

DEALING WITH SELECTIVE HEARING

<https://fiercemarriage.com/dealing-with-selective-hearing>

[00:00:00]

Selena: As a refrain before this episode, I was thinking about how it is such a gift to, one, be able to interact and communicate directly with our King, the creator of the universe, God, and two, that He hears us. And not just how we think He's hearing us, but He hears all of us entirely. He's not selective in what He hears from us.

Ryan: And the reason we're kind of marveling at that is because this episode is all about selective hearing. A few episodes back, we talked about a time, and we'll rehash it a little bit here today, where we had an argument that I think we're currently kind of at an impasse still, just because we're learning to understand one another in different ways. But we had kind of put this on our radar. Like sometimes we hear what we want to hear. Even more than that, we internalize what we believe to be valid when our spouse talks.

And what you're saying is, as we were praying before this, you're just thankful that God is not tuning us out if we don't pray, or if we pray in any way that offends Him. Which I'm sure aside from His grace, *[chuckles]* we can't help but offend the righteous, Holy God of creation.

Selena: Right. But He knows the motivations behind our prayers, and so He's not just... I mean, I just think of our 4-year-old or even our one-and-a-half-year-old, who's just... you know, they want mine, mine, mine. They just want whatever they see and they petition for it so much. I get annoyed in my human self, but God does not, right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: He doesn't just say, "Okay, she just wants this, and this is all I'm hearing. She actually wants more."

Ryan: And the reason for that is so profound. It's not just that God can see the deeper better places in our hearts, it's that he sees Christ covering us, and He sees the righteousness of Christ. And Christ is there at the throne contending for us and making our prayers right before the righteous Father. So there's a very profound thing there.

So we're going to talk through how Jesus is the perfect model for even our listening and our hearing of one another. Hopefully, you learn something. We're going to talk through three levels of selective hearing and give you some

tangible ways to work through each one if you find yourself in a particular level. So we will see you on the other side.

[00:02:23] <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.

[00:02:54] <podcast begins>

Ryan: Full disclosure, this is actually our first episode being recorded in our new headquarters. In other words, we moved. We moved four miles down the road. God has been so gracious. I think we'll probably share the full story with our Patreons because it is a very personal story. But the short of it is here we are. You might hear an echo because the office is still empty right now.

Selena: There's no rags on the floor. There's nothing observing the sound.

Ryan: Except for the microphone, which is getting all the sounds from... But that being said, man, we are just so thankful for this era that we're entering into as a family. If you hear that echo, just remember God's grace in the echo. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So speaking of echoes and listening and hearing things, that's what this episode is all about is selective hearing. So where this came from, and I

mentioned in the intro a little, is I had come home, I was on a daddy-daughter date with our middle daughter, Clementine, and I was just having a great time. And I just also was getting over this feeling really kind of yuck and dealing with my own... I don't know. What's the word? Not mortality, but my own limits as a human being. I have this body that is this flesh that is ultimately pretty fragile, pretty weak.

And I had some thoughts that were... I would say from a darker side of the spectrum, although I was having a great time. They didn't come from a place of despair. But I had these thoughts. Should I just share the thoughts or no? I don't know. I don't know. I think it's probably still too raw for Selena.

Selena: I mean, they are your thoughts. *[both laughs]* And now everybody is wondering.

Ryan: This will leave you titillated. Maybe we'll share with our Patreons. *[laughs]*

Selena: Maybe we'll share in five episodes or four. Nice. Guys, keep listening.

Ryan: Anyway, the point is I had come home, I showed this off to Selena, I was like, "Hey, this is kind of a funny thing. I had these dark thoughts, although here's why they're not dark thoughts." And you're like, "What? You had dark thoughts?" And I was like...

Selena: No, the words you said indicated like you had dark thoughts.

Ryan: And I was like, "Yeah." But what I tried to say was that [00:05:00] they weren't actually coming from that sort of place. The point is you heard the one phrase and everything else I said around it that you are impervious to. It didn't matter what I said.

Selena: Because the phrase said a lot. It's not selective hearing. If that's not what you meant, then maybe that's not what you should have said.

