

**Farnoosh Torabi:** Welcome to the show, Mark and Lauren Greutman. It's so great to have you. You're actually my first couple.

**Lauren Greutman:** Oh, good! We're so happy to be on together.

**FT:** And you both sound great, and are you calling in from your home?

**LG:** Yup, we have a home office.

**FT:** Let's talk about that, because I sort of think you're living the lifestyle career dream that a lot of couples probably admire and want, which is that you are in business together and you work from home. And Mark, I understand, you just quit your job in 2014, as an actuary, which I, last I checked, they pay pretty well... To work on your business together... So, let's talk about that business. Talk about markandlaureng.com.

**LG:** Well, so it all started out of a need that we had about eight years ago, we were in \$40,000 worth of debt, underwater in our mortgage and running a deficit of about a thousand dollars a month.

**LG:** And so the business of Mark and Lauren G was born of after we got out of debt, really wanting to help people kind of get out of debt the same way that we did, and offer a new perspective on, that we didn't... We wanted to teach people how to get financial independence and live a simpler, happier life, and not be chasing after the Jones' all the time.

**Mark Greutman:** Right. And it was getting out of debt and becoming more financially free that did allow me to quit my job as an actuary, which it was a good job, and I liked that job, but we wanted something more. And we got to a point in our lives where we had four kids and things were just crazy, and we decided to take the jump and do this.

**LG:** Yeah. See, I've been blogging over at iamthatlady.com for four and a half years, and that income was the one that was able to help us with him quitting his job. So, we definitely planned and prepared ahead of time for a while, but it's been a dream that we can really be together every day, and raise our family together, and really help people every single day, get on a better financial path.

**MG:** Right.

**FT:** How do you differentiate from all the other advice out there? I actually, we met at the financial bloggers conference, a wonderful community of bloggers and people who help millions of Americans every day, and including themselves, live the best financial lives. But at the end of the day, I feel like it comes to who you connect best with. So, why do you think people like coming to you guys particularly for this sort of advice that they can get from a variety of different sources?

**MG:** Well, I know that we really connect with a lot of couples in particular, who have been in a situation very similar to us. Yeah, we met... There's definitely a ton of just awesome advice out there, but we've definitely found a niche audience that really just likes how we communicate with each other, how we talk about money, and how we get through things together as a couple. And I kind of feel like that is missing a bit from the financial advice space.

**LG:** And there are so many financial articles out there of "The Top Seven Things To Do This", and "How To Get Out Of Debt", and the approach that we took was, "Okay, we can tell you all of those things, but we wanna show you." So, we're very, very transparent with the money that we spend. We actually are so crazy that we record us doing our own budget on a live Google Hangout every month, and people come in and watch us and budget with us. I think that people are really looking for somebody to come next to them, put their around them, and say, "It's going to be okay. We're gonna get through this. We've done it. This is what we're gonna do." and guide them through that.

**MG:** And we're still doing it. We're not millionaires by any stretch of the imagination, so we're still living this with people.

**LG:** Yeah. And I think that's really important, is really transparency and relatability. We're not financial experts. As far as schooling goes, we haven't been to school. Mark's an actuary, which is a financial profession. But we're not CPAs and we're not tax accountants. We've just been through it, and we know what worked for us and what didn't work.

**MG:** Right.

**FT:** And you're taking your business and your advice to multi-levels, and now you have a podcast, and how's that going?

**LG:** Yeah, we love it. It's going really well. We've gotten a lot of great feedback. And we really enjoy, honestly, that's probably the one thing we enjoy most.

**MG:** It's probably our favorite part of the job.

**LG:** It is. But I'm not gonna lie and say... I mean, there's been a few times where we've had to record the same exact episode three times 'cause we forgot to plug this thing in or that thing.

