

KNOW YOUR SOIL

<https://fiercemarriage.com/know-your-soil>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: "Love as distinct from 'being in love' — is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will, and deliberately strengthened by habit." That's a quote by the venerable C. S. Lewis. So what is the difference here? We're talking about knowing each other in really profound ways. Okay, Selene has some really good questions around knowing each other to the point where you can actually speak into each other's lives in a fruit-bearing way.

Selena: Yeah. Well, we've been talking about that, right? We've been talking a lot about meaningful risk. I feel like over the last couple of episodes, we've been talking about laughing together to promote vulnerability and connection for all of these reasons. But all of this takes some sort of knowledge about each other, some sort of knowing, and understanding. You know, what makes my husband laugh? Or do I know how my spouse responds to stress? And how can I serve them in that way? How can I love them in that way? It's not automatic. We aren't just going to think and know, right? We have to be intentional about our sources.

Ryan: So we're going to look at the correlation between knowledge and love. Can we know what we don't love? And how do we get to know, in the name of love, each other? So we're going to ask all these questions and we're going to process through them on the other side.

[00:01:22] <Intro>

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 can we know what we don't love? Do you mean can we not love what we don't know? Can we love what we don't know?

Ryan: Yeah. "Can we love what we know?" is what I meant to say. I don't remember what I said on the other side.

Selena: Can we love what we don't know? It's gone. *[Ryan laughs]* It's on the other side.

Ryan: I mean, I love how Lewis formed these sentences. It's a deep unity. Okay. I don't mean to exergy C. S. Lewis here. But it's a deep unity and it goes below the surface. He's talking about love versus being in love. Love is maintained by the will. "Maintained" meaning that left on its own, our love will probably devolve into something less than where it should be. So, it takes some maintenance. We have to maintain it. By the way, we have to be outside of ourselves acting against our base desires. We have to will this thing to be.

And he says, "Deliberately strengthened by habit." Again, "maintained by the will" and "deliberately" are very similar. Strengthened—so the more we love deliberately by the habits we did deliberately choose, the stronger the love will become. So what's the correlation then? Or how can we as married people, in light of scripture, in light of the gospel, in light of God's view of love know each other with the heart of loving each other more selflessly, more fully, more circumspectly?

Selena: Well, because culture is like, the more you know, the more you're going to hate. Right? The more you're not going to like that person. At least I feel like the message is more fear-based, I think, of like, oh, gosh, when you find these things out about your spouse, you know, that 5, 10-year mark, oh, it's going to be rough for that. Even that first newlywed, that first year, it's like the more you know, the harder it is. Well, yes and no, I guess would be my answer. Yes and no. Yeah, we'll get into that, I suppose.

Ryan: Yeah, Yeah. I do want to make mention of our awesome patrons. Thank you so much for joining patreon.com/fiercemarriage. If you're not aware of what that is. It's just a community of listeners and readers who say, "Hey, we want to see the gospel continue to be proclaimed through Fierce Marriage, and we're going to put our own backing into it. So there's about 270 of you. That

number tends to go down to the beginning of the month because it's this weird the way the thing works. But the point I'm trying to make is, we're just so thankful.

If you want to be a part of that, we would ask two things: you pray about it with your spouse and see if that's something that God is leading you to do. If He does lead you, we believe that He's going to lead those whom He wants to be a part of this. If He does lead you, then we just ask you to visit patreon.com/fiercemarriage. And that goes on \$2 on up. Anything helps. We just love locking arms with you.

If you don't feel like doing that, but you still do appreciate the content, you can always leave a rating and a review. Please do leave a rating and review on iTunes. Podcasts are going crazy. There's a lot of podcasts. There's a ton of true crime stuff. There's a ton of political podcast. There's even the office ladies, where they talk about behind the scenes, which I haven't actually listened to, because I feel like there's something pure about not knowing. I also don't have time for it. So it's really important now more than ever to stand out among the noise. And your rating and your review really do help that. So there's our pitch.

Okay, here's what's happening in the Frederick household.

Selena: A lot.

Ryan: A lot's happening.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: This episode is a little bit of the fruit of that.

Selena: The Lord decided...No. *[Ryan chuckles]* Somehow I was awake at three o'clock this morning, and that was just the greatest and the worst. Baby was sleeping. Everything was great and fine, just my mind started waking me up. Some of you know how that goes. So I decided, "Okay, well, I'll start praying. That sounds like a good idea."

Ryan: Usually is the quick ticket to the sleepy train.

Selena: I hate to say that. Well, had lots to pray about, then my mind starts going. "O Lord, I pray for my children. O Lord, I pray for all these fears and worries started spiraling." Then I was just like, "Okay, well I'm going to read the Bible." I get on my phone to read the Bible because I can't read in...

- Ryan:** But the light.
- Selena:** Yeah, you can't turn the light on. I know, I know.
- Ryan:** The phone light is also light.
- Selena:** The phone light is promoting the non-sleep. So anyways, we're not just going to go there. So started reading Hebrews because we're trying to finish up reading Hebrews together and I just keep taking forever and ever. I know. Then I started reading Romans 8 for another variety of reasons. Then the Lord was reminding me yesterday about how I was moving plants around because we're trying to get ready to go on this little mini kind of trip. Of course, I was like, "I need to move my place around. Of course, naturally." Ah, all the things you think you need to do.
- Ryan:** Have we shared about how we have a raised garden as our first year?
- Selena:** It's the first year we've had a raised garden. Yeah, but I didn't move stuff into.
- Ryan:** That thing is the flippin Amazon jungle over there.
- Selena:** It is. It's because we get so much sun in our front yard. We're south facing and we just get a lot of sun.
- Ryan:** And we also got the soil from the local...I don't know. Soilery? *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** That's a [comagro?]. Tagro as it's known around these parts.
- Ryan:** But that stuff, I mean, I don't know what they put into it.
- Selena:** It's like magic.
- Ryan:** It's probably a lot like [inaudible]. I don't want to know what's in the soil. I just want to know that it works. Holy smokes, that thing's taken off. Everybody that comes over is like, "What are you doing with your garden because that's unreal?"
- Selena:** I just threw all the seed packets in and I was like, "Here we go. We're going to learn about thinning."
- Ryan:** Some flowers are like six feet tall.
- Selena:** I know. I didn't think anything.

