

Change the Way You Think About Differences

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[music]

Jill Savage: We are so different.

Mark Savage: Like, night and day.

JS: Like, black and white.

MS: Opposites do attract. And it's those differences that drew us together that eventually began to frustrate us.

JS: Yeah. Unfortunately, that's right. But here's the key, it's really more about what we are thinking about those differences, than it actually is about the differences themselves. So that's what we want to explore today is, we want to jump in and take a look at some common thinking patterns that are not helping us in marriage as it relates to our differences. So here's just a few that we've come up with.

MS: Right. So on our list, we have, one thought, "My spouse does things wrong."

[chuckle]

JS: "My spouse does things wrong," needs to be changed to, "My spouse does things differently. And different doesn't make them wrong." Now, where this gets really messed up in our head is the way that we do things makes complete sense to us. And so we wouldn't do it the way we do it if we didn't think it was right.

MS: Right. And what is a challenge though, is that because we think our way is right...

JS: Yes.

MS: That really in a sense becomes prideful, and then we think everybody else is wrong.

JS: Right. And so man, we have gotta be so careful about this line of thinking, and really begin to change it. And you know I remember when I was first doing that. I literally would say to myself, "He's not wrong, he's just different. He's not wrong, he's just different." I'd say that in my head over and over, so that I would be reminded of that, and I could begin to untangle that faulty thinking that wasn't helping our marriage.

MS: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

MS: So another thought is, "My spouse doesn't do things efficiently." Wow, the efficiency quota.

JS: So this one needs to be changed to, "My spouse doesn't value efficiency as much as I do. And that's okay, we're different." And yes, maybe I could drive from point A to point B, quicker than they can. Maybe, I could get five more dishes in the dishwasher than they can. But all of that, if we're demanding our own way, once again if we're thinking, "Well, I'm right because I can do it quicker, better, more efficiently." Then that's only gonna cause problems. And so we have to really die to that efficiency piece, especially as it relates to marriage. So one of the things I say is, don't sacrifice your marriage on the altar of efficiency, it's just not worth it. Those five extra dishes aren't worth it, the two extra minutes aren't worth it. The three parking spots that were closer to the door aren't worth it. So we need to let those differences go. And instead of thinking that our spouse is wrong in those, just recognizing that they are different.

MS: Yeah. So another item on our list is, "He or she can't get it right. They are just like having another child."

JS: Oh man.

MS: Yeah.

JS: This is really not good thinking. We've even heard people say... I think I'd be the first to say probably more women than men would say, you know, people say, "How my kids do you have?" "Well, four if you count my husband." And man, that kind of thinking, number one, is emasculating. It is also what causes us to not view our partner or our spouse as a partner. And it's... Our tone of voice becomes demeaning.

MS: Yeah, yeah. And really it's incredibly destructive. And it fuels that negativity which really produces a bondage in your relationship, and it breeds bitterness.

JS: So instead of thinking that my spouse is just like a child or one of my children. Which you know, what? We just were coaching with a couple, and it was the husband that treated his wife like a child.

MS: Oh, that's right, yeah.

JS: And man, that... It was destructive.

MS: Yeah.

JS: And she actually had left, and that was a piece of it.

MS: Right.

JS: And so we have to change that to, "My partner or my spouse is my partner. My spouse is an adult, and I will treat them as a teammate, a partner, and an adult."

MS: Yeah, we are one. Yeah, that's a powerful gift.

JS: It is.

MS: Another thought is, "My spouse says every single thing that comes to their mind it drives me crazy."

[chuckle]

MS: Jill, I am so sorry for that.

[laughter]

MS: Not that I have ever been guilty of that...

JS: Oh my goodness.

MS: Daily.

JS: This is Mr. External Processor, this is Mrs. Internal Processor. So you know what? In those moments, what we have to do is we have to tell ourselves, "My spouse is an internal..." Oh, excuse me, "My spouse is an external processor." That's the way God made them. "And I can engage that by recognizing that they need to talk about things, they need to sort through things verbally, and that it's completely okay. And I can engage that instead of resist it."

MS: Yeah. And for the external processor, that you can really choose to not say everything that comes to your lips.

JS: Sometimes you can.

MS: Yeah.

JS: But for the most part, it is how you're wired.

MS: Well, it is. But think about this, I still say way more than you probably would like, and I am thinking about not saying all of those things.

[laughter]

MS: How crazy is that?

JS: Oh man. Well, you know what it reminds me of is our slow fade of not accepting really starts to show up when we are thinking these things about differences. Like when we're thinking these faulty thoughts about differences, it's really engages the slow fade of not accepting.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

JS: Because we're viewing them as wrong. And in essence, when we tell our spouse with our tone, with our words that they're wrong or their way of doing something is wrong, we really reject them.

MS: I even think of that slow fade of assumption that we begin to assume that they are doing these things to hurt us on purpose.

JS: Sometimes. Yeah, we can assume motives. And it's not that way at all. We have one more and that is, "My spouse never lets me know what they're thinking." Yep, that would be this one, the internal processor. And so with that thought, "My spouse never lets me know what they're thinking," we can change that to, "My spouse is an internal processor." And it's the way God made them. They don't even think to say the things that they're thinking about, so I can learn how to engage them with questions. I can give them the benefit of the doubt that... I think what happens a lot of times with someone who's an external processor and someone who's an internal processor is the external processor will assume the internal processor is not thinking about something, is not even...

MS: Oh right.

JS: But that's not true. So we have to believe the best in our spouse. So maybe it's, I don't know, we haven't talked about a vacation for a while, "So have you been thinking at all about our summer vacation?" would have been some of your thoughts. That's a great question for an external processor to ask an internal processor to draw them out and help them to go, "Oh yeah, I actually have been thinking about that."

MS: Yeah. And I think when you have projects coming up that you both are involved in to actually say to the internal processor, "So I know you have a list of things going on in your head. Could we write those down and could we talk through those so that I'm on the same page?" 'Cause what happens is we end up battling against the expectations and assumptions and it is destructive.

JS: It is. So differences are gonna happen in every marriage. We are different personalities, different temperaments. We have different brains. We think about things. We process things. We make decisions differently. But bottom line, if we will change our mind about differences...

MS: It'll change your marriage.

JS: Absolutely.