

SERVING IS PURSUING

<https://fiercemarriage.com/serving-is-pursuing>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: "When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.'" That comes from John 13.

So we're talking about service today, namely, in how serving is pursuing in marriage. The trick with service is that we don't serve to get something out of the other person. So in marriage conversations like these, we can say, "Hey, serve your spouse because if you serve your spouse, you're going to have a better marriage, you're going to have a happier marriage," or "you're going to get the thing you want from them, whether that's connection, sex, whatever, conversation." That's not service.

Selena: That's manipulation. All of it, right?

Ryan: It is. Yes.

Selena: Go back two episodes. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: So we don't want it are each other by serving each other. But instead, we pursue each other by serving each other. There's a difference there. We're going to talk through three ways that Jesus gives us and instructs us through this example of washing His disciples' feet. And we're hoping it will be an elucidating episode for you and we will see you on the other side.

[00:01:20] <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 candid, gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage.
- Ryan:** Service is not sexy. I don't think. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** I think it feels kind of like a necessary...it's not spark notes of how to have a good marriage. Service is not usually in those notes I feel like. But it is. And I just think we underestimate it. I guess that's just our own experience sometimes of service is one of those things that can really draw you together and I think unite you and your spouse. But it's not usually very glamorous or exciting times sometimes.
- Ryan:** As a topic, I think it gets kind of to the ball...
- Selena:** Overlooked?
- Ryan:** Yeah, overlooked is a good way to think about it. But you have often said that you find me attractive when I'm in the midst of serving you, whether it's...
- Selena:** He's never been sexier.
- Ryan:** ...how I care for the kids or how I clean up after a meal or whatever that that looks like. So in that sense, service is sexiness.
- Selena:** Ooh, Lord.
- Ryan:** But the topic of service is not something that...I mean, you're listening to this podcast, so something interests you. *[both chuckles]* But it's not like you could have a podcast that's all about service, right? Because I think people tend to overlook it because it is a little bit grading on our selfishness. It grades against our selfishness. Speaking of selfishness...
- Selena:** Oh, goodness. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** ...let's talk about *[laughing]* ourselves for a minute. It's been a tough couple of days.
- Selena:** It's been a tough couple of days.

- Ryan:** We're emotionally drained. Selena, I think you're particularly emotionally drained. We have a dog. Her name is Macy. She's an Australian shepherd, and we've had her for going on 15 years.
- Selena:** When did you get her? When did I get her for you and surprise you?
- Ryan:** You surprised me with this dog. A puppy.
- Selena:** Puppy.
- Ryan:** A little white and gray and black, little fluffy, little Australian shepherd. It was after we had gotten back from Switzerland. If you don't know our story, we moved over there. Selena got a job there as an Au Pair/groom. I was tagged along. I got very sick. Ended up almost dying. Literally, I'm not exaggerating there. We got home. We were broke. We had all this debt, medical bills, all this kind of stuff.
- Selena:** So what do you do when you're living in your parents' house that's for sale, and you just got jobs? Obviously, you buy a puppy.
- Ryan:** Well, Selena bought me this little puppy.
- Selena:** On trial. We had a deposit. I was like, "We could take her back."
- Ryan:** It took me like three minutes to say, "Yeah, we're keeping this dog. *[Selena chuckles]* Just the sweetest little puppy.
- Selena:** But she came over to you and just sat right next to you in the one beanbag chair in the house that was for sale that we had. *[laughs]* It was good times.
- Ryan:** Oh, man. Anyway, she's not doing well. As we speak, she is currently...we're deciding at what point...She doesn't seem to be uncomfortable, but we're deciding...
- Selena:** Quality of life.
- Ryan:** Quality of life, yeah. So it's been hard, ladies and gentlemen. To be candid, we're emotional. We've had emotional mourning. If you've ever had a dog, you'll understand. Or if you like animals you'll understand. To be candid, this episode is a labor of love. We wanted to just blow it off this week because we've had no margin in our lives.

So anyway, we're here and we're actually going through a chapter. So the in-between for us was we're going through a chapter in our book, our husband and wife in pursuit. So it's actually day 13 from both husband and wife. These books are all about pursuing each other and the way that Christ has pursued us, and how marriage is a means to learn that. So anyway, that's what we're going through today is serving is pursuing.

Selena: That's interesting because I feel served out if that is a term I can use. I feel kind of sad. *[cries]* But I just feel kind of empty in a lot of levels. I don't like crying on the podcast. Everybody knows this. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: It's okay.

