

WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO HAVE KIDS?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/when-is-the-right-time-to-have-kids>

[00:00:00]

Selena: Is there ever a good time to have kids?

Ryan: Quote unquote, "good time".

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I think you could probably make a case depending on how charitable is the conversation you're having, that there probably is never a good time to have kids, and that it's never convenient in the world sense of convenience. However, on the other side of that coin, I'd say that there's always a good time if we're viewing things through the proper lens, and we're calibrating ourselves based on that. Of course, this conversation is a big conversation to be had. So what we don't want to do here is to prescribe a certain thing. What we'd rather do is question this...

Selena: Question the questions that we're asking, right?

Ryan: Yeah. The question that we received, and that's a great question. Actually, it's timely for a lot of reasons you get to on the other side. But it's a great question. But at the same time, the premises need to be examined a little bit. So we're going to do just that. Like I said, we have a really cool announcement with a big giveaway, and we'll make that on the other side.

[00:00:54] <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.

[00:01:25] <podcast begins>

Selena: I feel like [inaudible] we have a big announcement talking about kids, and I'm like, "We're not pregnant, people. We are not pregnant." That's not happening right now.

Ryan: How do you know it's not happening right now? It could be.

Selena: Anyways, that's not this episode. So let's stick to what we know right now. We are...

Ryan: Before we get into that one, we received the question that basically said we asked people what are some questions that we can speak to, for better or worse, around the idea of parenting. So the question was: when's the right time to have kids? Well, we don't have the answer to that for every person listening to this, but I think we can help kind of parse through some of the heart motivations behind that.

Selena: Yeah. There's definitely some dialogue, some questions that need to be asked even about our preliminary questions. So we'll get to that.

Ryan: In that vein, we mentioned having this big announcement. Selena is not pregnant, but this feels like a baby maybe have been born recently. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: Yes, and no.

Ryan: We announced Fierce Parenting. If you've been following this podcast for a while, you've heard us talk about doing Fierce Parenting as a parenting arm of the ministry that is becoming fierce families. Actually, we launched that back in March, I believe, on Facebook, and Instagram. Already the community's been gathering around it.

All that time, we've been working on resources and writing content and building out a place for parents to gather around the topic of marriage...or excuse me. See, that's the habit right there. Around parenting and the gospel. And I'm happy to say...this is the big announcement. That's why we're doing

the giveaway is that fierceparenting.com is now live and ready for your enjoyment.

We have over 30 articles there; we've got resources on. We have seven facts about tech use in the family. It's called tech and screens guide. We also have a simple family worship guide. We actually have an eBook. It's over 50 pages long. It's how to craft your own Family Vision Statement with. I mean, all kinds of steps tangible ways. You can download that if you go to that resource on the website.

Selena: So there is a lot of stuff that we've put together. I will just say, Ryan, he's done such an amazing job at getting all of the content and resources ready. But the neat thing about I think for me if Fierce Parenting is that is it a more collaborative effort, because we're only about seven years into this whole parenting deal. As you know, we have nothing nailed. But we are going to share with other transparency, like we did in our marriage, of things that we have learned that have worked for us, resources, and tools. But I'm just grateful that we have contributive writers. Contributions?

Ryan: Contributing. *[laughs]*

Selena: Contributing writers. There's the word.

Ryan: Come read all the stuff we've written. *[inaudible]*

Selena: Come read all. *[laughs]* So come check it out. We are hoping to get some other contributing writers on board as well to talk about other hard topics around parenting, discipling. Yes.

Ryan: It is a vast, vast topic with a lot of different voices that we really want to give them a place to give us discipleship opportunities in the home. So that's the vision for it. Today is, actually like I said, it's got that...the giveaway. We haven't talked about the giveaway, but if you want to be a part of the giveaway, here's the thing You have until Friday at 5 pm Pacific Time to enter. And here's how you enter.

Well, first off, here's what you're going to win. If you enter and win, we're giving away a date night done right. And that includes a \$500 Visa gift card. You can spend that on a hotel. You can spend it on doing something fun. You could spend it on...there's not a lot you can do because of the pandemic, because lots of restaurants and like...You can't go see a movie. You can't go see a play or anything like that.

Selena: No, it depends on where you're at I guess.

Ryan: It depends on where you're at. But the point I'm trying to make is that you can do whatever you want. You can pay your babysitter, and you just want to get out. We're going to give away five of our favorite family, parenting marriage resources. They're five books that we're going to give away alongside that \$500 Visa gift card. That's the first place prize.

The second place one is just the five books, which they're incredible books. So I think they're worth it in itself.

Selena: You can see them on Instagram—the post.

Ryan: Yeah. Which that's how you enter.

Selena: Right. So you go on Instagram, find @FierceParenting, you'll see a post of a stack of books, you'll get to see all the books there. We did a little video I think that we'll share, and you'll do a screencast to kind of show some of the resources on Fiercepharenting.com. But go follow Fierce Parenting on Instagram and Facebook if you haven't followed that, Fierce marriage. And then you can find our own personal handles, which I'm always hesitant to throw out there. But hey, here we go.

Ryan: That's also how you enter. You follow those accounts; you follow us personally because we'll be hopefully living this out on this out kind of [inaudible]. We're not trying to make people feel like we have the perfect life.

Selena: We're not propping ourselves up. You know, when Instagram is posted on my account, it is, "Oh, wow, look a good moment. Let's take a picture and remember it." Because they're few and far between. But God's grace is good.

