

RHYTHMS > RESOLUTIONS

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[00:00:00]

Selena: I think we're similar when it comes to the first of the year. I don't really like resolutions. I want something more ambiguous. So I want to pick some words *[both chuckles]* to define the year or...

Ryan: Something that's not going to get you into trouble later.

Selena: Yeah. I mean, it is your birthday on the first. So that's kind of cool. You're New Year's baby. But I don't know, I get overwhelmed with the resolutions and goals. I'm like, "I just want to already be doing what I'm doing and not start again." *[laughs]* Does that makes sense?

Ryan: Right, right.

Selena: And you're similar.

Ryan: Normally this time of year I get really excited because I feel like you're finishing up this really busy season, and then you have holidays and everything, and then school. And all this stuff kind of just culminates. Then finally, you have this week between Christmas and New Year's. But this year, I just have not felt...We were on the couch last night talking and I was just like, "I feel like I just ran a marathon and I'm getting ready to run another one." Like I'm exhausted, and I have to start another marathon. A lot of it has to do with some of the work we've been doing.

I kind of just was studying and just surrendering to God yesterday in my devotions, and I just thought, "How can I just approach this year differently, but still honor God." So this episode is the culmination of some of that thought process and as we've processed over the years goals as a marriage. Anyway, we hope it helps you and we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:26] <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.

[00:01:58] <podcast begins>

Selena: So I guess we're a little bit more different than I thought. You do get excited at the first of the year. I'm excited for a quote-unquote, "fresh start." But I don't know, with all the lockdowns in life just being what it is day in and day out, I'm just like, "It's just a number on the calendar." It's not really another monumental change because nothing's really changing. We're just starting over with something else. But you know, having kids teaching them about time and...I don't know, it's just an interesting concept.

But anyways, New Year's is great. We're starting to run a marathon again it feels like. But God is good. We're reading - what? Isaiah or Proverbs. I can't remember. But he says he gives might to the weak. He gives strength to those...

Ryan: That was Isaiah.

Selena: And we were like, "Yes, Lord, that is us." *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Oh, my word. And then also I was reading Psalm 5 yesterday how he said that He covers the righteous with a shield. And thank God that He made me righteous because I'm not righteous on my own. But He covers us like a shield. Right?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And that's a great comfort in this moment. So, as we start this new year, we're recording this on the day it will release...Like you said, we were feeling a little bit...a lot a bit overwhelmed.

Selena: A lot a bit.

Ryan: So we're having to cope with that. Part of that is our podcast rhythms have been completely kind of just demolished over the last three or four weeks.

Selena: Most rhythms have been demolished. I'd say that's a safe assumption.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. We're having to figure out new rhythms in light of a kind of a bunch of new realities that we're facing.

Selena: Yeah, new seasons.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. We'll hopefully, I guess paint this whole resolutions rhythms, this whole kind of conversation, and maybe a somewhat novel light that will help somebody. So anyway, listener, we hope it's helpful to you.

First things first. Thank you for listening. Man, it means a lot to us. We're honored that you would give us your ears, you'd give us your time and your attention. I hope that it's a fruitful listen for you. If it has been, please go ahead and leave a comment and a review in iTunes, whatever podcast app you use. That's typically going to be iTunes or something like that, or the podcast app. Now, iTunes was officially I think gone. It's gone. But there's the podcast app now.

Secondly, if you are wanting to start this year and being on mission with us, then we'd be honored. We just ask that you pray about that. If God leads you and your spouse to be on mission with us, namely, in a financial capacity, there's a way to do that. Go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. There are tiers there.

One of the most exciting things that we are allowing our patrons to get for free is access to our brand new course ecosystem. It's actually not live yet but we're just making the final changes. The initial six-week marriage course will be available starting next week. And we're going to continually add marriage enrichment content.

Think of it like this. Really kind of blown out [00:05:00] podcast conversations that we have with each other, we have with other guests, and then we build those out into kind of larger resource, discussion guides, conversation guides, and things. And that's packaged in a way that you can take it as like a little mini-course. That's what the enrichment content will be. That's going to grow throughout the year.

Anyway, if that's interesting to you, you can go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage and become a subscriber there. \$10 a month on up I think is the levels we're going to provide that for. Or you can go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. That's where you can find all the information.

Selena: Awesome.

Ryan: Yeah. That I think is a great way to start the new year.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: A lot of couples have a channel for everything in their life that they enjoy but they don't spend time edifying, building up the most important human relationship in their life. And they wonder why they can't seem to get on the same page, or they're not growing in communication.

Selena: Channel. What does that mean?

