

THE WONDER OF CONTENTMENT

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-wonder-of-contentment>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Christian contentment is I think simultaneously the biggest gift and also maybe one of the least discussed [*both chuckles*] things. I don't know. Maybe not.

Selena: Christian contentment.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: You think there is non-Christian contentment?

Ryan: Well, I don't know. [*inaudible*] thought about that form the [*inaudible*]

Selena: Sorry.

Ryan: Yeah, I don't know.

Selena: That is the question.

Ryan: Well, can we be satisfied without Christ? I don't think so.

Selena: No.

Ryan: Can we be content? Maybe yeah.

Selena: It depends on how you define contentment.

Ryan: It depends on how you define it. Whoa, look who's here today to do just that. Selena Frederick, everyone.

Selena: Yeah, right.

Ryan: Round of applause. [*laughing*] We may handle this whole thing.

Selena: Oh, dear. Buckle up, people.

Ryan: I think it's a good conversation to have this time of year. It's a good conversation to have any time you happen to be listening to this. Because if we're honest, a lot of the things that we do in life are driven by a lack of contentment. There is an element of sin that I think.

Selena: Oh, sure.

Ryan: There is something maybe more than an element, a root of it.

Selena: I think being discontent is a sin.

Ryan: Oh, goodness. Wow.

Selena: I don't mean to be heavy-handed.

Ryan: Drop the bombs. If you want to hear, listener, you got to wait.

Selena: There you go.

Ryan: See you on the other side.

[00:01:11] <Intro>

Selena: Welcome to the Fierce Marriage podcast where we believe that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and refuses to give in.

Ryan: Here, we'll share openly and honestly about all things marriage—

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

Ryan: Priorities—

Selena: Purpose—

Ryan: And everything in between.

Selena: Laugh, ponder, and join in our candid, gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage.

[00:01:43] <podcast begins>

Ryan: You were trying to get into it and I cut you off because you know what? People like to be titillated.

Selena: Really? I'm like, "I want the answer and the truth now!"

Ryan: I think in 2021, I'm going to say the word "titillated" as much as I possibly can because it makes people...

Selena: You've said it twice already.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: It makes me feel uncomfortable. *[both laughing]* It makes me feel uncomfortable.

Ryan: It makes me feel also very comfortable.

Selena: All right! Well, why don't you do your...?

Ryan: By the end of the year, I won't feel any reservation about saying titillated.

Selena: I'd argue that.

Ryan: If you're still listening, thank you, *[both laughs]* after hearing that. What's the word that makes you cringe real fast?

Selena: I don't know.

Ryan: I feel like you don't like the word... Everybody doesn't like the word "moist."

Selena: That doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother me.

Ryan: It's just one of those words. It's a word that sounds like what it is. Moist. *[both laughs]*

Selena: This is how our marriage is going, people

Ryan: You know what else sounds like... This is a word that I don't like.

Selena: Should we just cut you off now? Should I just cut you off now?

Ryan: People are wondering, though. At least you're wondering.

Selena: No. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: "Crisp" is one of those words as well. It sounds like what it is.

Selena: Crisp.

- Ryan:** Crisp. A nice crisp, moist apple.
- Selena:** There's a word power over here, Ryan Frederick.
- Ryan:** Oh, there you go. That one was free.
- Selena:** Okay, let's just get into it right now. So if you are listening or have listened, I'm going to argue you need to at least fully listen to one episode before you rate. *[chuckles]* That's my little push there. You can't just listen like five minutes and be like, "Gosh, these guys are annoying."
- Ryan:** "They just talked about weird words. They say titillated three times, four times now."
- Selena:** "Oh, I listened to it for three minutes and I was done." Sorry.
- Ryan:** "Fredericks are over! The Fredericks are over!"
- Selena:** Listen to at least one full episode. I would argue maybe listen to more than that. But definitely leave a rating and review after that.
- Ryan:** Right. You got to leave a review. You got to leave a rating. If you haven't done it, pause. Do it.
- Selena:** Do it now.
- Ryan:** Go do it.
- Selena:** You know, it just helps get the word out about Jesus, about marriage, about the gospel. So if you want to help further the gospel... *[laughing]*
- Ryan:** If you don't leave a review...
- Selena:** You must not... Oh, dear. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** It's like the chainmail of podcast. If you love the Lord, then you leave a review.
- Selena:** No. Stop. Stop.
- Ryan:** We're kidding.

Selena: We just appreciate the ratings and reviews because it gives other people an idea of what you think about this podcast. That always is just the currency of the podcasting world. So that is very helpful to us. Please do that.

