

ALL ABOUT ATTACHMENT STYLES

<https://fiercemarriage.com/all-about-attachment-styles>

[00:00:00]

Selena: So why is it important for us to know how we attach to each other? And I don't mean that sexually. Don't be gross, people. Right?

Ryan: Okay. No one else thought that but you, weirdo. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Sorry.

Ryan: It's okay. Why is it important that we attach to each other in a marriage?

Selena: What does that even mean?

Ryan: Well, more or less how we attach to each other or how... What is attachment?

Selena: That's what I just said. What does it even mean for marriage? Because you hear about this attachment theory. At least I've heard it primarily with babies and having kids. It's this theory of like you know, you have to attach the primary caregiver. But what does this look like? How does it affect marriage?

I don't even know how to portray the question because it feels like there's a lot to unpack there talking about, you know, family of origin and how brokenness has affected us and sin. But then how does the gospel transform us to be able to have a healthy attachment to our spouse? Which then would cause fruitfulness and flourishing and all the promises of God from that point on. But where do we even begin? How do we recognize any of these broken areas of attachment within our lives already?

Ryan: Well, if you don't know what attachment styles are and you're listening to this, you're in the right place *[Selena chuckles]* because we're going to cover the four attachment styles, which actually tend to fit neatly on two axes: the anxious axis and the avoidance axis. So anyway, thanks for joining us and we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:30] <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.
- [00:02:02]** <podcast begins>
- Ryan:** So ever since the last episode, I think was two weeks ago, I mentioned some words that sound like what they are.
- Selena:** Oh, no, you're not going to keep doing this, right?
- Ryan:** I know. I've been obsessed with this. Ever since that came to mind, I'm like, that was a revelation for me. We talked about the...
- Selena:** [inaudible] basically.
- Ryan:** No. That's bam! That's what that is. *[both laughs]* You're welcome. No, like crisp. Crisps is one of those words. Moist. All right. It sounds like what it is.
- Selena:** All listeners cringe and everybody gives us one star after that. Thanks big. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** No. And titillated was one too.
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness.
- Ryan:** The words that keep coming to mind and they sound like what they are, another one is supple. What do you think as one strike?
- Selena:** Okay, moving on. We're just going to lose all the ratings now. Good job.
- Ryan:** Okay, sorry. One more. Listener, if you know one of these 971-333-1120 text it in *[Selena laughing]* because I'm obsessed with this. Supple is one of them.

Last one. Awkward. I feel like awkward is one of those words. These aren't a revelation to you because I've already run these past you.

Selena: Anyways, we are going to talk about this, not the words, but the attachment styles. Can we please just move on? Because now we're talking about rating and reviews and which is a really bad...

Ryan: We'll just skip it then. *[both chuckles]* Leave a rating and a review in your app of choice.

Selena: Oh, goodness. Please listen to at least one full episode before you do that. That's my small little request there.

Ryan: Unless you're already over the moon excited about the Fierce Marriage podcast. In that case, just go in and hit those five stars.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: All right. Okay, that's the rating and review piece. What else?

Selena: Patreon.

Ryan: Patreon. If you want to be a part of all of this, I don't know if you want to answer that, but if you do find yourself on mission with us, which is, by the way, I like to remind our listeners, the whole reason we do fierce marriage, this podcast, our blog, the books is to point couples to Christ and to commission them for the gospel. I can't get past this idea of what is it going to look like 30, 40, 50 years down the line if just the couples in the church that are already Christians, who call themselves Christians are living on mission, truly living on mission, not nominal Christian lives but missional Christian lives, what's going to happen? How will the next generation, two, three, four generations be different? How will our countries be different? So if you want to be part of that mission, that's the whole reason we get up out of bed in the morning. That and raise babies. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: It's where the real change happens, we believe.

Ryan: If you want to be part of that, go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. [Patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://patreon.com/fiercemarriage). There's lots of stuff there, good stuff for you to get if you're part of it.

Selena: If you are new to Fierce Marriage, we do like to joke around a little bit. Kind of the laughter keeps everybody happy and keeps things moving along typically. We usually have an Office reference nugget.

Ryan: It wouldn't be weird if you didn't talk about it. It would be just joking. And now you're making it weird.

Selena: Okay, I'm trying not to. I'm just trying to keep you on board. Too on the nose? Sorry. *[Ryan chuckles]* [00:05:00] All right, moving on to our topic of discussion. We are going to talk about attachment theory and attachment styles as we've mentioned before because we did some research on this and Ryan was talking about it, and we're like, "What does this even mean?"

It is a big topic in relational psychology, I guess, if you want to say that. But we started thinking about it and how it takes into consideration your family of origin and the brokenness that maybe you experience and how that affects your marriage, which is what we've been talking about, but also enter the gospel.

We've been talking about gospel-centered marriage and how does that change and transform and renew all of these areas of brokenness. If our attachment styles are broken, if we have had sin affect our lives, then how does the gospel restore and renew that brokenness? Then in our marriage, we have these grounds for sanctification and experiencing covenant knowing God intimately... And also, how do we know another soul intimately in a healthy way? How do we attach in a healthy way to another soul? That's a hard thing to do.

