

LAUGH MORE!

<https://fiercemarriage.com/laugh-more>

[00:00:00]

Selena: So I said from the beginning, we needed to do an episode about how "The Office" has saved our marriage. *[Ryan chuckles]*

Ryan: What?

Selena: But this is basically like that, but not. We're calling this one sort of laugh more. Because we need to laugh more in our marriage. We need to laugh more in general. But this episode, I'm excited about because nobody makes me laugh like you do. *[Both chuckling]* And nobody has from the beginning.

Ryan: It's true. It's true. It's true. The cool thing about laughter is it can be kind of a destination too, because, you know, it's...I would consider kind of a waypoint on the journey toward connection, right?

Selena: Mhh.

Ryan: It's like we know that if we can just get from here, from maybe this funk we're in, if we laugh together, then I know we can be closer to connecting. In a lot of ways, it does actually facilitate the connection, but man, it's such a gift to laugh.

Selena: It is.

Ryan: This conversation was inspired by a talk I had with a really Good friend of mine just about the need and the desire for laughter. So we hope it helps you. Laughter has played a huge role, like Selena said, in our marriage. And we hope that this can help it play a big role in yours. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:14] <Intro Sequence>

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.
- So like I said, no one makes me laugh like Ryan. Even from the beginning of our little teenage love story, he would give me a card. So I'm like this 16-year-old girl. You know, I invited some friends over for cake or something, and you brought me cards. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** I remember that part so vividly.
- Selena:** I was so excited to read the card from you, of course. *[Ryan laughs]* And like, "Oh, it's going to be so sweet and everything." But it was like—
- Ryan:** It was the picture of a little kid that had been knocked out because they had a water balloon fight but somebody put the water balloons in the freezer.
- Selena:** *[chuckles]* A frozen water balloon.
- Ryan:** I think it was a cartoon. It wasn't an actual *[inaudible]*.
- Selena:** He always gives me funny cards, which is just his *[unintelligible]* from the beginning. It's been like that.
- Ryan:** It's a tradition.
- Selena:** I'm so grateful because it just catches my serious heart off guard *[chuckles]* sometimes and it makes me just all the things.
- Ryan:** Oh, it's funny.
- Selena:** It's funny. It's so funny.
- Ryan:** I'll pour my heart. I went to, when we signed with our publisher—
- Selena:** You do nice things. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** When we signed with our publisher *[Both laughs]* in Grand Rapids—

- Selena:** It's going to be hard to get through this one, people.
- Ryan:** We just had Clementine, our second daughter, and so you couldn't come with me. We went to like talk about marketing our first book we did with them, Fierce Marriage. And I was so bummed. Like that's one of my biggest regrets is not having you there for that. So to kind of commemorate it, I went to the bookstore and I bought this Bible and I had it engraved. And I wrote this long letter, this really schmaltzy kind of thoughtful thing. I didn't think you read the letter until like three days after I gave you the Bible. That sort of thing just doesn't really connect with you is what I've realized.
- Selena:** Well, whose false is that? It's like, "Here's the frozen water balloon card from the beginning." *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** You're like genuine letters, but it doesn't connect with you like laughter does. It's such a unique thing. I don't know, maybe it's not unique.
- Selena:** You got to make me laugh first, and then we connect.
- Ryan:** Yeah. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** See how laughter works in a marriage, people?
- Ryan:** I don't know. Maybe. Maybe.
- Selena:** I'm kidding.
- Ryan:** We'll see. *[Both chuckles]* We're going to talk through what does God's Word say about laughter. Obviously, we want to root ourselves in that. These aren't just human things. I feel like laughter is a grace of God.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** So we're going to talk through that. We're also going to address three questions around this idea of laughter namely, do you feel like you laugh enough? Why don't we laugh? And what does laughter actually do in a marriage? And then we'll talk through some ways to actually laugh more as a couple? We have some tangible suggestions. So that's the roadmap for our conversation today.

But first, I want to say thank you to all of our patrons on Patreon. You guys are making this possible. Today, we actually hired a new transcriptionist, in addition to Heather who's been doing transcriptions for us for a while to just get caught up. And you guys, that costs money, right? These transcriptionists

are very skilled people. It takes a lot of time to make transcriptions that actually make sense and look nice, and all that. So, patrons, you're helping make that possible for people who can't listen, so they can sit down and read and still get godly marriage content for their lives.

You're also helping us just honestly do the podcast. It takes time to edit. It takes software and hardware, and microphones that don't always work right, and all that stuff. So thank you Patreons.

Here's why it's important, not only for the perpetuation of this ministry, which we are dedicated to basically preaching the gospel in the context of marriage, but also we don't know what's going to happen. We have a following on Facebook, on Instagram. We don't know it's going to happen, how long they're going to allow us to keep talking this overtly, and resolutely about the absolute things of Scripture. So by being a Patreon, you're actually giving us avenues of revenue that are not dependent on people who think they know what truth should be. *[Selena chuckles]*

So anyway, go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage and you can become a partner with us. We would enjoy it and appreciate it at 5, 10 bucks a month. That's all it takes. If this content has helped you, please do consider that at patreon.com/fiercemarriage.

Now, if you're strapped for cash, that's totally fine. We understand it. Don't any pressure. Still enjoy the podcast. We're doing it for you. If you still want to help and cash is not something you can depart with at the moment, I totally get it. But you can't leave a rating and a review on iTunes.

Selena: Yeah, super helpful.

