

EXPECTATIONS ARE EVERYTHING

<https://fiercemarriage.com/expectations-are-everything>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: So many couples spend more time planning for a vacation than they spend planning for their entire life as married people. *[chuckles]*

Selena: We are guilty of that for sure.

Ryan: We are guilty of that.

Selena: We are just trying to plan a little vacation here, and we realized [both chuckling] how much we don't plan for our marriage. No, we do though. We have those moments.

Ryan: And looking back, we only had a couple of, I would say, premarital counseling sessions, but it was basically just meetings with our youth pastor and the youth pastor's wife and... They were not just youth pastors; they were pastors in our church. But it wasn't anything like what we've come to appreciate in terms of planning for our marriage.

Selena: Looking back, I would have wanted a pair of us.

Ryan: *[chuckling]* That's vain.

Selena: *[chuckles]* I'm not sure it sounds vain. Somebody to like us.

Ryan: Oh, my goodness.

Selena: No, I would want somebody who would ask hard questions that would say, "Hey, what have you thought about this? Have you guys talked about these things?" There are some things that were never brought to our attention. I think people just thought we'd figure it out, which we do. But sometimes I think there's wisdom to be heard. And I don't mean us. *[Ryan chuckles]* I wish there was a podcast like ours.

Ryan: All right. All right. You back out yourself out of that one. It's fine.

Selena: I wasn't trying to be vain. I really just—

Ryan: *[chuckles]* It's okay. This episode is those hard questions. Literally, we're going to go through a whole list of hard questions but they're I think incisive questions that help you get to the root expectations that you bring in. This

isn't just for newlyweds, okay? This is not for just nearly weds, engaged people, newlywed people. This is for anyone who's never visited these types of questions. [Selena chuckles]

And you might be wondering why you're misfiring your marriage because, frankly, you might have expectations that aren't aligned and you haven't realized it yet. So expectations are everything. We're going to talk about that today.

[00:01:51] <Intro Sequence>

[00:01:53]

Selena: Welcome to the fierce marriage podcast where we believe that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and refuses to give in.

Ryan: Here, we'll share openly and honestly about all things marriage—

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

Ryan: Priorities —

Selena: Purpose—

Ryan: And everything in between.

Selena: Laugh, ponder, and join in our gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage. This podcast is coming at you pretty fresh and raw from some of our own conversations we've had in the last week or so. Which is why we decided, hey, this could probably be helpful to other people. Now, Ryan's way ahead of that stuff. He's always—

Ryan: What's up? I wasn't paying attention. *[chuckling]* I'm kidding.

Selena: He always has stuff in the hopper ready to share but—

Ryan: My good ideas folder.

Selena: *[chuckles]* Your good ideas folder. I'm not, okay?

Ryan: Maybe have your own folder. That's the whole point.

- Selena:** I have folders. You don't like how my folders are.
- Ryan:** Her folders will be two becoming one. They'll be the best ideas of all the ideas. We're working on a project that is namely around equipping couples. Really, I love talking about marriage because it's kind of just discipleship in disguise.
- Selena:** Oh.
- Ryan:** And so, we love talking about Jesus around the topic of marriage because you go in thinking, "Let's learn something about marriage," but we're really learning something about Christ and about our hearts, and about how He needs to govern our hearts.
- Selena:** It's not really disguise because we talk about how discipleship begins with your spouse, right? Your first disciple is knowing each other.
- Ryan:** Yeah. But it's not the Fierce Discipleship podcast. It's The Fierce Marriage Podcast.
- Selena:** Haha. Gotcha.
- Ryan:** Gotcha. Now you can't leave.
- Selena:** Anyway.
- Ryan:** Let's do our housekeeping real fast. Hey, we've been so encouraged. If you've left a rating and a review, thank you so much. Man, there's been a few where they're like, "Ryan, you interrupt Selena." It's probably because they're listening to the earlier episodes.
- Selena:** Skip those. *[laughs]* I'm just kidding.
- Ryan:** Yeah, well, those actually will be back. We're going to start redoing a few of those. Don't do it. Don't do it. Well, we're 163 episodes in.
- Selena:** I don't what I said. 163 episodes ago.
- Ryan:** That's 163 roughly hour-long episodes—
- Selena:** How scary. How scary.
- Ryan:** ...that we've edited and posted in the last I think - what? Two and a half years.

Selena: Ohhh, it makes me nervous.

Ryan: Anyway, if you've listened to the early ones, some of the comments are like, "Ryan needs to stop interrupting." Listen, guys, people grow, right?

Selena: I just wish you let me.

Ryan: Let me grow. I'm just going to maybe delete those episodes.

Selena: You're great.

Ryan: That's even with the caveat. But anyway, thank you for the encouragement, people who have done that. If you haven't, please leave a star rating and a review. We really appreciate it. Secondly, and this is actually quite serious, we really need your support on Patreon. And here's why.

In our country, things are changing a lot in our society, in the world, things are changing a lot. I frankly don't know how long we will be able to freely profess truths from scripture especially around the topics of human sexuality, marriage, traditional marriage, family, educating your kids in the way of the Lord. Things that we value as Christian people. I'm not positive that will have those freedoms for a long, long time. So we're trying to see the gospel proclaimed in the space of family and marriage. So it's an important mission. So if you want to be on board with that, just go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. That's P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/fiercemarriage.

Selena: And let's just be clear. We're not afraid of any of these things. We're just sort of, I think mentally, starting to think and prepare in some ways. Well, we don't have any real rational reason other than what's happening in the world. We don't have any insider information. Again, we're not operating out of fear, but we are...I think it's unlikely for things to remain the way they are.

Ryan: Yeah, we're not afraid, but we're just trying to be proactive on that front. Finally, if you have any questions, fiercemarriage.com/podcast, you can ask those there, by many ways and means.

Okay. When we started this episode, I mentioned that a lot of couples that are headed into marriage, newlyweds, nearly weds, they plan more for vacation than they would ever plan for their marriage and life together.