But then we can also look ahead. We kind of have a looking back at our family of origin, taking a current look at where we're at right now today, and looking ahead on mission. And we'll kind of get into that and what that means and how these all attach to each other. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: That's great. That was a really great summary. So I think it might be helpful at this point to start with clear definition of attachment theory. And that will inform actually attachment styles that play out within relationships. I have a definition out right now. It's by a gal. I don't know anything about this person. It's a website. Her name is Kendra Cherry. She wrote an article. It started like this: "Attachment theory is focused on the relationships and bonds between people, particularly long-term relationships, including those between a parent and child and between romantic partners."

So there's a whole group of psychologists, probably anthropologists, sociologists, I don't know, people with "ology" in their title.

Selena: That study people and relationships.

- Ryan:** They're studying how humans basically attach to one another.
- Selena:** Right. I have another definition actually by the Gottman Institute. It says, "Attachment theory describes how our early relationships with a primary caregiver, most commonly a parent, creates our expectation for how love should be."
- Ryan:** Okay. They focused in on how the relationship governs you later.
- Selena:** Right. Because this article is talking about attachment style and how it influences the success of your current romantic relationship.
- Ryan:** So with that definition in mind, now we can actually look at the various ways this plays out in adult relationships, romantic relationships. Mainly in this case, marriages. So the first one is kind of the lowest hanging fruit. This secure attachment style is I'm okay and you're okay. In other words, I'm secure in our relationship, I'm secure in you and what you think of me. Everything's okay. In other words, I'm confident. I feel that reciprocated. Parentally speaking, this comes from basically having a household of parents that were also secure.
- Selena:** Right. It starts early in life. And I think looking at each of these and looking back again, so we'll look at each of these styles and then look back at how these styles came about at the brokenness in the past or lack of. So in this case, this attachment style it really does start early in life. Like a child feels that their parent is a secure base. So even though they're happy to be with mom or dad, they're also confident enough to kind of explore on their own. We see this is probably to a father and a mother home. There's two parents in there. They grew up this way when their parents themselves are securely attached people.
- Ryan:** And the way this works in marriage is you kind of I think you're more self-sufficient. You're not completely independent of one another nor are you codependent but you're interdependent. And then you realize that there is a certain sense of self-sufficiency. We're comfortable with being self-sufficient but we also realize we need and want each other. And I think that's where the other piece of it is you get okay. You're more comfortable with intimacy. You want that closeness but you don't need the closeness to feel...
- Selena:** Yes. I think there's a deeper understanding of what the attachment means. So I know this is not me. I'm not total secure. God had by His grace moved us in that direction. But beginning out in our relationship, I was definitely not this. But we can kind of see this as a bit of an ideal of "Okay, you came from a two-parent home. These are the things that we... We want to look at in the future

of like, "Hey, this is what we are valuing and what God essentially has set forth as the design and purpose for [00:10:00] marriage and family."

Ryan: I would say that I was very blessed in that my parents were very clear that I was loved. They were clear that me my brother—I only have one brother—that we were loved, differently, but the same amount equally, if that makes sense. I mean that we weren't the same, but we both loved. That was something that was really pivotal for me as a child.

I also know that my parents were committed to one another. That even when they fought, I never worried that they were going to get divorced or that they were going to somehow turn it on us. And they did. Nobody's perfect. We weren't abused as kids or anything like that, but there's definitely like, you know, we were on the receiving end of maybe their anger or frustration or whatever.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: But still, in general, I think this is probably my...

Selena: Right. You're trusting or you're independent, but we're close. You're open. I think you express your affection in more confident ways, whereas I'm not that. *[chuckles]* And some of that's personality. You have to take into consideration a lot of things. But I think the important piece here is that we're seeing kind of the ideal and what can happen, the fruit of what happens when the gospel is at the center or at least pursued to be at the center.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. And I will say this. That I'm not emotionally intelligent in a lot of cases. Like when I get frustrated, or angry or hurt, I don't always know how to articulate or identify those feelings. So a lot of times, I will slide into an avoidance. I tend to be more dismissive than anxious over things. Like I'll just compartmentalize it. I don't get anxious over it, but I will dismiss it. So that's the next one. Let's talk about dismissive avoidance. Which here's a quote from... It's actually an article that's about the show *How I Met Your Mother*. It's incisive because there's two...

Selena: He's the characters typically that illustrate the points. Different styles.

Ryan: In general, this is dismissive-avoidant attachment styles. People who have the dismissive, avoidant attachment style find it uncomfortable to get too emotionally close to others or to fully trust them. Initially, you tended to think that this was you. And then I think as we moved on, you realized that it may not be....