- Ryan:** I planted it like six months ago.
- Selena:** So it's like crazy. But that's actually beside the point of what I was talking about with the garden. It incorporates a little bit.
- Ryan:** So there's context. People know that garden is actually a fairly new thing in the Fredrick world.
- Selena:** Well isn't doing a garden #pandemic? Right? Everybody's like, "Okay, cool. Now it's a good time to plant a garden? But I was doing it before all of that. I was like, "You know what we're really going to this time here? We're going to do it." *[both laughs]*
- So anyways, yesterday I was moving some plants because I have these flowers that go from green to brown. There's maybe been three blooms on them the last three years they've been in the backyard in this little garden area that we have. I'm like, "Man, why won't they just stand up and grow?" They keep multiplying, they keep coming back, but they just don't grow.
- Ryan:** They don't bear the beautiful fruit that you expect flowers to bear.
- Selena:** Yes. So I'm sitting there, I'm digging them out trying to get all the roots out looking at the soil underneath, which is more like mud and dirt and rocks. Obviously, it's been there for a long time and it's broken down and it's just...There's no real...It needs sturdy plants. Let's just put it that way. And I don't think these flowers were sturdy. I can't remember the name of them. I'll look them up if somebody really wants to know. Anyways, they come back every year. Are those perennials or annuals? Annuals.
- Ryan:** I don't know. Perennials I feel like is the word.
- Selena:** I was just like, "I love these flowers, but they're not doing well back here." So my mom gave me some other flowers, some candy tests that are a bit sturdier. She said, "Here, these should plant and multiply. They're low maintenance. I read the little tag. Awesome. Low maintenance. Water them really good when they first get in the ground. And then you know what? They're good." I was like, "Sweet."

So I decided to move those into the part that doesn't get as much sunshine, that doesn't get as much of the elements, but things grow that are sturdy. Decided to move the plants that don't grow and that are not as sturdy the flowers out to the front yard because we get tons of sun. I'm like, "All right, I'm going to put these roots in. I'm going to dig them down. I'm going to spray them off because they all look really bad right now. And I'm going to let them

try to perk up with some sunshine. I'm going to see if the like six or seven hours that we get on that side will help these poor plants grow."

The whole time I'm digging around in all of this, I feel like the Lord is just saying, "Know your soil. Know your soil. Know your soil." I'm not one to put a lot of spiritual...I don't want to put words in the Lord's mouth. I'm not saying here like, "Oh, God is speaking to me and telling me all these things." There are those instances the Holy Spirit moves. I feel like the Holy Spirit was like, "Just know your soil. Know your soil."

For me, in that moment, it was talking about me and my children, our children, about knowing them and knowing how to discipline them, and why we're disciplining them, and why we're training and teaching them. Then I thought to myself, "Hmm, we're going to be recording the podcast soon. This feels like a good podcast topic about knowing your soil in terms of knowing your spouse."

We can so easily just look at the ground and think "Oh, there are things blooming. There's flowers happening and growing. Well, there's this one area that just keeps dying but it's fine. The rest is growing. It seems okay." For me, the more I kept digging into the dirt and trying to make a nice dirt, I couldn't. You have to bring in new dirt. The rocks that were there, the flowers aren't necessarily going to pick up the rocks and move them out of the flowerbed. I had to do that. They needed some sort of intervention and some sort of recognition that, hey, it's basically mud down here. So something's got to be pretty sturdy, I feel like to remain here.

But also it needed some intervention of me reaching and taking some stuff out, me reaching and digging around in the dirt, pulling up some of the weeds, getting some of the roots up. I think you can probably see where we're going with this. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I see. So talking about knowing the soil, I see a correlation between what Lewis had said about it's a deep unity. Love is a deep unity maintained by the will.

Selena: Mm hmm.

Ryan: So here you are learning about the plant, learning about the soil, learning what the plant needs, what kind of soil is right, what makes soil good.

