

TALKING ABOUT TALKING

<https://fiercemarriage.com/talking-about-talking>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Every couple I know, including us, struggles with communication almost always. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Like you're almost always. *[both laughs]* It's never always. It's [inaudible] communicating.

Ryan: Almost always.

Selena: Almost always.

Ryan: I feel like that's an accurate thing to say.

Selena: It is.

Ryan: This actually is the beginning of a new era in the Fierce Marriage Podcast. And the reason why I say that is, ladies and gentlemen, we do bring our best to the show every week. We do our best to bring our best. And we're realizing that, you know, we want to start tackling these things systematically. These things. That's a generic way of saying it. I don't know. *[Selena laughs]* These things being the various challenge areas of life, marriage, family. Obviously, this is a marriage podcast, so it's always going to be around marriage in some way.

So, this month, we have the very specific category of communication.

Selena: Are you laughing because we're having a hard time?

Ryan: No, because it's not specific at all. *[both laughs]* But each one will have a kind of a specific goal. So for this one, we're going to speak generally about communication. We're going to talk through that popular verse James 1:19, slow to speak, quick to listen, what it actually means. It actually is not about communication, which we're going to discover. And we're going to talk about the habits for rock-solid communication. That's today.

In the coming three weeks for this month of... this month, which if you're listening in real-time, it's March. But if you're going to listen after the fact, it's some other moment.

Selena: In whatever month you're in. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: And we're going to tackle various kind of angles of communication, typical hang-ups of communication. Does that all sound clear and good?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Does it resonate with what we've talked about?

Selena: I mean, anything about communication resonates because I just feel like no matter how good you think you are, you're just never as great as you think you are. *[laughs]*

Ryan: And that's why we have to kind of bolster our arms, so to speak. We have all the kind of right tools and weapons in our disposal so that when war time happens, we actually communicate well. Because even the best, most well-meaning couples, their communication can just fall to pieces.

Selena: As we know. As we all know.

Ryan: So it should be a good episode. I think we're going to cover some new ground here. And we'll see you on the other side.

[00:02:17] <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.

[00:02:50] <podcast begins>

- Selena:** We have been communicating about what to communicate on this podcast episode the last couple of hours.
- Ryan:** That's [inaudible] right there. *[Selena laughs]*
- Selena:** I know. I say that, and I just laugh because, I don't know, it just feels like it shouldn't be that difficult. But it is. It is difficult to talk about communication, especially within marriage because sometimes you just feel like you're nailing it. You're like, "Yes, we're communicating" or "I understand. We're connecting." You know, you just feel like you're on this mountaintop of communication. And then *[sighs]*... And then you're not. *[laughing]*
- Ryan:** And then you fall.
- Selena:** And then you fall.
- Ryan:** The reason why I think it's tough to talk about this is because it's one of these... It can become so trite and so haphazard from a teaching standpoint. Like, "Hey, just talk better." All right? "Talk good, your marriage will be good." *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** Talk more.
- Ryan:** That's not always helpful to people. So you have to really drill down into the specific ways that this...
- Selena:** That people experience.
- Ryan:** ...that bad communication is experienced in marriage.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** So we're going to do that throughout the next few episodes. But I do want to speak generally to at first, just because I think it's good to have a refresher. Before we do that, we actually got a really, really amazing message from somebody. They sent it into our... it's our voicemail line. They actually sent a really long text. 971-333-1120. You can call or text anytime if you want to ask a question, or just leave some feedback. Anyway, is very encouraging communication from this person. *[both chuckles]* And it was just basically saying that we've helped them and their marriage is better, and they're sharing it with people and it's helping their marriage. That is very encouraging to us.

If that resonates with you as a listener, there are a few ways that you can partner with us and can kind of contribute to this thing that is the Fierce Marriage podcast. I think the easiest way to do that is to leave a rating and review in a podcast app. There it is. I think there's a Google podcast app now, there's an Apple Podcast app, and then there's Spotify, which doesn't let you do reviews. So leave a rating and review [00:05:00] wherever you can. And that's just an easy way to for you to show us that this content is helping you. It encourages us and encourages others to invest in their marriage. Our promise is to always be gospel-centered while we do this. Obviously, we're not perfect. So we hope to do that well, God willing and by His grace alone.

The other way, if you want to partner in a more in-depth way, we have a way to do that on patreon.com/fiercemarriage. That's a small community of our most hardcore listeners. They're people that have just said, "You know what, we love that you're communicating the gospel in the area of marriage and family, we want to be a part of that." So you can go there. There's various tiers. I will say this. For the \$10 a month tier and up, everyone gets access to Gospel Centered Marriage, our new marriage learning and enrichment curriculum/ecosystem. We actually just released our first mini-course. It's been a long time coming. Selena and I both had a lot of sickness...

Selena: We got the Rona, people. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: It was terrible. And we got through that and by God's grace, my word, that wasn't easy. But we got through it. We finally got to release these mini-courses. The first one is 5 Truths for a Healthy Perspective on Sex. It was a lot of fun. *[Selena chuckles]* The talk was...

Selena: Sex always is, right? *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: In the goal in the courses that you can do that in one sitting. So we're hoping that anyone who's a part of the ecosystem will be encouraged to do at least one enrichment course. It takes like an hour or two each month. And that I think could keep marriages sharper and stronger and flourishing and on mission. So anyway, if you want to be part of that, join Patreon or go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com.

Selena: Uh, go you!

Ryan: That was a big mouthful.

Selena: Good for you.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. Go you.