- Selena:** Maybe just a little bit but not as much. Yeah.
- Ryan:** So what's more on this side? I feel like if you had a childhood that was maybe a little less stable, a little less like what I just described..
- Selena:** Or maybe you had a two-parent home, but the gospel is not in it, Christianity was not a part of your upbringing. So there might be this inability to feel comfortable with emotional intimacy, because I mean, two parents were there, but you were like, Well, they were just kind of existed and they took care of my tangible needs, but emotionally it was difficult to connect, I think, at a more deep and meaningful level." So the result can tend to be that you pull away from being close with others. Or if you feel hurt or rejected again, you pull away.
- Ryan:** I think what I found helpful to consider is that even if this is your tendency, it doesn't mean you don't want to feel close.
- Selena:** Exactly.
- Ryan:** So you haven't yet figured it out or that you struggle with. It's not your natural style.
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** Now, each one of these, and maybe it's a good time to pause, is each one of these doesn't mean that you're doomed to whatever your tendency is. That's why we're going to talk about how the gospel really does inform this aspect of our relationships, of our lives. It can transform our hearts and our minds.

But anyway, let's go on to the next one. Anxious preoccupied attachment. As we get into these, it's helpful to think about them on a matrix. If you think about an X, Y-axis, on the x-axis, you've got anxiousness or anxiety all the way to the left, it's the flat part, you got low anxiety on the left, and then on the right you've got high anxiety. And then on the y-axis, you've got avoidance, you've got low avoidance at the top, and high avoidance at the bottom.

Each one of these quadrants represents an attachment style. Secure would be low avoidance, low anxiety. Let's see. Where do we place each one of these? Anxious preoccupied or dismissive-avoidant would be high avoidance, meaning I'd rather just compartmentalize or isolate myself. And I have very low anxiety. I'm not worried about it, but I'm just avoiding it.

The next one is anxious-preoccupied, which is the opposite, which I'm completely...I can't avoid it. You have to accept me. I can't be secure unless

you accept me. I have to pursue you until you accept me. And I'm anxious about it.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: What else is in that piece?

Selena: The anxious preoccupied?

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Well, they need [00:15:00] that reassurance again, like you said, from their partner. They're seeking that closeness, intimacy more intensely. I think this very much illustrates marriage and often more quickly than their partner is ready. So one may be coming in hot and the other one's like, "Whoa, I'm not ready for this." So you can probably see how the dynamic maybe plays out in that one. The last one if sorry, if you're okay moving on to that one.

Ryan: Sorry. One word that comes to mind with anxious of preoccupation or pre-occupied is clinginess. Someone is really clingy and you can't figure it out. I feel like a lot of...

Selena: What are you trying to say right now? *[both chuckles]* Just kidding. I'm not clingy at all. If you know me, I'm not.

Ryan: As a young middle schooler, I had this...I'm sorry, I'm going to talk about an ex-girlfriend at this point.

Selena: Ah.

Ryan: You're still my first wife. Okay. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Not funny.

Ryan: If you ever want to throw your spouse by the way, just introduce them and say they're your first wife.

Selena: Big failure.

Ryan: I was dating this girl. It was a two month...

Selena: Dating. Middle school. *[Ryan laughs]* Come on. What does that even mean?

Ryan: We all know it was silly. Okay. Don't kind of rub my nose in it.

Selena: You brought it up. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Two months I was seeing this girl. "Seeing this girl" sounds weird.

Selena: Went out with this girl.

Ryan: We were a boyfriend and girlfriend. I asked her to go out with me and she said yes.

Selena: What does that even mean?

Ryan: And after about a month and a half, she just lost interest.

Selena: Were you totally rejected?

Ryan: And I became the clingiest person. *[Selena laughs]* I was anxious preoccupied.

Selena: Oh, little anxious Ryan.

Ryan: Why?

Selena: What was your identity, son?

Ryan: She had become an unhealthy portion of my little eighth grade identity.

Selena: What did she want?

Ryan: I felt confident because this girl had expressed interest in me and it meant that I was valid. I was valid as a human being. That was all the rage. In that age you have to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

Selena: I know. Some guy asked me out twice. I was like, "Sure." And I was like, "What does that even mean? What do we do?" And then like five days later, I was like, "Nah." *[laughing]*

Ryan: You're so mettle in that way and it's awesome. *[laughs]*

Selena: I was just like, "This is weird."

Ryan: So I became really clingy and I was anxious about it. And the more clingy I became the more she pulled away.

Selena: You can see the vicious cycle that probably happened, which ended it very quickly. But if you're married, you can't end things like that. You can't end things like a middle school relationship.

Ryan: *[chuckling]* Yes, it's very true.

Selena: Bam!

Ryan: You're in a marriage, not middle school. You didn't ask your spouse to go out with.

Selena: You should though if you haven't done that.

Ryan: That's true.

Selena: Okay, you're ready to move on to the fourth one, last one...

Ryan: Sure.

Selena: ...so we can start to finding these things?

Ryan: Yeah, sure.

Selena: I mean, how they affect our marriage, I guess. Fearful avoidant. What is this one? This is the low...

Ryan: It's kind of both. Disorganized is another word for it. That's honestly how some people reference this attachment style.

Selena: Yeah, it's a combination of avoidant and anxious. So it's often confused, giving mixed signals of pushing away and craving more connection. Did you say this was me?

Ryan: Well, yes.

Selena: How dare you?

Ryan: Because what happens is if I'm disengaged, you become more like the anxious preoccupied. Like if I'm working really hard, you start getting really emotionally flustered. Hope you're okay with this...