Ryan: But I prefaced it with this: "I don't want to make this a big thing."

Selena: That feels like a disclaimer.

Ryan: It is a disclaimer because I'm trying to tell you like...

Selena: Still work in [inaudible].

Ryan: Okay, here's an example. If you said, "I fell down," if you think, "what did you fall off? A 100-foot cliff or did you trip on the sidewalk?" You'd have to qualify

the statement and say, "No, don't worry about it. I just tripped on the sidewalk, I'm fine. Scuffed up my knee, I'm fine." Or if I said, "Yeah, I fell off a cliff that was 100 feet tall, and I'm mortally wounded, I'm dying," that's a different... you have to learn to weigh those things differently. The preface matters. That's what I'm trying to say.

Selena: But I experienced the weight of words at a lag. So then when it hits me, and I get all the thoughts and everything, sort of I have a moment that I'm not dealing with other people and not being distracted, but in the best way of taking care of our family, when I have that moment in between, I'm just doing something with my hands and I'm in the kitchen or whatever, it's like, "Oh, he said this. Did he mean this? I feel like this. Oh, no, he definitely meant that. Probably."

Ryan: I'm fine with that as long as you take the other words that I say as well, and also mull those over.

Selena: I definitely try.

Ryan: And that's why we're talking about selective hearing. *[chuckles]*

Selena: It's not selective.

Ryan: Okay. We're going to get into the different levels I think.

Selena: Now it's competitive. *[laughs]* There's three levels of selective hearing that we're going to talk through today. They vary obviously from low intensity to high intensity. I think you're going to hear us process in real-time.

We're also going to look at scripture and what it says about... you know, it doesn't have the words "selective hearing," but it does talk about how we are to approach each other as believers and being in Christ. What does that mean? How did Christ model how we should communicate with each other and listen wholeheartedly.

Ryan: That'd be great. That'd be great. First, let's do some little bit of housekeeping. If you haven't yet, please pause this episode real fast, take 30 seconds, leave a rating and a review in your podcast app. It would mean that the world to us. It helps others who are on the fence about diving into this content. And if you've listened to any number of years or a number of episodes, you'll know we do our best. We're not perfect, but we do try to point people to Christ, and we point them to the truth in Scripture, not just what Ryan and Selena think is right and true.

So by leaving a rating and a review helps get that message, not Ryan and Selena, but the message of the gospel in the marriage life. It gets that into more people's ears and into their heads, and into their hearts, and into their lives. So ratings and reviews are more than just little token things that matter. So thank you in advance if you've done that or are planning on doing that.

Secondly, we mentioned our patrons a few times. I'll make this really fast. But our Patreon community is just people that have joined us in a deeper way to be on mission. That comes in the form of partnering with us financially from \$2 a month on up. There's different rewards. We get we do early releases there. Now that we're finally moved, we're going to do some live kind of Q&A stuff there. Just live interaction stuff just exclusive to that community. You can be a part of that. Just go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. All one word. You can read all about it there. There's some really good kind of upsides to being a part of that community too. You're not just giving, We're hoping that you're also getting a lot from that community, from that experience. And that's it for now.

We mentioned this one specific instance in our recent past where this sparked the idea of selective hearing. I told Selena a few days after, I was like, "We should talk about selective hearing." And you're like, "Did I inspire this podcast episode?" *[laughs]*

Selena: It feels very me inspired. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I also do my own share of selective hearing. But here's another category of selective hearing just to get us all thinking around these terms is not internalizing encouragement. I think that's really where this hit home for me. Because you tend to be really critical.

Selena: This is where I lead the charge here, people. The second way.

Ryan: You can really be critical of yourself and you hear the voices of critics very loud.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And then you take that and you run with it and you try to please the critics in your head.

