

## EMOTIONAL LUST AND ESCAPISM

<https://fiercemarriage.com/emotional-lust-and-escapism>

[00:00:00]

**Ryan:** I think in the church we spent a good deal of time talking about lust in terms of pornography, and kind of a physical lust. But how often have we talked about emotional lust? To me that's a novel kind of concept to explore. And just in our talking about this over coffee, you and I, I feel like there's just so much to be examined there, so much that can point us to our need for the gospel to shine its bright light in those dim areas of our hearts and our minds.

**Selena:** Yeah, there's places that it's easy to gloss over some of these...they might look like pebbles, but the more you examine them, you realize they're sharp rocks ready to just destroy you.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Wow. Today, we're tackling the topic of emotional lust and namely, escapism and how we escape our reality, and what the implications of that for how we come back to our reality. So it should be a good conversation, and we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:05] <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.

**[00:01:38]** <podcast begins>

**Ryan:** This topic actually came to us through one of our amazing Patreons. So Sierra, thank you for asking this question. It actually stirred a lot of conversation in our hearts. You've actually asked it almost a month ago.

**Selena:** I thought it was longer than that. And we had just kind of been needing to...we had to get through a series of counseling. And then we just kept coming back to this question. We kept mulling it over and just the timing was like, "God's still doing something. We're more still praying about this. How can we really approach this?" And we decided to jump in. I don't think you're ever prepared right to jump in and talk about all the things. But we did. And it was great. There's some serious truth that needs to be dug up here and seen and brought to light and put the lights shining on it because it is very instructive. Sorry. You want to go a different way with that?

**Ryan:** No, no, no, that's fine. That's fine. I think it's a good opportunity to remind our listeners of Patreon. That's how this podcast continues to be is through the faithful partnership with our Patreons. We have about 320 or so patreons.

**Selena:** Wow. Praise God!

**Ryan:** I would love to get to the 400 mark by the end of the year. I did a little calculating. If just like point 0.007% of our weekly listenership decided to become a Patreon, we would meet that goal.

**Selena:** Nice.

**Ryan:** And it's important because it keeps us kind of more independent, right?

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** It's listener funded. We're not reliant on advertisers or specific, kind of...I don't know. We're not reliant on anyone but the Lord and the people He leads to partner with us. So if He's leading you to partner with us, we would be honored and we'd love to meet you on Patreon. So go to [patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://patreon.com/fiercemarriage).

Actually, we do early releases there, you get free books, you get free rings, depending on your level, you get free access to our online course ecosystem, which is currently in beta but will be released in early next year. So there's a lot to be gained. But don't do it because of that; do it because the Lord is leading you to partner with us in this message of gospel-centered marriage.

Other than that, if you've been listening for any period of time and we've helped you, we would appreciate a review and a rating on iTunes. So at the end of this episode, make sure you take a few extra seconds to go there, leave a rating, and write a one-sentence review. It would mean the world to us and it helps others as well.

Okay. As we were brainstorming and just discussing this idea of emotional lust, it started to materialize, or at least show us some patterns. Namely, the pattern of escapism. We tend to put kind of men and women in these brash categories. So men are purely physical, they're very visual, and they deal with physical lust. I don't think that's necessarily...those lines aren't crystal clear. In general, we think women deal with emotional lust. Physically they're kind of less inclined to fall into those categories. I think that's probably generally the case.

So as we're thinking about emotional lust, we are contrasting it with: what drives men to pornography? What drives men to that medium for their satisfaction? [00:05:00] What's at play there? Granted, huge question. At the very bottom of it, it's our sin nature. We distort a good thing and use it to our evil ends. Sex is inherently a good thing. God created it as a good thing. Having a desire for your wife is a good thing. Being sexually attracted to the opposite sex is a good thing. Obviously within marriage, that's where that's fulfilled. It's where you find that final fulfillment or that consummation of what it's all meant to do is create this special bond between a husband and a wife to result in a special sort of fruitfulness, namely, having kids and perpetuating the gospel through how we disciple our kids.

So those things are all really good. But what we do is we take an intrinsically good thing, and we grab it, and we distort it kind of like Gollum with the ring or a Sméagol with the ring. And you chase after until it becomes precious in itself, and then you become enslaved by your own sin. You're enslaved by this twisted, good thing. Right?

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** So for men...Go ahead.

**Selena:** That enslaving I think gravitates us towards certain things. And I think you were about to say for men that tend to be porn, right? There's some realities that are broken, some emotional realities that might be broken, even maybe some physical realities that are just...There's these desires, the desires that you're talking about that God's given us sexually and emotionally, but there's some brokenness possibly there within your marriage. So that can often drive

us to...if it's left broken for a very long time, we want the quickest, the easiest way to kind of gratify those desires.

**Ryan:** Yeah. I mean, guys will gravitate toward porn because it's an addiction. There's those neural pathways have been blazed and trodden upon enough to where that's the easiest way to meet that need, right?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** That need being a sexual release. That need being that sense of sexual satisfaction, even emotional satisfaction. So you will gravitate toward that. Or there's, like you said, a crack in their marriage somewhere. I could either spend the next two weeks talking through this issue with my wife, or I could just go turn on the computer right now and like...

**Selena:** Yeah. For women, we have some of the same desires. Emotionally, physically, we want to feel close, we want to have that connectedness. But again, there may be some brokenness in those areas. So if, again, it's left for a long time, there's a long period of just disconnect, we want to escape that reality because it's unpleasant. It doesn't feel good. I don't like it. Everything about it just grates against me. There's different ways that we escape, I think, as women.