- Ryan:** So, again, we're going to be really meta here today. We're talking about talking. *[both chuckles]* Talking about communication. And the main deliverable for you is we hope that you'll walk away with five really easy, simple reminders, habits for solid communication in your own marriage. Now, communication continues to be a problem, because I think as human beings in a fallen state, meaning that we are saved by grace but still being sanctified day by day, our communication is far from perfect, right?
- Selena:** Yours is, yes.
- Ryan:** *[laughing]* Mine is far from perfect. We tend to say things that we don't mean to say, and we hear things that we should never hear. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Or we feel things because of something someone said or we interpreted something a certain way but we're trying our best to interpret it faithfully. It's hard sometimes.
- Ryan:** But even despite your best efforts, we sometimes fail.
- Selena:** Yeah. How many times have you tried to communicate well with your spouse and it just goes awry?
- Ryan:** Oh, yeah. Or as a husband, you say just the most boneheaded thing and you're like, "Oh, no." As soon as it rolls out, it's like, "Get that word out." And they're already out there. You can't put toothpaste back in the tube.
- Selena:** There it is.
- Ryan:** You can't unring that bell. So just to reiterate, communication is an activity with an objective. That I think is the very first thing that we need to remember. It's not just something we do just haphazardly. There's an objective in mind. And when we communicate in marriage, it is to convey with fidelity with faithfulness, but without losing the resolution along the way. We want to communicate with faithfulness the meaning that is in our hearts.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Okay. And that maybe is a more flowery way. It's the faithful exchange of ideas. In other words, I have to, as a communicator...*[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Communicator.

- Ryan:** ...I have to a) know what I'm trying to say, I need to know how to say what I'm trying to say, and then I need to actually say what I'm saying in a way that will communicate what I'm trying to say.
- Selena:** It's not easy.
- Ryan:** There's a lot of ways to go wrong in that.
- Selena:** Yeah. Well, there's a lot of factors to consider. I think we talked about it kind of being like a target. Like I'm not just going to say... Well, we have failed. We've said things generally, too ambiguously. It's like trying to shoot shrapnel at a target, right? You're just saying a lot of things.
- Ryan:** Seeing what sticks.
- Selena:** Yeah. And seeing what sticks. I think that the way we talk to each other was always meant to be rich and experienced and heard. So, heard therefore experienced. But if we're just throwing a bunch of things out there, how can we really hear all of those things at once? I think there's a way that we need to listen like you're saying. I'm just reiterating. I'm just repeating that. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Oh, I like the analogy that you brought up. You started saying it, but you didn't go all the way.
- Selena:** I didn't go all the way. [00:10:00] Thanks. I got sidetracked with another part of it.
- Ryan:** I'll help you along. A lot of times what we do is we will ready, shoot, aim
- Selena:** There it is. *[both chuckles]* There it is.
- Ryan:** And you're saying that it's better to do what?
- Selena:** Ready, aim, shoot.
- Ryan:** So we aim before we shoot.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** This is the part that I love that you... Gosh, I wish you would have just said it. *[both laughs]* When we were talking before we hit record, you were saying, well, when you're trying to hit a target, say if you're an archer, and you have a bow and arrow you're taking into effect...

- Selena:** The person with the gun.
- Ryan:** Or person with a gun. You're taking into account - what? Wind. And even in some cases, if it's a long shot, you grab the rotation of the earth, and even gravity, and all these different...
- Selena:** Whatever you're shooting, like your gun, your scope, everything that you're looking through, you have to consider every single factor before you can actually take a shot that will hit the target. And the target is small. It's never big. Maybe it is. I don't know. But for the sake of communication, it's typically small.
- Ryan:** And there's a direct relationship between the complexity of the idea and the difficulty of the shot.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** So if you're trying to communicate a very complex idea, whether it's in your heart, you're trying to get it across to your spouse, or you're trying to teach, you know...
- Selena:** What makes it complex is the human aspect of it. Because there's so much variation to try to ignore or take into consideration. It's a lot of...
- Ryan:** So to use the same analogy, I picture it like you're on horseback now and you're trying to hit that target. And the horse is galloping...
- Selena:** It's way better. This analogy just got a thousand billion times better.
- Ryan:** And the horse happens to be my emotions. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** How dare you!
- Ryan:** And my emotions are just going nuts, and they are hormonal, and they are competing with other stallions. *[both laughs]* And I'm trying to take this shot and I'm just weaving it because my emotions, I don't have control over them. I think that's interesting given that we're going to talk through James because James is going to talk about your words being like the bridle in the mouth of a horse.
- Selena:** Right. Which is good for you.
- Ryan:** That was unintentional. *[chuckles]*

- Selena:** Go you again.
- Selena:** I was going to say, in Revelations, it says, "Don't add or take away anything from the Word." God's Word is what it is. He didn't say arbitrary things to fill the air, make flowery...
- Ryan:** That's good.
- Selena:** ...interpretations. I mean, there are. Like there's poetry, there is wisdom.
- Ryan:** But none it is frivolous.
- Selena:** It's not frivolous. Yes.
- Ryan:** Yes. Every word is like hot knife through butter if we read it rightly with the right...
- Selena:** With God, yeah.
- Ryan:** With God there with us.
- Selena:** Yes, with grace. And I think that's the richness to be had, to be experienced. So how can we experience the richness of communication in our marriage when I think it's so easily can fall through the cracks just to our day to day life and where we're spending our time and our heart and our energy and our thoughts?
- Ryan:** And that's what we're going to be exploring over the next few weeks. So this week kind of generically also, specifically if possible... Doing really well.
- Selena:** Just go and say...
- Ryan:** What does the Bible say about communication? Now there are themes. Now, I want to talk through one of these popular verses that we've even used in this context. And I'm realizing that this verse is actually not about communication. James 1:19 says, " Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." I read the extra verse after because there's extra two verses after.
- Selena:** Context.