[crosstalk]

- Selena:** No, because I feel like I'm emotionally detached from you. Or like, you don't want to be attached to me emotionally. And so I think I get insecure.
- Ryan:** Sure.
- Selena:** So then I start pursuing you. And you think that I'm pursuing you because you're being cold to me or whatever. Right?
- Ryan:** Okay. How is that?
- Selena:** You were like, "Yes. I love you. I'm going to be affectionate." This is our scenario. Ryan wants to be affectionate towards me, and I'm like, "Okay, hey, hey, whoa." And then my feelings catch up to it and then it's cooled off for him, and he's like, "Wait, that ship has sailed."
- Ryan:** I don't think that's how it goes. That's funny. *[Selena chuckles]* I think it's when you realize that I have withdrawn the desire, the affection...
- Selena:** I'm telling you you're wrong.
- Ryan:** ...then you flip the switch and you're like, "Oh, shoot, I need to go get that fish back on the hook."
- Selena:** No, it's not.
- Ryan:** That's what it feels like.
- Selena:** I know. See, we're just divulging this in real-time. That's not the case. It's honestly my feelings take a little bit of time. I feel like you should know this about me. Seventeen years, right?
- Ryan:** We're going to...Ladies and gentlemen, real-time here.
- Selena:** They take a little bit of time to warm up. And then once they're there, you're like, "Wait, no, that was an hour ago."
- Ryan:** Okay. Well, here's my rebuttal to that. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Is rebuttal another one of those words? Rebuttal.
- Ryan:** We could spend all day together and we're doing great, we're doing awesome.
- Selena:** I have a bucket with a hole. What can I say? *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** To me, it doesn't matter the amount of time.
- Selena:** I'm empty. It's always empty.
- Ryan:** If I'm trying to draw closer and closer and closer to you and I realize that I'm getting a wall, that could take eight hours to get that wall. It could take an hour to get to that wall. But when I hit the wall and I start to withdraw, always, every time, [00:20:00] that's when you start to pursue. Whether that's eight hours or one hour, or 10 minutes.
- Selena:** Is that a control thing then you think?
- Ryan:** I don't know. Part of the secure attachment...
- Selena:** I think that's part of it.
- Ryan:** ...style is that you are okay with independence.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** A certain level of independence or a certain level of autonomy. So you are not okay with that after a certain threshold is met. So when you feel like there's too much, like I'm too far removed from needing you, that's when you start feeling insecure, and you start pursuing. And so the anxious preoccupied sidekicks in or the...
- Selena:** Okay. I can see that. I think, honestly, the Lord has brought me out of that, though, in a lot of ways. Can you give me any credit with that?
- Ryan:** Absolutely. I'm not trying to put you under the microscope of what you did.
- Selena:** It's fine.
- Ryan:** But also if I'm pursuing you and you're not having it, that's when you start to check out. You start to not push away...
- Selena:** Because I feel like...
- Ryan:** ...but just don't engage. That's the avoidance piece.
- Selena:** Yes. Part of that, the dismissive avoidance, is my tendency to pull away I read it back into my childhood of being hurt and rejected in a big way as a kid going through my parents' divorce at a very impressionable age. I think it was seven or eight. So I think that there's still residue of that there. And so we see that

in our marriage, which is a good kind of jumping off point right into marriage a little bit of how we can talk about a little bit of my brokenness. Just go to family of origin if you want to hear the episode about our upbringings and whatnot.

Ryan: No one knows what that means. You gotta go...

Selena: Sorry. Family of origin is where we've come from, our experience from being born to today.

Ryan: No, I wasn't referring to that. I was saying no one knows what "go to family of origin" means. If you want to find that episode, go to fiercemarriage.com/podcast and you can search in the search bar "family of origin" and it should come up for you. That's how you go to family of origin. And you hear both of our stories.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: I'm here to fill in those gaps. You're welcome.

Selena: Thank you. *[both chuckles]* Where am I going now?

Ryan: Real quick, before we segue into that, we're going to talk about how this plays itself out and how the gospel is kind of our help in this. I don't mean to put you under the microscope. I really don't.

Selena: It's fine. I'm secure.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: God is good.

Ryan: I see that you're all *[inaudible]*.

Selena: Aren't we all, though?

Ryan: We are.

Selena: I mean, I think in different situations maybe we're more secure than we would say at the moment. But yeah, I think we're flawed human beings, we are broken, we fall short all the time. We are sinners. So there's going to be some anxiety, there's going to be some avoidance some disorganization, some dismissiveness that we have to deal with. So how do we kind of change that

style? And is that our job to change it? Maybe we're recognizing it, but then here's where the gospel enters. We're recognizing, hey...

Ryan: Okay, hold off because...

Selena: Saw the finger comes up?

Ryan: Well, I want to stop you because I can't get a word sometimes.

Selena: You just put me under the magnifying glass. Now you're like, "Don't talk."
[laughs]

Ryan: I'm going to get some bad ratings. I'm sorry.

Selena: No. I love you so much. I love you.