[laughter]

**FT:** Trust me, I've been there.

**MG:** That was terrible.

**FT:** Oh my gosh. That's kind of my nightmare of pressing, "Okay, guys. Let's start." And then at 30 minutes later, you realize you are not recording. So, that has happened to me, not on this podcast, but in real life, on a real job, where people are paying me to do it, to go out there and get the interview. When it's your own business, you can sort of slap your own wrist. But when it's someone else paying you to go out there and get an interview and you forgot to press record, that's worse. I digressed. [chuckle]

**FT:** Alright, let's talk about money. I know you say you're not experts, but I think you guys know a thing or two, and I can't wait to hear your answers to some of these questions that I ask all of my guests, starting with something that is actually a little more philosophical than number crunching. It's involving your financial philosophy. And you may share one or you might each have your own, so feel free to jump in if you have differing financial philosophies. And you may have more than one. But for the purposes of this podcast, let's just focus on the one for each of you that truly, when

you think about what is your money mission statement, your money mantra, a saying that really helps guide the way that you make your financial decisions. What would it be?

**MG:** I think it would be to spend your money with what you truly value in life. When you buy something, when you trade money to get something, you're obviously giving that thing value. So, we really feel that you need to be intentional with where that money's going. And to also sit down as a couple and decide together what you're gonna do instead of having things just happen.

**LG:** And we have this thing that we call a "financial bucket list", which is where you sit down and, as a couple, you sit down and figure out what do you wanna do with your money as you go forward in life? And that's kind of like a financial bucket list; things you wanna do with money before you die. And by doing this together as a couple, you really kind of solidify your values of your relationship to move forward, but then it helps you figure out what parts of your marriage maybe where you might have conflicts, 'cause yeah, what Mark said, where you spend your money and where your values lie. So a lot of times, when couples especially are arguing over money, it's because there's some value thing that's not completely lined up. So, you're not really fighting about the money, but you might be fighting about the values behind the money. So for us, it's really important to spend your money so that it's reflective of what you really value in life.

**FT:** How do you identify those things, though? Because I think sometimes we feel like we value a lot of things. We value more than we can really afford. So, how do you narrow it down? What's the process?

**LG:** Go ahead.

**MG:** Sorry. You always have something to say.

[chuckle]

**LG:** I always have something to say.

**MG:** That's a tough question to answer. Maybe I should've let you answer it. But for us, I can only speak to our own experience. When we actually sat down and actually spent some time with pen and paper writing down, "Okay, what is important to us?" Things come to you, and the things that really are important rise to the top on this whole huge list of things that you might write down. And for most people, no matter where you are in life, it's gonna be things like family. It's gonna be things like being able to retire. The things that are really important to your life that aren't really even financial, are the things that rise to the top, and then you wanna go in and have money to back those things up and support those values.

**LG:** Right, and I think typically, what we would advise people to do is write down maybe a list of 20, and take maybe the top five or 10 of those values, and those are gonna be your focus and then forget about the rest until you feel like you have the other ones under control.

**FT:** And now we wanna talk about money memories, and I feel like this is gonna take us back to your debt story or maybe something else, but I'm actually curious to hear about how you got into debt, and when you had your sort of "a-ha" moment to be like, "Okay, this can't continue, 'cause we have bills and responsibilities and dreams and goals", as a matter of fact. So let's talk money

memories. Take us back, what's your earliest money memory, and how has it shaped your mindset about money today? And it could be a good or a bad lesson.

**MG:** I think it's just a great question because I think this will set the stage so you can see how we did get into trouble, so I'll let you go first.

**LG:** Okay. So, my first money memory, I remember I was probably 11 years old, and I walked in on my mom. She always had this legal notebook that she would write down the expenses, pen and paper. So I walked in on her and she was sitting with an envelope full of receipts and then she had her notebook and she was writing stuff down and she looked really stressed out. So I asked her what was wrong and she's like, "Do you think money grows on trees?" And she showed me the whole bill and she showed me everything like, "This is where I'm spending money," and I walked out there feeling like, "Whoa! What the heck just happened?" But then the very next day, we went shopping at the mall using her credit card. So to me, I was really confused about what happened. She was so stressed the day before, and now we're on using credit cards and acting like everything's fine. So that's my earliest money memory. Mark's gonna share his and then you can kinda see... We can kind of go into how we got started getting out of debt from there.