Ryan: So I feel like it helps us understand that James' intent in these words. These words while they are talking about communication, they're not actually about communication. Does that make sense? The way we know this is (a) the context, like you said. This is in the first chapter of James. The first part of it is obviously a salutation to the 12 tribes of the dispersion which that's an epic intro. To the 12 tribes of the dispersion. It sound so great. And he talks about the testing of their faith. Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds. And as we know, people who have looked at James and read about it, the main thrust of it is this idea, this correlation between faith and our works.

Selena: Right. Well, that whole part of speaking, listening is hearing and doing the Word.

Ryan: Right. So, when it comes to receiving the gospel, he's saying, and seeing the gospel actually bear fruit in your life, when you hear it know this: [00:15:00] "Be quick to hear, be slow to speak, slow to anger." And so what this does to us as people reading this, it's a warning to us to be quick to hear the news of the gospel and let it actually bear weight in our hearts. So he's talking to a Jewish audience here. A large majority of his audience would probably be Jewish. And they're going to be dealing with all kinds of dissonance in their hearts around this truth.

They're saying, "Wait a second. Jesus was the Messiah. He is the Christ. He what? He rose again. And his resurrection is the foretold... Wait a second. So you're telling me that all the temple rituals, rites, and sacrifices, all that's been fulfilled in Him? That the Sabbath is fulfilled in Him? All these components of the Jewish law that I know and love and cherish and follow, all of that is now fulfilled in this guy? So there's this dissonance there. So he's saying, be quick to hear, be slow to speak, slow to anger. Because I'm guessing there might have been an anger kind of response that is natural in the human heart when the full gospels find its way in there.

So we know that by context. I want to finish this thought. We also know there's a cross-reference here back to Ecclesiastes 5, where it says, "Fear God." All right. That's the heading. 5 verse 1. "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer - the what? The sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few." This is about reverence. It's about reverence for the ways of God and the way He's chosen to reveal Himself to us and the way He's chosen to instruct us to respond to His revelation.

- Selena:** I think if we have trouble responding that way, we can't justify the text away through whatever means that makes us feel better, we literally have to learn how to submit our feelings, our emotions, and even some of our possible beliefs that have been wrong for a long time and how we are receiving the word. It's tilling up that soil in our heart that may have become hardened, and saying, "Okay, this is what the Word says. This is how I am hearing it, seeing it, and it is manifesting in my heart. Whooo, there's some stuff I need to get rid of." I mean, that's just a natural response. And if it's not, then we're probably not hearing it the way it was intended to be heard.
- Ryan:** Which is interesting. Because if we don't hear the way it's intended to be heard, then our tendency then is to offer a full sacrifice which James...
- Selena:** Go back to that verse. That was good.
- Ryan:** James was all about... He says, "Show me your faith without works and I'll show you my faith through my works, essentially." Again, if you're not familiar with James, he's not talking about earning your salvation through works. He's saying that working out the salvation you already have, letting that actually be so true that it bears fruit in your life. You do it out of salvation, not for salvation.
- Selena:** Which such a new...
- Ryan:** But the fool's sacrifice is "I have to work, have to work, have to work after work to get God's love." That's a fool's sacrifice.
- Selena:** Well, he's calling it that which is interesting. Because if you read the Old Testament, which I have been living in, there was certain sacrifices for certain things. There's Levitical law. There's all of these... *[takes a deep breath]*
- Ryan:** There are ceremonial sacrifices.
- Selena:** Ceremonial sacrifices. Things that you had to consider. So that is interesting that he's saying that because to call you a fool, then... I would be angry if somebody called me a fool for trying to sacrifice what I thought and knew maybe as an Old Testament believer or whatever... Not believer. You know what saying though? Like you're calling my ceremonial things that I've been doing to honor God is now a fool's sacrifice? Because I'm not knowing, I'm not believing, I'm not...
- I guess that could be one of those, okay, James is saying be slow to become angry in this. Like, understand. Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen. Let me tell you now what this means. Don't be rash with your mouth. Don't let your

hearts be hasty. Just bring any sacrifice. Understand where the sacrifice is coming from. He's trying to essentially paint more of a picture for us to understand that... I don't know. Sometimes I think we become too familiar with the gospel or we're not familiar enough, but...

Ryan: When we don't draw near to do what Solomon's talking about in Ecclesiastes—to listen. Drawn near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fool. And that's what you're saying is we forget to listen. So listening to God, hearing His words, hearing the gospel, letting it actually be what it is. Instead, we're being fast to speak and slow to listen, instead of being quick to listen and slow to speak. [00:20:00] So the result is our sacrifice of fools. It's a fruitless sacrifice because it's not what God asked for.

Selena: Hastiness does that. That's interesting.

Ryan: Hastiness does that. And rashness. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. That's about reverence. That's about knowing the relationship between you and God.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: Okay. This is supposed to be communication episode. So this verse from James, James 1:19, is not about communication, but it also is about *[chuckling]* communication. It's not primarily about communication.

Selena: It's knowing your target, knowing your object, knowing what is...

Ryan: It's about understanding how the gospel should penetrate our hearts and the method through which it penetrates our hearts through being slow to speak, quick to listen. And then our reaction should be one that is...

Selena: Is reverent...

Ryan: Reverent, yes.

Selena: ...and submissive and humble, and respectful. Because, I mean, there's nothing else that's going to influence the way I speak to people than God and His word and who He is. But I have to know Him before I can espouse anything about Him. And knowing Him is spending time in His Word.

