

## COMING FROM A DIVORCED HOME

<https://fiercemarriage.com/coming-from-a-divorced-home>

[00:00:00]

**Selena:** Coming from a divorced home definitely has its effects on your marriage. It has had an effect on our marriage. As of late, I've been wanting to explore those effects, and it's been illuminating. God has been faithful and good. But it's also been a little hard, I think, to sort through some of that stuff. So we kind of wanted to do that live with you guys. And hopefully, this will be helpful to you.

**Ryan:** That's great. *[laughing]* Was that your segue? Okay. See you on the other side.

[00:00:33] <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.

[00:01:06] <Podcast begins>

**Ryan:** I'm genuinely curious what is precipitating this introspection of late.

**Selena:** Well, I think we had a fight and I think it was one that I...

**Ryan:** Never. *[Selena chuckles]* Never.

- Selena:** ...I was just like, "Why are we fighting about this again? Why are you wrong again?" But I don't know. I just have felt kind of this prompting to find out why you and I maybe have some of the same consistent fights and why I have the same feelings or responses to certain things that you do or that we do, and why I just feel like I'm at a wall sometimes and I can't overcome it.
- Ryan:** Are you saying that there's forces at work, whether they're from your past from, you know, how that's affected your heart and your mind and your views of me as your husband, but also our family that had to do with you coming from a divorced home?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And so you wanted to kind of look deeper into those.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Okay. And we will today. And I'm looking forward to this because I know you spent a lot of time marinating on it, and learning, and studying, and praying over it. Before we get into that, hey, we've been going through it, listeners. *[both chuckles]* Just to give you a quick overview, we've had a lot of sicknesses, we've been recording for our online marriage course ecosystem called Gospel-Centered Marriage. Actually, I'm kind of banking on the fact by the time this comes out, it will be available for pre-signup.
- Selena:** Whoo!
- Ryan:** Yeah, that's kind of a *[chuckling]* big deal in terms of the amount of work that's gone into it.
- Selena:** You say that nervously. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Yeah, because as I'm recording this, it's not ready. But it will be ready by the time you listen.
- Selena:** We've had just video guys getting sick and...
- Ryan:** Yeah, the Coronavirus.
- Selena:** ...everybody, all the people.
- Ryan:** Yeah, no, it's okay. Selena, you're wincing because you're worried people are going to think that we weren't responsible in it. We were. We didn't expose

ourselves unnecessarily. But that basically pushed us out a week and a half, and we're already under a tight deadline. So an additional difficulty. All I have to say is we feel like the spiritual attacks are real in this time.

**Selena:** I was just going to add, what are we recording on right now? *[laughs]*

**Ryan:** Oh.

**Selena:** Because our soundboard decided to break too tonight.

**Ryan:** Oh, my word! After three and a half years of doing this.

**Selena:** Three and a half years. It went kaput.

**Ryan:** Of all times.

**Selena:** We lined up some childcare at night and then the board broke. So we're like, "Let's see if our phones work really well." So if you have a little extra noise, you know what, that's all right.

**Ryan:** You probably can't even tell.

**Selena:** You probably can't even tell. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** Anyway, to bring that full circle, we would love to have you as part of Gospel Centered Marriage. Just go to [gospelcenteredmarriage.com](http://gospelcenteredmarriage.com) to sign up for the first run through. It's going to be a blast. It's actually not just a course. It includes a six-week core marriage course. And then as the year goes on, we're going to add more. So when you sign up, you're actually getting a full access to everything that we put in there. Actually, we have more than 20 mini courses slated for 2021.

**Selena:** Nice.

**Ryan:** Our goal is to turn it into a channel that you can use to enrich your marriage, at least on a monthly basis. So a lot of times if you're a sports fan or you're just a fan of movies, you're going to have a specific channel for those things. Like for a long time, we had Netflix because we were just fans of The Office. That was our office channel. We watched a few other things but... The point being, nobody has a channel to actually build their marriage.

**Selena:** Let's be fans of our marriage, people. *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** Come on. You got to invest. The investment is actually pretty nominal I think in terms of if you compare it to anything else, or any other channel or any other...especially marriage counseling or divorce, God forbid, which is what we're talking about today. So again, go to [gospelcenteredmarriage.com](http://gospelcenteredmarriage.com) and you'll have a way of signing up there. I'm not sure what it's going to look like yet. [00:05:00] But join us. It's going to be fun.
- Selena:** Also, if you have not rated or reviewed this podcast, we would encourage you to do so. Those get the word out about how great God is *[both chuckles]* and how great we're not, but also God is doing some good stuff in marriages. We get lots of feedback. And we love it. We love to read about it. So make sure you rate us, leave a small review, and share with friends. Because I always feel like sharing podcasts is just the best.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** [inaudible] behind and excited about. Also, if you want to partner with us...I'll let you do this.
- Ryan:** Just go to [patreon.com/fiercemarriage](http://patreon.com/fiercemarriage). Just pray about it. [Patreon.com/fiercemarriage](http://Patreon.com/fiercemarriage).
- Selena:** Help us buy a new board, people. A new soundboard. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Actually, we're going a different route. New USB interface now. So we're going to change that up anyway.
- Selena:** So moving into our conversation today, I was up late one night after I think, you know, had resolved everything, but it's still kind of just rolling feelings and things around in my head and just questions. And I started looking up "are there any resources written by people about the voices of kids that are now adults whose parents got divorced when they were kids?" I honestly didn't find that much. I'm sure there is more out there. But what I did find was a book called *Primal Loss*, voices of adult children affected by divorce. It's edited excuse me by Leila Miller.
- Ryan:** Or Leila. I don't know how to pronounce it.
- Selena:** It looks like Layla.
- Ryan:** There was a friend of mine in elementary school. Her name was Leila. L-e-i-l-a.
- Selena:** Miller.

