

THE SECRET (AND SUPER OBVIOUS) INGREDIENT

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-secret-and-super-obvious-ingredient>

[00:00:00]

Selena: We had a little predicament this last week, and we're going to share it with you. I still am a little unclear on *[laughing]* some of these things. We had a little tiff last week, folks. We're going to share that with you on the other side because I think it's going to be helpful. Because from this predicament, we discovered a secret ingredient—it's not so secret—to having a tasty marriage.

Ryan: What?

Selena: Is that a good tip? Nope. Okay, that's misleading. But we did discover something that helped us on all levels. I'm excited to share that on the other side. You're ready to go? Let's go.

[00:00:35] <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.

[00:01:04] <podcast begins>

Selena: You didn't go with me to this other side. Isn't it amazing over here?

- Ryan:** Oh, my goodness.
- Selena:** Am I just too much right now?
- Ryan:** You just make it so weird. Why do you have to make it weird?
- Selena:** You know what? Some people might enjoy that? Go ahead and write in, and tell us that you enjoyed that souche to the other side.
- Ryan:** You know what? Okay, you do that.
- Selena:** A souche. A souche. All right.
- Ryan:** Okay, so this episode, it is painfully obvious, okay, what the thing is. That's what we haven't told you yet because we want you to listen.
- Selena:** You don't even have the right rundown. You need to go. He's got last week's rundown. You see? This is how it goes, people. Mmh.
- Ryan:** *[laughs]* We had two falling outs.
- Selena:** Falling out?
- Ryan:** I don't want to say that. That's not...
- Selena:** Just say predicament. That's what I've been using.
- Ryan:** We fought.
- Selena:** We did.
- Ryan:** We had two fights. One was about food and one was about sex.
- Selena:** But you were telling me it wasn't about food. *[laughs]* So?
- Ryan:** One involved food, one involved sex, but neither of them had anything to do with food or sex. It was something else.
- Selena:** This is my life, people. This is why I was like, "Huh?" *[laughs]* Anyways, we'll get into that shortly. But first of all, we want to say thank you upfront to our listeners, raters, and reviewers.
- Ryan:** Yes, thank you.

Selena: If you have listened to, you have rated, and you have reviewed, thank you so much. If you haven't done that, please take a moment to rate and review us and leave a quick comment. It's always encouraging for not only us but other listeners out there that are wondering what this is all about. So thank you for that.

If you want to support this podcast, you can do so via Patreon, patreon.com/fiercemarriage. That is one way to just link arms with us to see the gospel and marriage and family unit just moving forward together. Pray about it, be in agreement with your spouse. Yes. We may not always be able to be on the platforms that we're on right now without paying. So this is a good way for you to just really tangibly partner with us and hopefully move into the future of whatever that looks like. It's all in God's control but we're just preparing for that.

Ryan: It ensures our independence from the powers that we...

Selena: Oppression. Just kidding.

Ryan: ...namely big tech. And you know what? These big tech guys don't really care about the gospel. They care about what...

Selena: Well, let's just leave it there.

Ryan: They only care about what the populace, whatever the angry mob is telling them to care about.

Selena: So we're going to leave that there.

Ryan: We're going to keep talking about the gospel and what it costs our family. Let's take that to the bank.

Selena: Take that to the bank. So jumping in real quick to our discussion here, we're just going to get right to it.

Ryan: You're firely. Go for it.

Selena: You're like, "You're not firely enough." [*Ryan laughs*]

Ryan: I have never say that to you.

Selena: You're like, "You could use a little more..."

Ryan: Let this be on the record. I have never once told Selena she is not firely enough.

- Selena:** Straight the record. *[both laughs]* All right. So last week, just a quick recap, if you didn't hear it, we talked about narcissism in marriage, what it looks like how it can affect us in our relationships, and how to combat it in our marriage if one of us or our partner, our spouse is narcissistic. There's a spectrum and there's a way to identify it, and there's a way to move forward under biblical authority with it.
- Ryan:** Let me jump in. One thing we did is we contrast that against...we didn't want to conflate the term selfishness and narcissism. Narcissism is a more extreme version of selfishness. Yes, but there are kind of...we contrasted it in that we reminded ourselves and listeners that narcissism is more where the person who's narcissistic tends to take on a more of an aggressor role in how those behaviors and habits manifest themselves within the relational dynamic. Check it out, people.
- Selena:** Check it out. Check it out. Let's talk about the dinner predicament here. *[Ryan chuckles]* So we're talking about how does the secret ingredient actually transformed our marriage? Are we going to say it now? Are we going to bury the lede?
- Ryan:** Okay, it's love. All right. The secret ingredient is love. And what we mean by that is there is this desire to be wanted and desire to be prioritized...
- Selena:** Thought about.
- Ryan:** It's innate in us. It's like we talked about many times now in the last few episodes, the Pharisees that would just pray because they were trying to do the right thing.
- Selena:** You're calling me a Pharisee?
- Ryan:** No. *[Both chuckles]* Go check out our manipulation episode. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Have you done that to me or to our listeners?
- Ryan:** Yes, I'm talking to those...
- Selena:** Both? *[Both laughs]* I was there.
- Ryan:** So they were praying and they were saying the right words, but they were doing it without love or affection for God. They were doing it for other reasons. Whether to check it off a list or to be noticed or to feel better about themselves. It wasn't about just relying on worshiping the living God of the

universe. So it's this secret ingredient that is love. So how are we wired to desire that in marriage? So I will submit to you an illustration that is from our very real lives.

