

THE 5 BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO TRANSPARENCY DURING LOCKDOWN

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-5-biggest-obstacles-to-transparency-during-lockdown>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Greetings, fierce listeners. Ryan here. Hey, we have a special episode for you this week. It's actually a recording of a live online event we did in partnership with our friends over at Impact Us Ministries which actually used to be Promise Keepers Canada. They were gracious enough to invite us to speak specifically on the topic of transparency during a lockdown.

Now, if you're familiar with the Promise Keepers ministry, you'll know that it's primarily a ministry geared toward men. But Selena was there with me on the talk, and we were able to, I think, examine these issues from both our perspectives. So namely, we talked about the five biggest obstacles to being truly known by our wives or by our spouses during lockdown.

See, what we're finding is that while couples are spending more time than ever together during lockdown and during isolation and things like that, they're actually drifting apart emotionally, and even spiritually and even physically in terms of their intimacy. So while we talk through each one of these five common obstacles, we also talk through a truth to kind of dispel the lie that is behind the obstacle. And we offer to step out into the light.

It was a great conversation. I feel like we covered some new ground. I was also really encouraged by the question and answer time that we had toward the end. Paul, the facilitator asked us some really elucidating questions, and we had a great time answering those. So thank you for joining us. We hope this special episode blesses you and we will see you as usual on the other side.

[00:01:22] <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.

[00:01:53] <podcast begins>

Paul: I would now like to introduce to you Ryan and Selena Frederick. Good evening.

Ryan: Hey, Paul.

Selena: Hi there.

Ryan: Thanks for having us.

Selena: Yes.

Paul: How are you doing?

Ryan: We're doing awesome. It's still early in the evening for us, so we're ready to go.

Paul: That's great. So great. We're Glad that you join us tonight. You mentioned off the top that your ministry started back in 2013, and the catalyst was God working through your marriage. Tell us a bit more about that.

Ryan: So we got married pretty young. I was 20. We were 20, 21. We dated for four years prior to that, and then we had been married and didn't have kids for the first 10 years of our marriage. It was around year eight when we were in our late 20s and we had a lot of friends that were going through divorce. They were going through really hard stuff. We had seen some friends even get married and divorced two times. And we just kind of looked at each other and said, "What is different? Why are we still together? Why do we still enjoy each other? What is the difference? And how can we somehow help our friends and people like them?"

And we realized that unequivocally the difference is Christ. And so we just decided to start a blog. Initially, it's just my mom was our reader. Thankfully, my mom still read but other people started reading. And it just kind of took off. We now have a podcast. We've written seven books - devotionals and

books. And we're just really enjoying the fruitfulness that comes from just honestly just sharing the gospel. We see marriage as an excuse to talk about the gospel. And so we just keep doing that day in and day out. It's why we get up in the morning.

Paul: That's amazing. Thank you again for joining us tonight. I mean, it's a big issue for a lot of couples. No question. And especially guys, when you're talking about transparency and intimacy in your marriage, it's not an easy thing to deal with.

Ryan: No, no, it's scary.

Selena: Yeah. It's a beast.

Paul: No. it's a big topic. That's for sure. So tell us about your latest book.

Ryan: You won't talk about it? I already talked.

Selena: Go ahead.

Ryan: It's called "See Through Marriage." I hope you can see that. There it is. See Through Marriage. We actually released earlier last year. It's all about experiencing freedom and joy and being fully known and fully loved, which is what we're going to talk about tonight is what that exactly looks like, and what is the firm ground that we can stand on when transparency seems super hard? When it seems impossible, when it seems like we're just going to be transparent to our own doom, what is the firm ground that we can talk loving stand on? And then what is the joy that's to be had and the other side of that risk? It's a path to the promise, as we say. So yeah, we're here to talk about that tonight. But that's the entirety of the book.

We get into what it means to be kind of see through to yourself. And not in like a self-realization, self-actualization sort of way but really seeing yourself as God sees you. It's the first step really in this journey. And then being transparent to one another, and then being transparent within Christian community and what that looks like as a couple. [00:05:00] Honestly, it's the hardest book out of the seven that we've written so far. But we're happy to hear that people are growing from reading it. So yeah.

Paul: That's great. Well, we're really excited to hear what you have to say to us. So I'm going to throw it over to you now. Take it away!

Ryan: Okay, well, thanks, Paul. Really appreciate it. And thank you all for tuning in to hear from us.

Selena: We're super grateful to be here. It's a very unique privilege I think and opportunity to be talking about transparency. I don't know if you're like us, but a lot of couples are now finding themselves at home working together, together literally 24/7. So it's kind of like how are we not being transparent I guess would be the real question, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: We're together all the time but does that necessarily mean that we are sharing, being fully known in those moments.

Ryan: This pandemic has created these unique challenges. We all know. We are all very familiar with that. But it's also created unique opportunities to connect. And if we're not careful, our physical closeness, meaning our proximity that we're in the same... You're looking at our office, this is where I work all day. The girls will come up—we have three daughters—they'll come up and interrupt me, and then I'll go down. So we're together all the time.

But in our physical proximity, and maybe you're in the same boat, the proximity can actually lead to emotional distance and relational distance. So here we're wanting to talk through what are some of the lies of obscurity that we tend to kind of gravitate toward as married people.

Selena: And even defining transparency, what that looks like I think in marriage. Because I think we all have different ideas of, well, do I share everything and from before or whatever? And so kind of drawing some boundary lines around that and for the health and sake of our marriage.

Ryan: But that routine and that kind of familiarity, if we're not careful, it can almost lead to more obscurity toward one another even though we're spending more time than ever. So we'll talk through those lies obscurity. We also hope to introduce five big obstacles that are really common for couples right now. And hopefully, at least one of these obstacles will speak to you directly. And then out of each obstacle, we're going to give you at least a step, one step on the path of transparency.

It'll be a good talk. As always, it will challenge you. It always challenges us when we talk about this topic, because I think we're at home kind of playing our cards close to our chest. But here that's not the gospel.

I want to start with this quote, actually. This is by a guy named Richard Needham. He said this, and I think it's so apt, for this moment. He says, "You don't marry one person you marry three. The person you think they are, the

person they are, and the person they are going to become as the result of being married to you." I found that especially convicting and elucidating at the same time, because as a husband, I know there's primarily men here, but the woman that my wife becomes is the result of the husband that I am in a lot of ways.

God is gracious. He uses even my sin and my brokenness to somehow glorify Himself in the life of our wives. But I think that's a sobering reminder that the person my wife becomes is a result of the type of man that I am, in both the way that I'm loving her, both I'm leading her, and in this conversation, the way that I'm being known by her in brand new ways. So it should be a good conversation.

So the main point for today, just to kind of stick our stake in the ground is we're here to give you some tangible ideas and tools for growing closer in your marriage in the middle of a nationwide lockdown.

Selena: Worldwide.

Ryan: Nationwide and worldwide really. Especially if there's nothing else you can do but just be together. And then we're going to do that looking through, obviously, transparency. So let's define transparency. I think that's the first step.

Selena: Yes. As you mentioned, it can be very nebulous and sort of hard to nail down. But for our talk here discussing transparency and marriage, it's being fully known with one another without hiding or any obstructions. Like I said, I kind of mentioned we get a lot of questions of, "You know, should we talk about things from the past, before, like past relationships and all the sins of the past and all of that?"