Ryan: That's super helpful as well. So let's get into this conversation about laughter.

Selena: About laughter.

Ryan: About laughter. We're just going to laugh for 30 minutes.

Selena: *[chuckles]* Ready, go! *[Ryan chuckles]* I thought you can do like a 30-second laugh or something.

Ryan: Awkward. *[Selena chuckles]* It's like a 15-second kiss.

Selena: You just don't do that on the podcasts.

- Ryan:** 30-second laugh. What do I mean? Let's talk about laughter a little bit because I feel like there are depths, there is different types of laughter. Okay. *[Both chuckles]* I tend to laugh a lot more at my own jokes when I'm like...
- Selena:** Don't we all? Don't we all? *[Both laughing]* You know I laugh at my own jokes because I think they're just funny.
- Ryan:** Well, it's the best and also the worst—
- Selena:** It is. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** When you think you crack a joke, and you're just like, "Man, that joke is really going to nail it," and then—
- Selena:** You mean the Michael Scott it, like you mess it up, and you don't get to the punch line?
- Ryan:** "What's up with you? What's up?" *[chuckles]* I do that all the time.
- Selena:** Or you just think it's way more funny than it actually is. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** So it is kind of like this goofiness where we can be just kind of playful with one another. And that does lead to laughter in general. I don't know how to categorize these things. I'm kind of shooting from the hip here. But you and I are always kind of bantering in a humorous way.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Like you'll always drop the most timely Office quotes. And Selena drops like deep track Office quotes, which I just love.
- Selena:** Just trying to keep up. Just trying to keep up.
- Ryan:** And not number the mainstream ones. Like she does the really obscure ones, which are just the best. So that always keeps our relationship alive.
- Selena:** I was just doing my part. I was just doing my part. *[Both chuckles]*.
- Ryan:** This morning... We're also Jim Carrey fans. Not fans of his politics or anything like that.
- Selena:** His movies.

- Ryan:** But his movies. I was in the shower, you came in, and I said something like, "Hello, puppet." *[Both chuckles]* What did you say to me?
- Selena:** "Yes, Satan."
- Ryan:** "Yes, Satan." *[Both laughs]* From Ace Ventura
- Selena:** That's from Ace Ventura.
- Selena:** "Sorry, sir, you sounded like someone else."
- Ryan:** Clearly, we're mixing Pirates of the Caribbean with...There's a lot of mashups happening in the Frederick household. But it's that sort of things kind of keeps us low level of just humorous banter going back and forth. It's really good for the friendship. Also, there are times when you just have a gut-wrenching like belly-laugh. Those are the best.
- Selena:** You're so funny. You're so funny. *[Ryan chuckles]* I can tickle you in the right spot under your neck and chin, you kind of get those funny laughs. I don't get them often, but they're good.
- Ryan:** They're rare. I wish I could belly laugh every day. I wish there was some—
- Selena:** Don't stop the tickle, sorry. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** You don't tickle me enough. Okay. I don't know if there's a way you could just flip a switch and just laugh hard for like five minutes.
- Selena:** I'm still trying to get Louise's laughs out of her. She sort of gives us some belly laughs occasionally. Dela can make her laugh pretty intensely, and it's so cute to listen to. But she's she kind of like internalizes it and it is kind of like, hehehe. Like a grunt coming out of her. *[Both laughing]*
- Ryan:** It comes from the depths of her abdomen. *[Selena chuckling]*
- Selena:** It's coming though. She's getting on board with the Frederick laughter. But anyways, all that to say that laughter is obviously a gift from God. It's an overflow. I don't want to mix laughter with joy, right? I don't want people to think that it's synonymous. Like joy is laughter. No. The Bible talks about joy and how a joyful heart is good medicine and joy is a fruit of the Spirit. But laughter is an overflow I think of that deeper joy that comes from the Lord, right?
- Ryan:** Mhh.

- Selena:** So again, Ryan, I think you said it well, that there's kind of layers of joy and laughter that we can experience in our marriages. *[Both laughing]* I'm just trying to talk about the things of the Lord. It's fine. Anyways. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** By the way, that's part of the reason you listen to the Fierce Marriage podcast, right? Hopefully we make you laugh a little bit and bring some of that joy.
- Selena:** Sometimes we don't mean to. Sometimes it just happens.
- Ryan:** So Selena is malfeasance.
- Selena:** Yes. So, again, you see the idea about cheerfulness, joyfulness in Proverbs. We're going to talk about just the physical results of joy, right? *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Medically speaking or theologically speaking?
- Selena:** *[chuckling]* Medically speaking, yes. Sorry, I can't even get through it because I'm just trying to hold it together here.
- Ryan:** So what are the problems? So a cheerful heart.
- Selena:** Already said that?
- Ryan:** You did?
- Selena:** I did.
- Ryan:** I must have been fixing the sound.
- Selena:** You must have.
- Ryan:** I was fixing the sound. You read both of those.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Good medicine. All right. So you mentioned that a joyful heart is good medicine. What function does medicine serve? Medicine heals. It heals an ailment. Okay?
- Selena:** Yes
- Ryan:** It is there to bring greater help.

Selena: Obstruct pain.

Ryan: *[Both chuckling]* To obstruct. To hide the pain.

Selena: Hide the pain. Everybody's just falling apart over here.

