

THE ONE HABIT YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-one-habit-you-absolutely-need>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: I don't think I'm overselling it. If a couple embraces this one thing, it has the potential, unlike anything else, to transform hearts and to transform your marriage as a result.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Like I said, I'm not trying to just be...you know, this grandiose claim. But the thing is, is just getting into God's Word.

Selena: We can be grandiose in claiming that because it is God's Word, and there's nothing more wonderful and life-giving and alive and authoritative than His word.

Ryan: So we're going to be tackling that idea of what does it look like for a couple to get in God's Word together, demystifying some of the stuff around that.

Selena: Yeah. Because I think we become too numb and indifferent about reading God's Word. And "yeah, I should have my devotionals. I didn't have them today. Oh, great." We're going to talk about those feelings, I think, *[chuckling]* and emotions around that.

Ryan: All right. Sounds like a plan. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:00:57] <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.

[00:01:30] <podcast begins>

Ryan: So we're going to tackle this topic really from our own recent experience. We've always been Bible readers, always been fans of the Bible...

Selena: Big fans. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: ...as if we were the ones to approve of it. It doesn't need our approval to be God's inerrant and holy word.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: We get to humbly approach it and let it change us. But the point I'm trying to make is that hopefully you won't feel like, "Oh, here's the Frederick's coming at this from this high perch of holy biblical knowledge. But really we just want to share an experience recently that we've had in diving into God's Word even deeper than we ever have, and how we came about to do that, what the path led to that.

And then we want to examine, really why God's Word has these transformative capabilities. And not only capability...It's so hard to talk about God's Word as if it's somehow equivalent to anything else. It doesn't just benefit us. It is what it is. And the more we sit under its authority, and I do mean that wording, we sit under its authority, the more it does what it does. And that is reveal to us the character of God, instruct us in the ways of God, and stir our hearts and our affections for God.

Selena: Right. And this is the way we are called to live.

Ryan: Unequivocally. *[Selena chuckles]* Unequivocally. So I'm thankful for God's Word this morning. This morning. It's morning time we're recording this.

Selena: I think we're hoping to uproot some of those old beliefs or responses or just behaviors around Bible reading that we've had the Lord uproot in our own hearts. So praying this transparency will be helpful and encouraging, and a little spur in the behind if you need one as well.

Ryan: A little burn yourself.

Selena: There you go. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: So we'll get right into that in a second. First, our housekeeping. I want to say thank you to everyone who has left a rating and a review. Thank you. If you haven't had a chance to do that, please go to iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts and write a little rating, leave a little review. Is that right? Leave a rating, write a review. *[Selena chuckles]* Whatever you think this podcast has earned. What it does is it helps others realize that this content is worth their time.

The SEO of podcast is growing. It feels like exponentially. It's like blogs 10 years ago, everybody had a blog, right? Well, this helps get the content that we believe is strong and gospel-centered, and helpful. It kind of rises it maybe above some of the phrase some of the noise.

Selena: For now.

Ryan: For now. For now—as long as we're able, which is actually the next thing. You guys, I actually read this morning that there is some serious censorship happening in some various social media outlets. I do consider iTunes to be kind of on that end of the spectrum. They're not worldview agnostic, okay?

Selena: Nobody is. Nobody is. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I get technology as a gift. I get all that. We're using it right now. It's kind of worrisome. I don't worry because God is good and all that, I know He's sovereign, but I just know that we need to be aware and cognizant of the fact that this type of communication about the gospel, about saying, "Hey, the Bible is the truth. It's not just whatever we feel it is," that's not going to be possible forever. I really think there's going to be a time when that's not going to be welcome in places like iTunes and Spotify and whatnot.

So with that said, we're trying to be strategic in laying some of the [00:05:00] groundwork for independence. And one of the ways we're doing that is through patreon.com/fiercemarriage. Now, this is another thing. Patreon is there. It's in Silicon Valley. It's part of...but we're hoping that we can still leverage their platform to build a community of people to really keep this thing funded. And part of that is by keeping ads off, but also keeping the message unadulterated by, I don't know, agendas. Other than we just want to make God's Word and Him great in marriages.

So anyway, we'd love to partner with you. A long pitch. We'd love to partner with you on Patreon. If that's something God is leading you to do, just go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. There are lots of benefits like free books, free rings. There's even an online course that we just rolled out. Well, it's in beta right now. So it's not available now. But it will be in January. Point is there stuff there to be had. Okay. Let's do the talk.

Selena: Okay. Well, I just want to say real quickly, we are in the middle of our beta right now. So the trial run of this Gospel-centered marriage course. We could use your prayers, friends. We could use your prayers, and just...I think just prayers. Because we want it to be valuable, but we're...

Ryan: We had some serious technical difficulties.

Selena: We did. And it was a little disheartening I think. It was the sound.

Ryan: It really did like take the wind out of my sails. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Like we're doing Zoom calls, and we're talking with a big group of people, and we're teaching and we're going through different assignments and whatnot. So they're going through this beta course, and they're also going to be giving us feedback as well. However, when all you have is sound and the sound is muddled, I mean, talk about the worst thing that could ever happen. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yeah. So we're going to go through and rerecord the first beta session so that people who are late to the game...

Selena: But I'm not surprised. It's obvious, there's going to be a need here. There is a need here. There's some spiritual warfare trying to happen and God is good. And we're just resting in His sovereignty and His capability to get through technology no matter what. So we could just use prayers all around.

Ryan: Again, it's gospel-centered marriage. It's not just a course. Selena said the word course. It's actually like an ecosystem of...there's a main course and then there's mini supplemental courses that will be a part of it. How many Zoom calls have we done and we've never had a problem? And then now when we do this, it's our first one...

Selena: The one we're talking about what gospel-centered marriage actually means what that looks like.