Ryan: They're growing so fast.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So that's pretty much mine is just I share basically times when I'm doting on Selena or our kids, or we do something really fun. I think I post like once a week.

Selena: Make sure you follow all of those handles and you comment on the Fierce Parenting Instagram post. Comment and tag a few of your parenting friends, parents to be, anybody you think should be following. You get bonus entries if you share in your story. Sorry.

Ryan: Again, you have until Friday this week. Sorry if you're listening to this episode in the past. Fast forward here, but you have till Friday this week. And that is I believe September 3.

Selena: No.

Ryan: 4th. September 4th. I think don't hold me to that. But anyway to do that, and we'll announce the winner then. Also, sorry, guys, this is a big day for us.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: To make a quick note, this podcast will continue being marriage-focused. We do have Fierce Parenting. It's going to be a shorter format. It's going to be a lot more kind of punchy, a fierce parenting version of this podcast that will be live sometime in the near future. But if you're worried that somehow going to evolve into...that's the vision right now.

The other big thing is—and this is why we're so thankful for our patrons—that we just crossed over two significant thresholds here today. We are officially in Season 4 of the fierce marriage podcast. To be honestly to you guys, seasons could be whatever you say they are. It's just a matter of me clicking a button in the back end. I think it's a year. So we're actually heading into our fourth year of doing this podcast. We've not missed a single week. Can you believe that?

Selena: Hmm.

Ryan: I honestly can't believe that. I thought for sure we were going to miss weeks all the time since we started this thing.

Selena: We only had two kids when we started it. The second one was just a baby baby.

Ryan: Was a baby baby. Yeah. I think we actually started the year that she was born.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Wow. So the point we're trying to make is man, our patrons have helped us cross this threshold into the fourth season. But we've also crossed another threshold of 5 million downloads. 5 million downloads.

Selena: Praise God.

Ryan: Which to me feels like a lot. So we're thankful for that. We're thankful that people continue to entrust us with their time and their brainpower and their ears while they're working out, working on the house, living their lives. Thank you for listening to the podcast. If you want to partner with us and continue to get this message out there, go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. We will continue to be faithful as long as God allows it. We are thankful for whatever contribution you feel led to make there. It also keeps us from being too dependent on companies, big tech, all that kind of stuff that don't really adhere to the same biblical Christian family values that we feel convicted to continue parenting on this.

There's another final big announcement. And it's this is our anniversary week. Yaay. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: It is.

Ryan: We're going on to 17 years married.

Selena: Been married 17 years, 21 years together. More than half our lives.

Ryan: Way more than half of our lives. I...

Selena: Way more. *[laughs]* Or do you think we are?

Ryan: Way more. We are so young. *[Selena laughs]* We are so young. *[laughs]*

Selena: No. We're so old. And God is good.

Ryan: We're middle-aged.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: How dare you?

Selena: You're middle-aged. Just kidding. You're six months older. *[laughs]* I'm six months older than you.

Ryan: You're old. I'm middle-aged. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: For now.

Selena: Yeah, for now.

Ryan: So I looked at you today and I just said, "Man, I just love you so flippin much." Without a doubt love you more than the day I met you. I mean every day I love you more. And I don't mean that just in the romantic Hallmark cards sort of way. Truly I appreciate new aspects of who you are.

Selena: God is so good. I'm just so grateful for the time we've gotten together because very much could have not happened. Very easily could have not happened. You can read about that in our book Fierce Marriage. But anyways, God is good and I'm so grateful for 17 years. Every year, every day is just so good with you. I love you. We'll talk about that more next week. I don't know what we're doing but this is our lives, people. *[Ryan chuckles]* Kind of living day to day here.

Ryan: Today is a little bit of a different day. Thanks for bearing with me.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Let's get into the content.

Selena: Last week we talked about the importance of having a Christian worldview with your spouse. It was a big topic. The more we talked about it, the less we felt like we knew about it, and how to translate the importance of having a Christian worldview with your spouse. I think it's as important now as it has ever been, especially in the social climate that we're in.

So this week, we are kind of taking a little bit I think of a turn into talking about when is it the right time to have kids. We get asked this question a lot via all of messages and emails and phone calls and all of that. So we're going to walk through a little bit of our story. Looking back, could it have been different? Yes. But could God still use us in the ways...? Looking back and looking to now, there's just all these questions. Well, what if we didn't have kids at that time? Or what if we have had a different...? You know, you can kind of play that game. Or maybe you don't have kids, and you're like, "Well, when is the right time?" And we can shed some light on our journey and hopefully, that might be helpful.

But I think, like you said, we're going to talk about asking questions about the question. So asking the question: when is the right time to have kids? Well, that's assuming a lot of things. That's assuming you think that there is a right time to have kids. That's assuming that there's some boxes that you are already believe in that need to be checked before you have kids. So who's dictating those questions I guess? Does that make sense? Does that feel like that's the way we're going? Because I felt like that—

Ryan: Well, we're just looking at what are the premises that are on the surface that are leading us to ask even those questions. So let's dive in with our story. Because I feel like we are a case study in asking that question and making these decisions, and probably from a wrong place. Not that the decisions themselves were wrong. I think we look back, like Selena said, you may be doing the math, listener, thinking, "Okay, they just said they had their oldest child when we started this ministry." I don't think we said that in the video or in the podcast. I can't remember.

Dela is going to be 7. We've been married 17 years. So we went 10 years before having our first child. And you may be asking, "Well, why did you make that decision? What informed that decision?" Looking back, I feel like that decision was was...God has used it. I'll say that.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: God has used it to bring us, in a way, to this place. We can't say if God would have done...He did what he did.

