

COUNSELING: DO ALL COUPLES NEED IT?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/counseling-do-all-couples-need-it>

[00:00:00]

Selena: Well, Christianity in psychology are very often at odds and have been through much of their history.

Ryan: Are they?

Selena: They are.

Ryan: Why?

Selena: Because when you think psychology you think Freud and other people that aren't believers, right? There's this whole science of non-believers.

Ryan: I think I could see how that might be a popular take.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I don't see it that way. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: That's fine. *[both laughing]* That's why we're going to have the conversation.

Ryan: The question that we're asking here today is, should we get counseling? Or does every couple need counseling? I think the case we're trying to make is yes and yes. Now, the question is, well, do I need counseling even when we're not going through a crisis or not dealing with something really heavy? And I think the answer is yes.

We're going to try and experiment here over the next two months, I'll say. So this is the first of a four-part series on counseling, although our counseling experiment will go for two months. We're just going to crack the lid on that today while also answering this question, what is the place of counseling in the life of a Christian and in the life of Christian marriage? I think you might be a little surprised. So yeah, stick around. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:11] <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.
- [00:01:43] <podcast begins>**
- Ryan:** We've often wondered if counseling is something that we should do. I think we're finally to that place where we're going to give it a shot.
- Selena:** I think answering that question more accurately means we have to define counseling, define what it is because if counselors are doctors, a lot of them, and so is it just like going to somebody with a broken leg? It doesn't really matter what doctor you see. They're going to fix you either way, right?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Or is there obviously a weight on some of the biblical counseling versus just a counselor? So defining counseling, what that means, and also talking about need. We are phrasing this: should we get counseling even if we don't need it? How do you define need? I mean, what's the value? So we're going to dive into some of those questions soon.
- Ryan:** I want to speak to that just a little bit. I know we're going to dive into it more. We will be in a spat where we're having a hard time communicating, or you're dealing with some family stuff, or I'm dealing with some family stuff and will often be like, "Let's just go to counseling." And it ends up being kind of this...feels like a last-ditch sort of effort. I think we're in a place right now where we're saying, there's a lot about ourselves we don't know yet. And that's where I think it's call to know ourselves.
- Selena:** Right. And I think those reoccurring themes of a continued spat or continued block in communication around whatever that may be is often just the birth

pains around what's actually happening underneath that we may not know about because we haven't spent that much time and research in that. And we're not counselors. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: And there are parts to ourselves that are obscured and only people who know their way around—

Selena: We are complex human beings made in the image of God. So yeah.

Ryan: Here's the disclaimer here. We are doing something very abnormal for our podcast. It's very abnormal. Actually, it just was such a perfect alignment with what we were already feeling led to do...

Selena: Because of the needs that—

Ryan: ...that we decided to go forward with this.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Actually, these next four episodes are in partnership with a strategic partner. It's faithfulcounseling.com. Basically, it's an online counseling service. They approached us and said, "Hey, we want to do an ad thing. I just said straight up, "Nice. Of course." I was like, "We don't usually do ads. We have Patreon and we do that instead." But I said, "But we really aren't looking for this because we're wanting to connect our listeners with a way to get counseling, especially in light of COVID-19 and everything. And it's hard to get in-person stuff. But we're not looking for just a transaction. We're looking for somebody to partner with." So we went back and forth for actually a year.

Selena: I was to say it's been a while. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Because they approached us a year ago and didn't work it out. Then they approached us again a couple of months ago. Anyway. I basically raised the bar really high. And they met us there. They're like, "Yeah, we want to do this partnership. It's not just going to be reading off the script, but you're going to be actually talking about the substantive - is that a word? With substance. *[both chuckles]* Then will point you to this resource."

So anyway, just that's the disclaimer. We hope that it helps you. That's our heart. We're actually doing this. We started talking about experiment we're actually going to be doing. We're going through this. Selena, you signed up today for this service, and we're going to actually get a...

Selena: Ryan and I are going to do counseling.

- Ryan:** You signed to your account but we're going to do it together.
- Selena:** Yes. We're going to do [00:05:00] counseling with Faithful Counselling.
- Ryan:** Honestly, as we're thinking about it, we have a lot of stuff that I want to bring up. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Okay. And?
- Ryan:** I'm kidding. We didn't mean to laugh because counseling is a good tool.
- Selena:** We only laugh because we're nervous. That's why. We're actually acknowledging a lot.
- Ryan:** What is this guy or girl going to reveal about...that I don't want them to reveal? *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I've been working hard to hide all the bad things.
- Ryan:** You're very insecure. "No, I'm not. Ryan! *[Selena laughing]* What do you know anyway?"
- Selena:** You got to have the [inaudible] here because it can get real deep and dark real fast sometimes.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** With anything that we put out there, use discernment. Scripture should be the voice that is in our hearts and the Holy Spirit leading us. Romans 12:2 reminds us: don't be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so by testing, you can discern what is the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 talks...
- Ryan:** Hold on. Hold on.
- Selena:** What?
- Ryan:** Being conformed to the world instead of do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If we subscribe strictly to a humanistic view of the world, meaning that the human mind and psyche is the way to truth, is the way to greater, I guess, enlightenment, that's humanism as opposed to biblical authority.