Ryan: What is that meme of the old man who's mask the pain...I forget the name. Anyway. People who know it know it. If you don't know it, I'm sorry. But yeah, medicine plays a role in our physiological bodies. Good medicine, it cheers up. The joyful heart is good medicine. Yeah, I think you're making an important distinction. We're not just trying to cover it up. Like laugh your way through the pain.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: If there's pain, all right, there needs to be healing. Many times when you take medicine, there's some medicine that brings healing. There's other medicine that just brings relief from the pain. I think both medicines have valid uses, right? It's not that you're taking the painkiller just...when I had a heart problem and when we first off in our marriage, we had moved overseas to do some work. We were making nothing, all that kind of stuff. They didn't know what was wrong and they were giving me medicine to help me feel better.

No one was denying that there was something wrong under the surface; nobody could figure it out. So in the meantime, this medicine helped me feel better. It helped me get some relief from the fevers and the pain and the aching. If you haven't heard our story, I had a bacterial infection on my mitral valve. The long and short of it is that it almost killed me. After a month of trying to deal with it in Switzerland, I finally had to have open-heart surgery. If you want to read all that, just find our book called "Fierce Marriage."

Anyway, the whole point I'm trying to make is that that was good medicine. I was thankful for that medicine. I also knew that medicine wasn't going to heal me.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I knew that in itself, it wasn't going to bring healing. Eventually, once they found the infection, then they could actually get in and the heart surgeon, who is Christ could get in, not literally.

Selena: Oh, the metaphors. Oh, the allegory. *[Both chuckles]*.

Ryan: Yeah. But the heart surgeon could actually get in and clean out the infection, clean up the brokenness in my heart. And then there's prescribed medicine that would actually keep the infection at bay and actually heal the infection that was in the blood. So you can see the parallels here.

Laughter is the type of medicine that will bring happiness. It'll bring joy. It'll bring good things. But without the hands of a skilled heart surgeon, without the killing of the bacteria in our heart, sin, and that's through the cross, through the gospel, it's not sustainable.

Selena: I want to jump in here because I think that this is kind of leading us into why we don't laugh. But the first question is kind of a yes or no question for you as a listener. Do you feel like you laugh enough with your spouse? Or does it feel awkward to laugh? Yes, or no. Do you laugh enough together? Yes, or no. Or is it awkward?

Ryan: So this is one of those questions that if you're the couple that laughs easily and often you're going to be like, "Well, of course, how could someone not laugh together?"

Selena: Right. But if you're not laughing together, you're going to be like, "Yeah, that's awkward to joke together. So how do we...?"

Ryan: You're wondering how in the world you get to that.

Selena: Yeah. How did we get here?

Ryan: How are people that free? Or what is going on? Or what are you missing out?

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: The point is, we have to kind of empathize and realize there are different people listening.

Selena: Right. And it's going to take your temperature. So starting with why don't you laugh together more, why don't we as a couple laugh together? You were kind of starting to touch on that. There's disconnect. Kind of there's a lack of, you know, we haven't invested intentional time together maybe, we aren't growing spiritually together, we haven't been physically intimate or mentally close or emotionally engaged with one another. So maybe there's some sort of disconnect either not so deep level or maybe a really deep level. Those are all reasons why you wouldn't laugh.

Ryan: Yeah, I can definitely attest to if we're not being playful with each other, it's not normal. Something's wrong. Unless, of course, we're like at a funeral or *[chuckling]* something like that.

Selena: Of course. You shouldn't about a funeral.

Ryan: I'm not laughing. I'm saying that it's funny in a context that it is not appropriate.

Selena: Yes. He laughs at all the wrong times. This is a theme in our marriage.

Ryan: Yeah. I kind of have a dark sense of humor.

Selena: This is a theme in our marriage. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: We've been working through it. But here we go.

Ryan: Okay. Okay. So yeah, disconnection. The next one is hurt.

Selena: Yeah. Which comes from this obvious disconnect, right? Maybe there's an emotional...

Ryan: Which could be cautioning the disconnection.

Selena: Right. Right. There may be an emotional hurt. Maybe you're dealing with a frustration or a breach of trust. Something there.

Ryan: So you're talking about hurt within the relationship, not just generalized hurt?

Selena: There could be. There could be like an external factor that's producing the hurt. Maybe there's family issues or maybe, you know, a friendship that's gone away. There's always something that can contribute to the hurt. But I think within your marriage, that can be one of the bigger factors obviously for why you don't laugh together, why you're feeling like there's a lack of joy between each other.

The other one is lack of friendship. So at some point, you may have just stopped enjoying each other's company and personhood and perhaps you have not investigated why. "Why are we in this funk? Why can't we laugh together? Why does it feel awkward to laugh together?"

Ryan: It does presuppose that there was a friendship of this nature before the marriage. Because there are couples that don't have that sort of friendship.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: And they have a friendship or it's more of courtship and not necessarily a friendship. So there is maybe the sense that it's not there because it's never been there. And you just need to build it. And that's the beautiful thing is you can build a friendship.

Selena: Laughter and joy are one of those stones to help build.

Ryan: It's not too late.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You haven't missed the train.

Selena: No.

Ryan: It just might look different. And you can still get on board of that friendship. Also, like you said, the burdens of life have choked out your friendship and you've stopped making room to enjoy one another. That's why dating is so important. We talked about this a lot. Dating is not an end in itself. Dating is a means to an end. You're getting yourself out of your rhythms of life, you're spending a little extra money—if you have it. Or you're just spending a little extra time, or a little extra thought around getting at one another. And that's the whole point of that is to develop your relationship and develop your friendship. I think friendship in marriage cannot be highly valued enough. It is so very valuable.