If you want to partner with us...I'm going to let you jump in here if you want.

Ryan: Yeah. We would love to partner with you. As you can tell, sometimes we like to have fun. But all the time. Sometimes we're more somber. Sometimes we're just tired. We try to show up and do our thing.

Selena: Ryan likes to phone it in.

Ryan: All the times. All the times. We like to point couples to Christ.

Selena: All the times.

Ryan: And sometimes it's fun, but all the times we do it. *[chuckles]*

Selena: I'd say it's fun all the time.

Ryan: It is. Sometimes I'm tired. Anyway. The point is if you want to be on mission with...

Selena: It's so fun when you're tired.

Ryan: It's true. Some of the most fun is had when you're tired. If you want to be on mission with us and you'd like to have fun along the way, but you also like to [00:05:00] have some serious talks about topics of consequence, namely, Jesus and marriage and family, and what it means to love and to be loved and to express the love of God that He's given us, then jump on board. You can do that by praying first, seeing if God is leading you in that way with your spouse. And if He does lead you, then by all means, we'd love to partner with you.

And the way you do that is you go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. There are benefits. And the biggest benefit... Okay, we're going to get into the content after this. But the biggest benefit is you will get access to our brand new...tatada. It's actually live this week. It's live as of yesterday. You will have access to gospelcenteredmarriage.com.

There is a core six-week curriculum on what it means to live out a gospel centered marriage. There's an early discount by the way because these resources are being built upon throughout the year, and in the years to come. So you get a discount for signing up early. But you'll get full access to everything as it's rolled out. I'm trying to figure out the words.

But there's many enrichment courses. So we'll have one on five keys to healthy perspective on sex. We'll do a whole mini-course on that on top of the core content. Anyway, go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com to learn more. Check it out, people. We would love to have you in there. We're going to do some live stuff. We're going to do some... We got a lot I think. We're going to do a lot of stuff through there.

Selena: A lot of stuff.

Ryan: It'll be...Yeah.

Selena: Hot dog.

Ryan: We're praying that God uses it because, boy, it's have been hard. Boy, has it been a lot of work putting that together!

Selena: Anything worth doing always should be and probably will always be.

Ryan: Oh, goodness. Thank the Lord that you know what? At the end of the day, I can rest content on my pillow regardless of how my work bears fruit. Because you know what? You just got to be faithful.

Selena: God makes it grow.

Ryan: So let's talk about contentment.

Selena: Let's talk about contentment.

Ryan: Especially around the topic of marriage. We do want to speak to it from a general Christian living standpoint, but in marriage, how can we sometimes fail to be content?

Selena: Where is the lack of contentment?

Ryan: Yes. How can we fail in this area? And where's the lies that we're believing as truth?

Selena: I mean, for me, this came from a book by Nancy Wilson. It's a study for ladies. But the book is called "Learning Contentment: A Study for Ladies of Every Age" by Nancy Wilson.

Ryan: Can I read it?

- Selena:** You can. Anybody can read it. It's super solid. Loving it so far. But anyways, this started me thinking of course, where do we lack contentment in our marriage? What are the areas that we face...?
- Ryan:** For you, I think it's me not bringing coffee to you in the mornings.
- Selena:** Stop. Oh, my gosh.
- Ryan:** We had a talk before this and you expressed...
- Selena:** Are you wounded?
- Ryan:** I'm wounded. Because you were like...
- Selena:** We're being vulnerable right here.
- Ryan:** ..."A friend of mine was saying that her husband came home and he brought her coffee and it was nice..."
- Selena:** He made her coffee. He didn't bring it.
- Ryan:** "...and took care of the kids." And you were like, " I felt a little bit like, you know, like maybe that would be nice someday."
- Selena:** I'm telling you my thoughts so that I could then express to you the one moment on Instagram may have created some discontentment and it probably shouldn't have. And I came to that realization with those thoughts. Let me finish because you were wounded apparently.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Well, I got a hotlining call. *[both laughs]* If you know you know.
- Selena:** I'm so grateful for you. Okay? Anyways.
- Ryan:** You know what? I could do a little bit more. I could do more.
- Selena:** We can always do more.
- Ryan:** You can do more. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Anyway. He's just feeling *[inaudible]* today, people.
- Ryan:** Sorry.
- Selena:** Anyways.

