

WHAT, EXACTLY, IS A GOSPEL CENTERED MARRIAGE?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/what-exactly-is-a-gospel-centered-marriage>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Our entire ministry is really built around this idea that it's possible to be Christian and still not have a gospel centered family and not have a gospel centered marriage. So this whole episode is defining that. The point is, is the word gospel can become cliché.

Selena: Yes. Or misunderstood...

Ryan: Or misunderstood.

Selena: ...if not defined accurately.

Ryan: Yes. And so we want to take an episode here and just really lay the groundwork, the foundation for I think... I don't know.

Selena: Well, it's why the gospel is at the center of our marriage and everything. And it's not just this in addition to, right?

Ryan: Right. It's not put the gospel in my back pocket, pull it out whenever I need a little boost. But it's absolutely central. So we're going to unpack that today. Stick around, I think you'll learn something new. We will see you on the other side.

[00:00:49] <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.
- [00:01:23]** <podcast begins>
- Selena:** How are you doing, Ryan Frederick? *[Ryan laughs]*
- Ryan:** You know what? I said this before we started recording, but I think I feel the opposite of how I felt last week when we recorded. I don't know.
- Selena:** How did you feel last week? *[laughing]* I don't remember last week very well.
- Ryan:** I was feeling my oats. We were having a lot of fun. I was joking a lot. Today I feel dejected.
- Selena:** That's all right.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Sometimes our feelings they go up and down. So we just kind of let them come and go and...
- Ryan:** Which is consistent, right? Because last time I was like, "We always bring the gospel. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's not. But we always do it." Here we are.
- Selena:** Guess what we're talking about today.
- Ryan:** Gospel centered. We were chatting just a little bit ago and you had said one of the things that we felt convicted about this coming year and over the last half of last year was we really wanted to go deeper as opposed to just spreading out and going broader. So I feel like this episode is representative of that reality, of that kind of conviction, of that truth, is that to be gospel centered means we go deeper. Because like we said in the intro, it's possible to be a "Christian household," quote-unquote and not actually be gospel centered.
- Selena:** So where is the difference? What are the markers there?
- Ryan:** Well, you could make a ca...
- Selena:** I'm just asking rhetorically right now. We can talk about that in a minute.

Ryan: You could make the case that...I'm saying this with open hands. This is the first draft idea right now.

Selena: Oh, boy.

Ryan: But you could make the case that if you're not gospel centered then you may not be a Christian household. I was going to say that. Okay. And that's my conviction. I'm not saying that to make you, listener, feel bad. That's very open-handed in the sense that...I don't know. Because I feel like the natural outworking of the saving grace of Jesus Christ in your heart, you've been made new, you were once dead now you're made alive, your stone heart has been transplanted with a heart of flesh. That should have a very tangible outworking.

Now, with that said, it's possible if you maybe just haven't matured in your faith, that you're yet to really learn what it means to live out being gospel centered. So that's why I say that with a very open. I'm not trying to say who's a Christian, who's not. I'm just saying that it's possible.

Selena: That's Jesus' job.

Ryan: It is possible, though, that if... And this is James. And this is a big deal. It's possible that there's no fruit, then there's something wrong with the root. But the fruit has to grow too. That's all I'm trying to say. So this episode really I think with that spirit in mind is, okay, we are talking about Christian marriage to presumably Christian people. We believe in Christ. We have a Christian worldview. And so this whole episode is really just to draw the line in the sand. This is what it means to be gospel centered.

Selena: Well, and I think asking the question, if you look at the flip side, of like, looking at the fruit that's in our lives, how are we not living out the gospel? Looking at the fruit and saying, "Hey, we think we're living off the gospel, but let's examine where we're at." And the good time to do it January for us right now. But anytime is a good time to evaluate.

Ryan: This is one of those episodes too. Have you seen the video on the internet that was floating around a few years ago where the woman has... She's like one of these great race or whatever. The Amazing Race.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: I don't know if it's that show, but it's one of those reality shows. And she's pulling back this watermelon in this massive slingshot. [00:05:00]

- Selena:** Oh, goodness.
- Ryan:** And she pulls back and she's going to launch it, and she lets go and it flings forward. But then it doesn't come out of the slingshot and it shoots back and just blasts her in the face.
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness. What are you saying here?
- Ryan:** I'm saying that this is one of those podcast episodes that I feel that way. I'm coming out the gate like, "It's possible to be Christian and not gospel centered." And I'm like, "This is me." The question I want to ask now, is it possible to be kind of gospel centered?
- Selena:** Kind of gospel centered? *[Ryan chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Because there are some areas that you might be living this out more faithfully than another area.
- Selena:** So we're asking the Holy Spirit to sanctify us and examine us a little bit deeper.
- Ryan:** Starting with Fredericks. Yes. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Yeah. Examine us a little bit more deeper.
- Ryan:** Just watermelon to the face. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** "Lord, what are our blind spots?" Or fundamentally, are we following and doing what we should be doing as a result of what the Lord is doing in our lives?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Excellent.
- Ryan:** We're definitely not perched up here in our nest of holiness just telling you how to be holy.
- Selena:** There's no nestis of holiness here.
- Ryan:** Our second born she calls nests nestis. That's the plural.
- Selena:** That's plural for nest.