Ryan: Yeah, the devil. *[both chuckles]*

- Selena:** The devil is in the computer. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** It's the devil. Anyway.
- Selena:** Nope, we don't give him that much power. Anyways. That is good. So just your prayers for that would be greatly appreciated. Okay, so.
- Ryan:** Okay. Selena said, "Okay, what is God doing? And what do we need to share with the podcast audience? Because obviously, we want to be responding to God's leadership?" And I just thought immediately, He's been transforming us. And not only our habits, but because of the result of changed habits, which we'll get into how that happened, we're reading more than ever in God's Word.
- I was actually with a group of guys...Actually, no, we did a Q&A after the first session of beta and one of the gals said that she really appreciates Selena's transparency around anger. And I said, what's really cool is that while she's very transparent, kind of self-deprecating, I'm talking about you, watching you go through God's Word in this level of intensity, which I've never seen you do is transformed that aspect of your personality almost, in that you have more patients, you have more understanding, more empath for me, for our girls. I've noticed you just changed, transform. And I'm the beneficiary. I'm the frontline beneficiary of whatever heart transformation happens in my wife. It's so overt and obvious.
- Selena:** And God is good to me too because in those instances, I feel...not feel, but I know that I'm being obedient. And that kind of trumps the emotions that might be railing against what action I'm engaging in. So if I'm not feeling patient with the children, but I respond patiently, I feel that affirmation of "Okay, this is obedience. This is teaching them. This is modeling Christ. This is this." The affirmation is so much quicker and clear. Because I've been reading the Bible, I'm knowing the Lord, I'm understanding His purposes, and disciplining my children is much clear, it's much easier, it's much more rewarding, which are things you don't say about discipline often. *[chuckles]*
- And even just responding to them it can get so wearisome, right? And yes, I'm human. Ryan can tell you the last couple of days they've been a bit rough because our margin has been gone. It's been chipped away at by many things that are all good and worthy. But there's just been some holy tension here. And I've been trying to kind of navigate all of that.
- Ryan:** Well, what would normally happen in those cases is you [00:10:00] would feel almost a sense of indignation, because of the kid. They're overstepping their bounds or if somehow offended you. So I think what's happened is—and I'm

just kind of speculating here, we could dig further into this—but what's happened is that that sense of self-righteousness has been replaced or that sense of indignance of like, "It's not just I'm going to discipline you, but why should I even have to do this? It's not this just that I'm frustrated. But why can't you just..."

Selena: "Why can't you get your life together?" I don't say those things. But I think as parents we tend to think those things. We forget, right?

Ryan: You would have feelings and then you'd have feelings about your feelings. And you would say, "I'm mad. But I'm also mad because I shouldn't have to be mad. And I'm mad because I have to be mad right now."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And that to me has been supplanted or replaced with a deeper patience in this sense of like instructing your kids is honoring God.

Selena: Well, and all the narration that's happening in my own head, the voices, the replay of like, "You shouldn't talk to your kids like that. You should be more patient. You should..." Just that guilt—I wouldn't call it conviction. It's definitely guilt and shame—that has been muted much more.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: And truly God has just been working in my heart and in my mind, and my soul through lots of scripture reading. But I think it'd be good to just ask a few questions maybe. But I want to say that the reading was spurred on by community, whether that be online community and or face to face. I think it was a combination of both.

Ryan: I think this could fall into that...

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: ...into that same kind of purview, where you don't know the originator of this Bible plan that you're reading, you don't know her personally but you were able to be ministered to by God using her and her platform.

Selena: Yes. And people that I do know face to face.

Ryan: So, ladies and gentlemen, this could be your call. That's what I think what we're trying to say. What I'm trying to say is that this could be the thing that

God uses to catalyze a change in your affections for scripture, your desire to let it bear more weight more often in your life.

I want to start with this quote and then we're going to get into some questions that we can ask that might, I don't know, spur some thought. But this quote Martin Luther says, "Let the man who would hear God speak read holy scriptures." Let the man who would hear God speak read holy scriptures. Another quote I've heard, I can't remember who said it, but they said, "If you want to hear God's voice, read the Bible. If you want to hear God's voice out loud, read the Bible out loud."

We actually had a very lengthy debate in our little...we had a church gathering at a friend's house and me and three other guys were talking about how to communicate prayer with one of the guy's 7-year-old-son. For an hour we talked about how to do this. We talked about the nature of prayer, and what is Christian prayer.

One of the things that I always harp on, and I don't know if it's right, I think there's lots of room for grace in these conversations. But one conviction that I have is that God has given to us everything we need for life and godliness. He has given us His revelation. That the gift that it is to have God's revealed decree, His word, His law, we oftentimes forget that God didn't have to leave anything. He didn't have to send anything. He didn't have to give us His inerrant Word that is so rich, and self-verifying, and so widely accepted as a valid true, and accurate historical document. He didn't have to give us that. We take it for granted. We take it for granted.

So his son's question was, "I pray and I don't hear anything from God. I say the words and He doesn't say anything back." So we were talking through what it's like. Is He not listening? Does God ever speak in that way? If He does, He does in the Bible, He speaks in audible ways. He also speaks in inaudible ways. How does He speak to the life of a Christian nowadays? So I always fall back on yes, there are exceptions to the rule and there are times when God will reveal something to us that is not extra-biblical, but it's not at while we're reading God's Word. Does that make sense?

But one of the things we landed on is that He would never give us anything that's not already in His Word. That's called special knowledge. That's what cults come from. Hidden knowledge, that's where cults come from. God would never say anything that's outside of His word to us, because it has to be verified by His Word. So in a lot of ways, it is His word. I think the Holy Spirit's gracious and impressing upon us or unearthing truth in His Word that we have never seen that. Maybe there's a verse sitting in our heart somewhere in a

corner of our hearts and... Anyway, the whole point is that God's Word is the means through which we hear from Him.