Selena: Very understated.

Ryan: Very understated.

Selena: And underestimated.

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Maybe one day you'll estimate it.

Ryan: That could be because of the lack of trust too. Back in the hurt one that you were talking about, if someone's wounded...think about an animal who's wounded, right? If you try to help the animal, they're going to lash out. They

don't trust that you're trying to help them. Not that you're an animal in a marriage. I'm the animal. *[Both chuckles]* But what I'm saying is that hurt will oftentimes breed a lack of trust or a broken down trust. So recognizing that is the first step in rebuilding it.

The next one, this one's big for me personally. I feel like for husbands...well, I can't be general. It affects everyone. Heavy laden with burdens. All right? So if I am...

Selena: There's a lot of things to feel heavy about lately, people. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yes. I mean, just the last—

Selena: The pandemic between the...

Ryan: The unrest?

Selena: ...all the politics and the unrest in our country, it is very easy to feel very heavy. At least I've been feeling the heaviness in and out. It comes and goes. Trying to learn to navigate in this new world that we're finding ourselves in and how it's always changing and how it...Yes, it always has been changing, but we're all feeling these bigger touchpoints I think with the pandemic, with the politics and things we're all trying to figure out how to have peace. right?

Ryan: Mhh.

Selena: Is it okay to feel joyful in the circumstances when others are hurting at a deep level?

Ryan: To answer that question, I do want to say, yes for one for a number of reasons. Our joy is not conditional on any circumstance. Our joy is based on Christ.

Selena: It's a fruit of the Spirit, yes.

Ryan: It's a fruit of our knowledge of Christ and our knowledge of all He's done as a result of that in our hearts.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: That's deep, deep joy. Now does that mean we are just laughing everything off and nothing affects us? Absolutely, not.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Our joy is not contingent on happiness. Happiness and joy are two different things. And laughter is connected in different ways.

Selena: I'm actually going to jump down in our rundown here just for a minute because it fits into this point and we can skip it once we go down to it. But Nehemiah 8 talks about the joy of the Lord is my strength. When I looked up this verse, I thought for sure it was a Proverbs or something. And I was like, "Nehemiah? What? Okay." *[Both chuckles]*

There's an article in Christianity Today that talks about the joy of the Lord and kind of breaks down this section of Scripture. It says, "Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: So when Ezra was reading the law of the people, it basically showed them their sin. The law, which is there to show us how broken we are, how in need of a Savior we are. So again, we're seeing that—I'm trying to bring all of this together—how we can have this deep joy that comes from the Lord in the darkest of moments. So Ezra is reading this law to them and they are saying, "Wow, we are so far from where we need to be." Right? And I think we can all identify with those feelings.

Ryan: There's a piece in there I don't want to gloss over in that passage. "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drink and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy in the Lord. Do not grieve for the joy off the Lord is your strength." Go and enjoy choice food. Stop scrolling. *[laughs]*

Selena: Sorry.

Ryan: My goodness. I'm trying to read. "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drink and send some to those who have nothing prepared." So he's compelling them to share it. He's compelling them to take this goodness and go and take it to those who don't have the goodness.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And the joy of the Lord is your strength. Of course, in this case, choice foods, sweet drink, I would liken that to just this lightness of heart. So, "Yes, yes, this

grievous thing is happening right now—this thing that we want to grieve over. Grief will have its time. This is not the time for that. Do not grieve for joy the Lord is your strength." So look instead to Him in this moment. Again, not ignoring the reality of what we're facing, we're just looking to a greater reality of the fact that Christ is who He says He is, He's done what He said He would do, and we are His by His grace alone.

Selena: Yeah. This article talks about when Ezra was reading it to the people that produced sorrow, because their lives and behavior were not in alignment with the law. But instead of being rebuked and condemned, they were instructed to celebrate. Why would the reading of the law, all of the sorrow, why would he say like, "rejoice? This is the day is holy." Because and I think it's obviously a reflection of or a foreshadowing—I'm trying to find the words—of the fact that we can have joy in this law that shows us our weakness because of Jesus. It shows us our need for a Savior that much more so.

Ryan: Okay, go with me here. You could say that laughter in light of grief is not glossing over a reality. But instead, it's seeing the truest reality. It's even truer than the circumstance. The truest reality is I am a sinner, and I need saving. And I have been saved. So that deep, true darker reality actually gives us a deeper, truer, brighter joy than any worldly circumstance could ever bear on our hearts as Christians.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And that is the joy of the Lord.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's amazing.

Selena: And the joy of the Lord is our strength. He goes on to talk about how is it our strength. Again, it's based on the gospel. Like we can rejoice in the love that our father has for us, his children. So I think, again, rooting ourselves in that, knowing that the hard circumstances that we're dealing with today are not something that needs to inhibit our joy, but it can bolster our joy and deepen our joy I think in the Lord, knowing what truth we rest in—the ultimate truth. We rest in the Gospel. We rest in the unfinished work of Christ.

Ryan: Man, I'm thankful for that. I want to read these other verses.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Zephaniah 3:17, "For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs." Psalm 16, verse 11, "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Isaiah 12:3, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

Everything that you've just said, I mean, that's echoing this massive story of Scripture. It's all about Christ. It's all about God's Redemption of His people. As we go and draw from the wells of salvation, we will do so with joy. The thing is, are we drawing from the wealth of salvation? That's the thing. What is the well of salvation? It is salvation itself. But it's the fruit of everything as a result of that salvation.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. All those fruits are there. It's amazing how self-control plays a role in the rest of the fruits.