Ryan: I mean, channel like you have like the Discovery Channel. You can subscribe to the Discovery Channel or Nickelodeon, or Disney plus, or whatever. We're trying to create a space for you to get not just marriage kind of entertainment, right? We want it to be gospel-centered, discipleship and instruction. That's the difference. We're not trying to just entertain folks. We're trying to really root marriages in the Gospel because long after you quit your subscription with Gospel Centered Marriage, the gospel will still be bearing weight in your everyday marriage in life. That's our prayer anyway. That long after Ryan and Selena Frederick are out of your life out, of the picture, Jesus still is. That's really what matters.

Anyway, let's open this conversation up. I wrote the rundown for this one, so I'll probably take the lead. But Selena Feel free to jump in at any point, obviously. But I am kind of this year eschewing resolutions. I'm avoiding them. And the reason for that is I do have daily resolutions anyway. Resolutions things like, "Today I will honor my wife." This is just really relevant example. But today I will honor my wife with my thoughts, words, actions, and attitudes.

Another one. I'm actually pulling it up in front of my face right now. "Today I will commit my heart, head, and handiwork to the Kingship of Christ," meaning I'm submitting it to Him. I'm not going to do it for myself, but I'm doing it for my King, capital K King, who is Christ. So I kind of have these resolutions that are part of my daily acts...Actually, I'll say weekly rhythms. I read those at least once, maybe twice a week.

Actually, I have 16 of them. They were 20. I whittled it down. There's 16 of those that I just go through just to kind of reset my heart on these things. And what I found is that these tinier resolutions, with a little bit of a higher resolution to them in terms of...I'm using that word in two different ways. I apologize. But a lot of times with new year's resolutions or any sort of big goals we have, we will say, "This year I want to lose 20 pounds," or "this year I want to say..."

Selena: Word. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: "This year I want to save X number of dollars," or "this year I want to, you know, do whatever the thing is." Run a marathon. It's not high resolution. It's very low rez. In other words, it's like one big pixel of like, here's the one big goal; there's not a lot of texture around how to get there. I found by adding resolution to the resolutions, again, I apologize if that's confusing, but finer level of detail that are more built around rhythms, and less built around these big outcomes, I found that the rhythms will take care of the outcomes far greater than just shooting for the goal could ever do.

Selena: So you're saying little tweaks, little decisions to help us move in the direction where we're hoping to achieve something. So our marriage, for example, we want to be better friends. So, how does that start today? Well, it feels like we have these grand lofty ideas of we're going to date, we're going to do all these things, when really, it could be like one of your daily resolutions of I want to ask my wife or my husband, as a wife, asking my husband, "How was your day? Tell me a high and a low." Every day, I want to check in with him at a connecting level, not just a passing level. But I'm going to connect with my husband, my spouse every day. So what does that look like? And in a fun way, right?

So you take that big idea, like you said, you whittle it down to just a daily rhythm. What are the daily rhythms that I can step into that will ultimately lead us to this resolution where we can look back...and when we're in December 2021 looking back, saying, "We did this. Every day we did this, every month, we did this. Like yes, God, we can see a difference in [00:10:00] because of the decisions we made to have different daily rhythms."

Ryan: It's totally biblical to...I mean, one of the passages that comes to mind is Proverbs 6:6. It says, "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."

So why the ant? Why is the ant the thing? Why didn't the...I don't know who the author of this particular proverb is. Probably Solomon. But why didn't he say like, "Look at the bear," or "look at the lion and look at how mighty that lion is, and how they go and get the kill." That's what we all think with the lions. But what if we're the ants.

Selena: We want to think, yes.

Ryan: What if we're the ant and our whole role is to just be faithful in the little... Ants accomplish a ton of work over a long period of time. It's not like an ant goes out and picks up a huge boulder. But every day they're picking up little tiny things and bringing them back to the anthill. They're storing up. It's just that time tested faithfulness.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That to me is so...

Selena: It's obedient.

Ryan: Well, those are rhythms, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Because it's just consistency. Because consistency is what changes our...

Selena: Well, no, actually, I think refine your resolutions together. Like you said, if I'm really consistent at doing these things every day, and again, not just checking off a box but actual engagement, things that the Holy Spirit is leading me in and things that I want to be better at, right? Again, it's not an identity thing. It's not striving. It is just at some level. But I want to like demystify that of this is something that is coming out of a godly desire to be closer in our marriage.

What are those things that you're looking at each other scratching your head saying, "Man, I wish our marriage was more like this," or "I wish we could be better in this area"? So what is that area? What does it look like? And how can we be the ant? And in those consistent pathways that we're constantly becoming more familiar with, I think we can become more efficient at and just better at. So it may feel a little fumbly if you're trying something a little bit new at a lower level, but the more you do it, I mean, the more consistent you are, the easier it gets.

Ryan: There's a quote that I want to use. And it's going to be kind of a foreshadowing of kind of how we're going to wrap up this conversation. But I just want to get you thinking about it. I love this. It's by an author... His name is James Clear. He wrote a book called "Atomic Habits." It's really helpful in this area. It's not Christian, but I did find it helpful. He said, "You do not rise to the level of your goals, but you fall to the level of your systems." Systems is another word really as far as this conversation goes. Systems is really just another word for built in habits, supporting rhythms in the areas that you really care about in your life. So built in habit, supporting rhythms.

