

MANIPULATION IN MARRIAGE

<https://fiercemarriage.com/manipulation-in-marriage>

[00:00:00]

Selena: When I started reading about manipulation in marriage, well, just manipulation in general, the first sentence I read on an article was, "At its core, manipulation is a type of lying." And that changed everything for me, people because I knew manipulation was bad. I know we've all been guilty of it, especially in our marriage, and some of it I think is conscious and unconscious. But when I identified it as lying, I felt like there was this clarity brought to everything that I have not been able to see clearly about miscommunication...

Ryan: And that is the hallmark of manipulation is there's the sense that I am the one that is wrong and this other person is right. They've proven to me that they're right in some way but I still feel like something's off.

Selena: Yeah, there's these layers of I think control and insecurity, fighting each other or on the same side, fear is involved, there's insecurities and intimidation. There's all of these things that manipulation roots run deep.

Ryan: And the thing is, is people don't always know they're manipulating each other and they don't know that they're being manipulated. That's the whole thing is it's this weird...

Selena: And we're not saying that it just happens to you. I mean, it kind of does. But if we look at God's Word about how we can have hope, and how we can have instruction, and how we can clearly identify manipulation within, for the sake of this podcast, our marriage, we can walk in the light. I think that much more clear. So it's going to be a good one. All excited here. See you on the other side.

[00:01:37] <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.
- I'm not used to sending us to *[laughing]* the other side. It was a little insecure there.
- Ryan:** No, it was good. A plus.
- Selena:** Thanks.
- Ryan:** This episode, ladies and gentlemen...
- Selena:** It's been in the hopper I feel like.
- Ryan:** We wanted to do this. We wanted to do it justice. And as we've continued to do research and reading, and reflection, frankly, it was upsetting because there are so many different ways that manipulators work. What we're realizing is that we manipulate each other. And as we're talking...
- Selena:** We're so guilty of it in our marriage.
- Ryan:** We're talking to each other, and I'm like Selena, "This is manipulation. I've done this to you." *[Selena laughs]*
- Selena:** And I've never done such a thing. *[Ryan laughs]* Manipulation.
- Ryan:** And then as we were talking I realize just how deeply I had been manipulated. Because it took like four layers to get to how you manipulate me.
- Selena:** Haha. *[both laughs]* I'm just kidding.
- Ryan:** It's true, though.
- Selena:** Yeah, we joke about it. But again, like you said, the more we're diving into it, the more we are uncovering how deep we're seeing the roots have gone. It's like pulling out a *[inaudible]*. You pull out and you're like, "Yeah, there's

probably not that many roots." Then there's like 12-foot root comes out in here.

Ryan: Oh, I know. Well, dandelion season. *[both laughs]* So here's the big caveat for this episode. Husband, wife, you're listening to this, it's going to be really tempting to hear what Ryan and Selena are saying, and to say, "That's my spouse. That's what he or she does to me." That can be part of this. We want to have eyes open looking at each other, but I don't want to do that at the expense of also looking into ourselves, and seeing how have I treated my spouse, how have I treated my wife, my husband.

So I want to make sure that as we're going into this, we're thinking circumspectly. You're looking at each other, but you're also looking internally.

Selena: This is all within the gospel and through the Word of God under the Bible authority of how we should be treating each other. We're going to go through a few things.

Ryan: Yeah, let's just dive right into this.

Selena: Oh, good.

Ryan: I feel like this is very good.

Selena: You know I like diving.

Ryan: Well, it's going to be a little bit of a bulky episode. I want to try to keep it under 50 minutes if we can without cutting things short. So where are we headed today?

Selena: The road map today we're going to define manipulation and what it looks like, we're going to look at a few articles, some biblical examples. We're also going to outline a few manipulation examples in marriage, and what does that look like exactly. Dive into scripture and allow it to uncover the authority that it is and how we can walk that out. Like, how can we not manipulate each other and also not be manipulated by others? Obviously, beginning with our spouse. But also in the world, there are many messages that are very manipulative about marriage, about relationships.

Ryan: So the best and the most pragmatic, and I think most fruitful place to start is clearly defining manipulation. So manipulation is a big topic. We'll talk...

Selena: It has different layers.

- Ryan:** We want to define that really clearly, but then we want to really put names to tactics of manipulators and ways that we can be vulnerable and vulnerabilities to being exploited by manipulation. We have to think of ourselves very circumspectly, like I said earlier, in that there are ways I manipulate. There are also ways that I'm exploited because, in some way, I'm not really...when it comes down to it, rooting my identity and my confidence in Christ...
- Selena:** There's a lot of connotation that goes with all those words you said. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Okay, yes.
- Selena:** They are pretty loaded. I think just hearing you talk; I am already getting a little defensive instantly.
- Ryan:** Very, very loaded. Please listen charitably.
- Selena:** We're using his words as they're supposed to be used with the definitions. We're not saying exploiting, taking advantage...
- Ryan:** For instance, if I have this need to always be a people pleaser, manipulator could exploit that need if they recognize that in me. They'll say, "Oh, he's a people pleaser so I'm going to make sure that I'm going to lead him with the carrot on a stick so that he's always kind of want to please me."
- Selena:** I don't even think I see it like that. I see a person's personality and I know how to play to their strengths or weaknesses.
- Ryan:** Okay. That's exploitation. You're using someone's weakness to your advantage. That's exploitation. So, anyway.
- Selena:** Let's define these terms. Just that's all.
- Ryan:** We're going to go through a whole litany of ways. Anyway, let's define manipulation, generally speaking, let's look at God's Word and reconcile how do we think about it through a biblical lens?
- Selena:** Yes. So, defining manipulation, this is a quote from gotquestions.org, which we love. It says, "At its core, manipulation is a type of lying. When someone speaks falsely for the purpose of deception, he or she is being manipulative, because to deceive is to manipulate someone into thinking or behaving a certain way. So all of the Bible's prohibitions against lying can be applied to manipulation. Lying is a dreadful sin."

Ryan: All of the Bible's instructions online can be applied to manipulation. I just wanted to emphasize that. So that does give us a place to now...Because manipulation I don't know that it's ever mentioned in the Bible...

Selena: It feel very nuanced.