Selena: He's sovereign.

Ryan: He's sovereign.

Selena: I think it's what it speaks to. And you have to trust that moving forward with whatever decisions.

Ryan: But had we known what we know today, should we have done the same thing?

Selena: Yeah, I think there's a few routes to the summits.

Ryan: Ultimately, [inaudible]

Selena: No. [chuckles]

Ryan: On the timeline.

Selena: No. We got married—if anybody who doesn't know—Ryan was 20, I was 21. We're six months apart. We graduated the same year. All that kind of stuff. We met each other in high school. We were high school sweethearts. We got married, again, at a young age and decided, "Hey, six and seven-year plan to not have kids seems like the way to go." Right? We were even—

- Ryan:** That would be in our mid to late 20s and we'll have college and career be established.
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah. Even though we decided to use birth control at that point, like medicine type birth control then, we didn't have the questions. I mean, this brings up a whole nother side of birth control and things that...I think we can do a whole...Did we do an episode on that?
- Ryan:** We did with the Griffins.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** I encourage you to read that. Or listen to that. Excuse me. The transcript is also available on the Fierce Marriage website. But yeah.
- Selena:** But in our journey, the first couple years of our marriage, I was on birth control and it did not bode well for my emotional stability I think. The hormones are crazy. We decided to get off of that. But we also wanted to control the time that we had kids.
- Ryan:** It was just what you do.
- Selena:** Yeah. Our faith wasn't being questioned in that area by anybody. We just were like, "This is just what you do." And so I guess that's probably one point I would say is it's good that you're asking these questions. But I also think you need voices speaking into, okay, why do you think there's a good time? What's your mindset behind all this? So anyways. This is just painting a picture of where we were at before we had kids. Six and seven-year marks came and we're like, "Yeah, still not ready."
- Ryan:** I want to blow that out a little bit because I know your outlines here. I don't want to skip it too much.
- Selena:** Don't skip away from the rundown.
- Ryan:** She cringes when I go on my tangents.
- Selena:** Well, not tangents. If they contribute, that's fine. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Thank you for your approval. I want to look more into the psyche of Ryan and Selena 20, 21 years old, getting married. What were we thinking? We were still in college. You'd said this. I was working full time. You were working like 20, 30 hours a week. We were both full-time college students. Were very, very

busy. So there was a sense that we don't have the bandwidth to do it. We just weren't ready to do that. The ethos behind having kids...

Ryan: Values were different too.

Ryan: ...we wanted to live our lives, we wanted to be married first, we wanted to experience life as just a married couple before bringing kids into the picture. These are a lot of big questions here. Like, can we biblically—

Selena: Were we wrong on that?

Ryan: Yeah, were we wrong in that? Or is a couple who thinks those same thoughts today wrong in that? I don't know the answer to that question. Because I feel like we see in Scripture this refrain that children are a blessing. One of the big questions that comes through my head is like, "Well, if they're a blessing, why wouldn't you want a blessing as soon as possible?" But we also know that children are a big responsibility.

Selena: Blessings take work. I think that we don't always see that side of a blessing, right? God gives you something, but you are then responsible to tend to it not on your own. God has entrusted you and He is still present and active. But there's this aspect to it of...I think we think blessing, we think like a blank check or something like that. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: So the work that comes along with that but the huge responsibility, I'd argue, well, it's one of, if not the biggest responsibility in the life of your marriage...

Selena: It's one of the biggest privileges I think you could ever have.

Ryan: Privilege and responsibility. Exactly. And blessing.

Selena: I think our perspective didn't...at that point in our lives, we were blind to some of that I think.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: We saw the words of blessing but we were kind of selfish in some ways.

Ryan: I'd say we were very selfish.

Selena: Okay. I was going to say that, but I'm trying to like balance out what selfishness and what is godliness and holiness.

- Ryan:** We're not saying every person who has this thought is selfish. I know that we were being selfish because we felt, at least in our minds, in our young, naive, under doctrine minds...
- Selena:** Yes, I wanted to speak to that.
- Ryan:** ...we didn't understand all of what the Bible has to say about family, and kids, parenting, marriage. We're just looking at the world. The world says you graduate from high school, you go to college. At some point between college and your career in there, you meet someone, you date, you court, you get married. And then at a time when you are financially viable, and your life is viable in the sense that you are independent, you're not...then you can start having kids. If you're a responsible adult. That's the cultural refrain.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Later than that even.
- Selena:** And I would say that that was informed and fed by the church that we were in at the time. There was a lot of talk about success, about achievement, about getting to a good place to financial stability, right? Those were kind of the themes rather than...this is not a dog on our past church experience. But looking ahead now...
- Ryan:** [inaudible] *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Because I'm just saying the church that we were in heavily influenced the decisions that we made, which I'm trying to highlight the importance of the church that you go to and the doctrine and the theology that you are subscribing to.
- Ryan:** Yeah, theology matters.
- Selena:** It does. It matters in your decisions, and it matters in these decisions of being fruitful. God loves fruitfulness. Those were things we did not hear in that form. There was a heavy...
- Ryan:** Sorry, you're opening so many cans of worms.
- Selena:** I'm not trying to.
- Ryan:** People are like, "What are they even..." We went to a church. We met at high school. Selena went to a church that...I would call it a word of faith church. I ended up going there because Selena was there. I ended up becoming a

worship leader there. Honestly, I have a lot of my early believe in Christ to credit to these men and women who were leading in that church.