Sierra, you said, she wrote in and talked about how Hallmark movies might provide some of that emotional escape. Or it's also a source of some emotional lust. Before we go, talking about emotional lust, escapism, and emotional affairs and those kinds of things, let's define some of that before we kind of move forward. And you can jump in here.

**Ryan:** Okay.

**Selena:** But I think...

**Ryan:** Go ahead.

**Selena:** ...for most emotional lust, a working definition we've gone on with is results have continued sort of unchecked involvement in heart that desire something or not someone else other than your spouse. It's essentially wanting something that's not yours, I think, would be a safe definition to kind of move forward with in terms of emotional lust. So when you talk about emotional affairs, those in itself, obviously, are sinful and wrong.

When you talk about Hallmark movies, are those sinful and wrong? Well, we'll kind of digest that a little bit. I think them in and of themselves, you know, it's entertainment. But when we start looking to it to be our reality, there's this

cycle that starts to happen. So emotional lust is essentially wanting intimacy with someone on some level outside of your spouse.

**Ryan:** Right. Right. So anything extramarital intimately, it causes problems. We are designed for this one-flesh union. That's very physical. It's also very spiritual but also very emotional. And if that one-flesh union fails, or if for whatever reason, we are failing to find our contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction in that or it's failing to provide that, meaning that your marriage is not completely healthy, it's tempting to go outside of that boundary to find intimacy elsewhere. There's obviously physical affairs or intimacy outside of marriage. There's emotional affairs or emotional [00:10:00] intimacy outside of marriage.

And this is actually right in line with God's continual reprimand on His people, Israel and Judah. God's people early on, He said, "You horde yourselves out to the other gods, the other nations. You came underneath their rule instead of being under mine. Basically, you cheated on me. And that was the constant refrain. And that was the warning. And God, of course, being the faithful covenantal God that He is says, "Yet, once again, I will be your God and you will be my people."

So, in that same kind of sense, all right, we have a covenantal God, a covenantal nature, we are to reflect His covenantal nature within marriage. Anytime we step outside of that covenant and seek intimacy, and satisfaction anywhere else outside of our spouse that we're designed to experience with them, that's an affair. That's where lust comes in. You want all of the goods without any of the costs. Right?

**Selena:** Right. I think we're going to be breaking down this pretend cycle as what we're kind of calling it. There's these two realities. We have the emotional loss that can be sourced in this idea of pretending. In a movie or in social media, there's images that truly they're fictional, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but then you also have this kind of mythical pretend—lie. There's a half truth, and it's not a full truth that I can find this emotional connectedness with someone else outside of my marriage. So we're kind of debunking some of that in there.

**Ryan:** So, let's talk about escapism.

**Selena:** Yeah. In terms of?

**Ryan:** In terms of the cycle.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Okay. So what is escapism? In general, women deal with pornography addictions as well, but in general, this need to escape reality. Let's sit on this for a little bit. You have a real life. Okay, listener, you have a real-life that you are experiencing with good and bad. Hopefully more good than that. We live in a fallen world and we are ourselves in a fallen state. We are being redeemed. We've been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We're being sanctified continually. Our justification is bought and paid for, but it's already a reality that's not yet realized. Does that make sense? So there's a very sense real sense of brokenness here now.

In other words, just because you're a Christian, it doesn't mean you're going to have a perfect life. I think everybody knows that but I just want to make that clear, that we're not expecting that of you. And God is not expecting that of you. He's expecting us to look to Him. So when we have a reality that creates in our hearts a dissonance, a dissatisfaction...Okay, so you're in our marriage, and just use us as an example, the wish is that we would have closeness on every front. We'd be in unity, we'd have a healthy home life, you would feel fed and nurtured and cared for as a wife. If any of that's not true, you're going to have a dissonance. You're going to want something that you don't have.

**Selena:** Or you're not going to not like what you have first and then desire something that you don't have.

**Ryan:** Yes. Yes. So you're seeing a disconnect between what you desire. And it could be a good desire. It could be a great desire, but it's not your reality. So that's what escapism is, is we say, "Okay, I can't get that here, so I'm going to escape and I'm going to go to a pretend place."

**Selena:** "...that will fulfill me ideally. It's going to give me what I want."

**Ryan:** "So I'm going to pick up that novel, or I'm going to turn on Hallmark, or I'm going to get on social media and talk to an old boyfriend or an old friend, and I'm going to seek that emotional connection that I so deeply desire." I'm escaping my reality and retreating into a more idealized place.

Now, this is where it gets really tricky. Because in a pretend world, nothing is real. Nothing's real. There's elements and hints of reality, but it's not real. Like if you're watching a movie on Hallmark, it's going to have real actors, it's going to have real cars and real scenes and real nature and real stuff like that, but it's not actually real. Why is it not real? Because it's scripted. These people are on their best behavior, because it's all scripted. If you're talking to somebody on social media, [Selena chuckles] they're not your actual spouse. They're not actually in your life. They're idealized caricatures of themselves. You're not seeing them. You are seeing a version of them that is pretend. Especially if

you're not face to face with them. And even when you're face to face in those scenarios, so you think, "Okay, I'm just going to go have a totally platonic friend coffee..."