- Selena:** Worldviews here.
- Ryan:** That's being conformed to the world. So if we go into something even like counseling like we're talking about, without scripture as our anchor, as our starting point, as the gospel being our finishing point, then we will miss it.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** I wanted to blow that out.
- Selena:** Yeah. I wanted to put some scripture here because I think when we go to Scripture, it really can help align us in terms of what we need to be thinking and hearing in terms of getting counsel—having discernment when we're getting counsel.
- Hebrews 4:12, "The word is living and active. It can discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Ephesians 5. There's a lot in Ephesians 5:6-11. "Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words. Do not become partners with them, for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works." Again, a big call to discernment here.
- Ryan:** You said, "Walk as children of the light." It says in parentheses in verse 9 of Ephesians 5, "For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." Where do we find what's good and right and true? We find it in Scripture. We find it in the person and work of Christ as revealed in Scripture. So he is the Word of God incarnate. We have the Word of God in Scripture, which is the canon, the Bible as we see. There's a lot of reasons why it is what it is.
- But the point we're trying to make is we have to be rooted in Scripture. And then these endeavors are even better. To self-exploration, to self-knowledge, to understanding your spouse all in light of Scripture, I think that's the structure that we need, the foundation that we need.
- Selena:** Yeah, knowing ourselves in light of the gospel. We're not knowing ourselves just to know ourselves and to try to make ourselves better because we know ourselves. But knowing that God created us a certain way and there's a bigger purpose and picture of sanctification, redemption, opportunities to grow because of God's grace and to grow with each other. And because we're in this covenant of marriage. So I just want to be clear that we are not trying to just know ourselves to know ourselves. That's just a dead end.

Ryan: So we're processing, listener. Hopefully this is getting you into our mindset as we're talking about this stuff. We don't mean to just babble on and on and on, but rather we want to make it clear where we're coming from. Does that make sense?

Selena: I'm not babbling. Are you babbling?

Ryan: Well, I'm nervous. All right. I'm nervous. *[Selena laughs]* Just leave me alone. You can just take it from here.

Selena: Again, the topic today, should we get counseling even if we don't really think we need it? To begin to even answer this question, we got to define a few terms and acknowledge that psychology and biblical counseling, they have tension. They still have tension even today. So we need to discuss and understand that just briefly. Deciding whether or not you want to get counseling depends on your beliefs around counseling or who's informed those believes.

There are Christian counselors who use certain techniques found in psychological theories while still giving biblical counsel. The key is discernment here and evaluating the psychological theory against the truth of the Bible to determine what can be helpful or what is clearly opposed to God. When you hear us talk about Christian counseling, we mean a counselor who believes in the Bible and that the Bible is authoritative and complete.

Ryan: Hold on. Hold on. Authoritative and complete?

Selena: Right. It's not a supplemental...Hey, this is a good scripture for you. Jump off. Go.

Ryan: Whoo. So glad you said that. When we use the word "authoritative", [00:10:00] it's important. You can hear it in something like this. "Yeah, yeah, the Bible's authoritative. I get it." No. Okay. It is the thing that governs how we see the world. That's what we mean by authority. Meaning it's not just a subtext, not just a footnote in some psychological idea because that's humanistic. Again, we're rooting authority and us. Okay?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: We don't do that. We look at God's Word as something revealed by God Himself. Therefore, it holds all authority and it's unquestioned in that sense.

Selena: So we're talking about a biblical worldview versus a humanistic worldview. Humanistic puts us at the center, biblical puts God of the Bible at the center.

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: We filter everything through Him and through His words.

Ryan: Yes. I want to make a note here before we go on about a common grace. Okay?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Because people will sometimes view stuff like this and we hyper spiritualize things.

Selena: I used to do that, and this is how you explained common grace to me, and I was like, "Oh, this brings a lot of clarity and free ground."

Ryan: Right. Think about it like this. Whether you're a Christian or not, whether you subscribe to the Christian worldview or not, you can go right now, assuming you live in a place that has this sort of thing, and get a delicious steak, and it will be really good. It'll taste good to you. Or on an even more common level, you could just inhale right now and have a breath of fresh air. And you know what? That air is going to replenish your body, it's going to go into your lungs, and it's going to go into your bloodstream, and your body's going to benefit from that common grace. All right. Regardless of whether or not you obey God, listen to God, subscribe to His authority, call Jesus Savior, there are good things in this world that you can experience.

I think psychology, science, medicine is all within that. The thing is with common Grace is that when we attribute common grace to the source of the grace, which is God, the God of the universe, the creator of the universe, it becomes better. It's amplified. Now, the steak in this meal or this medicine is not just a means to an end. It is a means to glorifying God. That when I have this meal, it's amazing. Because yes, my wife made it, God provided it for us, or whoever made it made it, and I'm enjoying it because God has allowed it to be so.