Selena: Right. How can I put these expectations on this plant? *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** And then going about the work of maintaining it. Analogies are great, but I want to make sure that we're all clear. Am I the soil? Or am I the gardener? Or am I the plant? *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Well, I mean, let's just go to Scripture. The Lord makes things grow, right?
- Ryan:** Okay.
- Selena:** We water it, we plant. I think it has a lot to do with expectations. If it appears that things are okay in our marriage but things keep dying off, or they're not thriving, or they're not blooming, then I think we need to check the soil of our hearts. We need to check...
- Ryan:** Yeah, that's scriptural. That's the parable of the sower.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** 1 Corinthians 3:6 It's in Matthew. Jesus is talking about the sower sowing seeds among the different types of soil. And then Paul, again, talks about how "I, Paul planted the seed, Apollo's watered it, but only God brings growth." So the seed is the gospel. God is the sower and the waterer in many cases, but He also uses others like Paul and Apollos to sow and to water. There's that side of the seed, planting, and soil analogy. In terms of marriage, in terms of how we are called to be cultivators of the soil of our spouse's heart, that's a conversation, that's absolutely what we're talking through here.
- Selena:** Yeah. And if I'm honest, it was just kind of this message of like, "Know your soil. Know your soil." I can't necessarily put this big metaphor, laying down this huge foundation...
- Ryan:** There's some open ends. It's not completely...
- Selena:** Yes, there's some open ends to this.
- Ryan:** Talk to me when it's *[inaudible]*. I'm kidding. No, I'm totally kidding.
- Selena:** Well, but there's a lot of meaning to be gleaned from all of that. I mean, God talks about, in the Bible, the garden. There's always these ideas of growth, and soil, and seeds, and sowing, and reaping. I mean, there's something to be taken away from, you know...
- Ryan:** For simplicity and for clarity, let's say this. Today we're talking through knowing your soil that is your spouse, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So knowing how to cultivate and help your spouse thrive being the soil that they are. So sometimes that means you need to put some good soil in there. You need to cultivate the land. We don't want the analogy to be the whole point. But the point is, how do we know each other? How do I know you? How do I know your heart—how God has wired you? Also, the different enemy outposts of our hearts, our individual hearts that haven't been won over by faith, won over by the gospel yet, or they haven't been conquered yet and sanctified yet?

Selena: And what are the lies that we're believing that are keeping the soil from being tilled over, right?

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. So as we go about this knowledge or journey, getting to know each other, it helps us to ground ourselves in the biblical definition of love. So I just want to contrast some things here. Again, I'm talking about the C. S. Lewis quote. Because I feel like maintaining love by the will is akin to maintaining soil in this way. Knowing your soil and maintaining the soil that is your marriage, that is your spouse's heart. So, contrast, right?

We have love that is covenantal. That is a very freeing thing. If we actually acknowledge and embrace this truth that God is love, that it is part of His character, that He is also covenantal, and He is covenantal because He's loving, and He's loving because He's covenantal, there's this intrinsic connection between covenantal character and loving character.

So when we talk about love and covenant in marriage, it is a reflection of God's character in such beautiful freeing ways. So, consider this. It's freeing. That's profound to understand that love is maintained by the will. It's not something that just happens to us. To know that love isn't something that we fall into, or fall out of, that we have no control over. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: To know that love isn't something that comes and goes like the wind. It's mysterious.

Selena: Yes, yes.

Ryan: To know that love is not fickle.

Selena: More secure than that. Yeah.

Ryan: It's not a fickle thing. It's not prone to vacating our marriage as soon as the emotions dry up.

Selena: Praise the Lord.

Ryan: So there's a reason God has defined marriage as a covenant bound by love. And it's not just love, the worldly version of love. We did a poll a while back, we did some research a while back on, "Okay, what is the world outside of Scripture view of love?" And the answers were as diverse as the people giving them. Right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: There wasn't one answer. Like if you said, "Hey, hey, I'm going to ask 100 people which ways up?" You can get a pretty good solid response. People would probably point up and they say, "That's up." So we'd say, "Okay, we have a solid definit..." Well, love is not that way. People don't have a strong sense of what love is. It's just love is whatever our culture says it is.

Selena: Mainly a feeling I think would be that.

Ryan: It's mainly a feeling. So to have a biblical version of love, we have so much more to hold on to, to say that love is patient, it is kind, it is embodied in the person work of Christ on the cross, and that God has loved the world in such a way. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." That means in such a way that He gave His one and only Son. So that is love. It's sacrifice. It's a sacrificial giving.

This is the contrasting parts I wanted to say, then we'll go on. Marriage is not a covenant bound by circumstance. So many couples get married because, oh, shoot, we slept together and the baby's coming, and it's the right thing to do: to get married. So that's our circumstance.

Or in contrast, our lives are just so great. We just are enjoying it so much. And let's get married because it's the next thing for us. We've been dating for a number of years. I don't really care what love is, I just know that this feels right. So our circumstances kind of lean into it.

Selena: You listen to it, yeah.

Ryan: Marriage is not a covenant bound by emotion. Emotions are good. Emotions are great. I love when I feel like loving you. *[both chuckle]* And I love when you feel like loving me at exactly the same time. You know how often that actually happens. *[both laughs]* Can I just be honest.

- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** It almost feels like a game of cat and mouse.
- Selena:** It really is.
- Ryan:** When you're feeling really affectionate, I'm just like, "Oh, I don't want..."
- Selena:** "What do you want?" What are you trying to get?" *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Or you feel like I'm mad at you, so you're being affectionate toward me. Or I'm being affectionate towards you, you're just like, "You haven't helped me today." Or whatever the argument is recently.
- Selena:** Oh, yes.
- Ryan:** So it's very rare that we're both just like, "I love you," and you also are feeling like loving me.
- Selena:** Emotions, they come and go tomorrow. They're more of like a byproduct, I would say. They're not the objective. They can't be, right? Our covenant cannot be based on emotion, otherwise it would be done.
- Ryan:** Right. Right. So it is not based on emotion. Marriage also isn't a covenant bound by financial security. Right?
- Selena:** Well, praise the Lord for that. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** If we feel like our marriage be so much better if we just had the financial security we were looking for. And if our financial security's not there, there's all kinds of stress and then that kind of bears its ugly weight on our pseudo love, or pseudo covenant. And it ends up breaking it because financial securities can't find a covenant together.
- Selena:** Right. When you don't have to, right?
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** That's the other part. Sorry. I love that we're saying that it's not bound by these things. I think I would say it doesn't have to be bound by these things. Because I think we feel so glued to our reasoning. So it doesn't have to be.

Ryan: It's freeing is what you're saying. Like it's freeing to not have to be bound by emotion. It's freeing that doesn't have to be bound by circumstance or financial security or even mutual benefit. I read a seriously troubling...