- Ryan:** I had a good time today hanging out with a good friend.
- Selena:** It's encouraging.
- Ryan:** Yeah. It was awesome.
- Selena:** So talking about contentment in marriage, these are the discussions that we're having. Because I think that when we look at our marriage, we can often see the lack before we see the flourishing or we see the lack before we see the steps and furthering that we...
- Ryan:** So where do we feel the lack, though? That's where I want to really get into the weeds a little bit as we set up this conversation,.
- Selena:** Right. We can get into those kind of ruts if we are believing the wrong thing about contentment. Maybe we think it's something that just kind of happens to us or we think that, you know, "Oh, his personality is geared more towards just being content. He's always been content as a kid. He played with a balloon in a corner for five hours and he was content."
- Ryan:** That was me as a child. *[Selena chuckles]* She's referencing a video of me as a child. I probably was having a birthday party. They were beaten up a piñata because that's what you did at six...
- Selena:** Little baby Ryan.
- Ryan:** And I'm literally my mom with the VHS camcorder, and I'm just over in the corner with a balloon all by myself.
- Selena:** Great. I think that's a good example of contentment because [00:10:00] no matter what was happening around you, you were content with...
- Ryan:** I mean, it could have been just a lack of brain activity *[both laughs]* on my part.
- Selena:** So in terms of our marriage... *[laughs]* Let's just reel it back in.
- Ryan:** Sorry.
- Selena:** What are those areas that tend to arouse anger, impatience, annoyance? Just general irritation. I mean, you can pick any from the big five that we always talk about. Like intimacy.
- Ryan:** Okay, let's talk about that. *[Selena chuckles]* Intimacy.

- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** A lot of the couples will say, "I wish she would have the same desire for sex that I have."
- Selena:** Same drive.
- Ryan:** Same drive, or that it would be more spontaneous.
- Selena:** Or be more adventurous.
- Ryan:** Yeah. "I'm just tired of the same old, same old. I want something more interesting." Is that bad? Are those bad things to...?
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** I think they can be bad. They can be twisted. They can be kind of infused with sin.
- Selena:** Right. I don't want to give the punchline away, but without Jesus, we can't really have a healthy idea of what contentment is. We'll always have this lack. So if Jesus is not within these desires of, hey, maybe we could talk about our sex life and why it feels challenging and why maybe we're feeling some underlying discontentment. Because it comes from a different approach. There's a different heart orientation. Because if it's just us and our selfishness, it's going to come across that way, clearly. So we need to be humbled.
- Ryan:** So are you saying that Jesus has something to do with our sex life?
- Selena:** He absolutely does.
- Ryan:** No, I mean, that's what you're saying.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** Again, gospelcenteredmarriage.com. Because the gospel does... We talk about that exact thing. By the way, I think we're going to really drill down into what it means to be gospel-centered next week, right?
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** If I'm not mistaken.

- Selena:** Just your timing of...
- Ryan:** I'm running away with the conversation right now.
- Selena:** Yeah. Reeling in Frederick.
- Ryan:** Okay, I'm working on it. You said you gave away the punch line. People know that's where we're headed.
- Selena:** Again, defining contentment. Okay, let's just define it right now.
- Ryan:** Okay.
- Selena:** I like Nancy Wilson's definition. I think you liked it as well. And we're not saying there's all these different definitions. But for a Bible-believing Christian, contentment is a deep satisfaction with the will of God.
- Ryan:** Ooh, wow.
- Selena:** If we are deeply contented with God, with the things of God, then the way we approach these areas of discontentment will be radically changed. We aren't going to approach them from a place of selfishness.
- Ryan:** Okay. You said that her definition was—and this is just her unique way of articulating—a deep satisfaction with the will of God. None of those words are truly nebulous except for "the will of God." Nancy Wilson, if you're not aware, they are part of a Presbyterian Church. A pretty reformed version expression of Presbyterianism. Is that a word? I don't know. But they're very reformed, and so the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is very high on the important doctrine list. And we would agree.
- This is a big debate, but I don't know how to reconcile logically, philosophically, a God who is omnipotent and all-knowing who is also not completely sovereign. There's something to be said there. So we think about the will of God when she says it's complete satisfaction in the will of God, can you resign yourself to the fact that you are awash in the will of God? That He is, in fact, guiding your steps, especially as a Christian? He is still sovereign over it. He's not somehow like, "Oops, look what happened." So, that understanding of Him, I am satisfied wherever I am because I'm resigned to the fact that God is sovereign. That is a big, big, big truth and so liberating but very hard to wrap our fleshly wills and minds around.
- Selena:** I think this is a good segue. We're just going to kind of jump around for you and I in terms of the organization of this conversation. So just try to keep up.

Ryan: I will.