Selena: Wait. I think I should be doing this. I wrote this rundown again.

Ryan: It's what you do.

Selena: It's what I do. So our little predicament was dinner. It had been kind of a crazy day. It's hot. The sun sets right in front of our house, so it's really hot in our house. So we were outside, kids were playing in the pool, I was talking to the neighbor, having fun. Ryan comes out at about four o'clock and he's like, "Hey, what are you doing for dinner?" And I was like, "I don't know."

Ryan: No, no, no, no, no.

Selena: And you got a little like attitude here.

Ryan: I did not say that.

Selena: It was a little howdy. [*chuckles*]

Ryan: I said, "Do we have dinner plans?" That's what I said. I wasn't like, "What are you doing? What are you going to do for dinner?"

Selena: That's not what I said. That's not what I said. You just said, "Hey, what are we doing for dinner?"

Ryan: No. You said I said, "What are you doing?"

Selena: Okay. well.

Ryan: That's very different.

Selena: Okay, we are one. We are one.

Ryan: Oh, phuu. People listening are like, "That chauvinist [*inaudible*]."

Selena: I know. [*laughs*]

Ryan: "His wife does not exist and [*inaudible*] [*Selena laughs*] I can hear him right now." [*Both laughs*] No, I said, "Do we have plans for dinner?" And usually, you do. And then you almost laughed. You almost laughed it off. You're like, Pmmh, no." [*laughs*] It was like 4:45.

- Selena:** It was four o'clock. Yes, because I was like, "I haven't thought of it." But I know we have food in the house that I can make real quick and we can put it together and have dinner. And it'll be great. Well, apparently, Ryan was not feeling very loved in that moment. We discovered this. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** There's another part of this.
- Selena:** Because I put some effort into this meal, but not as much as he was hoping for.
- Ryan:** No, no, no. Okay.
- Selena:** Did we fight? Big time, people.
- Ryan:** I need to add some more to this time.
- Selena:** Big time.
- Ryan:** So I worked pretty late that day because we were under a deadline. I come down at 5:15. I come down at 5:15. So our office is above our garage, which is on one side of our house, which is right connected to the kitchen. So I when I say come down, I mean, there's like five stairs. *[Selena laughs]* I walked down like five stairs, and I came into the kitchen. And you're carrying in your hands frozen chicken. And it's 5:20, 5:30?
- Selena:** Yeah. Hello, instapot. Hello.
- Ryan:** And that's great. That's fine. Again, it's not about the food.
- Selena:** We discussed it; it was not about the food.
- Ryan:** I said under my breath, I said, "Well, I was kind of hoping we could just have a nice meal."
- Selena:** It was not a new breath. It was very intentional.
- Ryan:** I didn't want to say it to your face. *[both laughs]* I was like, "Well, I was kind of hoping we could do more than just fill the void." *[Selena laughs]* That's what I said. Do you remember?
- Selena:** Still grates on me. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Because sometimes it feels like...

- Selena:** It was filling the void because both of us had had very intense days and it was hot and it was crazy, and it was a last minute, like, I have not prepared anything. And he was like, "Well, what couldn't you think about it? Like driving in the car or something?" *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** This is very much unresolved apparently.
- Selena:** It is resolved. It's just funny the way you're telling it.
- Ryan:** And you were like, "I'm feeding our family. What else do you want from me?" And I'm like, "That's that really about..." You can make the exact same meal but if it felt like you had prioritized it."
- Selena:** And then I said, "What does that mean? What does that mean? I'm making the meal right now. Seems like a priority because I'm trying to feed the family because I love my family." I felt like it was this moving target that I was just trying to like hit and I couldn't find it, and he couldn't really articulate it that well either. So needless to say, I went to Costco at that moment because I was like, "You know what, I'm done." So I took the baby, we went to Costco and got more *[laughing]* frozen chicken and other stuff.
- Ryan:** You put food in this instant pot.
- Selena:** And I said, I was like, "You figure dinner out." I was so mad. *[Ryan chuckles]* And I was like, "God, you can just help his heart to understand how wrong he is. I pray that you would just help him to know how wrong he is." So I was gone for like an hour, not even that long. And I come home and I just didn't talk.
- Ryan:** I don't think we said another thing that night.
- Selena:** No. Because I was like, "I don't need to say anything. I love this family. I am putting food on the table, literally."
- Ryan:** And you mad at me because it was an affront to your...
- Selena:** It was a good dinner, and I was like, "I don't understand. I'm making like good food. We have food that doesn't take that long to make." So it was very unclear thing for us. It was clear to both of us, but it was very unclear to both of us. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Like we didn't understand we were missing each other. Again, we'll talk about why it wasn't really about the food. What was the other example we had? Did you want to go there?