Selena: Oh, dear.

Ryan: *[laughing]* I read a troubling...

Selena: He reads a lot of things. So when he says he read something troubling, it makes me even more like, "Oh, no."

Ryan: Okay. This is out of Scripture. Okay, directly out of Scripture. The point that I want to make in this is how God calls us to glorify Him even when there's not a mutual benefit in a relationship. So this comes from 1 Peter 2. By the way, if you want to have your mind blown, read 1 Peter. Because I was in my devotions, *[Selena chuckles]* and I was trying to get through a chapter and I just found like...I like to write verses in my journal. And then I'll kind of pick the verses if something jumps out. I try to get through a few chapters and I'll try to pick a few verses and I'll kind of, I don't know, execute those very surface level type stuff. It just helps me process and pray.

Anyway, I couldn't get through even like half a chapter of 1 Peter. Anyway, I forced myself to get through it. This is talking about submission to authority, okay?

Selena: Oh, goodness.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Here we go. Buckle up.

Ryan: Again, all this is to illustrate the fact that covenants and covenants to love and honoring God isn't bound by benefit. So he's talking to the early church. There was so much persecution happening in the early church, and they were going through it. They were right in the middle of it. So he's writing to them, encouraging them, that regardless of how they are feeling, they are to glorify God by honoring their authority in this way.

It says, "Be subject to the Lord's sake." This is chapter two verse 13. "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are

free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

Then he goes on to say—talking about Jesus. This is verse 21. "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

The whole point is to contextualize our lives around the ultimate worth of God's glory over and above, anything that we experience.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: So, again, bringing it back to marriage, our marriage covenant isn't bound by mutual benefit in that we have made a covenant to each other and to God.

Selena: But there are mutual benefits to being married, right? *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yeah, you would hope so. That would be the hope.

Selena: But those are not the reasons why we got married, or that we stay married. I mean, I think some of them are.

Ryan: Well, clearly, somewhat there's a benefit pragmatically for us to get married. The difference we're trying to make here is that it's not bound by those things. It's held together by the covenant. And that is the same kind of spirit of seeing God's ultimate glory as our ultimate context in the institution of marriage.

Selena: The word "bound" I think throws me off when I hear it. So I think I like the word...what did you say? It's not held together by circumstances. It's not held together by our emotions. It's not held together by our financial security or our mutual benefit. But it is held together by God, by His love, by His character. He's drawn us into this together. I'm trying to eliminate like it's not our feelings that keep us together because feelings come and go. It's not our circumstances of, hey, when we're married, life is great. Because if you ask married people if life is great, I mean, it can be. *[laughs]* I'm just kidding.

Ryan: Hope it is.

- Selena:** Yes, you hope it is. But it isn't always. It's just the reality that we live in, in a fallen broken, sinful world.
- Ryan:** That's why we're focusing on this because it's so freeing to know that it's not held together by anything other than this covenantal love that has been shown to us, designed by, and given to us, through the Holy Spirit, by the God of the universe.
- Selena:** Does that mean we throw up our hands and say, "All right, we're married. That's it?"
- Ryan:** Well, that's not what love is though. Love is a constant pursuit of each other.
- Selena:** That's what I'm saying. That's what I read in there was just kind of...
- Ryan:** Well done. *[laughing]* Well done.
- Selena:** Go ahead. *[laughing]* Go ahead. You go,
- Ryan:** It is very freeing. It is very liberating. I mean, I just want to look back at our own history. If our marriage was bound by emotion, people always ask us, "Why are you guys...? They don't always ask us. I want to say this: when we started Fierce Marriage, we did it because we realized we had friends who were getting divorced, some that had been divorced twice over since the time that we had been married.
- Selena:** Which has been like 10 years or 9.
- Ryan:** We were 9 years in, heading almost to our 10th anniversary. And we just said, "What is different? Why are we still together? And why are we still enjoying each other? Has it been easy? No. Why are we together?" I don't remember exactly how it came down, but we basically looked at each other and said, "Jesus." If it weren't for Christ, and if it weren't for His grace, if it weren't for His version of love, we wouldn't be together." So if Our marriage is held together by emotions, we would have been divorced at year two.
- Selena:** And if we weren't talking about financial security, oh, baby. Buckle up. That's a whole nother podcast episode.
- Ryan:** Yeah! We had years of living hand to mouth and being saddled with so much debt because of my heart surgery...
- Selena:** Bad choices.

Ryan: ...bad choices, immaturity. We got married very young. So, years! And not like 3 years. Like 8 years, 10 years of living it under that kind of burden, under those hard circumstances of financial insecurity. So we're kind of preaching to the choir in a sense, but we're also preaching from experience, meaning that we're reminding ourselves. But we're also saying, "Listen, you guys, Ryan and Selena, Fierce Marriage is not a thing because we've somehow cracked the code on fun, healthy, vibrant marriage. We're still a thing because of the glory of God and the goodness of God and His desire to pull His glory out of us as we submit ourselves to the idea of covenant and love as He designed.

Selena: Right. I think at 3 am when I was laying there thinking about how dreary and dark the world is, this is my tendency folks, I was just feeling disheartened. I was just like, "Lord, why do we live?" I wasn't asking in a depressed or like I'm going to go do something to myself way. It was more of just a hunger for our purpose and what's our purpose in this whole universe. And it's to bring glory to God and to know His love and to know what that means, to be loved by God. A sinner, broken marred by sin, loved by a holy, perfect, impure God.