**Selena:** The fact that you're justifying it there, it says a lot.

**Ryan:** That's a red flag. And so you're going to go get coffee with this old friend and you're going to sit across the table and you're going to catch up. You're not getting real them. You're getting an update a highlight reel of their last 5, 10 years or whatever. And so, we go into this pretend place, and then what happens is we become attached. [00:15:00] For men, the attachment is very physiological. For women, you could say it's physiological because it's in the mind. But it's emotional in kind of a greater sense. You have the satisfaction that is now found. So I found what I'm looking for, men going to the screen, women are...again in general, now, I want to actualize that thing in my actual reality.

**Selena:** In other words, you're saying I want to impose this pretend fulfillment into my actual reality. I went to this place, my reality was broken, I am going to escape to this pretend place to get what I want, but now I want that to be my reality. So I'm going to start imposing that pretend de Ville onto my reality, onto my spouse. And what does that look like?

**Ryan:** Okay. I'm thinking of Hallmark movies. You admitted to me recently that you were...I had the girls. We went on a daddy-daughter adventure. We were gone...

**Selena:** Well, yeah, because I was helping throwing a baby shower, and it was going to be an all-day thing. And then he came home a bit later. I had read books. I read my Bible. I was just drained from all the things of reading, I was like, "Oh, I'll turn on a show as my last resort." [chuckles] And I watched a show that I liked a long time ago.

**Ryan:** It's a movie.

**Selena:** A movie. Can I name it?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Ever After. The action is just gratuitous and fine. But I watched it at such like teenager. It just brought about a lot of young Selena back. And I know it's going to happen. So I'm not sitting here just getting my heartstrings tugged at in many big ways. But I haven't watched a movie and I can't tell you how long just because our life is busy and honestly, I'd rather pick up a book right now.

But I watched it. Ryan came home and I was like, "Holy cow. I forgot how movies just grab your emotions and take them where they want to go. Not where you may necessarily want to go, but where they want to go." And I was just like, "Oh, this is crazy."

**Ryan:** That's the reason why I brought that up because you asked the question of how do you want to kind of deport or you...What's the word? Import from that pretend place. You want to take what's there and bring it into your actual reality. So what we had discussed was, okay, you're watching this romance unfold. It's scripted. It's jammed into 120 minutes...

**Selena:** It makes you think it's reality, right? This is how people actually...Sorry.

**Ryan:** You keep interrupting me. *[laughs]*

**Selena:** I'm so surprised by it still and I don't know why. It's so silly. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** It's designed to do that. Even the music that plays and the lines that prints it's giving are completely scripted. Of course, his teeth are perfectly aligned and he's handsome. So you now wanting me to be an articulate prince. Right? Not saying that that's what you wanted. You saw that. But we can do this without realizing it, where it's like, "You're not treating me like the Hallmark Joe is treating his woman or whatever." In the same way men do this.

**Selena:** Yeah, we get upset.

**Ryan:** They get into their bedroom, and they say, "Why aren't you doing the things that I've seen these other women do in pornography. Not only that, but they seem to be enjoying it or they're happy to be there." They're actresses. So it's a complete fabricated situation.

**Selena:** It's a fabrication of truth. And things that, again, are God-given. If we look at the Hallmark movie, we look at the countdown to Christmas, it's like the 11th anniversary, it's a two-month-long, nonstop marathon of movies. They come out with like 38 new movies. I'm like, "How do they do this?" This is how they do it. All 38 movies have the same plot. They have the same characters. They have different jobs, but it's always this like suburban privileged person that has this big degree and they have a handsome beau next to him and they should by all accounts be happy and successful...

**Ryan:** By the way, I had to ask her what she meant by the word beau.

**Selena:** B-E-A-U. It's a man. But then comes this other guy and there's another like there's kind of a little romance because beau letter A, he wasn't good enough



in some area, and so there's this dissonance. So they're creating the dissonance for you and you're like, "Oh, yes."

**Ryan:** "Oh, I feel that way about my husband."

**Selena:** And you start getting mad at your husband for things that he's never even done or thought about and never was a desire in your heart until you watch these movies. Again, 38 new movies coming out in December. Guys, the plotline is just so predictable.

**Ryan:** There's not a lot of creative innovation.

**Selena:** And I'm not just slamming them because like my mom watches them. I'm sure I would love to watch one and just be like, "It's fun. It's so everything." But they have quotes from people that watch. I mean this one girl she was orphaned at young age and she...This is not a character. It's a real person. So she enjoyed watching other families have [00:20:00] these scripted holiday times. And she says, "everything is always alright at the end," which is just the opposite of real life. And your heart breaks. You're like, "Oh, no." Yes, I want the reality of everything to be all right. I want my room, my house to look nice. I want things to be clean and beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. And how the heck did they do all these things of like decorating their house so perfectly, and their 1-year-old doesn't make messes?

**Ryan:** You just described social media too.

**Selena:** Exactly. That definitely plays into it. So, all I'm saying is that I know you won't have lots to say.

**Ryan:** You're on fire.

**Selena:** No, there's manipulation that's involved here. There's a script. There are aesthetically pleasing, looking people. And these are like all the lies. There's some element of truth. What is this element of truth that we talked about the beginning of this podcast? We desire reconciliation. We desire commitment. We desire everything to be okay or contentment. We desire closeness. We desire oneness. We desire to be loved. But the lie is that it happens in like 90 to 120 minutes. The lie...Sorry.