Ryan: Again, since this passage is not specifically primarily about communication, but it is echoing truth of communication, which are thematic in the Bible, and therefore it is a faithful way to read it, to say, "I should be quick to hear my

spouse, slow to speak to myself." Because it's thematic and because we see the theme of... it's about positional relationship. Okay. So God is God. I am not. You are my spouse, I am not. What does that say in terms of the position of my heart and listening to you? There needs to be a trust there of rapport there, a certain amount of discernment there. That is unique to the marriage relationship. So I can hear this verse and realize it's not primarily about communication, but it also does give me wisdom when it comes to communication.

Selena: I love how you said that. I'm just going to back up a little bit of how you said I think it just very much clarifies how our culture operates. Fast to speak, slow to hear, quick to become angry. And then we wonder why things are in disarray, when Ecclesiastes is the saying, "Be slow. Be careful. Be cautious on your way to the temple. The way you live, question it and hold it under the light of the gospel and see if it's really the way you shouldn't be living." Right?

Ryan: Question. Sorry, that just hit me like...

Selena: Examine. Examine.

Ryan: No, no, no, no, no. That hit me in a really good way like a ton of bricks. Okay, I'm back up. I said a few weeks ago I was watching this show and it's not related at all. I'm going to mention the show. But one of the heroes in the show, his fiancé had kind of gone sideways, and they were falling apart. And he was saying to her, "I never want to hurt you with my words. And I was like, "Yeah, I never want to hurt Selena. I never want to hurt my wife." Obviously, not physically. But more often than not, the pain that I inflict as a husband is going to be related to how I communicate, how I listen, or how I don't communicate or don't listen.

So I told that to you. "I never want to hurt you with my words. I'm going to be very..." In other words, I had question to myself. So when I approached you now, I'm questioning, "Okay, how can I say this?" If I really just don't want to hurt you, I want to love you well, it's not just about me saying the words that I want to say. It's about how can I say this in a way that is a) is not going to hurt my wife, and b) she will hear what I'm trying to say? I can question myself. I'm so thankful for that random bit of Holy Spirit wisdom while watching this completely secular show...

Selena: God is sovereign.

Ryan: ...where God is like, "Question how you speak to your wife because you don't ever want to hurt her because she's My daughter, she is the one that I've given to help you. Now, love her well." That conviction just sunk its teeth right into

my hard little heart. And now I am questioning myself. So, I don't know, that to me is what's being quick to hear and slow to speak.

I want to mention one other thing around this slow to speak idea is oftentimes when I've read that, I'm thinking, "I just need to say less." That's not what James is saying. If we go back to the Ecclesiastes 5, cross reference here, that verse is not saying "never offer sacrifices to God." It's saying, don't offer fool's sacrifice or a foolish sacrifice.

Selena: A foolish sacrifice would be what? One that doesn't know. One that is about the person bringing it rather than the God who's receiving it.

Ryan: Yeah, exactly. And it's on my terms, not on God's terms. That's a fool's sacrifice. [00:25:00] So if I bring my communication... So he's not saying be slow to speak and never speak. He's saying, speak on your spouse's term. He's not saying that. I'm saying this. Speak on the other person's terms, not on your own. Be slow to speak. What are you taking that extra time to do if you're slow and not fast? You're taking time to think...

Selena: To question.

Ryan: ...to question, to reflect, to hear what you've said, and then respond thoughtfully.

Selena: And to submit possibly.

Ryan: Wait. Blow that out a little bit. What do you mean submit? Because I hear you saying that as a wife, you don't mean submit to your husband. You mean submit to what?

Selena: Submit to God's authority on the words that you are thinking about saying. The words that are about to come out of my mouth, are they ones that are going to be respectful and show respect to my husband? Are they ones that are going to show that I am being a helper and not...?

Ryan: Hinder?

Selena: Hinder. There it is. *[both chuckles]* I was looking for a good word there. Thank you. Where's my response coming from? Is it coming from a place of pride or is it really under the authority and trusting God? Because it's not always easy to respond from that place of submission. But again, if I have a relationship with God and I'm trusting that His Word says this is how I need to respond in this situation, I may not see an immediate change of your heart, but I can trust that the words and the way I responded will not come back void. And at some

point, we will circle back and there will be hope there and there will be joy and restoration and healing there.

Ryan: So would you say yield would be a good synonym?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So when you're yielding to the wisdom of God in that moment instead of...

Selena: Right. I'm not speaking irrationally.

Ryan: Yielding to your own wisdom.

Selena: Yeah. Your own emotion.

Ryan: In other words, you're communicating on God's terms, not your own.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: There's so many beautiful things to be gleaned if we just take this time to blow out this verse. Again, it is thematic. So while we're saying that this is not what James is saying, what we are saying is it does make sense in this way because of other scriptures. So at this point, maybe we switch gears a little bit and we can say, okay, based on those other scriptures, namely, in the Proverbs, we can glean all sorts of wisdom around solid communication. And these are going to be foundational for the rest of our time in this theme over the next few weeks. So let's just talk through these. We got five of them for you. That's all right?

Selena: Sure. I was just thinking of some other things to share, but my mind is blank. Now we're here. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Sorry.

Selena: That's okay.

Ryan: You'll think of it right when we get off.

Selena: Right when we get off. The first one is to talk. Actively engage. I think we've been saying this over and over in different ways. But engage in the discussion. Learn to articulate your own thoughts. I think that is a very challenging thing for most of us to do. To communicate, like you said, in an effective way that can be heard or is heard the way you intended it to be heard, most people... we don't struggle with talking, but we struggle with communicating, right?