That is mind-blowing for me in terms of, okay, I can't even begin to wrap my head around that. But what it does for me is that it gives me some sense of assurance that my faith, again, isn't that strong branch, and that no matter the circumstances, no matter what my emotions are, no matter our financial security, no matter the mutual benefits I may or may not be getting from our marriage...*[chuckling]* Just kidding.

Ryan: Spouses with benefits.

Selena: ...I know that you still love me because it's not based on any of these things. It's based on 1 Corinthians 13. It is based on the love of God, the love that Jesus represented and showed in His whole life. I was reading Romans 8 early this morning...I sound so holy and I'm not.

Ryan: Let me build the bridge real faster here because we've been...

Selena: I just can't sleep.

Ryan: Yeah, you've had a long day already. So we're talking about love and covenantal love and God's covenantal and loving character. And we're segwaying into this is kind of the impetus for us to learn to love well, knowing that love is the action and covenant is the place where the action unfolds. And that, namely, is how to understand the soil that is your spouse. Knowing your soil, knowing your marriage, knowing your spouse, and how knowing that informs how we love one another. That's where we're headed.

Selena: I just want to say one last thing about God's everlasting love real quick.
[laughs]

Ryan: Do it.

Selena: In Romans 8:31, and we're all very familiar with this verse of "what then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

That just gave me so much peace, assurance, confidence, just liberation from all the fears and things that I was dealing with in my mind. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" Insert any of your fears there. Any of your darkest scariest fears put them there. Will they ever separate us from the love of God?

Verse 37, he says, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am sure that neither death nor life—and everybody knows that one—nor height nor depth, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If this doesn't speak to the type of loving God that we are in covenant with and that our marriage was created through and purposed by, then I don't know what else there is to say about it. Because...

Ryan: I have something else to say about it.

Selena: Okay, good. Say it.

Ryan: It's from 1 Peter 2:9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

Selena: So there's a lot of themes here that should hopefully encourage you to get about this business of knowing the soil, that is, the heart of your spouse.

Ryan: Rooted identity is where it comes from.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Rooted. We're using more...*[laughs]*

Selena: Here comes the metaphor.

Ryan: So if we're completely abiding in Christ—again, there's another plant metaphor there, He's the vine where the branches—our identity is rooted in Him and this reality, that we were not a nation now we are set apart people as believers, regardless of anything else. This is the only identifying creed is that I am God's. We are God's property. We are His saved, beloved people for His glory to proclaim His - what does it say? His excellences. I love that sense of regal.

Selena: Excellences.

Ryan: So we're rooted in that spot, to now look at, "Okay, I can relax. My identity is secure. Okay, how can I know and love my spouse?" Let's talk about ways to know and love our spouse.

Selena: Yeah. So some questions you might want to start kind of just asking yourself or your spouse or just kind of dancing around are things like... And these are struggles. These come from our own marriage. These are things that I asked myself. Like, do I really know how Ryan deals with stress? Maybe it depends on the type of stress that it is. But in different seasons, he has different tendencies. Do I know those? Do I know how to respond to those when my soil is not perfect?

When I'm feeling like everything's just scorched earth because of kids all the time, and then I love it, I'm like, "Yay, wrung out for the Lord." *[Ryan laughs]*. Something's got to grow too because otherwise *[both laughing]* we're all just going to be wrung out. But do I know where he falls in terms of how he deals with stress? Do I know how to lovingly lead him back to the Lord? Help him back. I don't know if "lead" is the right word. But help him, and encourage him, and reflect the gospel and Jesus back to him.

Ryan: I'm fine with it. We're partners in this in that fact that I sometimes don't always go to the well immediately. I go to other places. As my helpmate and as my wife and my best friend, and my partner, I think leading is totally fine. Because

you can say, "Listen, I love you. Let me show you where the good stuff is. The stuff's in Christ. Let's go to His feet and bring this to Him."

Selena: And we can securely do this because I know that even if you get angry or hurt or frustrated, we can work through those emotions because again, our covenant is not held together by those things. So that gives us again, the freedom and permission to start working through some of those hard areas. It gives us freedom and permission to know each other or know the sin that is in each other's hearts.

Another question might be, you know, you hear us talk about the love languages always. It's very important. Do you know how your spouse experiences love? Because in those instances, I think when they are struggling or when I am struggling as a wife in whatever area, I'm going to need my husband to love me, not the way he experiences love, but the way he knows that I experience love. Because that is what will speak to me. I think we're so quick to project verses.

Ryan: Right. I feel like I know how you like to be loved. But I will say this, it's a moving target. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Amen. I'm just kidding. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I'll be like, "Great. We had all this great quality time." Then we'll sit down and you'll be like, "No, we're just not connecting." *[both laughs]*

Selena: Again, it changes in different seasons, right? **Selena:** When we had kids...

Ryan: We've been talking, we've had been spending time together, I love you...

Selena: Sometimes acts of service go long ways. Gifts go long ways.

Ryan: Or I will order dinner, and I'll do dishes, and I'll do all that stuff and then you'll be like, "You don't love me well." *[both laughs]*

Selena: Are you really doing this?

Ryan: And I'm like, "I've done all the things?"

Selena: Oh no.