Ryan: ...in that word.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: It's funny because the word "manipulation" isn't manipulative. Because you feel like, well, it's not lying so it's not that bad. It's kind of like an undesirable thing. It's not a sin. We're here to say manipulation is a sin. Okay, that's the hard pill to swallow.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: Okay. It's also very freeing. Okay, knowing that we sin against each other, but when we manipulate each other selfishly, and we use lying. And lying is what manipulation is.

Selena: Recognizing the darkness of this, again, the darkness does not overcome. The light pierces the darkness. So let's just go in with that mindset. Because I already feel...

Ryan: Convicted.

Selena: I feel darkness. *[both laughs]* I feel it, people.

Ryan: So now that we've called manipulation what it is, a sin, we've called it lying, now we can start talking about what the Bible says about lying. Did you want to talk about spiritual manipulation first and then differentiate that too?

Selena: Yeah. I think as believers, it's good for us to understand that there is spiritual manipulation that can happen. We see this mostly I think in the context of churches and spiritual groups. You'll see the overlapping. They define it as to manipulate in the spiritual sense is to negotiate control or influence for one's own advantage. So that's not new. Spiritual manipulation is a technique used by some abusive churches and cults to control individuals and acquire, gain all the while giving the impression that their teachings are based on the Bible.

So I just wanted to lay that out so that we can talk about it. Because in marriages, people write in to us about the misuse of biblical terms. Things are

taken out of context. We try very hard as our bestest, *[Ryan laughs]* bestest, bestest to not prove texts, do not cherry-pick Scripture.

Ryan: Right?

Selena: Why do we read so much Scripture on this podcast? Because we want you to have the context. We want you to understand. Why is Ryan going to seminary because we don't want to be manipulative in how we present the truth. We want the truth to bear weight on how we present.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So when the Bible is taken out of context, when terms are misused or not understood clearly, there is the dynamic of the power and control and influence. There's also the whole false teachers, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Those are what we do not want to be.

Ryan: Yeah. Okay. Again, we're a marriage podcast so let's talk through exactly what that means. Here's a clear version of what you're talking about real quick. In cults, there's always one key marker of cults, because cults are manipulation at their very core, is the sense of secret knowledge, right? "I know something that you don't. And you can't find that thing yourself; you have to come to me. I'm the arbiter of truth."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And that's why Christianity is so unique in that Paul, to the Bereans, which we'll talk about, he said like, "Put these truths to the test because they're true. They're absolute. Yeah, go ahead and put gravity to test. Throw anything off a bridge, it'll go down. I guarantee you. Test it, because it's true." Cult leaders will say, "Oh, you don't need to throw it. I'll throw it in I'll tell you what happens."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Right. So that's the secret knowledge piece. So we do this in different ways. So, like, submission and marriage.

Selena: Several proof-texting things.

Ryan: It's proof-texting. I read the verse. I'm pulling it out of a hat right now, you're not looking at your Bible, I can quote it and immediately you put on your heels because you don't have it in front of you. In a sense, I'm applying secret knowledge. That's what cherry-picking is. Submission, for example, some teachers or husbands or typically husbands, they will say, "You need to submit because the Bible says submission is whatever. Submission is good. Submission is righteous." The way to combat this is to actually read the verse in context.

Selena: Yeah. It's Ephesians 5:22, for anybody wondering about submission. That husband in that instance, it would be good for him to read through verse 26 that talks about how the husband is called to love. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ had loved the church."

Ryan: Funny how we bring it full circle. When you read the full context...

Selena: And then how you define love, right? Getting in the 1 Corinthians. So there's a lot here for sure.

Ryan: I mean, this is just a little sidebar. In culture, that's exactly what people do is they'll prove text something out of Leviticus and say, "Christians are bigots because look at this thing." Oh, if you want to believe that this is a sin, then you better not ever do this thing, or you can't wear this type of fabric or whatever." And they're proof-texting, they're cherry-picking, they're manipulating. That's the thing is they're not actually looking at the Scripture as if it's in a larger body. So we do that in terms of marriages and things like that.

Head of household, another one. They'll see that and they'll say, "Oh, I'm the head of this house, which means basically you have to do what I say or you're sinning against me, you're sinning against God." And really that context is about sacrificial love. Like leading, because you're more accountable, and therefore you should love like Christ loves, which is sacrificially. Which means you don't lord it over, you're not tyrannical.

Selena: It's not for you. It's not about you.

Ryan: You are sacrificial, and you are a servant leader. You're at the bottom of this pyramid scheme.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's another tool of manipulation—proof text.

- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** Spiritual manipulation, namely.
- Selena:** Then we wouldn't be doing you justice if we did not talk about the enemy being the master of manipulation.
- Ryan:** Oh, baby.
- Selena:** You know, the father of lies in John 8:44. We see Genesis 3, I mean, his first interaction with humanity is an act of manipulation. The half-truth that he presents there. In 2 Corinthians 11:14 talks about how he masquerades as an angel of light. One more quote is that he exploits our weaknesses/our pride and assures us that following a sinful path is in our best interest. He's insidious and is artfulness. He manipulates to bring us under his control. I still need to read "The Screwtape Letters" by the way. This is just a good reminder. I haven't read fully.
- Ryan:** Well, okay. But the reason why "The Screwtape Letters" is so powerful is because it's like someone's turning the lights on in a dark room. And that's what we're hoping to do today is by putting names and words to these feelings, these uncertain feelings, either in things that you've done and you've been a perpetrator of manipulation or you've been a victim of manipulation, by putting names it's like flipping on a switch in a dark room. And what happens is all the cockroaches in scurry, and they try to run away. And we're saying, this is how you squash them is that you turn the lights on, you show it for what it is, then you can start going around squashing these things.
- One of the things that we kind of glossed over is every tactic of manipulation is done to gain power, to gain control, to gain influence. You didn't read that, did you? I think we glossed over.
- Selena:** We just said it. Yeah.
- Ryan:** Okay. So gaining power. If you think about it in those terms, like, "Okay, I'm a husband, I'm guilty of manipulation, I'm repenting of that, I'm trying to weed out those behaviors," but to say like, "I've been trying to assert power control and influence over my wife..."
- Selena:** Nobody is going to ever say that.
- Ryan:** Oh, my word! It makes you feel so guilty. *[both chuckles]* That's calling it what it is.