Selena: Same.

Ryan: Over time, I will say this, the focus changed. There was a conscious shift within the life of this particular church that dramatically I think went in the wrong direction and it became more of a cult of personality, and more of a monolith to the leadership of the church, and less of a representation of Christ's bride. And in that, along with the word of faith side of things, it became very success-oriented...

Selena: Thank you.

Ryan: ...very success-driven. Around that time, God was working in our hearts. We ended up parting ways despite our leadership roles in the church. It was a really violent time for us spiritually. It really did damage us in a lot of waterways, and God used that to heal us.

Selena: Absolutely. And He brought in other relationships and people that were having kids that were mothering and fathering young children at younger ages. It was such a blessing for us to see I think more of God's plan being on display, and for us to be able to engage in it. I'm thinking of our...

Ryan: So the whole reason we're sharing this is because the lens that we were viewing this through at the time was much informed by the church we were attending and members of at the time, which was not discipleship oriented. It was not family-oriented in that sense. We did not have this epiphany that kids are a blessing in the way that we see that now.

Selena: That was an afterthought. Yes.

Ryan: Multi-generation flourishing is a thing that goes beyond the dimensions of what that church was expressing.

Selena: Well, the value and idea of family was not what...we did not understand it to the extent that we do today.

Ryan: Yeah. So that was our approach getting into marriage. Then finishing college because we married young in the middle of college. We finished college, went off to be an Au Pair and a groom overseas. Selena was an equestrian Au Pair groom. We did take care of the horses.

Selena: *[chuckles]* I just giggle. I'm like, "Oh, so little, young Selena just learning to ride horses and take care of kids."

Ryan: I almost died. We came back. That's when we were in a ton of debt. We didn't have any real strong prospects. We somehow got jobs. We ended up back in the same church. Then about three years later we ended up moving to help plant a church in Southern California. All the while God is evolving our views on things.

Still I was starting a business, a web development business. We were living literally hand to mouth. Any penny I made designing and building websites went directly into paying our bills. That was like that for about five years. I don't even know when we decided, "Hey, let's have a child." When did we even make that decision?

Selena: I think it was just God's wisdom of you can absolutely do this and learn to trust the Lord at an augmented level. But God is so good in allowing us to struggle through that together. And then saying, like, "I don't know, there's just no good time. We just want to have a baby." I don't know. I don't know. God just lead us in that.

Ryan: I think you were worried too because you were...How old were you when...?

Selena: I had Dela at 31. I was 31 years old. So I was pregnant at 30. You know there's always kind of that just biological ticking time bomb there.

Ryan: So married young, parent late.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: By the way, you'd mentioned birth control. We have clear convictions around that now which we did discuss. We stopped doing that because of the hormonal thing, but then continued not using birth control because of our convictions for all that time. So I'd say for about seven years there was no chemical contraception happening.

Selena: So I would also encourage listeners to go listen to the interview with the Jacobsons.

Ryan: Okay, sorry. I was going to say the Adam and Chelsey Griffin on the bomb that I just dropped.

Selena: Birth control.

Ryan: The Jacobsons talks about how you let the decisions of the world and the metrics of the world values inform our values as Christians in this area.

Selena: How we shouldn't.

Ryan: How they do inform our values, and they shouldn't. Yes.

Selena: Right. Because they have eight kids. They talk about their journey of having children, the whole idea of how God loves fruitfulness, and what that looks like. So there's a lot to think about I think when you're to pray, consider. To demystify it, there's no perfect time to have kids because kids are just chaos, and they're good, and they're learning, and they're little people, and it's beautiful, and it's hard. It's just all the things that you can never anticipate. It's like a moving train. You get on and try not to die. *[both laughs]* There's a lot of blessings in it and richness. But it's learned. It's not always an automatic thing.

To kind of bring it all back together with our announcement of Fierce Parenting going live, we also wanted to talk about because it does bear weight on this idea of having children. This is God's idea. This is His plan, His purpose, His design. And He has given us such a big part in it graciously. So we get to ideally bring children into the world physically, or maybe that through adoption. But is there a right time? Probably not. I guess the questions would—

Ryan: I would say that having waited all that time and then finally having Dela our oldest after 10 years of marriage, I thought to myself, "Why didn't we do this soon?"

Selena: Right. *[chuckling]* Right.

Ryan: I was kicking myself thinking, "Being a dad is so much better than I ever imagined."

Selena: And some of that is our personalities of, you know, we have some things we feel like we want to hold out on or there's insecurities or we want to wait to get this right or something. There's just things that you know about yourself as a couple that, hey, maybe this isn't the right time. But at the same time, God is so good to use children to sanctify us. And I mean that in such a... they're not just tools. But they are in the hands of God.

Ryan: I feel like I'm going to pause because we're dancing around this a lot. Again, what we don't want to do is to say everyone needs to have as many kids as possible as soon as possible. What we also don't want to say is, hey, you need to plan your life according to your goals and your strategies and just control every variable, and get into it eyes wide open and bank account full of cash,

house paid off, every little jot and tittle is completely accounted for. That's the other side of the spectrum.