**Ryan:** Miller. It is basically a compilation of a bunch of testimonies from adults whose parents got a divorce and ones that they would consider quote-unquote, "good divorces." So it's part of their testimony. She basically breaks it up each chapters in the themes. The person is anonymous, but they're credited with a number. So then if you want to know kind of more about the person that's writing, you can go to the back and it says, "Oh, this person is 50 years old. She's a wife of her husband for 20 years and has three kids or something like that." So you can kind of get a small bit of background, which to me helps me kind of relate to the person.

But she breaks up the table of contents into...First of all, she's Catholic. She writes for other Catholic sources and everything. So just to put that out there...

**Ryan:** There are going to be some differences obviously between Protestant and the Catholic tradition. We won't get into those right now.

**Selena:** But sorting through some of it, you know, she just takes the themes of like the effect of divorce, and she's answering this question of like are the statements that many? I remember my parents...my dad saying, let me correct that, that, "Oh, it's fine. The kids will be fine. They're resilient." You know, that kind of comment that was thrown out there. So she has a whole chapter that says "Are children resilient?"

**Ryan:** Pause. I want to ask you that question then. You're...

**Selena:** We're going to get into my story in a minute. I was just wanting to kind of give this book as a resource to kind of share just what's in it, feelings of as child versus an adult, your view of marriage, the role of faith in healing. So she has all these stories.

**Ryan:** This book is a compilation of other people's stories, and she's put them into kind of buckets of categories of themes.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** So it's really useful. The whole angle for today's talk is if you came from a divorced home, which is actually pretty likely that either you or your spouse has some element of divorce in their life. That's pretty likely. You may or may not be aware of the effects that are at play. With Selena's journey was finding: what are these underlying effects that are affecting us? And this is the resource we found. Just to kind of make sure that's clear.

**Selena:** No, that's good. And just to be clear, this episode is not on whether or not you can get divorced or not. We're not talking about that right now. We're talking about, like you said, if you come from a divorced home or your spouse comes from a divorced home, which is pretty likely, how has it or how does it affect your marriage? Have you guys even talked about that? I know we got married so young and we were just such good friends and we just love each other, and we're just like, "Yeah, marriage is going to be great, like awesome."

I mean, divorce was never on the table. It still has never been on the table. And by God's grace, God has just worked out my experience, I think, and redeemed it through my marriage to Ryan today. But just to kind of, I guess, go back a few years to little [00:10:00] 6 or 7-year-old Selena, my parents, like most, they've been fighting, and I don't want to throw anybody under the bus, there's infidelity, my dad left. His words were. "The kids will be fine. They'll be okay." And my mom was not in agreement with that and she did everything she could to kind of keep us together.

But yeah, I mean, his belief was—she talks about it in this. It's called the divorce ideology—is kind of like, kids are resilient. Parents, if they don't get along, it's better for them to get divorced so that parents can be happy, and therefore the kids can be happy, and everybody will be happier in the long run. Well, they're finding out that's not the truth, and that kids from divorced homes come with a lot of questions, they come with a lot of feelings to sort through and their voice really has kind of been ignored and not put out there.

This is not a soapbox moment. This is really just kind of, huh, I'm reading all of this and thinking, "Wow, this is exactly some of the things I couldn't put words to but I'm now able to identify with in terms of, you know, how do I view my husband and love and things like trust and respect as a wife?"

My parents got divorced when I was about the age of six or seven. I think my brother was three or four. I was pretty ashamed of it. I remember going to school and not wanting my friends to know that my parents were divorced because I remember I felt like I was the only one in class. There may have been like one or two others, but I know that I was very much an anomaly. At least I felt that way.

But as you know, years go on, I mean, the trend of divorce definitely set into our school friends, our circle of friends so it became kind of the norm. I don't know, I felt normalized in some ways. So I was like, "Okay, this is not as big of a deal." But I think the habits that I built up that they kind of talk about, and the things that I...I don't know what the word is, but basically survival skills, I think. I would build walls. I would be able to, you know, be friends with lots of people and be happy and try to connect. But I think there was always an

underlying insecurity of not knowing where the friendship would go, how I was going to be hurt in it. So I would just try to avoid those things. I would just try to keep the friendship in a safe place.

As the years went on, I met Ryan...in what? Ninth grade. We fell in love, we went to college. I felt like life was pretty great. And it still is. God is good. [inaudible] I do remember when I was about 16 or 17, I believe church was having this preaching session or this...what do you call it? Like a sermon series. Sorry. I'm blanking out on the words. A sermon series, I believe, on forgiveness in our youth group. So I was like, "O, Lord, I think you're asking me to do some hard things right now." And He did.

And I said, "Okay, God." I talked to my dad. I said, "Let's go out to dinner." By this time, our relationship had been pretty often on. I mean, I see him and we'd have dinner, and I go to family functions. When I was a kid, we'd go every other weekend with him. And I just remember just being so odd, and it just felt so unnatural. It was just very weird. My mom was always so graceful about him and he just was...