**Ryan:** No, that's good. It is a lie. I want to make sure we're closing this feedback cycle. We talked about the escape cycle or the pretend cycle. Again, you have a part of your reality that you're not contented with. And you just brought this up really good point. You may not even know that you don't like this. And then they've put temptation in front of you and say, "Don't you want something

better?" And not that the directors and the actors were trying to do this. But the idea of a story being told, the point of it is to...

**Selena:** Control your emotions, essentially. It's taking through this...

**Ryan:** It's pretend. The whole point of adventure fiction is to take you on an adventure without actually having to go get your head and your arm chopped off. So there's no real risk here. You are a complete bystander. So it's playing on a dissonant piece of your own life. You go to a pretend world, you say, "I'm going to get what I need there. Now I'm going to try to import that into my actual reality." And then it doesn't work. We have a choice then. You say, "Oh, my husband's never going to be Prince Charming. My wife's never going to be whatever that false version of looking...she's never going to not be her." So we've bought a lie already. So we either need to discard the lie or we're in trouble. What happens so often, and it's very unfortunate is it plants a seed and it sets into their mind this thought that maybe there's more.

**Selena:** Stop right there for a minute. So the thought. Why does the Bible talk about taking every thought captive? Where does deception lie? Look at Eve in the garden. She saw the fruit and it looked good to her. There was a scene and there was a thought. Like how much more clear do we have to get about this?

**Ryan:** And tragically, that thought then grows. It takes root and it begins to grow. There's a passage. I can't remember what it is, but it's basically talking about this procession of starting with a thought and then growing into full-blown action, full-blown sin. So you can start to think, "Well, maybe there's something better." And then you start kind of grooming yourself and justifying yourself. "Oh, he's actually falling short in all these other ways. He's actually not treating me right." I've observed that and you get another friend who's getting on the bandwagon. You watch another movie, all sudden, it's the compounding effect.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** And so what you do then, is you say, "I can't have this pretend world in my current reality, so I'm going to create a new reality." So you get you break yourself off either emotionally, or you get a divorce.

**Selena:** Physically. Totally. Yeah.

**Ryan:** So you try to create a new reality. And that's where this pretend place now becomes a new reality. And what happens in new reality, and...

**Selena:** Over time and eventually.

- Ryan:** ...you have more dissonance.
- Selena:** Yes. Imagine that.
- Ryan:** So it's a cycle of escalating kind of buying of this lie and then paying the price. It's upping the ante every time. I'm paying this greater price...anyway.
- Selena:** The part that I think is so hard about those things is that it's probably true. You could probably treat me better as a husband.
- Ryan:** Nonsense. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** I could probably maybe be a little more...I don't know if this translates right to adventurism in the bedroom. I don't want to say that these translate equally across. I'm just saying that there are shortcomings that we have. So when those desires create dissonance, it augments the insecurities that we already are dealing with because there's possibly some truth there already.
- Ryan:** Okay, okay. I want to pause on that a little bit.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Because that's a really touchy topic. You just said that you could be more adventurous. I happen to disagree. I feel like you're amazing.
- Selena:** And I tried to steer away from that, in all honesty.
- Ryan:** Well, but that's taken time. And the reason is there's nothing sinful about not wanting to be adventurous in bed. [00:25:00] I want to be very clear. There's nothing sinful about that. Now there is a sense that we have Christian liberty within marriage to explore and enjoy and drink deep of love. That's what the Song of Solomon is all about. And by the way, Song of Solomon is pretty colorful in its language. But there are spots in here where there is an opportunity for you to be generous, where you could say, "Okay, let's explore." And I could say, "Also be generous."
- And honestly, I don't want anything that you don't want now at this point. I don't want to in any way pressure...So I feel like we can twist something. Again, it's a twisting. I could twist that thing in saying, "You're not actually sinning, but you're not..." Do you know how selfish that is?
- Selena:** Yeah.

- Ryan:** "You're not sinning against me, but I deserve this thing. So I'm going to retreat, I'm going to escape into whatever reality I need or fake reality I need to get what I think I deserve. And when I come back and you still aren't giving me that thing I deserve, that now I deserve to break our covenant." Okay, which ironically, you can't really break a covenant. I'm actually doing it as a contract at that point. It's not mutually beneficial to me. So the point we're trying to make is we have to identify these lies and cut them off at the past, and you have to make conscious decisions to escape the escape.
- Selena:** Right. If you know anything about us, you've heard us talk about sex on the podcast. Our basic rules for in the bedroom are nothing degrading or painful or not agreed. No third parties coming in to the bedroom in any way shape or form.
- Ryan:** There will be no pornography and be very careful about introducing other items, devices, and things like these. Just be very careful in discerning about that. We have a lot of liberty, but it's a very...
- Selena:** There's boundaries for flourishing. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah. And sex is a very powerful, good thing that needs to be wielded carefully and mindfully.
- Selena:** Absolutely. I mean, Jesus even talks about it. I think I've been reading 1 Corinthians about how there's a difference with sexual sin. A man sins against his own body, and his body is a temple. Like sexual sin is different in that sense. Coming back to this cycle, and coming back to living in our reality, some pretend reality either is brought into us or it kind of finds its way into our reality.
- Ryan:** Or we seek it out.
- Selena:** Or we seek it out. We engage in it, and then we from there, we tend to impose this pretend reality into our new reality. Of course, it's going to break...
- Ryan:** Into our current reality.
- Selena:** Into our current reality. Of course, it's going to break. It's never going to match up. Because how can it?
- Ryan:** How can it?
- Selena:** It's real-life versus fiction.