- Selena:** No. Well, we talked about sex.
- Ryan:** How it's similar.
- Selena:** It is similar, yeah. I think all the listeners would agree that sex can be very functional sometimes. And there's just like, you know, "Hey, we haven't been close in a while. Let's do this." But like, not just the act of doing it, but still connecting. But I think sometimes we struggle with like, "Okay, let's just check it off the list and get it done." Whereas we were trying to have a moment and it was just failing because of this whole ingredient of love.
- Ryan:** Well, there's another component. And then what happens is one of us will usually...I mean, this is how fights go in general. But around intimacy, it tends to be a little bit more emotional and intense. So one of us will spiral and then the other one's desperately trying to get them to not spiral so that we can salvage our moment. It kind of caused a moment of introspection. And we had just gotten some...we're getting around to the thing. We had just gotten some books in the mail.
- Selena:** So yeah. This was the next day. We've gotten some books. The kids are big fans of "Strega Nona" by Tomie dePaola. It's a story about this old Italian lady and she has this magical pasta pot, right? So the secret ingredient is love. So she blows three kisses to it and it like makes all this pasta. She has this whole struggling on it. Goes on vacation, she's got a harvest and birthday. All these kinds of things. You know, they just kind of...
- Ryan:** There are five of them.
- Selena:** Yeah, there's more on that. But the kids love it. While we were trying to hash it out...so this was like, I think a Wednesday, we had to record Thursday. No, it was a different day. Anyways, we're going to record again. And we're like, "This is going to go great. We have to act like we love each other and we're happy and everything's great, and I don't even want to talk to you right now."
- Ryan:** We just had these really difficult moments previously.
- Selena:** Yeah. We just like went to bed and we were just frustrated with each other.
- Ryan:** So this is real and raw people. And this was weeks ago. So it's not right now.
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah.

- Ryan:** So we were talking trying to kind of wrap our heads around, "Okay, we are not good fakers." So got a podcast and we're trying not to be phony. We're trying to be real and let our relationship be in a place of reality, not just say we're performing now.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** So we're sitting to talk about it and trying to reconcile it and I'm basically like, "It's not happening today. I don't feel like talking about anything. I feel like we are going to just phone it in and we're just going to figure it out some other day." Then I was like, "You know what, actually I had an epiphany as I was reading this book to the girls that the secret ingredient is what we've been missing, what we've been talking about." So the whole thing with the food and the whole thing with intimacy or any conversation, it's really there has to be love. And that sounds so obvious, right?
- Selena:** This is me, people. I was like, "What? I made you food. I thought about it. I didn't think about it as long as you want me to." I'm like... *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** No, no, no. Still...
- Selena:** No, I was putting this thing together.
- Ryan:** But you get it now though, right? Like it doesn't matter what it is. It doesn't matter how long it takes to make. It doesn't matter. All that matters is like I had felt like in that moment...And again, I'm trying not to be high maintenance here. But I felt like in that moment that here's the just the plain reality is it was a nice day, I was cooped up in the office all day working, staring at a silly computer screen, getting work done. And we're a team, right? You work in other ways around the home and the family and I work in other ways to provide and all that kind of stuff. And I felt like at that moment, we just were not...this dinner, which by the way, as we've learned, I view dinner as kind of this daily, almost a celebration. I'd never articulated that to you but I view this kind of this moment for us to come together. And this was a moment...
- Selena:** Expectation, people. See?
- Ryan:** It doesn't have to be some elaborate thing. It could be pizza, right? But it's a moment for our family to get together and really thank God in our actions. We pray anything God but also just to kind of celebrate it. We've made it through another day. It's another day we're alive and well.
- Selena:** And he did articulate in our conversation this was just a big point of coming down and being with the family. And that was a big thing for him. And I was

like, "I never heard that in 17 years, but Okay, that's great and I love that about you. I love that you're not just telling me, 'Hey, why don't you try some new recipe books? Hey, why don't you try something else?' But you're helping me understand where you were coming from." And you're like, "It felt like it was thrown together." And I was like, "I'm not denying that." But I didn't feel like my throwing it together was a lack of love in that sense.

So hopefully, this is clear for our listeners. I mean, I was fighting the thoughts of like, "Why is he trying to control this? It feels a little misogynistic to want this, like, it felt like a big prepared meal, and I just...like all my insecurities just kind of came out." And so then it's just like, yeah, of course, my walls are going to go up and I'm going to just be mean and just not talk and silent treatment and all those things.

Ryan: Then that's when we kind of go to our base level of "Oh, so you want me to make some massive Thanksgiving dinner every night. That's what you want?"

Selena: "We have a baby." [*chuckles*]

Ryan: So I don't want listeners to hear this and say, "Oh, wow, he expects this like..."

Selena: No, no, no. And you don't have to defend yourself.

Ryan: ...George Banks' experience every night I come home. My sherry, and pipe are due at 6:02. Splendid is the life I lead. I was trying to articulate where I had...And mind you, this is...

Selena: You were articulating the value that you place and that you've seen that you hold around mealtime. And that is good. That is what I did not hear because of the way you opened that door.

Ryan: No, no. You're arguing real-time. [*both laughs*]

Selena: No, not arguing. I'm saying that I didn't hear that. And because it was...we're like 16 minutes in. So that's...

Ryan: People, I hope this is helpful. Another thing I just want to...so when I said that in the kitchen the first time, I was hoping for something that wouldn't just fill the void, I wasn't trying to open this big can of worms. What happened was you heard me say that and you were like, "What do you mean 'fill the void'?" [*chuckles*] I'm like, [*inaudible*] greatest good you ever see? [*laughs*]

Selena: I was like, "Are you really saying this right now?"