- Ryan:** Wow. That's profound. We don't struggle with talking but we struggle with communicating. *[Selena chuckles]* Let's pick that apart a little bit more. You said, "Learn to articulate your own thoughts." We actually had a call with... I was on the phone with Ron Deal, and we're talking through some other content. One of the things he said was we have to put names to the emotions in order to start actually working from there.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** But I'm saying that's a learned thing.
- Selena:** It is.
- Ryan:** Because as a guy, and I don't mean to paint with too broad a brush here, but in general, ladies tend to be more attuned with their emotions, more in tune with what they feel and what it's called.
- Selena:** It's a double-edged sword though.
- Ryan:** And men, for whatever reason, they're not that in touch with themselves. And that's not...
- Selena:** I think they might...
- Ryan:** I think it's more control and not biological at the same time.
- Selena:** Sorry, to interrupt. But I think you might know they may not always want to communicate or say.
- Ryan:** Okay, maybe. I've never been consciously...
- Selena:** Can't speak for a guy. Go ahead. *[laughs]* Sorry.
- Ryan:** I've never been consciously guarded to you, but I have been obscured to myself and therefore obscured to you. I can't tell you why I feel how I feel because I don't even know how or why I feel. Because you'll say like, "What's wrong?" and my response is like, "I don't honestly know. I just feel like something's off." I got a case with grumpies.
- Selena:** I'm glad that's how you feel like. I mean, "What's wrong with you?" I try to be more loving than that.

- Ryan:** You are. But the point is, is that's a skill that I've had to learn as I've grown as a man.
- Selena:** Right. I also think it's something simple that we can kind of grab on to. There's tons of books out there to learn how to understand and articulate your own thoughts.
- Ryan:** Good friend Ray, he has this wheel. Have you seen Ray's wheel?
- Selena:** No
- Ryan:** It's a wheel of emotion. It starts from the middle and it's like, "Are you feeling..." It starts with really simple terms. And then as you move out, there's more like way simple term.
- Selena:** There's tools like that. Look up "emotional wheel."
- Ryan:** Look up wheels of emotion. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Google "emotional wheel." It sounds like wheels on the bus or something.
- Ryan:** We've got a friend that he really struggles with this. So we'll just hand it to him. It's in our guys' group. And we're like, "Dude, what are you feeling?" He'll just look at it and he'll say, "I feel this one." And he'll point to it.
- Selena:** That's awesome.
- Ryan:** And then we can start talking about it. So we have to learn...
- Selena:** Does every marriage need an emotional wheel?
- Ryan:** I would argue probably.
- Selena:** That sounds helpful.
- Ryan:** We'll try to find something and then we'll change one word, and then trademark it. *[both laughs]* I'm kidding. I'm kidding.
- Selena:** But not totally.
- Ryan:** So we have to learn to articulate. I love how you said that. A lot of times we know how to talk but we don't know how to communicate. Communicate. I'm guessing somewhere in there there's this Latin root word "with".

- Selena:** Co.
- Ryan:** There it is. With. So we need to actually be one with each other in sharing our meaning.
- Selena:** And it's hard.
- Ryan:** So, to do that we have to know what we're trying to say. And then take the time to actually talk, to speak well, to articulate how we actually feel.
- Selena:** And to understand it's not an easy thing. We can kind of, I think in a good way, gain confidence and assurance, you know, the more steps we take and the better we get at it. So don't just think you're going to be great at it the first time out of the gate, because you probably won't be. Not to get down or...
- Ryan:** Iteration.
- Selena:** You gotta repeat. Repetition.
- Ryan:** Well, that's the beauty of covenant too is that there's one...
- Selena:** Constant repeat.
- Ryan:** One of our quotes on Instagram that we post periodically is: "In lifelong marriage, a husband and a wife may disagree on many things, but they must absolutely agree on this: to never, ever give up." And that's a covenant in a lot of words. That's what covenant is. Covenant gives you the space to do what you're saying is it gives us a space to actually figure this stuff out, to mess up, and then to reconcile and then get better, and then mess up again in different way to get better and to reconcile.
- Selena:** And to get better, we mean, sanctify. Like to become...
- Ryan:** And to grow in scale and to grow in wisdom.
- Selena:** And abilities to talk, which is the first one.
- Ryan:** So the other side of talking is a lot of times we can say things in a way that we feel like is completely articulate, but we have no regard for how those words will land on the heart of our spouse.
- Selena:** Story of my life. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** What do you mean? Do I do that to you?

- Selena:** No, I do that to you I feel like. I think, "Oh, I've got this clear thought. It's so clear, how could he not get it?"
- Ryan:** But you're forgetting all the other thoughts that are around that thought.
[laughs]
- Selena:** Exactly.
- Ryan:** And you only say the one thing.
- Selena:** Exactly. It's like shooting at my target with only considering one factor. But the factor seems so good and so spot on that I'm like, "I got this." And then there's a tornado is going through. *[Ryan laughs]* Completely missing it.
- Ryan:** Because I have to look focused. Proverbs 12:18 gives us some wisdom here. It says, "There's one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." So what the author is saying here is that the one who has rash words is actually a fool. They're the fool. The tongue of the wise brings healing. The words and the tongue of a fool are like sword thrusts. They don't just allow damage, they actually cause it.
- Selena:** So good. *[Ryan chuckles]*
- Ryan:** They cause damage. And there's movement there, right? Words are happening.
- Selena:** Well, it's hard to be wise when you don't feel like being wise, when you feel like being rash, right?
- Ryan:** That's why the slow to speak is so huge.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Slow it down.
- Selena:** It's that temperate of emotions. So you got to talk.
- Ryan:** That's profound.
- Selena:** The first one.
- Ryan:** Habit number one, talk.