Selena: Right

Ryan: I am choosing joy in this moment. I'm not denying the grief, but I'm choosing to focus on the joy and to give it to God in that way—to trust Him with it.

Selena: It's not easy to do. It's not easy to do.

Ryan: It's not fake it till you make it.

Selena: No.

Ryan: It is the opposite. It is see the reality for what it is till you make it. That's what it is.

Selena: The reality is that Jesus is king and we can rest in His sovereignty.

Ryan: Yes. We had talked about this idea of - what is it? Heavy laden with burdens, and how the joy of the Lord is our strength. This came to mind when we were talking about this. This is how Jesus called us to have the faith like children. Super articulate right now.

Selena: Nope, it's okay. Let me read the Scripture. Matthew 18:1-6. The title is "Who is the greatest?" "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the

greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Like everybody, disciples are going to ask, "Who's the greatest here, Jesus?"

Ryan: "Let's just get down to brass tacks."

Selena: "Let's get some clarity around this." "And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Ryan: Go by a little fast.

Selena: There we go. Truth Jesus.

Ryan: I love the picture of children and the childlike faith. Having young kids right now is so vivid.

Selena: Sorry, I'm just reading the Scripture with new eyes. Obviously, yes, having kids. I forget who, maybe it was Matthew, whoever asked this question, "Who's the greatest?" Jesus doesn't even answer him. He calls a child over, puts him on his lap, puts him in the midst of this whole questioning, and says, "Truly I say unto you..." So He not only tells him but He shows him.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: He first shows him.

Ryan: And whenever he uses the word "truly," it's time to listen up. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "Truly, I say to you, it is this child, so become like children, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven." Let's talk about the joy that children have, which to me is just profound. Children laugh. Why do children laugh? I mean, hopefully, a child laughs. If a child's not laughing, something's wrong, usually with the child, whether it's emotional, physiological, or circumstantial.

Selena: Yeah, they could be broken.

- Ryan:** But a healthy child laughs. Why do they do that? I think they're carefree. I can count on one hand the times in my life as an adult that I felt completely carefree. But have faith in Christ, having faith like a child would lead me to that place more often to be completely carefree and joyful as a result.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Because to me, you can't fake laughter in that sense. You can't fake joy in that sense. It has to come from a place of truly being carefree.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** The other thing about our kids that I love is that they can be running around and I'll say, "Hey, come here," and I'll give them something. Whether it's a piece of cheese or some chips or candy of some sort—
- Selena:** That's what he feeds them, people. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yep, that's just for dinner tonight. Cheese and chips and candy. *[Selena chuckles]* They don't even look at it anymore. I'll just put it in their mouth and they start chewing, which is really fun to mess with them. *[chuckles]* I'm starting to mess up with them. But the amount of trust that's there, because they...Louisa I was holding her on the couch today. She was sitting up, she doesn't crawl yet.
- Selena:** Almost.
- Ryan:** She was sitting there and she kind of joked and jived in a way she lost her balance. So she started falling back. Well, when she started falling back, she just kind of like laid back, and she was just going to let it happen. Because she's never fallen back...Well, I won't say never because she has bumped her head on the floor sometimes.
- Selena:** *[chuckles]* Starfish-like reaction.
- Ryan:** Yeah, she just kind of leans back into it. She's like this is happening. Of course, I caught her because she was on the couch, and I was sitting there with her. Just that amount of trust that kids have is just so profound. So what Jesus is saying here is that we need to have faith like children. I think we're trying to draw the line between where does childlike faith and laughter. Where do those intersect? And as a married couple, how can we have childlike faith and more laughter as a result of salvation to the health of our marriage, to the health of each other?

- Selena:** So good.
- Ryan:** So let's get into that. So what does laughter actually do? I think we've talked about this quite a bit, but let's go through this quickly for posterity. We talked about why we don't laugh together. What does laughter actually do? Emotionally, it lightens the heart. Proverbs 17:22. We've covered that. Physically...
- Selena:** A lot of stress relief from laughter.
- Ryan:** Talk about that.
- Selena:** The Mayo Clinic says it's no joke. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Do they make mayonnaise there?
- Selena:** They make mayonnaise.
- Ryan:** Funny joke. *[Both chuckles]*
- Selena:** But stress relief from laughter. A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data is mounting about the positive things laughter can do.
- Ryan:** Like what?
- Selena:** There's some short term benefits. It can stimulate many organs. They say laughter enhances your intake of oxygen in rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- Ryan:** Some of this stuff just feels made up but I'll go with it. *[Selena chuckles]* It's the Mayo Clinic. They're trying to meet that Google word count. Of course, it releases more oxygen.
- Selena:** It can activate and relieve your stress response. So it says a rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response. It can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result, a good relaxed feeling. That's true. Sooth tension: laughter can also stimulate circulation aid, muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.
- Ryan:** Can't argue with that. I also think lots of other things can stimulate circulation and muscle relaxation. I'm just saying.

- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** These articles always make me laugh because there's...Hey, it's making me laugh.
- Selena:** Well, you know, it's doing its job.
- Ryan:** It'll make you breathe more.
- Selena:** I think one thing that's kind of funny about this is saying that improve your sense of humor. Like humor can be learned. And that's so true. I don't want to overlook that *[chuckles]* because...
- Ryan:** So that's one of the reasons?
- Selena:** ...your humor has gotten better over the years in most ways. And then you got your dad jokes, which are you know...you got to work on that.
- Ryan:** I've only been a dad for six and a half years. I've got some learning to do.
- Selena:** Has some learning to do is to improve that sense of humor.
- Ryan:** So what's brown and sticky?
- Selena:** You know.
- Ryan:** What's brown and sticky.
- Selena:** Syrup?
- Ryan:** A stick. Come on.
- Selena:** *[chuckles]* There it is.
- Ryan:** *[chuckling]* There it is. Okay. So how do we improve our sense of humor? What does Mayo Clinic say? It says, "Put humor on your horizon. Find a few simple items such as photos, greeting cards, or comic strips that make you chuckle." *[laughing]*
- Selena:** We just look at Office memes. That's pretty much our way.
- Ryan:** That's my Instagram feed actually.
- Selena:** Also when autocorrect text, those are so hilarious.

- Ryan:** It's funny when people backpedal. That's a funny thing.
- Selena:** Yes. Backpedaling on the autocorrect text. Just look that up. That's some funny stuff right there. Anyways.
- Ryan:** Share a laugh is what the Mayo Clinic says. Make it a habit to spend time with friends who make you laugh.
- Selena:** Good thing you're my friend. Okay. We should probably move on.
- Ryan:** Some of these are pretty lame. Browse through your local bookstore or library selection of joke books and add a few jokes to your list that you can share with friends.
- Selena:** I don't know.
- Ryan:** Can I add some talking points in here because—
- Selena:** *[chuckles]* Of course.
- Ryan:** I feel like not all types of laughter are helpful.
- Selena:** So like laughing at your wife when she's in the middle of a frustrating moment and pouring her heart out and then she throws a hot sandwich at your head.
- Ryan:** Are you speaking from experience? *[Both laughing]*
- Selena:** It's very pointed.
- Ryan:** It's very specific. Here's my own take on this. And I think it's probably other people's take as well. Laughter at someone else's expense I feel like is not true laughter. I feel like it is...
- Selena:** Oh, yeah, no.
- Ryan:** ...counterfeit laughter. That doesn't feel like true joy to me. It feels like it's cheat.
- Selena:** Yeah, there's an aspect, I think, of purity, right?
- Ryan:** Yes. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Selena: I wish The Office is questionable, people. We would definitely admit that.

Ryan: Well, here's why I think The Office is a little different. Because it's a mockumentary. It's literally making fun of itself. It's laughter at its own expense. Like everybody knows that it is silly.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: No one's taking it seriously. So they're caricatures of stereotypes that we have for like managers and different salespeople. And that's why to me it's funny. I feels there are some jokes that are just crude that I don't find particularly funny. Which to me, crudeness is at someone's expense on some level. So sarcasm tends to be this way. Sarcasm is always at someone else's expense and it's always one-sided. It's the lowest form of humor. Sarcasm.

So, husbands, if you're a sarcastic person, you have a really dry sense of humor, I love dry sense of humor, like our friend Jake. He's the driest guy...Like we have so many dry text exchanges that we're just both just chuckling. But that's because we have that unique friendship. So I think it's important to understand that not all laughter...

Selena: Created equal.

Ryan: Yeah. You can definitely be laughing on one side of your marriage and your spouse is suffering. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Just dying inside.

Ryan: Dying inside. Don't laugh at that.

Selena: Cry for help. No, but truly, yes, you shouldn't be laughing at your spouse's expense. I mean, unless, you know...Sometimes we do laugh together. Like you kind of got to get permission. Not sarcastically but like, if you are trying to like eat something and it goes all over your face, I'm not just pointing and laughing just yet.

Ryan: *[inaudible]* "It's my life now. Eat some soap."

Selena: Eat some soap. No. I kind of might giggle, but then I'll wait and see what your response is.

Ryan: Because I don't want to take it personally.

- Selena:** And then if you need help, then I'll help you.
- Ryan:** "I'm having a sensitive evening!"
- Selena:** Sometimes.
- Ryan:** [chuckling 00:36:39] I think a rule of thumb is that laughter that we're talking about, the healthy relationship, building joy, welling up with a new laughter is edifying. It's not tearing down. It's a building up. It can even be cheesy and still building up. You can still laugh at each other and still be building up. The point is that just you can't just be at their expense exclusively.
- Selena:** Right. So let's spend a few minutes on how we can laugh more as a couple. Because you had a few things listed down here, and I think it's kind of fun to talk about. Which we probably already have been kind of sprinkling in throughout the whole episode. But here's some tangible ideas of how we can laugh more. So smile more. If you're not careful, we can just forget to be grateful for each other.
- Ryan:** Hmm. That's good. Okay.
- Selena:** Show them your faces. And now that we all have to be masked up again, we can't. You have to smile more with your eyes, people. Smile more with your eyes.
- Ryan:** You go to get them crow's feet going. Lots of eye wrinkles. Big smiles, people. I want to be a wrinkly faced old man from all the laughing and smiling I do with our family.
- Selena:** It's already happening. *[Both laughing]*
- Ryan:** Okay. So smile more. Number to joke around and be playful. Okay, so playfulness, joking around. Selena. Selena...*[laughing]*
- Selena:** I'm too serious. I get it. Don't take life too seriously. That's why we got married.
- Ryan:** If I just start kind of poking at you, like literally poking at you, pushing you around, that's being playful, and you start pushing back.
- Selena:** Sometimes things don't go very well.
- Ryan:** Sometimes I get bitten. *[laughing]* Don't poke a bear.
- Selena:** Don't poke a bear.