- Ryan:** You felt like I was being very ungrateful.
- Selena:** Mm hmm.
- Ryan:** And then I felt like under-appreciated. So we had to work through that. Selena's heart was not...she's not saying she doesn't love our family by...
- Selena:** By throwing cereal at you.
- Ryan:** Hold on. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** It's not about the food.
- Ryan:** Cinnamon Toast Crunch. So we had to learn to say, "Okay, here's what you're trying to say. Here's what I'm trying to say."
- Selena:** Yeah, it felt like I was checking the list and you were like, "Can we do this in love and not just check the list?" Because you had a lot of expectations. And that's okay. That's what I'm saying. So looking at our marriage, how can we do things with that secret ingredient that Strega Nona has? How can we do things with more love?
- And if you're honest, it's not easy. For me, it felt challenging to try and do something maybe new or something that really showed him that I was being thoughtful about things. But to be honest, the more I tried...like, I bought some recipe books. I had like 20 of them, but I got the Magnolia ones, because I was like, Gosh, she seems like she knows what she's doing." *[laughing]* Obviously.
- Ryan:** It's in the pudding.
- Selena:** For sure. So we're trying some new things. And that actually got me excited, because I don't feel like I'm a very good cook. So there's insecurities there. So I was like, "Okay, I feel like we're a team. This is not just me trying to think of new meals. But this is me showing my husband love in a way that he really experiences it. Also, I'm kind of trying new things and trying to be brave in that way. And let the discomfort just kind of be where it's going to be until I grow out of it. But also, we're making this new meal and our kids can help and we can do this together."
- Then I read like the intro to the Magnolia books, and they're like, "Dinner is more than just a meal." And I was like, "How does she know this stuff? Like this is what we're arguing about right now?" It was just great. It was a good fight to go through.

Ryan: The part of the reason is that this the season we're in with the kids, the ages they are. Our youngest is nine months old, and she is pretty needy at the moment. She's...

Selena: She's kind of like a mouthful. Her teeth are coming in all at once.

Ryan: So part of it is there was a moment in time. This is I think where I was trying to contrast is that in general, we feel very loved. And that's a prevalent thing. But I just want to throw some other examples out there. So like if we were to have a conversation, and we're talking—and communication is imperative for any couples to connect—particularly for Selena to feel connected, we need to have time to communicate and laugh and be together and share our intimate thoughts and pass through things and talk about...

Selena: Yeah, Struggle and insecurities.

Ryan: ...the things of God and talk through life. But if I'm sitting on the couch, the kids are asleep and I'm just like sitting there, I'm not engaging, I'm not listening well, I'm not asking, I'm not offering, that to me is the equivalent of like, "I'm sitting here talking. What else do you want from me? We're having a conversation?"

Selena: "I'm here. I showed up."

Ryan: "I'm here. How can I love you?"

Selena: Right.

Ryan: You would say, "I can't explain that. I just don't feel like you're loving me right now." Because there's not the secret ingredient of engagement, of love, of attention, of affection. Affection to me is the word that really encapsulates it really well. I was playing around with the word engagement. We've played around with the word "attention". What was the other word I saw in here?

Selena: Motivation.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: What is the fuel?

Ryan: Yeah. Thoughtfulness was the other one.

Selena: Thoughtfulness. Yeah.

Ryan: But really affection. To me, affection fuels that. Because there's always this question. Okay, you love your spouse, but do you like your spouse? Right? And people say, well, it's the thought that counts. And why does the thought count? Because if someone displays, thoughtfulness, premeditation in these things, if I were to plan some elaborate date day with you, you would feel affection because you know what it takes to do that the premeditation of it, and the thoughtfulness of it. That's why the thought counts.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's why sitting in a conversation, you want to feel like I am enjoying your presence. And that's when we talked early on about the Pharisees. That's kind of the innate part of us is we want that relationship, that results from mutual affection.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And that's the heart of worship is I love God, I want to worship Him, I admire Him, I'm stirring my affections for Him. So kind of stirring our affections for our spouse is a way to always be adding this quote, unquote, "secret, not so secret" ingredients of love and affection and all that kind of stuff.

Selena: I might jump around in this rundown so just try to keep up, Ryan. [*both chuckles*]

Ryan: I'm always trying to keep up with you.

Selena: No, I think that the struggle really lies in how it feels like a burden sometimes. I mean, if we're just honest, it feels like a burden to try to figure out how to love our spouse in a way that communicates that to them to engage. But the thing about it is, is that I think it feels that way initially because it feels new, it feels unfamiliar, I don't understand it.

It may not be coming from our union with Christ. Like our motivation that fuels our fierce tenacity to never give up and never give in comes from that union with Christ. And it's His redemption of our souls that were then given that new direction. I'm reading this book called "Total Truth" by Nancy Pearcey. I fully, highly recommend it. She's incredible. But she said, "Redemption is as comprehensive as creation and fall. God does not save our souls while leaving our minds to function on their own. He redeems the whole person. Conversion is meant to give new direction to our thoughts, emotions, wills, and habits."