Selena: Well, I will say, you know, we are talking about one of the best things you can do in your marriage is [00:15:00] to read scripture in bulk together. And I think one of the biggest things that we've seen is that once we started reading...we aren't reading the same plans. We're doing different plans, but we're reading a lot of Scripture, and I'll define that in a minute, but we were also seeing all these different threads throughout our days and through our life together overall but through our days...I can mention, hey, I literally was reading Leviticus, but we're done with that, and he's been learning about like Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy in seminary.

So the Lord is so gracious. And you may not be in seminary, right? You may just be reading your Bible, which is so great. But there's themes. God is so good and gracious to reveal Himself to us to see the bigness of covenant, right? The grandiose thing that it is that binds us together and what that means, what that looks like, why God chose that way to interact with His people. There's so much rich meaning, and He's so faithful to show us that.

So I guess just to encourage you that scripture and prayer, doing it in bulk...there really is nothing better that you can be doing together. Maybe you're just feeling discouraged, you're frustrated, you're feeling alone in your marriages, these are messages we get daily, folks. That we're searching, we can't connect, I don't know how to love my spouse because they're just unlovable, I feel very alone in my marriage, I feel like there's infidelity happening, or there's an addiction happening. I don't know what to do.

And are we saying go read your Bible? Absolutely. That should be one of the first biggest and most things that you should be doing. Is that the only thing we should be doing in those extreme cases? Probably not. Because the Bible does say for us to get wisdom and get understanding, do that with counselors and seek outside counsel for the struggles that you're facing. These are not Selena and Ryan's ideas. These are things that we have dug up in the Word. And God is so good in that. So kind of our experience in this whole...again, we grew up in the Bible...

Ryan: I want to pause—I'm sorry—on that. These questions, we're trying to see, okay, you asked: do you feel discouraged, frustrated, or alone in your marriage? Another question, I don't think you asked it, but, are you searching for the next thing that will make you feel better about yourself?

Selena: Yeah. I mean, I was just kind of [inaudible] marriage.

Ryan: Are you struggling to know what it means to love your spouse because they seem unlovable? These questions beg more questions about the role of scripture in the Christian life? And that's what I want to push back on just for a minute. We tend to treat scripture like it's a pill to be swallowed when we had a headache and when we need a remedy. When there's a sickness felt, "Let's go to the remedy." Some that's true, in a sense. But it's more than that. That's what I'm trying to....

Selena: The Bible is life.

Ryan: The Bible is not a series of incantations to fix what ails us. It's not that you guys. It is God's revealed, decree, His word, His very character, His very—

Selena: It's about Him, not us.

Ryan: It is about Him. It chronologs the story of His redemption of his chosen people because He wants to show us how loving He is and how powerful He is.

Selena: He wants to define love for us.

Ryan: So those truths of Scripture they end up having a medicinal effect because the more we realize God is in control, the more peace we have. There is a sense that we get something from. I'm not saying we'll get things from it. That's not it's purpose.

Selena: I think we don't realize how dry and thirsty our souls are. Like we turn on this little faucet, we get a little drip and like, "Oh, yeah, that's good. Man, it feels better." But until we just turn on the faucet full blast and are just being washed over, we don't realize how dry and how lifeless we are and how we think we're surviving. We may even think we're thriving. But until you turn on that faucet, hundred percent, and you're diving in. And we're going to define what it means right now to bulk read your Bible. What does that mean? What does that mean? It means minimum of five chapters per day, or and or 30 plus minutes per day. Minimum. Minimum.

Ryan: You're just diving right in.

Selena: Well, sort of.

Ryan: Bulk versus what? I think is what—

Selena: Bulk versus...Okay.

- Ryan:** You just jumped like four steps down the line. *[Selena chuckles]* We say to a couple, "Hey, you should read your Bible together." They say, "Yeah, we should. Let's do it. All right. Let's grab Jesus Calling. [00:20:00] Let's read..." Okay?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** She gave me the uhhh. You pick that up, like bestselling book for 3800 years. Like it's been sold 7 billion copies. Everyone knows this book. You read a verse and then she's got, "Jesus is saying this to you. And oh, this is so great." And we're patting each other on the back, we read our Bible together, we are awesome.
- Selena:** "Gosh, I feel connected."
- Ryan:** "Gosh, I feel so connected to my spouse."
- Selena:** "On to the next thing."
- Ryan:** "Okay, check. Let's go to the next thing." And so you're saying something different right now. Okay, to go through another scenario. A couple hears us, Ryan and Selena say, "Hey, they said we should read our Bible." Husband, wife, let's read our Bible Genesis 1. And we're going to do a chapter a day for the rest of our lives. It's going to be awesome. So you start doing that.
- Selena:** Then you hit Leviticus and everything dies. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I heard one scholar say Leviticus is the place where Bible reading plans go to die.
- Selena:** But if we know the purpose behind it, the bigger picture, if we understand even some of the small stuff, guys, I'm telling you, I don't think I've been more encouraged by the word than I have been in reading Leviticus, and challenged.
- Ryan:** So we before we get into the bulk thing, which Selena already mentioned...
- Selena:** I'm jumping, people. You know this. Except for one that's jumping off boats into cold water.
- Ryan:** You got to practice salesmanship here. There's a warming up process. The different ways of reading scripture, we've mentioned these in the past, or, at least in our own lives, we've seen these three ways. There is bulk, which Selena mentioned. There's also for deep study. So you've got think in terms of depth

and breadth. Bulk is breath. You just want to travel a long distance pretty quickly. You're getting the grand narrative in your guts.

Then there's the depth, where I might take the first part of a verse or a few chapters and go into depth. I think I spent yesterday morning through the entire book of Ezra, but I spent an hour because I was like, "What is happening? There's all these different kings, and there's Persia and there's Babylon and there's..." So there's more study there and there's varying degrees of depth.

Then finally, there's memorization, which is locking small bits of Scripture away in your heart, in your mind. So we're talking about bulk today because I do feel like bulking on scripture has very sanctifying effect.