Selena: Yeah. Maybe sometimes we plan even more for kind of the wedding day than we do for the aftermath of it all. I mean, you can only prepare to a point, right?

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: At some point, you just have to be married and experience it and walk through it. But like you said, I think there's some wisdom that can be gained in asking questions ahead of time and asking questions in the middle of milestones or big life transitions. It's pretty much wedding season, and we wanted to serve our young couples and we also want to serve our listeners well in this area. So we kind of want to talk about expectations, what those look like around certain areas.

We're going to walk through a series of questions that we've been kind of going through in our own hearts and marriage. Hopefully, these will be applicable and helpful to you all. We'll also kind of shed some light and some, I guess, instruction on, you know, if he expects this and I expect this, how do we find agreement on those things? And what are the players in terms of...you know, a family of origin? I grew up this way, he grew up that way, how does this affect how we spend money or who works and those kinds of things?

Ryan: And I do want to reiterate that you mentioned that it's not just if you're headed into marriage, although we are mindful of that group of people. So if you're engaged or dating seriously, definitely perk your ears up. However, if you're newlywed in the first one to three years, I'll say, this will apply to you. If you've been married for 3 years to 10 years, this will apply to you. Even if you've been married two decades or three decades and you're having a tough time, and you feel like there's areas where you need to grow, all of this will still apply to you.

Selena: Right. Our hope is that we can learn to navigate expectations again and find unity and alignment with each other in these areas in ways that are full of grace. And so, talking about the pillars that we always talk about and foundational pillars in marriage of your beliefs. What do you believe about God, love, the gospel, Jesus? Why these are so important? Again, they're just going to be reiterated in this episode.

Because these pillars inform our behaviors. They inform how we approach each other about hard things, and how we how our expectations are actually formed, and how can we either calibrate them or realign them or get rid of them. So, really, trying to find unity is not an easy task. So our hope is that we can start asking the questions and start navigating through that a bit.

Ryan: Cool. So let's read some scriptures that informs this whole conversation. We're called to self-awareness, to being sober, judges of ourselves, and to live wisely.

Selena: Why?

Ryan: Because the heart is deceitful above all else.

Selena: Well, but why are we supposed to know ourselves? Self-awareness.

Ryan: Self-awareness. Well, that's a biblical call. It's not just pop psychology, but it's actually an important thing that we see throughout Scripture. We talk about that in our book, "See-Through Marriage" quite a bit. Two whole chapters dedicated to that. Anyway, I'm going to read Ephesians 5:15-17. Selena, you're going to read from Romans. But here it goes.

It says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. So, what we're focusing on there is that this emphasis on carefully walking, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time.

So, what does it mean to be wise in these areas? Selena, you had mentioned the foundational presuppositions or precepts of what it means to be a married Christian person. The truths that we have to understand and get on board with for us to be able to walk in wisdom, right? It'll never be wise to walk if you don't... it's a matter of getting on the right trailhead. If you don't start at the right trailhead, then your complete trail is going to be off. But we have to get on the same page, the same trailhead so that we can be walking in wisdom toward this destination of the ultimate purposes.

Selena: Sorry, I was looking up on Bible Hub just how it translates across—the word "careful." Because you're saying, "Walk carefully," right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Sorry, I mean "look carefully then how you walk." And if you look at the parallel chapters in there, the word "careful" is in every version of the Bible. I think in the King James Version it's the circumspcctly. So not as fool's but as wise. Pay careful attention. So there's this emphasis on not just walking, not just being, not just figuring it out which is a call to my own heart of just kind of don't fly by the seat of your pants. Don't just—

Ryan: Take great care.

Selena: Figure it out. Yeah, take great care in your marriage and in the things—

Ryan: That's good.

- Selena:** The roles that God has placed you in and the people He's entrusted into your care. All right. Romans 12:3 says, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."
- Ryan:** Same theme there is thinking with sober judgment and not think of yourself more highly than you ought. That is huge. Because if there's not planning or not thinking through these things, is thinking of yourself like, "I got that. I'm good. Everything that I believe or know today is everything I will ever need to know or believe."
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** Instead of looking at these things with a sober judgment. What is sober judgment? Is you're making judgments on yourself. You're saying, "This can stay, this cannot." But to do that we have to look carefully.
- Selena:** Right. And I think if you look around in Romans 12, the first section is we're called to be living sacrifices. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." So, we see this call to dying to ourselves. And then the next part is, excuse me, "The gifts of grace of..." And this is where we think with sober judgment. So we're called to die to ourselves, to think soberly of ourselves. Not to think lowly of ourselves, but to think soberly.
- And then the next section talks about marks of the true Christian which is genuine love. They abhor what's evil, they hold fast to what is good. So these are instructions, I think, in how we can find unity not just in our marriage, but I mean, with others, people in our community but especially within our marriage, I guess I should say. So rejoicing in hope, not being slothful in zeal, having a fervor spirit, constantly praying. Anyways, I think that it's just important to look at where it's at the context and why because—
- Ryan:** So good. Context will never serve us wrong as we're reading God's word.
- Selena:** So true. So true.
- Ryan:** Okay. We're going to go through a whole bunch of questions. The point of this episode is not to necessarily teach on those questions. There are some that will be obvious like right or wrong answers. The point is to mine, from the depths of our hearts, what our underlying expectations are, bring those to the surface so we can actually talk about them and address them. Because what

will happen is a husband will have expectations about one thing and then the wife will have expectations about that thing and they won't be the same.

Selena: Right. And then you'll fight about it.

Ryan: And you won't know why you're fighting.

Selena: Right. Well, speaking for real experience that happened real recently. And we're 17 years, married 21 years together, whatever and we still are like, "Why is this an issue? Why are we still unable to get past this? Maybe we should be past it. Maybe we just are changing in different seasons." So it's good to ask these questions constantly because—

Ryan: If we start with this, there's always going to be expectation drift to where your expectations shift, and you don't even really realize it.

Selena: Mm-mmh. Drift and shift. That's awesome.