**MG:** Right, so my first money memory was a bit more positive. My parents were always very good about teaching us about money, and we did have a small allowance, but I think at age 10, I was forced to get a paper route, and that's how I made my money. And not only was I forced to get a paper route, my parents made me save half of the money I got. So I was like, "Well, what am I saving for?" But they just said that that's what you gotta do, so that was my earliest memory.

**LG:** So, as you can see from us, the differences that we were raised in. So I was raised in like a credit card, never taught how to handle money, and he was taught very well how to handle money and when we got married, there was a huge issue with finances that we had never talked about.

**MG:** Well, we saw it right away.

**LG:** We did. So our first argument when we were married was in a grocery store over a bag of Doritos because...

**MG:** I was used to grocery shopping and like, "Okay, so we're just gonna get the things that we need and then we're gonna get out of here."

**FT:** Just like a man.

**LG:** Yeah, exactly.

**MG:** Right. She was in the store and she's like, "No, we gotta go down every aisle", and I'm like, "What? We don't need anything down this aisle." And then we got to the snack aisle and she picked up a \$5 bag of Doritos and I'm like, "We're not buying that." And she says, "Yes, we are. I want this."

**LG:** Yeah. So that was like the first inclination of, "Oh, we've got a problem here", because I was so apt to buy, buy, buy, not think about it, just get what I want, when I want, "I don't want anybody telling me what to do" kind of mentality. And then from that Doritos incident, fast-forward four

years, and we're in \$40,000 worth the debt.

**FT:** Credit card debt.

**LG:** Credit cards...

**FT:** Wow.

**LG:** Yeah, and a car payment or two.

**MG:** And a car loan.

**LG:** And so, there was this huge disconnect, and it was really, really difficult. So, those early memories of how we remembered, finances really played a huge role in our marriage starting out as well.

**MG:** Yeah, I wish we could've sat down and talked about money before we got in trouble.

**LG:** Yeah, I agree.

**FT:** Were there clues before you got married? Because I sometimes find that... Well, we all know couples don't talk about money before they get married, and even when they are married, it's such a challenging subject, but I've always sensed that there must have been some clues. Like you guys must have gone out together, gone on a vacation together, saw how you each spend, and maybe you had some... Maybe they weren't concerns, but you're like, "Hmm, that's interesting. Mark really doesn't like to splurge and I'm..." and, "She likes really fancy things", so... Yeah.

**LG:** I should have realized it, maybe when Mark and I went out on our first date and he didn't bring any money with him.

**FT:** Mark!

**MG:** Bring that up, but...

**FT:** Was that intentional, Mark? [chuckle]

**MG:** We were pretty young, though, that's the thing. And we got married actually while we were still in college.

**LG:** In college, yup.

**FT:** So, what would you say is a financial fail? Obviously we've talked about getting yourselves into \$40,000 worth of debt, that was a... In some ways you could call that a fail, but you're working your way out of that. What's another example of a financial fail? And this could be something personal; maybe you both experienced separately, but a fail that you really learned a tremendous amount from. And then what's the craziest thing you've ever bought?

**MG:** Well, when... Financially, we both looked at each other and knew exactly how to answer this

question.

**LG:** Exactly.

**MG:** It was this brand new house we bought in October 2006, which is probably the worst time ever to buy a new home, and we just, we bought it on a whim, we put some money down to have it built, and...

**LG:** Well, this is what really happened...

**MG:** Well, the \$40,000 that we were in debt, that didn't even count the amount that we were underwater in or mortgage.

**LG:** In our mortgage, yeah. So we actually went to go visit his brothers in North Carolina, and while we were there visiting, we bought a house.