Selena: So there you go. There's some honesty. Anyways, it's interesting. I feel very served out. I just kind of feel emptied on a lot of levels. But the interesting thing is that we're looking at John 13. This is right before Jesus goes to the cross. I mean, talk about fully being emptied and dying. I'm not saying that I'm there. Obviously, I'm not facing death. But I mean, it just shows how much Jesus loves us and gives for us and did all the way up until the end.

Ryan: Yeah. And to give a little bit more context to our youngest, Louisa, very healthy, strong, but has been very needy. And yes, we've been serving on every level, not just our family, but other families as well.

Selena: It's usually good. It just kind of feels like a lot sometimes in some moments.

Ryan: And you have these moments where it's kind of a perfect storm. So we'll talk through this. We'll read through that scripture again. I'll do a little bit of housekeeping. I've been very encouraged...Give Selena...give you a chance to kind of gather yourself. I know you don't like being put on the spot.

Selena: Thank you.

Ryan: But I've been very encouraged by our patrons. So we've had an influx of patrons this last week. If that's you, thank you so much. We can't say it enough. Here's why it's important. And this is why we've chosen to go this route instead of advertising. The message of the gospel is at stake in this. We've said this many times, but we see marriage as an excuse to talk about the things of God to present the gospel to people in a place of need, and a place of felt need, namely, the relationship. Now, we didn't start out with that. But that's how this mission has evolved.

So patrons are people who have partnered with us on patreon.com/fiercemarriage and basically saying that this content is important

enough that we're going to get behind it, and we're going to support you. And not through buying products, but by just monthly committing ourselves, committing our family to supporting your family because this message is important.

The reason why I say it's at stake is because we're in a weird moment right now in terms of what's happening politically, geopolitically, socially and all the unrest. And that Jesus and the gospel, anytime you have absolute truth, that is not going to be a popular thing in a postmodern culture. But we are committed to proclaiming the truth of the gospel no matter what it costs our family, no matter what it costs us because it is truth and it is the best way to love others is to present them with the gospel. And in this context in the marriage context.

All that being said, thank you to our patrons. And if you feel like being a part of that, we'd be honored. But we did want to make that case clear is that it's not just about money, people, it's about keeping this message going and making a statement. This is our whole profession. I've actually quit our other job. I had an inside thing doing web development. That's officially shut down because we're all in on this thing. So anyway, if you have a heart for that, and God leads you, just go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. There are perks and benefits. Don't do it for that, do it because God leads you. It starts \$2 a month on up.

Also another way you can support is by leaving a comment, leaving a rating and review on iTunes. They mean a ton to us and other listeners. So with that said, what do you think? Should jump into this topic?

Selena: You know how I like to jump in.

Ryan: That was a long, long runway there.

Selena: I'm sorry.

Ryan: But, like I said, it's been an extraordinary week and a half for us.

Selena: Definitely.

Ryan: Let's read the Scripture again because I find it just so helpful this time. You want to read?

Selena: Sure. So John 13:12-15: "When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I

am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."

I love how Jesus is teaching and instructing here. It's just such a beautiful picture of "Do you understand what I've done to you?" Like he's not saying, "I'm doing this to you." I imagine, you know, just my own self trying to teach kids how to read or something. It's like you don't tell them so much as you ask them because then they begin to own that information. And it's true in their heart; it becomes clear in their mind. And Jesus is just, once again, the perfect teacher in saying, "Do you understand what I've done to you? You call me these things? You say that I am this and you're right. I am. So if then, if I am this person, then I'm asking you to do the same that I've done. If you believe this, then I'm asking you this."

Ryan: Which who would raise their hand who's listening to this and say, "Yeah, I call Jesus my Lord. I call Him my Savior." If we call Him these things, then there should be an outpouring of that in our actual lives. So the fullness, the full gravitas of that reality of Christ's lordship should bear fruit. I think I read through the whole book of 1 John in my devotions. The whole of that book is—and I don't have my notes in front of me. Shoot!—but so much of it is saying, and this is also true in 1 and 2 Peter, but so much of it is saying, if this reality is a reality in your life, there should be an outflow of it.

That's where we get the whole walk in the light. He is in the light, so we have fellowship with one another, will be cleansed from all righteousness. That's 1 John 1. I think it's verse 5 and 6. Anyway, the whole point is saying that like, "If you say these things, if you call me Christ, the Christ in terms of I am the Messiah, if you call me your Lord and your Savior, then you should serve like I'm serving you." So He is giving us an example. But He's also doing so much more. And that's what I want to dive into here in three ways.

