

From Loathing to Loving.

Change What You Think About Your Spouse

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[music]

Jill Savage: So I have a question for you, if there was a machine that would project your thoughts up on a big screen, would you be comfortable with them projecting your thoughts about what you think about your spouse?

Mark Savage: That would be... That'd be scary for many, it's scary...

JS: It'd be scary for all of us.

MS: It would scare me just to even have a picture of what I think about in my brain. [chuckle] That's a scary place. [chuckle] But yeah, even so, just even directly about what we think about our spouse, because so often it's consumed with the negative.

JS: It is, and I think that where we get into this negative thought process is like the always and nevers.

MS: Oh yeah.

JS: Like "He always." "She always."

MS: "He never", "she never."

JS: Yeah. I mean all... Those are the places like, "He is so," fill in the blank. "She is so," fill in the blank, and those are going inside our head, non-stop.

MS: Yup, and then we are confused by the fact that it seems like we're always in this turmoil and trouble in our relationship, and a lot of times, or most often, we don't realize...

JS: It comes...

MS: How to link it back to, it's...

JS: Our thinking.

MS: It's our thinking, yeah.

JS: So right now, we've been really focusing on "Change your mind, change your marriage." And today we want to really think about what it is that we think about concerning our spouse. So in psychology, there's something called "conformational bias", and conformational bias is this, let me actually read you the definition, "It's when you think a certain way, then you look for actions that prove what you're thinking." So when you think a certain way, you actually look for actions that

prove what you're thinking. So therefore, when we're thinking negative things about our spouse, what they...

MS: "He always, she always."

JS: Yeah, that, "He doesn't, he never."

MS: Yeah.

JS: When we're thinking, and when we're thinking about what they don't do right, when we're thinking about what they do wrong...

MS: Right.

JS: And don't do right, then that's what we see.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

JS: That's what we see because we're biased to confirm that.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

JS: And so, it can actually work in the opposite.

MS: Yeah.

JS: That if we will change what we think about our spouse, if we will be intentional about thinking good things, positive things about their strengths rather than their weaknesses, then we will begin to seek that conformational bias and we'll begin to see those more often. And then, one of the things that happens with thinking is what we think affects what we feel, what we feel affects what the results, ultimately, the results that we get, it affects our actions and our actions affect our outcomes. So if we change the thinking and then it changes our feeling, so if my thinking about you is negative then my feelings for you are not warm and fuzzy.

MS: No, they're gonna be negative and destructive.

JS: Right.

MS: And then the outcome...

JS: Is that we feel a disharmony.

MS: Right. We live in it, it's almost, it's not just a feeling. It's like I think so many of us are confused by, "Why is this constant turmoil and disharmony happening in our family?" And if we're only consumed with negative, then we link it back to, "Well, it must be because of my spouse," but honestly, it's us.

JS: It's what we think about our spouse, and so it's important that we are vigilant about what we say

about our spouse, but it's even more important that we're vigilant about what we say to ourselves about our spouse.

MS: Oh, no kidding.

JS: That's really the key, what are you saying to yourself about your spouse?

MS: Well, and that's why God in His word says to take our thoughts captive, because he knows that we can be negative towards one another and then, ultimately live in that disharmony and in that living without hope. And we're angry and hostile towards one another; that's not healthy. So we wanna be vigilant in the opposite.

JS: Right, right, so there's two steps, two steps that we can take to change our thinking about our spouse, and the first one is move your thinking from what you loathe to what you love; move your thinking from what you loathe to what you love. Move it from what is wrong to what is right.

MS: And I think about, for me, I lived with that list of what I loathe about you and about us.

JS: Yes.

MS: And...

JS: And that really led, I mean, that ultimately led you to leave.

MS: Oh, absolutely.

JS: Because all you could think about was what you loathed.

MS: And I think for you that are joining us today, that if you're consumed with what you loathe, what you love seems like a stretch. "But you don't know my spouse, you don't know," and those are all excuses that I used, and so you can begin to state what you love and think about what you love about your spouse.

MS: Yeah.

MS: You go back to what brought you together.

JS: And so start thinking of their strengths. And so one of the best places or best strategies for doing that is to actually start a list.

MS: Yeah.

JS: If you have a journal, put a list of what you love about your spouse. And honestly, if you have been focusing on what you loathe for a long time, that list might start out with just two things on it.

MS: Right.

JS: 'Cause you can't even see the positive, but you start there, and you look at that every day,

multiple times a day if need be, put it on your phone and you just keep asking God, "Keep showing me my spouse's strengths. Help me move my mind to what I... How I can see them differently."

MS: Right. How to be grateful for who they are. How to be grateful for what they do, for what they bring, and...

JS: And that really takes us to step number two. So step one was, move from what you loathe to what you love and that's what you're thinking about, and step two is reframe your thinking.

MS: Yeah, because we do wanna be loving; we're called to that as Christ followers. We wanna reframe our thinking and in fact, I created a chart in our book *No More Perfect Marriages* that did that very thing. The first column was what I don't like about Jill.

JS: Yep.

MS: Why I don't like it, and then...

JS: Was the second column, yeah.

MS: And then the third column was, why is it good for me? How does it help me? You know, so often we can... We want to be loving and yet we can't figure out how to get out of that loathing, and sometimes like me, we could even think, "Well, leaving this relationship I'm in is the right answer." And what I wanna say is, it's not the right answer, that you can learn to love your spouse and you can move from loathing to loving.

JS: Yeah, and from seeing what they do right, rather than always seeing what they do wrong.

MS: Wrong, yeah.

JS: So bottom line, we need to move our confirmational bias to the positive. That's what we need to do.

MS: Yep.

JS: That we can focus on what's good about our spouse, we start seeing that, our bias is confirming that; we move our thinking from what's wrong to what's right, and then if somebody were to be able to put our thoughts up on a big screen, we'd be fine with whatever would shine up there.

MS: Yeah.