We're going to end there, but I really do want to address kind of this heart orientation that I at least have because I think you can fall on two sides of the spectrum, in terms of setting goals or having ambition. Because everything we want, especially around this time of the year is oriented around an ambition that we have. And whatever that ambition is, self-actualization typically, that's what new year's resolutions are, you know, looking better, feeling better, doing more, right? Because that will make us feel better about ourselves.

So, I just want to look at the heart in that, I guess, the gospel and our goals if you will. How does the gospel inform, and how should it? How does Jesus tell us to let our hearts be informed and our goals be informed by who He is and what He's done? So over the next 12 months, as you know, whether you listen to this now in January, or maybe later on in the year, whatever period of time it is...

Selena: It doesn't really matter.

Ryan:you're going to get...constantly there's an onslaught of distraction of opportunities. Some of them are usually really good, but you have to know how to navigate those wisely. So my tendency is, even though this year is a little bit different, but my tendency is to have really big eyes. Like my eyes are bigger than my own capacity. I'll think, "Oh, I'm going to do X, Y and Z because won't this year be great when I hit December and it's all done and I feel like I just live my best life?" *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Which if I can be your fan club here, that is one of the things I think that is one of your [00:15:00] strengths because you do lead us in a good, godly way.

Ryan: I hope so.

Selena: You have things on our agenda that will be memory makers. And it's all for good reasons. It builds relationships. But of course, the underbelly of that can be you like to take big bites out of *[both laughs]* things that we may not be

able to chew and actually swallow. So I will say, as your cheerleader, I think it's awesome. And I see the struggle also.

Ryan: Well, that's why I think we complement each other in this area, because you're not really my opposite, but you are...

Selena: I like little bite. I don't want big things because I'm more detail-oriented, I think. You say big and I say a billion details. Like you see the big, fun thing and I'm like, "I see that. But I also see the overwhelming amounts of detail that's going to take to get there."

Ryan: So the downside of that is you can look at the cost so closely and forget that some things are actually worth the high price.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: They're worth that amount of detail. They're worth going to all that trouble. So, I think we have to kind of find the balance there between. Having eyes that are too big for our own stomachs, versus having been so detail-oriented, that we never want to do anything.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That is of consequence. That we get so caught up in the trees that we lose sight of the forest. So that's an important kind of balance to find. Let's read a scripture. And bear with us. We know there's some context to be had here. But Selena, do you mind reading Luke 14:28-30?

Selena: For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"

Ryan: That that passage is not about building stuff. I just want to get that out there. *[Selena laughs]* That's not what it's about. There's kind of two levels of truth to be had here. Jesus is using a very obvious truth to illuminate a deeper, bigger truth. The obvious truth is that if you start a building project, and everybody in your neighborhoods watching you, and you can't finish it because you took bit off more than you could chew, you're going to be mocked. You're acting a fool, you're going to be treated like a fool.

That's the truth that they're all very aware of. And he's saying that that is like those who say they're my followers and they don't count the cost of following

me, and then they turn away as soon as it gets hard. This verse is about discipleship. It's about the cost of discipleship. That's really what it's about.

So it does bear weight on our hearts in a deeper way, which is like when my goals are put on the chopping block, when my ambitions are put on the chopping block, am I willing to give those up to follow Jesus? If you read on in that passage, I don't have in front of me, but if you go all the way...bear with me. I'm trying to get it in front of me. If you go all the way down to verse 33, it says, "So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

So yeah, this grande cost of discipleship. As I'm reading this, I'm trying to figure out, okay, with this new opportunity, fresh start, last year was a little tough, it's an understatement, what are my marching orders? And how should I be excited? And what am I going to do this year? How am I going to tackle this year? And honestly, the first thing I had to do is just surrender all those to Jesus. And that I think was a really refreshing place for me to start—to start with surrender. Because then I felt like, okay, now I've got a true blank slate. Truly, nothing matters except for Him. Now, how is He asking us?

Selena: It's almost parallel to the Sabbath of beginning from rest and beginning from a place of resignation. Sort of the sweet resignation, that this is a new time, so the world says. *[chuckles]* Again, I have my thoughts on time. My heart longs for timelessness. Sometimes I hear quotes about how we become slaves to time. It was supposed to be a tool of measurement. And it is, but it also has created slaves and followers. Anyways. So beginning this next year from a place of rest and resignation, I think is the call of wisdom in a lot of ways.