Selena: I would say that if we're being transparent here, we've never done this in our marriage. In our 17 years of marriage...

Ryan: Together.

Selena: ...I don't think we've done this together and read bulks of Scripture. Either one of us has been doing it at a time. But we've never really done it together. And I know that sounds crazy. And having young kids and doing all the beta and doing all the things, sometimes it sounds crazy when you look at it. But now I'm just like, "I don't know how I can live a day without it." I mean, John Piper...wasn't it him that said: visit other books, but live in the Bible?

Ryan: I watched it on Spurgeon.

Selena: Okay. Both wise guys.

Ryan: Just couple of [inaudible]

Selena: It's fine. It's fine. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: They're both wise.

Selena: Both wise.

Ryan: I think what the difference is now is when we say doing this together, you might be saying, "Well, this isn't marriage material. They're just talking about reading the Bible and marriage is just an excuse." And by all means, yes, that's what we're saying. Like your marriage is the place where you can do this together and see firsthand the sanctifying effects of it. Not just in yourselves individually, but in your relationship, in your actual marriage.

- Selena:** We're being held accountable for our marriage and our families first to God. So I don't see why this would not be a marriage-like topic.
- Ryan:** This is just classic Frederick right now because we're not the people that you listen to get five tips all the time. Five tips for better sex life. Five tips for this. I think classically we tend to go this route where we'll just let's talk about the deep core bedrock of your relationship. And from there, you can handle the rest. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Go to your pastor.
- Ryan:** You are smart people, listeners. You know what to do
- Selena:** So our experience as of late is that we've started reading bulks of Scripture. Ryan's been reading it, I think, for seminary and because he's been in this guy's group that's been meeting together once a week reading and talking about scripture. I've been reading it because a lot of moms in our classical conversations community group...Well, I didn't know they were all redoing the same reading plan and then I found out and it feels just even that much more affirming and life-giving. But...
- Ryan:** To that, I am not doing it for seminary or because of this group. God is doing something and He put in me a hunger. So I started in Hebrews...
- Selena:** I'm just trying to paint a picture of kind of where it started.
- Ryan:** But I'm saying that it's on...
- Selena:** It's God.
- Ryan:** It's God. That's what I want to say. It's not Selena and Ryan decided we're going to do this thing. We are honestly just riding a wave that God pushed and began to roll. So I started Hebrews when we read Hebrews together like two months ago. I just carry it through the rest of the New Testament from there. You started this other plan after I think you dropped off for a few weeks. I'm in the last part of it of Revelation [00:25:00] right now. Actually, no, I finished Revelation. It was such a fog, you guys. That's a tough book. So finished Revelation which by the way, the ending is awesome. I was like, "What am I going to read now?" So I read 2 Peter through in a day, 1 and 2. 1 and 2 Peter. And then Ezra. So all this to say it's not because we just decided. If you're listening to this, I think the first step is to pray that God put that hunger in your guts.

- Selena:** Well, yes and no, because...Yes, definitely pray and ask for that hunger. But you know what, there's an obedience aspect to it as well even when you don't feel like it, even if the hunger is not there. The Hunger is there; you just haven't identified it yet.
- Ryan:** Wait a second. Isn't that legalism?
- Selena:** Nope.
- Ryan:** Isn't that being legalistic?
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** How can you demand that I stick to a schedule. That's being legalistic.
- Selena:** I'm not demanding that.
- Ryan:** I'm being facetious.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** I want to speak to that for a second. Sorry, you've got your agenda here.
- Selena:** No, I think I want to...Well, yes. Go ahead. Go ahead.
- Ryan:** Selena, what you're saying is it's okay to force yourself to fight your flesh...
- Selena:** Die to yourself.
- Ryan:** ...to die to your flesh...
- Selena:** Is that not what Jesus did?
- Ryan:** ...to read scripture? Now, legalism is saying if I don't read my scripture, I'm not going to heaven. That's legalism.
- Selena:** Did I say that? *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Sanctification and self-discipline and self-control that's born of the Holy Spirit is the result of...
- Selena:** And it's glorifying to God.
- Ryan:** ...of salvation.

- Selena:** Yes. And it's glorifying to God. And we are called to glorify God. Okay.
- Ryan:** It's good to push yourself in this stuff.
- Selena:** Just jump on the ship, people. *[both laughing]* Come on. Okay? Again, we're doing different reading plans. Guys, it's been this hunger. Again, the wave of community has been reading it. We've been reading together. It's just like this affirmation. I feel like there's this momentum that the Lord is just creating among the people that we are around right now. And it's so awesome. And God is so good. And I guarantee you that you start reading, other people start reading...just is this momentum effect.
- Kind of one of the byproducts that we've been seeing in our marriage is that we've naturally been giving up other things that aren't necessarily bad, but for better things. So at night, the kids have been in bed, like we're pushing for that eight o'clock bedtime so that we can sit and talk and connect. Typically, we would sit, talk a little bit, and then turn on a show. Nothing bad about that. But honestly, that was just kind of our default. We just kind of do it. And now we're sitting, we canceled some...
- Ryan:** Kids will Netflix because we're just sick of it.
- Selena:** Kids will Netflix. Because it's the worst. And we are sitting talking about the things of God, talking about what we're reading in Scripture, talking about the relationships that are in our lives that we're struggling with. We are connecting in deeper ways. It is leading us to more intimacy on every level, we'll just say that. There's been more peace, I think, just underlying in our hearts, more patience and grace with each other. And I'm not saying like we just read like three verses. Again, Scripture has just been watching over every aspect of our lives, our minds, our hearts, our souls.
- Ryan:** So to step back a little bit, we're not bragging. That's what I want to make clear.
- Selena:** Oh, no.
- Ryan:** We're testifying to the change that has happened. And honestly, we're sitting here on—
- Selena:** A little bit ashamed.