Ryan: So we're at kind of a fork in the road. If you're hearing this, and you're saying, "Oh, that's me," or "that's my spouse," we have a decision to make. Are we going to continue or are we going to try and change? A lot of times if you have an unhealthy attachment style, this is what gives rise to codependency is you have somebody who is anxious avoider, or someone who's an anxious pursuer or whatever, and the opposite comes in and they're the avoider. So you have someone who's constantly avoiding and checking out and the other person is constantly pursuing and trying to get them to check back in. And that just creates more checking out and more pursuing and more anxiousness. And so it's codependence.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That can be really unhealthy. And a lot of times couples get stuck in that loop because no matter what, they're always reaching for each other at the wrong time.

Selena: Right. Then again, intimacy is completely affected, whether that's emotional, spiritual, or physical, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Because, again, you're trying to pursue or you're uncomfortable with intimacy. I know that I had to learn to be comfortable with it. And it took a while to be able to understand that sex is good and it's for our marriage. You hear the words, but the weight of those things was hard to translate into the bedroom in some ways.

So I think that we have to identify it. And then yes, how do we allow the gospel to come in and shed light and to lead us and to sanctify us? Because, like I said, at the beginning of our relationship, you know, when we all think we're perfect for each other, we then step into marriage and we figure out how broken and [00:25:00] unattached and our inability to attach to each other, how great that chasm is. Especially outside of Christ. He is the model. He is the author and perfecter of our faith.

And it's in our faith that we are able to begin knowing what it means to have a loving Heavenly Father if we did not have a loving earthly father. This is where we learn about our identity and how we are made secure in Christ before anything else, before anyone else. And it's here where we learn God's design and purpose for marriage, and the biblical definition of covenant and love. What does those mean? How do those springboard us into a healthy attachment with each other?

Ryan: It's letting God's Word shine its bright light into our hearts and into our lives and into our pasts to build that bridge from codependence, unhealthy attachment styles to interdependence, and healthy attachment styles.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: Because we're not called to be detached. Marriage is there and there's a oneness that is biblical. And it's interdependent oneness. It's not codependent.

Selena: I just want to jump in right there and say that marriage is not a commandment. It's not a promise of God. It is a blessing I think and a gift. But not everybody is called to it like we see with Paul. So I don't want to put that pressure out there on anyone.

Ryan: You mean like we see how Paul is single?

Selena: Yes, how the Apostle Paul is single. Man, I got to finish my thoughts.

Ryan: Well, I'm in your head so I'll be the bridge.

Selena: I appreciate that. I appreciate that. One more thing that the gospel does and I just want to touch on it. And we can keep talking about this a little bit more. But in terms of attaching, when they talk about the attachment theory with children at a young age and then growing up, it's basically the caregiver is proving their love over and over again.

It's you have a baby, you have a newborn, and they are at certain stages, they could care less who's holding them. The newborn is like, "I don't care, whatever. I'm not hungry, I'm not wet, so I'm good. I'm just sleeping on whoever I'm on." But at some point, which is like kind of where our 15-month-old is, they start preferring a certain person because they've spent a lot of time with them, they have a lot of trust built up with them.

So the thing I think I'm trying to get to is that Christ is our proof of love. He is the one that we can constantly go back to - His model, His life, His death, His resurrection, everything about Him. And everything that was said before He came is proof that God is a loving Father. He is patient. 1 Corinthians 13 defines love. And if God is love, then therefore God is patient. He's kind. He's long-suffering. He is trustworthy. He is the one we can attach to and look to on how to model that healthy attachment that will, in turn, ideally, keep our marriage covenant together. And not just by threads and strings, but by chains that will are unbreakable by anything in this world.

Ryan: Yeah. It's unreal. I love how your brain works. It's so true. Okay, we just want to reiterate it. Our children are learning. We're proving our love to them over and over again. And then at some point, they start to feel more independent, and that secure foundation gives them a place to then move forward about the... Think about the business of becoming a little child and becoming an adult. That's parenting 101. Right? *[Selena chuckles]*

Well, you're saying that God has done the same thing to us. That Christ is our proof of God's love. Jesus Himself says, "Be born again." Why does He use that analogy? The more I dive into family, the more I dive into God's word, the more I realize how profound the model for the Christian household, for the household, and how the gospel is a representation is represented in the Christian home, and the idea of being born again into a new identity, a new family, and having new life...I forget where it is, but it's the whole idea of being dead and brought to life. It's Voddie Baucham that talked about it.

Selena: It's very thematic throughout the scriptures.

Ryan: Well, yes, it is very thematic. But he talked about how you were not born because you decided to be born to your parents. It just happened. You had nothing to do with it. And it's the same thing with our birth into Christ's family, into God's family. We're born again out of nothing. Out of death we're brought to life. And that is the foundation of God's proof of love to us.

Now the problem is, is we will oftentimes by that...I mean, we'll believe that. I don't want to say "By" because it's the truth. We'll believe that truth but it won't fully permeate. [00:30:00] Like it doesn't actually inform every... In

other words, we attach ourselves to the hope of the gospel but the help doesn't work its way into every deep [inaudible]...