Because we were talking about this the other day, and I was like, okay, we get it. Having kids is a blessing. But does that mean that we just have as many kids and as rapid as succession as we possibly can? Is that what the Bible is telling us to do? Is that one biblical parenthood and the biblical ethos, or the biblical view of children compels us to do? I don't think it's either extreme. I think there's a place for discernment, a place for us to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Selena: Or when you're defining fruitfulness, too, what does that look like? That may not necessarily mean it's having as many kids as possible in the short amount of time. It always means trusting that time to God. Because you may think, "Okay, yeah, I think we're ready to try having kids," and a couple of months ago passed and you're not pregnant. So there's a lot. There's a lot. There's such a miraculous process that you have to entrust to God. But all that to say fruitfulness can look different.

Right now the fruitfulness of our children requires us having margin, requires us having time, energy, and requires us to be able to teach and recognize, okay, these are the weaknesses in our kids. Dela could have a thousand hours straight with us and still want more. Well, what is the lesson here? We need to teach her how to rely on her savior in a lot of different areas.

Ryan: That's good.

Selena: But we need time and space to do that. So to be fruitful, for us, we have learned that it takes time, it takes tools, it takes energy. These are all things that we have to consider when asking the Lord, "Are more children in our future, how would you lead us in this, Lord?" Where we were can we be obedient I guess is the question. Not how do I feel about this? But where can we be obedient? And how?

Ryan: Yeah, that's good. The thing that keeps going through my head is the refrain in Scripture that says kids are a blessing.

Selena: Psalm 127.

Ryan: Yeah. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. That convicts me. The fruit of one's womb are a blessing. That whole notion. I think as the psalmist was writing that, obviously medicine is different now than it was back then.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: The childbearing process is extremely wonderful. It's extremely violent. It's extremely scary. It's also a miracle happening right before your very eyes. So the idea of having a kid back then was probably, "Okay, let's bear down and see how this goes. Is this child going to be delivered in a healthy way without the mother dying in the process?" Was there that consideration there? I'm trying to read it the way the psalmist would have written it.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: In that children are a blessing. I feel like it was more rare to have a healthy pregnancy, healthy birth process with no [inaudible].

Selena: Well, with the amount of children that they were requiring to have in some ways to...not homestead but to survive as a people.

Ryan: And also you hear about...was it Abraham, Isaac, Jacob? Jacob had 12 sons. Daughters that Jacob had. Oftentimes in Scripture, they would not mention the daughters. They would mention the sons because that was a patriarchal society. I mean, is Jacob's wife then having 20 children in her lifetime? And is that the same thing that we're called to as parents today?

Selena: In that cultural context. Yeah.

Ryan: Big questions, you guys. And there's big, long books about this kind of stuff. What I want to do today is instead of sticking a fork in those questions once and for all, I really want to focus in on how God has convicted us. You've heard our story now. I've shared our story. Now we're telling you as a marriage audience that Fierce Parenting is now a thing officially. The website is live. We want God to use it to bless His church, to bless you as people.

So what are the convictions that are informing this movement of Fierce Parenting? We've distilled it down to what I believe to be the clearest, most all-encompassing tenets, the convictions that we are operating, the premises we're operating off of as we curate content, as we write content, as we create resources. The three tenets are these. And these are going to be foundational...God could obviously change these. He could cause us to have an epiphany or cause us to have a conviction that changes these because they're not nuanced enough. But right now, here they are. Ready?

Selena: Hmm.

Ryan: I'm just going to go over all three of them and then we'll go talk about each one briefly. Tenet number one is children are a blessing. You said that 20 times already. Tenet number two, family is God's idea. It's not a man-made idea. It's

God's idea. Selena mentioned that. Tenet number three is all parenting is discipleship. All of what we do as parents is discipleship. Okay. Let's talk about children are a blessing.

Selena: So if we're looking at scripture at Psalm 127, I think it's so interesting. It's only five verses. The title is "Unless the Lord builds the house". I'm going to read it real quick. All of it. "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."

So it's interesting that he talks about unless the Lord builds the house, then we labor in vain. If you are looking through that lens, and we're looking at children, unless the Lord gives us children, this blessing, unless He builds our house, then we are going to toil and labor in vain. *[chuckles]* I don't want that to be heard the wrong way. Because, yes, children are a blessing. I think that anytime we have them, we have to submit ourselves to this. That they are a blessing, and that God is going to build this house, and I'm going to trust Him in these areas beyond my own strength, feelings, emotions, whatever my abilities are at that moment.

So again, if there's no perfect time to have children, and we looked back saying, "Hey, why didn't we maybe do this sooner?" But God is so good to use the time that we didn't have them for His glory. It's a big trust. It's a big continual act of trust.

Ryan: Well, I want to take a moment to draw attention to the conflation here in Scripture between fearing the Lord, walking in His ways, and the blessing that it is to have a family. What I mean by that is that to have a family, when you have these children and you feel like you're blessed, you feel like you are walking in, or you feel like you're having a fruitful family, I feel like it's very closely correlated to how much reverence and awe you have for God in terms of who He is, and how He's designed us to operate as people created by Him. There's a lot there.

You read Psalm 127. I want to go into Psalm 128. It is such a beautiful succession of Psalms here. Psalm 128:1, "Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD and who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around

your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD... May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!"

So this multi-generational blessing of a household that is live in light of who God is, in other words, a household that fears the Lord. So our perspective of kids is very much informed by our perspective of God. And I might be saying the obvious, but I just want to say that this is very clear through Psalms 127, 128. If we don't see God as the ultimate authority, we don't see His Word as authoritative in our lives, we don't see God's vision of things, His design for everything, His law, His character, our nature as people created in His image, we don't see that as beautiful and good and right and true, then we will probably not have a beautiful good, right and true view of kids.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I don't think we did. I think we were seeing them as a commodity. We were just picturing this...you don't know what your kid's going to be like, so you kind of just caricature them into like...