Ryan: Yeah, I love that. Because Jesus, He fulfilled the Sabbath, right? And that's why it's such a beautiful thing that He's saying, like, "Follow me." You start from a place of resignation. Another word for resignation is "rest." Like our baby is giving us a real run for our money right now because she does not want to rest. She will not resign herself to rest. And I just wish she would because she would sleep better, we would all sleep better, life would be better. So resignation and rest I think are side by side.

So Jesus fulfilling the Sabbath is calling us into this place of giving everything up. And if that grates on us, then that is a [00:20:00] red flag that says that we are not surrendering everything.

Selena: Right. And it requires trust. It requires...

Ryan: That He's worthy. That He's faithful.

Selena: The call to be a disciple, to work out your marriage with the gospel at the center, those calls are going to have high costs, but it's worth it.

Ryan: Amen. That's good. I'm kind of going through the stream of consciousness with you. As I'm going through this, I'm thinking, okay, Jesus is calling us to follow Him. But there are those who follow Him who then don't. So many will call themselves Christians, but then they remove Christ from it. My big question was this. Is it possible to be a foolish follower of Christ?

Selena: Hmm. Well, yeah. And to what level? I'm just curious because when he's like, "If you renounce me basically in front of people, then you haven't counted the cost and you're not a true disciple and follower." But how many times do I do that in my own life or have I done that with relationships or family relationships over the holidays? How many times did I maybe shrink back and not rise up when the conversation could have...Christ could have entered in it? It would have been controversial but am I counting that cost? I don't know. At what point am I a foolish follower and at what point am I really a disciple?

I mean, we look at Peter. He has his denial, and we have all of these things. So, is that where grace comes in as a believer and where we just get back up and try again?

Ryan: I think grace is there all along.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And Peter became the rock upon which Christ built His church. So there is definitely a lesson there. I just think of how the people of the day would have responded to Christ and His meteoric rise as a leader, as a teacher, as the Messiah that He was. Not everybody thought...they just were just compelled by Him because of His authority, because of how He taught. I'm sure there was just this...

Selena: And His healing.

Ryan: Yeah, and His healing. So you have these massive crowds are following Him thinking, "I'm going to follow this guy because I can get so much from Him."

Selena: Right. Until...

Ryan: Until I don't get what I expect from Him.

Selena: Or until there's...Yes, which is a part of until there's persecution for His followers.

Ryan: Yes, persecution, or "You know what? He's just not everything I was hoping He was going to be. I wanted a different version of Jesus." I just want to read something. I wrote this down yesterday. I will probably make its way into a blog post at some point. But I just wrote this. And I feel like I'm better at writing than I am speaking. Not that I'm a great writer but...

Selena: Same. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Foolish followers of Christ don't endure because while they follow, they follow for the wrong reasons. They don't finish the job because they never truly counted the cost. When a particular Christian doctrine becomes unpopular, they bend, twist, and contort themselves until finally, they fall out of actually following Christ. They still call themselves Christians, but their Christ is not the Jesus of the Bible. It's a Picasso's visage. Right? It's a distortion of who He is.

So the Christ as you know, His name is Jesus Christ, well, Christ is a word for "Messiah" or "chosen one." Jesus was His actual name. So people will say, "I'm a Christian," but they don't actually follow Him. I think our goals are sobering reminder of this. How we plan shows how we hope to spend our lives. How we plan shows how we hope to spend our lives. So if our planning is completely void of Christ, then what does that say about how we're hoping to spend our lives for Christ?

Selena: Right, right.

Ryan: And that to me was that that hit right at the heart of my motivation in setting goals. So, the reason we set goals must be from a place of wanting to follow Christ better.

Selena: Reflecting Him.

Ryan: And reflecting Him.

Selena: Modeling Him.

Ryan: Yes. Obey Him.

Selena: Right. I mean, it's always a death to self with Him, right? He died for us. He died for the sinner. That is, I think, what the Lord has been revealing to me, especially in my own Bible readings. I'm like, halfway through the Bible. It's going good, guys!

Ryan: Nice.

- Selena:** I'm working through it.
- Ryan:** Wait! You started a goal mid-year?
- Selena:** I did. *[both chuckles]* Because that's when they started it. So I just did it.
- Ryan:** I'm just kidding.
- Selena:** But I think that the Lord is so faithful to lead us gently, but also with a holy protein if that makes sense.
- Ryan:** Oh, absolutely. He calls us into this radical obedience. And it doesn't mean that we just sit by passively. There is a cost to it. And there is, hey, you've been conscripted into this army, you better get onto the battlefield type of thing. And I think that's why James talks about our works being so important because they're the natural outcome of the faith.
- Selena:** Right. Like you said, yeah, our works. So then those works come from [00:25:00] desires. And ultimately our prayer is, "God, may your desires be our desires. Remove any selfish gain, selfish ambition. Whatever is for me, God removes those and replace those with your desires." I think that's what...is it Psalm? Like trusting Lord with all your heart. No, no, no. The desires...
- Ryan:** It's in there. It's in there somewhere. *[Selena chuckles]* The Bible says.
- Selena:** It's the easy one. I can't lean not...
- Ryan:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not in your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him.
- Selena:** Acknowledge Him and He will give you the desires of your heart. He will give you the desires that your heart should have basically. This next year maybe it's just taking some time to pray and ask God: what are some desires that you have for our marriage? Maybe we can't see it right now. Maybe we're in the midst of some really hard stuff. Or maybe we're feeling like we're on a mountaintop right now. Everything's feels great, seems great. Won't be for...No, I'm kidding. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Just get ready!
- Selena:** But how can we ask the Lord for His desires to become ours so then we can start those rhythms, setting those, not goals, but those gospel rhythms that will help us achieve those greater pictures and desires and goals?