**MG:** Yeah, that's right. That's how it happened.

**LG:** Yeah. So...

**FT:** They were like, "No money down! No interest for...".

**LG:** Yeah, no money down. We just thought, "Yeah, you know what? Yeah." We had no plan on moving when we went there. I mean, we had talked about it, but so we got so wrapped up in it that we bought a house.

**MG:** It wasn't a down payment, it was just like a...

**LG:** We just met with a banker...

**FT:** Signed a piece of paper and then they gave you a house?

**LG:** Yeah, we bought a house and then I was like, "Oh my gosh."

**MG:** I think we gave her a check for like 500 bucks or something.

**LG:** We bought a house and it's... We live in New York. We're back in New York now, so we had to move our family...

**MG:** So yes. So the house was finished in October 2006, and we were all excited about it then and it was... I think it was December of that year, like two months later that we were like, "Oh my gosh, what did we do?"

**LG:** What did we do? So to reward ourselves, and this is the craziest thing, I think...

**MG:** Yeah, here's the craziest thing.

**LG:** To reward ourselves for feeling so bad about our home purchase, we went out and bought

\$2,500 worth of brand new furniture to fill that house. And then we...

**MG:** 'Cause we had all this empty space.

**LG:** We did, and we didn't want the empty space.

**MG:** And it was financed 100%, so we didn't pay any cash for it, and then when we ended up moving out of that house and moving back up to New York, we sold that furniture on Craigslist for...

**LG:** For 500 bucks.

**MG:** Yeah.

**LG:** Yeah, so...

**FT:** Furniture is the worst thing to resell.

**LG:** It is, it is. And so that house, we...

**MG:** We had to sell is 'cause we didn't have room for it anymore.

**LG:** Yeah, we had to sell... We moved to get out of debt. So we're now debt-free, but to get out of debt, we moved from that 3,200 square foot custom house that we had, that we couldn't afford. We sold that house, and moved back to New York.

**MG:** We were able... It was a short sale, actually.

**LG:** We had to sell it via short sale, and moved back to New York and we rented an 800 square foot apartment, so that we could get out of debt.

**FT:** This is before or after you had four children?

**LG:** This is... We had two children at that time, yes.

[chuckle]

**FT:** Oh my gosh.

**LG:** Yeah, so this was at two...

**MG:** It was still crazy, but...

**LG:** It was still crazy and we're not in that 800... We were able to buy another home, but we bought way below, I guess, what we could afford, so that we could continue to live with financial independence, I guess. But now we have the four kids and we aren't cramped in the 800-square-foot apartment, thank god.

**MG:** But it's not 3,200 square feet.

**LG:** No, no. It's still tight, but...

**FT:** What's amazing is that through all of this, I hear laughter, I can sense you're smiling. I mean, tell me what's the secret in your sauce? I think there are people who have experienced exactly what you've experienced. I mean the housing bubble bursting was not a singular event, it happened for many, many millions of Americans. How did you get yourselves through it with such levity?

**LG:** Well, I think we have a really strong faith, that's important to us, but we also... Being together was probably the number one thing and learning how to talk about the hard things early on was really the key to us being able to get through this. I'm not gonna lie, there were many tears and fights and arguments, but because we were so determined to get through this together, we really both had to leave the past behind us, all of the debt, all of the spending, all of the money mistakes that we made. And I honestly, I was the one that made a lot of the debt behind Mark's back and that was a really difficult thing for me to admit to, but he forgave me, and we moved forward in that, and we never looked back. There was no blaming, there was no, "We're in debt because of you." There was none of that. He was really great at forgiving me, but I had to admit, I have a problem with spending money and not telling you about it. And that was huge for us to work through it together.

**MG:** Well, I actually just wrote an article about this. I think it was last week or the week before. There's that often cited statistic that financial disagreements is the number one cause for divorce, and that definitely is true. But I feel like for us, we used it as a source of strength, because our financial disagreements... All financial disagreements really aren't financial. There's always gonna be deeper rooted issues that need to be worked out, and we allowed hitting rock bottom to really work through a lot of those things and come out stronger because of it. But yes, it wasn't all laughter and smiles when we were in the thick of it.