**Ryan:** I want to ask you a question now. I know you're telling your story.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** How did that make you feel? You've got two sides to your family now—your mom's side, your dad's side. And a lot of times when you were hanging out with your dad, you were also hanging out with your dad's girlfriend.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** How did that make you feel? And how does that still affect you today? I know we're going to get into more of how it affects us today.

**Selena:** I think as a kid I felt like I was being dishonest to my mom or I couldn't share with my mom what was happening because I didn't know...I felt like that would hurt her a lot. And then I didn't know if I could, if that was allowed. As a kid, you just don't know. You're just like, "This feels wrong and it's not right and I don't know what to do about it as a little 7-year-old."

**Ryan:** Already at that age you're starting to without even really recognizing what it is. But your whole foundation has this massive...

**Selena:** There's a chasm in it. [00:15:00]

**Ryan:** Yeah, this massive schism, that it's now two parts. And you're having to protect. You're having to be a protector for your dad, for your mom. You're having to be kind of masking the truth in these ways.

**Selena:** You're the in-between. And it's like...

**Ryan:** But you don't consciously know that, oh, I'm having to withhold something that's true and even just put your feelings totally to the side. You didn't get to process through "this doesn't feel right. This feels like I'm having..." Instead, it's all just push down.

**Selena:** I think you said it. I'm not a stuffer, I don't think, of feelings, but I definitely would just shove things to the side. And it's just like, "It's fine. I don't need to deal with that right now."

**Ryan:** You compartmentalize it.

**Selena:** I do. I do.

**Ryan:** And now I deal with it. *[both laughs]*

**Selena:** God is good. But I remember that dinner that I had with my dad and I forgave him and I said all the things that I forgave him for that I felt like the Lord wanted me to forgive him of. I mean, he was pretty teary-eyed and I think he definitely felt the weight of that grace or forgiveness or whatever. But to this day we're friends, but we don't really see each other that much. I don't really feel like I know him a whole lot, because we just have not spent much time together.

**Ryan:** Like maybe two or three times a year, maybe four times a year.

**Selena:** Yeah. Again, I don't want to...

**Ryan:** Yeah, it's okay. It is what it is.

**Selena:** So forgiveness, grace washing over that. I think a 17-year-old Selena would probably say that I want to make sure there was no unforgiveness in my heart. So I need to go and check off all the boxes of forgiveness. But we've forgiven, we've kind of moved on from there. I remember that kind of being a little pivotal for me is like, "Okay, there shouldn't be anything here." But it's still kind of affects you. Holidays are still divided. Most of our life is still divided.

Again, I don't have a really deep relationship with my dad. Ryan and I, we've been forced at a really early ages with our kids to talk about divorce because



they don't understand why grandma and grandpa aren't together. And I try and answer why and what and give it a definition of divorce. We're teaching them about God and love and all these things, and we're like, how do you explain divorce to a 7-year-old? They couldn't explain it to me. How can I explain it to them? God is just so faithful and good to show us that right now we can draw those lines back to sin for our kids.

I think I know the world would argue that, but really it's sin and brokenness. This is not a shame on you for getting divorce if you are listening, because I do have friends that are divorced and remarried and God has been so beautiful in redeeming marriages in that way. So the caveat here really is just my testimony of God is good. I should not be who I am today, nor should I be married to the same man and have three kids with him. By all accounts, I should be three kids, three different dads, living with my mom or something. God has just been so good.

I shouldn't be doing marriage ministry. *[both chuckles]* But also at the same time, I'd argue, yes, we should. God is...I think His testimony and His glory has shone through me and more...not more, but...I have to give all the glory to God. He is sovereign in every situation. He used the divorce and He still uses it in many ways for His glory, for my sanctification, for my going back to Him. He calls me back through my weaknesses. He requires my dependence to be on Him and for my trust to be built in Him first before it's in anyone else.

Again, He is sovereign. There's no excusing it. There's definitely hurts that I still have to work through. There's feelings that. We are going to talk about in a minute of how it's kind of affected Ryan and I. And I want to give him a minute to speak to obviously but...

**Ryan:** Just waiting for my turn. *[chuckles]*

**Selena:** No.

**Ryan:** Kidding.

**Selena:** Just knowing God, knowing His design and purpose for marriage, because we've explored it so much through Fierce Marriage. Truly, God's formed my desires, like the word says. He gives us His desires and He forms our desires to be His desires. So I want a godly marriage, and I want marriage to work, and I want to whatever that path is, and the path is God, it's truth, is the gospel. [00:20:00] We will never get away from saying that. I guess I should probably let Ryan talk a little bit. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** I enjoy hearing you kind of hash it out because we rarely get time to sit and talk about this stuff. I mean, we did a counseling series a while back and we were able to start kind of poking at some of these big elephants in the room. Anyway, I enjoy hearing you talk about it just because it helps me kind of understand you even just a little bit more every time we hash through it.

Just to echo what you said, I'm in awe of God's grace over our marriage, just you as my wife and the mother of our children and how we still live in a fallen world and sin has effects, right? But it doesn't seem like it's dashed our family upon the rocks. I'm very thankful for that. I'm thankful for you and your faith-filled journey and that you weren't a victim because you didn't allow yourself to remain a victim, I should say. I'm thankful for that. That's your story. We have actually shared that in the past. We look...