- Ryan:** A little bit ashamed. I said the other day, I was like, "What were we thinking not doing this earlier? What were we thinking that we weren't devoting more time to this?"
- Selena:** Opening our Bibles...
- Ryan:** Opening our Bibles more consistently...
- Selena:** ...for longer periods of time.
- Ryan:** ...it's borne fruit around our breakfast and dinner tables. We're reading the Bible every morning and night now with our kids. That's on me. That's on me. And God has been gracious and showing that to me.
- Selena:** Well, I used to be like, "Okay, we'll read the Bible like three times a week." I mean, you can never have too much scripture. Yes. But even getting in with it with our kids every day and not just talking about things of God, but opening His word, reading it together.
- Ryan:** I don't want this to come across as "Oh, look, they've just got it figured out." We're marveling and my jaws dropped at my own foolishness and God's faithfulness. And why now and thank you now and not later, but why not sooner? I'm thinking in my head and my heart. So we're hoping that this episode at least communicates the wonder of that.
- Selena:** Spur. A bur under your saddle.
- Ryan:** Just put that bur in your saddle.
- Selena:** That bur in your saddle.
- Ryan:** Just so you know, if you don't take the bur out now, it's going to hurt in like three miles, and you're going to take it out then. So you might as well take it out sooner before...
- Selena:** So again, scripture, guys, this is how we know God. This is how we learn about His character, His purpose, His purpose in our marriage, His purpose in our role as husband or wife or parent, or sister or brother. This is where we learned how to live our lives and how to be loving followers of Christ, how to speak truth with authority and grace and humility, to know that He is sovereign no matter what our struggle is, to honor Him [00:30:00] in the struggles that we face, to lean into Him, to bring glory through our obedience to Him, our obedience that goes above and beyond what our feelings are. It's God's revelation of Himself, His decree. It's our source of purpose and wisdom.

Ryan: There's a quote by Matthew Barrett. If you want to learn about the authority of Scripture, there's a book called *God's Word Alone*, Matthew Barrett. One of the quotes in it says, "Apart from God's written revelation, we have no access to Christ." Think about that. Apart from receiving, reading, accepting, letting it bear weight in our hearts, apart from all that, we have no access to Christ.

If we didn't have the Bible, we wouldn't have special revelation. That's what it is. And that's in contrast, with general revelation, which is Romans 1. I see the trees, I get that something big is out there, I get that something made this. I see a baby being born, I get that that's a miracle. That's general revelation. You just see God's fingerprints on His creation. In our own hearts, that old song, there's a God shaped hole, right? That's so corny. But that's the revelation. That's the general revelation, special revelation. God's word is it, is the thing that saves us. So without it, not only do we not hear all the things that you listed off, His decree, His character, His law, His will, all those good gracious things that He's chosen to reveal to us. But we don't even know Christ Himself. We don't know God Himself. We don't know how to be saved without God's Word.

So, in a lot of ways, this conversation is not just about a better marriage, it's about eternity. It's about knowing the God who saved us. It's about honoring Him, both now and into eternity and glorifying Him both now and into eternity. I just want to take a little sidebar there. Apart from the revealed Word of God, we would not know Christ.

Selena: Did you want to share something else?

Ryan: That's it.

Selena: Oh, good for you. Awesome. All right. I think we should just walk through a few kind of pros and cons about reading plans just to disseminate some of those thoughts and struggles we might already be having.

Ryan: You mean dispel? Dispel thoughts and struggles. Disseminate means you're broadcasting and kind of getting out into the masses.

Selena: I want to dispel. Disseminate the dispelling. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: You saved it. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Guys, *[inaudible]*

- Ryan:** No, no, it's all right. People give [inaudible]
- Selena:** I want to highlight but it's all by the grace of God.
- Ryan:** And editors. *[chuckles]* By the grace of editors.
- Selena:** Yes. One of the pros and cons about reading plans is...Well, let's go through this. There's different types of reading plans first. There's a chronological one.
- Ryan:** What is that?
- Selena:** Beginning to end the—
- Ryan:** Biblically timeline you mean?
- Selena:** Biblical timeline, yes.
- Ryan:** The Bible is not written chronologically.
- Selena:** Right. Sorry. I guess I just assumed people knew that. It's a good thing to say. So it's not written chronologically.
- Ryan:** Yeah. You'd have to have a plan to lead you through chronology.
- Selena:** Which there are a lot of plans even on the Bible app, all that, they have chronological plans that you can just go through. People have already put them together for you. Super awesome. There's groups of people that you can read the Bible with. So I'm actually doing the Rachel Jankovic's "To the Word." I don't know if she's the one that actually did it. She's the one that it's on her kind of IG stuff. What's the name of the church? Christ Church I think in Moscow. They're putting out on that. So that's the one I've been doing.
- There's also different plans that are kind of like looping plans. So you read certain chapters, then you loop back to other ones. So you're always just progressing through the Bible. You talked about consideration for genre. Genre, sorry.
- Ryan:** Genre.
- Selena:** Genre.
- Ryan:** I think one of the mistakes early Bible readers, people that are new to kind of a bulk mentality, one of the mistakes they make is you will go hard at the

beginning, and you'll go hard into what's historical narrative and law. Those things are great. We need them, those areas of the Bible. But in terms of a baby Christian life, they can be rather daunting and hard to understand, and you feel like you're just reading words that means nothing.

Selena: Yeah, it feels irrelevant.

Ryan: I can now read Genesis 15, which is a whole...

Selena: Lineage or genealogy.

Ryan: Genesis 15 is Abrahamic covenant, how God walked smoking pot through the carcasses. Which by the way, that'll be a teaser for you if you're curious. I can read that now and my mind is blown. I could spend a week there and my mind is blown. If I just read that for the first time not knowing anything that you read in New Testament...

Selena: And I still feel like that's the beauty of the Bible, too I think.