Selena: Oh, yeah. When He's saying, "If you believe this, then this should be the automatic outpouring." Which again, if you're hearing that, we should be asking ourselves, "Well, if I'm not responding this way, why?" Like if He's saying, "If you know Me and you if you call Me teacher like I'm instructing you and Lord, I'm your authority, then you should be doing as I am doing."

For me, I'm like, "If I'm hesitant, why am I hesitant? Why do I feel like what He's saying is something I can't do in my marriage?" I don't know how to quote-unquote, "wash my husband's feet and serve him. Why? What are the obstacles that are keeping me from being obedient?"

Ryan: Obedient to Christ.

- Selena:** To Christ, yes. Sorry.
- Ryan:** So what are some ways that we can serve each other in marriage? I mean, you just opened up a little bit of a door there. So let's talk through that. I think we can serve each other through acts of service. That's one of the love languages that Gary Chapman talks about being acts of service. We talked about like I watched...It's not Gary Thomas. Gary Thomas is the secret marriage guy.
- Selena:** The Garys. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Dr. Gary Chapman. So, which obviously is a great book. The perennial kind of classic book on relationships and love. So that would include things like, "you're tired, let me clean up after dinner," or "you're tired, let me take the kids..."
- Selena:** *[both chuckling]* You're tired. That's just me. *[both laughs]* I'm sorry, another example. I love you. I would love to do something great for you right now.
- Ryan:** Yeah, yeah. So tiredness on the brain. So there's that kind of service that plays out in marriage. I think there's also we serve each other by...we talk a lot about being charitable toward each other, I mean, being generous in our assumptions. I think we can start are each other in that way? I think one clear example is if in your sex life you're feeling like you're not getting everything you'd hoped for from your sex life and your spouse obviously has something to do with that, you could assume that they hate you and they're avoiding you, *[Selena laughs]* and they don't love you anymore, and they don't want to be close to you.
- Selena:** I don't mean to laugh. I'm sorry. Those feel like really big assumptions. Just big leaps and jumps. But yes, no, I see the picture you're painting.
- Ryan:** Thank you. The caricatures that I am painting here. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Or you could look at it and say, "Hey, we've had a really rough week, I believe and I trust that my spouse still loves me. I trust that he or she still wants to be with me. I trust that they're not trying to somehow punish me." I think that would be serving each other in how you are perceiving that. Anytime you choose selflessness over selfishness I feel like it's an opportunity to serve as an example of service.

- Selena:** Right. And it's trusting I think God's word versus what you feel. So I may feel that if I'm giving to you, it's going to take away from me my energy or what I want to do. But when God in this instance of being able to serve one another, choosing the path of service and selflessness is always rewarded. There's always a deepening joy that can happen, I think, which would encourage me to trust more and more. But I think my hesitancy and my default, if I'm honest is to just not and to do what I want to do and what I feel like doing.
- Ryan:** Yeah, it's so counter-cultural. I want to just point out the significance of this being our Savior. Every other worldview, every other religion is a religion of ascent. When you're raising, you're going through the levels of ascent, whether it's ascent through your behavior, in your righteousness, or ascent through your level of enlightenment, thinking of like Buddhism or its ascent through some sort of progression through the spiritual ranks. And here we have a savior who has descended, who is condescended down into humanity. We're seeing that here in this depiction of His service. We're being called to the same thing. So it's this bottom-up leadership, right?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** It's upside down leadership. Upside down. Just our Savior, our King, our God. Not just this man, Jesus, it's God in the flesh, Jesus, serving disciples. How profound is that?
- Selena:** Right. I'm trying to understand like service in terms of a hierarchy in some ways. In God's economy, the first is the last. The leader is actually the biggest servant.
- Ryan:** Which is what we're seeing in Christ, yeah.
- Selena:** Right. So I'm thinking like in marriage, we're equal. One of us is not like the Christ in our marriage. So how are we coming alongside each other and serving one another in a way...? I'm picturing Jesus washing their feet. Metaphorically, He's washing the dirt of the day off of their feet. And I'm thinking how...
- Ryan:** Yes. Literally He is.
- Selena:** Literally, right. Yeah, sorry. So metaphorically, I'm thinking, "As a married couple, how do we do this? How do we emulate Christ with each other in this sort of instance? The dirt of the day being our sin, our selfishness, or just some of the struggles that we're facing that we may not be sinning actively in, but just we're tired, we're overwhelmed, we're empty. How can we serve each other in that instance?"