So psychology is very similar in that there are good things to be discovered about the most complex of God's organisms. The human being, the mind of the human being, something God created, we can get in there, we can learn about it, we can take medicine, all by the grace of God. We're not trying to hyper spiritualize it. We're also not trying to get so far on the other end.

Selena: Yeah, I want to be careful about medicine and all that.

Ryan: Of course.

Selena: Again, that theme of discernment here, the theme of a believer, the Bible is self-proclaiming to be sufficient for everything we need. And counseling is no exception in terms of that. We have 2 Peter 1, Hebrews 4 again, 2 Timothy talking about how the Bible is authoritative.

Ryan: I'm going to read this passage from 2 Peter 1. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

So you're telling me that God hasn't given us all things if we're using psychology now? Is that? *[Selena chuckles]* I'm pushing back.

Selena: You're being facetious.

Ryan: No, I'm pushing back.

Selena: You're pushing back. Yeah, we have to say these things and make sure we're very clear because we've been misunderstood in the past about jokes that have not gone over well. People don't know we're joking. When you hear th...

Ryan: So yeah, we have all things we need for life and godliness. Psychology, I think, can be subservient to Scripture. But it can also bolster the truths that are already embedded in the fabric of how God has made us.

Selena: I feel like it's like anything, right? You can use a baseball bat to hit a baseball or you can use it to destroy a car or something.

Ryan: Great analogy.

Selena: If it's made in God's image and we understand its purpose, then we'll use it for the right purpose and will discern and walk in it. But then what about the Holy Spirit as our counselor? There's a quick question about that and the origins. One of the titles of the Holy Spirit is comfort or counselor and advocate. We see this in Isaiah 11, John 14:15-16. All three of those words are translations of the Greek Parakletos.

Ryan: Parakletos.

Selena: Parakletos. From which we get Paraclete, another name for the Spirit.

Ryan: Wow. I didn't know that. This is from Got Questions by the way. They're awesome if you want to read this article.

Selena: So when Jesus went away, His disciples were sad because they were losing His comforting presence, but He promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort and console them and to guide those who belong to Christ. The Spirit also [00:15:00] quote-unquote, "bears witness" with our spirits. That we belong to him and thereby assures us of salvation. So paraclete means to bring to the other side or to be one. To have the Holy Spirit as our paraclete is to have God Himself and dwelling us as believers, which is so powerful.

I'm reading one thing. The Spirit teaches us the Word and guides us into truth. He reminds us of what Jesus has taught so that we can depend on Him, His word in the difficult times of life. The Spirit works to give us his peace, his love, and his joy. All of these things. With counseling and discernment, making the most of Christ is what this is saying. I feel like the Holy Spirit helps us. He's our helper. If we're hearing a message from a counselor, and it is not making much of Christ, we can ask them, well, I don't know if this is outlining up with this. And maybe they can walk us through that process.

But in our beings, we need to be able to discern, "Is this making much of Christ or is this making much of myself? Or what's this context here? And is this making much of the Word? Is it coming under scripture and authoritative in that?" I think those are little leery of counseling, you know, because I'm just like, "This guy doesn't really know me. So how is he really going to speak into my life?" You know, those kinds of questions that can circle around.

Ryan: And sometimes you won't be able to discern on the surface if they're starting from the same baseline. Because you have a counselor who say, "I'm a Christian counselor," but you get in there and they realize they think very low of God's Word and they think it's a supplemental thing, it's a supplemental reading to whatever they're actually trying to tell you. So you won't know that a lot of times because it's, "Yeah, the Bible is great and I'm a Christian." But you get into there and you realize, "Oh, wait, we haven't even talked about what Scripture says about this," or "you haven't mentioned scripture." So you have to discern.

Selena: Right. And I do want to say biblical counseling is not meant to replace the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Ideally, biblical counseling would affirm the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, in our marriage.

Ryan: So devil's advocate here.

Selena: Sure.

- Ryan:** I'm speaking hypothetically, just for people who need extra clear. All right?
- Selena:** Great. I'm in a marriage and it's a loveless marriage, I'm going to say. I feel like my wife has completely gone cold to me. I'm depressed. I've struggled with anxiety my whole life. So you're telling me that the fact that I'm still struggling with anxiety means that the Holy Spirit is not in me, I'm not trusting him? Is that what you're telling me?
- Selena:** You can answer with me. *[both laughs]* This hypothetical person can...No, no, he's...
- Ryan:** And the fact that I still cry myself to sleep at night because my wife hates my guts...
- Selena:** Right. You're being gratuitous.
- Ryan:** Yes.
- Selena:** So to your point of there's a lot of deep hurt inflicted on spouses.
- Ryan:** It's a really hard thing to talk through because you have a lot of married people who feel this way. And I don't want to dismiss their pain. I think we have to be very clear to define what healing is, what joy is, what the purpose of life is.
- So if I'm in a loveless marriage, absolutely, we need to work on fixing that horrible situation. You want to make it right. You want to make it ideal. You may not be able to do that. And so, where does the Holy Spirit come in there? Can I still have deep peace? Can I still have deep hope? Can I still have joy somehow?
- Selena:** Right. Because...
- Ryan:** My answer wants to be yes.
- Selena:** It is. Galatians 5:22 talks about the fruit of the Spirit. So if the Holy Spirit is at work in us, he can produce fruit in our lives. What are the fruits of the Spirit?
- Ryan:** Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- Selena:** Right. These are not things I produce simply on my own. But it is an outworking, it is an acknowledgement of paraclete of the Holy Spirit—God Himself in me. So no matter—