- Ryan:** That's the way we say it around the house.
- Selena:** Don't mess with it.
- Ryan:** Yeah, we don't correct them because...
- Selena:** Cute.
- Ryan:** It's too cute to correct. Let's do a little...
- Selena:** #homeschool. *both [laughing]* Just kidding. Our kids know how to talk. Oh, my goodness.
- Ryan:** Jokes abound.
- Selena:** They are learning Latin. What are your kids learning? *[laughing]*
- Ryan:** Oh, yeah. Just talk about pointing the finger over here. Hey, by the way. This isn't a parenting podcast, but actually, we are about to release...
- Selena:** Not yet.
- Ryan:** ...a blog post by Anna.
- Selena:** Yaay!
- Ryan:** It's all about, listen, let's stop condemning each other around our schooling choices. Because that's a conviction that she has. And I think it's a good post. So anyway, that's a sidebar.
- Real quick, if you've been listening for a little while and you've gotten something out of the podcast, we'd really, really appreciate a rating and a review. Just hop on over to iTunes or the Podcast App, and just hit the stars, ladies and gentlemen.
- Selena:** Hit all of them.
- Ryan:** Hit the stars. It's so satisfying.
- Selena:** But you do have to listen to at least a full episode. Don't listen like three minutes and you're like "Oh, hot dog."
- Ryan:** That's Selena's...

Selena: That's me.

Ryan: ...arbitrary thing. I'm saying if you're just listening to this and you feel great, and it's your first episode ever, just go ahead and hit five star. *[Selena laughs]* You do you. Don't let Selena hold you back. *[both chuckles]* Second thing.

Selena: Just do it now. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Coincidentally, this episode is actually... So we have a new system that's all around going deeper and it literally is called Gospel Centered Marriage. That's the URL. Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. It's an online course ecosystem starting with the six core kind of sessions. And then all throughout the year, and in the coming months and years, we're going to be releasing new content. Think of it like a Netflix for gospel centered marriage.

So anyway, we would love to have you on board with that. It will be worth your while. Right now you have to just see the vision with us. And hopefully, we've gained your trust to the point that you know that it will be good and that the content will keep coming. Because we're actually just rescheduling the enrichment course with Jeff and Ashley Potts talking about the importance of Christian community.

Selena: Oooh, sounds good.

Ryan: Yeah, it's going to be awesome. It's going to be awesome. It's not just us. It's going to be other smarter people, more beautiful people than us. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Thank the Lord.

Ryan: Thank the Lord. Okay, okay. Okay.

Selena: Okay, okay. Okay. Okay. Stop joking around, Selena.

Ryan: I just want to ask you the question. Don't look at the answer. Don't think about it too hard. What exactly is a gospel centered marriage. Go. Go, Selena.

Selena: A marriage centered around the gospel. *both [laughing]*

Ryan: Oh, my goodness. Okay, okay.

Selena: Mic drop.

Ryan: Mic drop. What is it?

Selena: It means that it's a marriage that is submitted to the authority of the gospel. It is one that thrives only in and with the gospel and views that as the place to be thriving out of.

Ryan: Hmm, that's good. Okay. I would say the gospel... We're going to get into what the gospel actually is.

Selena: I didn't ask. *[laughs]*

Ryan: You didn't ask me. Never mind. I'm going to the next point. What is the gospel then? I'm going to say this, and then we'll get into what the gospel is. But to add to what you said, the gospel is the defining reality by which we anchor our lives. Now, that last part could be given or taken away. But it's the defining reality, meaning that it's the spring from which the rest of life bursts forth.

Selena: Right. It's not one of many. It's not in opposition and equal...

Ryan: It's not an option that we just happen to select.

Selena: Yes. It is the truth.

Ryan: It is the defining reality. That begs the question then, what is the gospel? Now there is an [00:10:00] evangelistic way to go about this. And that's like the Romans road thing. God is perfect. He is holy. We are imperfect. We are sinners. We need help. In our sinful state, we cannot be loved. We are basically subjects of God's wrath alone. We need a savior; we can't save ourselves. Jesus, He was the Christ, the Messiah that was foretold in the Old Testament. He came fully God, fully man, lived a perfect life, died unjust death, was in the grave for three days, was raised from the dead, conquering death, forgiving us of our sins, and basically enabling us to be saved. That's the evangelistic gospel.

If you want more of that, if you're new to all this, just go to the website thenewsisgood.com. Anyway. Then there's like the more theological view of the gospel. Obviously, they're the same. I think it's just what you emphasize as you're discussing it. It just changes. To get a little technical here, the gospel completely hinges not on the life of Christ. It hinges on the resurrection of Christ. Even if Jesus was fully God, fully man but was never resurrected, we would not have the gospel.

Selena: The resurrection is the hinge.

Ryan: The resurrection is the linchpin here. So, the resurrection of Christ, not His death is the center of our scripture, nothing else means anything from a Christian standpoint without it.

So I want to read from 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..."

So, a gospel centered marriage is one that answers with a genuine resounding yes to this question. Did Jesus Christ raise from the dead?

Selena: Wow. Yes.

Ryan: That's where it starts. So can you, listener, answer that question. Now, we were both raised in Christian homes. And I feel like you run the risk of if you're raised in a Christian home kind of taking that for granted. And then when the rubber meets the road, you've never actually dealt with this question: did Jesus Christ raised from the dead? So I guess I want to ask you, I mean, is that something that you can say with an emphatic yes, "Yes, Jesus Christ raised from the dead?"

Selena: Yes. *[Ryan chuckles]*

Ryan: Done. Done.

Selena: Yes. It's hard to imagine. But yes. I mean, I've been reading through the Bible doing a whole reading plan, and the more I have been reading and reading the Old Testament, the more you see the nitty-gritty just the fleshly parts of who we are as humans has come to light. I think that growing up in Christian home...Like our kids, you know, they know the story of Jesus, they know what's happened, they know that He rose from the dead.