Ryan: So the point is, recognize genres [00:35:00] and use your mind and your and wisdom around navigating through those. Some genres to consider...there are different kind of breakdowns of these, but here's some ideas. Historical narrative. That would be the story of God's people. Things like 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings Chronicles. Even some of the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of the Bible fall in this genre. Some of those also fall into law, which is another genre, which is God's revealed way of things for His people, for Israel. Leviticus, Deuteronomy are the books of law. Deuteronomy literally means the second law or the second iteration of the same law Deuteronomos. And then there's apocalyptic literature, which would be parts of Daniel, obviously, Revelation. The apocalypse. There's Prophetic books, and there's major, minor prophets.

Selena: Poetic books.

Ryan: Poetic book: Psalms, books of wisdom, Proverbs. And then there's a narrative, which could also be Acts and the Gospels. Then there's the epistles, which the epistles is just a word for letters written by Paul, Peter, and John and I think a few others.

Selena: Awesome. Love that.

Ryan: Now, how does that actually bear weight on your reading plan? Don't just read apocalyptic literature. All right. Get into some of the epistles because those are letters to early believers. That's us, by the way, like in the grand scheme

of things that were the church in that sense. We always recommend Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians.

Selena: I think there are plans out there that might be more user friendly from the beginning.

Ryan: But if you go into one genre too heavily, it tends to imbalance your view and your...I know that if I'm reading Psalms, I feel great, but there's not a lot of depth there. But psalms lend themselves to like feeling and gaining your emotion riled up and identifying with the author. I feel like if I just read Proverbs, it feels like I'm living very militantly.

Selena: Sure. You got to be careful with those feelings, too because, again, I think we need to...

Ryan: They're valid.

Selena: They are valid.

Ryan: I'm not saying you stop reading. I'm saying you say, "Okay, I'm going to temper Proverbs with some of the epistles and maybe some of the Gospels

Selena: Right. Right. Which is why a reading plan can be very beneficial. Because many, many, many, many, many, many smart people ahead of us have written these things and come together as big groups because they have seen the need. So chronological, there's reading groups, there's looping, there's genre. I keep saying genres I don't why.

Ryan: We're on 1 John right now. *[both chuckles]* So jonra.

Selena: I in 2 John. Second John.

Ryan: Smugness.

Selena: It's smugness. My reading plan right now is a nine-month plan through the Bible. So it's a minimum of about six chapters a day, which is awesome. I did start out with Psalm 19. So that was the first reading. So it's not like six chapters.

Ryan: Which is massive.

Selena: Yeah, that's like over 100 verses. So kind of some pros and cons about reading plans I think the amount of time...Again, we're talking about bulk here. So the amount of time is important to recognize. I don't know that you could be

spending your time doing anything better—I'll just argue that—than reading your Bible. So yes, it's plus and minus.

How does that look in my day when it's crazy? It looks like maybe in the morning before the baby wakes up, I can read a few verses and then I have to put it down. And maybe at naptime I can pick it back up. Or maybe when I'm doing the dishes at night I can turn it on audibly. I know that listening to it is different than reading it, but sometimes when I'm in Leviticus or Numbers or Deuteronomy listening to it actually gives me more of an idea of what is happening. Hearing it read aloud to me is very encouraging.

Ryan: You can get choked up on some of the names too.

Selena: Oh, gosh, yeah.

Ryan: It just helps you get through it. And you can know full well that if you were able to take the time and study, that those names would make sense.

Selena: Which is so beautiful, right? We're never going to grow out of reading and knowing and understanding the Bible and God's Word. Another pro and con is falling behind can feel discouraging. I think we've all had that. We've all fallen behind. And there's a catchup day or a rest day or whatever. But I think there's a good part of this feeling discouraged, right?

Ryan: Yeah. I mean, that's why you have the plan. So if you deviate from the plan, you're going to feel like you deviated from the plan. And I think the key in that instance is to recognize, "Okay, I missed it. Why did I miss it? I was too busy today. I didn't prioritize it today. Or I fell asleep." Or whatever that is. And you just say, "Okay, well, I'm just going to hop back on the wagon and I'm going to just dive right in where I left off." And not get lost in that "Oh, I got to read twice as much today." No, just pick up where you left off. You missed a day. That's grace. Now get back on it, and God is [inaudible].

Selena: But I also do think that it's okay to feel some of those feelings. We shouldn't just be like, "Oh, it's okay. I'm still a good person," which that's a huge, bad phrase in itself.

Ryan: Nobody is saying that though. Nobody's [00:40:00] saying that they're...

Selena: No. But I'm saying that some people it's easy for us to kind of wash over and just gloss over like, "Oops, didn't read it." I guess I just want there to be some element of conviction there and allowing space for the Holy Spirit to walk us through those feelings and not just ignore them I guess.

- Ryan:** Conviction is productive; shame is not.
- Selena:** There it is. Right there.
- Ryan:** So if you're feeling shame and condemnation, that's not yours to carry. Conviction is good. But just get back on your feet. That's the thing. You're not going to hell. Jesus still loves you. You're still on track. Just get back to the Bible. Just start reading again. To me, that's helpful to hear.
- Selena:** Yeah, absolutely. A pro. I don't think it really has a con but the habit building, that happens when you are in a reading plan. I think the first couple of weeks can tend to be hard. Like anything new, or that's kind of out of your rhythm, it's difficult. But the more you do it...Honestly, I've been in there for two months now and I can't do it without it. I can't go a day without it now. It just feels like there's this gaping hole and I need to go to God's Word every day, every day, every day. You start to recognize the hunger. You start to recognize the shortcomings and how much we just need God's Word.
- Ryan:** I remember two months ago when you were diving into this, and you were just like, "I feel like I need to do this. I feel like I need to." And you're like, "But I just don't know how I'm going to make it happen." And I remember distinctly saying to you, "It'll get easier. You'll get stronger. Just like lifting weights, just like anything else, you will get stronger, your tolerance will rise and you'll feel like this is now the bar as opposed to..." Which at the time, I don't think you were doing any Bible reading. It was very, very minimal.
- Selena:** I was just trying to get through the Gospels to know Jesus more and more. But it was like a chapter a day maybe and just feeling like I was just struggling. It meant that the first thing that I picked up to read had to be the Bible. And that's just how it is. And I'm so grateful for that.
- Ryan:** Perfect analogy, quickly, is you went for a run yesterday. And today, you're like, "I'm so sore."
- Selena:** Guys' it's been a while. I think I ran last week once. That was two weeks ago.
- Ryan:** But you'll get stronger. And anything you start like that it's going to be rough...
- Selena:** It was good.
- Ryan:** ...but you learn and grow.
- Selena:** Yes.