- Ryan:** That's a great question. I think the starting point is what you just said, is asking God. Because you asked, how do we ask God? I think we just do.
- Selena:** Right. From a place of, again, like what you said, of humility, resignation, rest, costliness I think. Just knowing...
- Ryan:** You've probably heard Psalm 1. It's the "Blessed is the man whose delight is in...Well, it's Psalm 1, like the very first..."
- Selena:** This is in Ryan 1 that you're reading. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Right. Ryan 1. "Blessed is the man who walks out on the council the wicked or stands in the way of sinners." It goes on into verses 3 and 4. "He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields fruit in its season and the leaf does not wither. In all he does he prospers." Like we all want that to be us. We read ourselves into that Psalm and say, "Oh, Yes, Lord, I'm a tree planted by your streams. Let me just flourish and never wither and always be fruitful" and all this kind of stuff. *[Selena laughs]*
- But nobody wants to read verse 2. And that's the one that immediately precedes the popular part. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Can it be said about me that my delight is in the law of the Lord? And the grace that the law is, like the way that He's outlined the way for us to operate and function and to flourish as human beings, am I delighting in that?
- Selena:** That's so good delight because I feel the heaviness of the word law. We feel...
- Ryan:** Because we were taught that the law is basically juxtaposed to grace. And it's not. The law is grace.
- Selena:** And understanding who Jesus is and how He loves us. But there is...
- Ryan:** We don't get saved by the law. We are saved by grace.
- Selena:** We are not saved by the law.
- Ryan:** But the law is still good, and it's still something that's delightful.
- Selena:** But I guess from my own personal shortcomings come in is that I try to live out the obedience. And then it can begin to feel heavy if I'm not reminding myself that this needs to be a delight and this needs to be something I meditate on.

It's not like a one and done and I shouldn't be nailing it the next day after I read it. So how can I begin doing that?

Ryan: It is heavy if we try to do it from the outside in. But if we let our affections for Christ, our desire to follow Him because of all He's done and all He is, then I think we can delight in the law of the Lord much more, I think, freely.

Now, it's worth saying we're not talking about the Levitical law, the ceremonial law, or even civil law. We're talking about the moral law of God, right?

Selena: Yes, yes.

Ryan: Because all the other versions of the law were satisfied in Christ. They had different contexts. But we're talking about the moral law, which is a very specific kind of scope within the law as a sidebar. So, that kind of addresses the heart of it. Okay. But now, we're actually called to live out wisely. We referenced the ant in Proverbs 6, where we actually need to get about the business of building an anthill. We're called to live wisely.

So how does the gospel inform us in those? I mean, I have my answers, but what do you think? How does the gospel inform how we set our goals? Just shoot from the hip.

Selena: I know. I was like, "What? Okay." I think it has to be the center and it has to be the place, the thing...I hate saying "the thing." It sounds so watered down. So diminish. It is life. Jesus said, "I'm the way the truth and the life." So that Him, He, God has to inform all of our goals, all of our rhythms, everything we do [00:30:00] and why we do it? And if He does not, then we need to examine those areas and ask ourselves why we are still engaging in that.

Because, for me, I found selfish motivation, I found insecurity, I found identity issues in things that are not really of Him. But I can label it "of Him" if I want to. Again, my goals, they may be few, but if they're gospel informed, then I know the magnitude of them as well. So, if my goals are to...I think one of my daily resolutions was just to have my kids see me reading my Bible. I always read it at night after they go to bed and I'm like, "Gosh, they're never going to see me read it. And I love it. I don't want them to not see this."

Ryan: Part of discipleship is modeling, right?

Selena: Right. And it's been kind of just a function of babies and kids going to bed and having some quiet time, and nights being a little rough still sometimes. So not getting up early in the morning to where they're waking up seeing me do this. But we are continually incorporating how I can be reading the Bible with them

during the day as well and studying God's Word and show them, by God's grace, what a godly woman looks like. And those are goals. It's like a small goal, but I see the magnitude of it, and I see the steps that it will take to get there.