Ryan: I'll give an example.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: I'm going to give an example because we have friends who have been through this and they've been through unfaithful...They were husband and wife together, the husband often and had an affair. And then he said, "I'm done with this marriage, get a divorce, went off, lived his entire life." She was of course devastated, sad, broken. But she held on. I'm not saying it always ends this way. But she held on for over a decade. 20 years, wasn't it?

Selena: It was 10 years.

Ryan: 10 years.

Selena: It doesn't matter. It probably felt like 20 years.

Ryan: Yeah. In that time, she'll tell you she still had this deep sense of...

Selena: God's not done yet.

Ryan: ...love, joy, peace, patience. And she was bearing kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. She had all this fruit of the Holy Spirit and dwelling. Love and joy, we gloss over those. Love and joy...

Selena: In the midst of.

Ryan: ...in the midst of a marriage that have been shattered by infidelity, by injustice. [00:20:00] I mean, I'm thinking of another couple. We had them on here. It was out of the dust, right?

Selena: Hmm.

Ryan: He completely turned his back on God, left, they got a divorce. Then God ended up rescuing him out of that. All the while she's like, "What is happening. My life is upside." She couldn't even hardly understand what's happening. It all happened so fast. And she held on to that. The Spirit was still there giving her hope and peace in that.

Selena: To read this little quote here is that the Holy Spirit comforts our hearts and minds in a troubled world. The power of the indwelling paraclete gives us the ability to live by the Spirit, and not gratify the desires of the sinful flesh, which is in Galatians 5. The Spirit can then produce his fruit in our lives to the glory

of God. What a blessing this is to have the Holy Spirit in our lives as our paraclete, our comforter, our encourager, our counselor, and our advocate.

We're not saying that it's going to be easy to live in a loveless marriage and that it's ideal, obviously. But the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in you is great. There is an abundance to be had there. Again, biblical counseling is not to replace the presence of the Holy Spirit. Ideally, a counselor would be affirming the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart and in your marriage.

Ryan: So you're right now presupposing that the reason why we exist as people is to be made holy, is to be conformed to the image of Christ. The reason we exist is not to live this life the happiest way possible. That's a hard, hard truth...

Selena: That's a hard truth.

Ryan: ...when things are not going well. So I don't want to gloss over that. We don't mean to do that, listener. We're just saying that if we say that our purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever and to glorify Him forever, if that is our purpose, then we can find all these—

Selena: Let it be in suffering. Let it be in—

Ryan: That's why Paul said to live is gain and to die is Christ.

Selena: Well, he even talks about...I was listening to podcasts which Jenny had Matt Chandler on there, and they were talking about some end time stuff. But talking about I think it was Paul who wrote about momentary affliction, calling this light momentary affliction. And he's like, "Paul, by all means, he has greater purpose to say...Like he was in prison. He was in shipwrecks. He was tortured. He was held...

Ryan: He lived on afflicted life.

Selena: We can't imagine that. In the first world country, westernized, whatever we live in, we can't imagine. And he calls the things that he saw in Revelation...Was it Paul who wrote? No.

Ryan: No, it's John who wrote...

Selena: John. Sorry.

Ryan: Paul said light momentary affliction.

Selena: Yes. Anyways. He called this light momentary affliction, which is ironic because he was the one walking in more affliction than I think any of us have ever experienced in our lives right now. We have not been shipwrecked. Most of us, I could think can say could have not been imprisoned for the gospel.

Ryan: So the point being that when we have that view of this life, we see the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will then compel us to see things through that lens. Now, obviously, we hold on to hope, and we hope that we can see reconciliation because that is biblical and that's good. In this life, we hope that we can see healing, we hope to get to the other side of it. Counseling is oftentimes a way to help get to the other side of it when it's rooted in Scripture.

Selena: Absolutely. I think we're just going to this next point real quick. Talking about the word "need", do we think we need counseling? I think I'd reword this as: what's the value of counseling? Because at least for me, I won't engage in something or put money out or whatever because I don't really see the value in it, or we don't think we need it until we're in crisis mode. It's like, "I don't need a generator until the power goes out." "Oh, now I need a generator." Maybe that's a bit bad example. *[laughing]* But having one on hand is not a bad idea. But also like, do we need to have it on? Just those questions of what's the value of this?

I mean, maybe you haven't experienced a major crisis in your marriage, that being infidelity or any sort of addiction or a major mental health issue. But if you were asked, you could probably name a few areas of concern. Like you guys don't communicate well, maybe sex and intimacy is difficult, or you're struggling with finances, and that's burying a ton of weight on your marriage. Again, oftentimes, there's just those emotional, external sort of tensions that come to the surface, but they really are just symptoms of the soul issues that need biblical counseling.