- Selena:** But talk good.
- Ryan:** This episode is brought to you... Anyway. Talk good. Habit number two is just as profound. Here it is. Ready? Listen.
- Selena:** We giggle because they seem so easy and clear and yet, don't we all fail so miserably at both of them? *[both giggles]*
- Ryan:** Again, you used the phrase, and I'm going to keep saying, is question yourself. Question yourself.
- Selena:** Full of good phrases. It's my day.
- Ryan:** You are fool of something.
- Selena:** It's my day. It's my day.
- Ryan:** Question yourself. So listening is one of the most potent ways to question yourself.
- Selena:** What do you mean?
- Ryan:** What I mean by that is I can hear what I think you're saying, or I can try to hear what I think you're saying. Does that make sense?
- Selena:** You said the same thing.
- Ryan:** I know.
- Selena:** I can hear... Say it again.
- Ryan:** I can hear what I think you're saying or I can listen to try to hear what I think you're saying. *[both laughs]* Super clear.
- Selena:** Well, you're a smart guy.
- Ryan:** The point I'm trying to make is that there's a knee-jerk hearing of what you say, and then there's a hearing that is more question of that, and then I'm actually trying to hear what's beneath the surface.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** What's the matter? *[chuckles]*

- Selena:** I was thinking about our spat last week.
- Ryan:** Yeah. We might share that at some point.
- Selena:** It's too raw still. [00:35:00]
- Ryan:** It's raw, and it was intense.
- Selena:** We tried to talk about today and it was like, "Nope, still can't get through." I mean, we are, but we just...we need a little more time I think to articulate it.
- Ryan:** It's funny because we're kind of at an impasse because I think we have a fundamental disagreement. It's not just about what was said. It's about the nature of things that are said. And that's why we're not really talking about it.
- Selena:** We're still figuring it out.
- Ryan:** So anyway.
- Selena:** But I still love you. We are so good. God is so great.
- Ryan:** God is great.
- Selena:** We still have contentment in it all.
- Ryan:** Yeah, we do. So, talk, number one. Two, listen. So we have to give each other the space and the time that they need to communicate. And we do that by actually shutting our mouths and listening with open ears. Now, that's not just sitting there while words happen. Okay, that's not listening.
- Selena:** There's no interrupting. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yes, thank you. Listening is not just sitting there while your spouse talks. Listening is internalizing what he or she is saying as if you were trying to understand it from their perspective.
- Selena:** Which is what I was doing last week just to be clear.
- Ryan:** Clear enough because it's not all my words. It had the same effect because I said some words and you're like, "I'm going to disregard those words and still hang on the other words you said."
- Selena:** The other words you said were bigger.

- Ryan:** I tried to make them smaller. *[both laughing]*
- Selena:** You can't say that.
- Ryan:** Your advice was good but [inaudible] was bigger. *[both laughs]* It's not that bad.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** All right. So Proverbs 17:27 gives us a really good insight here. It says, "The truly wise person..." Again, there's a wise person in Proverbs is a fool. "A truly wise person uses few words, a person with understanding is even-tempered." Let's contrast this. Let's do an anti-Proverb, if you will. A truly foolish person uses a ton of words and a person without understanding is not even-tempered.
- Selena:** Not even-tempered. Is irrational.
- Ryan:** Is irrational. And who knows? An even-tempered person, you can trust how they're going to respond.
- Selena:** Because there's a consistency there that creates this reliance. I can trust you to respond a certain way consistently, because you are also even-tempered.
- Ryan:** Show me a couple who articulates themselves well and listens to each other while the other person articulates and I'll show you a couple who is most likely thriving in their marriage. So if we can just get these two skills of just talking well and listening well, oh, my word. So anyway. This actually leads to number three, which is a component. I'd say it's an overflow of...
- Selena:** I know. It's almost like a 2.1. Right?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** But we'll call it number three.
- Ryan:** 2.0.
- Selena:** Seek understanding. So when you listen, try to understand, again, your spouse's perspective, listen without getting defensive. The governments talk a lot about this, actually. And it's really hard to do. In an ideal world, Ryan could espouse to me all the things that he's been triggered by that I'm causing, and I would not get defensive or angry at all. *[chuckles]* But that's not the truth.

Because everything that he might be saying, in this, for instance, word is going to be triggering because it's about us and me.

Those are things that are hard to not take personally. So what can we do to not take them personally? Well, how can we seek to understand them better? How can we soothe our emotions, our "okay, I'm rising up, I feel this heat coming to me because I'm getting angry because he's saying these things, and this is not what I meant, and I'm getting super frustrated"? Whoa, whoa, whoa. Just put those to the side for a minute. I'm not saying stuff down. I'm saying just let those be for a minute and really ask yourself, "Is this..."

Ryan: Question yourself.

Selena: Question yourself. "Is this really what he's saying? Do I understand this fully?" If I don't, "Okay, can we pause for a minute? This is what I hear you're saying. Is this accurate?" Ask the questions. Are there things that you guys are facing that you're not... like in your external circumstances, right? We talked about stress and anxiety in one of the episodes and how one is external. Maybe we're not understanding a piece of that in our spouse. And so asking questions, seeking to understand. Proverbs affirm this.

Ryan: Yeah. Well, I love how you said that. In argument, in marriage, everything is triggering. *[giggle]* Because that's why you're having the argument.

Selena: Right. And you're so familiar.

Ryan: Oh, I'm sorry, Selena. But this makes me laugh every time. We'll be fighting and you'll be like, "It's always my fault." And I'm like, "We're having an argument. So yes, I think you're wrong and I think I'm right." *[laughs]* Like, "I'm always wrong." Anyway.

Selena: I always feel wrong. You always make me feel wrong.

Ryan: And that's what you just said is that every argument in a marriage is triggering because it's a marriage. That's why you're in the argument.

Selena: You're committed. You just walk away from each other.