Selena: I don't know why all the time, people. I'm not a counselor of myself. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I think a lot of people struggle with this. I'm more of the school of thought that I don't care what anyone thinks. *[both laughs]*

- Selena:** Opposites attract. Opposites attract.
- Ryan:** I care what some people think. I care what our listeners think. But if they're not invested, they don't know us, then I'm like, "You know what? You can have your opinion. I don't really care about it." Unless you make a good point, then I would hope that I could hear [00:10:00] that good point and change and hope the Holy Spirit would help me do that. That's not to say that like I'm... That has its own downside. I'm not saying like, "Yay, I got it figured out, Selena doesn't." But I think at this point we're going to use you as the example just because you...
- I can encourage you and say, "Listen, you're the most amazing wife, mother, friend that a man could ask for. Thank you, I love you. You're the best." And you'd be like, "Great, thanks. Awesome." And then I'll be like, "Why is my underwear not in the drawer?" And you'd be like, "I'm a horrible person," and you get really upset." Then that compounds on all the other stuff you've heard. By the way, that's one of our ongoing struggles. So I'm not trying to be misogynistic. *[both laughing]* It's not being misogynistic. I'm just saying that's an ongoing struggle of ours, particularly the underwear piece. Anyway.
- Selena:** So I bought like 30 packs, *[laughing]* so he's never without. It's his problem, not mine. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** In our home, I'm not saying this has to be in every home, but in our home, Selena is the keeper of the wardrobe.
- Selena:** I don't do it well, people. There's a lot of laundry.
- Ryan:** I don't care. You won't hear me complain about it until right out the shower and there's no underwear to be found. Then I might say something. Anyway.
- Selena:** You are allowed that I suppose. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** That's what we're getting at. Like thinking those terms of in your own marriage, how do you tend to be a selective hearer. I think they probably would fall into one of these three types. And we're just going to do a quick overview right now. Do you want to dive into this?
- Selena:** Yeah. I was just thinking really quickly about love languages, and then selective hearing. So maybe not love languages in the love languages aspect, but thinking how do I process feeling valued? And you say I don't internalize encouragement, for whatever reason. Is that a way that I feel appreciated or that you feel like I should feel appreciated?

- Ryan:** Hmm, that's a really good point.
- Selena:** That was the question that was in my head.
- Ryan:** I hadn't thought of it.
- Selena:** I'm not being defensive. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** That's a really valid point. Because for me, word, your words, in particular, I just said, I don't care about opinions that... *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** I know you care about mine.
- Ryan:** But your opinion matters to me so much. So if I hear your opinion is low or high of me, that matters. I guess maybe I'm projecting on to you and saying, like, "I'm telling you you're awesome. Believe me that you're awesome." And you're saying, "Words do hold up a lot of weight when it comes to how I feel loved." Words do hold a lot of weight when it comes to how you feel criticized. Right?
- Selena:** Yeah. So when you serve me, when you go out of your way to be thoughtful about something, and it's like you took your time and energy that I know is super valuable, and you put it towards me, that speaks volumes. I understand that more clearly. Anyways, that's just some side note thoughts that I think would contribute to this conversation and maybe something to talk about with your spouse. But the problem with selective hearing, you said there's three different types kind of going to quote-unquote, "light" and then quote-unquote, "heavy."
- So a light way of being selective in your hearing is kind of the I'm distracted by visual overload, I just kind of...
- Ryan:** That has a clinical term. It's called inattentive deafness. We'll get into what exactly that means. Well, no, I'll say right now because then we'll talk through how to kind of break out of this. We're going to first present a biblical view of this and then we'll talk through how to break out of these.
- The inattentive deafness is basically you're so distracted. When there's a lot of visual stimulus coming in, there's a way we route our attentional energy into interpreting the visual stimuli. So we don't hear things. So if your spouse is watching the game, or they're playing a video game, or they're on their phone, or doing anything with their eyes, and you're trying to get their attention, that's called inattentive blindness. And we call that the light

version of it because usually, it's kind of just in the moment. There's no nefarious or underlying...

Selena: It's a quick fix...

Ryan: ...bitterness causing...

Selena: ...kind of putting your phone down, or "Hey, look in my eyes," like we say to our little kids.

Ryan: And it could be heavier in that if you have somebody who's severely addicted to video games and he can't pull his eyes away from it—I say "his" because most of the time it's guys—you can't get him to just care about you enough, that can get heavier. So you kind of have to sift through these a little bit.