- Ryan:** Yeah. And contrary to popular opinion, you have to love me with your emotions as well as some physical touches always is the guys think, right? *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** I love you.
- Ryan:** Well, I feel like guys get oversimplified. Guys get oversimplified. We're emotional people as well.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** I think traditionally we've kind of just learned to squash a lot of those emotions much to our detriment as men. But anyway, that's a different thing. So know, and learn, and practice how your spouse enjoys being loved.
- Selena:** Right. We always talk about this as well, but it takes a level of maturity and awareness. Like spirit maturity, spiritual awareness. Sometimes it takes time to grow and mature as a person just like a plant, right?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** I probably did not love you well the early years of our marriage. Maybe I don't. Maybe it's now that I don't. Because I'm just like, "I feel like there are so many things to do to love *[laughing]* all the people in our house well."
- Ryan:** Well, we've been in this long season of having young kids and that does change the dynamic for a time.
- Selena:** It changes, yes. But again, we have the security of our covenant, and we have the security of just talking to each other about that and saying, "Hey, when you say these things, this is how I hear it. It's probably not right." And I give all these qualifiers whenever I'm going to bring something that I know is either going to go ablaze. Or just kind of say, "Yeah, you know what? Let's talk..."
- Ryan:** Selena loves to read my mind *[laughing]* before we have a conversation.
- Selena:** Because I have gotten bit *[laughs]* without preparing.
- Ryan:** But what happens is we have an argument that I don't participate in.
- Selena:** It's really hard to try to prepare and also not prepare.

- Ryan:** You're like, "I know you're going to hate this, I know that you are going to shoot this down right away, but here's the idea." And I'm like, "Well, we are. Now I'm going to shoot it down. *[both laughing]*
- Selena:** It's good times over here. It's good times.
- Ryan:** Good times over here.
- Selena:** So, yeah, do you know these things about your spouse? Are you mature enough person to go to them and say these things because you're secure in your covenant? I think that's a big part. Because a lot of us don't feel secure because maybe we feel like our covenant is based on our feelings, our covenant has been based...or there's been trust that's been broken. I think that's something that you just cannot ignore.
- Ryan:** So learning to love each other in light of this is the theme. I kind of have these rhythms. I think we all have these rhythms where we kind of get in a funk periodically. Like you'll have highs and lows. So when you're in the low point, I think it's really important to know how to navigate the low points. And recognizing that, hey, you're in a low, you're in a low point, your emotions are off. Maybe you've spent too much time on Instagram and you feel terrible about yourself. So knowing how to navigate that.
- I came to you and I was like...what was it? It was a recent day and you said, "What's going on? It was your birthday. *[laughing]* You're welcome for that.
- Selena:** It was. Birthday breakfast and I'm like, "Oh, something's not right. You're okay?"
- Ryan:** I made crisps so. I mean, made crisps because that's your love language. There's six love languages. *[Selena laughs]* Crisps is the sixth one.
- Selena:** Food is always. That's the newest addition. We got to *[inaudible]*
- Ryan:** Let's write a book. The sixth love language—food. Damn. *[both laughing]* That's a verbal trademarks binding. I think I was having a hard morning and you're like, "What's going on?" And I was just like, "You know what, I'm actually not doing great, and it's for these reasons. And just so you know..."
- Selena:** A lot of people had their emotions on my birthday. I don't know what it was. Maybe I was feeling more sprightly and everybody's like, "Oh, you're feeling good, so let me tell you how I'm not feeling good."

- Ryan:** "Let me just suck some of that energy from you. *[both laughs]* I think what I told you is like, "It'll just pass. We don't need to hash through it. Know that I love you and this stuff will pass. I just need to learn to..."
- Selena:** But what did I say?
- Ryan:** I don't remember what you said. What did you say?
- Selena:** *[both laughing]* Remember I was saying, "Well, maybe God's trying to teach us how to take an active role in this and not just let it pass." Sometimes, yes, there are sometimes to let it pass. But if it's a consistent thing, if we're consistently dealing with certain things, waiting for them to pass is not the right thing to do."
- Ryan:** Right. Just basically snoozing it till next time.
- Selena:** But this isn't what you're talking about in terms of...
- Ryan:** That's exactly what we're talking about. Sorry to contradict you, but that's exactly...It was so helpful to me because you know me well enough to say, "This is a rhythm. Okay, so we can't just snooze it. So it's going to go off in seven minutes metaphorically. It does go off again. So maybe it's Call for God's for you to bring it to him in a new way." To me that was a lightbulb moment, maybe because you knew me. So it's a newer brave in saying that because I feel like maybe I could lash out in those moments.
- Selena:** Right. There are two options. As a wife, you're either like, "Oh, we're dealing with this again. Aren't you over this? *[both chuckle]* Did you figure this out yet?" "No, I'm sorry, I haven't figured out my identity and all the things. I'm not a secure person, okay?"
- Ryan:** "I'll just bottle it up for next time." Bottle it up.
- Selena:** Boom! Explosion. But knowing that you do that, knowing that I could sense that something was off. And honestly, I've been trained to not go that way of saying, "Oh, gosh, you haven't dealt with this yet? Or we haven't figured this out? But the more I know about you and how you think, and how you love, and how you enjoy things, and the struggles that you have, it honestly begets compassion for me. Like I want to empathize with you. I want to figure out how to love and serve you well. Not as a way of writing you off or dismissing, but actually like walking through it together because that's what this covenant is about. Partial, not total.