Ryan: That's so interesting. Because you're right. We are equals in terms of we have equal value, worth and importance. And that we, you and I, husband and wife, any husband and wife are made in the image of God. And Jesus here is taking on flesh. There's a verse that says He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. That jumped into my mind when you started talking about equality in terms of our humanity.

This what I love about the gospel. Is it level? Completely level is the playing field. There's not a pyramid scheme. It's Christ is our head, and everyone else is on the same plane below Him, in terms of we're all saved by grace, we all serve Him. He is the head of our church. Of course, we submit ourselves to church leadership, and we submit ourselves to the other institutional authorities, namely family, church, and state. And that's all good stuff. But to answer your question, how do we serve each other as equals, I think we just see opportunities and we jump in to fill those gaps, those opportunities, those moments when you could benefit from.

Selena: Yeah, we can serve each other through walking, through each other sin together. Like in repentance, that whole cycle, I think there's an aspect of service that maybe we overlook, and we should be talking about today. A little bit of highlighting. Again, the day's dirt that's on our feet, the things that are just there, and sometimes we don't notice them as much or we've just allowed them to be there. Like how do I not lord it over you and say, "Hey, I got to wash your feet. They're so dirty." Like we do with our kids, right? They run in the house, you're like, "Ah, let me wipe your feet off or something. They're so dirty."

Where Jesus comes, and He comes humbly, and He comes to them. He's walking them through this and He's not lord it over them when He of all people would have that opportunity. Just the way He uses service, because service is always kind of looked at—and I don't want to stay here too long, I guess—but looked at as the lesser of...the people who serve are less than the people who are being served. Where Christ is saying, "The one who serves is the greatest among you."

Ryan: And we'll see what can be assumed about the disciple who would have refused to wash feet in this instance in that sometimes we do that. So let's get into these three ways that we see Christ teaching us. The three key truths that we can learn from this example.

So the first one. Again, this comes from our book. This honestly is day 13 of Husband in Pursuit and Wife in Pursuit. If this strikes a chord, just go to 31daypursuit.com and learn more. Anyway. So the first one is, Jesus' action set foreshadows His ultimate act of servanthood through His death on the

cross. So they know He's God. At least they know it in their heads, right? They're coming to believe it more in their hearts, and He's foreshadowing to them this great act of service. I just want to read this. It's an ancient culture. And you had mentioned it. "His feet were generally filthy, and particularly exposed during meals, there's people reclined at low tables." So they're not sitting on chairs. They're more likely, according to that culture, sitting around a low table, but on pillows of sorts.

Selena: Their feet are kind of just right there.

Ryan: Yeah. So they're reclining back there. They might have their feet to the side. Obviously, their feet aren't on the table, but they might be...

Selena: One would hope.

Ryan: ...exposed in some way. *[laughs]*

Selena: I don't know. Unless you're Clementine. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: So the washing of their feet before these meals, it's customary, but it's almost like a prerequisite to eating a meal and enjoying the meal. Because think about feet and the smells that they bring, especially if you're walking in the streets in the day.

Selena: Yeah, it was sandals.

Ryan: They were filthy because they were dirty, but also because of human waste, animal waste.

Selena: Everything was just poured out to the streets.

Ryan: So John, he's very intentional in describing how Jesus prepared to wash His feet. He says, "He laid aside his outer garments, taking a towel..." This is from John 13:4. We didn't read this. "He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist." So He then used that towel to wipe their feet dry after washing.

So I had asked this question a while back when I studied this: why did John include that part about the towel? It seems like it's one of those things that if that's the normal practice, it's like if I said, "Hey, you washed your car." I wouldn't include like Selena got the bucket, put soap in the bucket, filled the bucket with water.

Selena: Unless you're trying to hit a word count. *[both laughing]* Just kidding.

Ryan: John was clearly trying to hit a word count here. The Bible editors were...you had to hit 60,000. *[both laughs]*. No, but there was a reason he did that, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: He wanted to make a point to the audience that he knew would be reading this gospel. Again, I'm processing through it. There's obviously more to it could be true. I read this in a commentary, but I'm just kind of asking this question. It could be true that Jesus' removal of His outer garment or His robe, and a lot of times, the outer garment was kind of considered like a mental, right, in these times. And attaching the towel is signified a removal of His divine mantle or His role in heaven.

He was still fully God, fully man, but He was not acting as God in this capacity. I don't mean to be sloppy with my words there. But He was laying down kind of His divine right in that instance in His role in heaven. And His dawning of humanity for the work to come on the cross. Could that be some symbolic? He's taken off his outer garment, He's wrapped this towel around His waist, and it's a clean pure white towel. I'm assuming it's white, because I'm picturing like terry cloth. It's probably not white. It's probably some other color. But it's clean, presumably. And He's going to use this towel to now clean the filth off of us in an act of service. So that's a foreshadowing of it.