Selena: I would argue it's because we don't continually go back to that well of hope. We don't continue to go back to the living water, the bread of life. We say, "Oh, I got this cup of water, it was good. The living water was good. I'm going to go out and live my life." And it's like, well, you're going to be thirsty again.

And if we don't understand that about our current sinful condition, then we're going to just consistently come up to the living water parched, which we should anyways. But I'm just saying we can live I feel like a hydrated life on the living water of Christ. Our marriage can be even in the darkest moments, fully, fully dependent on the living water, the bread of life. So we were not disqualified in any way if we are going through hardships.

Ryan: It's profound. So how does that revelation, that truth that we are born again into God's family by the blood of Christ, resurrected spiritually...? Last week, we talked about the resurrection being the core of the gospel and how our spiritual resurrection is our salvation, and how it gives birth to a new heart, a new mind. How does that truth filter down into these faulty attachment styles?

Selena: And off the cuff, I think we can look back at our lives and see the brokenness, and yet look at Christ and know that He is sufficient and enough and He's faithful to work out my inability to attach to you, my brokenness that is keeping me from a healthy attachment to my husband in whatever aspect. Whether that be intimacy, whether that be through our communication or our lack of being able to resolve any sort of conflicts. I think that we can hinge all of that weight and brokenness and ability, whatever, on Christ.

So the gospel changes everything in that there is purpose and design for marriage. Wives are called to be fruitful vines. We have children, that all have shoots around the table.

Ryan: What passage is that? Where is that?

Selena: Is it Psalm 128? Yes, I think it's fruitful vine and the offshoots. So when we believe and stake our hope, and our whole entire soul and life and marriage, everything on the gospel and God's purpose and design, we're trusting that it's instructive and that it is instructive, not just for me to not have joy, but to maximize joy and I guess be fruitful and continue in that.

Ryan: What I want to do here is take a moment to just... I want to read that passage because that's one of my favorite passages.

Selena: I know. It's a good one.

Ryan: It's Psalm 128. We'll read the whole thing. It's only six verses. Then I want to look at each one of these three attachment styles besides secure and I guess just talk through how the gospel is the beginning of a path toward security. Now, I do want to add a little caveat to what you just said. Like if you had a history where you were abused severely and you're just afraid and you have an attachment style that is reflective of that, I don't want to sound like that as soon as you just... If you can just believe harder then all of a sudden, you'll not have to deal with that.

Selena: No.

Ryan: That's not biblical. It's not what we're trying to say. I certainly don't want to come... That's not a place of hope. That's a place of, I need to pull myself up by my bootstraps even more.

Selena: What we're saying is that the God we serve, we can go to. He made a way for us by Christ dying on the cross.

Ryan: And even if we don't feel relief from our insecurities here in this life, we can cling with hope. The whole ask of God for the covenant he made with Abraham was faith. Faith that a 90-plus-year-old man, I can't figure the exact age but yeah, way too old to have kids that God somehow make them into a mighty nation. He made him into mighty nation. It was faith, and it was credit to him as righteousness. So it's not the strength of our faith, but the object of our faith that determines the outcome. What you're saying is we have an immeasurably secure object of faith regardless of how insecure or faith can feel at times.

Selena: Right. The research does show that the disorganized attachment, I think that was the fourth one, is the one that tends to develop from abuse, trauma, or chaos in the home. Basically, you learn as a child to fear a caregiver and you have no real secure base.

Ryan: Another word for disorganized is fearful-avoidant.

Selena: A fearful-avoidant, yeah.

Ryan: So let's Psalm 128. "Blessed is everyone who fears the [00:35:00] Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall

be blessed, and it shall be well with you." Pause real fast. It's painting the picture of somebody who is following after the ways of God, the law of God. Fearing the Lord means that I...

Selena: Commandments and statutes.

Ryan: ...have a reverence for Him and I follow Him, I obey Him. He is God, I am not. So this is the outcome of that healthy orientation in the universe. Saying, "I'm not God, He is and He deserves all my worship, all my service, all my praise." So out of that, the psalmist is projecting in a way.

Verse 3. "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!" That's the city of God or the kingdom of God. "May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!" So that's this place of this foundation of fearing God of health. In Ephesians 6 - what is it? Four?

Selena: Mm hmm.

Ryan: I want to look it up real fast. Yeah, Ephesians 6. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Again, somebody who is following after God, a man in particular, is going to govern their household in a way that is representative of God's law, of God's will, of God's decree, which is not to rule it with an iron fist, it's not to check out because you're too busy getting drunk or going every which way or working too hard...

Selena: Doing your hobbies. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Doing your thing. It's serving your house, dying to self,...

Selena: Fighting for them.

Ryan: ...loving from the bottom up. That's this picture of fearing God, following His law, submitting to His way, loving Him in it, and being desirous of Him and your family as a result.

Selena: And when the man does that, the result is a wife who is like a fruitful vine. You start seeing the results of a man stepping into that headship restoring that leadership in the home. That truly is an act of God. Like I can't make Ryan lead. The Holy Spirit has to prompt that in him. So if you're a wife whose husband is not stepping into that headship, what can you do right now? You can pray.