**LG:** No, it definitely... There were a lot of times of fear and disagreement, but definitely, remaining true to each other and never letting anything split us apart as far as disagreements and communication. We've always communicated. Well, not always, but since we decided that we were gonna start changing our spending habits six years ago, and really get out of debt at a rapid speed, we worked together. We decided it together.

**FT:** Well, it sounds like you were very brave because, like, Mark, you just said you were willing to go to the deep dark place of finding out what was at the root of your differences. And so, I actually just had an epiphany here, because I think... Yeah, I think couples obviously come many times with the financial differences. That's not the real issue, because that's very common and that's to be expected, and that's easy to see, "Well, I like to spend, you like to save", but what's more, maybe scary and a little more demanding is to really trace the root of that. And to face that, because sometimes we haven't faced it even privately, and to do it with somebody else, hopefully it's someone you love and it's your partner, and you trust this person and you're willing to go there together, that I think can sometimes unleash solutions and can really be an enlightening moment. It sounds like you both have that, so thank you for sharing that.

**LG:** You're welcome.

**FT:** Alright, let's talk about "So Money" moments. So we've delved a little bit on the negative, although it sounds like you are doing fantastic now, and you're working your way through things. But what would you identify as, what I like to call, a "So Money" moment? In other words, a time in your life when you've had a financial win.

**MG:** I think for us, we've agreed on this, it's definitely when we realized that we had the financial freedom for me to quit my job. So it's kind of funny that our "So Money" moment would be actually...

**LG:** Decreasing our income. [chuckle]

**MG:** Decreasing our income rather significantly. But it's about life and being able to have that financial independence to be able to make a move like that for the sake of our family. I think that was definitely our highlight so far.

**LG:** Yeah, and I'm gonna add one more "So Money" moment, too, is I remember the first purchase that we made after we got out of debt, was in 2011. And we bought a swing set for our kids with cash. And it was a nice swing set. I think it cost us about \$900, and it was something that we always wanted, but we weren't willing to pay for because we were in so much debt. And so, as soon as we paid off our last piece of debt, we saved up the money and we bought a swing set for our kids. And at that point, we had just had our third child. And it was so awesome to just feel like we had worked really hard to get out of debt, and had so many years of living without, and not going on vacation and not buying things that now, we had the freedom to make a big purchase like that and make it in cash.

**FT:** Awesome, awesome, awesome. I know, I... Sometimes my cash purchases are my favorite, because it's done.

**MG:** Right.

**FT:** No more bills, and you can now just purely start to enjoy the purchase and there's no aftermath.

**LG:** Right, yeah, I agree and I could say that becoming debt-free was definitely a moment for us, but following that moment was purchasing that swing set, which is more important to me, I think.

**FT:** I'd love to talk a little bit about being parents, and you have four children. What... And I know that you had only two when you were going through these struggles, and now you have four, and things are little bit better, a lot better. What kind of messages do you think you're sending to them? And have you, maybe been... Have you ever concerned yourself with, "Well, maybe they've learned bad things in the beginning, and now they're learning that there's a way to pull yourself through things"? Or were they too young to even understand?

**LG:** Well, we're actually pretty honest with them. Our kids' ages are... We have a son who's nine, and then our three girls are five, three and one. So the younger girls don't really, they're not really there yet, and they certainly don't remember what it was like when we didn't... When we were in a lot of debt. But our nine-year-old kind of does, and we're actually very honest with him that we were in a ton of debt a few years ago, and we've gotten ourselves out. So, he understands that we don't really use credit cards and he... Yeah, I feel like we're very honest with him about it.