Medium is the next one. This is light, medium, and heavy. It could be small, medium, and large. It can be tall, grande, and venti. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Venti.

Ryan: Okay. Medium selective hearing is...

Selena: This is probably where we fell.

Ryan: Yes. And it's during conflict you would cherry-pick things.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So you hear something that they're saying... and this is kind of the classic...

Selena: This is what you felt. I didn't feel like this. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: It's kind of a classic like you hear to respond instead of hearing to understand.

Selena: Right. Hearing and listening to [00:15:00] find agreement first and say, "Okay, yes, we are on the same page with this, but I'm not hearing you correctly."

Ryan: It's a little bit more nefarious and that you're just trying to win the argument regardless of the true nature of what your spouse is trying to say. You just want to come out on top. That can be problematic, obviously. And it does shut down communication because your spouse feels like no matter what they say, you're just going to use it against them. You're going to turn into ammo and fire back.

Selena: Yeah. This is interesting. I think there could be a 1, a 1 (a), a 2, a 2 (a). There could be a little middle part to these, because the third one... So the medium, like you said, is selective hearing during conflict. But I think you and I kind of hovered between two and three of the heavy, which is "I don't trust your words. You're telling me these things, but I don't trust them." And for whatever reason, if we need to dive into those, then we will, but "I don't trust your words."

Ryan: And that's why it's selective hearing is I hear what you're saying but I'm not internalizing it because I feel like you're just giving me lip service right now. And that's why I can hear the words, but I don't hear the meaning.

Selena: I don't trust those words, yeah.

Ryan: And I don't internalize the meaning as true.

Selena: Well, we may not even interpret the right meaning of the words, right? And so then we don't trust it because there's a lot of maybe connotation, or there's just bad past or history that's happened when...

Ryan: And we'll get into the roots of that. I won't jump the gun there. But here's the takeaway. So we talked to the three types: light, medium, heavy. The end result, this was the epiphany for me, is it doesn't matter. Whatever you're facing in terms of that spectrum, the end result is the same, is that you're not communicating well and therefore your marriage won't grow toward health. Instead, it'll gravitate toward dysfunction.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: You use this great example. Do you want to share the IV example, which I found very apropro [Selena chuckles] just because we're dealing with a lot of stuff in the new house?

Selena: New house? Our old house has this wall of IV in between... It's kind of [inaudible]. And, you know, it's really easy to deal with until it's not because it just glows on everything. You don't have to do anything to make it glow. It just takes over. Which is kind of like how we communicate with each other. If we're not listening, we're doing a selective hearing thing, it's just like the IV. It just continue to eat away at whatever the structure is, is going to take over.

Ryan: And overcome it.

Selena: Right.

- Ryan:** And then when it comes time to finally do the labor to tame it again, it takes a lot of energy.
- Selena:** It's a lot. Yes.
- Ryan:** It has taken energy for that IV to glow, but it's not energy that we're putting there. And the thing is, is our sin nature makes us drift toward dysfunction and not drift towards health.
- Selena:** I would say, yes, I'm dysfunction to being pride, fits of anger flaring up, all of those things.
- Ryan:** So we want to ask an interesting question. And if you were to do topical study in Scripture, or go to your concordance and look up the term "selective hearing," you would find zero results. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** Are you speaking out of experience?
- Ryan:** Well, I actually didn't even try that to be honest. But I know enough to know that that probably wouldn't come up in that exact phrase. So you have to think thematically through Scripture, think through the heart of what selective hearing is, like what's happening in the human dynamic.
- Selena:** That's such a good example of just not selective hearing right there. Right? You're not just taking verses out of context and cherry-picking, right?
- Ryan:** Oh, so good. That is what cherry-picking is. I mean, we talked about that as the medium one. But we do that with Scripture, too. We hear what we want to hear and we make it about us. And it's not about us, it's about Jesus. It's about God and His story for His redemption.
- Selena:** Amen.
- Ryan:** We put ourselves in the story. And we do that in selective hearing, insert ourselves and what our spouse is saying instead of saying, "What did they mean?" In the scriptural context, what is the text saying to who... the author when they wrote it, who are they talking to and why were they saying this?
- Selena:** It feels like you're pushing the point right now. *[chuckles]* Maybe I'm insecure because it's a real truth that I probably hear in our...
- Ryan:** No, honestly, I'm in the Old Testament interpretation class right now. And that's what the whole thing. *[both laughs]* So that's...