- Ryan:** It's actors versus...And the scripts that these actors are reading off of are poured over by professional writers who their whole job is to tug at your hearts.
- Selena:** Right. They've gone to universities, they know how to make it palatable and tastes good, go now, right?
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** It's like this is their job. So how do we begin unpacking?
- Ryan:** How do we break the cycle?
- Selena:** Yeah, how do break the cycle? Like we're seeing here saying this Ryan, like, my reality is not what I want it to be. Why is it so bad that I go somewhere else and get it? It's too hard to try to talk to my spouse. It seems too hard to work through it. Why should I work through it? This seems like it works for everyone.
- Ryan:** No one's getting hurt, right? No one's getting hurt by me kind of going into this hole. So I can't help but think of Phyllis right now with the headphones on in the office. She's listening to 50 Shades of Grey.
- Selena:** I don't even want mention of that podcast.
- Ryan:** I'll just leave it there. If you've seen it, you've seen it.
- Selena:** I don't even want the name of the title of the book.
- Ryan:** Come on.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** Realistically speaking, that's why that book series did so well because it's often offering...
- Selena:** A sexual escape.
- Ryan:** ...an escape for a number of ways. And I'm not going to do an analysis of that book series. But you asked how do we break this cycle? And what's wrong with it? When we seek satisfaction outside of any biblical prescription, *[laughs]* it's a recipe for destruction.

**Selena:** I just laugh because it is all dressed up and its simply idolatry. It's all dressed up in whatever you want to put on it. But when it comes to it, idolatry is idolatry.

**Ryan:** Okay. So it's idolatry, because we're looking to something other than our Savior to fulfill us in a way that only His design can fulfill or only He Himself can fulfill. As we were talking about this, again, the cycle, you have your reality, there's dissonance, you go to a pretend place, you find what you think you need, and you find what you're looking for or a caricature of it and you try to import that into your reality. That doesn't work, and so you spin off a new reality. In other words, you change your circumstances in a way that is going to be more along what you think it should be. That's not healthy.

The thing we need to do is actually abandon the process and now go to an even deeper reality. And that is the reality of this. We mentioned it earlier. This foregone conclusion, this already, but not yet Christ is king but He has yet to reign fully.

**Selena:** When do I do that? When should I do that, Ryan?

**Ryan:** Okay. I want to be clear. Hallmark movies aren't bad in and of themselves.

**Selena:** No.

**Ryan:** Pornography. There's a distinction to be made there.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** It depends on your heart orientation. Now, there's no...

**Selena:** With movies. With movies, not monography. Pornography is hands-down never acceptable.

**Ryan:** I was just going to say there's no redeeming qualities in pornography.

**Selena:** Nothing.

**Ryan:** Nothing good about it. So steer clear of that like across the board. With movies like this, Hallmark movies, you feel your heart going in the wrong direction, that's an opportunity to recognize that. Now if you're just watching it as an entertaining thing and it's a light-hearted thing and you're not trying to escape...

**Selena:** You're being fed by it.

- Ryan:** There is a difference between being entertained and escaping. So if you're not being fed by it, that's a really good way to think about it. Well, if you feel your heart going that bad route, it's time to go get fed somewhere else. Instead of going to the vending machine and grabbing a soda you need to go get living water. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Hmm. Word!
- Ryan:** And I think that's the difference is you have to be an adult, Spirit-led. This is the beautiful thing about this is that we are Spirit-led. As we teach our daughters this, you can't really follow our hearts...Everything about Disney movies, Hallmark, is like, "Oh, follow your hearts and you'll be satisfied." I just think like...
- Selena:** If you're not believer, it's definitely not a good idea because the heart is not good.
- Ryan:** I just can't get past Napoleon Dynamite when he's like, "Just follow your heart." *[laughing]* I think about that all the time.
- Selena:** No, we're talking about heart and desires. I don't know if that's where you're going about the comment of your desires change right when your heart is not being regenerate.
- Ryan:** Right. There is this sense in the Christian life that say your heart is deceitful above all else is what the Bible says. And it's true. However, when we are regenerate when we are Christians, when we are indwelled with the Holy Spirit, we do have a new heart.
- Selena:** Scriptures confirms this.
- Ryan:** Scripture says that he has removed our heart of stone and put into our chest a heart of flesh. That doesn't mean it's completely perfect, completely sanctified. But we have the Holy Spirit leading us. We had a recent thing happened in our lives where we were going to make a big decision. It was going to be a big financial decision in our lives. And I felt all this peace and I was super excited about it. You felt peace. We had talked about it. I think I was prayed about it.
- Selena:** I was pretty agnostic about it. I was like, "Yeah, I see his point. So yeah, I'll just go along." Like I've become familiar with this path of like I'm just going to jump on board with you because typically when...Unless it's a massive red flag, I

don't say much, but it just kind of I was a little indifferent. I was like, "Yeah, this could be great. I see the potential."

**Ryan:** Yeah. So I'm thinking, "Okay, God's leading. I feel like this desire is... I'm thinking that this desire is good, it's right, it feels like it's not unwise. I've run it through the whole rubric of decision making, our family vision statement, all this stuff. Okay, good. So let's move forward." We move forward. And finally, get the first step along the way, and we're more or less committed to this thing. And I go to sleep that night feeling great wake up, no peace whatsoever. Not just no peace, but negative peace. Like anxiousness, turmoil. The peace that I thought I had was gone, and now is replaced with this sickness. I felt like, "Oh, this is not right. This does not sit well with me." And I tried to justify it away for two, three days.