**LG:** We are, and he saw early on that... When he was five, when we were really getting out of debt still, I had a garage sale to get money to buy him a toy for his birthday. So, he's seen those kind of sacrifices that we've made, and they're also very... We always tell them, "It's not in the budget", or, "We can't do that this week, maybe we can do it next week", or "We have to budget for that". So, they're very aware of the fact that mommy and daddy really pay attention to their money. But then on top of that is, we're really showing them, we're not buyers anymore, we don't buy stuff.

**MG:** Right.

**LG:** We don't go on luxurious vacations. If we go on vacation, we rent a beach house and just stay at the beach all week. We just don't do a ton of stuff, we're very simple now, and really want to focus on the simplicity of life, so they're very intuned with that. But then also our son, so he's nine, and he has chores, he has to take out the garbage, and he has to clean the kitchen three days a week, and load the dishwasher. He has to work for his money. And if he wants to do something and he wants money, let's say for a toy, or something like that...

**MG:** It's Legos, always, these days.

**LG:** Yeah, he has to save money for it. I'll give him an extra project to do, "Okay, mop my kitchen floor and I'll give you another few bucks", or something like that. So, if he wants extra money, he has to work for it. And we hope to be instilling that in our children, that money really doesn't grow on trees.

**MG:** And it has to be that, because Andrew, who's nine, we can already tell, he's a spender.

**LG:** He's a spender, yes.

**FT:** Oh really?

**LG:** Yeah, he is, big time.

**FT:** Well, Legos are awesome.

[chuckle]

**LG:** Yeah.

**FT:** Oh, they are.

**LG:** That's right. We went out on Black Friday and took them out to the store, and he... This is funny...

**MG:** This is hilarious.

**LG:** He looked around and we were hoping to find one on sale, and he looks around, he's like, "Mom, this..." What did he say?

**MG:** He said, "Black Friday is a rip-off."

**LG:** Yeah.

[chuckle]

**LG:** Because he couldn't find one on sale, I said, "Honey, they're Legos. The ones that you want aren't on sale." But he saved his money 'til Black Friday to buy... He'll save his money to buy the thing that he wants.

**FT:** Well, then there you go.

**LG:** Yep.

**FT:** Then let him eat cake.

**LG:** Exactly.

**MG:** Yeah.

[chuckle]

**FT:** Your "So Money" ritual, guys, what is something that you do that is either daily, weekly, but it is a habit, that helps to give you guys the compass that you need to follow through on your financial goals?

**MG:** I'd say that our ritual would have to be hosting our monthly budget night on the last Sunday on every month. And we've been doing our budgets monthly together...

**LG:** For years.

**MG:** For a long time, anyways. But I think now that we're sharing it publicly, it really has become a ritual and it holds us accountable to our audience who's watching us. So, yeah, people can see where we plan to spend our money, and we have to follow through and do it.

**LG:** Yeah. And so, I think budgeting as a couple; so our ritual is, Mark takes care of all the bills. So, he figures out everything, we have this drag-and-drop budget software that we had built, so he puts all of the numbers and the bills into that, so that when we sit down to do our budget, it's pretty much him figuring out all the bills and then he asks me questions like, "How much do you need for groceries this week? What kind of birthday parties do we have to go to? What kind of gifts do we have? How much do we need for diapers?"

**LG:** Those questions that he doesn't know, I fill in the blanks. So, I hate spreadsheets, hate them, and he loves them, and so he loves to deal with all that kind of stuff. And then I do all fun spending stuff, [chuckle] within budget. So, that's our ritual of how we've always done our personal budget and it really helps us keep accountable. And then we take out cash for some categories, like groceries, we do cash. We have a miscellaneous cash that we do every week, so that we don't have to nickel-and-dime each other the whole time, the whole week. So, we take out \$50 a week in

miscellaneous money, and then diapers and babysitting, those are the things we'd take on cash.

**MG:** Yeah.

**FT:** I have a quick question, how do you guys splurge on yourselves? Do you always have to check in with each other, or do you have an allowance to be able to... I hate the word "allowance", but some sort of account where it's personal and you can do whatever you want with it?

