. I do believe that sometimes he purposes, ordains, causes, plans suffering for his people. That's a really difficult thing to say, and receive. Jen and I were challenged early on, when we started to use language like "plan". This is God's plan for our life. They would say, "Well he would never do anything like that, he would never plan this for you." And so, we either thought, "Hey, we're either some extra biblical heretics and we just stepped in something. Or we're right."

**GH:** And so we went to the Scriptures and sovereignty and suffering is everywhere in the Bible. And it's a really hard thing to embrace, but it's there. That he does have a plan and it's not easy and you don't have all the answers.

**JH:** I've had to get very comfortable with just tension and that's how I think as I mature in the Lord and as I mature in age wise, I became more and more convinced that that's where we're supposed to reside. And it's still like that: Already, not yet... That we reside there in general as believers, we know how the story ends and yet we're still in this broken world.

**JS:** Yeah, we are.

**JH:** Clearly with COVID and all of the things going on...

**GH:** This is my COVID make-over hair-do, by the way. I'm typically not bald.

[laughter]

**JH:** It's his COVID cut.

**JS:** Nice on ya! I don't know you any other way.

[overlapping conversation]

**GH:** I've had hair in high school.

**JS:** I love it.

**MS:** I know.

**JS:** Oh my goodness.

**JH:** I think just embracing tension and...

**GH:** That keeps coming around, and we live in a place of tension all the time. Yeah, we're already justified, not yet glorified, being sanctified.

**JH:** I think whether it's politics, or fill in the blank. I think that if we're not experiencing some sort of tension we might not be going in the right direction. Like I think [1:01:53] \_\_\_\_ in tension is just where we are as believers in [1:01:58] \_\_\_\_\_. Something I still struggle to communicate clearly, but I feel very passionate about and I think the Lord is doing work in me to begin to formulate that more. But nonetheless, we can see the Lord's hand, that leading up to the accident, I'd been in Hebrews, and on our big huge chalkboard that we had in our dining room, I had taken a lot of time, as a perfectionist, to put Hebrews 12:28; be thankful for receiving the Kingdom that cannot be shaken. Because I remember feeling like our world had been shaking... And the world in itself was just shaking. I can't remember what was going on politically or [1:02:49] \_\_\_\_ at that time, but I remember thinking the world is just crazy and life is just crazy and I don't know what's next with this pregnancy, and money, and I'm just all of these things. And I remember just reading that and being so comforted. I can be shaken, but the Lord is not, this kingdom is eternal, and it is beyond America and beyond whatever is happening worldwide. And our neighbor stayed with the kids when we left to go to the hospital and so she stayed, her and her daughter...

**GH:** The wife of the man who picked up Jude's foot.

**JH:** So they stayed with Mika, Clay and [1:03:34] \_\_\_\_ while we left with Jude. And she tells me the story of coming back into the house and seeing that on the chalkboard. They're just crying and taking comfort in it as well. But the reality is, is that we were shaken. We were shaken. Our world was shaken.

**MS:** Absolutely.

**JH:** And that's what that verse, that in context is talking about the things that can be shaken.

**GH:** And it really distills down... I don't know how to describe that. Your true color comes out.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** It really distills down who you are as a person. And I, man I praise God because there were some ugly things. Man, I'm just a sinner. Right? [laughter]

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** But I've been saved by grace and I am his son and I belong to him. That's more that's really come out of this. It's kind of shaken down.

**JS:** And that's the power of the anchor of our faith. It really is. You guys, this has been rich. Thank you for taking the time, thanks for getting up really early.

**MS:** Yeah, thank you so much.

**GH:** We do anyway, we typically are up by 5 o'clock.

**JS:** Oh! Well we were the only ones getting up really early then.

[laughter]

**JS:** This was normal for them.

[laughter]

**MS:** I'm usually up early...

[overlapping conversation]

**JH:** Identified that I need a quiet house.

**GH:** If we're gonna have some solitude, that's when it happens.

**JH:** I'm done at night, I don't have a brain cell left in the evening, probably because I get up so early.

[laughter]

**JS:** So one of the things that we ask anybody that we do one of our Dive Deep interviews is, because this is No More Perfect Date Night and we are all about growing marriages and spending time together, and so we're curious, we love to know, what is your favorite date night activity? It sounds like maybe it's sleeping.

**GH:** Well we don't get dates.

**JH:** Unfortunately, we've never been able to make that. I know some couples are able to prioritize that. And we just... Financially, finding a baby sitter for six kids.

**GH:** Who wants to watch six kids?

**JH:** We can't afford it. And then, so occasionally we'll get time. Because my mom will come.

**GH:** Jen's mom is less than two hours away and she's a fiend for her grandkids, and so she's like,

"I'm on my way." Tells us she's coming up.

**JH:** She's gracious, but especially in this time, she would be considered high risk, and so we've not been able to see her. But...