**Selena:** Family of origin.

**Ryan:** Family of origin—Selena's story. Just search for that.

**Selena:** It's a little more tearful. *[both chuckles]*

**Ryan:** Yeah. I mean, these emotions can have more raw expressions sometimes rather than others. So that was your story. And then we're going to talk real quick about how it kind of affects me or affects us. And then we're going to talk through really some of the bigger underlying divorce and worldview questions and what is causing this, right?

**Selena:** Right. Right.

**Ryan:** Anyway, I want to spend a lot of time on my reflection. I think the biggest way that it's affected us, and it's a recurring thing having to go back and forth is just intimacy. I don't mean physical intimacy, but just that closeness of you really feeling and allowing me to be on your side to be fighting for you. Because a lot of times when there's stress, immediately, I mean, we both do this...I don't want to throw you on the bus.

**Selena:** That's fine.

**Ryan:** I think your default posture is sometimes to have your hands up.

**Selena:** For sure. For sure. I just wrote that. We didn't even talk about this and these things I wrote about what I should say. I think he still feels like my default is to put up walls and to push them away rather than come close. That's just been a survival tactic. It's been a survival mechanism or whatever. It's hard to change. Well, because it's kept me safe and okay for so many years.

**Ryan:** It becomes Selena against the world and not Selena and Ryan against the world or against this issue. Now, granted, God is gracious. We've been able to identify that. We're 17 years in into the marriage, and we're 21 years into our relationship. So it's not like it's been a fast thing. But I'm just very hopeful for other couples that have or may be experiencing that. Whether you're in your first five years or decade-plus in or even further, just know that these things don't have to remain issues. You can work through them. You can learn, gain emotional empathy. That's another piece. So the walls has really forced me to, I think, learn new levels of empathy and listening.

**Selena:** Well, not to be like, "You don't know," but you came from a two-parent home. Your parents are still in love and married for - what is it? 20 some, 30 years?

**Ryan:** Actually, no. They're going on...

**Selena:** Forty?

**Ryan:** They got married in 60...

**Selena:** Wow.

**Ryan:** No, they graduated...I think they got married in 71.

**Selena:** Wow.

**Ryan:** So they're going on 50 years.

**Selena:** Oh, geez. Wow.

**Ryan:** Yeah, next year I think it's their 50th anniversary. That's insane.

**Selena:** That's crazy. So, sort of what this book kind of uncovers as well is just that how kids from a two-parent home, their perspective is just so different from kids from a one-parent home. I hate to say you'll never understand, but you just can't because we have different experiences. Just like I wouldn't know what it's like to have two parents in a home, you would never know what it's like to have just one parent and to watch your parents not like each other and break up.

**Ryan:** I think that there's that big kind of underlying, there's this big break. You have two homes, and you don't have that same depth of security or that consistency. But I think that has kind of, if you think about it radiating outward, what are the other effects that maybe aren't core to it, but are ancillary. Right?

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** So you have [00:25:00] things like...your mom she's one of the hardest working women I know, brilliant, take such good care of us. I'm blown away by your mom. We love her.

**Selena:** But she had to work and be the provider.

**Ryan:** That's two effects in that she was the provider which was never enough because she was still in nursing school when the divorce happened. She had not started that yet.

**Selena:** Finances were big.

**Ryan:** And so food banks were very real.

**Selena:** Church food bank was where we got food.

**Ryan:** Even to this day, that still...it permeates her thinking. Not to say that's a bad thing, but she's very frugal-minded. Not that being frugal is a good thing. Being a good steward, that's always a good thing. But that is...

**Selena:** It's residue I think from...even with me, too, I think sometimes.

**Ryan:** So you were always really afraid to ask for things of me.

**Selena:** I'm always been afraid to ask for things because I never wanted to burden my already financially burdened mom or parents, right?

**Ryan:** One of the things you articulate, at least in the last year, I've heard you say at least half a dozen times is this notion... You just kind of reflecting back saying, as a young child, you go to a friend's house and you would want...maybe it's just being shy, but you would want maybe a glass of water and you would always ask your friend ask their parents for a glass of water. For the record, I would do the same thing. I think for different reasons. Because I was very introverted. I love my dad, but he has a very strong personality. I was, I think, pretty stifled because of his strength of personality. I didn't feel very confident. And I'm saying it kindly right now. *[laughs]* So anyway, I think that's one effect of it.

The other piece is that intimacy that was lacking between you and your mom I think is affecting how you're mothering our children. Just because she was working so much. She worked her butt off. She would go to the hospital, she

worked night shifts so that she could see you in the morning before you went to school. I mean, how amazing is that? And how grace-filled is that? She had the wherewithal and the desire to do that and God helped her do that. There was never really time to just sit and like bond, right?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** That wasn't part of your...

**Selena:** We did it in different ways. She would save up all year for vacations. We would connect in different ways. And here I am homeschooling my kids, home with them all day all the time. Sometimes there's these God's starting to bring to my own recognition of, "Hey, your kids are here. They're playing and they are content. But how are you engaging with them? Because it doesn't seem like you're really engaged?" Even though you're present, you're not really engaging. Their life can just fly by so quickly.