I don't think I said this, but the difference of having a biblical counselor versus just a counselor. Counselor understands that these are soul-deep issues. These are not just a [00:25:00] human issue. So getting help from a biblical counselor will get us I feel like the rooted deep help that we need. Not just good advice, not just a band-aid, but an actual cast to help a broken bone. Right?

Ryan: Yeah. I just want to use a really tangible example from our own lives, some areas that we feel like we want to explore as we head into this experiment. And who knows? This experiment could last for two years if it bears fruit. But we think of your family of origin, I think of my family of origin.

Selena: Family of origin in general, yeah.

- Ryan:** Without throwing our parents under the bus, God's grace is thick in all that. My parents were great but there's some stuff that I'm realizing from...I remember it took me months to hash through some of that stuff.
- Selena:** Yeah. I mean, again, we may not ever be on the other side of it. I think that when you're dealing in a world that is broken by sin, we're constantly going to be faced with brokenness. We're hemmed in in all sides right with sin. So we can't expect to have a problem-free marriage if we both have come from parents, or we have siblings. Whatever your family of origin story, it's going to play a role in your marriage. Whether you're a year into your marriage, and you're like, "wait, life is great." Or 20 years in saying, "Yep, these are all the things they did wrong or something." *[laughs]* And we're not here saying that. I'm jokingly laughing about that because I think we can all look back and say we feel like our parents made mistakes. Well, yeah, they're human and they're broken by sin also just like us. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** We were raised by sinners. Yeah, there's probably issues there.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** I think the point I'm trying to make is that there are areas of our marriage...Again, to go back to us, your dad left your mom when you were about - what? Eight years old?
- Selena:** Hmm.
- Ryan:** That still affects you to this day?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Because you didn't grow up with a dad in the house and you didn't have that example.
- Selena:** There's more weight and different roles placed on my mom because of the absence. This took away from us and her ability to be a mother in different ways. She still was a great mom and provided all the things. But just by necessity, she couldn't do all the things that a mom can do when a father's around.
- Ryan:** Right. Because you're having to fill other roles, and so you inevitably have to give up certain other areas. The point I'm trying to make is we are still dealing with that. So a counselor...and we've talked about this for a year, me and you. You've talked about, "Hey, I need to go hash through some of this stuff." Not

to just start scratching at the scar to see if it bleeds or to just pick up the wound... *[Selena laughing]*.

Selena: That grosses me out. That imagery. I'm just like, "Oh."

Ryan: But we're not just trying to stir things up, to stir things up, but to see if there's something there that we can work through for the health of our marriage, for the health of our family. You can think, as a mom, how can I love our daughters well and not having seen this version of motherhood in your own home growing up because we're together? So you can find that maybe you're a little more cold than you want to be toward the girls. And maybe there's some—

Selena: Let's talk about why you feel that.

Ryan: Reason for that. *[Selena laughs]* I even though I feel like you—

Selena: What are your problems? *[laughs]*

Ryan: By the way, Selena is a great mom. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Moving on!

Ryan: Well, for one...

Selena: Again, we're laughing because we're just nervous and insecure. Don't take this as like, haha, they're laughing at people's problems.

Ryan: I think people know us.

Selena: Well. Some of views would say otherwise.

Ryan: One of my things lately I've been trying to be aware of is how I get when there's stuff to be done around the house. It used to be worse. Before we had kids, when we were first married, I would be so impatient around any sort of project. If I'm putting a bed together or fixing the gutters, or whatever—

Selena: There was no joy in it.

Ryan: No joy. I was always mad. And I come to realize that it reflected a lot of how I experienced my dad doing that stuff as a kid. And I realized I don't have to do that. I don't have to be that way I can be happy toward my wife even though this project is irritating me.

Selena: There can be joy in tasks.

- Ryan:** Exactly.
- Selena:** But he's on that journey of discovery. *[Selena laughs]*
- Ryan:** And I'm on the other side of that journey, thank you very much, of discovery. For instance, I was working in our backyard cutting the hedge. And it's this massive hedge. We live on this hill...
- Selena:** It's a giant hedge. It might as well just be a thing of trees. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** And I'm trying to think through biblical lens thinking God is in a sense called us to work our land, quote-unquote, to steward that which he's entrusted into our care. I'm not trying to be a literalist in that sense, but I see the theme. So I'm like, "This is a joy to be able to work and to cultivate this land and to steward it to the glory of God for the good of our family." [00:30:00] And I can be happy in this. Even when it's hard, I can be happy because it's hard, knowing that I'm toiling to the glory of God. I'm toiling because of original sin, and it's a horrible thing, but—
- Selena:** The original sin affects the growth of hedges. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Yes. Yes, it does. He's giving me joy in that by His grace. That's one of the things I'm working through it. My dad was notorious for having a list. Like there was no fun to be had until the list was done.
- Selena:** He would say that.
- Ryan:** Dad, if you're listening, I love you.
- Selena:** No, he would say that today. He proclaimed that for sure.
- Ryan:** So he would go to work in summers. All summer long, he would go to work and then he'd leave the list. And it was like, "Do the list or you're in big trouble when I get home." It could be anything on the list. Like, paint the house or something. *[both laughs]* And I just remember being so resentful of that. So I had to work through that.
- Selena:** What were the actual tasks though? Because I imagine in the little mind of little child Ryan doing one task is probably like our seven-year Dela who's just like, "Oh, I feel like we're always doing chores." I'm like, "Hey, cool. I asked you to do one thing." *[laughs]*