- Selena:** It is.
- Ryan:** So now I can start to assert love on my wife and try to love her sacrificially.
- Selena:** Absolutely. You can engage in this, I think, is the...
- Ryan:** Sort of asserting power. I used the wrong word, but... *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I think a part of actually identifying manipulation in our marriage and in our relationships is calling things what they are. I think we are very averse to that in our culture today. I don't want to call sin "sin." I don't want to call my manipulation "lying." I don't want to call my bad communication "laziness" or I don't want to call my desire for intimacy "lust." There are things that we are not able to identify clearly and under the biblical authority because our pride would have us call it. Otherwise, because we don't want to make ourselves seem that bad. Right?
- Ryan:** Okay. Yeah.
- Selena:** I'm just talking about myself.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Or in our culture too, we tend to be so distracted nowadays that we don't actually take the time to reflect and think through what things might actually be. We just kind of call it whatever the first word that comes to mind.
- Selena:** There's just a lot of grayness. I think the Bible is more clear than we want to admit and that we want to submit to in some ways. I feel like one of the best ways for at least what I'm learning right now, tactics against and identifying manipulation is to just call things what they are, and then start unpacking those together.
- Ryan:** So in the name of that, calling something what it is, I'm reading a book. I just started reading it. It's called "In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People." It was written a couple of decades ago, and it seems to have fared the test of time pretty well. Of all places, somebody wrote a review on it. It was a three-star review on this book. I don't want to overstate their qualifications. So I don't know who this person is, I just feel like they're articulating some truths really well in this review. So I'm just going to read it because it did help me see things kind of differently.
- So he's talking about this book. The person who wrote in said, "I'm fascinated by psychology, and why people do what they do. The book explores the interesting concept of the "covertly aggressive" individual, someone who uses subtly manipulative tactics to further his own agendas, while still preserving

the image of a good person ("impression management") and effectively concealing his true intentions.

Selena: Ah, it just speaks to so much in terms of transparency and vulnerability. I'm sorry. Okay.

Ryan: I'll continue on. Again, this is a three-star reviewer. So they just had some other issues. "These tactics are insidious and particularly confusing to conscientious people, who often fall prey to these underhanded individuals with less-than-stellar motives. The two most valuable insights that I gained from the book are the reminder to be aware that not all people operate from a place of personal integrity, and that over-intellectualizing why people do what they do is counterproductive.

It's more important to recognize manipulation when it occurs, confront it in the moment, and self-protect. In all of the examples presented, the manipulation "victims" knew something was wrong, but failed to trust their own initial intuitions and perceptions. I do believe that most people are predominantly good, but also recognize that there are others who exist solely to advance themselves at any expense to others. This is perhaps the hardest thing to learn." Then he or she says, "It's easier to excuse bad behavior than stand up to it, but freedom exists in being aware and assertive.

Selena: Those are some big words. Aware and assertive. Again, this is not like a gospel truth. This is a book review. But the clarity around the ideas is something to be appreciated and grabbed on to in terms of I'm that person. I'm not saying I'm the victim. I'm not trying and play the victim card, of course. But I can sense when things are wrong, but I don't have the tools in the moment—the awareness and the assertiveness. The assertiveness is where I struggle because I'm a people pleaser in a lot of ways. So I'm learning assertiveness. And I think it's an art form. You can't apologize for it. Otherwise, it's not assertiveness I think. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: In the whole assertiveness thing is, is really okay. If we are a people of God's Word and we love God's law, and we fear God more than anyone, more than men, then I think assertiveness can come from a better place. If you're just being assertive because you want to see justice at your own hand...Okay, justice is generally a good thing. But I think true gospel-centered assertiveness comes from this place of I fear God and I love His law more than I fear man and I love man.

So now, part of God's law and part of knowing who God is and knowing His call to me as individual, I need to love with truth and love, speak with truth and love. So then you can be assertive in a really truthful way but also in a very

loving way. Someone of being assertive is also identifying it and understanding how it's damaging you and then quitting the damage, and cauterizing those wounds and saying, "This is a manipulation tactic and I'm not going to let it get into my heart anymore. I'm going to start being assertive as opportunity arises." Does that make sense?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Okay. I thought it might be helpful to read an excerpt from this book that I just referenced. Because as we were reading it, I looked at you and I said, "I'm guilty of this."

Selena: *[chuckles]* "This is me."

Ryan: This exact thing, but this manipulation tactic. Then we're going to go into a lot of really clear...unless you want to talk about how we're called to act as believers in terms of this.

Selena: No, go ahead and read what you're going to read, and then we can...

Ryan: That's the other thing. Here's an excerpt from the book. This is the introduction. It's already getting into the deep stuff. This is covert-aggression, the heart of manipulation. It says, "Perhaps the following scenarios will sound familiar. A wife tries to sort out her feelings. She's mad at her husband for insisting their daughter make all "A"s. But she doubts she has the right to be mad. When she suggested that given her appraisal of her daughter's ability he might be making unreasonable demands, his comeback "Shouldn't any good parent want their child to do well and succeed in life?"

That comeback made her feel like she was the insensitive one. In fact, whenever she confronts him, she somehow ends up feeling like the bad guy herself. When she suggested there might be more to her daughter's problems, and that the family should seek counseling, his retort "Are you saying I'm psychiatrically disturbed?" made her feel ashamed for asking."

So she is gaslighting here. She feels like she's the one that's kind of seeing things incorrectly. She's the one that's wrong. She's the one that's...

Selena: I guess my question would be to him, though. Why is he responding that way? Because maybe he thought this is true sense of like, "Yeah, I want to be a good parent?" Any parent wants these good things for their kids, right?

- Ryan:** Well, but the response "Are you saying that I'm psychiatrically disturbed and that's why I went to counseling?" She was not saying that. But he's jumping to that in that degree to make her feel crazy...
- Selena:** Jumping to conclusions is never good. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** ...to make her feel crazy and out of line. So she's like, "Okay, well, I guess not. You're not psychiatry disturbed." But she on the spot...
- Selena:** She's having some awareness.
- Ryan:** ...unless she's aware and ready to respond, she wouldn't say, "Well no, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that our daughter could use some help and a psychologist can help." So that's gaslighting and that's manipulation tactic. I've done that. Not this exact example, but I tend to jump to conclusions. You'll say like...
- Selena:** Quite a head node here. *[chuckles]* I love you.
- Ryan:** "I just wish you could help more in the kitchen." I'll be like, "Oh, you're saying I don't provide enough for our family. I'm up there working and you don't care about anything I do." And you're like, "No, I didn't say that. I'm just saying that I could use some help in the kitchen." Granted, there's usually some more emotions involved in these conversations.
- Selena:** Sexual attention, people. Just kidding.
- Ryan:** Right now.
- Selena:** Right now? *[both laughing]*
- Ryan:** We'll see you in five minutes.
- Selena:** Stop.
- Ryan:** No, three minutes. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness.
- Ryan:** Just kidding. Lighten up. Lighten up. Marriage podcast, right? You got to laugh a little bit. So attention is real. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Yeah. But he says she often tries to assert her point of view but always ends up giving into his. Sometimes she thinks the problem is him believing him to

be selfish, demeaning, and controlling. But this is a loyal husband, a good provider, and a respected member of the community. So by all rights, she shouldn't resent him yet she does. So she constantly wonders if there's something wrong with her.