There's things that we do that I remember as a kid that we did with my mom, but then there's things that I'm learning to kind of pioneer my way through and understand my own rhythms of our home. And as a mom, how can I connect with each of these three different personalities? I feel torn in all which way because I want to give them each 100%. But anybody who was multiples knows that it's just not possible. But I'm...

**Ryan:** Sorry. So you could probably say that motherliness is something you've had to really fight for.

**Selena:** Yeah. And I've had to watch other people be moms.

**Ryan:** And wifeliness if that's even a thing.

**Selena:** Right, right. I barely remember my parents being together, unfortunately, because it was such a young age. So I wasn't able to really watch my mom be a wife to my dad. She was just my mom more.

**Ryan:** I want to just...Sorry, you finished that?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** I'm just reflecting and I'm really trying to be tactful. Again, God is gracious. I think He's been gracious. I've struggled a lot with bitterness towards your dad. If I could just say that.

**Selena:** I don't think he'll listen *[laughing]* to our podcast.

- Ryan:** He probably won't. I'm trying to process this. I hold you in such high regard. You're the wife, the gift that God has given me, you're a daughter of the king and now we have three daughters. That almost makes it worse because I wonder how could you just walk out like that and...
- Selena:** I mean, that kind of leads us to what...
- Ryan:** Hold on. The nature of it, though, was so flippant. That's the part that really frustrates me if I can just vent a little bit is it was so flippant. From what I hear you recounting and recalling, and when I've heard your mom talk about it, it was just like, "I'm just over this. I'm over this version of my life now." [00:30:00] That really grieves me as your husband and as the father of our daughters. It makes it really hard for me to have grace toward him. Bear in mind, this wasn't your dad's first marriage either. Your mom wasn't your dad's first wife.
- Selena:** Right. And the thing is, too, is that if...I mean, it's just uncanny. He definitely has regrets, I think about not having more of a relationship with me and my brother...
- Ryan:** Because you're his only biological children even though he's helped raise two other families. Which again, that's another point of contention, too, because...Sorry, I just want to make sure we...
- Selena:** No, there's definitely dysfunction around everything that we deal with. And yes, I think this...
- Ryan:** Let me finish that thought though.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** In my frustration around this idea that you have immediate needs as a teenage girl and here is another family being raised by your biological father, and your mom struggling to make ends meet.
- Selena:** And God, again, shows Himself faithful even in that time. I mean, I can't think...
- Ryan:** You read rawness in my voice I'm sure. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** I can't thank enough the pastors and the leaders, and the teachers, and the people that were in my life that kept me in God's house, and nowhere else. I was so involved with my youth group. I was so involved with some of my best friends. We're ones that followed after Jesus enthusiastically, and we went to

camps, we went to conferences. We were with Jesus. We were the Jesus freaks and just loved Jesus with all our hearts. Didn't have time for boys, even though we saw some cute ones.

**Ryan:** Until you saw this guy.

**Selena:** Until I saw this guy, yes,. And I was like, "I don't like boys," and then you came in.

**Ryan:** You like men. That's what you said. *[both chuckles]*.

**Selena:** You are right.

**Ryan:** That's 15-year-old?

**Selena:** Yes. Yes, we'll hear your Cinderella story later. *[both laughs]*

**Ryan:** *[inaudible]* watch movie, she's all that. *[Selena laughs]*

**Selena:** That's Ryan.

**Ryan:** He's all that.

**Selena:** He's all that. *[both laughs]* But anyways. We'll come back to how can a couple begins sorting through some of the issues and maybe some of the issues you've heard in our voices of how it might affect us. So, me as a wife and a mother, I feel like a bit of a pioneer, just to recap, in learning some of that. We still deal with my default kind of being a wall, putting my hands up, resistance, learning to trust, I think, and submit at deeper levels because it's been asked of me as a mother and as a wife. And it's good. It's within the covenant of God. It's not something that is oppressive or anything like that.

And then dealing with some unacknowledged feelings. I think anger is always been a hard thing for me too. I'm either hot or cold. I can't seem to manage in between. I'm really trying and I'm learning. All I saw was kind of hot or cold unfortunately in my home. At least, that's in the impressionable times that I saw.

Again, and also fear of never getting things right, failure, hurts, and breaks things. So I didn't want to fail. And trust. Friendships have always taken me a long time to open up at deeper levels. I think I can be friends with people three to five years and I'm just like, "Gosh, I wish we were better friends." *[laughs]* Ryan's like, "Uhm. Okay."

- Ryan:** [inaudible] person more than ever.
- Selena:** Some about fear, failure, hurts, and breaks things. And so I don't want to fail.
- Ryan:** You're very afraid of failure. And that comes out a lot in our marriage. I think it's maybe the last point that I've touched on in this regard is a lot of times you are anticipating because you're afraid that I will see, think, or say something that I have not yet thought or said...
- Selena:** But you will! *[laughs]* Not really.
- Ryan:** ...where you are pre-empting my response. And that does really short circuit sometimes healthy...
- Selena:** Conversation.
- Ryan:** Healthy conversation. And even just healthiness in general.
- Selena:** Health.
- Ryan:** We've had to be real careful in backing out of those weeds that tangles very intentionally.
- Selena:** Because you start blaming me as I start anticipating. I'm like, "Here he goes. He's doing it."
- Ryan:** Self-fulfilling prophecy. So I've had to learn as your husband to carefully backpedal out of that and de-escalate it, not in an annoying way, but in a productive way, knowing that this path is not going to lead to life in my...it'll get us there eventually, because God is gracious and we work our way through it. But there are better ways. So we've had to be very aware of that pre-emptive tendency that you have to try and preempt every possible scenario. I always joke that Selena tries to be a mind reader to varying degrees of success.
- Selena:** Oh, and you're always anticipating kids, right? "Oh, they're going to be hungry then, they're going to want this."
- Ryan:** That part is...Yeah, that's indisputable. We need you to do that. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Okay. Let's get into what the Bible says, not about...we're not talking about what are the biblical reasons for divorce? [00:35:00] We're not getting into that here. Right now we're talking about what God feels towards divorce. God hates divorce. The Bible's clear about that. He hates it. It was not His original