- Selena:** So you're saying it's the Holy Spirit is talking to me now.
- Ryan:** That's exactly right. *[laughs]* You're welcome. What does the Bible say about this?
- Selena:** I love you.
- Ryan:** You did a little bit of study on this.
- Selena:** I did. You and I were talking that Jesus hears things perfectly. We do not. He hears things perfectly. So how does the gospel bear weight in how we hear...
- Ryan:** That's a big... Sorry.
- Selena:** ...and listen to our spouse.
- Ryan:** That's a huge statement. Jesus hears things perfectly. What do you mean by that?
- Selena:** I mean that when I am praying and talking to the Lord, He is not hearing what I may be even trying... what I'm saying as much as He is probably knowing the place of [00:20:00] my heart and the steps that He is sanctifying me in. Does that make sense?
- Ryan:** Yeah. So He knows your full context.
- Selena:** He knows the full context.
- Ryan:** He knows everything that's going on.
- Selena:** Beginning, the middle, the end. All of it. So that perfection of Him hearing all of it and then me in this moment, I can't weigh that. But what can I do? Well, if Jesus is the way, the truth, and life. I can look at the life of Christ, I can look at who He was. In Philippians 2, we see... it's highlighting the humility of Christ and His examples—Christ's example of humility. Paul, who wrote Philippians, said in verse 2, "Complete my joy..." Sorry. I'm going to start in the first verse because it's just so...
- Ryan:** Yeah, go for it.
- Selena:** "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one

mind." So, first of all, that just right there, selective hearing means there's some sort of division. There's an A and a B, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: You're only hearing one of two. So we're seeing this here, like, "Be encouraged, be of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." I know there's context to that, but I do think it does flow into this idea of...

Ryan: Sort of spirit of mutual endearing. Like you're saying you're valuable. Therefore, I'm going to value you over myself, my own interests.

Selena: Yes. And verse 5, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So we look at those verses, we see that Paul is trying to encourage the oneness, the unity, the lack of division. He wants that. And he's saying, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition." Those are the key words that we want to see here.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: But in humility. So the selfish ambition or conceit. Can we even listen to our spouse talking without some agenda, without selfish ambition or conceit? No, we struggle because we are broken, because we are still in this fallen sin nature that God is sanctifying us out of. So every time we have a fight, and every time we struggle with not hearing fully, that is an opportunity for us to grow in that ability to be like Christ.

What does that mean? That means we can learn to be humble. We can take the humble route. We can see that Christ being born in the likeness of men, talk about humility, God coming to us, and He didn't count it something... He didn't count equality with God, which we often try to take that prideful path of, "You know what? I'm better than you. I'm smarter than you." We may not say it like that, but we fight like that with our spouse.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: So being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. So when we have to die to ourselves in these conversations, we are emulating Christ in a lot of ways when we don't pick up that argument, cherry-pick argument of "well, you just said this."

Ryan: Can you imagine if Jesus did that...

Selena: Oh.

Ryan: ...when He is communicating?

Selena: Destroyed. Done! *[chuckles]*

Ryan: We read this with our girls just this morning.

Selena: John?

Ryan: Yeah, in John 16. It's the part where he says, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." He's telling the disciples, "I'm going to send a helper. I'm going to be gone for a while, but then a little while will pass and I'll be back." And they're like, "What? What do you mean? What do you mean?" And he doesn't throw that in their face. He says, "I know what you're thinking. I know that you're worried. I'm going to give you comfort."

Or anytime he talks to somebody, I'm thinking of like Zacchaeus or... I forget his name but the leper that he tells us to go jump in... Is that the name

Selena: Barnabas?