Ryan: That's man. Listener, if you're listening to this...

Selena: It's hard. I feel like all of reality is tainted with manipulation. And I'm like, "I don't even know how to sort through it sometimes."

Ryan: In a way it is. In a way it is.

Selena: And maybe that's part of the brokenness of sin [inaudible]

Ryan: Always there's agendas at play, there's always an underlying thing, and there's always people...Here's the thing. We talked about pathological manipulation is that sometimes people don't know that they're doing this to another person. So if you've had an interaction with an in-law, with your spouse, with a friend, and you're saying like, "I love that person but something feels off. I feel like they're impermeable - is that a word? Impermeable to my inquisitive being known." It's like I don't fully know what's going on in that situation.

Selena: There's the light not this [inaudible]

Ryan: That's the light going on in the room. That's showing you where the switch is. There's something there that's at play and they are somehow twisting or manipulating either wittingly or unwittingly. We say someone's a pathological liar or they're a pathological manipulator. That means that it's so ingrained in them. They think they're so justified and right that they're somehow getting around to the truth. This is what people that are narcissistic...We should do one on narcissism. Put that in the good ideas folder.

Selena: Oooh.

Ryan: Someone that's narcissistic legitimately thinks that the world revolves around them. They legitimately think that that's a good thing and that's the right thing, and that's the right-oriented of the universe. So it doesn't matter what harm they do to others.

Selena: Thought it's consciously and subconsciously sometimes, right?

Ryan: Yes

Selena: I'm not like, "The world revolves around me; everybody should serve me." But they take on these truths of maybe it's a husband that's like, "I'm supposed to be the head so you should serve and submit to me." There's some of that slippery slope-ish. But it also comes up very subtly, too I feel like.

Ryan: And that's the pathological piece is that they don't know that they're doing pathological lies so habitually, they don't even know when they're lying and telling the truth anymore. And they do it so convincingly that they don't have any conscience check because they feel like they're right in doing it. They've convinced themselves that they're right, either in the truth or in doing that behavior.

Selena: Right. I think with talking about some of this darkness of manipulation, the lies, the deceit, there's also this sort of spiritual manipulation that can happen I think amongst believers and within our marriage of like, "The Lord has told me that blah, blah, blah." People have quoted that to me, and automatically you feel like you can't say anything against that. It completely shuts down the conversation. So I guess the flip side to that would be if you hear things like this that are shutting down conversations, it's probably a manipulation tool.

Again, they may not be aware of it but one way we can maybe be aware of it and then be assertive in those moments is just by purely being honest. Saying, "When you say that, I feel like there's not much I can say here." Asking clarifying questions around those things instead of...So I guess the path is, okay, this person is saying this, this is shutting down the conversation, it's shutting down anything that I might think is valuable or whatever. I need to explain this right now like. I need to assert this in a loving and kind way. But this is a truth that needs to be asserted right now."

That's something I'm just taking for me. This is off the cuff and not on script at all. But the awareness and assertiveness is exactly where I feel like the Lord is pressing into my heart saying, "Here's how you can love your husband more clearly and well, and love the people in your life."

Ryan: We use an example, yeah, awareness, and assertiveness. So we had this example pop up in our lives this morning. We're around the breakfast table, Selena is getting vitamins. *[chuckles]* This is raw. Selena is getting the vitamins for the girls because you have vitamins on an empty stomach and it makes you feel like you're going to puke and that kind of thing. So you're in the cupboards getting like five different bottles out and this is kind of a pet peeve of mine because I'm...

Selena: Just to be clear. I need to be clear because this is going to happen. Let me be clear.

- Ryan:** Okay, clear that up.
- Selena:** I know there's lots of multivitamin companies and all that. I'm sure I will engage in one at some point. I don't have time right now, people, okay? So it's vitamin C, a multivitamin and a probiotic.
- Ryan:** For the kids. And they are gummies. And we give them like half of the dose of the probiotic and vitamin C's in the multivitamin.
- Selena:** Yes, just trying to be healthy.
- Ryan:** So I have opinions about these things because there's a lot of science that talks about the controversies around vitamins. But please don't write in about vitamin.
- Selena:** We're not asking you to write in about this.
- Ryan:** Yeah. *[Selena chuckles]* I'm just telling you that we are having a marriage rift about this thing. Not a rift really. It's just something that... *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I feel like this is going to go really badly.
- Ryan:** No, no. It's too late. It's already out there now.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** We're trying to care for our kids well and doing that based on science and all sorts. So I don't like that you have to get out all these different things and we ran out of ones, you're on Amazon looking for them. And I am like, "Okay, I don't know how to bring this up because I feel like the bad guy. I don't think our kids need X, Y, and Z." And you're saying, "I do think they need X, Y, & Z." We both care about our kids. That's the baseline. We love our kids.
- Selena:** The health of our children. Their healthy bodies.
- Ryan:** You haven't said this, so I'm going to put some words in your mouth. Okay? So I fear that if I bring it up, you're going to say, "Well, don't you want our kids to be healthy? They need it because it'll help them blah, blah, blah?"
- Selena:** I might not say that, but I'll look at you and those are fostering through my head.