design. This is not to put shame on people. This is not "if you're in an abusive home, you should not get divorce." This is not what we're saying.

**Ryan:** How about this then? We don't want to put shame on people that feel divorced because we don't have...

[crosstalk]

**Selena:** That are divorced you mean?

**Ryan:** That feel or divorced, yeah.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** Here's the other thing. God hates sin. So God hates divorce, yes, but God hates sin. So divorces is a version of sin. It's a result of sin. It is sin. So we're not just somehow singling out divorce as this kind of irreconcilable, irretrievable, irredeemable transgression against God's law. It is a transgression and it is sin. And God hates it. But I do think there are unique aspects to divorce of given God's grand design for fruitfulness for the family, for...

**Selena:** Right. It's not outside of...

**Ryan:** ...human flourishing.

**Selena:** ...His ability to use it for His glory.

**Ryan:** Yes. But what I'm saying is that there are aspects of divorce itself as a unique sin. All sin can lead to death outside of the saving grace of Christ. But divorce, same with I think sexual sin, Paul talks about how sexual sin is unique in this way. I would even consider divorce kind of in those same lines. That it's different. It's unique. The fallout is especially insidious. It's especially nuclear. I mean, there's going to be this kind of sickening, radiating effect around divorce. And that's why, you guys, we spend all of our time, literally all of our time, by the grace of God, speaking out against it without calling it by those terms.

But we're helping to build Christ-centered marriage. Why? So divorce becomes far less common, and health becomes the norm in the church, and children flourish, families flourish. Does that mean your marriage is perfect? Not in the slightest. It just means that God will redeem it. If we submit ourselves to His ways, we'll see the redemption because He is faithful.

**Selena:** Right. The one verse that keeps coming to mind about why God hates divorce is usually Malachi 2:16. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." It says, "I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel."

But if you go back a few verses, we can see that...Well, and if you look at the whole Bible, right? God doesn't like divorce because He esteems marriage so highly. It's a covenant. It's a reflection of His own character and who He is. In this passage, it says that God, He's not just listening for the...He doesn't listen to the pleas for blessing from those who have broken a covenant of marriage.

But 1 Peter talks about how husbands like live with your wives in an understanding way, show honor to the woman, she is a weaker vessel, so that your prayers may be hindered. Not be hindered, sorry. So there's a direct correlation between how a man treats his wife and the effectiveness of his prayer, which is so interesting to me. But again, God in Malachi 2, go back a few verses, He's the one who makes husband and wife one. He designed it; He gets to define it. And that's what I think is so cool about...

**Ryan:** Yeah, let's hover on that a minute. That God designed marriage, He designed covenant. We've talked about this, but I'm going to reiterate it. Covenant is part of God's character. It's His whole method for relating to His chosen people. Selena always rolls her eyes at me on this part because I like to go into all of the covenants and see the big survey of them.

**Selena:** Why do you like the covenants?

**Ryan:** I know. But the point is, is marriage is a covenant for a reason. And God designed it in that way for a reason because only a covenantal framework can fulfill the purposes He has in mind. Now, divorce is just undermining the covenantal framework, is saying that I am not actually going to call it divorce...I'm not going to call marriage covenant, I'm going to call it something else. I'm going to call it a contract or I'm going to call it negotiable thing.

**Selena:** Agreement.

**Ryan:** An agreement. As long as it's mutually agreeable, we're good. As soon as I'm over it, kind of like what I used earlier, language with your dad, is then it becomes something else. It's not a covenant. I don't know. I just think oftentimes we overlook the profound nature of God's design, His architecture, He's blueprinted it for u, and it's [00:40:00] as if we are saying, "All right, we're going to build..." Marriage is a grand endeavor. Marriage is a grand endeavor. And say you're going to build a Taj Mahal or you going to build some grand

architectural thing. We have a plan for that. We have structural engineering for that. We have permits for that.

And now someone is saying, "Great. That's a great plan. I like how it looks, but I'm just going to play by ear. And instead, I'm going to try to build this structure without any sort of plan, without any sort of architecture, without any sort of overarching authority or truth." And what's the inevitable result? We get shanty towns, and we get buildings that collapse and kill everyone who lives inside.

So the whole point that I'm trying to harp on here is that the design for marriage is not arbitrary. It is God's design. It is perfect. Even though our marriages aren't perfect, His design is. And our whole goal within covenantal love, covenantal marriage is to submit ourselves to that perfect, great design.