Now, what does it have to do with marriage? *[laughs]* I think it helps us understand that our Savior is a sacrificial Savior. He's a servant. He's our servant King. It's so humbling, and we talked about this many times the parable of the unforgiving servant and how we tend to...if we have self-righteous thoughts over each other, meaning that I deserve this, or you don't deserve this because of some moral standing, this should alleviate that burden. That falseness in our own hearts where we forget that we are just as in need of grace, we are just as in need of this servant King that we see here and that He is calling us to serve each other in the same way.

I think this first one really does level the field for us in marriage. In that if you're in a marriage, we feel like your husband, your wife has continually failed you, whether it's through an infidelity or through a betrayal or through some sort of just inadequacy...

Selena: Lack of service, lack of valuing...

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. ...we can't really hold that over them in a moral sense.

Selena: Sure. Which is hard to do. It's hard to do.

Ryan: Yeah, it's really hard to do. So that to me sets the stage now for true service, because now we can see each other as equals in that sense. You know what I mean? Does that make sense?

Selena: Yeah. I was thinking through your example and how the Bible Commentary was talking also about the washing of the feet was not something that was typically done at the table. It was done kind of as you walked in. Like we remove our shoes when you go into a house. I think the customary thing to do in that time was to have...the host would have water set out so they would be able to wash their feet and come in.

So the fact that Jesus is coming around and washing each of their feet, there's just a rich symbolism there, obviously. And it's a foreshadowing, again, like we said, of his ultimate act through death on a cross. I mean, our King died on a cross, a human cross. Like a divine King came down and died a human death for us, so that we could be reconciled back to God so that we could have life eternally with Him. So what does that say about service? Where does that put that role of how we love each other and how we serve each other?

Ryan: It puts it at the forefront and what's important in our lives. And then we can stop seeking our own selfish gain and we can seek each other's.

Selena: Yeah. Each other's selfish gain. *[chuckles]* No, we can seek to serve one another. Because I think we can very easily get lost in our own needs. And I'm not saying that we should ignore our needs in order to serve one another. But I think serving another person can often alleviate some of those things that we might...those deep needs that we feel. Does that make sense?

Sometimes I think it's like the one thing we need is to not look at what we need, but actually, look to the needs of others, and how that kind of brings about some clarity sometimes, and it puts things into perspective. It takes the focus off of me not saying like, "I need sleep, therefore, I'm going to go give someone else sleep." Well, no, just take care of like your physical needs and all of that.

But if I'm kind of just emotionally, looking at myself all the time, and emotionally just trying to figure things out all the time, sometimes I feel like that can be very secular without looking to Christ and asking Him to..."How can I serve in this instance, maybe?" Which, again, is not the most default thing that I go to? I'm not going to say, "Oh, how can I serve?" when I'm feeling terrible about myself and my life or something?" No. But I think that in serving one another, we can then lift our eyes from what we might be feeling stuck in. Does that seem more clear?

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Actually, I think that speaks to the second big truth that we can glean from this scene that is unfolding here. The second big truth is that Jesus was countering the proud attitudes of His disciples. So, He went in there and He sensed the proud attitudes. And of course, him being God and being obviously very close to these disciples, it was a keen observation. So what's really cool and interesting. If you look in Luke, there is a parallel account of this. In Luke 22:24, they're actually fighting over who would be regarded as the greatest. I just want to pull it up real fast. I don't have in front of me. Luke 22:24. Let's see.

Selena: Okay, those pages, people. Oops, there's a lot of verses in chapter 22. Like sixty-some. Okay, Luke 22:24. Who's the greatest. "A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you.

Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Ryan: It gets it back into the Jewish history there. So His example of humility. So picture this. Okay? Again, we're talking about marriage, we're talking about kind of our right to experience being served, or Christ's right to experience being served. He walks in here, He gets the sense that everybody's got the kind of this high and mighty sort of attitude, there's a bit of pride going on. He sees the dynamic. Then in the parallel account, like Selena just read, they are asking, "Who will be regarded as the greatest?" Then what does He do? He takes off His garment, He puts on the towel and He starts washing their feet. This would have shocked them. This would have utterly shocked them— this example of humility and servanthood.

Selena: Try not to read it and just be like, "Jesus is just like, 'Boom, I'm the greatest.'" You know what I mean?