Selena: If we look at the Apostle Paul, who wrote Philippians, I can do all things, I learned contentment... Philippians 4. I just want to read that real quick. 12 and 13. "I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation—to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."

So we have this idea of contentment. He says in verse 11, "I am not saying this out of need, for I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances."

Ryan: What version is that? That's a different version. [00:15:00]

Selena: That is not the ESV? Oops.

Ryan: Yeah. You're reading the Bereans Study Bible.

Selena: Bereans Study Bible.

Ryan: You've been doing that recently even in like, "Where have you been...?"

Selena: You know what?

Ryan: The ESV version of it...

Selena: Thank you.

Ryan: Different versions have different...they're fine. We're not going to argue about that. But this one says, "Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." That is huge. This is Paul, who's...I mean, if you...

Selena: Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on.

Ryan: Go ahead. Yes, ma'am.

Selena: He learned to be content in whatever circumstance. Nancy Wilson says that he has learned to have control over his own spirit in every situation. He knows that God is in control of all things, exercising His sovereign will over every aspect of his life. Therefore, Paul is satisfied with all that God is doing. Stop. Was Paul just out there living his best life, preaching the gospel? No. 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, I think it's titled something about his sufferings in service. So let's look at his sufferings and get a little perspective possibly.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: And in all of this, he says he learns contentment. In all of this. I mean, I'm not trying to say like, wow, our little marital woes are nothing compared to being adrift at sea for a day and a half.

Ryan: Wow. Okay. Sorry. Mind blown a little bit because what you're saying is that contentment is not something that happens to me. It's something that I learn.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: That admission and that revelation in anyone's life is going to be completely transformative.

Selena: Right. Especially to our...

Ryan: That my circumstances don't determine my contentment. Because that's not contentment. That's something else. That's maybe you're in a good spot. But contentment is a fixed thing, right?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: It's a fixed heart orientation in the midst of whatever is happening. And it can be learned and it can be imparted. By the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, I feel like we are given the gift of it.

Selena: He's the one that gives us the strength to be able to attain any level of contentment.

- Ryan:** So the husband or the wife who they're just miserable in their marriage... And you might have good reason to be miserable. I'm not trying to be cavalier about that.
- Selena:** Or we make excuses for just having a fiery temper or like a sharp tongue. I know that's me. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Okay. So you have maybe a wife who feels unloved by her husband, and she can't get through to him. He's not listening, and he's disengaged. He's addicted to video games, or pornography, or work, or whatever that thing is that's taking and stealing his affections. And she feels hopeless. Can she still find contentment? And I think the answer is yes. It's something that can be learned. Does it mean that she is completely resigned to dysfunction? I don't think that's what contentment is.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** But you can still be content... Paul didn't want, in 2 Corinthians 11, to be in hunger and in thirst without food in cold, and exposure apart from other things.
- Selena:** Stoned.
- Ryan:** Stoned. He didn't want that stuff but he's learned to be content in that. Why? Because he...
- Selena:** He had that deep satisfaction with the will of God. So it's like he knows and trust that there's a greater purpose of God being glorified even in his weakness. Which is another huge thing that you see throughout his letters to Corinthians, Philippians, everybody.
- Ryan:** Can I share an example from our life really fast? *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I guess. I'm like, "I don't know. I don't know where he's going." But yeah.
- Ryan:** We had a really tough week last week with the baby, and namely, how she was affecting our sex life. We're honest. We mentioned this in our last episode. But what had happened is typically because of the rhythms that we've been in, and the way that babies been sleeping, we find time for each other...
- Selena:** Once the kids have gone to bed.

Ryan: Once the kids have all gone to sleep, then we have a window there. That window was completely stolen from us. Some of it was the baby, some of it was schedules, and just general lack of margin and life.

I actually remember one evening being really frustrated because the baby was having a really tough time and so you were caring for our child. And I was just frustrated being like, "Man, we can't catch a break." You know, as a husband, as a man it takes a toll as most men know. There's an emotional toll. There's a physical toll. There's also a mental toll in terms of [00:20:00] being able to focus. I'm just being honest.

So I remember sitting there, and the Holy Spirit and all of his goodness said, "This is an opportunity for you to rest in me, and to be generous to your wife." Obviously, it's not her fault.

Selena: Well, it's not that I don't desire intimacy as well.

Ryan: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Wow. But don't I know it? *[both laughs]*

Selena: Goodness.

Ryan: No, the point I'm trying to make is that was an opportunity to find deeper contentment in God and instead, take that desire and that longing, and that very physiological desire...