Ryan: Especially, when you have kids or something, specifically around intimacy, there's drift and shift in the life and physiology of a mom. And then obviously, there's drift and shift in your schedules, in your time and the amount of energy it takes to be in that stage of life. Or if you get a new job, or if anything changes.

That's one of the things that Selena brought up while we were preparing for this is that these are also valuable for revisiting constantly in those at those crucial milestones and those changes in life.

Selena: Yeah. We're going to start off with finances. Talking about income, money, all that kind of stuff, because I think we overlook the fact that we do have opportunities when we talk about finances and roles. Who's going to be a provider? Who's not? Well, who's going to provide income, I guess, for your family? Because I think we're both providers.

But we missed the opportunity to really understand that we can extend some love and grace to each other when we are discussing this but also when we're working this out. I know that you take a good, godly pride in providing for our family.

Ryan: You're talking to me?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Okay.

- Selena:** Ryan, you are at the frontlines of everything. And we were sort of joking and arguing about this about how I make money too. Even though I'm with the kids, I'm like, "Yeah, but I wrote books." It's like I can mentally divide those things and forget...I minimize our roles in some ways. And that can cause trouble between us, I think in my own heart. So, I think just recognizing we have opportunities here to be really loving and gracious towards each other.
- Ryan:** And generous toward each other, and offering charity toward each other and saying like, "These are my expectations, but how can we unify?" It takes an effort to unify your expectations of all these things, and your understanding, right?
- Selena:** Yeah. Understanding that our family of origin tends to be a big influencer. At least I think it has been. It can be. Maybe not for us so much, but—
- Ryan:** We do have two Family of Origin episodes where we talk about our own. Selena's was really good.
- Selena:** Because I cried. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Well, it was genuine and it was—
- Selena:** It was real.
- Ryan:** If that term is new to you, go look those up.
- Selena:** So yes, jumping into some of these questions. Who will provide income for your family? When we got married, we just kind of both jumped in. I mean, again, look at your stage of life. We are different when we got married than where we are today.
- Ryan:** So, pause. As we go through these listener, if this is something that you want to go through and be able to process through with your spouse, find a way to keep notes during this. Grab your phone or whatever, open a new note, or jot it down. But write these things down. Because again, we're asking them more or less rhetorically...well, we will speak to it a little bit, but more or less rhetorically, we're going to get through these questions pretty fast. Right? Selena just said the first one: who do you expect will provide income for your family?
- Selena:** There's a lot of cultural influence here. There's a lot of different voices. So talking about that is super important. Again, being gracious. What do you expect will happen when you have children?

- Ryan:** In terms of your finances, in terms of income. If you're a dual-income family, what's going to happen when children come along?
- Selena:** Child care happens. *[chuckling]* So what does that look like?
- Ryan:** Your child care or one person has to leave, so what are your expectations around that?
- Selena:** Who's caring for the children? Yeah.
- Ryan:** Who will functionally pay the bills? This is a big one.
- Selena:** Oh, man, guys, we were a mess when we got married *[Ryan chuckling]* because I tried. I think I have slight number dyslexia because I was like, "These numbers added up when I did them and now they don't."
- Ryan:** We're 17 years in and we finally have a balanced checkbook.
- Selena:** I use Cleaven's. You know, Cleaven. That word. What is it?
- Ryan:** What is what?
- Selena:** What does Kelvin say when we got fired in the last episode?
- Ryan:** It's a special number that balances all accounts. *[Selena laughing]*. I'd be like, "Why are we bouncing checks?" And Selena's like, "I put it in there." It wasn't working well.
- Selena:** I don't do numbers people. Not very well. Anyways.
- Ryan:** So, we hadn't discussed it.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And I think the default was, "Okay, I'm going to take care of the big picture of making sure that I'm working...we're both working. And this is how we're going to partner. I working longer hours I think is what it came down to.
- Selena:** Right. We're just kind of divvying up responsibility. And really, we probably should have been looking at each other's strengths and weaknesses on some level.
- Ryan:** We should have iterated too much more quickly, and we should have realized what didn't work instead of 10 years down the line. *[chuckles]*

- Selena:** Yes. I feel like people thought we just had our lives together getting married at the ages of 20 and 21, and I'm like, "Where were people like us when people like us got married? Where were they?"
- Ryan:** Yeah, we were pretty naive. I use that term to be kind. Stupid is another term that comes to mind.
- [chuckling]*
- Selena:** You know.
- Ryan:** The smartest thing I ever did was to marry you, but I was, however, still a very stupid person. *[both laughing]*
- Selena:** Awesome. So, decide who's going to pay the bills. Maybe do it together, maybe somebody just stronger at it and enjoy that process and knowing that. What levels of spending will require further discussion? Why? Will that level ever change? Finances fluctuate in your marriage. I mean, there were times where we'd have to talk about \$20 being spent, and now it's \$25.
- Ryan:** It's death by a thousand cuts though. *[chuckles]* I look at the statement and it's like, "Amazon, \$25; Amazon, \$25; Amazon \$25.
- Selena:** "How dare you? What are you buying?"
- Ryan:** "How many books do our kids need? I always asked you that. "What is this?"
- Selena:** You did not. It's not like that. You stopped questioning. *[both laughing]*
- Ryan:** I lost momentum. I lost steam. I give up is what happened.
- Selena:** See, just write it out. Just write it out. *[chuckles]* I'm kidding. That's terrible advice.
- Ryan:** But I mean, obviously that's our threshold, but early on in our marriage, that would have been a big problem because we wouldn't have made bills. Now, granted, we're not rolling in it, but \$25—
- Selena:** Patreon.com. *[laughing]*
- Ryan:** Patreon.com. No, definitely not. But it's important to establish those levels. Even I think picking some sort of financial plan. We never did that. We never did the - what's that guy's name?