The answer to that really is just you need to listen to the Holy Spirit on that. You need to pray about that. Because there are some things, which we're...we'll share one of our stories that the Lord brought to Ryan that he needed to share from the past. It's not airing out your dirty laundry just to do that. It's there's a purpose. Remember this is a path with a purpose and a promise. Ryan, you share about our story about...

Ryan: I love that. And that's what we have to remember is that as you're standing in this trailhead, you're not just doing it for its own sake. There is an end in mind.

Selena: A joyful and intimate good.

Ryan: A joyful good. And that is closeness [00:10:00] and that is sanctification and unity. And that's a deeper understanding of God's love. And sometimes it's hard to see. I'll just share a story from our near past. I mean, our recent past. We had been going to church kind of going about our business. I can't remember what it was...

Selena: Pre-pandemic.

Ryan: Pre pandemic. So it was probably two years ago. And I had been watching I can't remember who. I think it was Matt Chandler. I was watching him online, some sermons kind of throughout the week. And it's actually coincidentally while we were writing See Through Marriage, so I'm already kind of tuned into this stuff. He said, "Someone who's only 99% known will never feel 100% love." He says, "As long as you're holding back that 1%, you're always going to be sitting in the back of your mind, when you hear your wife or your husband say to you, "I love you, I care for you," you're always going to be doubting that, because you're always thinking, 'If you just knew this last bit, then you wouldn't love me.'"

That hit me like a ton of bricks because I was thinking we've lived transparently, but there was something that in my past, I won't get into the details, but I wasn't proud of it and I was ashamed of it. I was very ashamed of it. And it was from when I was probably like...I was probably 10. Like, really young. You could even say before the age of accountability. I don't think I knew I was a sinning person in that moment. So I just felt ashamed.

Anyway, I was like, I felt that kind of come up in my guts and I thought, "Ah, that's ridiculous. I don't need to share. That's too far." And this is why Selena was saying you got to kind of listen to the Holy Spirit, right? You can't just chronolock your whole life. You have to be sensitive to what God is leading you to do. So I just kind of pushed it down, kept going about my week. In my prayer time, I keep having this kind of recurring conviction...

Selena: And prompting.

Ryan: Yeah, and prompting. Until one Sunday morning. I remember so distinctly, we had gone to church, we got the kids there. It was chaos. We got there. We went through the service. And our church does communion every week, so we were in the back of the church kind of doing communion. And the way we do it is we were standing there praying together as we were kind of partaking. And I just felt the Holy Spirit, just this one really heavy time saying like, "You have to do this. If you don't, you're disobeying."

And I kind of had this sweet sense of resignation, like, "Well, I guess Here we go. I'm taking a step off this cliff. I'm going to talk to Selena about this thing that I've just tried to basically suppress for the last two weeks." So of course, during communion, I just looked over and said to you, I said, "Hey, there's something I need to talk to you about. It's really serious. Not right now but today we need to talk." And you were like, "What does that mean?"

Selena: Heart kind of drops down and was like, "Huh?"

Ryan: Nervous laughter by the way. And you're like, "Okay, well..." By the way, that's always a really good tactic. If you have something to talk about just mentioned that you want to talk about something, give it some space, set aside the time. And so we did that. We'd packed up, left church, we went to...

Selena: A miraculous thing happened. All three kids fell asleep in the car at the same time.

Ryan: Never happens. That never happens. It happened this time. So we're literally pulling into our street to get home and we just kind of kept driving. We slowed down and I just said, "Here's the thing." I laid it all out. I just remember so clearly, I've never felt so exposed, so vulnerable. We're going to talk about some of these lies obscurity. Every single one of these lies that obscurity were at play in that moment. And I just remember so clearly, the three ways she responded to me. Do you remember those three ways that...?

Selena: Yeah. I think it was thank you for sharing with me. Because I think it's always hard to share something shameful or that you're afraid is just going to break trust. I still love you. Because I did and I do and I always will. I made that covenant. And then it's funny, you share something like that because I've been feeling the prompting as well to kind of be transparent about some things that happened in my past and I want to bring some reconciliation to this.

Ryan: I just can't express how intensely and differently I felt the love of Christ in that moment more than any other time previous in our marriage. I'm not trying to be hyperbolic. That's true. I felt like it was all out there. It was like I was just hanging out there. And you could have done whatever...

Selena: As a wife, I mean, it's so easy to... The Holy Spirit was able to... I was able to take the right step there because many times I've not. I've been, "What? Why have you shared this?" or "how dare you?" Just that kind of righteous sort of feelings of anger want to creep in. And I felt like the Holy Spirit was just like, "Have grace. Have grace. Slow down. Let the emotions just sit inside of you. Do not respond. Like, responding grace respond in love."

And truly, like he said, I mean, the Holy Spirit's prompting him to share this and then me to respond [00:15:00] in grace and not pour on more shame and weightiness in the sin or whatever he was dealing with. So, in that moment, we both experienced what it means to give grace, to receive grace, to love each other truly, and to be fully known and transparent in those moments that the Lord is leading us where He's leading us to do this.

Ryan: So really our heart here is to encourage you to listen to those promptings from the Holy Spirit to identify those dark hidden places, and then step forward confidently. Everybody wants so badly to be fully known and fully loved. Our greatest fear as humans is to be fully exposed and fully known and then rejected in them. And I think that fear of being exposed and rejected is really it's not invalid. It's a legitimate fear. The problem is, is it's not rooted in the Gospel. It's rooted in something other than scripture. It's rooted in something other than God's truth about marriage, about the nature of love. And we're here to remind you of those truths.

And really, coincidentally, there's three big truths that they tend to be kind of victim to these lies of obscurity. Does that makes?

Selena: Yes, yes. Can you define obscurity? What do you mean by that? Three lies of obscurity.

Ryan: Sorry. Obscurity is the opposite of transparency. So transparent: things you can see through. Obscurity: things that you can't see through.

Selena: Lies or things that you can't.

Ryan: Ways that we'll hide. A lot of times you have this prompting, this thing that you need to share, whether it's a current sin or it's something that your past you're shameful of or just fear or hurt. The fear is, and here's the first line of obscurity is that I'm not loved. In other words, my spouse won't love me if they know this. And that's a lie because we forget. And this is such a beautiful truth, but we can't just gloss over this. Biblical love isn't contingent on behavior or feeling.

Selena: Right. Right. So when we say "my spouse won't love me," we're using the definition application of love probably from a cultural standpoint or some emotional... They won't love me, so they aren't going to have those feelings of love towards me. Well, if we're subscribing to the truth, which is the biblical truth of love, that love is patient, it's kind, it's long-suffering, it's there and God is love, this is the love that we're applying. That even when the feelings and emotions may not be there, I can still show love. I can still be loving towards my spouse despite the feelings and emotions.

There are feelings I think that result out of these acts of love, but it is something we choose. It's not something that just sort of happens to us. It's something that we can be active in.

Ryan: Now, of course, if you haven't felt love in a long time in your marriage, then it can feel more fragile. And I think there's some groundwork to be laid there around actually creating that culture of biblical love in your relationship that isn't based on feelings. That's a little caveat there. But at the very root of it, the lie says that love isn't what the Bible says it is. It says love is something cultural, something...

Selena: Right. 1 John 4:19 also says that we are only able to love because He first loved us. So knowing and understanding what love is cannot be anything outside of God and the gospel.

Ryan: Good. The second lie of obscurity. So we talked about love.