But I feel like at some level, their understanding of that...there's got to be an experiential aspect to that. I'm not saying that the gospel is a whole experience and only that. But I am saying that you have had... Ryan has had a close brush with death. Therefore, some of that experience I think you can imagine life in death or life to death and death to life, that kind of thing just from a fleshly I think physical experience.

Ryan: I've stepped a little closer into death's threshold in most...

Selena: But I think that we say these things without thinking like someone in the hospital dying. I think we we're detached from it. Maybe that's just a better word. Because it happened so long ago, but yet it does hinge our whole beliefs. Everything that we live by hinges on that. But does it make it any less? No, it makes it more. I'm at the crucifixion right now. Actually, there's a plot Judas just betrayed Him. But I think that...

Ryan: Spoiler alert. *[laughs]*

Selena: Just trying to imagine it and like, you know, our day and age are being human. You know, you see it portrayed in movies, you see it portrayed in different places. And so to actually be a person that was in that crowd, seeing these things happening, like trying to be that Matthew or Mark that's watching these, I don't know, it just takes it to another level as far as the resurrection—somebody raising from the dead. There's undeniable power there and undeniable role in the cosmos, the world creation, all of it that just you can't...[00:15:00]

Ryan: This is where I'm kind of stricken by this because we...

Selena: It's a lot. It's like a fire hose.

Ryan: I know. We're going to get into this even further. But the alternative here, okay, we're the gospel centered or we're me centered. And there's expressions of being me centered. So when we doubt this, at some point, we have to take that leap of faith. There is evidence, right?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: There's a lot of evidence. Namely, there's what Steven Willem... He's a professor at Southern. He basically said we have three interlocking pieces that are kind of the simple evidence for this. One of them is the empty tomb. I mean, people that aren't just Christians, but this dissidence, people that didn't believe in Christ documented the empty tomb. All right.

We also have Christ appearances after with countless witnesses. I think I heard Lee Strobel, who's an apologist, he said if you interviewed every witness to the resurrected Christ, and you started at breakfast on a Monday and you spent 15 minutes with every witness, and you did it 24/7, you wouldn't finish till Friday at dinner. 15 minutes.

Selena: Wow.

- Ryan:** So there's hundreds of these witnesses. And they're not just delusional, they're not hallucinating. They're legitimate accounts... And again, they're not just people who are trying to somehow push an agenda. It's they're witnesses. And that goes on to the third interlocking piece is that we have the transformation of disciples and the establishment of the church. So you have people that are willing to die for this truth. Not that Jesus was a good man, but that He was resurrected.
- Selena:** And it was foretold.
- Ryan:** Yes. And that's what they were banking on, is they're saying like, "He was the Christ. He was the king that was supposed to come." And of course, you have the Pharisees and the Sadducees who are staunchly opposed. All of Paul's epistles, they show us that the center of Paul's theology is the resurrection of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, then the spiritual resurrection of believers, and then the future bodily resurrection of believers. So the resurrection is so central in the Gospel. So we have to ask ourselves, "Is that something that we actually believe? Is it going to affect every aspect of our life?"
- Selena:** Yeah. How does how has it affected? Or how does it? How should it be affecting our lives?
- Ryan:** Well, I'm glad you asked because I actually have a neat little...
- Selena:** You're welcome.
- Ryan:** So if Jesus was resurrected, there are unbelievable implications to that.
- Selena:** I'm giggling because we're tracking. I didn't even look at the notes for that one.
[Ryan chuckles]
- Ryan:** Good.
- Selena:** Just 17 years of marriage right there, people.
- Ryan:** So, if Jesus was resurrected, here's the logical conclusion. He is God. Can you look up John? I don't know if you have your Bible handy.
- Selena:** How dare you? *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** You sinner! All right. I've got it right here.
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness.

Ryan: Sword. What are the things called in Sunday school? Sword drills? You would pull up.

Selena: I never did those.

Ryan: So, John 15:8. So if Jesus was resurrected, He is God. John 5:8. Excuse me.

Selena: 5:18.

Ryan: 5:18. You nailed it.

Selena: Do you read the Bible much?

Ryan: He said, "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." Okay. So if Jesus was resurrected, He proved, once and for all, that He is God. If He is God, it logically follows that all scripture is true. Now, how do we know that? Because in John 5... This is all John 5 by the way. I love John 5. We're reading with the girls right now and it's blowing my mind. So I decided to go there today as I was writing this rundown.

Selena: It seems like a good direction.

Ryan: John 5:39. All right. He's talking to the Pharisees. He says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people."

So he's saying that you're going to the scripture to try to find salvation. And he's saying, "The scripture points to me." So not only is He saying that it points to Him, but He's saying it's true. So if Jesus was resurrected, He is God. If He is God, and scripture is true—and scripture is true—I am who the Bible says I am. I, Ryan, you, Selena, we are who the Bible says we are.

So if Scripture is true, it bears its full weight on us in every area of life. So what does the Bible say about who we are? I'm going to go to John 5:23-24. Do you want to read those?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: 24 and 25. You have them? No?