Ryan: But there are two specific things that I would argue allow us, by [00:40:00] God's grace, to seek understanding even in those moments. And it's a) obvious love. Paul talks about love in 1 Corinthians 13. He says, "Love hopes all things." What that means is that love is giving you the benefit of the doubt. It's hoping and trusting that you're not just saying what you're saying in the angry way because you're trying to make me angry. Love says, "What's under the surface

here? What are the stressors that you talked about? What is the context? What is happening in my spouse's heart, in her head, in her mind, in her world that is infusing this conversation? How do I hope all things in that?"

Selena: That is what I was asking myself last week too just for the record. Those are the things I'm trying to help you understand too. We're still trying to seek understanding around this.

Ryan: And I tried to tell you that that was a reason why it shouldn't be a big deal. *[both laughs]* One day, maybe we'll...

Selena: One day.

Ryan: So that was the first thing is love. And the second thing is wisdom. So we have to have wisdom, and we have to as believers put it to work. We can't just put it on the shelf and leave it there. We need to put wisdom... What is wisdom put to work? It's the Proverbs actually saying, like, "I'm going to trust God's way in this. I'm not going to offer a full sacrifice. I'm going to do it God's way, not my own way."

Proverbs 18:2. "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." That one stinks. That stinks so good. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only expressing his opinion. The anti-Proverb of that, which is just how do we flip it around to amplify the meaning, that a wise person takes pleasure in understanding and in hearing another express their opinion. I don't know. Maybe that's...

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: The point is, is that we have wisdom at our disposal to say, "Okay, I need to actually take pleasure in understanding. And I can seek it because I love my spouse and hoping in all things."

Selena: Well, not only do we have wisdom, but we have discernment with the Holy Spirit.

Ryan: Amen.

Selena: We have a counselor who is active and with us and knows every aspect about us, and is helping us. Sometimes I would argue that we shove it aside when we just don't think maybe it's not right now. This is not going to work right now. And it's like no, when is there a better time for this to work? It's in those hot seats, right?

Ryan: And as Ecclesiastes 5, that's that foolish sacrifice. Because a sacrifice on God's terms means I'm going to crawl up onto this altar, I'm going to be a living sacrifice, and I'm going to do it God's way and not my way. I'm going to trust His way. Like we ask our children to trust us even they don't want to, they don't see it. Trust us. It's wisdom. We see things you don't see. We know things you don't know. And it will bear positive fruit in your life. I always tell our daughters, "My whole job as your dad is to maximize your joy. And I do that by pointing you to the ways of God and the way to salvation Himself, Jesus Christ. And everything I do, discipline wise is to remind you of that and to maximize your eternal joy." Anyway, that's wisdom put to work.

Number four. And this is I think where the rubber meets the road. It's one thing just to talk about stuff. But we have to actually let it change our actions. That's number four is act.

Selena: This is what James is talking about, too, I think overall with the Gospels. Don't just hear the Word, but actually do the Word.

Ryan: Because words are cheap.

Selena: Right. So yes, like you said, having all the conversations in the world don't mean anything if it never translates into action. We constantly here at Fierce Marriage talk about how your behavior is just an indicator of what your underlying beliefs are. So if my belief is wrong, my behavior is going to be wrong. So we can't change the behavior without changing first the belief. Our actions are often... they can be a natural byproduct of love, but we can't just expect them to be, I think, without...

Ryan: Well, we need to put love into action. And that's how we prove our love in a lot of ways. I mean, Jesus didn't talk about dying on the cross. He did, but He also did it. He talked about it, and then He went forth and completed the work. Actually, we were talking to a friend about they had a friend of theirs come to them and say, "My husband never says he loves me anymore. And the reason he doesn't do that is because he feels like it'll lose its meaning." We know that's silly. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Stupid.

Ryan: My reaction in listening to that...

Selena: As a husband.

Ryan: ...with you, I was like, "Well, it only loses its meaning if you don't actually show it." Like if your wife hears you say that you love her a hundred thousand times

but [00:45:00] never once experience is your love, of course, it's not going to mean anything. When you say, "I love you," it means nothing because it bears no weight in your actual life.

Selena: There's no actions happening.

Selena: Yes. But if you say I could tell you, "I love you," and my prayer is that every time you say, "Yes, you do. You do love me. I know that." It's not any less valuable because I said it 10 times today...

Selena: Thank you for loving me

Ryan: ... and 20 times tomorrow.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: The point is, is it has to have an action there

Selena: When I hear those words, I'm not thinking of what you're saying. I'm thinking of the many times that you have shown me and acted upon that love with our children, with my own heart, with our family, like our extended family. Again when I hear those words, I'm not thinking of you just saying them. I'm thinking of...

Ryan: The time I'll let you keep the Yeti mug even though I got it for myself. And you claimed it. And I said, "Just think of me every time you sip that cool, cool beverage." I said you could use it. Not Wednesdays.

Ryan: But not Wednesdays. *[Selena laughs]* That makes my heart sing but you feel loved and you know that you're loved.

Selena: Okay. I was about to interrupt. I thought you were going to say something.

Ryan: It's all right. 1 John 3:18.

Selena: "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

Ryan: And in giving your spouse Yeti mugs.

Selena: You sounds so rich. Yeti mugs are expensive.

Ryan: It was a freebie because we order shipping supplies.