**Selena:** No, it was a couple of hours.

**Ryan:** And I just said, "This is not peace." My heart had led me astray. But I had the Holy Spirit now that by His grace had changed my desires to now lead me back on the right path. So our heart can, when it's governed and informed and ruled by the Holy Spirit, by Spirit-driven desires, our heart can lead us into a good place. But when we're walking according to the flesh, it does not lead us into good places.

**Selena:** Good.

**Ryan:** So I think that's the distinction to be made here. We're talking again about emotional lust. When our desires are leading us into a dark place, again, escaping, not just being entertained, but we're actually escaping and trying to be fed by something that is inherently kind of going to make us sick, that's what we need to be discerning.

**Selena:** In Proverbs 3 it talks about - what is it? Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to Him, and He will give the desires of your heart. But your heart's desires at that time are aligned with His desires. I think that's the part that we [00:35:00] just gloss over for whatever reason.

**Ryan:** I want to spend a few moments talking about our conversation this morning.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** It's somewhat related to this. We were talking about...



- Selena:** Sorry. *[chuckles]* Which one?
- Ryan:** The girls were all playing and we were having our morning coffee, getting ready for breakfast and all that kind of stuff, and we talked about how television has kind of desensitized us. So we've stopped watching most things. I can't remember the last time we've watched. I mean, it's probably three weeks ago, four weeks ago we watched something together. And even really, in general, I mean, you watch this movie because we were gone late. And we were reading this article that's basically saying how this escalation of drama, this escalation of violence, this escalation of sexual gratuitousness, that's happening in TV on Netflix and everything, how it's almost a result to...it's like the call and response to all the chaos we've experienced. And it's like we need more chaos, in a sense...
- Selena:** To feel something?
- Ryan:** ...more drama to feel something.
- Selena:** Why is that?
- Ryan:** You grow immune to it.
- Selena:** We're learning about the human body in our community, our homeschool community. We're talking about nerve centers, your sensory system, and how if you take two pencils, poke yourself lightly upper by the elbow, you take two pencils, and poke yourself lightly on the finger, you're not going to feel two pokes on your arm, you'll feel two pokes in your finger. And why? Because there's more sensors in your finger. There's more nerve endings in your fingers that translate that information.
- Ryan:** Higher resolution for feeling.
- Selena:** Right. And so what's happened because of, you know, Amazon, Disney, all the big names, but especially Netflix, we feel, there is this sealing of our sensors. There's this sealing of...
- Ryan:** We're becoming none because they're always being burned.
- Selena:** Right. They're always being burned. They're always being brought these terrible messages.
- Ryan:** Sorry, that's classic fiction and addiction. I mean, same with drugs. Right?
- Selena:** Right.

- Ryan:** You get that first hit, "Oh, we will never have a hit like that one." Because your body automatically starts becoming...
- Selena:** Immune to it.
- Ryan:** Immune or adjusted to it. I mean, take all this comment. We're talking about TV; we're talking about Netflix. Think about social media now. If you get on Instagram, and you wonder why you feel inadequate, you wonder why your life doesn't feel like it's everything it should be...
- Selena:** Or you feel agitated with your spouse.
- Ryan:** ...it's because you're seeing literally a highlight reel of humanity. Not only a highlight reel of humanity but the one that's curated specifically for you based on your past behavior. The algorithms are designed to make you want to create that longing for timelessness, that longing for beauty, perfection, of belonging, success...
- Selena:** Social glamour. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah. It's designed to keep you there.
- Selena:** It's not somebody just created something to make it pretty and nice for you to interact with. I mean, I think that's what they originally set out for, but it's become its own machine. And now there are people that are actually informing everything that happens, every sort of drop of information that comes out.
- Ryan:** Because the whole business model is basically keeping your attention as long as possible. That's a whole nother conversation. The point we're trying to make here is that social media has the same effect because you're getting the highlight reels. If you go to like the Discover function of any sort of app, it's designed to give you the things that are resonating the most deeply with humanity. So they're said that the way that most people are resonating with its pithy and witty, and touches the heart, pulls on the heartstrings. Visually, it's funny or there's someone attractive or it's an interesting or it's novel, it's new, and it's meant to create a new a sense of wanting to give it...you're literally giving it your life. You're giving it your time, your attention.
- Selena:** Ooh, Man!
- Ryan:** We don't even realize we're escaping.