- Ryan:** Dave Ramsey?
- Selena:** Yeah. Which I wish we would have invested in some of that to just create some really fruitful habits financially for our marriage. And what will do...how much? I'm just jumping ahead.
- Ryan:** How you approach giving is another big one. How much as a percentage do you expect to save? Those are big questions. A wife and a husband could have different perspectives on these things. One's a spender, one's a saver. One's a chipmunk, the other one is a peacock. [both laughing] One's just sucking things away, saving it for a rainy day, the other one wants to flaunt her feathers. Although the male peacock I think is the attractive one.
- Selena:** No, that's funny. No, because we do that. I mean—
- Ryan:** What do you call a female peacock?
- Selena:** Is this is a joke?
- Ryan:** No. They're called peahens.
- Selena:** Oh, okay. Are you sure?
- Ryan:** It's true. It's true. [chuckles]
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** You learn something new every day.
- Selena:** Every day, yes.
- Ryan:** All right. This is a big one. What will you do if you can't pay your bills each month? Hopefully a lot of newlyweds nowadays don't enter marriage with the same level of risk that we entered marriage with. A lot of them are waiting till they have careers. There's still risk with the career, by the way. A stable career no longer is stable. So you may be facing this right now. Like, "Okay, we're not able to make our bills. What are we expecting as a husband and wife when our jobs are kind of on the chopping block now?"
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** That's an important question to make sure you answer.

Selena: Yeah, we don't run to mom and dad all the time, right? Like, hey, you can't just run to your parents and ask for money for like—

Ryan: But if you do, let it be in unity.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Because families are there to help.

Selena: Absolutely. In unity and peace.

Ryan: But I mean, that brings to bear a lot of questions like, what is the role of the local church? Our community groups are really amazing. I'm so thankful for our community group. But if anybody in our group is ever struggling financially, we will just rally around them. We're not going to carry them forever, but if they go through two months where they're just—

Selena: I know we have elders in our church...our church is set up that way to help people financially.

Ryan: The Church plays a role?

Selena: Yeah. Did you talk about how do you expect to discuss disagreements?

Ryan: Yeah. How do you expect that to happen?

Selena: What do you mean by that? Ryan wrote that question. What do you mean by that?

Ryan: Well, I mean, we talked about the spending thing. I'm looking at the statement, and I didn't realize that you had spent this. Do I just bring that and say, "What in the world are you doing?" Like how do I expect her to handle that? How should I expect myself to handle those situations from disagreement? Or if we can't just find agreement?

Selena: We got to take initiative possibly, and set those expectations ahead of time. And then when things go awry, then we will talk.

Ryan: This is a big one that we faced. We're in the market for a tent right now because our family's grown, and we're tent broke. And so we're trying to find a tent.

Selena: The last two tents we've had that we're on the less expensive side have broke.

- Ryan:** And so, Selena got her sights set on this super fancy REI tent.
- Selena:** No, no, no. I pulled people. The people had spoken. Okay? The Facebook people have spoken. I'm just kidding.
- Ryan:** Yeah, they're just trying to affirm they're expensive. [both chuckles]
- Selena:** No, no.
- Ryan:** And I'm for the Costco tent, which has hundreds of reviews and they're positive. So, we're having this conversation and I'm sitting there thinking, "This isn't even a conversation. I've decided." [laughs]
- Selena:** I know. I got so mad about that.
- Ryan:** But I didn't say that. And then eventually I said something—
- Selena:** I said it. I said, "This isn't even a conversation. It sounds like you've already decided." So, I had my attitude on. And you go, "Yup." [both laughing] And then I walked out. But you know what? It did cause me to dig deep and find out what my reasons were. And they were pretty...I'm sure they...I don't want to admit that at all. Thanks.
- Ryan:** [chuckles] You said deep.
- Selena:** You can go ahead and edit that one out.
- Selena:** You said deep so...Anyway. This is going south, ladies and gentlemen. Okay, move on. Communication and conflict. Let's talk about those. [chuckles]
- Selena:** Oh, gosh. I think we should talk about sex first. Nope. [both laughing]
- Ryan:** Not relevant right now. Okay. Communication and conflict.
- Selena:** When we got married, we did establish that we were never going to use the word "divorce." We weren't going to just throw it around as an empty threat or even use it applying to our marriage, in application to our marriage. The other thing that we were told was never to use sex as a bargaining tool ever in your marriage.
- And then we also decided no vulgar name-calling, no name-calling in general, was kind of some key pillars that we wanted to just stick to as a baseline, right?
- Ryan:** Yeah.

- Selena:** Feels like good things to do.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Berating each other was not was an off-limits thing. Degrading each other. "You're such a whatever."
- Selena:** When you're initially getting married, you're not going to say like, "Oh, how can we handle conflict well?" Well, we haven't really had probably a ton of conflict. I mean, we have. But sometimes it's hard to talk about communication when you first get married because you're still learning. So sometimes you just got to...is that part where you just got to be married. So if you are married, and you're having a hard time communicating, which happens to all of us, probably frequently and more than we'd like to admit, because we're both humans and we both think and just have different dialogues in our minds...
- Ryan:** About tents and such. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** I was going to buy it. I was going to go get it.
- Ryan:** What are your expectations for that fight? First communication question we would ask you to consider is are there any—this is something to what that Selena saying—are there any words phrases, types of phrases, tones, or attitudes that should be off-limits? So go through that yourself.
- Selena:** Again, thinking about your past too what you've maybe—
- Ryan:** And your tendencies.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** So, how have you handled conflict up to this point in your relationship? And how do you expect to handle conflict moving forward?
- Selena:** Some of us—I'm raising my hand—don't like to deal with conflict or feel insecure about how they deal with conflict. I think recognizing that. That's taken us some time. That's taken us some time because Ryan thinks he knows everything.
- Ryan:** I think I'm smart, which is a very stupid thing. *[chuckles]* So, I have some good news and some bad news. And I'll start with the bad news, is that whatever your tendency is as a person in terms of conflict and communication, whatever your tendency has been in the past, it's not going to naturally get better.

- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** That's the bad news. The good news is it can get better, is that you can learn how to communicate more healthfully. You can learn to be a better empathizer, which is you can learn to be a more emotionally mature person, which will inevitably affect that. But you need to talk about your expectations in that area, and how you will handle conflict.
- Use terms like "what timing." Discuss what timing you expect. If your conversations are getting more heated, do you expect to deescalate that or have you not thought about that? And how do you de-escalate?
- Selena:** Why do you de-escalate?
- Ryan:** Well, because that's healthier in general.
- Selena:** Unless you're talking about tents, then you fight him to the end. *[chuckles]* I'm just kidding.
- Ryan:** Okay, okay. Okay, podcast over. Anyway. What will you do if you can't find an agreement for prolonged periods? *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I don't know people. You get some help.
- Ryan:** You get counseling.
- Selena:** No. That's where community comes in, I think. And you have these conversations with another couple that are present so that you may harness your words or choose your words a little bit more wisely. That's always a good idea. So bring other people in. Don't just do it alone.
- What would you consider communication and connection time, quote-unquote?
- Ryan:** In other words, what fills your bucket as a person? And how do you expect to have that communication and connection time filled in your marriage? Or what does that feel?
- Selena:** That's a good question, again, no matter what season of marriage you're in, because it changes. I mean, we have friends that have been married, newly married, and with this whole pandemic, it's been hard on the marriage because it's like you have time together, but like, are we really connecting in that time? And what does that look like? And how often should we be connecting through our communication. You can be present but you may not

be communicating well with each other. Or connecting. Obviously, if you're not communicating, you're probably not connecting.

Ryan: This next one kind of piggybacks on that and it's really fun. Describe to yourself and to each other, what is your ideal date?

Selena: Not a date on the calendar where it's not too cold.

Ryan: Christmas. *[chuckling]* That's my ideal day. I mean, what does that look like? What absolutely fills your void, your bucket in this area? And then talk about it. Try to get on the same page.

Selena: I feel like you should have like a one, two, and a three. Like number one, off the charts. Number two, a monthly thing. Number one is like once a year. Number two is like once a month. Number three is weekly kind of thing.

Ryan: Very good.

Selena: You're welcome.

Ryan: That's a good idea. I'll put that in my folder for later.

Selena: Your good idea folder?

Ryan: Yeah. I'm going to swipe it. We're going to talk about sex now. This one is so important because in our culture, very sexualized. No one's going to argue that. Everybody's bringing in sexual expectations—sex expectations. And it really is depending on a lot of different factors. So this is something that you'd absolutely need to discuss.

Now, if you're not married yet, talking about sex can be problematic, I'll say, in that you haven't shared this intimacy, at least not ideally. According to Scripture, we shouldn't be engaging in sex until we're under the covenant of marriage. And so, I do want to caution you. If you're not married yet, have these conversations but do so with a premarital counselor or with some good friends. Maybe some older friends who are married who can walk alongside you in this.

Selena: Yeah, because there might be some sexual paths that you definitely want to disclose to one another before the wedding day.

Ryan: But also I'm just thinking there's that piece, but then also you don't want to get yourselves all riled up talking about this while you're sitting at 10 p.m. on

your couch at their future in law's house or something. So you want to make sure that you are being wise in that.

So here's some of the questions. How often do you hope to have sex as a couple, and as a person? Individuals coming into that couple, I mean. You can't do it by yourself. So what will your sexual experience be like or what are your expectations around your sexual experience? It's not easy to answer.

Selena: Ah-ah. I'm looking at it like...aaah. I don't know. That makes me uncomfortable. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Again, some of the stuff you won't be able to ask truly until you get on the other side of your wedding day, and maybe your honeymoon and maybe—

Selena: I'm 17 years on the other side of it and I'm like, "This is just making me feel nervous." But it's good though. It's good.

Ryan: Yeah, that does speak to some of our struggles of late. And it's just be encouraged that there's growth throughout the life of your marriage to be had. You never just figure this stuff out. And that's a beautiful thing. Keep just going back to each other, going back to Jesus.

What will the experience be like? Things like...I don't know; I won't get into details on that. What do you expect to contribute to your sex life? And what I mean by that is, you know, if you're a husband, you could say, "Well, I want to have really elaborate dates for my wife so that she feels loved because I know she feels loved in this way and that will—

Selena: She's going to have to put it out.

Ryan: Oh, my goodness. You're so inappropriate.

Selena: And so are you.

Ryan: A wife might have a certain vision of what she's hoping to contribute to love her husband in certain ways that she's expecting him to respond to.

Selena: Contribute. Sorry. It just sounds so formal. What do you expect to give? How do you expect to make your spouse feel loved in that intentionally?

Ryan: That's a better way of phrasing that. Okay. So, when do you expect sex to happen? A lot of couples get up in arms about spontaneous sex versus planned sex.

- Selena:** There's room for both people. There's room for both.
- Ryan:** There is room for both. But many couples can get, or a husband or wife could get very upset if they feel like there's never any sort of like spontaneous rapturous...We just had this amazing date and it's all—
- Selena:** "Goodnight."
- Ryan:** Yeah. So you need to know what you're expecting from each other so that you can meet each other in the middle. Again, that's the whole point of these conversations is not just to make your desires known so your spouse can meet you there. But really to know your own desires and to know their desire, so you can meet and love each other well in the middle.
- Finally, this is very important. And it's not easy. But what are your expectations and how will you talk about sex, your desires, your frustrations, and your needs?
- Selena:** Right. All under the context and the umbrella obviously, of the Bible, the authority of the Bible, and under the gospel. I know this kind of goes without saying, but I think it can easily fall into like, "This is what I want or what I expect when we're together." Those kinds of conversations tend to not go well.
- Again, open hands, open hearts, sharing where you're at, and even prefacing like, "I know this might not be right, but this is what I've desired in the past or I've had frustrations in these areas. I'm bringing them to you so we can work through them." Not just like, "You're always like this" or "you never." Always and never. Again, those just always go badly and they never work well.
- Ryan:** I love that. I can't say enough about that. But the whole point there is you have to approach the conversation with a very gentle hand. Meaning that you're not just throwing out hurtful things. Really consider how your expectations would affect your spouse.
- Selena:** That's easy to do.
- Ryan:** That doesn't mean don't articulate. This means that take care in articulating those things.
- Selena:** Yeah, because it's really easy to just feel insecure, feel hurt, and then lash out. And especially about sex. All right.
- Ryan:** We got a lot to cover here.