Selena: Feeling of lack.

Ryan: ...feeling the lack and say, "This is an opportunity to now press into praying and trusting God more and being content in Him." And saying, like, "My life is not defined by my sexual desire being satisfied. My life is defined by my desires being satisfied ultimately in Christ, in God, in Him, in seeing Him in that." All that to articulate that in those moments of discontent with... What's fasting? Fasting is depriving our flesh of food or something, some other thing...

Selena: It's a lack. Yeah.

Ryan: It's purposefully creating lack so that we can recognize that our greatest fulfillment is in God.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: That's what fasting is. So contentment, I think, is along those lines.

Selena: As women—I mean, I guess I can just speak to the wife. I'm kind of spinning off of this—I was feeling very stressed by the whole situation, knowing fully well what is happening right now. I think this is where Nancy Wilson just articulates it really beautifully. She's just like, you know, we can make excuses for our behaviors. We were stressed out. There's all the stuff that's happening in our life. There's no way we can actually find contentment. But she's like, "This is false. As Christians, we can learn contentment and we should learn it. It's not really an option."

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: Because lack of contentment or discontentment is usually... She says, "It's not a neutral behavior to be stressed out." Like I can't just be like, "I'm just stressed out. I'm not here nor there. I'm just stressed." It's like, no, that that is an act of behavior and it's going to engage in some sinful things.

Ryan: It's not a neutral thing to be stressed out.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: It's going to result in sin that we're going to have to repent of because our heart is not quiet, we are not leaning into that deep satisfaction of Christ. I think it manifests itself so much... It can in our marriage and in our relationship with each other because it's such a familiar place. It's just this we know...

Like that evening when the baby was asleep, I'm like, "I know how long we have not been intimate. I know the effects that it has on you. I'm very familiar with the depth of frustration and everything that everybody's feeling." And on top of that, we're just tired. Like physically, we're just super tired and mentally. But we need to connect. There's just these huge battles that we're facing. It felt like huge battles. Nothing compared to Paul and being stoned or adrift at sea. That's kind of what it felt like to me. I don't know. But either way, God is the only way. I hate saying way but we can only find contentment in Him. Yeah.

Ryan: Yeah. I was looking at the passage because something occurred to me when you were talking. You keep saying that contentment is something that we... Stress is not neutral, right? It's not a neutral thing to be in a state of constantly being stressed out. That there's something there that is pulling us away from this contentment from peace.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Now, there's a lot of nuance to stress and anxiety...

Selena: Go check out that podcast episode.

Ryan: We're not trying to gloss over if it's a mental disorder or even a physiological one. But the point we're trying to make is that there is a certain amount of Christian agency that needs to be exercised in this area over our lives just like over any other sin. And it's power by the Holy Spirit, that is prompted by the Holy Spirit.

We see the example of it all throughout the New Testament, but the one that came to mind was Psalm 42. It's the "my soul is cast down within me." This is verse 6. "My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you." He goes on to say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise..." Do you see the pivot there?

Selena: Mm hmm.

Ryan: He's recognizing "I'm cast down. I'm feeling stressed. I'm feeling depressed. I'm feeling anxious. I feel like I'd have no hope." And he's reminding himself. "Why? Hope in God. Hope in God." And that's another way of saying what you already articulated that it's that confidence in the [00:25:00] will of God.

Selena: Right. I think when he's lamenting or something about how "I'm having a hard time. Why so downcast, O my soul? O my soul." If you go to Hebrews 13:5-6, it sort of speaks to this in the terms of like, let your conduct be without covetousness. "...be content with such things as you have, for He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" So we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Ryan: If that's not relevant today, I don't know when it's relevant...

Selena: For sure.

Ryan: ...in terms of everything that happened over the last three weeks politically, and on the world stage everywhere. So anyway.

Selena: So just speaking to that, when you said, "My soul is downcast," why do we tend to feel this downcastness? Because we sense that there's some sort of lack. And God is saying, "If you are in me you have no lack." Right?