Selena: You talk through really fast I feel like. But that's fine. We talk about love and covenant in another book that we wrote "Fierce Marriage," the one kind of before this one. But if you want to know more, or you're like, "How do we define love more?" it's in those books. I really just want to throw that out. Because I feel like we're glossing over and I'm like "Gosh, there's so much to talk about."

Ryan: Even we have a new course Gospel Centered Marriage. We talked about that at the very beginning.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: The second one is covenant. Covenant is another one of these foundational... It's a pillar of Christian marriage. And the lie is that our covenant is conditional. Again, we have the first lies that love is conditional. Now, the second lie is that our covenant is conditional or our marriage, this thing that we're in can't handle this.

If I put the weight of this shame, of this sin, of this confession on our marriage, it will break it. The lie leads us to fail to see that our marriage covenant is actually... Now, if we look again, calibrating ourselves by biblical definitions here. The marriage covenant is a profound, profound reflection of God's covenantal promises to His people. The promise is based not on their merit, but based on His character, on His ability to fulfill it. In the same way, that's what agape love is. It's not based on affection. It's that same covenantal foundation.

Selena: Right. And to some truth, I mean, if our covenant is not rooted in the Gospel and our marriage is not centered around the gospel, [00:20:00] then our marriage covenant might be really fragile. It might not be able to handle. We might not do a great job of being transparent with each other if Christ is not at the center.

So I think that working towards...not working. That's a bad word I think. But knowing what it means to have Christ at the center and living in a way that reflects that is so pivotal for us. Because then that leads us into understanding love and what that means, the biblical definition, but also covenant. And seeing that it is a reflection of God's nature, but it is also this safe sort of area that God's allowed us to come into with each other to say, "Hey, I'm dealing with some shame, I'm dealing with some fear," or "I just feel like we haven't been connecting. And I don't know if there's past sins that we need to deal with." I just wanted to highlight that a little bit.

Ryan: Well, it's beautiful. It's actually a perfect segue into the third lie of obscurity, which is basically the gospel is not enough. That we can believe this lie that the gospel can reach me kind of in general, but it can't reach into there.

Selena: Right. How do we deal with the gospel and struggle? What's the line there?

Ryan: Well, we can feel like, as our marriage is dying, it's dying slowly rather than thriving. And that can lead us to a place of despair. The gospel diffuses that because it starts with this truth that we are made in God's image, that we are sinners, yes, but, but we are saved by grace because of the covenantal love of God

We always talk about gospel centeredness and what it means to be Gospel centered. Well, really the core of gospel centeredness is staking our entire life, our entire identity, our entire eternity on this truth that I am made by God, I'm imperfect, deserving of His wrath but I don't have to have it because Jesus has paid the price and He's resurrected me. I was once dead now I am alive. This is just classic.

I mean, not seeing that or not believing that fully is kind of classic garden deception. We see that in the garden when the enemy, right, the serpent says, "O, did God really say that?" Come on, you can just eat of the fruit of this tree?" And then they go and eat of it, and he's just gone. He's just like, "Whatever." And a lot of times in our life, we will eat of the fruit of the tree, we'll do something sinful because we feel like we minimize it. And then...

Selena: We do exactly what Adam and Eve did. We go and hide in shame.

Ryan: And then of course, after we've kind of bought the lie that it was worth it, then we get sold another lie that says, "You're beyond forgiveness now." See how that's a deal bait and switch?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Right. We haven't read any scripture yet. I think at this point...

Selena: We've mentioned a few. *[Ryan, Selena chuckles]*

Ryan: We've mentioned a few. Let's read a little bit of a longer passage. If you have your Bibles, we encourage you to pull it out. We're going to go to Ephesians 2:4-9. We're going to tease out really looking at the top and the bottom of this passage. But won't read the whole thing, because context is a beautiful thing. Do you want to read that?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Ryan: Oh, my goodness. There's just so much there. But you start to see how transparency is absolutely... everything about it hinges on the gospel. It hinges on our belief that it is because of his great love, that's verse 4, we were once dead but he has made us alive. We didn't claw our way out of the grave, but he has made us, He is the beginning and the he's the author, the originator, the finisher of our faith, the one who brings us from death.

And then I love how Paul is juxtaposing or he's using the word "work" in a way to drive the point home. In that we are saved. It's a gift, not of our work. Every one of these lies has to do with our work. I don't deserve love because I haven't done the right things. Our covenants not going to work, it's not going to survive this because we're not doing the right things. Or the gospel is not going to get in there because I'm not good enough. God's grace isn't good

enough. And Paul is saying that it's not because of your works, but it's because you are His workmanship. Do you see how he flips the script there?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And then here's the kicker. He says, "Now created in Christ Jesus for good works." So yes, works are good, works are part of our faith, but they're not the origination of our faith. They're part of our salvation, but they're not the [00:25:00] activation of our salvation. *[Ryan, Selena laughs]* I can't drive this point home hard enough is that we were dead and now we were alive. God saw it. He chose to enliven us. And why do this? Because of His covenant to love. Right? That is the very basis and foundation of anything we can talk about in terms of transparency.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Actually, the last part of the verse. I want to go to another passage.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: We're going to 1 John. So if you have your Bible again, go to 1 John 1. Because that last part of works is beautiful when Paul says God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. He's talking about these good works. So walking, this language of walking it's a perfect segue into this passage, which really is talking about God being light.

Selena: I just want to stop real quick. Just pause real quick. Because there's this illustration of this before we're transparent with our spouse, the transparency, and then the life afterwards. And I can't help but say that it reflects sort of that we were dead, right? We're living in death. It sounds extreme. I know. But it feels dark. It feels scary. It feels like you're alone sometimes when you're dealing with sin and shame and something all by yourself.

So we were dead but then Christ died. So there's this moment of Christ. We have been imputed with His obedience, His righteousness, by His grace only. And then now we are called to this life, this walking out of the darkness and into the light is in Christ. Doing that, I mean, just in the tomb, His life, everything, it's just incredible the parallels. Throw some light on that. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Yeah, throw some light on that.

Selena: Shed some light.

Ryan: Throw out Scripture, light is a theme for the presence of God, for the reach of God, for the view of God, for the effects of God. The truth is that just who He is shining into the dark places, metaphorically but also literally, in a lot of places. I think of it like the Transfiguration or Moses on... So it's just this blinding light of who God is. I don't want to lose sight of that as we read this next passage. Let's read 1 John 1 starting in verse 5.

Selena: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

That's the promise. He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And transparency, my friends is a part of that cleansing from all unrighteousness. It is good.

Ryan: The question is, and we have to ask ourselves this, is it worth it? Because so often we can...

Selena: Talk ourselves out of that.

Ryan: Talk ourselves out of it because we can minimize the sin, we can minimize God's holiness or we can maximize our goodness and try to close that gap and that need for the gospel that need forgiveness. So that's the question we have to ask ourselves. This whole thing about marriage, is about transparency, you're talking primarily to men, so you have to ask yourself, is it worth it to rid myself of this burden, to rid myself of this sin?

And what is the thing to be had? Well, closer unity with Chri... communion with God. When you're saved, you are grafted in. That's not going to change. But our sin does affect our communion and our closeness with God Himself. Even is our salvation secure, our communion can be broken. So there's that sense that it's worth it. It's worth the fight. It's worth confessing. It's worth being sanctified. And in a lot of ways, it's natural. And if it's not happening, it's an indication that there's a root problem. The fruit is indication of a root.