- Selena:** I do. I says... Thanks for sharing your Bible. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. [00:20:00] Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."
- Ryan:** So, from death to life, from judgment to justification, from being judged to being justified. Our state without Christ is we are dead. We are subject to God's wrath. And instead, in Christ because of Christ, not because we've done anything but because we've put our faith in Him, we are made alive and we will the doctrine of unity with Christ. So we are then kind of adopted into the righteousness of Christ. That's the whole propitiation thing. We talked about it last week a little bit. The point is unbelievable truth. Okay, so track with me here.
- Selena:** Unbelievable truth. But you better believe it. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** You know what I mean.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** If Jesus was resurrected, He is God. If He is God, scripture is true. If scripture is true, I am who the Bible says I am. It says I'm more than, I'm just a sinner. It says I'm made in God's image. That has a huge implication in marriage.
- Selena:** Oh, man.
- Ryan:** If it says I am, the next conclusion is I'm only saved the way Jesus says I can be saved. We read 24 and 25. Let's read John 5:40 as well. Let's see here. "... yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." So we are saved by going to Jesus. That's the truth. Because He's the resurrected one, and in Him we have resurrection. The spiritual resurrection and future bodily resurrection because of His resurrection. Okay, see how it's so pivotal and how the gospel without the resurrection isn't a gospel at all?
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Then finally, I'm only saved the way Jesus says I am. If I'm only saved the way Jesus says I am, Scripture has a relevance in every aspect of my life. Now for that, because I wanted to stay in John 5, I went to John 5:1-17, which is the healing at the pool in Bethesda.
- Selena:** On the Sabbath.

- Ryan:** On the Sabbath. So He is now the governor. He's satisfied the ceremonial pieces of the law.
- Selena:** And this is him identifying that, right? This is the first time He does this?
- Ryan:** I can't say for sure.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** It's really in John. So he heals the invalid man at the pool, and then He says to him, "Now go and sin no more." In other words, go and live out this miracle.
- Selena:** "Sin no more."
- Ryan:** "Live out this healing."
- Selena:** "Nothing worse may happen to you."
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** Yes. I think this begs the question... Not begs the question but it helps us to understand those next steps. "Sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him." I think this is a good example of the gospel being at work, bringing healing to us. How can we not share it? How can we not go and tell that Jesus is the one who's done this. Jesus is the one who saved my soul from the pit of hell. And if you ever want to be scared out of your pants, Google what that's like. *[Ryan chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Or just read...what book did I read that was devastating? Oh, Dante's Inferno. Oh, my word.
- Selena:** Oh, goodness.
- Ryan:** Anyway. So the point I'm trying to make...
- Selena:** Some good news here.
- Ryan:** This is extremely good news. And I just want to hover on that point a little bit, this idea of being dead and made alive. When you're dead, you're dead.
- Selena:** There's no life. There's no fruitfulness. There's no indicators of life.

- Ryan:** I'm not clawing my way out of this state. It's like you didn't choose to be born; you just were. And just in the same way, when we choose to be born again, we just are. It's not something that we really even choose. That's a reformed view of it. And that is the one that we hold to is that it's only by the grace of God that I'm reborn. I had no real...
- Selena:** I have no claim to it.
- Ryan:** My faith was a gift. My faith itself was a grace of God.
- Selena:** The only thing we brought was our sin. That's the only thing.
- Ryan:** A little bit of Jonathan Edwards in there. Good job. So the point being made is that this is an amazing gift that would have tangible outworkings in our life. And the man that was healed, he goes and starts to spread the good news. He starts telling everybody, "Listen, this guy is down at the pool. He's healing people. He is the Christ." Obviously, that was an outworking. But in every area of our lives, we would do the same thing if that reality is bearing its full weight. If we are really experiencing that fullness of life, we're being brought that saving, pivotal faith.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Again, this is convicting to me. Like I'm thinking, "What areas of my life am I still clinging on to?"
- Selena:** Sure. Well, that's the curse of sin and brokenness.
- Ryan:** That time when I sinned ruined everything. [00:25:00]
- Selena:** No, I just think it's important for us to remember that we are never going to be sin-free here on earth. And that is okay because that means that in our weakness He is made strong, He will be glorified. And that is the beauty of it.
- Ryan:** I want to push back a little bit. I get that we'll never be sin-free. But here's where I want to tease this out a little bit more is that we don't have to keep sinning in the same way. Sanctification is real.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** The ways that I sinned before being saved, in a way that I've sinned before being sanctified are very different from the struggles that I have today. And the struggles I have today are much more... I don't know. I don't want to categorize sin too brashly here. But for me, the struggles are much more

around my own fear, my own pride, my own ambition, my own... It's not so much the earlier sins that I struggled with.

Selena: Maybe not so much outward, but inward sins. Like things that you struggle with more on the inside. Which is typically, again...

Ryan: Which is still sin. It's not any better.

Selena: You still see the fruit of whatever is being mulled over, right?

Ryan: But there should be a sanctification effect of the salvation that we experience.

Selena: How does that work itself? Maybe I'm jumping the gun here because I was just thinking about, okay, so how would that work itself out in marriage? Like we're both Christians, we're saved, but we're struggling with sin in different ways. So, my response ideally if I'm in sin and I'm convicted at some level by someone or something and I feel like it's my response that truly shows us or shows me where the gospel, how much the gospel is bearing weight, how much I'm under its authority, or how much I'm submitting to it...

Ryan: So, wait. You're saying that...

Selena: If I'm going down this road of repentance, then there's evidence of the gospel at work in me. But if I'm going down this road of hiding and trying to step away from...I don't know. I'm trying to say, like, I'm trying to hide my sin, "Oh, God forgives me. God forgive me. It's fine," instead of, stepping into the light of the good news and the gospel. I think there's just ways that we work out our salvation. That should be evidenced with the gospel. Does that make sense?

Ryan: So what you're saying is, okay, when we're saved, we're involved with the Holy Spirit. When we have a saving faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit then is our helper. And the Holy Spirit then we'll go about the business of sanctifying us and helping us. Now, the Holy Spirit is God. He is active, alive in us as believers. He's the gift that Christ gave.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So how we respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you're saying is an indication of how submitted I am to the Lordship of Christ.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Okay. That's akin to 5:39 in John. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life." And it is they that bear witness about me.