But I also have experienced enough of these goals to know and see that it's worth it. Like, I feel like there's been those mountaintop moments of every step that it took me to get here, I remember, I can feel and I know the depth and hardship of it. But God was so faithful. And it is so good right now. And I'm so grateful that I counted the cost, that I resigned when I needed to resign, and I just set goals into motion from a place of rest, right?

Ryan: So from a place of rest. Yeah, that's good. In other words, to distill all that down, the Gospel is there because you start from a place of rest, and you let that inform kind of the minutiae of your goals, right?

Selena: Right. Because I'm not the one that has to make all these happen. It is the...

Ryan: Speaking of goals... We heard our little daughter down there. I love how you worded that. The way I see the gospel in my own life in this area is reminding me of my own limits. In that this life is really short, and my hope is not in this life, my hope is in Christ and in eternity. One verse that always comes to mind is Psalm 90:12. But I looked up the cross-reference to that, which is Psalm 39:4, which I love the wording. It's really fresh to me.

Psalm 90:12 is "Lord teach us to number our days that we might gain a heart of wisdom." But Psalm 39:4 says it like this. "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!" Let me know how fleeting I am!

That to me is such a refreshing reminder that I am finite, I'm fleeting, I am not infinite, I'm not eternal. This life is a vapor.

Selena: And that's good. And that's okay.

Ryan: It is good. Yeah. And that's why I can rest and say, "Okay, so I'm going to be dead and gone..." The one thing, legacy...I think legacy is a bit of a myth. That's my own personal. But like the one legacy I do want to leave his legacy of faith to our children. I want them to remember who Christ is, and I want their kids and their kids' kids, and so on, like till Jesus comes back, I just want our babies to know Christ. That's all I want.

But other than that, I can work in this life knowing that it's not ultimate. I don't have to accomplish everything to feel like I lived a good life. That's the first

piece. I just love it. Unlimited is a good thing. Following Christ means valuing Him and His Kingdom more than anything else. And that starts by I think, looking at our own finitude with a really clear vision of how fleeting it is.

The second way, and this is kind of where all this is going, is rhythms. I see the gospel and our goals and the rhythms that we establish based on what you basically said. Like coming from a place of security.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: Again, we're kind of rehashing a little bit of this stuff. I just want to read some of what I've got here. Goals are fine, but I found them far less powerful than habits. I know where I hope to end up but the journey is taken in steps. So I prefer to focus on the steps themselves. And that's where we had the James Clear quote. "You do not rise the level of your goals, but you fall to the level of your systems."

I think that's a pretty easy sell. I think people understand that. Listen, if you don't set up the systems and the habits and the rhythms that are healthy, you can't expect to have outcomes that are healthy.

Selena: Well, and I guess just one last note on that. Don't set up like a thousand systems because that feel so overwhelming. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: But I know I can tend to do that and be like, "I'm going to set up all of these things and [00:35:00] I'm going to do all these things." And then it's just like, "Oh, that's just too much. I can't do it." So just small little tweaks here and there.

Ryan: That's good.

Selena: Consistent.

Ryan: There's something to be said for reserving your systems for the things that actually matter. Because what happens is we get overwhelmed when we have systems in place that aren't really...they can't be as big of a priority for making them. That's when things start to feel really stressful. At one point when we had our second daughter, I was used to going to the gym for two hours a day like three, four, sometimes five days a week. That does not happen now. That does not happen now because it's just not important. I don't have the time for it. It's not important. It's not two hours important. It's maybe like 30 minutes

important. But if I try to hold on to that system that should be changed or removed or diminished...

Selena: It's a season you're in, right?

Ryan: It's a season. Then, yeah, that's when things get out of whack and I feel like I can't do the things that are most important. So...

Selena: So...

Ryan: Go ahead.

Selena: How does this all apply to marriage? I feel like there's a lot of connections that listeners can draw the lines to. But there's four things I think we want to reveal to help create better rhythms. And they're not super groundbreaking, but they are.

Ryan: Well, they're more reminders. Pretty much everything that we have to give is not groundbreaking. It's just going to be a hopefully a new kind of refreshed reminder. *[laughs]*

Selena: Yes, yeah. It's centered on the gospel.

Ryan: How does it apply to marriage? I mean, think of any area where you need health. Okay, that's kind of the big five. In every marriage, at least as we see them, there's sex and intimacy. Intimacy being more than just sex. It's are we close to one another? Emotionally, spiritually, physically, are we close? We want health in that area? What are the rhythms that need to be in place for health in that area?

Communication is probably the biggest area of heartache for most married couples. So they just can't seem to get on the same page. Well, what are the rhythms that you can create around that? We'll give you some ideas? I'll just give you a quick overview here.

Money. Finances. That's a huge area of stress for a lot of people. How do we have rhythms around our finances in terms of saving and spending and checking in on where we're at? Another one is priorities and how we spend our time. That's a huge area that couples tend to overlook. Go ahead.