**MG:** We actually have been talking about that. We have been planning on giving each other 50 bucks a month to just spend on...

**LG:** Whatever.

**MG:** Whatever.

**LG:** Yeah. We're not there yet.

**MG:** We haven't done it yet.

**LG:** Yup. But we do have that \$50 miscellaneous, so if that... And that's per week, and that's just cash that we leave by our... I won't tell you where we leave it, just in case somebody's listening to this. [laughter]

**FT:** We'll have your address on the website, don't worry.

**LG:** Yeah, right. [laughter] But we leave it in an envelope. And so, whenever... If he decides he wants to go out to lunch with a friend or whatever, he can just grab that, and go and spend it. So that's kind of an allowance, but we would love to be able to give each other \$50 a month where we can just buy whatever we want with it.

**MG:** Yeah. We do both have hobbies, so...

**LG:** Yeah, yeah.

**FT:** Well, I hope you get there and let us know when you do, 'cause I think that's important.

**LG:** Yeah, I will.

**FT:** Okay, so, this is the fun, I think the most fun part of the interview. Hopefully, you will find it, too. It's called "So Money fill in the blank". And I'll just throw out a sentence, and you'll finish it for me. So, "If I won the lottery tomorrow, say, a 100 million bucks, I would..."

**MG:** It's a good question.

**LG:** Fill in the blank.

**MG:** I think we would...

**FT:** First thing, first thing you'd do.

**LG:** Pay off everybody's houses that we know.

**FT:** Really?

**MG:** Oh, that's a lot of people.

**LG:** No, not that we know.

**FT:** Can you pay off mine? I'll send you my mortgage bill.

**LG:** [laughter] We would pay off everybody in our family's mortgages and car payments.

**FT:** Wow.

**LG:** That's what I would do. What would you do?

**MG:** That's towards the top of the list, yeah.

**LG:** Okay. Yeah.

**FT:** Just be careful they don't come back asking for more.

**LG:** I know, right?

**FT:** That's the problem when you help people out sometimes. You enable... You become an enabler.

**LG:** Yeah. I don't know.

**FT:** I literally... I had one person say, "I wouldn't tell anybody that I have tons of money." And maybe he would send anonymous checks in the mail to people, but...

**LG:** Oh, maybe that's a better idea.

**FT:** Maybe.

**LG:** To anonymously pay off people's...

**FT:** Anonymously, yeah, don't let anyone know. Alright. "The one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is..."

**MG:** A smartphone.

**LG:** I agree.

**MG:** I tried to have a dumb phone for a while, but it just...

**FT:** Like a flip phone, one of those \$50...

**LG:** Yeah.

**FT:** Okay.

**MG:** It just didn't work. You have to... [laughter] It makes life so much easier. I really do need to have an iPhone or an Android, or whatever.

**FT:** Well, thank you for sharing that, admittedly out loud. So that's... And for anyone out there who's still not carrying a smartphone, it doesn't have to be an iPhone, something that gets texts, you can take pictures, you can do a few more things on it, check your email. Get it. It's worth it. It's 2014.

[chuckle]

**MG:** And data plans aren't even that much now. It's not that expensive.

**LG:** We're really bad at just doing fill in the blanks.

**MG:** Yeah, we just keep talking.

**FT:** No, you're great. No, you're really good. You're really good. It's awesome. "My biggest guilty pleasure that I spend a lot on..." And I know you're both budgeters, but there's gotta be something that you're like...