And here's verse 40. "Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. So I think the response to that conviction is to repent.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Repenting is different from saying, "Forgive me." There's something to be said for the efficacious forgiveness of Christ on the cross. He didn't forgive the sins that you've confessed. He's forgiven every sin you've ever done and ever will do. So you're already forgiven. But repentance is turning from that sin.

Selena: And acknowledging.

Ryan: The language is similar. "I'm sorry. I've sinned against you, Lord. I have lived in this. I'm turning from it." That's the difference. Because you can give lip service to a mistake and say, "I was wrong." But the repentance is actually turning from that thing.

Selena: Right. And then again we see an overflow. A fruit should be coming. Fruitfulness is such an indicator I feel like of...

Ryan: Well, I mean, let me finish the thought. You're right. But the repentance is turning from the sin toward Christ. He's the object of our faith now.

Selena: Yes. Not just figuring out ways to just continue to...

Ryan: I'm not going to turn to some other sin. I'm turning toward Christ, away from my flesh toward Christ. And so yeah, that will have...

Selena: I mean, you can see that in marriage. Just think of any...

Ryan: Well, let's get into the... I think it's helpful to compare...

Selena: Go to the alternatives and talk about...yeah.

Ryan: So, in general, what's the alternative to being gospel centered?

Selena: Me centered.

Ryan: It's me centered. That's really the only alternative. Now, there are expressions of this.

Selena: That's indicated in Genesis 3. I mean, the whole turning of... The enemy was just like, "Hey, don't you want to be like God." It's focusing not on God.

- Ryan:** "Did He really say that?"
- Selena:** It's focusing on you.
- Ryan:** It's not trusting God.
- Selena:** Yes. So because being me-centered doesn't require trust. Being God-centered I think absolutely requires trust.
- Ryan:** So there's a very clear me-centeredness to that [00:30:00] it can be obvious in our lives.
- Selena:** Not so obvious.
- Ryan:** I'm starting with the obvious one.
- Selena:** Yes, yes.
- Ryan:** You say, "Well, I don't want to go to..." I'm using church. We're not saved by going to church, but let's use it as an example. "I don't need the Community of Christ. I'm good. I don't need the body of Christ. I'm okay."
- Selena:** Said the very introvert ever.
- Ryan:** I feel God convicting me in this area that I need to stop watching pornography, or I need to stop sinning whatever habitual way or I need to submit whatever the thing is." And instead, you're saying, "I'm going to basically squish that conviction, I'm going to clinch it and I'm going to turn and I'm going to be me-centered instead of being gospel-centered. I'm going to bend my life based on what I want instead of what God wants." That's kind of the obvious outworking. But some less obvious ones are things like being spouse centered.
- Selena:** It can seem like a good thing in our marriage that we're really sacrificing a lot, doing a lot. So what would be the...
- Ryan:** This is hilarious because we're a Christian marriage podcast, and we're talking about, "Hey, don't be spouse centered." Like, serve but not too much. That's essentially what we're saying. Well, it depends on where your heart is at.
- Selena:** I guess, it's like a heart orientation. Because you can be doing one action that can be either a manipulation tactic. It could be a, like, I'm just going to throw this in your face tactic, or it can be like one of service in love.

Ryan: Or you get the wife that is just abdicating or she's giving up because she's just being a doormat because her husband is just too hard to deal with and she wants to keep the peace.

Selena: Yeah, absolutely.

Ryan: Or get the husband that's so insecure that he'll do anything to keep his wife happy, including not leading her in ways that she doesn't want to be led. But you should lead her in things like Christian community and other ways.

Selena: So trusting their own desires and fears. Submitting and trusting God's design and purpose

Ryan: Another example. I didn't mean to step on your toes there. I just want so badly to make my spouse happy that I'll lead us or overextend us financially. Like, "She said she wanted that car" or "she won't be happy unless we get this house or whatever, that "I'm going to go down or whatever road" is actually this obedient to God because it's not good stewardship. Or he's maybe leading a different way. Or it's an opportunity for us to submit more readily to Him. Instead of just being spouse centered, which we say it's a version of being me-centered because really I don't want to actually deal with it in the way...

Selena: You want the feelings of feeling good and loved versus knowing that I am already loved. Me buying this house for him is not the way forward in that.

Ryan: So just quickly, there are other expressions of this kid centeredness. It plays out in practically the same way. Job centeredness, meaning that we make decisions based on the career that we're in.

Selena: Yeah, I think you said it well at the beginning. That everything sort of bends and submits to this. This machine, whatever it is, your spouse, your kids, your job, everything is kind of centered around that. And you know how that looks. I mean, we will continue to paint the picture but you know what that looks like. You know what the sacrifices you make, and you know that you're just trying to...you're continually being callous to I feel like the voice of the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Ryan: Oh, man. It's terrifying.

Selena: It's just you have to identify that.

Ryan: It could be anything centered. You can be gym centered. Like I have fitness centered, or personal appearance centered. Those are all version of me centered.