**Selena:** Right. And I think we take marriage too lightly because we don't understand the depths of covenant. I mean, read the Old Testament. Talks about covenant. Genesis, the first covenant between a man and a woman, right? We see all these covenants, like you said, between God and His people. But divorce was not a thing. And now because it's so prevalent in our culture, I think we can kind of take the sharp edges off in our own mind of, you know, God's purpose and design for it.

Again, this is not a shameful talk. There's sin and brokenness that causes divorce, which then results in more brokenness. But then I'm here saying and people like me are here saying, yes, God is so faithful and sovereign to fill in the gaps for me as a kid. Putting teachers there who could talk me through hard things, or who could just show me the love of God or model Christ's patience and His thoughtfulness and His goodness and His kindness. God is so faithful.

And this is not to excuse marriage and say, "Oh, yeah, the kids will be fine and whatnot, because that is not God's original design, purpose, and intent. He wants fruitfulness from that. But God is so good to be able to...He allows fruitfulness to happen even from brokenness.

**Ryan:** So what we're reviewing here is that what does scripture say about divorce. In general, God hates divorce because divorce is a sin, but it's also a special sort of category of it, which I think is...

**Selena:** Well, and it's such a picture of Him and His design and His purpose.

**Ryan:** Wait, wait, wait. Marriage is.

- Selena:** Marriage is, sorry. Marriage is.
- Ryan:** The picture of covenantal relationships.
- Selena:** Right. So divorce is really kind of a mockery of God's created concept for this covenantal relationship.
- Ryan:** I don't know how much more we can cover here. What are the underlying kind of deceptive forces that a couple can be aware of when it comes to divorce? I know this isn't in the rundown. So I apologize. But I'm thinking about some of these themes like...Well, I mean, individuality.
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** Individualism. That's a fairly new phenomenon over the last 100 years or so. A lot can be said about individualism, but self-actualization, meaning I am the arbiter of my own destiny, of my own fate. I am paramount. It's not just about my group.
- Selena:** This is the idea of individuals.
- Ryan:** Yes. Yeah. The idea of individualism and how is that weighing into marriage. If we don't value our community structures as well, like biblical communities, namely, churches and the authority of it, then we run the risk of making decisions based on a completely individual judgement.
- Selena:** Because it's an idolatry thing. We become the god and we become the...
- Ryan:** You said that so perfectly. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** It's okay. We become the authority, right? So if there's no outside governing force, then we will just default to whatever we think is best, which typically is not always right and godly.
- Ryan:** Can I share some of these? Is that okay?
- Selena:** Sure. And then I think we need to quickly get into how can a couple begin to sort through some of these issues if you're dealing with this, if the sin accord with you.
- Ryan:** One last underlying thing. And this is the foreword of this book Primal Loss that we mentioned. And it was written by...I want to give her credit. Jennifer Roback.

- Selena:** Oh, the forward, yeah.
- Ryan:** The forward, yes. She wrote the foreword. The book is by Leila Miller. Anyway, the foreword starts like this. This is [inaudible] like a good forward, right?
- Selena:** I'm a forward reader.
- Ryan:** You got to be.
- Selena:** I read the forwards. I read the dedications and notes, every single thing.
- Ryan:** It gets you La La land.
- Selena:** It does.
- Ryan:** It's like a little snapshot. [00:45:00]
- Selena:** It really does.
- Ryan:** I would hope you listeners would read all the forwards to all Fierce Marriage books. It starts like this: "The divorce ideology is one of the linchpins of the sexual revolution." I've not thought of it like that. That's me, not the foreword. But the linchpin of the sexual revolution. And what that means is it is critical for the proponents of sexual revolutionism or the revolution to have what they want. And that's this change in this debasement of sexual ethics. I'll pause it there.
- Then she goes on. "Kids are resilient. Parents who don't get along do their kids no favor by staying married." These are all kind of lies underneath this. "Everyone has a right to be happy, which means the right to change sex partners, more or less at will. TV sitcoms, movies, academic studies, public policies, style, quote, unquote, sections of newspapers, women's magazines, therapist, and even some clergy claim divorce is harmless to children and beneficial to adults. Unfortunately, these claims are false. Switching partners around can create chaos in the family. Divorce does not necessarily solve the problems people thought it would solve. The probability of divorce is higher for second marriages than for first marriages."
- I want to go through...let's see. There's another piece. I can read the whole forward. I'm going to spare you though. There's one piece on this next page. It says, "In reality, many divorces take place against the will of one of the parties." That's something we don't...Like your mom...
- Selena:** Didn't want it.

**Ryan:** ...fought tooth and nail. She did not want it. She would have done anything. She did everything she could. "It takes place against the will of one of the parties. The law takes sides with the party who wants the marriage the least. Even if that person has committed adultery. That is how no-fault divorce not only demolished the presumption that marriage is permanent, it also smashed the presumption that marriage is sexually exclusive." This is so good. I can keep reading.

**Selena:** I know. I'm telling you. It's a good book.

**Ryan:** But there's all these like...we just...as a culture, we've been sold a bill of goods, that divorce is just somehow not devastating. One of the things that she says, I can't remember, if it's the person who wrote the foreword or the author of the book, they said that divorce is like the battered bloody elephant in the room. That nobody is talking about it, but it is bloody and it is causing all this discord in our society.