So I'm thinking about Christian life, I believe in God, we live our lives or model our lives after and under the authority of the Bible. So how are day to day habits been impacted by my conversion? This is I feel like one of the main ways is being not only engaged and thoughtful but allowing it to not...allowing it. Asking God for it to be an overflow from my relationship.

Ryan: That's good. This could easily descend into a form of legalism.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I want to speak against that. A few minutes ago, you had said that it starts to feel like a chore, an obligation. And that becomes an oppressive thing. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So I would contend that feeling that way is completely fine. Being generous toward each other, being charitable toward each other, and being understanding is key. To me, that's a thousand times better if you come to me and say, "Man, I know that dinner is important. I know that you want to feel loved in this way. It feels like I'm just gritting my teeth right now because I've got all this other stuff going on."

Selena: We're in a hard season. Yeah.

Ryan: "Honestly, enough said, let's order dinner." I feel loved because you're thinking about it, and you've thought about us. And there are days when I prepared dinner as well, right? Like probably...

Selena: Hmm. I'm just kidding. Yeah, you do it a lot. You're great. *[laughs]*

Ryan: And breakfast, it's like whoever gets up does breakfast. Whoever gets up first. So the point I'm trying to make is, and I said this a few weeks back, but apathy to me is so much worse than opposition. In that, I think our fights had stemmed from a place where I felt like you were apathetic toward this moment in our day and this priority. That our food is a priority. You were apathetic. Or you weren't apathetic. You had a plan, you just had not put any teeth to that plan yet, and that's where the fight started. But that's what I felt.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I always say I don't want this to be a thing that all wives and husbands hear this and say, "All right, I have to add the secret ingredient. I have to do this with effort and affection."

Selena: No, that's not what we're highlighting right now.

Ryan: That's become legalism.

Selena: Yeah. And this is what we're highlighting right now is that this is a response, like an overflow of your relationship, your union with Christ, and all the redemptive conversional work that He is doing through sanctification daily. This is how we are understanding love.

I'm going to jump here real quick. 1 Corinthians 13. I just look at the first verse, the way of love, right? "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." This is exactly it. Exactly it. "If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

Ryan: So that's where we get the whole dichotomy between speaking truth with love. People who think they can't speak truth and be loving; it's really hard to do. The problem is, is that we often don't love the way we're shown how to love in Scripture, and with an affection for the person we're trying to reveal this truth to. An affection for them. A desirous longing for them to be enlightened in this way with truth.

Selena: Right. It's an agape love.

Ryan: That's why marriage is so awesome. Because there are moments where you can be generous to me because we'll be talking about and it'll be on the couch, and I'll say, "Listen, I'm sorry, I can't give to you more right now. I'm super tired or I'm just spent for the day," or "I'm just emotionally I'm not here." You can then choose. You can say, "I need you to step up to the plate, and if you don't, we're going to have a problem. Because I need this and that." I think that's okay for sometimes for the spouse to say that. Or you can say, I get it, I understand. How can I help you? How can I now pour into you?"

Selena: And we can't do that from a place of self. We can make that choice. I can say that God has given us the ability to make that choice. But I do think we can only make that choice because we see that choice is there, which is by God's grace and our understanding of the gospel and our understanding of love. Excuse me.

Talking about love, there are different kinds of love that are mentioned in the Bible. The Eros and storge don't express the appear in the Bible, but the Eros is a passion or sexual love. It's the source of the English word erotic. Eros is important within a marriage relationship. It's created by God. It can also be

abused or mistaken for storge love, which is an affectionate love, the type of love one might have for a family or spouse. It is naturally occurring, unforced type of love. So those are the Greek terms.

But the ones that we see more in the Bible are agape and phileo. Excuse me. Agape speaks to the most powerful. Noblest type of love this is from one of the articles we were reading on Got Questions. But agape love is more than a feeling. It is an act of the will. This is the love that God has for His people and that prompted the sacrifice of His only Son Jesus for our sins. Jesus was agape a love personified. Christians are to love one another with agape love as seen in Christ.

The phileo type of love, which I think we are called to also is refers to brotherly love and is often exhibited in a close friendship. So best friends will display this generous and affectionate love for each other as each seeks to make the other happy. We see this in David and Jonathan. After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David they loved each other as best friends, and as brothers would love each other. It says, "Phileo love involves feelings of warmth and affection towards another person. We do not have phileo love towards our enemies," which is interesting.

"We have agape love towards them. However, God commands us to have agape love towards everyone." This includes those whose personalities clash with ours and who hurt us or treat us badly or who even hostile to our faith. In time, as we follow God's example of agape love for our enemies, we may even begin to experience phileo love for some of them as we start to see them through God's eyes.

So I feel like that is something that kind of happened with you and I is that...I mean, I feel like the Lord has allowed us to develop agape love and the phileo love of in that moment, I was not having to feelings of love...that can stem from love. Not the feelings of love, but the feelings that can come from this affection towards each other. But the more that I kind of pressed into that agape love of an act of the will, try to work towards seeing what you're saying, and not just shutting the door giving up, that is where I feel like God is able to bring us together and reconcile. And that's where I feel like we can meet on common ground is when I'm saying, "Okay, I don't have these feelings of love, I don't have this warm affection of phileo love, but God has commanded me to have agape love towards everyone. So this is an act of the will and I'm going to choose that and press into that." Is that a preaching? Sorry.