Ryan: Yes. I want to add. I know what you're going to say. You can't change your husband's heart. I know that. And I think our wives know that.

Selena: I didn't say that but that's true. *[laughs]*

Ryan: I want to add I have a good, good friend—you know who I'm talking about, but I'm not going to say his name. His wife is such a rock star in a lot of these ways that he will often feel like he's dropping the ball, because she's just so awesome at loving her family well and like scripture, and bringing scripture into the household family worship. And what it does, it doesn't make him feel bad, it makes him want to lead on par with how she is... her righteousness is so compelling.

Selena: Sure. But there's a manipulation aspect if you're not careful. So that's what I'm just trying to... Again, the Holy Spirit is good and pure. Modeling, just modeling, loving the Lord will do a whole lot more, I think than having some confrontational conversations.

Ryan: Look at me reading my Bible. And I wish you do that too.

Selena: Stop.

Ryan: I'll model it for you.

Selena: I guess I'll model it for you.

Ryan: I know what you mean.

Selena: No. I think we should talk about...

Ryan: Well, we're going to go through each one of these real quick and kind of shine the light of Scripture into each one of these.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Anxious attachment style. Again, this is because of a lack of trust. I read a summary from Medium. It's a blogger here. They said, "These individuals need constant reassurance and communication to feel peace within themselves." I immediately think of John 14:27. My peace I give you. My peace I leave with you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

So if you're prone to anxious attachment style, which is I need to feel secure, I need to feel a loving bond with you, so I'm going to try to be possessive of you and I'm going to pursue you to fall, the antidote to that, if I could use that word, maybe that's a little too trite, but the first step on the path toward security is grabbing a hold of the piece that you have in Christ. Because He says, "Not as the world gives," meaning it's not contingent on anything that you do or any way you can rationalize. It just is. I give it to you.

Selena: In other words, blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. So he takes hold of that peace that God has given.

Ryan: Okay. If you tease that out, fearing the Lord is saying, "I can have peace because [00:40:00] you're God. You're in control, I'm not"

Selena: There's a reverence aspect. There's a holiness and authoritative aspect as well. The second piece there. So the anxious attachment we just talked about and then the avoidant. So the avoidant attachment style. Adults tend to distance themselves from emotional intimacy, they might feel uncomfortable with affection and love, and they might isolate themselves or would prefer to live a rather more independent lifestyle. Then they tend to rationalize their emotions and deny their own feelings to avoid kind of confrontation. I think those are resonating [*both chuckling*] a little too more than I would like them to.

Ryan: So avoidances is...

Selena: Like you keep somebody at an arm's length to kind of keep that vulnerability. You don't want to be vulnerable. You keep them at bay. But then you're not really experiencing love, knowing you're loved, feeling you're loved. What would you say?

Ryan: Well, I was going to say it's almost like a lack of empathy or a lack of desire to empathize. I don't have to feel or worry. I can just avoid this hard thing. First off, we don't have a high priest. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

So the step on the path toward security is remembering that we have a high priest, a savior, a king, a friend, who has stepped into our space and has offered Himself and can empathize with us and is calling us into the same space when it comes to loving ourselves.

Selena: So good. We don't have a God who doesn't know what it's like. I mean, He created it. So would you call this...not an antidote, but maybe a gospel secure

attachment or sort of a gospel-centered attachment? I don't know. I'm trying to label it so that listeners are like, "Ah, this is the difference. This is what this looks like as a more gospel-centered attached or I guess to the..."

Ryan: I appreciate that. How I would nuance that is security is the word. We want to be secure. In psychology, it's security in yourself. And we're saying your securities doesn't have to be in yourself. It can be in Christ.

Selena: It shouldn't be in yourself.

Ryan: Okay. Yes, I agree. It should be in Christ.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And that security is so much deeper and more secure than whatever security we can muster on our own.

Selena: Yes, very well said.

Ryan: A gospel-centered security, like you said, feels like a good way forward.

Selena: Awesome. All right, the last one, fearful-avoidant attachment style. They have difficult time connecting with others and they crave intimacy while wanting to remain independent. So it's kind of like this back and forth. The dysfunctional "Hey, I want you but I don't want you."

It said this was the combo of they share the anxious and avoidant attachment styles. They just tend to have that push-pull dynamic. They want to feel close and love, but they also want to avoid any feelings of intimacy at the same time because obviously, then there's some vulnerability that's probably happening. And so, yeah, you can see how that all plays out.

I think one of the, I would say, pushback on this or the antidote or the gospel centeredness would be when we actually look at love and the definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13. That it's trustworthy. Love is patient, is kind, is long-suffering. It's ready to be there no matter what. And so if we are subscribing and we are believing that this is the standard of love, this is the plumb line of what love should be defined as, then what I'm perceiving as love I can recognize that that might be a lie, and that I'm pulling away from something that maybe is not truth. Does that make sense?

Ryan: I think so. Yeah. *[Selena chuckles]* Well, I was trying to look up a verse because this...

Selena: I mean, you could love me how God's called you to love me and I could still pull away. So there's truth in that as well.