Selena: [inaudible]

Ryan: That's so articulate. *[Ryan, Selena laughs]* So there always is a correlation. That's we want to point to in this passage. There's always a correlation—you have seen it in 1 John 1—between walking God's truth and two things: fellowship with God and man, close relationship, walking alongside others, and the second thing is being sanctified or sinning less, or the language we see in some translations is being purified from all unrighteousness. That's a really close correlation.

Now, what does it mean to walk in the light? We're going to talk about that next. We have these big obstacles that kind of keep us from going down this path. Think of the obstacles as a literal obstacle, maybe a hurdle in your way or a stone in your... Something that has to be actively engaged and overcome. So walking in the light is an active thing. John doesn't say you sit in the light, or you just wait in the light, or you're patient in the light [00:30:00] or you stand in the light, or you just let the light shine on your face. No, you walk in it. You walk in full light of everything God has done, everything He is, every promise that He's laid before you. And you walk that out in faith.

Abraham was the subject of this covenantal promise to God—the Abrahamic covenant. What was the one condition that God put on Abraham for that promise? Faith. Faith. And so here we are standing at the beginning of this transparency journey. We're called to do what? To put our faith in Christ, to put our faith in God's way and to walk it out, to step it out, to walk in the way as Paul talks about in Acts and various other books. Let's talk about I guess what are those areas. These are the big questions. Okay.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: We've kind of laid the case and the groundwork for transparency by looking at things that would obscure our transparency, these lies that we'll believe. Now, based on that, the questions are: which area... in your relationship, you're listening to this, you're going to turn your computer off, your phone off, and you're going to be in your life. What is the area that presents the biggest obstacle and the biggest opportunity for transparency in this moment? Now, you might resonate with one or more of these. Our action I think asked in this is to find one, and move forward in that. So let's talk about those.

Selena: I think we'll just run through them real quick and then we'll go one by one, and then talk about truth and then one step you can take to step into the light, and then the next step as a couple. So this is kind of the more tangible piece of our talk tonight. The first obstacle would be past hurts and lack of forgiveness in them. So past hurts and forgiveness in them, or ourselves, in our spouse, or in ourselves.

Ryan: The second one. I will go through this really fast.

Selena: Sorry.

Ryan: Past shame. That will tend to invalidate your feeling of being fully loved. We talked about that in our story. Active sin. You know what that means. You guys, that could be typically among men, it's a pornography addiction or some sort of addiction. Something that you haven't quite let go. Alcohol, drugs, work, even hobbies, things that are actively kind of creating disordered love in your life.

Poor communication. Now this is getting very pragmatic. So past hurts, past shame, active sin, poor communication. What does that look like? Well, unbridled communication, unmeted stonewalling each other, manipulative language, those sorts of things. And the final one is positivity or laziness when it comes to pursuing each other.

Each one of these things will create their obstacles to be overcome. Now, wherever you are, whatever your season in life, one of those probably is louder than others. And we're saying zero in on that one. But as we go through these, we're going to talk about the obstacle a little bit more. We have a few more minutes here. And we're going to, hopefully, overcome the obstacle with truth and then give you a really tangible step into the light.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So we're going to continue this theme of walking in the light as an active step of faith. Again, it's a path with a promise. You're not just doing it because Ryan and Selena Frederic said to do it, or your church leader, or your pastor, or Impact uS said to do it. You're doing it because there's a promise and the promise is more fellowship with God, more righteousness, and more sanctification. So, obstacle one. Past hurts and lack of resolution and forgiveness.

Selena: Right. I mean, the truth is that we are sinners. We are forgiven. So if there are past hurts, there's things that we haven't resolved I think between each other, or even maybe before you were married, again, if that prompting of the Holy Spirit is there, then we need to recognize who we are. We're sinners. We're saved by grace through faith.

So God has not held our sins against us. So in this act of forgiveness, we cannot not forgive. We have to forgive each other. Forgiveness, again, is not just a blank slate. Trusting everything's good, we're right back where we started. Forgiveness is also a journey of rebuilding trust in a lot of ways. So there may

be consequences that we have to work out. But for that, we need to walk in faith. You can talk about this.

Ryan: Well, this is one of the biggest areas. I saw a poll recently where basically they started the sentences, "(this blank) made our marriage stronger than ever. Like name one thing that made your marriage stronger than ever in the life of your marriage? There were as you can imagine varying answers, but you'd start to see themes float to the surface.

I'd say one of the most prevalent if not the most prevalent theme was when we dealt with past hurts. What does that usually look like? You're taking the time to actually talk through it. You're taking the time to seek reconciliation. A lot of times we'll have a [00:35:00] past hurt, the bomb will drop. You never actually clean up the destruction. You just like, "The explosions gone" or "sorry," but we're still living in destruction of it instead of rebuilding. And that rebuilding is an immensely hard thing to do. It's immensely hard work. But that's what these couples were saying.

And there's hundreds of them that responded and said, "It's when we finally got through and got past these past hurts. We worked through them." So that's the step into the light. So the truth that you talked about is we're all sinners, we're forgiven. If you need confirmation of that conviction of that and how being forgiven means that we must forgive one another, go read Matthew 18, the parable of the unforgiving servant. It just wrecks my life every time.

Colossians 3:13 says, "... bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." That's an imperative. That's not a suggestion. It's a command.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: You must also forgive. So the step into the light is if you were wronged, forgive. And I don't mean to sound like... It's not an easy thing to do but we're saying it's a necessary thing to do and it's a thing that we need to start walking toward if you haven't started walking toward that. But here's the kicker. We forgive and then we seek steps of reconciliation.

So if you've sinned, that's if you were wronged against, if you were the sinner, in that case, offer a heartfelt. And this is psychology 101. It's the first step down the road of getting past hurts and reconciliation. We're not psychologists, but we know this much is that if you're the offender, offer a heartfelt confession, a heartfelt earnest request for forgiveness. And then

display behavior that shows that you've actually repented, that you've turned from that sin and you're now walking toward life, toward truth, toward health.

Selena: Being that workmanship.

Ryan: Right. Right.

Selena: So the next step, I think, as a couple would just be to prayerfully seek reconciliation together, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: You can do this as an individual, of course, as well. But seek the reconciliation and get outside help as necessary from pastors or Christian counselors or wherever or another mentor guide.

Ryan: It's an active thing. It's against your walking because that can hurt. We've had relationships in our life, friends, family relationships that it hurts to take that step but it's a step of faith. I'm actually having to make that step right now, not in this relationship, but another relationship toward reconciliation. So that's a challenge.

Okay. The second obstacle, we'll try to get through these fairly quickly. So we have some time for some questions. The second obstacle is past shame that invalidates the feeling of love. Like you don't feel loved or you don't feel lovable. The truth to dispel that is that God... Here's the thing. God knows your sin and He still loves you. Romans 5:8, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I see the picture of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 hiding from God as they hear His steps in the garden. And God asks, "Where have you gone?" God knew where they were. It wasn't like, "Oh, no, I've lost the humans." He knows you. And it was while you're sinners that he died for you.

Okay, that truth dispels this lie that your past, your shame makes you unlovable. Because the God of the universe the perfect holy, immeasurable, majestic, perfect God of the universe has told you otherwise. That you are lovable. So what's the step into the light?

