# Change What You Think About God

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Mark Savage: This year, Jill and I have focused in No More Perfect Date Nights on the theme, change your mind, change your marriage. And we have talked about a variety of different topics, all of it built around what we think. And so this month we're focused on changing your mind about God.

Jill Savage: Yeah. Because what we think about God really changes the way in which we operate in marriage. It really does. And I don't think that we realize how much it affects us, but I challenge you to do a thought audit and pay attention to how much you're thinking about God, and whether it's accurate or it's not accurate.

MS: Well, and totally for me, because my thinking wasn't accurate, it was twisted up and I made dreadful mistakes, blew our family up because of my view of God.

JS: Right. And he wasn't doing what you wanted him to do.

MS: Nope.

JS: And so...

MS: Wasn't showing up the way I wanted him to. He wasn't doing what he said he would.

JS: When he really was, but because you were expecting the answer to look like this, and the answer was over here, you were missing that he actually was doing.

MS: Right, he wasn't. Wasn't doing what I wanted.

JS: So here are some things that people think about.

MS: Right, but first of all, we're starting with the basic belief that you believe in God, that you believe that God exists.

JS: Now, you may not know him well, you may have some doubts, but there's just a basic belief that he does exist. Here are some of the common things though that people think about. One is, God is impotent. In other words, not powerful. And so I think a lot of times the thinking on that is, "Well, if God was powerful, then bad things wouldn't happen in this world."

MS: Yep, for me, I believe... I began to really believe and mull around that God is impotent because I could not get free of me. I couldn't get free of my past and my childhood, and I was just worn out with myself.

JS: Yeah. Sometimes another false belief is that God is distant, he's far away and not available to us, readily available to us. And that's not true.

MS: I think, too, along that line of being distant is he doesn't see me. So...

JS: Yeah, that goes along with it. He's uncaring, or he's angry. Now, a lot of times, we view God through our... The lens of our earthly father. So if what we knew was an angry dad, an uncaring dad, then we may struggle with even understanding how a Heavenly Father could be different.

MS: Right, definitely, that was true for me, that I had the face of the two men who were supposed to be my dad in my life, on the face of God.

JS: And it wasn't accurate.

MS: No. Another one is, God is a liar. So he's not doing what he says, he's not acting as he promised. Bottom line, he's not doing what I want.

JS: Mm-hmm. God is unloving, and especially if we've been treated by someone in an unloving way, someone that was supposed to be loving to us, we will struggle with that. He doesn't have my best interest at heart, that's one of the things that really... That was kind of one of those thoughts that you ruminated on.

MS: I wrestled with it big time.

JS: Yeah, and finally, when you chose to be unfaithful, when you chose to leave, it was be... Like, "Fine, you know what, he didn't have my best interest at heart, I'll take care of it."

MS: Yeah, and that didn't work for me.

JS: No, it didn't work either. He doesn't have time for me, he has a bigger... He has bigger things in this world to focus on. But he loves each of us individually, and he cares about the big stuff and the little stuff.

MS: The word that came to me was neglect, that I think God neglects us based upon what we've experienced, which isn't true.

JS: That's what you thought.

MS: Right, right, that's what I thought, and it's not based upon truth.

JS: Yeah, and man, that journey for you of taking the face of your earthly fathers, one of which was passive and not engaged, and then one that was incredibly aggressive and abusive, so you had all of these misconceptions of who God was.

MS: Absolutely.

JS: Was huge when you began to actually move their faces off and begin to explore really who God is. And for me, in fact, a couple of years ago on Father's Day, I told my father, I wrote him a letter because I'd watched Mark struggle with this. And I wrote him a letter in his Father's Day card and I said, "Dad, this has been a hard journey for Mark because he didn't have an earthly father that cared for him well, that loved him well. And I'm so grateful that I did, because honestly, I didn't have to wipe... " Now, my dad wasn't perfect. None of us are gonna have a perfect father, but I think he was probably as close to what a human form of God could possibly look like because he loved well, he offered grace, he offered forgiveness, he offered accountability and conviction when I was out of line. So it wasn't just all butterflies and roses type of love, but it was the balance. I care enough to draw a line, as well as, I love you, and there's nothing you can do that'll make me love you less. And there's nothing you can do that'll make me love you more.

MS: Right, right. So as we think about marriage, what are some truths about God that impact our marriage? The first one is that God, he really does wanna protect us from more hurt, there's gonna be hurt, there's gonna be pain, there's gonna be suffering...