Selena: From what you see. Yeah, from other things, other people, other adult relationships. You just put stuff together and you buy the things and your kid's going to sleep here, and they're going to do all the things. And then you get them and you're like, "Wait, what?" It's wonderful and amazing. But like you said, seeing kids for who they are and then what they are. They are a blessing. You used the example of honey. Can you tell your example?

Ryan: This comes out of Proverbs. I don't know the reference. But it's what happens if you eat too much honey. It's a blessing to eat honey. It's great. Well, you puke. *[Selena laughs]* If you eat too much of a good thing, there's foolishness on one side of that equation if you go too far and do a good thing. And my question to you in our candid talk was: is that the case? *[both chuckles]* Obviously, once you have a child you're not going to say, "Oh, that one was too much. That one..."

Selena: You can't unring that bell.

Ryan: That's what will make that kid puke because... *[both laughs]*. I'm joking right now.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: But I'm saying, where do we...because in contrast to that verse in Psalm 127:4, like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is

the man who fills his quiver with them. Not Blessed is the man who selects carefully the arrows that he is...If you want to be a mighty warrior, you want to take lives in battle, you're going to fill your quiver as packed full as it can fit. Now, what if my quiver only fits three arrows? *[both laughs]* That's what I want to know.

Selena: The Lord is the decider of how big the quiver is.

Ryan: But I'm saying like...

Selena: I know, I know.

Ryan: ...we don't...

Selena: Well, again, I think it goes back to having that perspective. Not how do I feel about what God's word says, but how can I be obedient to what God's word says? So our obedience is matched by how we view and value and are willing to submit ourselves to God's way. So seeing children as a blessing versus a commodity, seeing children as human beings fully developed and people from the time of conception. There's a lot of messages that would say otherwise. So we need to just understand that. There are a lot of things shouting at us that...

Ryan: What I don't want to do is explain away hard truths to justify some cultural bent that we have.

Selena: For sure.

Ryan: I feel like here we're presented with some hard truths that as parents and as married people and as citizens of society today. Which, by the way, fertility is going down. And it's predicted that we will have half the world's population by year 2100 because there's a lot of reasons for it. So fruitfulness is frowned upon in this way in the world in that more kids means more headache.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So all that to say is we don't want to explain it away that maybe...my big question is: should every time a married couple has sex, should every time that that happens, should there be a potential of having a child during that time?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That's a big question. And we're going to leave that big cliffhanger out there *[Selena chuckles]* because it's a long, long conversation. I do think it comes down to: are reviewing children rightly and are we obeying the Holy Spirit and listening to the Holy Spirit lead us in that area? Instead of just listening to what's my career trajectory look, or standard of living. What do I want? What makes me feel like a good person? What makes me a good parent? What make me...?

Selena: Is this child filling me? Is it becoming an idol? Right?

Ryan: Those are questions we can answer in this podcast.

Selena: Those are questions we get to pose. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Thank you.

Selena: The second tenant is family is God's idea. Once again, kind of overlapping with children are a blessing. We are obediently coming under the authority of Scripture knowing that family is God's idea. God is identified as Father and Son. Seeing that familial relationship being bigger and deeper than just mother, father, sister, brother. Jesus even came and said...go ahead.

Ryan: Sorry. What this is pushing against, at least, as I brainstormed this and pitched it is this cultural notion that the family is just an idea that evolved over time, and the families just kind of been the western default because of maybe Judeo Christian values, and therefore it's up for interpretation or it's up for grabs and it can kind of be modified based on the cultural currents. That is what we're trying to push against and saying no family is not an arbitrary construct.

Marriage is not just something designed and not in the mind of man and for early society. We believe marriage is ordained by God as an institution. Family is an institution ordained by God for the flourishing of not just families who choose it but for the flourishing of humankind and for the flourishing of the church.

Selena: Total truth.

Ryan: We see this in Ephesians 6. Paul is talking to them and says, "Children, obey your parents..." So he starts addressing children. "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father, your mother, it may go well with you and you'll live long in the land." We see it also in Ephesians 3. "For these reasons, before whom every family in heaven on earth is named." That passage goes on. We see it in Genesis 1. We see it in Romans 8, John 1, Galatians 3.

More than that, Selena, you brought this up today as we were talking before we hit record, we see family as language God Himself uses. He refers to us as brothers and sisters in Christ. It's Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It's not father, soldier, Holy Spirit. It's not Father, Savior, Holy Spirit. Father, Son, who is also our Savior. So we see a family dynamic constantly happening, the patriarchal society that is Israel, that generational blessings that we see unfold, the call in Deuteronomy to raise our children up in the way of the Lord. These are all...

Selena: Family is God's ideas.

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Family is absolutely God's idea.

Ryan: So when we acknowledge that truth that God has designed family, our view of its priority is completely transformed. That's what I want to emphasize there. That we can then take full responsibility for our roles within this thing that God has placed us.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: I am the father, you are the mother, the wife, I am the husband. Our firstborn is our firstborn. Our middle child is our middle child. We embrace that our baby is the baby. And they all have a specific role to play. I know our friends Jeff and Elisabeth, they talk about family teams a lot. Each family member plays a significant specific role in the team. And that I think is rooted in this idea that family is God's idea.