Selena: Did you say finances?

Ryan: I did.

- Selena:** And sex and priorities?
- Ryan:** Yeah. Communication. And then the last one is conflict.
- Selena:** There it is.
- Ryan:** So how are we fighting and how are we dealing with fights or disagreements? Not necessarily fighting. But when we can't see eye to eye, how do we handle that? Do we have healthy rhythms? Believe it or not, you can create healthy rhythms around conflict so that you don't have those knockdown drag-out fights, that you don't have those big atomic bombs going off in your household because you're dealing with things in a healthy way.
- We talked a lot about tinder. I think it was in a couple of podcast episodes ago. Tinder. Not the app. I'm not on the app, obviously. But a lot of people I think think of the app when I say the word "tinder."
- Selena:** Unfortunately, yes. Words are becoming redefined.
- Ryan:** I mean, tinder and like the actual word tinder, not the...
- Selena:** Like our marriages are like forests. And if we don't...
- Ryan:** Clean up the tinder, the bottom of the forest...
- Selena:** ...cleanup for tinder underneath, it creates a lot of hazardous materials for fires to begin.
- Ryan:** It takes tiny spark. And if that tinder is all there, it's going to set your forest to ablaze. That I think creating rhythms. Let's just be really tangible. Let's start with conflict because that's where we're at right now. And communication. What are some really tangible ways that we can create rhythms around how we can have conflict and how we communicate? We'll just put those two together. What do you think?
- Selena:** How do we conflict?
- Ryan:** How do we conflict? *[both laughs]* The friend pat took turn.
- Selena:** I think some of ours are we just kind of set some rules and boundaries as far as like there's no name-calling, there's no...
- Ryan:** But we're thinking in terms of rhythms, not bound...I think boundaries are different rhythms.

- Selena:** When we...
- Ryan:** At night we asked each other hard questions. You're really good at asking...
- Selena:** Well, not too late at night because then that's just more conflict to be had.
- Ryan:** Yeah. I think one of the big rhythms is we don't like conflict just kind of stay let's do and stay open-ended. We deal with it in a timely fashion. Selena, you're really good at getting to the bottom of it. A lot of times I'll have this like low grade, frustration, anxiety. It's not necessarily because of you, but it's something. I'm trying to hide it, but I never can. And you're always like, "Something's up. What's going on?" And I'll just be like, "I don't really know to be honest. I'm trying to figure out why I feel irritated right now." And I try to be really generous to you because it's not your fault. And just be really generous in communicating that "Hey, it's not because of you."
- Selena:** Right, it's not my fault. I'm just kidding. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I think that's one really healthy thing that I've enjoyed being married to you is that I know that if I'm in a funk that it's going to be [00:40:00] probably two days max until you are pressing pretty hard to figure that thing out. Let's see. Communication I think would fall on that too. But one rhythm around communication that we've really love...By the way, Louisa joined us. That's why Selena has backed off the mic a little bit because Louisa is mid nap and we're trying to figure this stuff out.
- One of the things that we've really loved in terms of communication rhythms is we used to do it more when baby was sleeping better. She's on this weird sleep change thing right now.
- Selena:** You always want to call it a regression, but I'm like, "Are there really regressions at certain times?" I mean, I get the three or four month one, but like, really? I feel like you could just look up any month and they're like, "Yeah, there's just sleep regression." *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** So, anyway, we ideally, we're getting up and having our morning coffee together. I think it happens actually kind of between the time we have breakfast and the time when we start the day.
- Selena:** Yeah, right now it does.
- Ryan:** That's been a really sweet rhythm in terms of communication. Not every family can do that because I know you're rushing out the door and stuff. So

you have to find something that....basically what's that time when you can connect? What's that connection moment that happens daily?

Selena: Right. What do you connect around? I mean, again, if it's the gospel centeredness and the Word, how do we connect around the Word together briefly? Maybe in the morning and at night.

Ryan: Yeah. Another thing for communication is asking the question—we should do it a lot on the podcast—is what book is in your hand? What voice in your ear? And what is God stirring in your heart?

Selena: It's the heart check.

Ryan: The heart check, yeah. Those three questions tend to be pretty helpful in getting down into what's happening in each other's hearts. I think that actually feeds into the next one, which is connection. So conflict, communication, connection, or intimacy. That's getting into the emotional intimacy, spiritual intimacy, and then around physical intimacy.

I think we are big fans of kind of having a really open conversation around your sex life, when and what type...not what type, but what the nature of your sex life. Having really open conversations regularly around that, and then putting that to work. So just to be very candid, for us, every two to three days, we know that it's time for Mommy, Daddy time. *[both laughs]* So we set that time aside, or we try to as much as our kids will allow with their sleeping and whatnot.