- Ryan:** And I'm thinking, "Yeah, I want our kids to be healthy, but I don't agree on this sort of thing."
- Selena:** So how do we reconcile? It feels manipulative, right?
- Ryan:** Right. So there are different ways.
- Selena:** That's one way to combat it.
- Ryan:** The other one is the car seat things. Like if we want to get a new car seat...
- Selena:** Not if we want to. They expire for some reason. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I'm like, but I don't necessarily buy all of the things the car...
- Selena:** There's spectrum of car seats in Ryan's head.
- Ryan:** And it's such a racket. *[Selena laughing]* Car seats are such a racket. Okay, you got to buy the sizes and the boosters and the different things and the expiration date.
- Selena:** And if you want one and all, it's your firstborn.
- Ryan:** Yes. So, I tend to be on the sense of like, "Okay..." Anyway, we're not going to get into the details of car seats, but the point is, is that I can feel like, "Well, yeah." You're like, "If we getting in an accident, our kids are going to die, it's going to be your fault and you'll regret it for life."
- Selena:** I don't say that.
- Ryan:** And I'm like, "Well, I don't want them to die. I don't think it's going to be my fault." But in the moment, I'm like, "Okay, okay, I'm just going to give in." So the tactic has worked. *[laughs]* I do that in other ways.
- Selena:** But I don't even want that anymore. That has maybe been our past but I don't even want your giving in because I'm like, "No, I want you on this train and enthusiastic. And if you're not..."
- Ryan:** *[inaudible]*. You want me to say two plus two equals five. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** It's not.
- Ryan:** You want me to buy the full doctrine, hook, line, and sinker.

Selena: No. Because if you don't, then I'm not going to. I feel like that's become a more healthy place, has it not?

Ryan: Yes, yes, we've grown in that way.

Selena: Thank you. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Usually, 1984, people. If you haven't read...

Selena: Trying to. I'm trying to finish Animal Farm again.

Ryan: The parallels. I do feel like—and I don't mean this in a biblical sense—but I feel like George Orwell was prophetic in a lot of ways when he wrote that Animal Farm. Anyway, that's another sidebar. So let's go through some very specific...again, prophetic not in a biblical sense, mouthpiece of God's sense. All right.

Let's talk about some very specific manipulation tactics, manipulation techniques. These come right out of Simon's book. Simon's the author of "In Sheep's Clothing. By the way, didn't say his name. His name is Dr. George Simon. In Sheep's Clothing. These come out of his book. We're going to talk through each one. There's actually like 20 of them, so we'll kind of...

Selena: Why did you put this?

Ryan: It's not in there. It's right here. It's on the screen. Okay.

Selena: Conversations about—

Ryan: Lying. Lying specifically by commission is the first manipulation technique. This is a summary of it. "It's hard to tell if somebody is lying at the time they do it, although often, the truth may be apparent later when it's too late. One way to minimize the chances of being lied to is to understand that some personality types, particularly psychopaths..." *[both chuckles]* The word "psychopath" is a clinical term. It just means that you don't really have a good moral compass.

Selena: Actually, using psycho and path.

Ryan: There's sociopath, and then the psychopath is something else. It is a traditionally personality disorder characterized by persistent antisocial behavior, impaired, empathy, and remorse.

Selena: These are clinical terms not...?

Ryan: Yes. I'm not calling you a psychopath pejoratively.

Selena: Thank you.

Ryan: So one way to minimize the chances of being lied to is to understand that some personality types like psychopaths are experts at the art of lying and cheating, doing it frequently and often in subtle ways. That's lying by commission. That means that you're saying a thing that is a lie.

Then another lie is a lie by omission, meaning that you're just...the subtle form of lying. You're withholding a significant amount of truth to some other end, right.?

Selena: Right. We all battle this at different levels and is a good identifier for me. Just I don't typically lie. I don't ever. I don't try ever to lie. I think I lied twice as a kid and I didn't pay for it dearly. So I was like, "This is not a good idea." But we do it subtly. We can do it subtly. We learn the art of doing it subtly. Our sin nature says, "This is an easy, good path," and really it's not. I mean, it's the whole Genesis 3. It's the whole Genesis 3. Why is the enemy the father of lies, the master of manipulation? I'm sorry, I'm just...Truth, truth, truth. Come on truth.

Ryan: You're going to look it up. No, it looks something else.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So lying of omission, an example of that is propaganda. Propaganda is used by typically political movements to get widespread acceptance of an ideology or an agenda.

Selena: Compliance.

Ryan: And compliance. So you might say something like...I don't know. I can't think of something off the top of my head. But propaganda is sin. Like if we call lies of omission, what they are, it's lying, it's a sin it starts to completely transform how we view the world.

Our whole book, See-through Marriage is about fighting lies of omission. It's about saying, like, "I'm being transparent to you. I'm choosing a meaningful risk. I'm going to expose..." I'm not just going to say, "I've been struggling with sexual integrity to you." I'm going to say, "I sinned in this way." So there's a deeper level of being known, a deeper level of transparency, a deeper level of righteousness to be had because I'm being vulnerable to you in this way." And that takes a lot of trust. We're going to talk about trust next week actually.

Selena: Building trust.

Ryan: It takes a lot of trust to speak to you in a way that doesn't lie by virtue of omission.

Selena: Oh, man.

Ryan: Okay, the third one. Again, this comes out of the book "In Sheep's Clothing." By the way, I can't endorse the book wholly because I haven't gone through it word by word yet. So please, if there's something in the book that's counter biblical...

Selena: We know where we stand, people.

Ryan: We know where we stand. Okay. It's a psychological book anyway. I don't think it claims to be Christian.

So, denial. A manipulator refuses to admit that they have done something wrong. That's pretty obvious. But the worst kind of denial is when you clearly know that someone...we had an example of a family member who was doing a lot of lying, and I confronted this person. And it was like I was the crazy one. So they were questioning me, they're like, "What? How could you think that way?" And I had evidence, evidence and I showed it to this person. The response was, "I don't know how you figured that, I don't know how you got that, but that's a lie." That's just denial. *[laughs]*

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That's a really clear example. But when the lies are not as clear and not as provable, the denial is oftentimes a manipulation tactic to basically skirt the issue.

So rationalization. We all do this. Excuse maybe by the manipulator for the inappropriate behavior. So rationalization is closely related to spin. So you'll somehow in your mind rationalize. I'm thinking of if a husband goes out and makes a purchase without telling his wife and it's a significant purchase. He might rationalize that purchase because "Oh, it's good for the family" or "she'll love it when I surprise her with it" when really he knows that she's not on board. Now I know that—

Selena: They've had that conversation before. Sure.