Ryan: Well, okay.

Selena: Okay. Oh, dear.

Ryan: This has been our dialogue over the last two weeks, because I'm always like, "Yes, and. Yes, but. Yes, but."

Selena: All right.

Ryan: To me, it's different in marriage. So there is a sense that I love you and that's never going to change. If that doesn't have accompanying affections, then it starts to feel cold. And it starts to feel like a duty more than a joy or more than a desire. That's where I want to really tease it out because it's the old adage and the husband, a wife says, "I don't feel he loved me anymore." And the husband says, "I said I loved you on our wedding day. I'll tell you if something changes." Nobody wants to live in that kind of marriage.

People want to have connection. People need the doctrine. They need the shared understanding that is we both understand God's vision of love, and His example of love, and His what love is. We need to believe. We need to have that together. We need tools for when and how to love each other well. Things like five love languages, all that kind of stuff. But there needs to be connection. So without affection, you can't have connection. That'll tweet. [*Selena chuckles*] Do you get what I'm saying?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: That's how I'm trying to tease that out. Because we do have a gap a love for each other, we do show each different types of love in the Greek words and all that kind of stuff. But that's to me is where our conflict arose. And I think that's where a lot of husbands and wives can feel like their marriage is lacking is because there's not this shared affection of giving one another. I mean, that's why you go on dates, right? So that you can have a moment where you can stir your affections for each other. That's why you buy each other gifts that are unsolicited. That's why you serve each other in an unexpected way is because you're giving them a gift of your affection.

Selena: Right. And love the way God has instructed us, which we'll read in 1 Corinthians 13 again, it augments the acts of service. That secret ingredient, it just makes it better. It makes it better when I'm patient with you, when I'm kind with you, when I do not envy or boast what's great about your life and not great about mine, when I'm not arrogant or rude. That makes...God is not...go ahead.

Ryan: Here's a good example. I mean, I'm thinking of I go downstairs maybe after lunch or something, and I do the dishes. And I walk into the living room where

you're teaching the kids or you're doing some craft or you're reading to them.
"There! I did the dishes. Are you happy? [Selena laughs]

Selena: That's so awesome. I'd be like, "Yes, babe, thank you."

Ryan: No, but if I came down and I was like, "Did the dishes. Feel better now?" And I had that kind of...okay, would you feel loved? The act of service was the same.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: What if I just came down quietly and did them and then quietly left. And then you walked into the kitchen and you were like, "Oh, wow, thank you."

Selena: The dish [inaudible] does exist. [both laughs]

Ryan: I'm using that as a very kind of old-time example. But any way that you can serve your spouse. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: How you go about doing the thing matters is what I'm trying to say as opposed to just doing the thing. And that to me is the secret ingredient. That's the thoughtfulness. That is what we are I think aiming for. Does that always dictate the choice to love? No. Because sometimes you just have to do the thing that's loving, even though you don't feel like it.

Selena: It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, does not rejoice at wrongdoing. I kind of wanted to exegete that part of Scripture. So you want me to read all 13 verses again? Or not? Maybe not all. 13.

Ryan: Just start and see where it takes us. I'm fine with that. We have a little bit of time.

Selena: Going through starting at one?

Ryan: Yeah. Where are you? Verse 13.

Selena: No, that's chapter 13.

Ryan: Okay, do what you're going to do.

Selena: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all

mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Noah last week...one of our elders was speaking. And it was just fire. I mean, it was awesome. I would recommend it. Go to Gospel Life Church and look up this last week's sermon on...it was basically loving one other and how will the world know that you are believers, and it's like your love for one another. He was encouraging the church that through this pandemic, through these disconnections, and the political climate, everything, there's lots of dividing points amongst churchgoers, believers. We are in the book of Galatians, I believe. Or is it Thessalonians?

Ryan: I think it was...I don't know.

Selena: He read out both of them, I'm sorry.

Ryan: 2 Thessalonians.

Selena: What he was saying is that the world...he's like, "I've got friends that they'll do meal trains or unbelieving friends they'll meal trains for people having new babies, all of that. I have nonbelieving friends that will come help me with my house or do something like that. He said, "The difference between a believing friend and a nonbelieving friend is that I can disagree with my believer friend, my Christian friend, and we can still love each other. We can still work through these hard things.

And that is how the like people that are unbelievers or that are outside the church will say, "Wow, they disagree on some of these things, but they're still in relationship with each other, and they're still communicating with each other." That is love. God is calling us not only to be like him, but to also...sorry.