Ryan: But He is.

Selena: He is, absolutely.

Ryan: So He's their teacher. Not only is He their teacher and He's their Messiah, He's the one they've been following. He's the miracle worker. He is the Christ. And now He's calling them on their pride and then serving them to show them the way out of it. So He didn't just tell them, "Hey, you need to wash his feet. You know what, Simon you need to wash James' feet right now..."

Selena: "He's really dirty."

Ryan: "...because you know what, you're a mess. You need to be humbled." Instead, He shows them. So He's not just teaching us and telling us. He's showing us. And then it goes on to what you said Jesus used His own example to remind them that the leader is the one who serves. In other words, He's identifying Himself as the Christ, but He's calling them to be servant leaders in the same way.

So like you said earlier, in God's economy, the greatest or the least, the richest or the poorest, the last shall be first. He was discrediting their proud attitudes and refocusing them on what matters most to God. How countercultural is that? Okay. So we think about...

Selena: And especially in the marriage arena, there's just so much of...I think we deal with some entitlement even in our own hearts. We divvy up the daily chores, we divvy up the me time. We develop these tit for tat cultures. Like, "Well, you get to do this on Saturday, then I get to do this on Sunday." I think that we overlook service and how it can be such a gift of generosity as well as a way of pursuing one another. I don't know. Because I feel like when I give to you, you're more gracious and ready and willing to give to me. And I'm not saying that as a manipulation tactic, it softens the heart. What's the word that you always use? Not "decompress."

Ryan: Diffuses.

Selena: Diffuses. Yeah, it diffuses situations. And it can defuse any bitterness and pride that could be puffing up in my heart.

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. It's very disarming too if we are having a fight even in one of us. Again, very raw stuff here. But if one of us is fighting, and we're arguing and someone says, "Listen, all right, I give up. I'm going to serve you in this way." I'm going to say, "I'm sorry." Even though I could probably argue myself into a place of rightness, I could probably make my own case, but I'm not going to make my own case. Instead, I'm going to say that I care more about you, I care more about seeing this conflict resolved and us reconciled.

That's a way you can serve your spouse. And oftentimes that's the hardest. When you're just like gritting your teeth and your white-knuckling the thing, you don't want to let it go, that's the time to let it go.

Selena: Right. Well, I was just reading one of my read...it's reread and reflect on today's scripture that says, "What are your thoughts?" And I wrote back a while, "Christ's example is vivid. He's flesh quote, unquote. His flesh shows and that He gets down and dirty in the name of service pursuit and love." And I think that He's calling us to that. I think in our marriage is where we really experience this in a deep way. Because I can experience it on a friendship level, but it's not the same when you experience it with your spouse. When you get down and dirty—and I don't mean that in a vulgar, sexual tone—I mean, you're getting down in the grind of the day to day dirt that's on your spouse's feet, and you're saying, "Let me wash your feet. Let me serve you in this way. Let me help you." And it takes humility.

I mean, yes, Jesus was like, "Boom, I'm the greatest," but He didn't say it like that. You know. They're like, "Who's the greatest?" "Well, the greatest is the servant." And then he just goes and does it and shows them. I think that we can't overlook that.

I'm just trying to think in marriage specifically. It's so hard to serve one another. I think that's probably one of the hardest things because sometimes sin would have us just battle each other. And sometimes sin would have us at a dichotomy. Like one is on one side, one is on the other, and we're just like duking up and everything. And Jesus is calling us to serve, to lay down our pride and serve.

Ryan: And that's part of what the example here is, is like you are all on equal footing here. And it's not strong footing. You need to put your footing on my righteousness—Christ's. Anyway, we see some of that as He calls them out. So He was countering the proud attitudes of the disciples.

The third lesson I think we can learn is that He reminded disciples to follow the example by serving each other. So that one feels like the most obvious. But consider, again, the scenario, in this culture, it was customary, like Selena said, to wash your feet before your meals. So the host would often put a bowl of water out and people entering would wash and then they sit down. Well, that hadn't happened. The water hadn't been out. They hadn't already washed their feet. They're all sitting down. It was customary. It's like you're not going to eat a meal...I'm trying to think of a modern Western world example of a prerequisite to eating a meal. I don't know.

I'm thinking like if you walked into a friend's house and you were the guest, and they had prepared this massive meal, this amazing thing, you wouldn't just walk in without saying anything, grab a plate, dish yourself up some food, sit down, and just start chowing down without saying a word. That would be incredibly rude.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So in a similar way, you wouldn't sit down to a meal without washing your feet first. It would be incredibly rude. It would be very unsanitary. It was a prerequisite. It wasn't an option. It was something that had to be done. Yet none of them had had their feet washed. And none of them had volunteered to wash each other's feet.