- Ryan:** Another clear one is a husband or wife could rationalize looking at pornography and using it for sexual gratification because I don't want to bother my spouse right now because she just had a baby and I'm serving her by looking at porn.
- Selena:** Which we're not saying that right after you have a baby you have to have sex.
- Ryan:** Thank you.
- Selena:** We're not saying that either.
- Ryan:** Okay, yeah, we're not saying that. Give it enough time to heal all that kind of stuff more than what the doctors prescribe. Love each other well in that area. But I'm just saying, or we could just say we have a six-month-old, my wife's tired because she hasn't slept well. So she's asleep, I'm going to go take care of whatever because this is how I can love her well, and not ask her for sex." That's a rationalization. That's a manipulation tactic.
- Selena:** I'm giggling inside because we're not really calling things what they are right now in this podcast. "I'm going to go take care of whatever."
- Ryan:** Oh, yeah. Well, we're trying coy.
- Selena:** I know. Sensitive. That's true.
- Ryan:** There's little ears in your shot. So minimization. Couples do this a lot with sin. Again, to go back to the porn thing or any sort of...
- Selena:** The half truth, right? Genesis 3, I mean, "you'll be like, God, I mean, you'll know. You'll know that you'll know good from evil." And sorry, keep on.
- Ryan:** I can't get away from the porn example because this is a classic. It's just so rampant. Manipulation is so rampant around that sin. So minimization would say like, "Well, does it hurt? It's not hurting you. I'm not actually cheating with somebody. Obviously, whoever's made the movie wanted to make the video." They're minimizing. If you really look at the industry, it's abhorrent what these people are involved in, and the pain and damage it causes around the world, not just through your computer screen.
- Selena:** Minimization requires you to believe a lot of lies. So it's not a secret that it's manipulative technique.

- Ryan:** Selective hearing is another manipulation tactic. *[both chuckles]* Selectively inattention or selective attention. So basically, you're not paying attention to things that may distract from what the agenda is they're trying to push for.
- Selena:** Yeah. The longer you're married, the more you see that stuff and you're just like, "Yeah, I know what you're trying to do here." Move on.
- Ryan:** Let's jump through. There's a lot in this book, but I want to...
- Selena:** You wanted to give some to husbands and wives. There was one of...
- Ryan:** Yeah. So there's one in here. We don't mean to laugh about it because it is serious. But seduction is a manipulation tactic. Not just sexual seduction, but a manipulator will use praise or flattery or charm, or overtly supporting others in order to get them to lower their defenses and give their trust and loyalty over to the manipulator. I mean, a lot of these are like sales tactics if we think about it. They'll be like, "Hey, you're a smart guy? Smart guys like cars that run like this. So don't be a dumb guy. Be a smart guy. Buy this product." *[Selena laughs]* That's seduction.
- Selena:** It really is.
- Ryan:** That's a classic sales trick. Like staring someone in the eyes. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I'm right here.
- Ryan:** Anyway, we can use that in marriage in different capacities, I think.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Let's see what's another one.
- Selena:** Part of that seduction is they will also offer help with the intent to gain trust and access to an unsuspecting victim they have charmed. So again, seduction is a manipulation tool of getting what we want and not getting...I see this in like in the bedroom. You are always saying dates are get at your spouse. It's not just an intimacy is to get to know your spouse. Getting to them, not getting to your own desires, not getting to your own...I mean, yes, we're supposed to have desires for each other, but my whole motivation is not to please myself. My motivation is to love you because the Lord has called me to that and has purposed our marriage for love. And when we're defining love, this is what it means. If we're defining...

Ryan: You've just left the realm of being a manipulator when you start asking what His absolute truth was, and you submit yourself to Him. I mean, this is why biblical marriage is so beautiful in that it completely diffuses these if we submit ourselves to the truth. That we are sinners, saved only by Grace. We are called to marriage to glorify God not to satisfy ourselves. If we buy those truths, a lot of the stuff becomes clear and it becomes...you want to rule it out.

Selena: It loses its power, yeah.

Ryan: It loses its power. Yes. Another big one is a guilt trip. That's a tactic for manipulation. I was going to read the summary that we found. It's a special kind of intimidation tactic, the guilt trip. "A manipulator suggests to the conscientious victim that they do not care enough or too selfish, or have it easy. This usually results in the victim feeling bad, keeping them in a self-anxious and submissive position."

Selena: Goodness. This is Genesis 3 right here. It just got in front of me. "He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

Ryan: "Did He really say that?"

Selena: "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden but God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, and neither shall you touch it lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, truth and you will be like God knowing good and evil, truth.'" But the lie was "you will not surely die." So when the woman saw the tree, we all know what happened. So, sorry. As you're reading that and I'm reading scripture, it's the epitome of the truth of manipulation.

I mean, this is where manipulation plays to pride, it plays to deceit, it plays to all of it. I'm baffled. My jaw is on the floor just diving into the study about manipulation. So anyway, I lost for words on some things.

Ryan: We have a little bit more time.

Selena: Well, we have a few things to go through. We do not have a little bit more time.

Ryan: Well, this is helpful I feel like.

Selena: You have one more.

Ryan: No, there's a few more I want to go through. Diversion is a manipulator not giving a straight answer to a straight question and instead of being diversionary, steering the question to another topic. Evasion is similar to diversion but giving irrelevant, rambling, vague responses or weasel words.

Selena: Weasel words. Sounds like weasel words to me. *[Ryan chuckles]*

Ryan: Weasel words.

Selena: That might be a new one in our marriage.

Ryan: I'm reading ahead here. I want to do two more in-depth and I want to just name a few. So shaming, a manipulator uses sarcasm and put-downs to increase fear and self-doubt in the victim. You can do this even in a covert way, that you can shame someone by making them feel stupid. You're not calling them stupid, but you're making them feel stupid in your tone and the way you're constructing your arguments.

We've talked about this in the podcast, but God has convicted me over the last I think number of years. He opened my eyes to this and continues to show me how I have not loved my wife well. I don't want to make it sound like I'm this terrible...I want self-defend here *[laughs]* because I do love my wife.

Selena: Everybody knows that you're a great husband.

Ryan: I hope. I hope that that's somewhat evident.

Selena: Some of our challenges have been around this area of...

Ryan: When I get defensive, I start talking in ways and trying to make my argument and I make leaps. And I will start to make you feel like you don't understand. And that's another way of saying make you feel stupid. *[both laughs]* I just I'm so ashamed of that. And I've just asked God to help me with that. But that's what calling it what it is.