- Ryan:** And His language is assuming that you've lost hope in God. When your soul is cast down within you, it's... Have you ever...? I forgot what they are called. Antipsalm or whatever. Basically, they are universal language of the Psalm...
- Selena:** Okay, yeah.
- Ryan:** ...besides what it's saying a different way. The opposite of "why are you cast down?" would be "putting your hope in God" or "why are you encouraged?" It's because you put your hope in God. So another way of saying being cast down is you've lost hope in God.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Sorry, I didn't articulate that well. But the point is that there's a direct correlation between hoping in God and feeling contentment.
- Selena:** Yes. Well, I want to be careful about saying "feeling contentment," because I think contentment goes beyond feelings. I think it plays with our knowledge, and it can elicit those emotions, but it's not just a feeling on its own. I think there's more to it. Just like love.
- Ryan:** Well said. Well said.
- Selena:** The writer of Hebrews is saying that the Lord is our helper. He's with us. So what can man do to me? So if we continue seeking contentment and things of the world or anything or anyone sort of outside of Jesus, then we're living as those ones who do not know God. Like if we've lost hope, our hope in God, then we're living as one without hope, without God.
- And Jesus says this in Matthew 6:25 and 6:33. So he's teaching about, you know, "Therefore I tell you, don't be anxious about your life, what you'll eat or drink..." The Sermon on the Mount. "Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" And then he gives us the direct command not to worry about the things of the world. He says, "The pagans, they search and run after these things. But seek first God's kingdom. Your heavenly Father knows what you need."
- So if you, like you said, flip that over, like deduce what he's saying, the lack of contentment really is sin. And it puts us in the same category, again, as those who do not hope in God or do not know God and therefore don't hope in Him.
- Ryan:** Wow. This is all hitting. I don't know if it's just something in the air, but it's hitting me a new right now is this idea that worrying about your life and worrying where your resources will come from. It's one thing to be mindful of

it and to be diligent in the work that God gives you and working faithfully. That's one thing. It's another to worry about those things.

And then just the relationship between worrying about your life, your resources, your body, all that kind of stuff, the relation between that and paganism, basically the pagans run after these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you need... It's such an indictment on our faith when we worry.

Selena: God has invited us to trust Him as King of the universe, sovereign, supplier of all, creator of everything.

Ryan: You're right. You're absolutely right. The trouble with that is people hear that and it just comes across as a platitude or a trite answer. And it's anything but. That's the thing is it's not applied to...

Selena: But I can't convince somebody that's not a platitude unless they're in the Bible. I mean, to be honest.

Ryan: And the Holy Spirit enlightens that in their hearts.

Selena: Yes. It's God's Word and it's His Holy Spirit that leads us and illuminates the path.

Ryan: So we are given, like you said, that invitation into trusting His ultimate grace and sovereignty. And then we are given permission to seek first the kingdom.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Can you imagine life of freedom that we would experience if we just would seek first the kingdom more purely and seek His righteousness more ardently? I'm just convicted and encouraged at the same time by that.

Selena: Right. And I think that we [00:30:00] have to really look... I think looking at contentment with clear eyes... I've been reading this book and then doing the study, and seeing that without Christ... I mean, Nancy says, "Without Christ there's no contentment. But through and with Christ, we can do this difficult thing." It's only made possible through Christ. He is the one that strengthens us. He strengthens His people to be content. There really is no other way.

Last quote by her. I know I keep quoting her. "Contentment is not hardening yourself so you do not care what happens. It's not being a stoic, nor is it bottling things up. Contentment is the result of spiritual strength that comes directly from Christ. Contentment is the ability to stay satisfied with God's will

in all circumstances, whether easy or difficult. Though it's simple to understand, it's certainly not easy to do," which is why she says, "We need and we have an expert teacher who is Christ Jesus."

So understanding what contentment is, and that it's not something we can attain outside of Christ is huge. The key to overcoming discontentment and lack of faith is to find out who God really is. Like when you say platitudes, I'm like, "Well, you're saying these big things." There's so much more that's happening in your heart when you're saying God is sovereign or Lord Jesus. There's so much more of a picture. There's so much more depth. There's so much more to be had.

But me saying that to somebody who has never read the Bible, like our 7-year-old... She's reading the Bible but she has no real experience engaging with God for 38 years like I have. I'm just saying that if you're unfamiliar with the Bible, and you haven't been in His Word, it's really hard to hear some things, I think, that we're saying or hear the things not meant to be platitudes but they sound like platitudes. But they don't have to be because there's depth and there is more to be had. You don't believe?

Ryan: No, no, I'm processing because I know that I've heard the same thing in a dozen different ways. You could say God is sovereign on 10 different days and I would hear it 10 different ways.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So I'm wondering, the truth that God is sovereign, has that changed?

Selena: No.

Ryan: In all that time, no. What has changed is maybe my circumstance, my heart orientation, my blood sugar, what I happened to read five minutes before you told me that, what I happened to do five minutes before you told me that. So really, everything else is in flux, but that truth is not.