**LG:** Make-up. I love make-up. I buy lots of make-up. [chuckle]

**MG:** For me, it would be drums. I play drums, and...

**FT:** Alright.

**MG:** Every once in a while, there might be a little expense here that we talk about.

**LG:** And he has an obsessive purchasing of iPhone cases on Amazon. [laughter]

**FT:** Wow, you're really going full force with that smartphone.

**LG:** Every once in a while, I'll be like...

**MG:** I haven't bought one in a long time.

**LG:** "What's this package from Amazon?" It's like, "Oh, it's the third cellphone cover a month thing." [laughter]

**FT:** Oh, my gosh. Maybe there's a business idea there, maybe there's like a cellphone of the month.

**LG:** Oh, maybe we should. That's a great idea! [laughter]

**FT:** Cellphone... Yeah, so just send me 10% commission. That's all I ask.

**MG:** We were supposed to share our guilt. You weren't supposed to throw me under the bus there, but...

**LG:** Oh, sorry.

[laughter]

**FT:** I'm gonna have more couples now on this podcast. I think that it's a lot more fun that way.

**LG:** Yeah.

[laughter]

**FT:** "One thing I wish I had known about money growing up is..."

**LG:** That you should work for it. I never worked for money ever, until I got married. What about you?

**MG:** I don't know.

**LG:** That money is fun to spend?

**MG:** I feel like I knew about money when I was growing up, so...

**LG:** Yeah. He was... Wait, you know what, we...

**FT:** Well, excuse me.

**LG:** I know, right? We have a professional money manager.

**FT:** Did Mark just drop the mic and he's out?

**LG:** Yeah, he's out, right?

**FT:** He's like, "I know everything. Mark out."

**MG:** My parents did a great job.

**LG:** I, on the other hand, did not do a great job.

**FT:** It is possible. That's the lesson here that, as parents, it is possible to raise your kids in a financially savvy way. It doesn't all have to come crashing and burning when they're 23.

**MG:** Even... They didn't let me take out school loans. Actually, they let me, but I chose not to, 'cause I knew it was dumb. So I graduated with \$3,000 in school loans and that was it.

**LG:** Right.

**FT:** Wow, that's pretty awesome. These days, that's your books for the first semester.

**LG:** Exactly. Which is why I was in a lot of school loan debt, 'cause I just bought books.

[laughter]

**FT:** Nothing else, nothing else.

**LG:** Nothing else. [laughter]

**FT:** "When I donate money, I like to give to 'blank' because... "

**MG:** My church and my children's school.

**LG:** Yeah. We send our kids to a private Christian school here, so we believe... We're very active with them, and we like to give money to them to see them flourish.

**FT:** Awesome. And, "I'm So Money", or "We're 'So Money' because... "

**LG:** We're willing to be weird and uncomfortable in order to have a life full of financial independence, definitely.

**MG:** I agree with that.

**LG:** Yeah. So, a lot of our friends think we're crazy that we work from our office, and Mark quit his job, but we're willing to be thought of that way.

**FT:** And you're transparent and I love that. And I want everyone listening to check you both out. Where are the best ways to find how you're being weird and crazy?

**LG:** Well, markandlaureng.com is our website, and that's where you can find our budget night that we do every month, and you can actually sign up for an alert for that. You can also check out our podcast, which is the "Simpler Happier Life" podcast, where we are as equally as transparent. Actually one podcast we actually recorded a fight that we had about money, so we thought we would do that for people.

[laughter]

**FT:** Whoa.

**LG:** Yeah.

**MG:** We were going to argue about it, but then Lauren was like, "No, just stop. Let's save it for the podcast, just grab the mics... "

**LG:** We went and grabbed the mics and argued on air. So, that was probably our most downloaded podcast to date. And then we're on Twitter, @markandlaureng, and then we're also on Facebook, Mark and Lauren G on Facebook.

**FT:** We'll have all those on our site in case you miss them and you don't have a pen and paper while listening to your iPod, oh wait, did I just date myself?

**LG:** Yes, you did.

**FT:** Your iPhone...

[laughter]

**FT:** Or your smartphone. Thank you so much, Lauren and Mark. We really appreciate all your candid and honest advice, and we look forward to watching you flourish.

**LG:** Thank you so much. It was fun.

**MG:** Thanks for having us.