Selena: *[laughing]* "Asked God to help me with that." I'm sorry. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: What else should I do?

Selena: God is sanctifying our hearts in this area I think. Sorry. When you're asking God for help, it's like you're asking a buddy. And God's not our buddy. He's God. I'm not.

- Ryan:** I asked God to help me with that. *[Selena laughs]* I don't know how else to word that sentence.
- Selena:** I hear it differently. See, communication breakdowns. You know the podcast.
- Ryan:** Quit manipulating me. *[both laughing]* Speaking of which, vilifying the victim that's another tactic.
- Selena:** I've not read these ahead of time, people.
- Ryan:** So more than any other, this tactic is a powerful means of putting the victim on the defensive while simultaneously masking the aggressive intent of the manipulator. Again, going back to the sexual example. A wife catches her husband looking at porn. "It's your fault. You weren't available to me. You weren't available when I came to you. When I put out the vibe, you were tired, you had a headache so you went to bed. So now I'm looking at porn and it's your fault." That's vilifying the victim.
- Selena:** Wow.
- Ryan:** That's another flipside as playing the victim. Two to go through here, but I want to just read them. Playing the servant role is another one.
- Selena:** I don't if you can read these without...
- Ryan:** Cloaking yourself, serving agenda, and the guise of service or morals.
- Selena:** Because we do also want to talk about how we are called to act as believers in these things.
- Ryan:** Feigning innocence, feigning confusion, anger. *[Selena laughs]* Bandwagon effect. Then there are ways that we're vulnerable to these types of behaviors. Either we can have a blurry sense of identity. That's the biggest one. Typically, manipulators know how to either covertly or overtly, inadvertently or on purpose exploit these vulnerabilities. We have a disease to please or addiction to earning the approval or acceptance of others, a fear of negative emotion, a lack of assertiveness. Selena, you talked about being assertive. That's one area that you're growing.
- Selena:** Yeah, sure, I am. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah, that's right. Let me assert that. Low self-reliance...

Selena: Can I just stop right there for one second, and say that my assertiveness and my ability to say no to things and to be able to clearly communicate, maybe the rub that I'm having with people, has come from an identity rooted in Christ. I can't act that role out of being assertive because I will fail. I don't do things...

Ryan: You can't do it on your own strength.

Selena: Yes. Well, and I can't fake that. If I don't know that to be a truth, then I'm not going to be able to enforce that or be assertive in that.

Ryan: Yeah. I mean, it comes from fearing God.

Selena: I'm just trying to bring death, and image, and growth and roots to the whole assertiveness and how God has grown me in that and shine the light on the roots that He's grown.

Ryan: Simon has a few of these. He says naivety is one of them, over conscientiousness, low self-confidence, over intellectualization, emotional dependency.

Selena: Gosh, I feel like the internet just does this to you, doesn't it? It's manipulative. It's manipulative. Ah, man. You got to show this to Nathan. Sorry.

Ryan: Nathan is our good buddy over the Gospel Tech Podcast.

Selena: Gospel Tech. Check it out.

Ryan: Check those guys out. Literally, Good buddy, I've known him since I was like 13. Awesome friend and brother.

Selena: I've known him since I was 12. *[laughs]*

Ryan: So but you're a better friend of mine. And he's a man. So how dare you?

Selena: *[laughs]* How dare you. It's true.

Ryan: He's like a brother to us, truly. Okay, those are all vulnerabilities that are exploited by manipulators.

How do we act as believers in light of everything that we've just catapulted out there?

Selena: As Christians, we're not to engage in manipulation and we're not supposed to take advantage of each other in this way. I don't want to say we don't want to be taken advantage of. So, in Matthew 10:16, Jesus is talking about being shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves. So shrewd as snakes—don't be taken advantage of. Innocent as doves—don't manipulate others.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: I mean, let's just talk about context. Matthew 10 is talking about 12 disciples. They're being sent out, so they're being commissioned, and he's talking about persecution in this particular reference in this verse. He says, "Persecution Will Come: Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." So there's different versions that say shrewd or wise.

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour." Such an invitation of trust, right? "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: We're looking at this in context of persecution. Even in that, in persecution, Jesus is leading us to be shrewd as snakes. To not be taken advantage of but to also be innocent. And how can we do that? We can only do that by believing the gospel, being obedient to God's Word, letting it fall on ears that hear and a heart that is not a stone but of flesh.

The innocent as doves, I mean, there's nothing more in terms of images [*both laughing*] as something means so innocent but not manipulating others. And I think for me as a believer, knowing that God loves me in a non-manipulative way and that He calls me to love you in a non-manipulative way, feels like quite the calling. But I know that He hasn't called me to walk this path alone. He says, "I'm here with you. I won't leave you. I'm not going to forsake you. Here's my word. Here's my instructions. Here's the authority on which if you trust it, if you believe it, and you can assert yourself because of it..." Does that make sense?

Ryan: It's all about the foundation of your identity.

Selena: There you go.

Ryan: Again, loving God more than anything else and trusting His word more than anything else. That's the life of a Christian is learning those two things.

Selena: What does His Word say? Put off falsehood.

Ryan: And of course, His word is a way to know and love God. And that's why we trust it more than anything else. So if we know and love God by trusting who He says we are, then we have a place of confidence. I feel like Muhammad Ali stole from Jesus when he said, "Float a butterfly sting like a bee." But, yeah, I love that "be as shrewd as snakes, innocent as doves." You can't do that unless your starting place is Christ Himself.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Okay, man. I want to read Act 17:11. "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

Selena: That's exactly what we talked about at the beginning.

Ryan: And that gives us the gauge for truth. So this is diagnosing manipulation. It's so hard, you guys. It's so hard. All I'm going to say is that you look at the situation, trust the Holy Spirit in you, trust truth...

Selena: I think our knee jerk reaction is...Sorry, really quick. Our knee jerk reaction is to be defensive and angry. But we need to see that for what it is, and like you said, go to the word, seek truth. So what does God's word say about how I should respond?

Ryan: The heart governed by the Holy Spirit will be a heart filled with peace. You'll have a deep sense of peace. Yes, but there will be parts that are not peaceful. To me, those are red flags, and those are areas that you can start looking introspectively looking into your heart, also looking at the situation. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, I think trusting your gut is something that you can do.