- Ryan:** Here's another example. We recently had the epiphany. Okay, so personality tests are a thing. For a little while, everybody was all about the enneagram...
- Selena:** Oh, wow. Sure, that's how people talk.
- Ryan:** Oh, hey, my name is Ryan. I'm a six. What are you? *[Selena laughs]* "Class three."
- Selena:** I think it's more like, "You're three, aren't you? What's your name?" *[both laughing]*
- Ryan:** Yeah. "I can tell you're a three. I can see it's three a mile away."
- Selena:** Or "five over there."
- Ryan:** By the way, I have no idea if these numbers mean. I used to throw them out there.
- Selena:** I forgot.
- Ryan:** So those things are tools, whatever. *[both laughing]* You could use them. They're just not ultimate in our lives. I just want to be balanced there. They're useful things. But we were having a conversation about how some people think just completely like it's a different operating system in your brain. I would liken it to Windows versus Mac.
- Selena:** Okay, some people think what?
- Ryan:** Some people think linear thoughts, linear things. Like you have an ongoing inner monologue throughout the day. And listener, maybe that's you. Actually, the majority of people I'm told, statistically speaking...
- Selena:** I think sometimes I'm blank.
- Ryan:** ...have an ongoing inner monologue or inner dialogue even with themselves.
- Selena:** Right. "I need to do this thing."
- Ryan:** Yeah. "I'm going to get up, and I'm going to look in the mirror, and brush my teeth."
- Selena:** I don't think that. I think sometimes I'm going to get up and go brush my teeth all day. *[laughing]*

- Ryan:** I've never realized that people have those thoughts.
- Selena:** Because you're a web thinker. We discovered this just recently, folks.
- Ryan:** I don't think in words, in any concrete way. It's all completely abstract.
- Selena:** Try writing a book with this guy. *[Ryan chuckle]* All right. It's all I'm going to say.
- Ryan:** So they're associated ideas. The best word picture to come up with is that it's like a web of ideas that have interrelated connection.
- Selena:** Which is really great because it makes you sound really smart, where I'm like, "Okay, we're at point A. How do we get to point B? Okay, we got there. Now how do we get to point C?" And you're like, "Ah, there's like D in that."
- Ryan:** I don't know. I don't know when I get there.
- Selena:** Yes. You can imagine the frustration on some levels.
- Ryan:** So writing for me is a lot easier because I can write it over and over and over again until it's got the A to B progression. Speaking is so hard for me because...I don't know. We can prep to speak, and I don't know how it's going to come out when we actually speak. *[Selena laughs]*
- Selena:** I know you do, but it's just so funny because...I mean...
- Ryan:** But if I can get in the zone, and I can be thinking...
- Selena:** The actual literal zone of like, "Okay, this is what we're talking about. Here's the topics. Here's a few points that I know and I'm familiar with, and I've done a lot of research on." Then I can confidently step forward and start moving.
- Ryan:** But if you give me a script, I'm just frozen in the water.
- Selena:** You just read it.
- Ryan:** I have to be on the zone of the actual...I'd be a method actor. I'd have to be like Shia LaBeouf or whatever. *[both laughing]*
- Selena:** What?
- Ryan:** He's a method actor. Anyway.

- Selena:** You're funny.
- Ryan:** That's another thing that we realized about each other, and I thought, "Okay, how can we love each other in light of this new information?"
- Selena:** It's actually helped me a lot because I think it's challenged me to think more web-like as you say.
- Ryan:** You say that a lot lately. I'm getting tired of it. Stop it.
- Selena:** No. And I hope it's forced you to think more...
- Ryan:** Linearly.
- Selena:** Linearly. Just making up words over here.
- Ryan:** It has helped me think in different terms. We've had a lot fewer, I think divisive arguments in light of that information because that's when we would tend to talk down to each other.
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah. Knowing equals loving people. Knowing begets how we love. Jen Wilkin: "The heart cannot love what the mind does not know." She's talking about God, obviously. So if we don't know God, how can we really love in our experience.
- Ryan:** And our love for God would compel us to know Him.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** We were just talking today about how I can't get into God's word enough. We're asking God to stir our affections. He's doing that, and we're realizing that now we're starving for more of Him.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** And that's a good place to be. So it's similar in marriage with our love is that the more we love, the more you want to know. The more we know, the better we can love. So it's kind of a circular thing.
- Selena:** I think one last thought, at least for me, here is just... *[chuckles]* One last thought of me for the day. That's it. Just get one more thought. Knowing your tendencies. I would categorize these secondary type things. We need to be in our primary knowledge of each other. Like where do we stand with the Lord?

Do we agree and know? Do we believe and know the same things? We know and believe the same things.

His grace, His love, how Jesus has given us redemption, victory, all of that, those are the primary pillars of things that we should know and understand them. Therefore, believe. The secondary things are our tendencies or defaults, our strengths, and weaknesses. What do I know about my spouse in those ways? Because if I know that Ryan has a tendency to, not escape, but you just kind of leave, or you vacate a little bit, or mentally you just divert or go somewhere else, then it's like, "Okay, hey, I'm recognizing that this is the pattern that's happening, and I don't think Biblically, this is what we're called to do and how we deal with this."

Ryan: But knowledge does then inform us how we recognize but then deal with that. Because it's one thing to recognize it and call it what it is. It's another to deal with it in a loving way that's going to bear fruit in the relationship and in each other's lives.

Selena: This is why we harp on; do we know God's Word? Are we in God's Word? Do we know what it says about love, about marriage, about wisdom, unity, faith? Those are all words that we might be familiar with, but do we know the definitions that God has given those?

Ryan: And are we in agreement on those things?

Selena: Are we in agreement on those things?

Ryan: So we'll get back on the really practical notes. So we talked about all of this. Transparency being fully known in marriage has many layers. So our book "See-Through Marriage" talks through all of this. I'll mention that go to seethroughbook.com. You can find that anywhere books are sold. That's our latest book. But some other things just to get you thinking listener is things like your family of origin. Have you really looked through the...?

Selena: They supply a lot of your marital conflict. Let me just tell you that. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Any past trauma is crucial to know about so you can love them better, and to work through that better and find healing. Even if they found healing, maybe it's affecting your marriage in ways you don't realize.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Other relationships, problematic relationships, like in a work dynamic. You had a boss at one point that just completely poisoned the waters of our marriage.