- Ryan:** Mama Bear. The old towel whipping thing tends to be a hoot. Except for I'm 10 times better...
- Selena:** Because when we were teenagers and we all swim and pools, dip the corner of the talent pool, and we get in these fights. And the guys would all just go like crazy on each other. And I'd do one snap and then you have to run for your life. This is what happens in our household.
- Ryan:** *[chuckling]* Because she'll be feeling frisky and she'll give me a little...
- Selena:** No, you start feeling frisky and do it. And then I start doing it back and you're just like—
- Ryan:** Then the floodgates open.
- Selena:** You get mad.
- Ryan:** I don't get mad. I get even. *[Both laughs]*
- Selena:** I don't want back.
- Ryan:** I say, "Stop."
- Ryan:** I just want you to stand here while I whip you with the towel.
- Selena:** "No, thanks. No, Ryan. Okay?" *[chuckling]*
- Ryan:** I just want to whip you the towel with no consequences whatsoever. I want all of the benefits and none of the drawbacks. *[laughing]*
- Selena:** [inaudible]
- Ryan:** Playful. Sometimes with spontaneity. That kind of requires you both to have a sense of playfulness, right? *[chuckles]* If you're walking on a dock on a romantic [inaudible] somebody feeling playful, and you push the other person in...
- Selena:** Probably not great. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** That might be a little heavy-handed. I always think of Winston on New Girl.
- Selena:** Is that okay show to reference?

- Ryan:** It's not a great show. But Winston is a hilarious character. They call him Frank Sinatra. *[laughing]* He calls himself Frank Sinatra. *[Selena laughs]* And they always make fun of him because he doesn't know how to prank. He either goes way too light or way too far. Anyway, I won't get into it.
- Selena:** That's funny.
- Ryan:** So you got another balance between playfulness and kind of ruining them. *[Both laughing]* Not only that. That takes truly having the relationship and reading each other. So joke around people.
- Selena:** Yes, it's not easy to joke with each other.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** And if it's been a long time since you laughed, then you got to find some stuff to start laughing about.
- Ryan:** Which for us, it's The Office. We talked about it...
- Selena:** Yeah. That's a mutual ground.
- Ryan:** ...but that's kind of become our safe place. This might sound silly. Okay, you guys, we talk a lot about Scripture. We're not trying to be too surfacey. But I'm just saying very practically, we go to places we know that will make us laugh and shows our grace of God in this way. It kind of takes our minds off of the heaviness. I don't know what the equivalent would have been in Bible times because clearly they didn't have Netflix. Maybe they had gestures. The king probably had some sort of gesture. That's a medieval thing.
- Selena:** Maybe animals were super funny to watch too.
- Ryan:** *[chuckles]* I don't know. But you focus your mind elsewhere. So for us, watching The Office together, or Parks and Rec, something like that, we're dating ourselves. This one's really practical too is if you have kids, play with them. It's really hard to have a heavy heart when you are invested in playing with your kids. Specifically, physically playing with them not just...playing games is one thing but like our girls are six and a half, almost four, and not even a year old, they love to wrestle. Whenever I'm expending energy, when I'm the carnival ride, when I swing them around by wrestle, and I'm exhausted, the more exhausted I am, the more fun we just have.
- Selena:** The more fun it is, yes. Yes!

Ryan: And it's really hard for me to stay heavy in those moments. It helps me to laugh genuinely. To tickle them, to hear them laugh, and then they'll try to get me back. It really is good for the soul. Then usually that will breed laughter in our whole family for we're all laughing. So you're going to read something, it looks like.

Selena: I was just looking up because you're talking about your mind and laughter and how it kind of...A lot of the battles I think and the heaviness starts in our minds and into our hearts. So I was just looking at Philippians 4. Obviously, I should have this memorized by now, right? Philippians 4:4, says "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Verse 8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

So I guess I was just trying to look for like some of those filters of joy. And I know that The Office has not great topics, and there's some crude humor there. And we're not saying like, this is the way to a good marriage. We're saying find those things that that kind of make you laugh together that you can see that...I don't want to put these verses and that show together. So I'm trying to break this apart a little bit after I brought it together. *[chuckles]*

But if there's something in you that you're trying to laugh together, but it doesn't feel true, or it doesn't feel honorable, right or pure, or something that you, I don't know, having kids really changes your sense of humor on a lot of things. We all have to ask the Lord to kind of weed some of that stuff out of us. But really, again, just the goal of laughter, like you said, I think it has a lot of purposes. It can really lead us together when we might be feeling apart, or it can really kind of be that glue that has kind of kept us together in a lot of ways.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: So again, it's a gift. It's from an overflowing deep part of our joy that can be found in the Lord. Then I think that when it's just pure and it's from deep

down, there is something just holy about it I think. I don't know. Just trying to...

Ryan: The holiness of laughter. Don't go away from Philippians 4. You have to remember that early church, right? The context that's happening and why Paul is writing to them. In many cases, I think Paul was in chains writing this. And he's exhorting them. And they're undergoing persecution, and they're dealing with heresy, and they're dealing with all kinds of schisms that are already happening in the early church. And Paul is saying in this encouragement, this prayer, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious."

So how is joy and reasonableness, and anxiousness, and prayer, and supplication, and thanksgiving, and letting your requests be known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses our understanding? All these things are interrelated, right?