Selena: Let's step into the light. Then would be realizing that your shame is an opportunity for your feel and for your wife I guess if the husband's confessing to express the love of God and brand new ways. It takes a lot of talking, a lot of trusting, a lot of prayer. And as you know, he shared his story. Again, I'm continually asking the Lord to help me build trust with Him to be able to share things. And I'm continually asking God to help me be a good confessor. I guess

a better repenter. Just continually to repent and to create that...I guess not an ease but a place to be able to be comfortable in this...

Ryan: It becomes part of our language.

Selena: And becomes part of our rhythms in our language of like, "Hey, we can fight faster, we can reconcile sooner. There's forgiveness, there's grace. I understand where I am, where you are." So that step into the light really is just seen as an opportunity and asking God to help us and how to trust Him and how to root out the shame. And to give us words to really articulate where we're at. Because it's really hard sometimes to just communicate some of that.

Ryan: I don't want to gloss over that thing that you said it's so powerful is that your shame or the shame that your spouse brings to you is an opportunity to experience the love of God in profound new ways. I just want to press into that. That's the promise on that side of this. And even if your spouse fails at loving you in that, [00:40:00] even if they fail, that's an opportunity to feel God's love in new and different ways.

Selena: They will. We will fail. So when we fail.

Ryan: When they fail. Well, I'm saying, in that moment, like we had in a car, you didn't fail me. I'm saying if your spouse fails you in that regard, and they respond in a different way, by God's grace, you can still experience the goodness.

Selena: Yeah, we still need to keep coming back. Because if we don't keep coming back, we're just going to keep living in the darkness and be hiding and withdrawn.

Ryan: Third obstacle.

Selena: Oh, yes, number three.

Ryan: Act of sin. All right. This is the conviction time. If there's any sort of sin that is unconfessed and active and unrepentant, this is going to be an obstacle to your transparency to your closeness, you're going to be living in close proximity, but emotional distance. You have to be known in this way, not just so you can wallow in it and be a pig in mud but because it's...

Selena: Be called out of it.

Ryan: Be called out of it and dragged out of it and pulled out of it. Here's the thing about sin is that we can rationalize it. We're really good at rationalizing sin. We saw it in the garden. It's hardwired in to us.

Selena: Yes. Our desire for goodness.

Ryan: Yes. "Oh, what they don't know can't hurt them. I can deal with it by myself on my own. I don't have to tell him or her. I can just deal with it. And then once I'm fixed, then I can tell it to them as a past tense thing." That's rationalizing. Or "it's not that bad. It's not as bad as everyone says it is. You're just making a big deal out of it." We do that. We minimize our sin because we minimize the gospel. Remember, the good news is only as good as the bad news is bad. And the bad news is pretty bad, you guys.

Selena: Read the Old Testament.

Ryan: Read the whole thing.

Selena: It's changing my life.

Ryan: But the good news is better. That's the thing. That's the gospel. So don't minimize it. Call it what it is. Particularly around the idea of pornography, it continues to be a pandemic of its own nature. In a lot of ways, it's the worst. Someone once told me, he said, "We need to stop treating pornography like a fly at the picnic and treat it like what it really is." It's a viper in the bedroom. It will kill a marriage. It will kill your soul as it steers the conscience. It hardens the heart and it is toxic. It is death. It is death not just to you personally, internally, it's a death to your relationship, it's death to our society. So stop treating it like just a fly at the picnic. It's a viper in the bedroom and it's poisonous, and it will kill us.

So the step into the light is, again, you'll hear this refrain, repent and believe the gospel. Repent of that sin. Turn from it. Ask God to help you. You guys the Lord's Prayer "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil." I started praying that a couple of years ago in the mornings. First I elaborate on but like "God help me avoid to chew temptation. Helped me to see it for what it is, and then run from it." That's a prayer that you can pray. You can confess it to God and then to your spouse, and then begin down the path of rebuilding trust after that sin has been brought out into the light.

Selena: All right. Actually, number four is poor communication. That is big. *[Ryan, Selena laughs]* I just read and I'm like, "Oh, man."

Ryan: It's a huge topic.

Selena: We are seventeen 17 years into marriage, and we still have terrible communication with some things. We've gotten better. But I'm just like, "How are you not hearing what I am saying right now? I cannot make it any clearer."

Ryan: Yes, of course.

Selena: But the words that we say are powerful. And if I don't put the weight in the words that he's putting the weight in, then we're going to have a clashing of the Titans, for sure.

Ryan: So again, massive, massive topic. We've got a lot of resources on communication within our fierce marriage ecosystem. [inaudible] The Bible has some pretty obvious themes around communication. The first one is that words matter. Words are powerful. How you speak to one another is powerful. Enough said. The second one. Listening is better than speaking

Selena: Be slow to speak—

Ryan: Quick to listen. So listening is not an option. But speaking is optional. Listening is best, speaking isn't so well.

Selena: Again, there's a way to listen. We're not just going to listen to respond. We're going to listen and try to find that agreement and that point where we can start from.

Ryan: And that's the third kind of big principle we see all throughout Scripture is that communication is a tool for bringing others close. And that can be to reconcile a relationship, that can be to resolve a conflict. It could be just to know one another more deeply. We use words as tools to that end. So that's why we listen. "I genuinely want to know what's going on in your heart, in your head, in your guts. Tell me." ut it only works if I listen while you talk.

So the step into the light just is listen. Ask questions. Slow down. Slow down the cadence. Especially when you feel an argument escalating, the best way to defuse those bombs is to just slow the cadence. Quit responding with such quickness. Instead, pause, think, try to re-articulate.

Selena: And ask questions. And again, listen to not just [00:45:00] respond. But listen and find that agreement point to begin from.

Ryan: A deeper meaning

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Try to hear what they're saying with their heart, not with their words. That takes an emotional awareness, emotional maturity. But you can do it.

Here's a really fun exercise that we do around communication. Because you might be thinking, "Well, yeah, I want to have deeper conversations. I don't know where to start. Help me." Because we've been staring at the same walls for the last year. We haven't gotten out. There's no restaurants. Nothing's open. Like, we can't experience anything new.

Here's some stuff that will help. Three questions. We call it the heart check. What book is in your hand? And then just talk about it. What voices in your ear. Podcasts are all the rage right now.

Selena: Sermons, whatever.

Ryan: Sermon, podcast.

Selena: Audiobooks.

Ryan: Video, audiobook. What's in your ear? Let's talk about that. The third thing is, what is the Lord stirring in your heart? What is the vision that He has for you? How is He leading you? What are you learning in the Word? How is He convicting, prompting you? These are great ways to start open-ended conversations that don't get distracted or you don't get stuck.

Selena: The last one is passivity, laziness, lack of discipline in pursuing one another. This is a big obstacle. I think it's kind of the default for us. I think it's just easier to fall into passivity and to be lazy. "We're tired. We've been parenting. We've been working, the scream. We've been doing all the things right." So just kind of go to the easiest, the lowest common denominator of "well, it's fine. I mean, we'll deal with it later."

Ryan: Well, it's like pursuing each other. We can't go out to dinner. So what am I supposed to do? We tend to just find that status quo, which for us, we love watching this show on the History Channel. It's called Mountain Men. *[Selena laughs]* We love it. It's become kind of our way to bond. But if we're not careful, we can just settle into that routine and pretty soon we stop having meaningful conversations. We stop laughing. Once again, we got to mix it up. Instead of just vegging out in front of TV at night, maybe talk about scripture. Like a few nights ago, we had a pretty epic tickle fight. Selena is an awesome tickler to my chagrin.