Not against me, but he was so toxic that your whole attitude had shifted. So we had to kind of deal with that. Actually, you ended up quitting. I ended up going down and confronting your boss. Do you remember that?

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: Because he had sworn at you or something, and I was basically like, "You don't talk to women that way. Especially you don't talk to my wife that way." And he's this ex-military guy and he kind of like puffed up his chest and all this kind of stuff. And then you quit like three days later. So I was like, "No, we're not doing it. We don't need the money that bad." And we did need the money that bad actually. *[laughing]* But you were basically begging me because...not begging me, but you were like, "Please let me just quit." You didn't want to give it two weeks' notice because you just had it.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Anyway.

Selena: It was rough times.

Ryan: So knowing each other in those ways. I'm trying to think of other ways to know. Sexual expectations are a big thing. Do you know if your...?

Selena: Again, knowing the trauma, knowing the past, knowing what you expect and why.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Not that they have to be connected to trauma in the past.

Selena: No.

Ryan: You can have sexual expectations that you haven't communicated. You don't feel like you can communicate those. So maybe ask the spouse, say, "Wait, what are your expectations for our sex life? How can I help you? How can I serve you in this way? How can I love you in this way?"

Selena: It's not an easy conversation, folks. Take all the married people that have always talked about marriage and that are gurus and they'll tell you it's not easy to sit and talk about sex. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yeah. Well, it's an intimate thing, and it's very thrown to landmines and those sorts of things. Finances are another one. Do you know propensity in terms of spending? A lot of couples are one's a spender and one's a saver. And that creates issues.

- Selena:** Do you know why? Do we know the why behind the actions?
- Ryan:** So there's a lot of directions you can go with this. But the point is, is that love compels us to want to know. And knowing informs our love. 1 John 5:19: "We love because he first loved us." So He is the starting point. That's the summary here. Christ is the starting point. Now, I choose to love Selena...Again, God's definition of love, not mine, not the world's but God's. I'm choosing this maintained by the will (action) to love Selena that...
- Selena:** Choosing and trusting, right?
- Ryan:** ...compels me now to know you and to ask you those why questions. To come to you and say, "What do you think about this? What do you feel about this?"
- Selena:** It's compelling. And we have to trust that it is liberating, that is going to bring freedom.
- Ryan:** Then I can now turn around and love you better as a result. So there's a circle of love and knowledge and love and knowledge that's perpetuated in our marriage.
- Selena:** And just to I think wind it down with 1 Corinthians 13 about how love is patient and kind, I just want to read one part. It does not insist on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.
- Ryan:** Truth is knowledge.
- Selena:** "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." It rejoices with the truth. I think when we know the truth of who we are and who our spouse is, again, we're in this covenant, it gives us this place to see with clarity the brokenness that is our sin as an individual. But in this covenant of marriage, we can say, "You know what, I'm broken too. But guess who is not broken? The person who created our covenant."
- If that isn't the truth that brings rejoicing, then what is? There's security, there's assurance. We can rejoice in this truth that we can know each other in these ways and walk forward together. Reading our Bible, knowing God where He stands, knowing where we are supposed to submit and resting in those things.
- Ryan:** That's why we spent so much time, in the beginning, talking about love and covenants and contrasting it against all these other false foundations. So I

guess I want to leave you with that, is I love that it rejoices in the truth. Well, let your love rejoice in the truth. Maintain your love by the will and deliberate strengthening by habit. I guess this will be the couple's conversation challenge for this. The first habit, always healthily ask why. Start by asking why.

Selena: With a king and loving heart.

Ryan: With a kind loving heart. And what I mean by that, so if you're trying to find out more about your spouse, you got to start with the starting question. How can I love you better? Okay, that's a really broad one. "Okay, well, you can love me better by... (your spouse will have an answer). Then ask why. "Why will that help make you feel more loved. Does that make sense?"

Selena: Yeah. No, I keep going into the why. "Why does that make you feel loved?" "Because my dad always did this and it made me feel special" or "this always happened and I felt secure in this."

Ryan: "When we talk I feel like I know your heart better."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So keep asking those why questions.

Selena: Be vulnerable and have that meaningful risk in those answers.

Ryan: And then getting God's Word together and continue doing the same thing.

Selena: Continue it, yes.

Ryan: Anyway. Selena, can you pray for us?

Selena: I can definitely try. 3 a.m. sitting, people. It's about 12:40 pm now. Jesus, thank you for your Word. Thank you for knowing and loving. God, you are such an example. Not an example; you are our God. You are the one that we submit to, that we throw our lives down at the foot of the cross and say, Lord, help us, lead us, guide us.

Give us all that we need God to glorify you, to reflect you, to live for you in whatever way that means. And right now that means knowing each other, that means being willing to walk through hard things and have hard conversations with each other so that we can just enjoy unity together, unity with you and to be able, again, to reflect and bring glory to you God because truly you are the one who has brought us together. And we rest in that security, Lord. We love you God. Amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us for this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can!

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce!

[00:54:37] <outro>

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.

[00:54:48] <Podcast ends>

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:00:00]**
 - Quote:
 - C. S. Lewis: "Love as distinct from 'being in love' — is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will, and deliberately strengthened by habit."

- **[00:17:24]**
 - Scripture references:
 - John 3:16, ESV

- **[00:20:37]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Peter 2:13-17, 21-25, ESV

- **[00:29:15]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Romans 8:31-39 ESV

- **[00:30:38]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Peter 2:9-12, ESV

- **[00:47:11]**
 - Book Recommendation:
 - ["See-Through Marriage"](#)

- **[00:50:00]**
 - Scripture References.
 - 1 John 1:17

- **[00:50:53]**
 - Scripture References.
 - 1 Corinthians 13

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>