Ryan: I don't remember. Okay, I don't remember. Somewhere early in John. *[both chuckles]* But he sees through the arguments. Especially the Pharisees will come to him and try to catch him in a lie or catch him in some sort of bad doctrine just to give him a gotcha moment. And He just sees right through it. So what you're bringing to light here is, Paul is saying, just as Christ humbled Himself to taking on flesh, to being equal with God did not see equality with God the thing to be grasped, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: He humbled himself. In that same way, humble yourselves to each other, even to the point of [00:25:00] self-sacrifice. If it came down to it, yes, I would die for you. *[Selena chuckles]* I would die for you. I would. At least I hope and I'm pretty sure that I would until you are faced with that, and then it's hard to say.

The point is, is that there's days I don't have to die physically for you but I have to die emotionally.

Selena: Yeah, absolutely. We die to our emotions, we die to our responses, our prideful responses, we die to our selfish-ambition. If you go down into verses 14 and 16, Paul writes, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."

So I say, could the argument made—this is me, Selena, not Paul, obviously—that the mark of a fruit-bearing Christian is in fact that they are able to pursue their spouse in their communication by listening wholeheartedly, by listening with humility, by pursuing blamelessness and innocence, and not just giving up or succeeding? But maybe that part of his dying to self, the self-sacrifice of being humble and able to hear and ask questions, not as a response to spark more division and flames and fire and just arguing, but to actually get to the heart of what the conflict is about, what you're hearing, what we're saying.

Ryan: I want to make a quick point here, because Paul is writing a letter to the church in Philippi. So yeah, we can take these words and say, "Okay, let us do these things without grumbling or complaining and be blameless..."

Selena: Right. There's context.

Ryan: No, no. There's context but I don't think you're forsaking the context. I'm saying that he's talking to a church and what is the household but a mini representation of the church, in that you and I are brother and sister in Christ, I am the head of this household, you are my helper. We see Christ is the head of the church, the Holy Spirit is the helper of church. We have the little disciples—our children. So we're a little micro version of the big C Church. Even of our local congregation, our local church.

So he's talking about how they are to deal with one another. This is the same Paul who wrote the letter to the Ephesians, saying, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church." That's not a big stretch to say that we are to act as the church is called to act among other church members. You and I, Selena, are church members in our little mini family church. Right?

Selena: Right.

- Ryan:** It's a faithful way to look at it. So when we love each other in this way, we are internalizing in a healthier without making the scripture about us, recognizing that Paul is talking to all believers here.
- Selena:** Right. And I think it honestly expands our knowledge or expands our perspective of it when he says, "...without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world by holding fast to the word of life..." Again, I'm arguing that the way we listen and how we communicate with our spouse should be one that others see as a light and see, "Wow, there's really struggle through some of this. Wow, I feel like I would have walked away from my spouse by then. Wow, they're still pushing through. That's awesome." Like, why? Why can you still continue to listen to each other, to come to the table, to not just grumble about every tiny little thing? You know that couple that you invite over and try not to. They grumble all the time, or they're at each other's throat, and you're just like, "Ah."
- Ryan:** You can tell there's tension.
- Selena:** Right. Again, this is not just about us. But this is about God being glorified in the way that we live, even in so little thing that doesn't seem little as listening to each other wholeheartedly.
- Ryan:** That's awesome. I want to do a quick recap and then we're going to get into how to overcome each selective hearing habit. The recap is that we have this tendency to hear things selectively. And that selectiveness, in a thematic way, comes from a lack of humility. Christ is a perfect example of a humble servant leader, who has lowered Himself in a way to love with complete humility, complete genuineness. We see Paul calling us into that same level of self-sacrifice, self-denial, and especially in terms of how we relate to one another.
- Selena:** And we can do this, not just on our own, but because of Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Specifically, Selena, you touched on this at length, so we won't have to rehash it, but do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, [00:30:00] but in humility, count others more significant than yourself. That is the crux of the biblical case for learning how to not selectively hear one another, to count one another as more valuable than yourself or more... what does he say? As more significant than yourself. That's where we talk about how generosity multiplies itself. If I'm generous in this way to you and you're generous in this way to me, what happens? We have this growing body of generosity and understanding and mutual affection that continues to turn around and grow and be stirred and not die.