Selena: Oh, I did, yeah. Sometimes I can muscle it in...

Ryan: Mine was threw up. [inaudible] *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: I guess.

Ryan: She's stronger than she looks. Don't take my word on that. So the point being is you got to mix it up. And that takes a certain level of avoiding passivity. Speaking to the men here, we are called not to be passive. We're also not called to be aggressive. We're called to be active, engaged, actively taking on this responsibility, this role. As a husband, as head of the house as father if you have kids, step into that. Step into the light in that way.

And what that looks like for you, it could be praying. Here's the most tangible step that I can give a husband looking to engage his family is pray more. Pray more. Open your Bible. If you don't know where to go, go to John. Just start reading in John. If you have kids, maybe go to Genesis. John has some great stories as well. And if you want to take it up one notch with your wife, sit down, kids are asleep, or you're together, just ask her, "How can I pray for you? What's in your heart? How can I pray for you. As your husband, I care about you, I want to go to God on your behalf. What can I pray for you?"

Selena: Nothing sweeter than hearing that. *[laughs]*

Ryan: And then after she answers you, say, "Can we pray together right now?" Grab your wife's hands, and just start praying with her. I'm shocked at how many men find that hard to do.

Selena: It's not easy sometimes.

Ryan: Right. Then I remember back too how it was hard at first for us too.

Selena: Yeah. Anything new or they haven't done for a while can be uncomfortable. So step into it.

Ryan: That's not to feel shame. It's to encourage you that...

Selena: To keep it keep at it.

Ryan: ...if you feel like it's really hard, you're not alone. And you can step into that with confidence. So hopefully you found something helpful. Really quick recap on these obstacles. Past hurts can be an obstacle. To step into the light is to seek forgiveness. To forgive one another, forgive yourself.

The second one is past shame can invalidate your feelings of being loved. Remember the gospel in that? Act of sin. Repent, believe, trust the Gospel is enough...you're loved in Christ and your spouse can be a part of that process in that confession. Poor communication. Learn to have good conversations. I know it's a big, loaded thing to say, but that's an art you can learn. The final one is just avoid passivity. Get active, pursue one another.

And we're confident that as you take your steps down this path of transparency, you guys, you'll have hope along the way but you'll have growth along the way. And that promise is secure, Christ is enough and I'm confident that you'll see growth in these areas in your marriage.

Thanks for letting us talk to you guys. It's been a joy. Hopefully, it's been helpful to you. I think Paul's going to hop back on the screen here. There he is, people.

Paul: Hey, wow, that was incredible. I just sat here glued to the screen. I'd be happy to keep on going. [00:50:00] Wow, that was power-packed 35 minutes or so. I love the obstacles that you spoke about. You made it so real for us. And I got to say, as a husband myself, as a guy, I'll say this tongue in cheek, I'm encouraged that you guys struggle with communication as well.

Ryan: I'm encouraged that you're encouraged. It means you struggle with it, too.

Paul: Oh, there's no question. I could see as you were going through the obstacles, you know, the weaknesses that I have and areas that I need to work on, for sure. But thank you so much. That was incredible really.

Ryan: Thanks, Paul.

Paul: So encouraging. You talk about one of the things we see a lot with guys is past shame. Guys really struggle in that area with past shames and not being able to let go of the past so they can move forward. Communication is obviously a big thing for guys. And yeah, it's a struggle to, like you said, pray with your wife or pray with your family or get out of the habit and then having to get back into it. It can be tough for guys.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Here's one thing that was really encouraging to me on that front. I'm not naturally a talker. I was a wallflower all throughout middle school, high school.

Selena: He's become more of a talker. *[laughs]*

Ryan: But I learned something. Actually, I'm 38 now. I don't care who knows it. So at I think 36 is where I read an article by Josh and Christ Straub. They basically talked about emotional maturity, emotional intelligence. They basically said it so simply. They were like, "You can grow in this." Actually, you don't have to just be born with emotional intelligence, emotional intuition, emotional awareness, or maturity. Men, you can learn the skill of learning to empathize with your wife. You can learn the skill of asking these insightful questions and then probing for deeper answers. You can learn that. That's a skill that you can learn. I was really encouraged to learn that in my mid-30s. I'm encouraged to learn that I haven't topped out yet on that scale. I can still learn so.

Paul: Oh, that's great. I'm not great in that area either. I'm not a big small talker. And I want to encourage everyone that's watching tonight. If you've got comments, questions, please put them in the comment section. We would love to bring them to Ryan and Selena and ask. I have a handful of questions here that have come to us prior to our session tonight. What is one step a couple can take towards a see through marriage.

Ryan: I mean, hopefully, you found a step within the obstacles that we provided in the steps get out into the light. I think the most, and I didn't mention it at the very end, but I think the very most kind of visceral, most actionable step if you're looking at this, it feels like you're staring down the barrel of a gun. Like, how am I going to do this thing? It's just pray. Okay. And the reason why I say that is not a cop-out, but it's because you can't do this alone. I forget who said it, it was a theologian, somebody smarter than me. He said, "We don't pray because we think we don't need God." Our prayer life is an indication of how much our hearts actually need God and are reliant on Him.

So praying, because this is a challenge that a lot of couples will face and they're at the edge of a cliff ready to jump. Well, yeah, you need God to carry you. So pray together, pray alone, spend as much time praying until you know what that next step is. And believe me, you'll know. The Holy Spirit is faithful and he will convict in the right way. And then just pray for the conviction...

Selena: Obedience.

Ryan: And the obedient. There it is. The obedience to actually take those next steps. And then trusting that they're worth it.

Paul: Oh, that's great. Thank you. Yeah, taking that first step can always be the hardest part. There is no question. How does selfishness chip away at the health of a relationship?

Selena: How to selfishness not chip away? *[Selena, Ryan laughs]* Yeah, being selfish definitely it's like a hammer to your marriage. I don't think we realize how selfish we are until we're married, and then I realized how selfish I was when I had children. Because I think we are either me-centered or we are God-centered. So when I am me centered, that's kind of our default. That's what we're kind of waging against right? This sinful, broken self that is all about me.

I'm going to feel feelings of entitlement. "Why doesn't my husband treat me the way that he should treat me? Why are we not going on these elaborate vacations? Why are we not spending the money that I want to spend or do what I want to do?" You know, selfishness just begins to chip away at the foundation I think of understanding of the gospel and how we are called to be stewards of our resources or stewards [00:55:00] of the other's hearts.

Ryan: It's antithetical to Biblical love. Really that's what you're getting at is that the core of the biblical love is selflessness.

Selena: Dying to self.

Ryan: It's dying for self. Selfishness would extract everything from my spouse. Like you are a resource of mine, whether it's for my sexual desires. You're something to extract value from. And that's what selfishness does. It says, "I need to get as much out of you as I can, do what I want you to do. Let's do..." So as soon as that stops, then we have a problem because now you're no longer valuable resource to me. The opposite of that is selfless love.

The picture that comes to mind here, and in the selfish side is Smeagol and Gollum in Lord of the Rings. He's just the precious. He's so just wrapped around. that. He has to have it. And what does it do to him? Over time, it just turns him into this shriveled, decrepit creature. And our selfishness will do the same thing in marriage. Biblical Love is the opposite. You flourish. I think of - what is it? Psalm? I always forget the number.