- Selena:** Matt Chandler said this in Beautiful Design. And he said that none of those things are bad. It's just when they are elevated to that...
- Ryan:** I forget who said it, but every sin is disordered love.
- Selena:** Right. Right. And so anything elevated above where God... it becomes god. It becomes that idol, obviously.
- Ryan:** It's the thing that you're making sacrifices for.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Okay, let's do a really deep contrast here because I find this really helpful. So we're going to look at six different things: identity, communication, sex, priorities, conflict, and money. We're going to contrast me centeredness with gospel centeredness in each area.
- Selena:** So this would be a helpful exercise for you guys to kind of see. It'll be more tangible understanding, I think.
- Ryan:** By the way, we go into these in in greater detail in our the Gospel Centered Marriage course. So again, quick pitch. Gospelcenteredmarriage.com. Check it out.
- Selena:** check it out.
- Ryan:** Okay, identity. So if I'm me centered, my identity comes from me. Really this is the refrain of the world. This is everything that we hear from the world is that you need to be true to you, love yourself...
- Selena:** Live your truth.
- Ryan:** Follow your heart. Yes, live your truth. You only live once.
- Selena:** And all of this is based on how you feel.
- Ryan:** Yes. That's complete me-centeredness. I am the center of the universe.
- Selena:** Complete nonsense is what it is. You can't live [00:35:00] on your emotions or from within yourself. How do we know this? The Bible tells us this.
- Ryan:** True, it does tell us this. The heart is deceitful above all else. That is what the Bible says. So we see how if your identity comes from within, I'm literally the

center of Ryan's universe is Ryan and Selena exists, she orbits around me. And soon as her orbit gets a little bit wobbly, my universe goes out of whack, right? Because I'm the center of it. It can go for you too.

But what happens is, if my identity is based on me, as soon as the things around me become wobbly, my identity starts to implode. Like a dying star. It becomes a black hole that not even light can escape from.

Selena: That's very true.

Ryan: This sounds silly but...

Selena: No, I feel convicted about it. Not about myself. I think I sometimes center around you and the kids. Not that that's a bad thing. I want to serve and love. But I'm also like, "Okay, Lord, are there boundaries that I should be setting in order to be engaging and flourishing in the things that you have for me? What does that mean? What does that look like right now?"

Ryan: Well, you just described gospel-centered identity...

Selena: You're welcome.

Ryan: ...which is found in Christ based on being loved by God and adopted into His family. Again, we said at the beginning, this reality is the defining truth that our whole existence hinges on. God has loved me in Christ. He is the object of glory. He is the reason I exist. He is the center of my universe, not me.

Selena: Until when things clash and then we have to communicate through clashing...

Ryan: I can still trust Him. My identity safe because He's immovable and unchanging. So that's gospel-centered identity.

Let's talk about communication a little bit. Me centered communication is all about being understood. I have to be heard at all costs. If I'm not heard, then our communication has failed. Right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: In other words, I need to get you to feel what I feel. Instead of gospel-centered communication, which is...now that's good. It's good to be understood. I'm not saying that's bad. But if that's the defining center of your communication, don't be surprised when your communication is dysfunctional.

- Selena:** Right. We can't be listening just to respond. Like it's gospel-centered. Listening and seeking understanding are paramount. But I think we're listening to seek that agreement first, and then be able to kind of springboard from there. So when we're in a funk, we're having a really hard time communicating, instead of me just listening to be able to respond, stopping and listening to find agreement on, "Okay, he's upset about this..." What would be this? I don't know. "He's upset that the house is a disaster."
- Ryan:** I'm never upset. So it's hard for you to think of something.
- Selena:** I know. It's really hard sometimes.
- Ryan:** I'll come down in the...I work upstairs above our garage.
- Selena:** No, it's a disaster right now.
- Ryan:** I'll come down and I'll be like, "What you've been doing all day, huh?" You know, I do dishes, I help with dinner, all that kind of stuff. Don't look at me like that. *[Selena laughs]* It's true.
- Selena:** I feel like you're laying some claims here. No, you do.
- Ryan:** I help. I help as much as you help with this podcast. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness!
- Ryan:** Show for the show.
- Selena:** Okay, that makes sense. That's all right. *[both laughs]* Listening and seeking understanding are paramount. You've got to give empathy. Again, not listening to just find your response.
- Ryan:** But how is that centered on the gospel? That's what I want to get into. Because if I'm gospel-centered, how am I actually able to listen now?
- Selena:** Because, well, if we go back to our identity, we're listening out of a secure identity in Christ. Typically, we tend to respond out of insecurity or being attacked and feeling defensive. So if we can remember that our identity is rooted in Christ, that we've been adopted into His family, that we are loved, then we can walk confidently through this communication storm.
- Ryan:** I agree with that. Now, here's my one Ryan caveat to that is there are times when I don't feel great about it, but I just need to trust that listening is the better path.

- Selena:** Dying to self there.
- Ryan:** Dying to self a little bit and serving you from a place of even though I'm frustrated, even though not angry...*[laughs]*
- Selena:** Listening to your wife. That sounds like some good advice.
- Ryan:** Yes, you should take it. *[both laughs]* Now, intimacy, let's just skip that one. I'm not having it. We joke. We joke.
- Selena:** Joking around.
- Ryan:** I'm saying that you frustrated me. Therefore, we're skipping the closeness part. Anyway *[inaudible]*.
- Selena:** That's never a good tool.
- Ryan:** Never do that.
- Selena:** Never do that.
- Ryan:** Plus, I'm never on that end of it anyway.
- Selena:** So I was looking at you with some confusion there.
- Ryan:** Yes.
- Selena:** So sex and intimacy. Me-centeredness would say: "it exists to fulfill my personal needs and desires." [00:40:00]
- Ryan:** But isn't it? It's my body, right? It's for me, right?
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** Obviously not. Being serious in that. The gospel-centered intimacy says that our sex life, first off, it's a sign of the substance of the covenant. So it is reserved just for you and me in our covenant. No one else, no other pictures, images, videos, screens, anything like that. Just me and you. And it is an opportunity to know, serve, and enjoy you, enjoy each other to the glory of God. That doesn't mean that it's not fun, it's not something that we want to do. It just means that the purpose is rooted in God and His design and His glory. And it's not rooted in me, my desires, my glory.