- Selena:** We are escaping. And it's a twist of this whole theme of love that the Bible talks about in terms of...You see, when you hear about God's love, you hear about how his Son died. What I'm talking about the twisting is that we are dying to the life that God's given us in order to live for these screen filled desires. So we're getting frustrated and agitated and we're just done with this life, that God is like, "This is the gift I've given you and you're throwing it away. Why are you throwing it away?" Well, because my desire is over here. I love this thing. I want this thing. I want to look like this. I want to feel like this. I want all of this because I'm not getting it. And if I'm not getting it, no one's getting it." But anyways.
- Ryan:** John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends." I think oftentimes we forget the meaning of love. One of the most repetitious definitions of love [00:40:00] we see in Scripture is the laying down of one's life for another. One of the clearest signs of love in Scripture is death. Death itself. And escapism is the opposite of that.
- Selena:** Feeding yourself. Everything else dies.
- Ryan:** You're not giving me what I need. Instead of dying to you, I'm going to become more alive to myself.
- Selena:** Ah, Lordy! I'm just like, "Uh." Gospel is so powerful.
- Ryan:** Okay. So how do we get this cycle? As we look to the definition of love Himself, Christ, we are reminded that we were lost and we were dead in our sin. Dead! Not mostly dead; we were dead.
- Selena:** Deceitfulness of death, first of all, I just want to say. So you may think you're alive, and this escape pretendy Ville. That's what they want you to think. But truly, you're dead. We need to take the Bible's authority and truth on this. You are dead aside from Christ. We are dead aside from Him.
- Ryan:** But that's the whole premise of escapism is I deserve...
- Selena:** That's what I'm saying.
- Ryan:** So that notion that I was once dead and now I made a live in Christ, that notion is that I deserve nothing in myself other than the wrath of God. And what I do deserve as a person made in God's image, I only deserve it because God said so. Right?
- Selena:** Right.

- Ryan:** I'm going to deserve dignity because God said so when He endowed me with the image of the Creator. Without His entire context, I am literally dead and worthless. In this context, I'm alive and made in His image.
- Selena:** And that's what I'm saying is that we twist this idea of death and life. We think that we know where life is found and we think that we will be made more alive by escaping that. And then there's this...
- Ryan:** That sounds awfully familiar to Genesis 3. "Did he really say?"
- Selena:** "Did he really say that?"
- Ryan:** "God's just afraid. He doesn't want you to be like Him. Come on, take this thing and then you'll see, and you'll see behind the veil, and you'll know he's a liar, you'll know there's not real life in his way."
- Selena:** Guy's there is no fulfillment there. Escapism never any fulfillment. No matter however you dress it up and paint it.
- Ryan:** That is the paramount lie of humanity is that we can find satisfaction anywhere else than by going to God Himself. And then as a result of experiencing His goodness and His love, conforming ourselves into the image of Christ, falling under the authority of Scripture, finding beauty in the law and precepts of God. Anything other than that will bring us to a place of death.
- Selena:** So good. So good.
- Ryan:** And that's I think the problem with escapism. I get that movies are good. Honestly, I think movies in a lot of ways are a good grace of God. Like we get awesome story format, we get to experience different stories and different characters and different facets of humanity that may not be accessible to us otherwise, they can stir in us a really good kind of inspiration and a desire for good beautiful things. It's an art form. And art is beautiful. God made beautiful things.
- Selena:** He was the first Stardust.
- Ryan:** Yes. But escapism. Again, we're trying to look at the heart. Again, there's no redeeming aspects to pornography. You can't have a good heart and go view that stuff. This is different. Movies, music, Instagram, these things can be redemptive. They can be redeemed...
- Selena:** It might be how you found Fierce Marriage.

**Ryan:** Not redemptive. I meant to say they can be redeemed because God created beauty. It's like you said. It might be how you found Fierce Marriage. I guess we're trying to ask this question: is your heart escaping? Now, we could talk about this for a long time, but I want to get to the next piece, which you are escaping into this alternate reality and it's creating an emotional lust. To bring this conversation around, that emotional lust is a desire for something that is not yours to be as yours.

So I want a connection with this other man or men, you want a connection with this other woman. When that connection is not yours to have, that's where the lust part comes in. That connection does not belong to you. That emotional draw that you feel needs to be satisfied in your spouse alone.

**Selena:** So you're saying that we may have certain inclinations that come up within us, distractions, whatever, that try to create a dissonance. And it's in those moments that we take the thought captive how by having scripture and form our desires, by reminding ourselves that, no, this is my husband, this is my wife, this is the person that I'm in covenant with. For me to desire someone else, that's wrong. That is off-limits wrong. [00:45:00] I think I just want to paint that picture clear. Like when I'm in the moment, it's late at night, I'm scrolling on my phone, I see a message or I see an old boyfriend or an old friend of the other gender, and they say something and I want to like start engaging them, you should definitely check that inclination.

**Ryan:** Yeah, absolutely. But I want to speak to the spouse who's feeling like, "Well, my husband or my wife, they are not meeting my needs. What do I do? So they've been speaking words that are hurtful. They've done things that are hurtful. We don't have trust. We don't have intimacy. We don't have closeness. We're not talking. Maybe he's not even financially providing. He's not feeling whatever those...He's falling short in some way.

Remember the verse we looked at in John 15:13. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends." That's all fine and great. You might be thinking, "Well, what if he's not acting as a friend? I don't want to lay down my life for this person. They don't deserve it. They don't deserve my respect. They don't deserve my love." Okay, well, I'd like to read Romans 5:7. "For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

**Selena:** *[sighs]* Goodness!

**Ryan:** It's in those moments of dissonance when you have the greatest opportunity to love your spouse.

**Selena:** How Christ loves us.

**Ryan:** How Christ has loved us. That's the takeaway is that you feel in your heart this need, this desire, this unmet need, that's our chance to look to Christ and then in turn, love our spouse as Christ is calling us to love our spouse in the middle of their imperfection, in the middle of the hurt, in the middle of the 'I don't want to.' So instead of escaping, we can rely on One Holy and be obedient.