- Ryan:** Be so aware of its overtness and its uniqueness to the Christian faith.
- Selena:** And the message that it's sending...
- Ryan:** That you work through hard things, unlike any other people...
- Selena:** Yes, thank you.
- Ryan:** ...because we have a foundation that is immovable, and an affection that is shared for Christ that is so profound, that everything else is dwarfed around it. That our differences, be they political, be they whatever, if we share the same affection for Christ, we can remain in relationship. Or in a secular context, he would say, "Well, that person's canceled in my life. I'm not going to hang around them. They're bigots or they're whatever." Whatever the pejorative it.
- Selena:** The dialogue. Yeah
- Ryan:** It's worth noting here Paul's speaking to the Corinthians. Corinth was a very worldly place. It was a hub kind of between landmasses, in between bodies of water. So it was kind of right in the middle of all this commerce that have been happening, but it also is at the foot of this hill where they had the temple to...I forget. Is it...I don't know. So they had all these deviant things, behaviors, and expressions of the faith as a result of the worldliness of their culture. So Paul was correcting, namely, their expressions and their beliefs and their definitions of love. Sounds pretty relevant today.
- We live in a worldly time. We live in a time when the things of God are not popular. So having our minds and our hearts adjusted in this way is exactly what Paul was doing. So I love what he says. "All mysteries and all knowledge and all powers. If I have all faith and move mountains and have not love, I am nothing." We talked about how love is an action. Love is a choice. Love is an objective thing. We don't fall into love; we choose to love one another.
- Selena:** It also is a fruit of the Spirit that's produced in us.
- Ryan:** It is a fruit of the Spirit. And that's where I want to play around. I think he's talking about more than just the choice. He's talking about a genuine affection for one another that looks like affection.
- Selena:** And it can only come from Christ.
- Ryan:** And is an overflow of deep...

Selena: Yeah, the gospel at work.

Ryan: The gospel transformation.

Selena: Absolutely. Absolutely. So biblical love is selfless, not narcissistic. Had to throw that in there from last week. It costs us something. The love of God cost Him Himself. There was sacrificial part of Himself. It comes again from this union that we have in Christ daily. He is sanctifying us. He's growing and redeeming us and how we think and act and love towards our spouse, towards our children, towards people in our life.

We talked about the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and how the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and producing these ways of love. I don't feel like I was a good per...I didn't love you the best I could when we first got married. I did for what I knew. But as we spend more time together, as we grow in life together, and as we go through the things that we go through, I feel like the Lord has...I don't feel like. The Lord has absolutely taught me how to love you well, and for who you are, weaknesses, strengths all the above.

Of course, we're going to have these clashes. We're only human. But it's in those clashes that I have this reassurance of, "Okay, we're going to work through this because we're in a covenant. You're not going to go anywhere. We're mad at each other. I wish we didn't have to be mad at each other. But I'm also like, "You need to apologize." [*chuckles*] Because we're just working through it. Sorry, you're going to say something?

Ryan: Yeah. Well, the more we talk about it, the more it is clarified to me. What we're talking about here is the contrast between duty and desire. Duty is fine. Duty sometimes has to...

Selena: Trump desire.

Ryan: Okay, yeah. Sometimes it has to be the thing that sails the ship. But duty is always a substitute for desire. It's not the main thing. Desire should be the thing that is driving us. That's what we always talk about the gospel transforms us. How does it transform us? It puts into full light the goodness of God because of his greatness, His Holiness, His highness in our lowness, our unholiness, our tininess.

So for Jesus to do what He did has one result other than saving us. It makes us love God. That's why John Piper, his whole thing is Christian hedonism. Hedonism is doing what you want to do because you want to do it. Christian hedonism is the idea of...well, his refrain is God is most glorified in me when

I'm most satisfied in Him, when He is all that I want, and all that I chase. God is most close. So therefore the life of the Christian is to want and to desire God more than anything else.

There's a quote from CS Lewis, I think speaks to this really well. "A perfect man would never act from a sense of duty. He'd always want the right thing more than the wrong one. Duty is only a substitute for love of God and of other people, like a crutch, which is a substitute for a leg. Most of us need the crutch at times, but of course, it is idiotic to use the crutch when our own legs, our own loves, tastes, habits, etc. can do the journey on their own."

To bring it back to full circle around what is the tangible outworking in marriage? Okay. There are times when I do things out of duty or you do things out of duty. The dinner example is just one of those examples, right? You knew that it was your night to do it, and you were going to do it and your duty was going to be fulfilled and the bellies were going to be filled. *[both chuckles]* I mean, you weren't desiring to create a meal experience for our family, or you were...I don't want to put that in. You were. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: I'm not trying to stare daggers. I'm like, Mhmmh. But yes.

Ryan: So you see the difference. So intimacy is always this way. All right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: If you're having a hard time connecting in bed, this is why pornography will never work, because it's just completely around...

Selena: The physical.

Ryan: The physical.

Selena: It's the duty.

Ryan: And there's no connection. There's no desiring of another person. It's complete objectifying and using of another human being to gratify some fleshly physiological desire.

Selena: We learned last week that is rooted in narcissism.

Ryan: So intimacy, if a wife feels like her husband is not loving her during sex, it's probably because she...or if a husband's not feeling. It could go either way. But if there's just duty happening versus a desire of another person. I mean,

think about the best time you and your spouse have ever been close. It's because both of you are just in this rapturous state of desire...

Selena: Desiring each other. Yeah.

Ryan: ...for one another. And it's a mutual shared desire. That's what intimacy is so awesome at times. There are times when one desires and other ones fulfilling the duty. And we talked about the spectrum of sex. As long as you're on the same page and...

Selena: Yeah, there's a mutual execution in love.