Ryan: But so often we give up because you're like, "Yeah, I don't want to be sore like that ever again."

Selena: We don't push through to actually—

Ryan: To get through to the growth.

Ryan: The life-giving and the growth and the fruit. I think you wanted to talk real quick. So we topical and book studies. I think you already talked about this. And just going through short stuff is also good to go deep. But right now we're just talking about bulk and the benefits of that.

Overarching themes in Scripture become clear also. I think I'm seeing much more of the character of God. The reverence that's been lost, I think, even by us as Christians for God, for the last days, for being in His presence, wholly and completely. I mean, it's massive. It's massive. And there's just so much in this world that is trying to dilute and distract, and just dismiss this whole idea, calling it a fairy tale or something that's not actually going to happen, and trying to convince our hearts and our minds of this. And the more I'm in it, the more I am excited for that day. The one thing you want to talk about was devotionals.

Ryan: Yeah. Okay. They have their place. We've written five of them. We've written five devotionals. We still want people to read those. We're not going to pull them off the shelves. But here's the thing with devotionals is they tend to be really topical. We write marriage devotionals that are around prayer and around pursuit and around being too as one. But the devotional in itself is milk. It's not steak. It's milk. If someone is bottle feeding you, namely, whoever's written it, taking a verse, talking through it, and helping you process and apply it. And that's all really good.

The problem is you sit down for dinner, and you just give someone a huge glass of milk and that's all they have, they're going to be hungry in like a half-hour. They're going to have to go to the bathroom pee *[both chuckles]* in case you're wondering.

Selena: Number one or number two?

Ryan: Number one. But if you sit down to dinner and you say, "Here's the steak. It's the main course. Also, milk is awesome and you can have some of that. And here's some dessert and it's a main course," you'll be sustained with that. That is a meal. That is something that will feed your soul and that is something that will tie you over until the next meal. You can't ever stop eating meals. So I think of it as diluted word. And that has a pejorative sort of tone to it.

Selena: Connotation.

Ryan: Connotation. Thank you.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: But it can be diluted. Like a lot of times we read paraphrased scriptures and things. It's like, yeah, guys, we got to trust God's Word to do what God's Word does. And that's why we submit to it, we invest. We don't just spend our time reading God's Word, we invest our time. We invest more than a lot of times we have to spend. [00:45:00] A lot of times we just take our disposable time and we just sprinkle it a little bit here and there. A little bit on Netflix, a little bit on the internet, a little bit on God's word maybe, and whatever.

So we're saying if you only a little bit to give, devote it to God's Word. Devotionals aren't necessarily your actual devotions. So devotionals, I should say. So we're a bit radical in that I think. Maybe not. I don't know. I feel like that's off the mainline of Christian kind of popular thinking. Devotionals can replace your study of God's Word. We just reject that. We reject that. You need the raw Word of God more than anything else. Devotionals are great for supplementing or introducing the truths of God. Okay?

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: All right. So we talked through those types of reading plans. So, why should we read our Bibles? Ultimately to glorify God. Have we even brought scripture into this yet? *[chuckles]*

Selena: I'm pretty sure I did, but...

Ryan: Hebrews 4:12.

Selena: Got to read it.

Ryan: For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

It's so ironic. *[both laughs]*

Selena: I had that right at the top in the beginning.

Ryan: We just gloss over.

Selena: We were so excited to talk about the Bible; we didn't even read the Bible.

Ryan: So the benefits of reading your Bible. It's a great thing to say we don't read the Bible because of its benefits. We read it because it's how we know God. We read it because we want to know God and He has given it to us to know Him by. So that's the benefit of reading the Bible. *[Selena laughs]* How does it actually change our marriage? Well, it softens our heart. It is God's Word. If we submit ourselves to it, we are humbled and we grow in our fear of the Lord. Fear the Lord not being afraid. We are afraid of God, because He's God, we're not. But a fear in that reverence for what He said and who He is and who He has said we are to be in light of what He has done, that grows and humbles us. It sanctifies us.

What happens when you're humbled and sanctified in marriage? Does marriage get better or worse? It gets better. It gets a lot better. *[Selena chuckles]* Will it get worse before it gets better? Maybe, especially if you've been living in sin, and especially if you've been hiding sin, and you know that now you need to confess the sin. That's going to be hard. But you know what? Feeling hard doesn't mean it's not getting better.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Sometimes something feels hard because it's getting better, *[laughing]* and you're no longer avoiding...Selena, you're terrible. *[both laughing]* Goodness. Sometimes things feel difficult because they're getting better. How's that? Weirdo. *[both laughing]* Okay. So the point I'm trying to make is that being humbled by God's word, and letting it bear its weight on our lives is going to sanctify us, which will make our marriage [inaudible].

Selena: Well, I want to dispel this idea that reading our Bible is going to eliminate all of our problems and feelings of frustration and all of that. Definitely not. I mean, some of it is a byproduct, yes. We can alleviate some of that our quarrels and fights and conflicts just simply by doing what He does in our hearts, softening them, giving us more patience. But sometimes there are external struggles that are causing us stress, causing us anxiety. And we just need to honor God and bring Him glory and how we get through them, how we are stewarding these hard times.