Selena: Mhh.

Ryan: And what is the common thread between all these things? If you have a marriage that is not filled with joy, and you are anxious about everything, what are we missing? I guess that's the big message here is that if we're not enjoying one another, if we're not enjoying our marriage for the gift that it is, if we're not laughing...some couples laugh more than others, I get that. But whatever that version is for you, whatever that thing is that brings you closer together, if we're missing that, then I would go read Philippians 4 and ask, "What are my circumstances? How am I giving them more power than I should be? How am I not attributing to God the power and glory that I should be? And what does that look like in our marriage?"

Selena: Right? Yeah! You said something good too here on our little rundown here of just how, you know, the point of laughter is an investment in your marriage. Your health and the health of your household. Like, it's okay to have fun. It's okay to enjoy God's grace. I think even and especially in the times that feel like they feel these days, you know, with the heaviness. I mean, Paul, the context that he's writing in is not far from where we are today. We still are humans. We're still are dealing with how to live peaceably with each other, to live out the gospel, to live out truth in a world that would have truth be relative. That's a hard thing to do.

We can't just be serious 1,000% of the time. I can't, I need that sort of breath. I need to laugh. I need to sort of look up and be lightened and allow just joy to

be rooted in me, but also to kind of overtake me in some areas that I might kind of seep into myself.

Ryan: "To overtake." I think that's really good language. Because we can do these things and feel like we've done these things without truly resigning ourselves to this truth that God is still in control and he's still good. And that the joy that He's said is ours is actually ours.

Selena: Right. One last thought on this conversation. I think that it can feel vulnerable, I think to laugh, especially if you haven't laughed in a long time.

Ryan: Sure. Or if you have damaged trust or hurt.

Selena: Right. You feel like you might be giving up ground or something.

Selena: Yeah, yeah.

Selena: So I think I just want to encourage anybody who's at that point to just let go a little bit. Just let go and trust the Lord. And trust that if you do laugh, you're not giving up the battles that you're facing, but you're actually...go ahead.

Ryan: You're advancing the battle I'd say.

Selena: Yes, towards unity.

Ryan: And you're not compromising the healing. I think you're helping the healing in maybe ways you might not understand before you let go in that way. So maybe it's a call into a step of faith.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: All right. So what's couple's conversation challenge? I think talk about the laughter culture of your home. Do you laugh enough? How does your laughter over the last week compare to the laughter over the first week of knowing one another? Look at the difference there and maybe think about why is that different? Okay? We've talked about in this episode. It could be some different baggage that you've accumulated over the years or hurts or unforgiveness or burdens, worldly burdens, or you've just forgotten your friendship. Talk through those things.

Then make a laughing plan. Okay, this is totally from the hip. *[Selena laughs]* Where are you going to go when you realize that your connection needs strengthening, and laughter is the way to do that? What are you going to do? What is your plan for laughing together? Talk through that, think through that.

I'm confident it will bless and strengthen your marriage. Let's pray and we'll call it an episode.

Lord, I'm thankful for this gift that you've given us of laughter and the effects of it. It's a grace of yours to be able to look at another person or look at our spouse and to think common thoughts and to laugh over those common thoughts and to then have our hearts made joyful through that. So thank you, Lord. I pray that you'd help us biblically speaking what laughter is and just the gift that it is.

I pray for couples who feel like laughter is absent or joy is absent or unity or trust or love can even feel like it's absent in their marriage. I pray that you would strengthen them, that they would find joy in the truth that you love them. They would find joy in the truth of an eternity secured in you. And that from there, you would bring them to a place of having a lighter heart, a childlike faith, that just trust a good Father, runs to your feet, sits on your lap, and takes everything that you give with complete and utter trust, Lord.

I pray that wives and husbands be marked by trusting you first and having a marriage that is built on that trust. Lord, we thank you again for this time. I pray that our words will be fruitful, and the lives of our listeners. And thank for each one, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Thanks for joining us, ladies and gentlemen. If you're looking for something really tangible to grow in your connection, check out 31daypursuit.com. That's 31daypursuit.com. There's a pair of books: "Husband in Pursuit" and "Wife in Pursuit." You can get both for I think 23 bucks. It's 31 days of activities that you're doing to actually pursue your spouse in light of how Christ has pursued you.

Selena: There might be some funny ones in there.

Ryan: There are some really fun ones in there. There's also some pretty intense ones, I'll say. The whole point is to get at each other, to get down into the depths of each other's hearts, and experience one another in deeper, new ways. Go check that out. As usual, thank you for joining us for The Fierce Marriage podcast. This episode is--!

Ryan: In the can!

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until then--!

Selena: Stay fierce!

[00:50:36] <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.

[00:50:59] <podcast ends>

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:20:31]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Nehemiah 8

- **[00:20:43]**
 - Article reference
 - ChristianityToday:
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/how-can-we-have-joy-bible-talks-about.html>

- **[00:25:16]**
 - Scripture References.
 - Zephaniah 3:17, NLT
 - Psalm 16:11, NLT
 - Isaiah 12:3, NIV
 - Matthew 18:1-6, ESV
 - Proverbs 17:22, NIV

- **[00:31:10]**
 - Article reference
 - Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>

- **[00:41:43]**
 - Scripture References.
 - Philippians 4:4, ESV

- **[00:49:53]**
 - Book recommendation
 - 31daypursuit.com: <https://shop.fiercemarriage.com/products/the-31-day-pursuit-challenge-two-book-couples-bundle>

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