Yes, the heart is deceitful above all else. It's not what we're talking about. We're talking about trusting that still, small voice...

Selena: Discernment.

Ryan: ...discerning, yes, to help identify these manipulation things. Not so that you can just be proven right. It's so that you can root out sin in your life, in your marriage, in your spouse's life. You're called to help them in that way. Doing

so in truth and in love, getting help where help is needed where you cannot find health on your own.

Selena: This is the abundance

Ryan: You start with identifying the problem for what it is, so you can then start on the path toward true reconciliation, true healing, and true sanctification.

Selena: So good. So good.

Ryan: But that's the thing with manipulation as it happens and we don't even know what's happening. We do it but we don't even know we're doing it. So we have to see the sin for what it is, call it what it is, and then rooted...

Selena: Search me and know me, right?

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: God, search me and know me.

Ryan: Yes. Okay, man. How do we move forward in this? I think having a conversation with each other.

Selena: Yeah, we're going to talk more about this on next week's episode. So you got to stay tuned for some of this. But here's a little...

Ryan: Yes. So if you find that you're having a very manipulative back and forth in your marriage, whether it's in a conversation or you have kind of patterns that produce themselves over weeks and months, learn to assume the best in each other, okay? When your spouse says something, assume the best then ask questions based on that assumption.

Love hopes, all things. That's 1 Corinthians 13. What that means is that love is expecting the best out of the beloved. Meaning that you said one thing, I'm going to expect that you meant the best out of that thing. And I'm going to hope for that. And I'm going to ask you questions based on that, and I'm going to make you come to the table.

Selena: When you give kids vitamins, when you say you don't want them to have them, you assume that we want health for our children. It doesn't make sense, but I'm going to try to go for it for a minute.

Ryan: That's a good example. Thank you for saying that.

Selena: Because if it doesn't make sense, that's where the questions come in. Right? We don't just want to keep assuming. If you start to assume, and then you think, "Ah, we're starting to fight," ask questions. Ask questions.

Ryan: Or the more subtle assumption, in that case, would be that you're just too cheap to buy the vitamins.

Selena: It's also that.

Ryan: That's a more relevant assumption. *[laughs]*

Selena: That's where the vitamin companies make their money. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Right. And I'm saying, "Well, we give our kids food and food contains vitamins. Traditionally speaking, vegetables contain vitamins. Anyway. *[laughs]*"

Selena: Let's stop right there. Moving forward, assume the best, ask lots of questions.

Ryan: We say this a lot, but exercise charity in how you listen and how you talk to one another. That's part of assuming the best.

Selena: It's hard, people. It's going to rub you the wrong way, it's not going to feel good but continue down the path. Trust that God's word is instructive and it's authoritative and it's got purpose in it, and we have to trust that over our own feelings and emotions and uncomfortableness. It's okay to be uncomfortable.

Ryan: Which, speaking of God's Word, be slow to speak, quick to listen. That's another way you can move forward in this area.

Selena: Put off falsehood. Be truthful to your neighbor.

Ryan: We're right up at 55 minutes. A little bit more than that. Anyway, thanks for listening to this, ladies and gentlemen. We'll pray us out real quick.

I want to make mention of our Patreon page. If you want to support, we need your support. We have no idea how long we'll be able to talk about Christian marriage this overtly through this medium. If you want to make sure that we at least have some resources to work with and keep that going, "Go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage."

If that's a problem, we understand, don't worry about it. We would love your support there. But you can also support by leaving a rating and a review on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. iTunes is the one most people go to. That'd be very helpful.

Next week, we're going to be talking through how to basically triage. What do you do when you've experienced basically a catastrophic car wreck, so to speak in your marriage? I mean, literally.

Selena: That's not next week. I thought it was a week after.

Ryan: No, it's next week.

Selena: We said we're going to talk about...

Ryan: That's when you rebuild trust. So if you had a catastrophic event in your marriage, there's been a damaged trust, there's been something that just feels you're there, you both are injured and bloody, laying on the side of the road—I'm using the analogy now—where do you even go after you've had this damaged trust? It feels like you have no way forward, it feels like you're on your deathbed, how do you begin building trust.?

Selena: It feel a little qualified to talk about these things.

Ryan: Well, we're going to trust God's Word and we're going to hopefully speak in a way that's filled with truth and love.

Selena: And hope.

Ryan: And hope in Christ. Ladies and gentlemen, we don't have a lot but what we have, we give to you. And that is Jesus Christ.

Selena: Definitely feels like the five loaves and two fish. *[chuckles]* Thank God for Jesus.

Ryan: All right. So I'll pray for us. Is that all right?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Thank you. *[both chuckles]* Lord, I thank you for, gosh, your light. I thank you for the light that you shed into our hearts and into our lives. I think that your Word is truth and that you have given it to us, you've given it to us in yourself in that Jesus Christ, you are God's Word. I thank you for the revelation that is scripture, that it is truth, and we can rely on it, we can trust it. And Holy Spirit, I thank you for illuminating that truth in our hearts helping us to understand, apply, and appreciate that truth for what it is.

I pray for the husband and wife right now who are struggling. If they're struggling, I pray that you would give them hope and then bring help into their lives, whether through your Word or through your body of believers. I thank you for the marriages that are in a good spot. I pray that you continue their flourishing and that you would show them ways that they can minister to others out of that place of strength. In your precious name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Thank you for joining us, ladies and gentlemen, for the Fierce Marriage podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can!

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days, maybe sooner. Until then—

Selena: Stay fierce!

[00:58:46] <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.

[00:59:11] <Podcast ends>

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:06:27]**
 - Quote:
 - www.gotquestions.org: “At its core, manipulation is a type of lying. When someone speaks falsely for the purpose of deception, he or she is being manipulative, because to deceive is to manipulate someone into thinking or behaving a certain way. So all of the Bible’s prohibitions against lying can be applied to manipulation. Lying is a dreadful sin.”

- **[00:11:04]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Ephesians 5:22-26, ESV

- **[00:12:55]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 2 Corinthians 11:14, ESV

- **[00:16:00]**
 - Book Recommendation:
 - ["In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People."](#)

- **[00:34:10]**
 - Book Recommendation:
 - ["See-Through Marriage"](#)

- **[00:41:36]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Genesis 3, ESV

- **[00:48:24]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Matthew 10:16

- **[00:51:34]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Act 17:11

- **[00:54:16]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Corinthians 13

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