Selena: 1:28?

Ryan: I will call it 128. I don't know. It's the "blessed is the man who fears the Lord, his wife will be..."

Selena: Yes, that's the one.

Ryan: ...like a fruitful vine. We're on the same wavelength.

Selena: How dare you? You don't trust me? *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** His wife will be like a fruitful vine, his children will be all of shoots around his tables. He will see his children and his children's children. He'll see the flourishing of Israel, of God's kingdom. So that selflessness that is rooted in a fear of the Lord that says that my marriage is not my own, I am called to steward, that will have the opposite effect. We will flourish. Instead of sort of shriveling and dying, we'll flourish and will bear fruit. And it's a multiplying fruit. That's the thing is generosity begets generosity. Love begets love. So to answer your question, Paul, is that selfishness is a cancer to every relationship, to every marriage, and it needs to be routed out.
- Paul:** Wow. Very good. You didn't touch on it tonight, but you have in your books. Talk about the importance of knowing and taking care of yourself spiritually, physically, and psychologically. Why does that matter in marriage especially in this pandemic world we live in today? And what would that look like?
- Ryan:** That's in the part of the book where we do talk about being see through to yourself. I really struggle with this part to be honest because of the culture we live in and self-actualization is seen as the pinnacle of human existence. If you can just live your truth...
- Selena:** Enlightenment kind of thing.
- Ryan:** ...you can find the answers in yourself. That's not at all a biblical call. The Bible says the heart is deceitful above all else. But here's the thing is it also says we're created in God's image. So there's this need to know ourselves enough. I think that Psalm 90:12, Lord teach us to number our days that we might gain - what? Wisdom.
- So we have to know and care for ourselves as steward ourselves, because the biggest truth is that aside from being made in God's image is we are not infinite. We're made in God's image, but we're not God. We have these fragile bodies. So when we talk about that in terms of living transparently, it's understanding that "Hey, late at night..." This is an example. "Late at night, my blood sugar tanks." That's not a good time to have hard conversations.
- Selena:** Yeah, we're tired. Everybody's just... It's just not wisdom.
- Ryan:** Have the wisdom to say, "Hold on." I love you enough to say, "Let's talk about this tomorrow."
- Selena:** And wisdom in knowing also how we can better care for each other, knowing kind of his weaknesses or his strengths and how I can love him better than that, and give him and be generous with time that he might need. Or as a mom and a wife, like, he say he offers to take the kids, I'm going to go have...I hate

to call it me time because it's not the time to just forget all my worries and throw caution to the wind. But it's time that I'm being sewn into. I'm in Scripture. I'm praying. It's time that I can rejuvenate for these wonderful and beautiful tasks and roles that God has given to me to steward well for His glory.

Paul: So well said, especially in this pandemic time [inaudible]. No question. So in your marriage, where has practicing transparency been most challenging?

Ryan: Oh, I shared the story.

Selena: Oh, good. [Selena, Ryan laughs] So here I go. No, I think sometimes trying to be honest about my feelings or how I've been hurt without hurting him and saying that. Does that make sense?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So like, "I've been hurt because I feel like you're treating me a certain way" or "you've been ignoring me" or "I don't feel like we've been connecting." And those are hard. I know him [01:00:00] and so I know that when I say those things, they bear a lot of weight. And so I'm like, "Here, I'm trying to be transparent about where I'm at, what I'm feeling." Of course, he takes it personal, so then it's hard to kind of, I think, work that out. Sometimes that's been a real struggle for us.

We're both learning. I'm learning how to really try to paint that picture a little bit more clearly with better communication and you rhetorically, I think, ask some questions, saying, "This is not what I'm saying. I'm not saying this thing. I'm saying this. How can I better communicate this without...I don't need you to feel hurt, but I want us to find a path forward together."

Ryan: I've noticed that. By the way, this is real-time. Real stuff here. It's a constant battle. On that note, I've had to learn how to listen more charitably, and identify wrong motives in my own heart manipulation tactics that I might be putting into play without realizing it. The way that works out the most tangibly for me is I try to express and verify meaning. So we're having a hard talk or something, you feel it escalating. This is a version of transparency, right? I'm trying to say, "Okay, I don't want to just take that thing that you said to the nth degree." That's manipulation tactic because that's not charity. You're not actually saying that but I'm using that to win the fight.

Selena: We're recording this, right? [both chuckles]

Ryan: Yes.

- Selena:** Of course, I can go back to this. I'm just kidding. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** He's going to cut it.
- Selena:** Cut it out.
- Ryan:** The point being that I've learned through being transparent and seeing you and learning to listen more charitably, and then responding in a way that isn't just trying to win the battle, but instead trying to win your heart.
- Selena:** I've noticed that.
- Ryan:** But that's been one of the biggest benefits of transparency, because we can actually say to each other, "Hey, you're manipulating me right now."
- Selena:** It doesn't always go very well. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** But if you're transparent with each other, you'll say, "You know what? You're right. You're actually right. I'm not perfect. I need to fix this. I need to repent. I'm sorry." I mean, that's hard to do. It's easy to say here now when we're feeling great. The Lord is faithful and prompting you and then enabling that repentance. Remember that faith that we have is a gift. And so the repentance that we're able to offer is a gift. So I guess you step down those paths.
- Paul:** Yeah. Like you said, just keep remembering 1 John 1:9. He is faithful and just to forgive us from all unrighteousness.
- Ryan:** Yes.
- Paul:** Another great question here. As a husband, is there a healthy balance between confessing certain sins to your wife and your brothers in Christ? So as a husband, is there a healthy balance between confessing certain sins to your wife and your brothers in Christ?
- Ryan:** Yeah. I will say yes, absolutely. Because depending on your personality, some guys that I've interacted with, it's like they're very interested in rehashing the sin. I'll use the word wallowing in it, although that lacks some nuance. They kind of want to get into the nitty-gritty of it but consistently. I'll say this. They consistently fail to take steps out of it.

So the same gospel that gave us our salvation is the same gospel that gives us our sanctification. And just like David, David, when he stood before Goliath, he threw that stone, he defeated the giant. That was a decisive victory. Christ is the greater David. We, in a lot of ways, are the people of Israel in that sense.

But what did the people of Israel do? They charged into battle. So the victory has been decided, it's been won, the giant is defeated, death is defeated, but the war rages on against our flesh. And so there's the sense of girding ourselves up. I'll use that language for talking to man like girding up our loins, and getting into battle.

And so when you ask that question, is there a balance to this, it should be effectual like. Our confessions should be effectual, not therapeutic. So there's a time for therapy, there's a time for hashing out kind of the root of it. And that's good biblical counseling, a pastoral counseling.

Selena: Your dad's a counselor.

Ryan: My dad is a counselor. It's underrated and we need that. If you need to hash this stuff out. But I'm saying that our confession to our brothers in Christ is on the battlefield. All right. If someone's injured, and they're trying to put a salve on your wound or a bandage on your wound, that's so that you can get back up and start fighting. That's I think, if I'm going to draw a line in the sand it's the confession should be effectual. It should be effective. There should be forward motion. There's nuance to addiction because there's a physiological thing that needs to be rewired and worked on. And there's a process there. But I'm just saying that if ever we're wallowing in it, that's a red light.

Selena: I think, how do you share with your spouse, your wife the sense you're not necessary rehashing...? [01:05:00]

Ryan: The crime scene?