- Ryan:** No, it would be at least two to four hours of work around the house on average.
- Selena:** Was that because you did all around *[laughing]* or is that because...?
- Ryan:** No comment. *[Selena laughing]*
- Selena:** Because I know Dela if I don't keep her on task. Some things...
- Ryan:** Didling is not even a word. *[Selena laughing]* So I'm going to pretend like you didn't say that. How dare you?
- Selena:** How dare you. You don't know me?
- Ryan:** How dare you? Okay. Enough of that. Experiment over.
- Selena:** Experiment over. I hate to call it an experiment because honestly, I feel like the Lord has just aligned a bunch of opportunities I think for us to talk openly and learn how to even vocalize and communicate with wisdom and with patience and with love areas that are hard for our hearts, are difficult, and they don't feel good to talk about. But we are going to face those and not be afraid because the Lord has not called us to be afraid. He says, "Do not fear. I'm not giving you a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind."
- Ryan:** So I think when we address need, it's better to flip, like you said, what is the value of counseling? So to put it tangibly, these three values, at least three values that we see is there's an investment in your marriage and in your own mental health that will bear fruit for years, possibly even into generations. That's the first one.
- The second one is, bring a third party who is knowledgeable and experienced and who can see the issues objectively and ideally lead you and understand the issues to soul level. We have a good friend Drew, who's a counselor. Actually, Drew and Leanne are both counselors. And we were talking over this a few weeks back on the phone, and he was like, "Rule number one of counseling is you don't prescribe things for them to do. Instead, your whole goal is to hold a mirror and ask questions and get them to kind of come around that."
- Selena:** Which is so awesome. Because I think even in friendships we don't do this well. With Christian friends and even in discipleship, we can fall so short of trying to help but just damaging even more sometimes. Again, where I think counselors come in with tools, with knowledge, with experience, with clarity, it's invaluable. I mean, how can you—

Ryan: Yeah, will ask questions.

Selena: And it's not just again prescribing telling you, "You should do this, you're acting like this." Although sometimes I'm like, "Can somebody just tell me what to do because I feel like I don't know anything right now." Especially when it comes to parenting and just all the things. But someone who can say, "Look at this from this perspective. What do you see?" And ask the questions that are good. We don't even ask good questions sometimes I feel like as just brothers and sisters in Christ. We struggle with that.

Ryan: With a counselor, again, biblical counselor sitting there in front of you, they have the tools to ask you questions in light of the Bible, in light of everything our worldview gives us in terms of the nature of God, the nature of man. I am sinful and I don't see myself correctly. And they help to see myself correctly because of I'm blinded by my own sin, or blinded by just my inexperience or my lack of vocabulary to see these things.

Selena: Yes. I basically am hoping for someone when we do counseling that will show me the Bible more and how I'm missing that mark in some ways. Like, where's my sin? Why does it cause me to sin? And how can I be aided in this? Holy Spirit, helped me see these things that I feel so blind to. We were walking in darkness. Well, we're still this side of sin and brokenness. So there's still darkness in us. Yes, God has overcome. Ultimately, there's light inside of me the Holy Spirit, but again, I'm a broken sinner on earth, and I need God's help, I need the Holy Spirit.

If you're somebody who's listening too, I just want to say, as a friend, I have had people reach out to me and desperately like, "What would you do in the situation?" And I'm just like, [00:35:00] "First of all, I'm really not equipped to talk about these situations."

Ryan: Heavy stuff.

Selena: "I don't have any tools for this. As a friend, though, I can pray with you. I can help you with any tangible needs, bringing meals, watch your kids, give you money. I don't know. I'm here to help. But a biblical counselor is definitely the way to go." And that is me stepping into the role of marriage advocate for these friendships. It's not taking the burden on myself because I don't know. I don't know.

As much as we sit here and talk about marriage and feel like maybe we know a little bit, we really don't know a whole lot. We're just sharing what we know. [chuckles] But God is good in His grace to give...I'm just saying that all the

things we know, again, feels like we've fallen off a log and God's like, "Here's all the things you can learn from this. And here's all the things that you can share with the world about your brokenness, your marriage."

Ryan: Well, I want to put a caveat in there because I feel like our lane is connecting the gospel to the day to day struggles of marriage. That's been our specialty. Whereas we've not specialized as authors or even...I'm going to seminary but I'm not going for a counseling degree. Because I want to understand the Bible. I want people to connect the gospel more clearly. That's just our lane.