- Selena:** Yeah, we do. I think we're doing all right, though.
- Ryan:** The next three. Let's do children next. So, what are your expectations—
- Selena:** Seems unnatural? *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah, the category of children. Do you expect to have kids? If you're listening to this podcast, you probably hope to have children in your life, whether you conceive naturally or you adopt. And that's a good thing. But you need to make sure that your expectations are all on board and on the same page with the Scripture.
- Kids are a blessing. They're not some commodity. They're a blessing. So get on the same page with that first and then talk about maybe these incidental questions like, how soon do you hope to have kids after you're married or from now? How many kids do you expect or hope to have? And why?
- Selena:** That's a hard question. I mean, I think our tendency was to just go into it and think, "Oh, we're going to try to have this many and be done by this." You always try to impose your schedule.
- Ryan:** I think we were—
- Selena:** Okay. Well, I felt more maybe you imposed the schedule of like, "I think at around six to seven years married we'll be about this age, and we'll have this and we'll be in a good position to have kids and do all the things." I think the Lord is gracious in when He brings children into our lives. When and if. Again we can - what is the verse? Like we can plan our days, but only the Lord...
- Ryan:** Yeah, only the Lord basically guides our steps. Something to that effect.
- Selena:** Right. I think, again, an open hand with this idea of children. And there's a lot to be discovered, I think and explored in Scripture about children and being fruitful and what that looks like and how we're called to just have children until we can't have children anymore. There's a lot of conversations to be had around that.
- Ryan:** So, those are the big, big questions, big expectations. But once the kids are in the picture, there's other expectations. Who will be the primary caretaker for the kids? That has to do with who's in the home and who's outside of the home presumably working or earning.
- Selena:** Decisions on how you're caring for children. Like are you nursing? Are you bottle feeding and what does that look like? Because that obviously

determines where kids go and when and how they're, again, cared for just logistically speaking.

Ryan: Some of those things you won't even know till you get there in terms of even what you hoped for and expect. We didn't talk about any of that stuff.

Selena: Jump on our moving train and try not to die. [both chuckles]

Ryan: Yeah. So what do you expect in terms of sleep, diaper changing, and feeding the child?

Selena: There's always an ideal. There's always an ideal.

Ryan: Always ideal, but this is a huge clashing point for a lot of husbands. There are some husbands that they just consider themselves completely out of that piece. And the wife could say, "No." I mean, Tim Keller and Kathy Keller have an incredible story around this where he grew up thinking, "Yeah, husbands just don't change diapers ever." And Cathy's like, "No, that's not the case. Husbands help. Husbands are supposed to serve in this way and be involved." And Tim just could not get on board with that. And so, having those conversations early on is very helpful.

And finding agreement. Again, not just to make your agenda known, but to get to know each other's hearts and then find unity in that.

Selena: Right. There's got to be some give and take. I feel like expectations can make or break a marriage in a lot of ways, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So we want to calibrate those, we want to put them under the authority of Scripture, we want to find unity around them with each other. So yeah.

Ryan: Few more kid questions.

Selena: Okay. You're going to keep asking them.

Ryan: Well, yeah. What do you expect from your spouse when it comes to parenting? What kind of a mother—

Selena: Who's the enforcer? Just kidding. [chuckles]

Ryan: What kind of mother...if you're a husband, you're envisioning your wife being a mother, you're probably envisioning your wife being like your mother in

some ways. I think that's just a psychological thing. Not that I'm a fan of froid. I'm not a fan of froid. But there's that. And then there's, what expectations do you have for educating your kids? One of you may be a staunch private school person. The other person might be a staunch public school person or home education or Montessori. Is that how you say it?

Selena: Montessori?

Ryan: Montessori. Yeah. Nailed it. Okay. Have you harped on that...?

Selena: There's a lot. A lot to consider. And sometimes you just got to work it out and have these conversations as they're happening. Do you want to talk about church or community next?

Ryan: Let's pick and choose. We're going to trail off here on these because the questions honestly are so...there are so many of these. The point is that you are thinking about each of these areas. Let's talk about community. Then let's talk about church. And then I do have a few more that aren't in the outline that I want to talk to in terms of like transparency and trust, in-laws, and so on and so forth.

Selena: Why don't we just do those for now? Transparency, trust, and in-laws. Those are big ones, especially if you're married.

Ryan: So we'll speed up here. So transparency and trust. What will you do if and when you need to repent to your spouse?

Selena: Ooh, big. That's good.

Ryan: Pause and think on that.

Selena: It's more than just an apology, right? It's more than just like, "I'm sorry." It's "I've been sinning against you in this way, and I'm very sorry. It hurts you, and I'm sorry. Please forgive me for doing this. How can we reconcile and what will it take for us to get there? How can we love each other in this process?" We did not know those things getting married. It was more of like, "Fine, I'm sorry. I hope you'll forgive me."

Ryan: We had no idea what repentance is.

Selena: Yeah, we didn't. We wouldn't even call it that probably.

Ryan: No. No.