Selena: These dirty, men. *[both laughs]* I'm kidding.

Ryan: It's just stinking up there. Just classic men.

Selena: Men smell.

Ryan: So it was safe to assume that they had thought to it to do it, but none of them had acted on it—of washing their feet. So basically by their inaction, they're saying, "I'd rather not eat than wash so and so's feet. I'd rather just sit here instead of taking the serving role. Not only is it dirty, but it's also undesirable. It requires effort. And it's also an act of like submission to another person. And that's an ugly thing, and I don't want to partake in that." Jesus, instead, He...

Selena: Embraces it.

Ryan: He jumps in and He embraces it, and He teach so graciously, shows us what it means to love each other the way that His economy would do it.

Selena: Right. And you said this a little bit before but I just want to say it again in a different way of let's not let service be limited to simple acts of service. Let service be in how you communicate to one another. Having charity in your communication, having charity in your assumptions about one another, extending grace, serving one another in that, you know, I'm going to extend grace here because I want to assume this bad thing, but I'm going to serve my marriage and probably serve my spouse in giving them charity. I'm going to serve my own heart in a way to not go there. Like I'm really choosing a better path right now by not embarking on those thoughts or those assumptions.

So I guess the challenge here in marriage would be to not just let it be acts and doing things. But in our words, in our speech and how we love, how are we

serving? How are we giving of ourselves? How are we submitting ourselves? How are we dying to ourselves? And how are we embracing the dirt? Not just to sit and play in dirt water, but to cleanse and to then sit and have relationship with one another and break bread together?

Ryan: That's profound because that's really the end game is you want to get communion with one another. That's when the washing of the feet was all about is so we can get past this, and we can get into the meal, we can get into a relationship. That's so profound.

I don't want to gloss over. I want to remind us, I want to remind the listeners as well that this motivation in the service is so key. So where do we find motivation to do this? I'm thinking of the husband or the wife listening to this and they've thought, "Yeah, you know what, I've done that and still my spouse takes. And they take, and they take, and they give nothing. They still talk to me in a really degrading way. Or they still are not coming to the table so to speak. It's like I wash their feet and they go right outside and they..."

Selena: Stump in the mud, and they know that I'm watching.

Ryan: And then they revel in the fact that I'm washing their feet now again. What does that spouse do? Where do you find the will to continue to serve? That's why it can't come from inside us. It has to come from outside us. What I mean by that is that we serve because Christ first served us, He first loved us. We look at His example, and we say, "I do this as an act of worship not unto my spouse, but an act of worship unto the God of the universe." So when I serve them, I'm doing it for their good because they are my beloved, I love this person, but I'm doing it ultimately, as an act of obedience, and reverence for the way God has shown me to serve and love others.

Selena: So not letting their behavior and response dictate the way you serve.

Ryan: Yes. Because if I am only washing the dishes because I'm hoping that we will...

Selena: Going to get busy later.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: That's manipulation. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: That's manipulation. Well, it's trading.

Selena: It's trading. Yeah.

Ryan: And that is a very low view of love. It's a very low view of who you are. It's a very low view of what our marriage represents. But instead, if I'm washing the dishes because I love you and I want to show you I love you because I recognize God's model for love, and God's model for servant leadership as authoritative in my life, I'm going to wash the dishes and say, "I love you. You're welcome." Period. In the same way, you're want to have physical intimacy because...

Selena: Because you washed those dishes. Oh, yeah. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Because you understand love, because you see me for who I am, you understand that that is a...

Selena: When I know that you know what this means to me. It's not just...

Ryan: It's a wholesome fulfillment of God's definition of covenant. It's not just, "Okay, I get it. I get it. I'm going to have to put out later because you're doing dishes." Or I know that this is a need. I need to check it off for this week so that I'm quote-unquote, "good wife." Do you see how the whole script flips when we start seeing our marriage as a means through which we worship the God of the universe? And service is one way that we do that.

So let me just recap these three things we've learned real fast, and then we'll pray, and we'll have some application questions for you. So we're looking at again, John 13. I encourage you to go back and read it. If you want to do the parallel reading of Luke 22, it's very good. Obviously, can't recommend the Bible enough. Great book. *[both laughing]* It's a great.