Selena: Mm hmm. Absolutely. The third one here is that all parenting is discipleship. Ryan presented these to me and I was just blown away because all parenting is discipleship is so true. Like we are not simple. I'm not a facilitator of my children. I don't just feed them, dress them, make sure they're not fighting and entertain them. Lord help me. That was all parenting was.

Ryan: Not their tour guide.

Selena: There is so much more to it if we're willing to open our eyes and ears, and Lord, help us, our hearts to see it. There is so much more to being a parent than simply bringing them up through the years. There are moments in between in these day to day lives that we have to pray and ask the Holy Spirit's help us to see, to discern, to respond correctly to our children. And ways that we are bringing them up in the Lord. It's not just to sit down around your table and do family worship. Yes, do those things. But as a mom of three, there are

many moments that I can either build up this daughter in the Lord and teacher and trainer or there are moments that I can simply gaslight her or put her to the side and just say, "You know what, go watch something," or "You guys are playing, it's fine. I need to do the stuff."

And don't get me wrong. There are many days where I have to just do things, like get the house clean, because a bomb went off. Again, every day, three times a day more than that. But what I'm saying is that, as a mom, God has been teaching me to slow down and recognize those moments and let everything else go and just give in to those moments of teaching, and training, discipling, loving. All of those things. Because that is what parenting is. And I think that's the blessing for a parent, having a child is seeing, wow, I get to teach. I get this opportunity to teach and train." I'm not the Savior. I'm not the one that gives them salvation. But I can display this feast of who Jesus is before them and pray that they have an appetite and that God calls them. Right?

Ryan: Yeah. The thing that this was specifically meant to push against. So I appreciate what you just said. That's absolutely true. The heart behind these tenets as I brought them to you and as we stand on them as Fierce Parenting, again, this was is a marriage podcast, we'll get back to marriage but for today the heart was the push back against some sort of cultural thing that continues to influence us. How are we set apart? How are these ideas set apart?

So the idea that all parenting is discipleship is a kind of battle cry to the mother in the mire, to the father who is overwhelmed to remember that the time and attention you give to your kids is not just to get them to shut up, I'm sorry, but to get them to be satisfied, but it's to disciple them. Now, the thing that's pushing against for me is all parents face countless decisions each day. But the question I wanted to ask is what governs those decisions?

Dela loves anything we put in front of her—our oldest. If we take her fishing, she loves fishing and wants to fish. If you take her camping, she wants to live outside. If we plant flowers, she wants to be a farmer.

Selena: She kind of wants to do those things anyways.

Ryan: But there's always opportunities because of her age. But as the kids grow, they're going to have different interests. Well, those interests aren't always worth pursuing. And how do we know if they're worth pursuing or not? Well, we have to look at it through a discipleship lens. So here's an example. All right. Let's say you have a 12-year-old, he wants to participate in an extracurricular activity. So they approach you as convincingly as possible. And they say, okay, whether it's soccer or football, or they want to do some sort of singing thing, or art thing, or drama thing, or whatever their thing is, or they

want to build model rockets. I don't care what it is. But say they want to bring it to you. Without a framework in mind, our first thoughts will be about schedule, our first thoughts will be about convenience, about cost, about commitment, time commitment, about peer influence. They'll be about our own...what are other parents going to think, or what's going to infringe on my priorities.

All these things are going to feed into that decision. And if it makes it through this maze of arbitrary framework, we might say to them, "Okay, we can do that thing," or "We don't have time. No." But what if, instead, this is my proposal here, what if instead, we asked what role does this activity play in discipling my child? If I say yes to this, yes, it'll be fun. But is it going to further their discipleship, or is it going to distract from their discipleship?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: They're not necessarily like, "Hey, okay, we're going to go do model rockets today, son, but first, you have to memorize all of Philippians 1." Because that's discipleship. If you want to do this, you got to do this. No, that's not what we're saying. We're saying that the framework is, is this going to kind of take us to the edge where discipleship then becomes hindered? Or is this somehow going to enrich our relationship in a way that will amplify our discipleship? Some of that stuff I feel like, as it sits today, a little idealist, I mean, we have to flesh it out.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: But I feel like that framework instead of...

Selena: Again, coming back to the questions behind the questions, are we asking the right questions? We can only ask the right questions if we are viewing God, the way He is supposed to be viewed and we submit to His authority, we recognize His authority. And that is what governs us, not our feelings, emotions, or what the world values. So we can't ask these questions if we don't know who God is, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: It really what it boils down to we can't ask his or when is a good time to have kids unless we know what God says about kids, about His purpose for family, His purpose for children, His purpose for flourishing, and fruitfulness.

Ryan: And this is why we get so into the whole family vision framework, because...

Selena: Beliefs and all of that.

Ryan: ...we go from making functional decisions to every decision comes from a foundational place.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So what if the answers to these functional questions flowed from a deeper well? And what if we began to ask questions like...again, this is from the third tenets, which all of parenting is discipleship. How does this activity aid in the discipleship of our child? Does this commitment reinforce the overall mission of our home? What if your home does even have a mission? That's why we call your family vision framework. How does this activity reflect our prioritization of family?

In other words, if we're running every which way, we never sit down to have a meal together, is that a biblical thing to not sit around the table and remember and enjoy a meal together?

Selena: The years are fast. Especially when you have kids, time goes even quicker. I know people might argue that, but it really does. And you have less time with them than you think. You have less opportunities. So having a family vision is such a driver for the decisions that we make. I don't say it's a safety net, but it feels like we can make decisions in light of the gospel confidently because we've already made the big decisions of parenting is discipleship, this is what this looks like.