But there are people that their whole passion is understanding and finding tools to have a breakthrough so that...For instance, Selena you talked about someone showing you how you're not seeing scripture correctly. A lot of that is we're believing something about God that's not true. We're believing something about how He's created us that's not true. So scripture helps us identify those lies, and a counselor will be able to hold the mirror up and say, "Look, what do you see? Now try this angle. What do you see?"

Selena: So good.

Ryan: As opposed to, "You need to go pray more. You need to read John. *[chuckles]*

Selena: So hopefully, listeners, you're listening, you're thinking, "Wow, I feel like I have a great marriage, but I bet counseling would actually really help us in areas maybe I don't even see, or maybe my spouse doesn't even see." If we can just take on that approach, that humble approach of, "Wow, I really don't know at all," and I'm speaking myself, you know, people—

Ryan: I think this applies to not just going to get a quote-unquote, "professional counselor", but even getting pastoral counsel, or getting help from a mentor, or a friend. It's the same heart posture. I think we're just saying that there is an extra skillset that a quote-unquote, "Counselor by profession" will have. And that's a good common grace of God.

Selena: So you're probably thinking, "Awesome. I'm on board. However, finances are a little tough right now."

Ryan: I don't know if I'm on board right now. *[laughs]* Just to be honest.

Selena: Okay. Well, maybe you're not on board but the thing that would tip the scales would be how do we afford it? I mean, traditionally speaking, counseling has always been pretty expensive.

Ryan: You had mentioned the cost thing for helping a friend. You said, "Hey, I can't give you counsel, but maybe I can give you a meal" or "I can give you some money out of my wallet." *[both laughs]* That's a terrible anchorman quote. The reason why I bring that up is because a lot of times that's one of the reasons people don't get into it. And that's a good reason. Because if you can't afford it, that's hard. If you can't afford...

Selena: We're not saying go into debt over...

Ryan: Right. So I want to at least address it not from a salesy thing. But this is why I like this partnership because I feel like it is more accessible. Well, typically—

Selena: Before—

Ryan: Go ahead.

Selena: Before we go there, I think we just want to clarify also that churches often have pastoral counselors available. So check with your church if it's a financial thing. There's cash pay. You're talking about cash pay, and then I added this little crowdsource funding for lack of a better term. Like ask your Christian community, ask your family to help. I can more often than not say, if you are in within a community of believers, and you're saying, "We're struggling here and we don't have the finances to do this. Can we talk about building up support? Or is there any way we can pray about this even and look ahead?"

Ryan: I want to add to that. So churches will often have pastoral counselors. Churches oftentimes will also have a care fund. I know our church has this. If we were to go to them and say, "We really need to get counseling," they would probably say, "Okay, well, we'll give you enough to get two months of couples counseling." What's really cool about that is a lot of times the church would also oversee that process because they care. You have elders who are accountable for your spiritual health. So they're going to oversee it in terms of they're going to make sure that you're seeing a biblical counselor, they're making sure that you're actually growing from that, and they're going to follow up and you're going to get pastoral care on top of the mental care. So there's that piece.

There's also just insurance. A lot of folks have insurance that does cover counseling. I know from talking to my dad who is a counselor...By the way, I didn't mention that once. My dad's a counselor. *[chuckles]* So I grew up with kind of seeing how the sausage is made *[both laughs]* if I could use that term.

Selena: Your examples today are just— [00:40:00]

Ryan: Just so good.

Selena: Oh, my goodness.

Ryan: Anyway. So there is that sense that there is insurance that can be accepted. Because of the state of medical insurance, it is harder to find good biblical counselors who take all types of insurance.

Selena: Imagine that.

Ryan: A lot of times—this is the other thing. I'll add the fifth one—is that with cash pays, sometimes there's a sliding scale. You go to a Christian counselor, and you say, "We really need this help. Your fees are I don't even know I'll say \$120 for the hour. I can't afford that." And they'll say, "Okay, well, since your cash pay, "Let's do \$75 and we'll commit to an hour, an hour a week for at least eight weeks. So right there it's a \$600 investment total. I think that's probably a good investment over four or eight weeks. So anyway.

With that said, we want to put in front of you more overtly now this solution, because we are in partnership with them for this little series, this four-week series. It's faithfulcounseling.com. Everything that we just said is kind of the...hopefully to answer that question of is counseling of worth? Whether or not I get it in person or I do it through an online service like this, is it worthwhile? And the answer is yes. What's really cool about Faithful Counseling is actually we have friends...before we even decided to do this—

Selena: Close friends.

Ryan: Close friends. Ones that I've actually spoken to and helped us repair parts of our marriage, who decided to go get counseling online, and they happen to use faithcounseling.com and very smart, spirit-filled, Bible-believing know the Bible well. I'm on a hike with the guy a few weeks back and he's telling me all these things that he's learned.

Selena: He used to be a pastor.