So John 13:12-15 is what we read. The first truth we see is that Jesus' actions foreshadow the ultimate act of servanthood through His death on the cross. So it's a contextualizing truth, that it is this ultimate service that He foreshadows, and this ultimate service that we are then to live in light of.

The second big truth we learned is that Jesus is countering our proud attitudes and the proud attitudes of the disciples. The third one is reminding us to follow His example. So he's showing us His example. He's countering our proud attitudes and then beckoning us to follow in his example in this way, in this really tangible way.

So what are some application questions here? So here we go. What are three ways you can better serve your spouse? I think that's a really tangible. What are three ways? If you're a husband, how can you serve your wife? If you're a wife, how can you serve your husband?

- Selena:** As a reminder, this comes from knowing your spouse. Serving projectively. So if I serve in ways that I want to be served, it doesn't necessarily communicate to Ryan the way I'm hoping for. So knowing my spouse, knowing what would speak to them. And knowing that service, again, is a humble, trusting, kind, and somewhat dutiful act. And that's okay, and that's good, and God's created it that way. How can I better serve you? And maybe even ask your spouse. I would say, in those three ways, ask your spouse, "What are some ways that I can serve you better?"
- Ryan:** That's always a good thing to do is to ask them when you're trying to serve.
- Selena:** I wish somebody would ask me that. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Oh, my word.
- Selena:** There it is. But hey, I'm just dropping it.
- Ryan:** I don't think that was a hint. I think that left hint territory. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Not happening. *[both laughs]* Okay. If you're wondering, you're still scratching your head, just ask God to give you a heart of servanthood. Because what will happen is you'll start to see and recognize different opportunities to serve your spouse.
- Selena:** Or you'll see how selfish and unerving you are. I think that's what God said to me sometimes.
- Ryan:** Beautiful way of being sanctified. And there oftentimes you see ways that weren't on either of your minds on how to serve each other. Again, this comes from our pursuit book, *Husband in Pursuit, Wife in Pursuit*.
- Selena:** You're going to say the act?
- Ryan:** There's an act associated with it. So one of the unique things about this book is that each day that you go through it, there is an action—an action of love in the name of pursuit. So this one is if you're feeling particularly bold, husband, wife, if you're feeling like doing this, here it is. This evening take the time to wash your spouse's feet. Have them sit in a comfortable chair, grab a bowl, grab some water and a towel explain Jesus' example of servant leadership in this way, and how you're learning to pursue your spouse in the same way. All right. If you're led, read John 13:1-17.

So, obviously, it would be great if they reciprocate. In the pursuit books, they're coordinated in a way that you would do this on the same day if you're doing the study together. But yeah.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: That's a bold one.

Selena: It's a bold one. It's a bold one.

Ryan: You want to wash my feet later? *[chuckles]* For Selena, this would be the ultimate active. We were just talking before we hit record how Selena hates bad smells and I cannot stand...

Selena: And Ryan hates loud noises.

Ryan: I can't stand stray noises. Like just noise. Ugh! I can't stand it. *[both laughs]* So for Selena, to wash someone's feet I think it's particularly a service. *[both laughs]*

Selena: *[inaudible]* the words.

Ryan: Anyway, I've been talking a lot. So do you want to pray for us?

Selena: No. Thank you for talking. I've been low on words today. But sure.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Jesus, you are so good in showing us and teaching us, in giving us your example and maintaining your authority through it all. You do not acquiesce to our standards, but you come to us and you show us the better way. Lord, I pray that we would embrace you, embrace your way. Help us to commune with each other God, in light of the gospel. Help us to pursue each other through service. Show us the way. In Your name, amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right, folks, we hope this episode has been helpful for you. As we mentioned earlier, if you want to be a part of all this happening through Fierce Marriage, and now Fierce Parenting, which there's lots coming down the pipeline in that regard...

Selena: Oh, man, buckle up

Ryan: ...that is keeping us very busy, you can do that by joining on patreon.com/fiercemarriage. We would greatly appreciate it. Of course, pray

about it. We'd love to partner with you. Other than that, this has been a full and great episode. So this episode is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:47:22] <outro>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit [FierceMarriage.com](https://www.fiercemarriage.com), or you can find us with our handle, @FierceMarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:09:27]**
 - Scripture references:
 - John 13:12-15, ESV

- **[00:20:23]**
 - Website reference:
 - _31daypursuit.com

- **[00:21:54]**
 - Scripture references:
 - John 13:4, ESV

- **[00:28:41]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Luke 22:24-30, ESV

 - Book Recommendation:
 - [Husband in Pursuit](#)
 - [Wife in Pursuit](#)

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