So the question I'm pondering and thinking is, just because something is a platitude does that make...? The platitude nature of something is not reliant on the truth itself. It's reliant on the person receiving the truth, or the person delivering the truth. So I'm thinking of a brother who is encouraging me having a down day and he says, "God will provide. Don't worry about what you're going to wear. You don't worry about what you're going to eat. Don't worry about any of that stuff. The pagans worry about that stuff. But you can trust in God. You can see his first His kingdom and trust Him." And he could be

saying those beautiful, freeing, soul resting truths and I could just be like, "Shut up."

Selena: It's grating on you. And why is it grating on you?

Ryan: Right. My conclusion that I'm coming around to is it's a state of my heart and it's a state of distrust. That that trust shouldn't be a self to my soul, right? Now, I should always hear that and say thank you. It may not feel great, but I should always say and have a response that is gratitude.

Selena: Grateful.

Ryan: That's the whole Psalm 42 thing. Hope in God. Why are you cast down?

Selena: There's a resignation...

Ryan: Submission.

Selena: ...submission of those emotions I think in those instances. And I don't think it's bad. But also as a brother or sister in Christ that's encouraging you, I think that we can be discerning in how we are loving and leading and not belittling and dismissing. Because I have that tendency too. I think that's probably one of the biggest things that friends have pointed out to me is that I tend to want to just fix things and find an answer.

Ryan: That's different. Let's look at Job quickly. What happened when Job's friends went away? The first however long they just sat with him, it's beautiful. Because they're just sitting with him. Like, "We don't know what's going on with you. We're not going to leave you. We love you." I'm paraphrasing and adding my own texture to it. But then at some point, they switch the script and they start saying, "You're probably experiencing all this because you have sinned. How have you sinned." That's the prescription. And he's basically like, "You're horrible friends." It's not that.

Selena: "I'm impure before God. I've done everything. I'm not disobedient."

Ryan: What they could have done and this is where I'm contrasting with what you said is maybe the wrong solution is to come in and say, "God is good. You know what? You just need to just save more money every month. God is good, [00:35:00] maybe you just need to get in the job. God is good, maybe you just need to get dressed up a little nicer so your husband engages with you more." That's where it gets really prescriptive and maybe unhelpful.

Instead, you could say, "God is good." Period. "Remember God is good. I'm here with you. Just remember God is good. I'm never going to stop reminding you God is good."

Selena: And I think that's a good segue into how can we engage and learn contentment as a couple? Can we go to each other with those areas of discontentment? I can come to you say, "Hey, I'm struggling with believing some of the things that God says because things feel so hard right now. Are we listening to Him correctly? Is there something I'm missing in His Word? Has it changed and I'm just not...?" You know I'm just being facetious, of course. "But how is my heart pardoned in some of these areas that I'm seeing and I'm hearing the word but I still can't get it into me? Husband, help me or lead me."

I'm not saying that everybody is at that point of being able to have those conversations, but I'm saying that we need to begin to get on that path to be able to have those conversations with each other. If we're not and we're far from it, then we need to start getting in the Word, praying, asking the Holy Spirit to help us on this path of contentment with our marriage. Because, friends, we are in a very difficult time in our world. Even the best marriages that I know are struggling. And not like they're going to sign divorce papers tomorrow. I'm saying they're struggling in the fact that life is just really heavy and hard to deal with on every level.

And so where do we go? How do we find that contentment and rest in Christ? How deep and beautiful it is? And it's not just a one day "All right. Learned contentment. Check." Right? It's a continual... God pop quizzes every day through our kids, through their spouses. So how can we begin to engage in this?

Ryan: Man, I love how you just play that out in terms of spouse going to the other and early bringing this. Because oftentimes we forget to do... I know I forget to do that, where I'm feeling something and I wait for you to ask or I don't have the emotional intelligence a lot of times to identify it before you do. *[both chuckles]* Maybe that's the couple's conversation challenge for this week is talk about maybe your contentment conversational protocols. A horrible term. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: What? *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Talk about this idea of contentment and talk about how you can approach each other or be aware of either when you feel discontent and you need a reminder or you notice your spouse is being discontent and they need a reminder.

Selena: Oh, where are you guys both struggling together in contentment? Where is this lack?

Ryan: I've got a few constant struggles in my own heart that have to do with...

Selena: Are you broken in the center too?

Ryan: Yeah, believe it or not. It's there. *[both laughs]* The sanctification process is not complete. It's underway. I'll report back next week on the status. But there's a few kind of recurring themes of discontentment in my own heart that has to do with comparison, they have to do with my own insecurities, and all these different things that probably everybody deals with. I've noticed that if I just bring them to my wife, if I just say, "Listen, remember that issue I brought up two months ago, it's back. I'm wrestling with it. I've prayed about it. I just need you to know a) that I'm dealing with it again and b) I'm looking to you just to know that and to help me however the Holy Spirit leads you."