JS: Because this world is a broken place. But God gives us guidelines. See, a lot of times I think we get stuck, that could have been one of the other lies that we believe about God, is that God is just a bunch of rules. But really, he is about protecting us. Why do we give our children rules? It's because we want to protect them. They have a curfew because we know that nothing good happens after midnight, and they don't need to be out there, and so we do that out of love. Well, God says the same thing, that we're not to lust in our heart. He says that we're not to have sex outside of marriage. It says he hates divorce, and the reason he hates divorce is because he designed for us to have relationships that make it, and that we don't have the baggage that come with the brokenness. There's already... This world is not a perfect place on this side of heaven, it's very broken, and so he wants to spare us of additional pain that we would cause ourselves if we don't follow his directions.

MS: Boy, and that's such a powerful statement that we would cause ourselves. Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

MS: A second truth is he calls us to a covenant relationship, he calls us to a committed relationship.

JS: To make a promise and to keep that promise.

MS: To make a choice on a continued basis regarding that promise.

JS: Mm-hmm. And that we have to choose to keep loving. Another truth is that God is our leader, he doesn't leave us to just do this alone...

MS: No.

JS: Like, "You just figure it out. You said, I do. You just figure it out." No, he literally tells us how. I know when Mark and I were separated, God taught me how to love at a deeper level, and he took me to Romans 12:9-21, and that became my marching orders every day. It's really kind of a group of verses that teach... That talk about how to love someone who isn't loving you, how to treat someone right that isn't treating you right. And at that point in time, that would have described our relationship, and I didn't do it perfectly, but God didn't just leave me in this painful place, he showed me what to do, and he was my leader, his word was my leader.

MS: I think through his word and his spirit, he leads us. And for me, when in the midst of that terrible mess that I had made, that my heart's cry was really from 1st John to, "Lord, in the way that you've loved me, in the way you've loved others, how do I love Jill?" Show me how to love because obviously, I had loved her based upon what I would get out of it, and I'd done that my whole life, and now in my brokenness I needed to learn how to love.

JS: And God showed you.

MS: Yeah.

JS: And he still is.

MS: Right, he still is.

JS: I was gonna say, neither one of us have arrived on that, we're gonna keep learning it as life goes on. How do we intentionally move from where we are in our thinking about God to maybe a healthier place? So let's take a look. Step one would be consider the lens you see God through, consider the lens you see God through. So are you seeing him through an accurate lens, was there a lot of dysfunction in the home that you grew up in, and if so, that might be a red flag to go, "I'm not so sure I really understand who God is."

MS: Yeah, as you were talking, a random thought, but the whole idea of cataracts came to my mind.

JS: Oh my goodness.

MS: And honestly, because I'm starting to grow those, but they cause confusion in what I see, or they limit what I can see. And so now you can have surgery for that, and so we need, in a sense, to have a surgery, so that we can see God through a different lens.

JS: Yeah, have surgery on our thinking. So, then number two. Start reading the Bible. And along the same lines, number three is, start talking to God. 'Cause here's the deal, it's like you wanna get to know somebody, what do you do? You wanna get to know them, you hang with them.

MS: Right.

JS: Right?

MS: Yeah, and for me, as I was learning about God as my dad, as God as father, I decided to go straight to the source, and I've spent the last many weeks, months in the Book of Psalms, just really working to capture who God is as dad. As daddy God, who is he? It's been powerful.

JS: Yeah. And that's how we begin. We replace those old thoughts with new ones that are far more accurate.

MS: Yeah. And as you fuel your mind with those positive thoughts, you begin to see God working in that positive way.

JS: Yeah, it's very true. And when we think about our crisis 10 years ago, really it was your thinking about God as well as other things that caused you to spiral.

MS: Yeah, absolutely.

JS: This was huge.

MS: It was huge. And it was skewed, it was toxic, and it was just terribly destructive.

JS: Yeah, and it was probably my thinking about God that helped me to stay steady, that helped me to stand firm. And I'm grateful to my father, my earthly father, that I had this picture of God that I could trust, that I could trust that he would lead me through this dark and difficult season.

MS: So how you view God in your marriage is of huge importance.

JS: So how we think about God affects our marriage, because how close we are to God also affects our marriage. So it's like a triangle, okay? So there's a triangle and we are the bottom two corners of the triangle, and God is the top of the triangle. And the closer each of us gets to God, the closer we get to each other. And so if our perspective is skewed and we are pulling away from God, then we will also feel that distance in marriage. So if you wanna change your marriage, change your mind. And if you'll change your mind about God, you'll change your marriage.