Ryan: He used to be a pastor. He's really smart and honestly really skeptical about this kind of stuff and really flip. And he was like, "Yeah, it was really cool. He helped me see myself in a new way, and see my wife in a new way. And it was a huge breakthrough." And it was the simple thing that this counselor in Australia told him. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That's really cool. Anyway, the whole point is, is we're doing this counseling challenge, and we're going to do it through faithfulcounseling.com. We want to invite you along with us. But here's a little bit more about them. The way it works is you basically go on to faithfulcounseling.com and you fill out a form that asks you all these questions, including questions about your faith. This is where you have to be really specific.

They do have biblical counselors there, but there are going to be people that aren't necessarily ascribing to a biblical worldview as we've discussed here. So we want to make sure that you as the person going on and to be really discerning. So you fill out this form, you fill out all the things about you and things that you're interested in, and then they will eventually match you with counselors.

Selena: With a few counselors.

Ryan: With a few counselors, and you can select one. So they're all licensed professionals, there's over 3,000 of these counselors around the world. They deal with things like depression, stress, anxiety, relationships, even sleeping, crisis of faith, trauma, anger, family conflicts, grief, self-esteem, and of course, I think probably anything you could share with them. But it's all confidential, all that good stuff.

Anyway, because of this partnership, we're doing a coupon code. So you can actually get 10% off your first month, you got to use this discount code: FMP. So that stands for Fierce Marriage Podcast. So go to faithfulcounseling.com/FMP, and you simply just fill out the questionnaire and let them assess your needs, and then they'll match you with counselors that you'll love. Again, faithfulcounseling.com/FMP.

Selena: A couple's conversation challenge here I think is should we get biblical counseling? Talk about that with your spouse. Bring that question up. It's never—

Ryan: Sorry. I can just hear husbands right now responding to their wives asking that question because you would ask me that and I'd be like, "Oh, brother."

Selena: Well, I'm telling the husbands right now to lead that charge. That's what I'm saying.

Ryan: Oh, love that about you.

Selena: Then how do you go about doing this? Again, having this call of discernment, having the Holy Spirit paraclete with us. How do we go about discussing should

we get counseling? Why or why not? We're always for the why. Yes, and the why. And how can we better be discerning in this process of finding a good counselor, a good biblical Christian counselor? And then how do we discern what we're hearing and the information and the questions were being asked. So that would be our conversation challenge to you this week.

Ryan: Then we need some help actually because we are going to spend like I said, the next few weeks talking through this. We're going to address I think some specific things like codependency. Again, we're not counselors, but we want to at least bring some of these issues to the forefront of your thinking. Talking through maybe how we can start to think through it. Because if someone said, "Hey, Ryan, you're codependent," I might not see that until I understand what codependency is.

Selena: Sure. Sure.

Ryan: I might say, "Okay, this is unhealthy." So we can start working through it. So if you have any ideas on things that we should talk through, whether it's anxiety, depression, codependence, we talked about narcissism in the past, again, family of origin, boundaries, anything like that, do this. Go to fiercemarriage.com/counseling. [00:45:01] I'm going to have a little form there that just lets you quickly enter your name and a thing that you want to talk about. That'll help us decide these topics as we go forward for the next three weeks. Okay?

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Sounds good?

Selena: Yeah. No one else is going to answer that. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: All right. Let's pray and then we'll call it an episode. Father, you're good. Thank you that you are true, Jesus, that you are Truth, capital T truth and we can look to you, and not just to know about you, but to know about us. And we can look to you to know about how we're created. We can look to you to know about how to trust you more fully, how to know our spouse, and love them well. Lord, you are the source of truth.

But also thank you for this common grace that it is to know our minds and to talk to others who know the human mind who can help us see things and new

fresh ways, to help us have breakthroughs. Lord, I pray that you would help the listeners of this episode, the husband, the wife who feels like maybe they're against a wall, and there's no breakthrough in sight. I pray that you would give them all the hope that is theirs in you, Christ, and give them all the peace that is theirs in you.

I pray that you would help them find a way, find a door, find a way over the wall, to find a way through the wall they're experiencing. And I pray that you would just lead them Holy Spirit in that path. God, we trust you. God, no change happens aside from your Holy Spirit making happen in our hearts. So we ask that you would keep our heart soft and help us to grow and more rightly glorify you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Ladies, gentlemen, thank you for joining us for this episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast. This episode is—

Ryan: In the can.

Ryan: We'll see you in about seven days. Again, we're going to continue this counseling series over the next three weeks. So do go to fiercemarriage.com/counseling. Give us your feedback. Tell us what you want to learn about on counseling. Even if you've had a counseling experience, we would love to hear your experience. There'll be a form there. It'll be really easy for you to fill out. And that will be helpful for us. Anyway, we will see you again soon. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce. *[Ryan laughs]*

Ryan: You nailed it.

[00:47:17] <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

- **[00:05:45]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Romans 12:2
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - Ephesians 5: 6-11
 - 2 Peter 1:3-4
 - Isaiah 11
 - John 14:15-16

- **[00:18:42]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Galatians 5:22

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