- Selena:** And it's such a huge part of learning to get in that habit of reconciliation.
- Ryan:** It's the life of a believer.
- Selena:** It really is.
- Ryan:** Repenting and believing. Repenting and believing, rinse and repeat, because we're imperfect, and we're being sanctified and we need Jesus. Next question. How do you expect your spouse to respond when you repent to them? Big question. Well, you would hope to forget with forgiveness, or do you expect them to...?
- Selena:** I was so blindsided on any expectations that I put on you before, like, how you're going to respond. I'm like, "Well, I'm just going to put it out there."
- Ryan:** Well, gracefully, I think would be an expectation of—
- Selena:** You'd hope. You'd hope, but you do not know.
- Ryan:** What if one spouse has a worldview? You both call yourselves Christians, but maybe you say, "Well, there needs to be a time where you just kind of bask in it. You need to feel the shame." As opposed to like—
- Selena:** "Let's reconcile and get through this."
- Ryan:** "I'm hurt but let's reconcile." Or "I'm hurt and I'm going to step out for the next three days and let you deal with it emotionally. So talking through that because there's healthy and there's unhealthy things to do.
- Selena:** Right. Like putting a time limit on how long you can be angry and sit in this anger out of response. Yeah, that makes more sense.
- Ryan:** How do you hope to respond if your spouse admits to sinning against you? So you're on the other end of the equation now for damaging your trust. How do you hope that you would respond? And how do you expect yourself to respond?
- Selena:** Right. I mean, 2-year-old Selena, I think, would hope to resolve the conflict and move on. But I think my desire for that was different than it is now. My desire was like, "Okay, I just want to get on with the happy moments in life. And I don't want to deal with this. I forgive you. We'll work on it. It'll get better." Instead of man, yeah, that hurts and I get it."

- Ryan:** "And here's how this is pointing us back to Christ." As opposed to "let's get back to—"
- Selena:** Some of that is just learning, growing, maturing, right?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** If somebody would have said this to me when we were 20, I'd be like, "Oh, yeah. Yes, I want to be able to respond this way, but I don't think I do. And why is that?"
- Ryan:** Good. Those are the transparency and trust questions. Let's talk about in-laws. *[chuckles]* This is a big point of contention for many, many couples.
- Selena:** It is.
- Ryan:** How do you expect your in-laws to be involved in your lives? How do you expect your spouse to view your in-laws? How do you expect your in-laws to respect your boundaries and privacy?
- Selena:** What do you do on holidays?
- Ryan:** How do you expect Christmas to go?
- Selena:** And when kids come into the picture, it's a whole nother question of what is it going to look like and why?
- Ryan:** This is a whole lot of implications for how your family is structured if you come from a divorced home.
- Selena:** Yeah, there's a lot of dynamics.
- Ryan:** A lot of dynamics. If you have step-parents.
- Selena:** A lot of expectation, yeah.
- Ryan:** What happens if your divorced father gets a girlfriend and she wants to be in your kids' lives?
- Selena:** How do you navigate that?
- Ryan:** These are real scenarios real questions to be had. So whatever your situation is, consider that. Let's move on to hobbies, wants, and desires. I always picture the guy that's out riding like a quad in the woods on a Saturday morning. And

he's left at 5 am to go ride the quad or the motorcycle or go fishing or go hunting or do whatever the thing. I'm thinking of a man, of course.

Selena: I think of the young me that would go ride horses all day every day probably can be at the barn and just not...there was just timelessness. But obviously, those things change and have to be questioned. And then we're brought straight into question when we had kids. I was necessarily not allowed, but I there was no room for it. And I didn't want to fight to make a ton of room because the Lord was clearly taking some things out of my life for my sanctification, for His glory, for my good and for my children's good.

I mean, there was a lot of selfishness there. A lot of selfishness that drove some of those decisions around...I'm not saying hobbies, wants, and desires are bad. No.

Ryan: As your husband, I couldn't be the one to say, "You have to quit this."

Selena: Right. Because that just fuels the fire. Like, "I'm not going to quit because you said. But then—

Ryan: "It's my thing. It's something I want to do. You're going to make me not do it. You're going to make me a prisoner in my own home?" *[chuckles]*

Selena: It's my one time to getaway. I just recognize that kind of language and vocabulary it's only in trapping yourself more. It's not actually providing any more avenues of freedom. It's breaking your soul down in new ways.

I think again, revisiting discussing hobbies, wants, desires, again under the umbrella of the authority of Scripture and how can we...I don't know. I question those things more now because...are hobbies godly? It's okay to do things right. It's okay to enjoy doing things, but should I be intentional about when I do them and who I do them with? Should I bring along maybe someone that we share the same interest but they are not a believer? Should that be a part of these decisions and desires?

Ryan: That's a whole different conversation.

Selena: Sorry, yeah.

Ryan: But the point is you need to be on the same page. Have expectations. Because if a husband or a wife are entering into marriage saying, "I'm a huge horse person, or—

Selena: "I do this every Saturday."

Ryan: "This is a sacred place. You can't question this."

Selena: "Why is this new? We made it and then I did this." Yeah, yeah.

Ryan: And so, you need to understand your expectations.

Selena: And your views on your marriage.

Ryan: And you need to talk and come into—

Selena: And priorities. Priority is a thing.

Ryan: And then this one's a huge one. Division of labor.

Selena: Oh, goodness.

Ryan: So, how will you handle things like dishes, things like garbage, taking it out? Things like cleaning the house, folding the laundry? Things like we talked about paying the bills that was early on. That's part of the division of labor. Washing cars.

Selena: People, we still struggle with this. I still like...

Ryan: Because you're just super lazy. *[chuckles]*

Selena: How many time like, "I don't feel like you've loved me or served me." And you're like, "I just did the dishes every day for like a week." "Well..."

Ryan: It didn't count.

Selena: It doesn't count. I didn't see it.

Ryan: You're not lazy, for the record. You were the most unlazy person I know. That's why you didn't even react because you know it's nonsense.

Selena: No. But those internal struggles and dialogues can contribute a lot to the conflict that you might be dealing with in your marriage. So talk about the divisions of labor, revisit who should be doing what and when, because maybe you're under a deadline at work, and you just need somebody to kind of fill in while you're gone. But there is that season, there's that deadline, right? So there's an end in mind. It's not just this ambiguous "you're just going to do all the things while I play video games."

Ryan: I don't want to miss these but I do want to go quickly through them. Community and church. I'm just going to blast through these questions. How do you expect to interact with friends as a couple? So think through your individual friends and your couples.

Selena: Your single friends, you mean?

Ryan: Single friends? Well, they could be married, but just like you don't really know the wife—

Selena: Oh, sure.