What are the other ones. In terms of finances...there's Lou. There she is. Checking in, I think with finances. For us just a monthly thing. But creating those rhythms around spending, checking in with spending, having conversations around spending. We found that to be really helpful. One thing that we've really enjoyed to help with these rhythms is we actually downloaded this app. This isn't a plug, but we've found the app to be really helpful. It's just Qapital is the name of the app. It's capital with a Q. Q-A-P-I-T-A-L.

There's a number of these different apps out there, but this one actually will, kind of based on how much you're getting paid each month, it will save a certain amount. I've got it saving to a savings account, and I've got it saving to tithing account. And then that money just kind of grows there. And then we tithe that out as the month goes on. Or even we might let it build up a little bit and give as the Lord leads. So that's been really good for creating rhythms around our giving.

I'm trying to do the last one. Oh, yeah, priority. This one is actually I think the most nebulous, but it's also the most important. Selena just stepped out, she's coming back. Again, we got some baby problems. So we appreciate your patience.

Priorities. We have what's called a family vision statement. And we have an eBook. If you go to Fierceparenting.com, you can actually find a free eBook called "How to Craft Your Own Family Vision Statement." And that is really important for establishing priorities. And then we have to live those out, of course. But as far as the rhythms go, we visit that at least once or twice a year, we're going back and reading that vision statement or changing it, tweaking it, so on and so forth. So anyway, that's kind of how we've built out those rhythms.

I'm going to actually finish this episode out, but Selena is going to say goodbye at least. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: It's been fun, everyone. Happy, Happy New Year to all and I'm excited for what this year has for us here. Lou says bye too.

Ryan: Bye Lou. Bye baby girl. That's a sweet smile. I love you. But with that said, it does seem like a lot. I know this all seems a lot to kind of figure out all at once. I think that's the beauty of rhythms is that you can just layer them in and start with one small thing.

So for us, if we ever get off the rails, the biggest rhythm that matters is how we are reading our Bibles personally. And if that's not in place, then all these start to kind of tailspin. So we make sure that that most important one is in place. We're praying, we're communing with believers, we are talking to each other. We kind of layer them in based on importance. And what happens is, they start to compound. The more I'm in the Word, the easier it is to communicate in a healthy way. The more I'm communicating in a healthy way, the easier it is to stay connected intimately.

I think that's the power and rhythms as opposed to just saying, "Hey, we want to have a really ambiguous, big, unmeasurable thing." Like, "We won't have a better marriage in 2021." I think that's a good ambition, but it doesn't actually get teeth until you start building in rhythms.

So it might seem like a lot, but that's the stuff of life. And that's why I want to encourage you. If these good rhythms aren't monopolizing my time or coming close to it, then I think that's an indication that I'm probably not living the sort of life that I'm going to really be proud of, or excited about on my deathbed. That might sound morbid, but that tends to be where my mind goes.

Anyway, this is not meant to be a kind of pylon episode. I think it's meant to be something to help free you of having to have these big, grand ambitions. Like just find that freedom that rest in Christ. And then let Him lead and see how He's leading you. Let the Holy Spirit speak into this area of your life, and take a look at your hourly, daily, weekly, monthly rhythms and ask God to help you establish healthier rhythms that are going to be more glorifying to him. So, anyway.

With that said, I'm going to close this out in prayer. Selena is obviously not here, so I'm just going to take it all the way home. [*chuckles*] Lord, I thank you for the couple, the husband, the wife listening to this. I pray that you would encourage their hearts. Wherever they're at in their relationship, wherever they're at in life, I pray that your word would bear its full weight on them and the full weight would be born as hope and as peace and as joy that they have because of all you've done, Jesus, on the cross and in your resurrection.

So, Lord, I pray for the husband and the wife that are struggling right now. They feel like they can't figure things out, that they're just in a tailspin, and they are stressed, they're anxious, they can't communicate, they haven't figured out intimacy. I pray that you would just give them a deep sigh of relief right now that you are still at work, that your grace is still alive and well in their life, that even listening to this is evidence that you have not forsaken them, you have not abandoned them. So Lord, be our hope today. And may we glorify you with every ounce of our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

All right! Well, ladies and gentlemen, this episode is in the can. And we will see you again in about seven days. Hopefully both of us for the entire time.

I want to make one quick reminder. Make sure to check out gospelcenteredmarriage.com. I think it's a great way to start the year. The system is growing. So go ahead, check that out. If you're ready to make the investment, we'd be honored to have you on board. It should be a good time. With that said, we'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time...stay fierce.

[00:48:14] <outro>

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

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:10:09]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 6:6, ESV

- **[00:16:27]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Luke 14:28-30

- **[00:32:29]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Psalm 90:12

- **[00:43:47]**
 - eBook Recommended:
 - [How to Craft Your Own Family Vision Statement](#)

- **[00:41:36]**
 - Website Recommendation:
 - [Gospel Centered Marriage](#)

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