Ryan: Again, it's not a legalistic thing. That's where I want to contrast. Because Selena could say, "Hey, I love you. You know I love you. But right now I'm tired, but I know this duty needs to happen." And if I'm charitable toward her, I'll say, "I understand. Hey, we can wait." Or we can just get down to business and then we can go to sleep. And you're usually like...whatever. *[chuckles]* Like we try to give to each other in those moments when we don't share the desire.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: More often than not you're the desiring one.

Selena: You're always tired.

Ryan: It's like, "Girl, why are you so thirsty?" *[both laughs]*

Selena: I am and you didn't. Sometimes we get to laugh about that. Oh, my goodness. Anyways.

Looking ahead, tangibly speaking, just briefly, how can we be more loving towards one another? It sounds so simple, but apparently, it can be very difficult, right? We would say start with prayer. Pray for your desire for your spouse to grow. And in turn, learn to like want your spouse. I think we did a whole episode on your spouse, like your standard of beauty or your standard of desire.

Pray and stir your affections. Even if you feel like things are great, just "Lord, help me to desire my spouse in new ways and help us to mutually experience that together. Pray for recognition of areas where you might be checking the boxes rather than engaging." Are there habitual times that you are just checking the boxes trying to get through the day? And there are seasons for that. We are the first to say there are seasons for certain tasks to feel more dutiful than desire-driven. But I would say on a whole, ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you in how you can be desired, driven, and engaged. From a

biblical perspective, obviously, not just whatever desires, you know, go after them.

Then, of course, reading God's word. It's alive. It's sharp. It has everything we need to know to live this life and to be married the way God has purposed and designed us for. Become familiar with the overarching themes of love. I feel like when I'm familiar with the bigger themes in the Bible, it really puts into context all of Scripture. Memorize scripture together, get it in your heart, know it more than you know anything else. I think there's no better time to be committing scripture to memory and to our hearts.

Ryan: I would lead into a couple's conversation challenge with this. Ask and reflect: what are areas in your marriage that you feel like could be more driven by desire and less by duty? And how can those desires begin to be transformed by praying and being in the word? Have that conversation with each other. Try to go to it with...This could be really explosive. It could be hard to have that conversation because you could say to your spouse, "I feel like you just do this because you have to but you don't really care that it's actually helping our family."

Selena: Yeah. *[sighs]*

Ryan: Right? It's not easy conversations.

Ryan: I don't know how to have the conversation, but just maybe bring it up. *[Selena laughs]* Bring up the topic of... basically this. Duty is a substitute for desire. Where is duty driving the ship more than desire is? And how can our desires be informed by the priorities of God?

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: I mean, that's why we talked about a few weeks ago respect. And respect is the result of seeing your spouse or rightly seeing your spouse the way God sees your spouse, somebody he's made in His image of equal value, worth, and importance. So when you calibrate your thinking with God's in that way, it completely informed like I now want to treat you so so well, because God has put so much value. I'm starting to align my thinking with God's thinking.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's how God's Word transforms our desires. As we start to align our thinking with His own, my wife is not just a person that I happen to get hitched to and we have kids with we live in a house with. No, she's a gift. She is a child of God. She is the mother of my children. She is all these things. And so you

start to stir your affections and your desire starts to come to the forefront. That's a beautiful thing. So have that conversation. *[Both laughs]* Want to pray?

Selena: Sure. It's like, you won't regret it. I think I don't regret that fight or that conversation because that caused me to grow in a lot of ways. Both of us, right?

Ryan: Absolutely. Because I learned how to...this is a new articulated thing in our family. But it's also I learned a way that I can kind of attribute thoughts to you that you didn't think because I feel misunderstood. Does that make sense?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So if like you clearly don't care about our family, because you didn't think about this for more than 30 seconds. And that wasn't true. You do care about our family.

Selena: What about for one minute? *[both laughs]*

Ryan: That was productive for us I feel like. Hopefully, people don't see this as a...

Selena: No.

Ryan: We kind of worked out some of this stuff in real-time.

Selena: That's good for people to hear.

Ryan: I hope so. *[Selena chuckles]* You're going to pray?

Selena: Oh, thanks. God, thank you so much for all that you've given us. Your love humbles us. It leads us. It guides us. It instructs us. Father help us to submit where duty is being the driver. God help us to submit and to allow your desires, God. Help us to desire your desires for our marriage, for our spouse, for the way that we think about them, how we love them, how we engage with them. Father, I pray that you would drive those desires and that although it may start with duty, God that the desires would grow, and they would deepen.

Thank you for your love, God. Your love is so good, so new, so refreshing, and so correcting and instructive. We love you, Lord. In your name. Amen.

Ryan: Amen. Quick resource here. If you want to take this conversation even further, check out 31Daypursuit.com. It's a husband and wife devotional prayer, and

it's all about pursuing each other as Christ has pursued us. What happens is you end up doing lots of things that take you out of your comfort zone. But inevitably, it's like working a muscle. You get stronger. Your desire gets stronger. You start to have the feelings, the affection of love by doing the actions of love. So 31daypursuit.com. I'm actually having a sale. Check that out. Hopefully, it helps you, hopefully, blesses your marriage.

Other than that, ladies and gentlemen, once again, thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage Podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:52:24] <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. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- - Scripture references:
 - 1 Corinthians 13, ESV

- **[00:51:39]**
 - Book Recommendation:
 - 31Daypursuit.com

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