Ryan: But the husband's really good friend. Think about those dynamics and how you expect to continue interacting with those friends. And if those friends are healthy or not. What does a healthy friendship look like for where your marriage is headed? Obviously, you want a friend who's going to advocate for your marriage and not be adversarial. So they need to be on board with you as a couple.

What role do you expect friends to play when you face marital conflict? That goes into the church community piece as well. What are your expectations for church communities and small groups? And what is your expectation for being involved in those? What role will the church community play in the health of your marriage?

Selena: Right. Because we can so easily just attend a community group and share just a bit, but not actually do that meaningful risk, engage in that meaningful risk, and build those relationships to the point of allowing them to come in and talk and have a say to the hardships of our marriage. That's key. That's huge.

Ryan: And then, these are big questions, but you need to talk through them, is what is the purpose of the church?

Selena: Right. And that's always a good question. I think we are constantly, not us personally, but we hear from a lot of couples that either don't have a church or are in a church and they're having problems, they don't know how to navigate those. Or one goes to church and one doesn't go to church.

Ryan: And the reason is you're not unified on the purpose of it. So one could say, "Church is just a place I go on Sundays, and that's it." Another could say, "A church is where you have your family, your community. It's where you're involved. It's where you pour your life into, because..." Those are very different views of basically the same thing. So you need to make sure that you're on the same page and how you expect the—

- Selena:** And the Bible's governing that, right.
- Ryan:** And the Bible's governing that, yes. Because the church is not just a place you go on Sunday.
- Selena:** It's a body of Christ.
- Ryan:** It's a body of Christ. And so you need to get on board with God's Word and then make sure you're on that same page together.
- What do we need as a couple? What do we expect to get out of a church? Big Question, long talks. Is attending a church important? Why or why not? It goes to the first two questions. How will we select the church?
- Selena:** Yeah, we've revisited this many times in our marriage.
- Ryan:** Doctrinally, what matters to us? A lot of these questions can't be answered if you don't know the answers.
- Selena:** Yeah, you don't know what your church stands for. You don't know their mission statement. You don't know their - what is it? Their beliefs. What is that usually called?
- Ryan:** The beliefs stand.
- Selena:** Their tenets of belief—
- Ryan:** Yeah, their core values or beliefs. Yeah, doctrinal underpinnings. Very important. If you're wondering, by the way—
- Selena:** Every church should have those.
- Ryan:** If your church doesn't have those...red flags. [Selena chuckles] If your church does have those, they should be orthodox, and they should at least affirm the Apostles Creed. We can go on and on about that.
- Selena:** What is a healthy level of involvement in a church? We have been overly involved and it has hurt our marriage. And then I think we've been underly involved. I think that we have—
- Ryan:** There's a balance.
- Selena:** A balance, yeah.

- Ryan:** There's definitely a balance.
- Selena:** You never get it both ways, I think.
- Ryan:** And you need to be discerning. This is one of the things that changes as your season changes. So we were very involved without kids. We helped plant a church. I was leading teams. You were in Young Life as a leader. And then we had kids and we had to phase out of that stuff because we realized it was not sustainable for our sanity in our marriage and as a family.
- Selena:** Right. And then we kind of phase back in helping with kids at church, and helping with the Sunday school type stuff. So, again, what is the purpose of the church? And how do we make ourselves submitted so that in the different seasons that we're faced in marriage and in our life?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Awesome. I think there's—
- Ryan:** We covered a lot of ground here.
- Selena:** We did. You're like, "This might be a short episode." I was like, "Mm-Mhh. That's kind of powerpack to me."
- Ryan:** Couples conversation challenge. Go through all those questions. Have a conversation.
- Selena:** Are you making those available?
- Ryan:** They are right here on the podcast. You can listen to it folks.
- Selena:** Right here. Right here. This is actually part of a project we're working on to do what we're talking about and walk couples through all these different questions. So take heart. It won't be available for at least a few months, but just know that it's coming. And we hope that it's worth the wait by then.
- Selena:** We know.
- Ryan:** Well. [signs]
- Selena:** You know. I'm trying to be a positive marketing person. [chuckles]

Ryan: Okay. Thank you very much. Lord, thank you for this time. I thank you for your word that does govern these types of big questions, that does help govern our expectations, Lord. Where you've given us freedom and agency to think and feel, and to have opinions on these things, I pray that you'd give us grace to navigate that as a couple.

I pray for the couples listening to this that they would navigate those gray areas with grace and with poise and with generosity and charity and love toward one another. I pray for couples that are struggling, the husband, the wife, who maybe feels hopeless and feels like their spouse has grown cold to them. I pray that you would soften their hearts, that you would turn their heart of stone into a heart of flesh and that they would see you work in their lives, and in turn it will point them to a greater relationship with you and to further glorifying your name. And in your name, we pray, Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Thank you for joining us for this episode of The Fierce Marriage podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: All right. Ladies and gentlemen, as usual, we will see you in a few days. I do want to make a note. If you didn't listen to the interview with Matt and Lisa Jacobson that went live last Thursday last week—the episode right before this one—go back and listen to that. It is my favorite. I think it's my favorite interview so far. These people are incredible. Truly incredible. I won't even get into it. But you got to listen to the episode. And they're hilarious.

I just want to give them big hugs and have coffee and talk to them for hours. [Selena chuckles] So anyway, Matt and Lisa Jacobson. Check them out. They are the interview prior to this, episode prior to this. We will see you in a few days. Until then...

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:55:03] <Ending Sequence>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the fierce marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit fiercemarriage.com, or you can find us with our handle, @fiercemarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this blessed you. Take care.

[00:55:27] <Podcast ends>

FIERCE MARRIAGE RESOURCES

Main Site: <https://fiercemarriage.com/>

Shop: <https://shop.fiercemarriage.com/>

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage>

Podcast: <https://fiercemarriage.com/podcast>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/fiercemarriage>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fiercemarriage>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/fiercemarriage>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/fiercemarriage>

Pinterest: <https://pinterest.com/fiercemarriage>

Ask Us Anything: <https://fiercemarriage.com/ask>