- Selena:** Well, that's a reflection also of the oneness of the tri nature of God and also, I think, the oneness that...
- Ryan:** Being loved in the Gospel?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Being fully known, fully loved still in completely, literally naked, but still literally loved. I mean that. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** I know. That's great.
- Ryan:** Okay, priorities. We got three more of these. We're running a little short on time. So me-centered priorities means that my life is oriented around what's most important to me. Again, that's the whole... I'm the center of the universe...
- Selena:** Is that saying that if my kids and husband are important to me that I'm being me-centered?
- Ryan:** Well, that's a little bit of a logic bomb there.
- Selena:** I guess. Because, I mean, that might be my struggle, to be honest.. I think that you guys are important to me and therefore I want to serve you well as an outpouring of God and the Holy Spirit at work and the Gospel at work in my life. But what about when that becomes...I guess when that moves into like an identity thing? That can be me-centered versus gospel-centered.
- Ryan:** Okay. Let's talk about the gospel side of it and then we'll talk about that more. But the gospel centered version of priorities is our life is oriented around what's most important to God. So what's most important to me, what's most important to God. That's the contrast. So if your husband and kids are most important to you, that will clash with what's most important to God if it means that you are not loving God, worshiping Him, glorifying Him with your heart, your affections, your time.
- Selena:** Right. So again, if I'm finding my... Because both will bear fruit. So I'm just saying, how do you differentiate?
- Ryan:** Yeah. But I think the kids can pick up on when the priorities are out of whack. Like when you're working and serving the family, and when I'm working and serving the family from a place of Christ is first in my heart, I love you way better.

- Selena:** And God is our provider.
- Ryan:** For me, that's a big one.
- Selena:** I guess that's just what I'm trying to understand. That it's an identity piece. It's a reliance piece. There's pieces of this that go together because I think you could make the argument the other way as well. Like, my life is oriented around what's most important to me. You're saying that's me centered. While I guess then I would be me-centered as a gospel-centered woman. But it's not. We're saying the differentiators are these desires are from a place of God. He's given me these desires. And my identity is not in who I love, and what I have.
- Ryan:** You are stewarding instead of owning it.
- Selena:** Yes, an attitude of stewardship versus identity. Reliance, though, that self-reliance piece I think is big.
- Ryan:** Yes. So in our lives, you will serve us to a fault. Because I feel like there's an identity priority piece in there sometimes. You just said that.
- Selena:** I mean, if I'm honest, I just don't know where to draw boundary lines very well. I think that's where it comes in in terms of with kids and time.
- Ryan:** So how does that show itself? I think anger is a symptom of the disordered love.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** It's also a symptom of... You can be angry without sinning. So you can feel angry, feel frustrated; it doesn't mean you're automatically sinning.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** So it's hard not to sin in those moments, but it's possible. Anyway, I think we could talk about that a lot. I think it's a good question.
- Selena:** Off the podcast I guess. I'm just throwing some stuff around, people. I'm doing it right now.
- Ryan:** So it just comes down to your heart orientation. So conflict. Let's talk about that, speaking of anger. Me-centered conflict. This one's interesting because people think of conflict that's selfish. It's like, "I just have to be right." I think another way to be really selfish in conflict is to avoid healthy conflict and to

basically avoid confrontation. "I'm not going to bring it up because he's going to respond this way. I'm not going to bring it up because I'm just [inaudible]."

Selena: Gosh! You're just reading my mail right now. Because I'm just like, "Man, maybe there are some ways that I'm just not..." Again, I'm not good at drawing boundaries, because what? And those are things I need to explore. I want to keep the peace and I don't want to engage because we just don't have a lot of like margin energy to examine these things with a [00:45:00] healthy perspective and one that's starting to blow up. But it's like, "Are we actually like taking the time to walk into this gospel centerpiece for the conflict section?" Are we welcoming the conflict the process to be pursued in healthy ways for sanctification and reconciliation? Am I saying this is a necessary and welcome process to be pursued in healthy ways for sanctification and reconciliation?

Ryan: That's a good question. I have a verse for that. Romans 12:1-2. We happen to be memorizing it with the girls. "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

That's a kind of one of the verses that you probably have heard a hundred or a thousand times. Being transformed by the renewal of your mind. There's an outcome here. The transformation is the outcome, but then there's an outworking of it. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

So it's a discernment question. How do I know if I am loving my family to a fault, as an idol, or if I'm loving them as a service unto God? That's a discernment question. We discern by testing. How do we test? Well, we get in God's Word, we learn who He is, we learn His will, His character, His decree, His law, we learn what His desires are, we talk to others, we pray, we listen.

Selena: Yeah. I guess that just falls to the ears of wives and mothers of like dealing with the mom guilt or just the me time kind of conversations. So where does that fall? I don't know. Those are just questions that I think come to my head of I've always been... I don't want this me selfish time. You can have me time to be refreshed to be able to engage in those roles and relationships that God has put in front of you. But the meantime is not for me to sever and get away and ignore completely. It's the purpose. I think it's the purpose. Maybe the purpose that is in front of you not to the right or to the left. But what is in front of you? Where's God...?

Ryan: That's good.