You said the chief end of man was that catechism. What is the chief end of man? It's to glorify God. And how do we glorify Him? Through our obedience, through knowing what faith is and who it comes from, knowing the motivations for why we're trying to reconcile with our husband or reconcile for you to me. Because God is a God of reconciliation. These are his ways. The world is very different. If you're in the world and you have no plumb line of God and His word and morality, that's not going to be your response. Your response is going to be like, "You hurt me. Cut! We're done. Through! I don't need to talk to you. I'm going to block you. I'm going to...whatever."

Ryan: Cancel you.

Selena: Yes. *[sighs]* So knowing that we always belong to Him, we have the means to glorify Him daily in how we face these challenges. We have the means. God has given us...

Ryan: That's powerful.

Selena: ...the means. And we don't have to be perfect. Our house doesn't have to be clean, just talking to myself. Things don't have to be in order for us to experience God's goodness, His fullness, His grace in our lives. It's often in those moments and in our daily lives where I feel like knowing Him becomes more...visceral? That would be the right word?

Ryan: Sure.

Selena: Just more augmented. Like His goodness is glowing [00:50:01] and it's bright, and you can see it and experience it.

Ryan: So I mean, again, talking through tangible, like, what are the benefits of reading?

Selena: I mean, these are a few of...

Ryan: So chicky to say that and so disorienting to say that. But the bottom line is that what benefits don't come by being under God's Word and being in God's Word? One of the things we have here...you modeled it to each other. When I see Selena reading the Word, I feel sweet conviction in the fact that I want to lead her well. There's almost this one upmanship that is, I think, really healthy in that. There are times when that's more intense than others. I think also modeling it for your kids is really important. We want our kids to grow up with memories of gathering around scripture not just around Easter and Christmas, but all the time.

Selena: Memories, but it's a habit that's formed in their life at a very young age. Reading the Bible...

Ryan: I think in terms of memories, but that hopefully by God's grace will translate into their own values and in their own habits. So what benefits can't be had? I guess there aren't many things. There's no detractors to reading God's Word. There's no cons to it. One of the cons, I will say is that, given the volume we've been reading, I'm actually falling way behind in my seminary reading. It's just not as interesting.

Selena: What did I tell you to tell your professors? *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I fall behind them.

Selena: Because I'm reading the Bible. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Ironically, the course I'm in right now is Bible survey.

Selena: Lots of irony happening over here.

Ryan: I'm reading the Bible but not getting the material. Anyway, that could be a con but I'll put that con onto work or something later. *[Selena chuckles]* I'll blow off work or *[inaudible]*. So a couple's conversation challenge. Read your Bible. That's it. I think, tangibly speaking, think about what kind of plan would work for you. And here's the challenge. The honest challenge is think in terms of bulk. So you're going to want to get through the Bible in a period of time. Nine months to 18 months I think is a very reasonable period of time to get to the Bible from intensity levels. Eighteen months to two years is not very intense reading plan. And that's fine.

What then I would encourage you to do is after two months of doing that, revisit it. And maybe think about upping the ante a little bit thing.

Selena: I think Tim Challie has a light reading where you can start to like...the obsessive reader. So there's different reading plans that he's kind of laid out, which is pretty helpful.

Ryan: Do a search on Google "Challie's Bible reading plan" and that will come up.

Selena: There is one more thing I wanted to say about reading together. If you can make the time in the morning, if your schedules allow, or at night, read together, that's awesome. Even read aloud together if you want. But the thing is, is that you are reading...Ryan and I read it at different times of the day just

because of the way our days look. But we always have a touchpoint at some point in the day where we're talking about it.

Ryan: And we're not reading the same thing.

Selena: That's what I mean. Yes.

Ryan: So together doesn't mean you're reading the same thing.

Selena: Not necessarily.

Ryan: It just mean that you're both valuing the same thing.

Selena: But you can. Yes, yes.

Ryan: I read Ezra and parts of 2 Chronicles. And you're in?

Selena: Numbers and 1 and 2 John.

Ryan: And I'm just finishing up Peter and Revelation. So the point is, is that we're reading swaths of Scripture alongside one another. The swaths are not the same. And then when we get together, we talk through that and I listen and we process. Actually, we mull over Leviticus was really hard. So we talked and got a lot of good conversations. So that's the challenge.

Selena: Yeah, yeah. So they can be the same swath. But if they're not, that's great, too.

Ryan: So take that to your spouse and say, "Hey, I think we should think about this, reading in bulk, maybe revamping our devotional strategy. Here's a few reading plans that I think could work for us. Let's spend a week maybe researching and praying about this and then committing to it." And then I would just recommend that you give yourself at least a month before slowing anything down and then reevaluate after a month or two.

Selena: Around six weeks. I'd say six weeks.

Ryan: Okay. All right. Let me pray.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Lord, thank you for your word that you have revealed yourself to us, that you've given us this gift of your revelation, and it is good for our salvation. It's good for knowing your character. It's good for honoring you. It's good for obeying you and being close to you. And you have drawn near to us. So I pray

that you would well up in us and in the listeners of this podcast. Well up in us a serious, deep desire to know you through your Word, to devote ourselves to the reading of your Word and to the study of your scriptures.

God, I pray for the wife who's feeling discouraged. She's hearing this and thinking, "There's no way my husband's going to buy into this." I pray that you give her hope and your heart-changing power, Holy Spirit. I pray for the husband who feels like he's lost the ability to lead his wife. That there's no way that she would go alongside him in a journey like this. I pray that you give him boldness and courage to lead her with integrity and with conviction and with clarity and that you would change hearts, you would soften hearts through the reading of Scripture, you would soften our hearts and the hearts of our spouses. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, ladies and gentlemen, thanks for tuning in to the Fierce Marriage podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:55:34] <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

- Scripture references:
 - Hebrews 4:12, ESV

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