Ryan: Yeah. I'm just trying to think that that's been my tendency in the past where I know that you're trying to love me well and I'm pulling away because my own insecurity and sin.

Selena: When we have our secure base, right.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So this fearful-avoidant, like disorganized kind of attachment, they have no real base of security. And so [00:45:00] there's this constant like... I imagine jumping back and forth. So if you don't have a real base of where you're anchored, then you're going to be jumping back and forth between things.

Ryan: Here's my pitch for that and here's my step on that path towards security. Psalm 42. I love this one too. Man, I've just been in the Psalms lately and this one just rocks my face off because I love the ocean. Have you ever been in a wave? I know you have. But I'm talking you've been in a wave and just been just completely and utterly taken over by it.

Selena: Yes. So scary. You're probably like, "Yes, this is awesome." [*chuckles*]

Ryan: We were on vacation a few years back. We went to Hawaii.

Selena: That's the place where I get... yeah.

Ryan: And I got just manhandled by this wave.

Selena: Yes. It's a wide-open ocean.

Ryan: Pounded into the ground. Like legitimately injured myself. Anyway, I take great solace. That's the analogy the psalmist is using in 42. And I love it. It says this: "My soul is cast down within me." So the psalmist is in turmoil. And there's a few in here in this series, I think it's 42, 43, maybe even 44. My soul is cast down. That's this language he uses.

"My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock: 'Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?' As with

a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, 'Where is your God?'" He's reminding himself again. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."

I love that picture of being completely awash in the grace of God. That you couldn't stop it if you tried. That's what comes to mind in this fearful-avoidant attachment style is that being kind of... The antithesis to this is God's steadfast love? It's the opposite of steadfast. Bouncing back and forth.

Selena: I think somebody said in our little home church group, he was saying that grace is kind of twofold. There's grace for your sins that you've committed and then there's grace for the sins that have been committed against you. So if we look back at our family of origin and maybe some sins that were committed against you, whatever that looks like, we can offer forgiveness. How? Because of the grace of God, because of the extent of forgiveness that God has given to us. And we can only do that once we understand that, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So I just want to, I think, place that out there so that we're not stuck in this, "well, this was my upbringing, I'm hurt. This is where it all comes from. There's no moving forward. I don't even know where to begin." Well, we can first have hope in Christ. We can first have hope in the Gospel.

Working that out may take a counselor, it may take a pastor, like a Christian counselor, a pastor, someone walking alongside of you to help you see the path more clearly. But to understand that there's grace. There's grace for the sins that you have not even yet committed. There's forgiveness there. That is the gospel. That is where we can hang our hat. The resurrection of Christ, the coming of Him, it's life-changing. And it's marriage changing. There's nothing that compares to it.

Ryan: I'm picturing the wife or the husband listening to this thinking about their own maybe attachment style, their own family of origin and how it's affected them, but also how their spouse attachment style has affected them. And maybe the faults are there and it's probably on full display. So I think that's the spot where I want to just add to what you were saying is that this can inform how we love each other.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: That I can see your family of origin, I can see you maybe pulling away or closing off or pursuing. And I can instead of just doing what I would naturally do, I can

meet you there. So if you're listening to this thinking, "How do I connect with my spouse? How do I get through to them?" I'm saying, like, maybe fill that gap a little bit. Obviously, if they're pulling away from you, you can still pursue because you have been pursuing Christ. If they are clinging to you, you can be gracious toward them.

Selena: And pray for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to that because sometimes we just aren't seeing it. And so, God, I pray for the opportunities to see how I can love my spouse and meet them where they're at.

Ryan: You can pray.

Selena: We should pray because we are pushing it.

Ryan: We're up against it. Why don't you pray this week?

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: All right.

Selena: God, thank you so much for your goodness and your grace. Thank you for psychology that helps us understand how we can attach to each other, [00:50:00] putting words to things that we can't always express. I pray that these would be tools in helping us understand where we've come from and the brokenness of sin in our lives, but more so the grace and love and sanctification and redemption, and hope that you have for us, God.

I pray for the marriages listening right now that this would be a spur, that this would be a fire, that this would be just that first step in recognition and beginning to hopefully take steps and recognize that they're not alone and that you are there meeting them, Father. Thank you for the gospel. Jesus, thank you for coming. Thank you for loving us. It's in your name we pray, Amen.

Ryan: Amen. We forgot to do a couple's conversation challenge. So I'm going to say this. Take these four attachment styles. I'll recap them real fast. You have secure, you have anxious attachment, you have avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. So talk through these with an open hand. You can talk about this stuff.

Selena: And you can google it too. It's pretty neutral.

Ryan: There's a ton of stuff out there.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Talk through that and maybe try to identify your greatest tendencies as individuals within your relationship. And then to see where the conversation goes. And wherever the conversation goes, close it in prayer, ask God to help you just attach in a more secure gospel-centric way.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Sound good?

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: That said, this episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for joining us this week on the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We'll see you in about seven days. Until then—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:51:42] <outro>

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

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:33:05]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Psalm 128, ESV
 - John 14:27

- **[00:19:23]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Ephesians 6:4
 - Hebrews 4:15
 - Psalm 42

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