- Selena:** ...purposed this path for me?
- Ryan:** I'm going to harp on myself here in a second. And husbands. I think maybe one way to look at that is that quote-unquote, "me time" from a gospel-centered perspective is really about refueling. Refueling for the same journey. You're not taking a detour just to get off the road, but you're actually saying like, "I need to fuel. I need to take care of this finite body this tired mind..."
- Selena:** Your weary soul.
- Ryan:** My weary soul. I need to refuel because I'm still in the battle. And the enemy is still here. And I still got to swing the sword.
- Selena:** So husband, how can you just battle for me for a bit and let me...
- Ryan:** Well, last night. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** You did.
- Ryan:** I battled. Our baby's been teething or something. She's had a hard few nights. You had a Bible study with the ladies.
- Selena:** And I was very tired, friends. I was like, "You know what? I could really just sit this one out." But you were just like, "You should go. I think you should go." *[both chuckles]* Okay. And I knew it wasn't going to be perfect.
- Ryan:** I know that you worry.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** I texted you and I was like, "She's not doing okay. Just FYI." And you're like, "She's not doing okay!" You read it that way.
- Selena:** I didn't drive. It was like a college carpool here. We're just like...
- Ryan:** Four different ladies.
- Selena:** Yeah. And so I'm just like, "Oh, no." I didn't freak out. I just kind of let my heart takes few floaters.
- Ryan:** And I was holding down the fort, taking care of the kid and I was like, "You know what? I'm just going to put her mind at ease even though things aren't."

- Selena:** You did. You did.
- Ryan:** I said, "It's great. I got it. We're doing great. We snuggled together. I love you. I love her."
- Selena:** "Take all the time you need." And I was like, "Pheeew."
- Ryan:** And then like half hour later is like, "You're still out there? *[both laughs]* You're coming back. It get a little sweaty over here."
- Selena:** That was fine. We're the only one in this group that has the youngest child. I was like, "Can I get dropped off first?" They're like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, it's fine. We love Lou. We want to make sure she's good."
- Ryan:** They are so sweet. Yes. So, men, how do we avoid conflict in a me-centered way? I think we can avoid bringing up things that we know are going to upset our wife. Sin is the one that always comes to mind.
- Selena:** So we tend to do this. Yes, as a me-centered, we just want to...
- Ryan:** We tend to be passive.
- Selena:** ...keep peace instead of...
- Ryan:** We're not called to be passive. We're called to be engaged, active. Not aggressive, but active. We're called to be engaged in our household. Now that means modifying our own sin first before God, then before our wives, and before our brothers in Christ. So I'm thinking of any sort of addiction. We always talk about pornography with men, but it really comes down to anything, whether it's video games, [00:50:00] alcohol consumption. It could be the amount of time you're spending away from your home. Maybe it's work.
- For me, my worst addiction is work. I have to be really forthcoming with God about that and forthcoming with you. Honestly, we have a lot of fights around it. And so I've had to learn...
- Selena:** Really?
- Ryan:** Well, it's been better. I've gotten better. Sanctification. *[both chuckles]* Right? Am I right?
- Selena:** Gospel-centeredness.

- Ryan:** Okay. That's the guy side of it. What's the gospel-centered side of this? And you touched on it. It's we see conflict as a necessary welcome process to be pursued in healthy ways.
- Selena:** And for all those who are conflict-averse, hello for me. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** But it's not just for itself. It's for sanctification.
- Selena:** Well, and that's the promise that conflict-averse people need to cling to and remember. That is my battle. It's not your battle like that. You don't battle at the same way as I do. Therefore, we...
- Ryan:** Oh, believe me, I do. I do.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Not with you because...
- Selena:** No. I'm just saying the promise that I have to stand on may be different for you.
- Ryan:** That's good. Okay.
- Selena:** Sorry. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I'll give you that.
- Selena:** I'll give you that. All right. We got to wrap this up. Money.
- Ryan:** Me-centered money. I trust my job. I trust my work. I work feverishly. I spend to maximize my status, my ease, and I pursue security through wealth.
- Selena:** Oh, man. Wowie. Wowie. Wowie.
- Ryan:** Oh, boy. The gospel-centered version of that is, you know, we trust God, we work diligently, we steward faithfully, but we pursue God's purposes and money is a tool to His ends.
- Selena:** And we can give generously. Would you add that there?
- Ryan:** I would add that.
- Selena:** Okay.

- Ryan:** Because we get from a place of security. It's not ours, it's God's.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** He is the owner of everything.
- Selena:** And I think the way we spend money can be either...like whose mission are we supplying here? Right? Are we on mission with God or are we on mission for ourselves and our own puffing up and status and glory? Because I think...
- Ryan:** There's a very real...
- Selena:** There's a real battle out there. And I think that sometimes it might be hard for us to take hold of some of the promises or the things of God because of the how easily it can be misconstrued as, you know, we deserve this kind of thing. Does that make sense?
- Ryan:** "I worked hard. I deserve this. As opposed to God allowed me to work and maybe I should give it away. Give it to Him or in some way submit to Him.
- Selena:** Do you know what I'm talking about?
- Ryan:** I think so. Why?
- Selena:** Oh, just curious.
- Ryan:** What are you talking about?
- Selena:** Just for us.
- Ryan:** Oh, are you sub texting me right now?
- Selena:** Sub texting. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Okay. I was actually thinking while you were talking so maybe I missed something.
- Selena:** You're thinking...

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:10:48]**
 - Website recommended:
 - [Thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com)

- **[00:11:35]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, ESV
 - John 5:18, ESV
 - John 5:39-41, ESV
 - John 5:23-24, ESV
 - John 5:40, ESV

- **[00:45:31]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Romans 12:1-2, ESV

- **[00:46:00]**
 - Website Recommendation:
 - [Gospel Centered Marriage](#)

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