Selena: Not to be your hope. Not to the answer.

Ryan: But to point me to Christ, point me to hope.

Selena: Ladies, we're going to fumble this up. The first couple times he would say this, I definitely platitute it up for him. And it was real helpful.

Ryan: I'd be like, "Oh, good for you. Thanks for the advice. I'm so fixed right now."

Selena: It's just our nature. We're going to fumble it up because we don't really know how to maybe engage with our husbands at that level yet. But the more that you continue to bring it to light, the more consistent you are, the better the Holy Spirit equips you to deal with it.

Ryan: Can I give husbands and wives just two really tangible I think surefire responses to that sort of plead?

Selena: Yeah, you may.

Ryan: If you're in this situation, your spouse comes to you after you had this conversation, and maybe a week down the line they say, "I'm struggling with this thing. I need contentment, I need to put my whole back in Christ, and I need you to help me," you do both of these things. All right? Surefire win. Say, "Can I pray with you right now? Let's pray together. Let's just bring this to God together. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us right now in this right now." [00:40:00] Boom. Pray. Five minutes. Done.

Second thing you can do. Surefire win. Just encourage and just say, "I love you." Don't encourage them to fix. Just say, "I love you. I'm with you. That hasn't changed. I see you. We're going to get through this." I feel like you can't go wrong with those two things.

Selena: No.

Ryan: Can you? Okay.

Selena: I'm sure you can but... *[Ryan laughs]*

Ryan: The prayer?

Selena: That sounds good to me. Sounds good to me. You know your spouse, right?

Ryan: You can pray in a really passive-aggressive way.

Selena: No. You know your spouse and you, and God is good to give us the words to speak. Again, if you fumble a little bit, just have a soft heart. Apologize. But I think the earnestness will show and I think that the honest vulnerability will be acknowledged.

Ryan: Hopefully. I've learned a lot today, actually. And I'm looking forward to having those conversations with you in the future because there are plenty of opportunities for discontentment. I actually saw a study recently, and someone was like, "Why go to counseling when you can just quit Facebook?" That's what the study revealed. That literally, quitting social media for a season has the same effect as therapy.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: And why? Because I think contentment is a big piece of comparison. There's inverse correlation between how much you're comparing and how content you feel. If you're comparing a ton, you're probably not going to be super content. If you're just head down just living your own life, you're not looking at everybody else's highlight reel, it's amazing how content you are with where God has put you. But there are distractions.

Selena: Yeah, there are distractions. I also learn quite a bit on social media. But again, it's how you view it.

Ryan: It's how you use it as a tool.

Selena: Tool tech not cool tech.

Ryan: Yeah, seriously. If you ever get wrapped around the axle in that, you can tell like...Is your identity...? That's what was going to say. If your identity is in it, that's where it stops being a tool. It starts using you instead of you using it.

Selena: All right.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: I think we've ventured out to the land of discontentment for a while there.

Ryan: Our baby is discontent. Why don't you pray? Because I prayed last week.

Selena: Okay. God, thank you so much for this life you've given us for our crying babies. We're grateful for them. I pray for contentment in marriages. I pray for the vision to see the lack of discontentment. Excuse me, the lack of contentment. I pray that that would become clear so that you might become glorified in those moments. Holy Spirit I ask you to lead, instruct, counsel, do all that you do within us and within the listeners who are desperately trying to find contentment in the chaos that may be in their marriage right now.

We love you, Lord. Thank you for the grace and opportunity that it is to speak into this mic and speak into the lives of and marriages around the world. We are so grateful and blessed and take it humbly, and are so undeserving of it, Lord. To you be all the glory. Amen.

Ryan: Amen. A quick mention again. If you are looking to grow in a tangible way and you want to invest time, mostly time into your marriage, check out gospelcenteredmarriage.com. We'd love to have you in there. With that said, this episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: All right! Ladies and gentlemen, we'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:43:39] <outro>

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PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:14:22]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Philippians 4:12-13, ESV

- **[00:24:20]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Psalm 42

- **[00:25:13]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Hebrews 13:5-6

- **[00:27:25]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Matthew 6:25, 6:33, ESV

- **[00:43:00]**
 - Website Recommendation:
 - [Gospel Centered Marriage](https://www.gospelcenteredmarriage.com/)

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