**Selena:** We can be obedient, and we can act and love how Christ has called us to love and exemplified modeled for us to love. I think even taking a step further, that sometimes you have to do the action before the feelings come. We had somebody kind of share with us that you may not feel like loving your spouse, but feelings are not the drivers of how we love each other when we're in this covenant. If God didn't feel like dying for us, He could have done that, right? He didn't have to...

**Ryan:** Right. He could have just said, "Oh, this didn't work. Adam and Eve sinned..."

**Selena:** "This is too painful. I don't like it. It doesn't feel good.

**Ryan:** And annihilated.

**Selena:** Yeah. And He didn't.

**Ryan:** Instead, He gave us a promise. And the promise was—and this was as he was sentencing the serpent—He said that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. That's a promise.

**Selena:** He gave this as promise. And that's what I want to think walking too is like it's not death to death, it's a death for life. You're exchanging the death of yourself, the death of your flesh for life in the Spirit. And that is worth the death a thousand times over. Life in Christ.

**Ryan:** Honestly, and this is where the circle kind of completes, is that at some point we have to choose to trust. We have to choose to trust God's sufficiency, Christ's sufficiency for our enjoyment, for our fulfillment. And then we have to trust that we can't import these artificial versions of what we think we want. We can't import those. God can only create those by the power of the Holy Spirit, He only well those things up that we want from within us from His transforming capabilities, not from our transforming capabilities.

Again, to bring this conversation kind of full circle, we started out talking about emotional lust and escapism. We talked about what escapism actually is. And

I think out of all that, and through our conversation, we realized that the only escape from escapism is into the arms of Christ, and into the loving leadership of Christ, and into trusting His way of love and loving our spouse, and realizing that it's not our role as believers to escape anything. He has placed us in this world. We're in it, but we're not of it. That's what that is. It's like, "There's no escape here. You're still going to deal with trials. You're still going to have persecution. It's still going to be hard. I'm not going to pluck you up and just take you into tracing. You need to stay here for your good for my glory." This is God talking. "For your good for my glory and for the good of those I love."

So, husband, wife, you're listening to this, maybe that's an opportunity to show your spouse the redemptive love of Christ, the selfless love of Christ right in the middle of their imperfection, right in the middle of their perfection. That's what that passage in Romans says is that at the right time, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So we can die, not in the same sense that Christ died for us, but we can die for each other in that sense. That I can lay down my life for you. I can say, "I may want to escape. I may want the selfish thing. You're not perfect, but I can lay [00:50:00] my life down for you because Christ has laid His life down for me and He's called me to love you in this way. And I can trust that as I do that, my heart is going to be changed, my affections for you are going to be stirred. But I can trust that that love will have transformational properties that I could never generate on my own.

**Selena:** Mm hmm. So good.

**Ryan:** Oh, man, *[sighs]* we went a lot of different ways with that, but I love how God's Word and how He is so faithful to I think show us I think a lot that we were processing in real-time.

**Selena:** Yeah. Yeah. God is good and faithful, trustworthy.

**Ryan:** I get a sense there's a lot of listeners that are listening to this and it's creating some waves, if you will, maybe rattling some cages. The whole point of this is to show you that Christ is good friend. He's good enough. And I think maybe Selena you could pray for us, and we could pray for the husbands and the wives that they would just really I guess repent and believe the truth of the gospel, or repent of their sin and believe that God is enough, and then have the courage and the ability to then press in to knowing and following Him more faithfully.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** I'm relying on that grace.

**Selena:** God, thank you so much for the marriages that are listening right now. We are so privileged to have the platform to speak your truth. God, I pray that it would be loud, that it would be clear. Holy Spirit, be at work in the hearts of your people. We pray for discernment. We pray for eyes wide open, hearts of flesh and minds that live in the Word and that are communing with you daily, Father, so that fiction, so that non-truth, that lies will be so clear, God, and that we will have the clear pathway to break the cycle of living and escaping the world that we disdain, that is just full of sin. God, I pray that you would just remind us of the power that you've given us and we're equipped to live in this world. We're equipped to not escape it. We are equipped to fight. We are equipped to live and not be dominated by anything else. God, you are authority. You are God. We can trust you. We can run to you. We can lay our sin at the foot of the cross and know that it has been taken care of. We trust you in this, Lord. In your name, amen.

**Ryan:** Amen. Gosh. If you're listening to this, just know that we are praying for you and we're...honestly, everything we do is to point you couples, husband, wife, spouses to the gospel that help you realize it and then be enlivened and emboldened and living it out and living in light of it, I should say. So anyway, just know that we're praying for you.

I just want to make quick mention again of our Patreon community. Guys, we're going to do this as long as God allows it. We're going to keep harkening the gospel in the area of marriage and family and parenting pretty soon. We're going to have another parenting podcast by God's grace if He allows us. At least what we hope to do. But we rely on our Patreons to support our family. You guys goes right to putting food on the table for our three daughters and for us.

So if you would just pray about that, pray about partnering with us. We're trying to amass an army of people that are like-minded there. And if God leads you, just go here, go to [patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://patreon.com/fiercemarriage). There's all kinds of details there. And with that said, this episode is—

**Selena:** In the can.

**Ryan:** Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. As usual, we will see you, listener, in about seven days. Until then—

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**[00:53:57]** <outro>



**Ryan:**

Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit [FierceMarriage.com](https://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**

- **[00:34:39]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Proverbs 3, ESV
  
- **[00:39:46]**
  - Scripture references:
    - John 15:13
  
- **[00:46:06]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Romans 5:7

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