- Selena:** I know. And it has a big thing on. It has a big logo on it. It is a Yeti. An actual Yeti one. But it also has a bigger logo on the front part where everybody sees it, right?
- Ryan:** A ULINE logo.
- Selena:** Yes. Just so people aren't like, "Well, Sheesh. An expensive cup."
- Ryan:** Most people can probably... If you want a nice cup. Anyway, don't feel bad if you spent real paper money on Yeti mug, ladies and gentlemen. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Sorry.
- Ryan:** Number five. This is the fifth habit for rock-solid communication. And that is rest. This might sound a bit funny, but let's elaborate. Remember that you're works in progress. You're in for the long haul. That's the covenant piece. There is grace as God works. You can rest in the fact that you don't have to solve every communication difficulty...
- Selena:** What?
- Ryan:** ...in the moment. *[chuckles]* You can let it breathe, you can let it rest, you can let the heat subside, and then you can come back in and figure it out together. Because you are married after all.
- Selena:** You are married after all.
- Ryan:** The covenant is still there. As long as you both keep coming to the table, you can still work through it. Philippians 3:12. "Not that I have already obtained it or I have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold for that which is also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." And that's the verse about perseverance. And we can persevere because Christ has persevered because we know that He is strong even when we are not. That when our covenant feels weak, we can rest in the fact that God created covenant in His design and it is strong.
- Selena:** And in rest in that, we can then rejoice. I don't mean to make this about me. But God has been affirming those words for the last couple of months. Those are the words for 2021 for me. I don't like to do goals. I do words. And rest and rejoice were the clear words that came for this year, which is so interesting to me because it's been one of no actual rest in some ways, but also a lot of rest in other ways.
- Ryan:** The year is young. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: It's only March 1. It's true. But rest and rejoice. But I'm not necessarily saying that like not busy schedule means you're resting. You can have a lot of things happening in your life that are all good and godly and still find rest. You can have a lot of things going wrong and we can still find rest in the God of our salvation and we can still rejoice in the fact that He is not far from us, that He is present with us and that we can walk through this with all assurance. We can rejoice.

Psalm 5:11, a friend shared this with me just today. "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield." We can rest in the words, the promises of who God is. We can rest in the fact that we're not perfect at communicating with each other. I'm not perfect at listening, or talking, or even acting or seeking to understand. But I can rest in the fact that God is helping me and making me better in those things. And I can learn to be better at those things through His Word, through communion with Him through discipleship. That's where we can start and then it can flow out of that.

Ryan: Remember that these aren't just words. These five things aren't just tips. They are habits. And the habit of rest is not dependent on you. That's the key. That's what the Sabbath is.

Selena: Work to be able to rest. We rest... [00:50:00]

Ryan: ...out of a place of security.

Selena: Sorry. Yes. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: I am secure.

Selena: It continued to in my head and didn't come out of my mouth. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Sometimes that happens. *[both chuckles]* Thank you for doing that. There it is.

Ryan: And that's our communication problem.

Selena: I'd say it's a win. You're really good at picking up on my sentences.

Ryan: But then people are like, "Stop interrupting her!"

Selena: No, I paused.

Ryan: I'm like, "Well, I know where she's going and I'm trying to help her get there."
[laughs] All right. Selena.

Selena: Gotcha. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: You got me. *[both laughs]* Good thing, this is not a video right now. The point is, is our security rests not in the strength of our hold on Christ, but on the strength of His grip around us. And that's why that's a habit. We have to remind ourselves to rest in that and not just be always moving, anxious, trying to figure it out, trying to... We get to the next path, but say, "Hey, I'm in covenant with my spouse. We messed it up this time. Let's figure this out. But we can't do right now because emotions are high and we're frustrated and we're tired. Everything's really raw. So listen, I love you. Even if you don't get a chance to say that, you can still rest. If you're just too upset or whatever, just rest and then come back around to these habits, talk, listen, seek understanding, act, and rest again, if need be.

Those are the five habits. If you do those five things, continually and an increasing measure, you will have a thriving communication life, you will have a thriving emotional connection, and your marriage will be thriving as well. All right. Let's pray and then and we'll call it an episode. We have a couples conversation challenge. This whole thing was a conversation challenge.

Selena: Sounds good to me.

Ryan: Here's the challenge. I'll make it up on the fly. *[Selena chuckles]* You're probably listening to this by yourself. If you're not, you're listening to it together, then you can just do this. But go to your spouse and talk about the five things. Again, here they are. Talk, listen, seek understanding, act, and rest. And talk about how you can make each one of those things a habit in your communication life as a married couple. All right. And resolve to grow in some way.

All right. Lord, I thank you for your Word that is just so rich and full and fruitful in our lives. I pray that you would give us wisdom to apply it when we need to apply it. Give us the humility to recognize that we need to submit ourselves to Your way, to resign ourselves to the way of wisdom, not for arbitrary reasons, but it's for our good, it's for our flourishing, and it's for Your glory. I pray for the couples who feel like their communication is completely upside down or they're just completely missing it. I pray that you would give them hope as they hear this prayer, as they listen to this podcast episode. And I pray that

Holy Spirit you would work in their marriage as they do the work, that you would complete it, that you would make their work fruitful and efficacious, and it would do everything is supposed to do as they follow your words, as they trust in your wisdom, as they submit themselves to your terms. So Jesus again, thank you for communication. Thank you for the gift it is to speak and understand words. May our words bring glory to you in life to one another. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, thanks for joining us. I want to give you a quick reminder. We're going to be talking about communication for the rest of the month. Each one of these episode is released early to our Patreon, supporters and also get free access to all kinds of online content, eCourses, you can get some free rings, free books. If you want to be a part of that, just go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. You can learn everything you need to know there. You can sign up for one of the tiers there. We would love to have you as part of our core community. [Patreon.com/fierce marriage](https://patreon.com/fierce marriage).

All right. That episode I think is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: All right. *[Ryan laughs]*

Selena: My goodness. Just say it again.

Ryan: I got ahead of myself.

Selena: Slow down.

Ryan: This episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:54:07] <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

- **[00:13:33]**
 - Scripture references:
 - James 1:19, ESV

- **[00:32:52]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 12:18
 - Proverbs 17:27
 - Proverbs 18:2

- **[00:46:08]**
 - Scripture references:
 - I John 3:18
 - Philippians 3:12

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