Ryan: Yeah. There's a lot there, you guys. As we get into the Fierce Parenting content we'll actually begin blowing out these ideas and applying them. I feel like the first to the family is God's idea and kids are a blessing are kind of the foundational pieces and then the discipleship pieces. How does it actually work itself out in our day to day?

But anyway, to answer the original question we post here around when is the right time to have kids? I'm picturing you're a couple that's either headed into marriage, you're newly married and you're just starting to have these conversations, or you're just wondering in general, or maybe you've been married three to five years, and you're thinking, "I think we might be ready for kids but my spouse isn't really ready for that. When is the right time?"

Our whole purpose for this episode was to get us thinking in these terms. That kids are a blessing. They're not just a convenience. They're not a feather in our career cap in our life. Picture that we're painting, this perfect life that we want to have. Instead, there's so much more to it.

The family, actually raising kids is not something that's arbitrary. It's not a decision to be made lightly nor is it a decision to be made outside of the framework of our roles as parents, as being disciplers, which is the third one. Is that when you do have kids, if you have kids now, seeing it as every moment is a discipleship opportunity. And that's what governs how we make that decision.

Selena: And none of this is possible without marriage. The covenant of marriage. I think we would just challenge you as a couple to go through three core tenants and talk to each other about them, read through Scripture, pray, spend some time just asking the questions, again, behind the questions. Well, why are we asking this question right now? What is informing the point that we are at now with this information?

So hopefully, that's been helpful to you guys and enlightening. Again, I wish somebody had Fierce Parenting out when we were having kids or decided we'll have kids. But when we were in that first 10 years of our life, I think it would have...God is good. I have no regrets. But I also would be so grateful to be hearing voices now like that.

Ryan: Yeah. So, hopefully, this has shed some light on that for you. Sorry, we couldn't give you a straight answer that you should have kids 1.3 years into your marriage, and no sooner no later. But as you can tell, that would be a silly errand, a fool's errand to try to give that answer to everyone. So the bottom line is you got to know God, you got to trust the Holy Spirit, you got to act in obedience with a heart that is solely aimed at glorifying Him, then you will be led to make the decision that God wants you to make. And we can't make that for you.

I wanted to close with a reminder. So we have some resources. If you're looking for more resources on this, these coincidentally are the resources we're giving away. For our big fierceparenting.com website announcement that we mentioned earlier in this episode, again, you can enter to win by going to fierce parenting on Instagram. Look there, there's going to be a post. There is a post there [*Selena chuckles*] that shows you all the instructions on how to enter.

But these are the five books that we hope to land in your hands. The first one, one of my absolute favorite books on the topic on family. It's called Family Worship by Dr. Donald Whitney. You can check that out. It's available anywhere books are sold. A new one that just came out this month actually, it was by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin called Family Discipleship. We got the

joy of endorsing that book and reading it in advance. Incredible resource for any family that wants to be more discipleship-focused.

We also mentioned Fierce Marriage is also one of those books. You probably know about that. You can find that anywhere books are sold. What's the other one?

Selena: Risen.

Ryan: Risen Motherhood?

Selena: Mm hmm.

Selena: Selena has contributed an article to them. That book is phenomenal. I haven't read it but I've heard it's phenomenal. *[Selena chuckles]* What's the fifth one? Oh, Parenting by Paul Tripp. Just the perennial *[inaudible]*.

Selena: Paul Tripp.

Ryan: It's all right.

Selena: Or Davis Tripp. My goodness.

Ryan: Paul Tripp is the voice in parenting right now, and for good reason. He is harkening the message of the gospel for parents around the world. If you are wanting to go deeper in the Gospel truths as they apply to parenting, definitely pick up that book. I think that's all five.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Okay. I think that's all. Yeah. Okay. Again, go to Instagram, follow Fierce Parenting, and find that for more info. Other than that, wow, let's pray us out because we need God's help.

Lord, you're good. We need you. We trust you. Thank you for you designed for family. Thank you for the blessing of children. And thank you for the missional call to discipling our kids and to training them up in the way they should go, and your promise that it will go well with them if they learn obedience and if we disciple them faithfully. I pray that you would give us hope. Wherever the marriages are, wherever the parents are that are listening to this, that you would be our hope, our eternal and present hope, Lord.

Jesus, we are hopeless without you, but yet we do have you. So thank you. I pray for the husbands and the wives who are struggling right now even within

just marriage, within loving each other well or feeling misunderstood, or having communication problems, or even infidelity problems. I pray that again you would be there hope. That they would run to you, and they would do so gladly, but then also listen to your voice and obey quickly. Lord, we ask that you would...Holy Spirit that you would help us to do those things in Jesus name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, this has been a chock full episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast. So I can say this episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: All right, ladies and gentlemen, until next time, check out fierceparenting.com.

Selena: Stay fierce

Ryan: We'll see you in about seven days.

Selena: So until then—

Ryan: Stay fierce. Whatever.

[00:55:43] <outro>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit FierceMarriage.com, or you can find us with our handle @FierceMarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:31:45]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Psalm 127, 128, ESV
 - Ephesians 3, 6, ESV

- **[00:52:59]**
 - Recommended Resources:
 - [Family Worship by Dr. Donald Whitney](#)
 - [Family Discipleship by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffins](#)
 - [Fierce Marriage](#)
 - [Risen Motherhood](#)
 - [Parenting by Paul Tripp](#)

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