**Selena:** All the messes.

**Ryan:** And no one's talking about it. No one talks about how it affects the kids. If you think about divorce conversations of any substance or merit, they're always around what are the parents thinking and feeling? And how do they process through it? And of all things, how do they handle it financially, which to me is so asinine that that's the thing that we're focusing on. So anyway, maybe we'll get more...

**Selena:** Maybe we'll make this a two-part series. So if you're a couple, you're kind of hearing our dialogue, if you're a couple that has divorce in their childhood, maybe we're talking and some things are starting to resonate with you, I think just the biggest thing for me right now has been to recognize some of the issues and begin talking about them, just naming them, finding a resource like Primal Loss that kind of lists out a bunch of things.

There were a few things that I was like, "Yeah, that's definitely not me. God has redeemed me from a lot of that." Which was faith-building, right? Like God has been so good. But then there's other places that I was like, "Yeah. God, that is a struggle for me, that is hard for me. And now I know why it's such a big struggle for me." I would encourage you couple to gently and fearlessly proceed together with Christian community. Find a guide couple or mentor couple. We were trying to circle guide couples, but a married couple you can maybe have some of these hard conversations with or ask questions and just have a safe space to discuss this with.

I think the biggest thing for you is ask God right to give you opportunities to see how far He's brought you. So ask God, "God, give me eyes to see how you have redeemed this brokenness that I've had to walk through and grow through and still deal with today, and will continue to deal with my whole life, but also areas where am I still struggling. God, you know my heart, show me. Shine the light in the dark places. I'm not going to be afraid of them. Give me a spirit of fear. You know how to sanctify me. You know the pain and you know the fear and the pride or the whatever my mechanisms are. God, help me. Purify my heart, O God. Know me."

**Ryan:** So what are the challenge questions for couples? I think you put a lot of questions out.

**Selena:** No, sorry. So I think if you're from a divorced home, start talking about it. When did it happen? How did you feel? How do you think that it's affecting you today? And then honestly, I think you need to ask your spouse how they think it is affected you in your marriage. So it's like me asking you Ryan, how has my [00:50:00] parents' divorce affected you and affected us? How do you see that playing out? Because I think that that's healthy for us. Because I can only see so much.

It's a big topic, but I think just begin asking questions and asking each other and sitting there and assuring each other of like, "I'm not going anywhere. Let's have these conversations."

**Ryan:** And just to reiterate, you had mentioned including a guide couple in that conversation I think as soon as you can. I think that would be really beneficial. Even if you just say, "Hey, could you pray for us, we're going to be talking about kind of my history coming from a divorced home. Just so you know, I'll let you know how that goes." You start to discern what is necessary. But don't walk through it alone I think is the theme.

With that said, I do want to make another mention of Gospel Centered Marriage. And the reason is one of the biggest pieces that we are fighting for within that is to get people, you couples, ourselves, other couples to walk through marriage, the hard things of marriage, and even just live alongside intentional as that word. If it's not intentional, what is it? I don't know.

**Selena:** Random. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** Yeah. To walk alongside actual couples. And what a guide couple is it just think of any couple in your life that is accessible to you that you look up to that follows Jesus. And ask them gently, tactfully, "Would you mind just being a resource for us? It doesn't mean you have to meet us weekly or anything. Just

can we text you monthly to check in and you can ask us questions as the Holy Spirit prompts?" That's what a guide couple is all about.

Anyway, all that to say is Gospel Centered Marriage, that's a huge component of that. And being that it's a brand new resource that we're just finishing up, we'd love for you to jump on board. It will launch in early January. So there'll be an early signup discount. It's going to be worth it, people. It's going to be worth it. [Gospelcenteredmarriage.com](http://Gospelcenteredmarriage.com). If you go there and there's nothing there, just check like a day or so after.

**Selena:** He's working hard on it, people.

**Ryan:** I'm working hard, but I had a massive migraine today and it took me out for four hours out of the day.

**Selena:** Guys, we don't have four hours to spend.

**Ryan:** We don't.

**Selena:** Everything this week is crazy.

**Ryan:** It's the devil!

**Selena:** So anyways...

**Ryan:** Let's pray out because of that. Spiritual warfare. Cosmic forces of darkness that are at play.

**Selena:** Okay. Go ahead. *[Ryan laughs]*

**Ryan:** Lord, we thank you for this time and thank you for your grace. I pray for the couples that maybe this resonated with. I pray that first and foremost, they would feel your love and feel your grace in this message. Even if it is a hard truth, a hard pill to swallow, God, it's your truth. And it's life-giving if only we can submit ourselves to it.

Lord, your word is authoritative above all else in our lives, not ourselves, not our opinions, not other voices. Your voice. So I pray that you would help us Holy Spirit to fully appreciate that reality on every level. I pray that would help the husband and the wife who feel particularly helpless at the moment, that you would give them hope in their helplessness and their hope would not be in themselves but in you. And then eventually they would find the help they need through your community, through your word, through prayer, through



just starting these hard conversations with their spouse, they would find help that is rooted in the hope of the gospel in Jesus name. Amen.

**Selena:** Amen. All right.

**Ryan:** All right, ladies and gentlemen, this iPhone episode is—

**Selena:** In the can.

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

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**[00:53:35]** <outro>

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

- **[00:03:45]**
  - Recommended resource:
    - [Gospel Centered Marriage](#)
  
- **[00:37:19]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Malachi 2:16

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