**GH:** We've not seen her, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah.

**JH:** Outside of her, there's not another really option. So we've been creative. We have in-home date nights. And it usually involves popcorn and root beer.

[laughter]

**JH:** There is this [1:06:42] \_\_\_\_ organic root beer that I like, and so we just... And especially if there is Sonic ice involved. Random, but...

**GH:** I'm from Louisiana, so my popcorn is spicy. I put some creole seasoning in it.

**JH:** So it's spicy popcorn.

[laughter]

**JH:** And then we watch a movie on our laptop. Yeah, I think we've had to learn contentment when things aren't ideal.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JH:** And last year, for the first time, we actually got away for about four or five days. And we went to Michigan and we had an Airbnb. And it was just the sweetest, the quietest time, and that was really, really good.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JH:** But I think that because life is so full and crazy for us, we're pretty low key. It doesn't take much. A dinner out and a walk. Just face-to-face time. I think moving into a different season I would like to... I think Greg is egging for this, but he wants some more adventurous activities.

**GH:** Skydiving. Yes, yes.

**JS:** Oh, wow. That's adventurous.

**GH:** [laughter] Yeah.

**JH:** I love him, but I will not skydive.



[laughter]

**GH:** I was totally in jest.

**JH:** I think that we could use some spicing up, a little bit. But it's also in the season where... I'm sure we're not the only one's not getting date night, right now. There's a sense of just trusting the Lord and doing what we can. I think we need that right now. We need some face-to-face time that's not business related. Not this or that...

**MS:** Right.

**JS:** Right.

**MS:** Right.

[overlapping conversation]

**JH:** [1:08:50] \_\_\_\_ that lately.

**MS:** That's the importance, yeah.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Especially during this COVID season, where we are captive at home. It is being content but being creative.

**JS:** Yeah. That's good. Good stuff, guys. Thank you so much. Thank you.

**GH:** You're welcome. Two-way street [1:09:12] \_\_\_\_.

**MS:** Yeah. Enjoy...

**GH:** Any other questions? We'll send you the bill.

**MS:** Alright, yeah. There you go, we gotcha.

**JS:** Gotcha. You know what? Greg, would you mind praying for anyone watching this that is going through something hard? Would you close this in prayer?

**GH:** I would love to, thank you. Our Father God, as we stop... Oh Lord, you're teaching me to be still, and pause, and yield, in the hurry that is our society. As we approach your throne with confidence, you tell us that we can do so. Knowing that we're gonna find your grace, and receive your mercy in our time of need, Lord. And you've taught Jen and I that that's all the time. It's not periodic or some kind of frequency, but we're always in need of you, Lord, and I thank you, that as we approach you as our God, as our King, as our Savior, help us by the power of your spirit to be made aware of your throne room, of who you are. That you are who you say you are.

**JS:** Yes, Father.

**GH:** I thank you for this new day, that mercy was waiting for us here. I thank you for this morning and this interview, that's been so delightful, with Mark and Jill. And anyone who... Lord, we are afraid of pain. We are afraid of suffering. Help us. That's nothing short of your indwelling power, to behold your glorious... 2 Corinthians 3-18 tells us to do, and be transformed from one degree to the next. And help us, Lord Jesus, not to graduate from the cross.

**MS:** Yeah.

**JS:** Yeah.

**GH:** That we would look... We know that you're not on the cross, but we know that you endured it for your glory, and our good, and our joy. Because of love, Lord. And help us. If anyone's dealing with any kind of... Not if, but as people who view this have their own trauma, have their own suffering, and have their own fear of man. Help them take that fear, and place it on you, that the beginning of wisdom is fear of God.

**JS:** Yeah, thank you.

**GH:** And that we would look to you, and know that you have life and death in your hands, but you are good. You are full of love and unending mercy. You did suffer, you were executed for us, for sin. And you've given yourself to us in the cross, and you were raised to life. Now you sit at the right hand of the Father, Lord Jesus. Help us stop and yield to you, and look to you. Knowing that you're with us. That Immanuel is not just a theology, but it's a reality. That you're here and that you care. You're here to help us face hardship. You're here to help us endure. You're here to help us reconcile. Are you here to help us understand that if something doesn't make sense, that you're with us anyway?

**JS:** Yeah.

**MS:** Yeah.

**GH:** And that we can have the peace of Christ with us, through your word, dwelling in us richly, Lord. Thank you for this beautiful day. Lord Jesus, we come to you by your beautiful and majestic and most powerful name. Amen.

**JS:** Amen.

**MS:** Amen, thank you. Yeah, amen.

**JS:** Well, thank you, guys. And this is Mark and Jill Savage, signing off. Along with Greg and Jen Hill. With a reminder that a real marriage isn't perfect. A real marriage is two people being perfected.

**MS:** Two people being perfected. [laughter]

**GH:** Amen. Appreciate you guys, thank you so much...

**JS:** Thanks for joining us.

**MS:** Alright, bye-bye.

[music]