Selena: Right. ...but you're not glossing over and not being completely honest. So I guess honest, I think, with motivation or you need to be honest with what the sin was and how you're repentant of it.

Ryan: Yeah. So a lot of times, again, talking to men, again the same topic, sexual temptation, and failure and addiction, pornography, stuff like that. We can be talking to other brothers and we can say, you know, you got four guys, you're in a group or whatever, and say, "Let's do the check-ins. How's everybody doing?" And you say, "Well, I was tempted this week and I struggled with sexual temptation." That's better than nothing. But that is what I would categorize as a false vulnerability. And here's why. I think the better version of that, the meaningful risk version of that, and this is there's a book by - who's it by?

Selena: Andy Stanley?

Ryan: No, it's not Andy Stanley. It's called "Strong and the Weak." Andy Crouch.

Selena: Crouch.

Ryan: He talks about meaningful risk in that book and how it's truly being vulnerable in a sense that the other person has the chance to hurt you and hoping that they won't hurt you. So the meaningful risk version of that, I was tempted and it was hard is saying, "I looked at pornography today and I did it for however long. For 20 minutes, or whatever," or "I did it five times this week or three times this week. And here's what led me down that path."

Now, you don't want to say, "Here's the website I went to, here's the things I..." You don't want to rehash all that stuff. But I think having enough meaningful risk to say, actually show where your heart went wrong, and exposing that sin in a meaningful way so that you can actually do surgery on the actual wound. Otherwise, it's ineffectual. So that's what I mean there's a boundary I'd put around it. I'd say put the boundary around the fake version of that. Be real around it while also being sensitive to the fact that you want to rehash the crime scene.

Paul: Excellent. So where do you see the balance? Because you've talked about being really honest and transparent with your wife, which is great advice. As a men's ministry, we encourage men iron sharpens iron, and so does a friend sharpen friend. And we really encourage accountability. So where do you see that balance in terms of I speak to my guys, my accountability group versus I speak to my wife.

Ryan: That's tricky. Our marriage and I don't want to project our marriage on anyone else, but Selena is my first accountability partner. That being said...

Selena: There was a journey to get there.

Ryan: There's a journey to get there. It was the most liberating evolution of our marriage, I think, for me as a man in our early marriage to kind of overcome temptation. Unbelievable transformation there. But as men, there are certain things that I feel like we can still protect our wives from without hiding things. Like we never want to hide things in the secrets but there is a certain aspect of protection.

We always use this phrase earlier. We used it earlier. We don't want to rehash the crime scene, because there's a certain point where that the benefit curve takes a dive. Like it's no longer beneficial to confess. You need to confess enough to root out the sin and then leave it at that. That's the balance there.

Now, in terms of the nature of it, I think, if you're struggling with pornography or whatever the thing is and you're totally hiding it from your wife but you're only telling your guy friends I think that's probably not ideal. You would want your wife to... it's going to be hard. She needs to deal with that. That's going to be hard. But you sinned against her. You need to confess to her. You're not sinning against your guy friend, you're sinning against your wife in that extramarital sexual satisfaction, extramarital sexual activity.

So you need to go to her confess it, deal with the fallout of it. Again, there's a path with a promise to get to the other side, which is - what? Fellowship and purification from all sin.

Paul: Excellent. Let's say we have one spouse who is very open with their feelings, are very transparent and one is not. So how does one encourage the other without forcing the conversation?

Ryan: What do you think? *[Selena, Ryan laughs]*

Selena: Gosh. I don't know if that's just a question of knowing your spouse and being known by them. Because we have friends like this that she's very, you know, "Here's my feelings. This is what we're going through," and he's like two-word guy. There's not much. But she knows him, so she knows and the weight of his words. So the things that he [01:10:00] might come back and say.

I think I would just say, just keep asking questions and keep being humble in that. Because it's so easy, as a personality to just kind of run over the spouse and just be like, "Why don't you just tell me? Just get it out there." And the other one is like, "I don't really know what it is yet." So I think that if you can just humbly continue to ask questions, continue to have conversations around it. And asking, you know, "Hey, I don't want to be divided on this. So if we need to put a pause and take a timeout right now, then that's fine with me. But I really want to come back to this conversation to find more reconciliation about it."

Ryan: You got to be careful not to require of them to be a clone of view.

Selena: Yeah, we project a lot.

Ryan: You have to learn how your spouse is responding and learn to read and hear what they're saying even though they may not be saying the words. But you have to read between the lines. The question is phrased, "how can I be encouraging without forcing?" I think was... Well, you do just that is you just encourage.

- Selena:** Know how your spouse feels loved.
- Ryan:** And really tangibly speaking, sometimes it's just because there's too much distraction. You don't have the bandwidth or the time or the space to actually go deep enough. You need more time. So turn off the TV. Go somewhere. Do something to create the place where you can have all those conversations.
- Paul:** Great answer. I don't see any more questions this evening. I don't know if anyone else has questions for us, any of our viewers tonight. Is there any last thoughts you want to leave with everyone tonight, Ryan and Selena?
- Ryan:** Oh, yeah, we have a few resources. If you're wondering, "What do I do? How do I step forward?" we have two things. It depends on kind of your level of depth. We have a lot of books and stuff. Go to fiercemarriage.com under "shop." Lots of books if you'd like reading books. But there's two really tangible steps. One of them is an eBook. It's free. Go to 5habits.us. That's a free download. Basically, that gives you really tangible habits to start building today. That'll benefit you today, here now.
- If you want to go even deeper, and we've turned some light bulbs on, we have a new course ecosystem that we just actually released this last week. And the final sessions for the first course are up this week—on Monday. They were up on Monday. It's called gospelcenteredmarriage.com. It's meant to become like a Netflix for your marriage. We're just starting it. So we have one core course. We're adding mini-courses constantly. It takes about six weeks to get through the first course.
- But the whole point of that is to lay these firm foundational gospel truths around love covenant and gospel. We build on top of that, what it means to communicate in light of the gospel. What does it mean to be gospel-centered in our communication, in our intimate lives, in our money, in how do we divide labor around the house. And then eventually, we end with a marriage on mission. You fill out a family vision worksheet. So sorry, that's a lot to start with. But go to either 5fivehabits.us or gospelcenteredmarriage.com.
- Selena:** Just go to both. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Yeah, go to both.
- Selena:** Hopefully, you'll be blessed by both.
- Paul:** So lovely. Thank you so much.
- Selena:** Thanks for having us.

Ryan: Thank you, Paul. It's been great.

[01:13:34] <outro>

Ryan: All right, guys, thank you so much for joining us for this special episode of the podcast. If you want more information on Impact Us, you can find their website impactus.org. That's impactus.org. Also, if you want more information on Gospel Centered Marriage, our new online eCourse ecosystem, check it out at gospelcenteredmarriage.com. We have a special offer there for you and we would love to see you go through the course. So that's it for now, and we will see you again in about seven days. So until next time, stay fierce.

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PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:18:10]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 John 4:19, ESV
 - Ephesians 2:4-9, ESV

- **[00:27:10]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 John 1:5-10, ESV

- **[01:11:44]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Colossians 3:13, ESV
 - Romans 5:8, ESV

- **[00:41:36]**
 - Resources Recommended:
 - [5fivehabits.us](https://fivehabits.us)
 - gospelcenteredmarriage.com
 - impactus.org

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