- Selena:** And I would like to say something to that point. That if you are the one that's continually pouring out, continue to pour out because it will not be ignored, it will not go unseen I think by your spouse.
- Ryan:** Wow. Paul says this in chapter 3 of Philippians in verse 12. "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." A lot of Paul's language is around perseverance and running the race, knowing that the resurrection of your soul is complete, but your bodily resurrection is yet to come. You're pressing onto something bigger. And that's a well that will never dry up if you're looking to Christ. So you can continue to pour out, even when you feel like your effort is in vain. Doing so is a humble act because you're trusting that God...
- Selena:** Our of trust, yeah.
- Ryan:** You're trusting and you're valuing your spouse, even though they clearly aren't valuing you the same way. That's humility. That's what Christ did for us.
- Selena:** It's modeling Christ.
- Ryan:** And it's so easy to sit here on this podcast and say that, so please don't hear us glossing over it. But please just hear the truth in that.
- Selena:** There is weight in the words, yeah.
- Ryan:** There's weight there. So we don't mean to gloss over your situation. Let's get into the end of the weeds of each one of these.
- Selena:** So we wanted to recap the light, the medium, and the heavy. The light is that inattentional deafness. That's the term you used. So just overly distracted.
- Ryan:** So how do we overcome each one?
- Selena:** Right. Some steps I think to begin that.
- Ryan:** Here's some really tangible steps, you guys. And a lot of these will be intuitive. So don't hear this and say, "Oh, yeah, I know what they're talking about." Take this as a reminder if you already know this stuff and a call to action for you as a spouse.
- Selena:** Share with your spouse. If you feel so, *[chuckles]* It's fine.
- Ryan:** So much of marriage ministry is very intuitive. But if you're in a log jam, you need someone like us to come along and help break free the log jam so then

the river can start to flow again, and take this as maybe we're plucking a few logs out of the jam for you. So hopefully, you can get this going and open up communication in your marriage.

The light selective hearing would be distracted, unintentional deafness. So how do we overcome that? Well, simply turn stuff off. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Drop stuff. Put it away.

Ryan: Put your phone down, reduce the stimuli in your life, sit alone in a quiet space for more than three minutes together. If you're the one that tends to be more distracted... Selena and I kind of ebb and flow in this. Like there's times when I'm super distracted by my phone. For me, my big problem is businessy stuff. So like checking email, checking performance when we... Like, how's the podcast doing? How are all the different metrics?

Selena: Yeah, just checking that. It's like walking the fence line of your property or something and you're kind of just like, "Okay, where's the holes? What's going on here?"

Ryan: That's a great analogy. I'm going to use that.

Selena: You're welcome.

Ryan: It's good. For you, you tend to like at night when we're hanging out and it's like ton of downtime, and you're kind of off the clock because you're a mom.

Selena: Because I never look at social media during the day unless I'm selling something or meeting a mom or something. I tend to...

Ryan: What do you mean selling? Like something from our house? Selling essential oils? *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Sorry. No, like stroller pieces. You wouldn't go there.

Ryan: That's wrong. Don't hear me. Don't selectively hear me. *[Selena laughs]* So anyway, that's how we tend to ebb and flow and kind of remind each other. So, for the listener, the one who tends to be distracted, prioritize whenever your spouse speaks above whatever thing you're doing. Again, obvious...

Selena: Well, that's cue. I mean, you got to have some cues. If you're missing the queues, then your spouse is going to get frustrated with you and you shouldn't be surprised.

- Ryan:** But if you're oblivious to it? They're not.
- Selena:** Right. Pick up on the cues. Perk your ears. The only way we can continue to be sharp with our ears and our listening is to not dull our senses.
- Ryan:** So that's for the listener. And that's fine. For the speaker—so we have a speaker and a listener—still be slow to speak. All right. Because you have some folks that are prone to using a ton of words that maybe aren't necessary, and that that's why there's a selective hearing happening because there's always noise. So you start to tune out the noise. So speaker, still be slow to speak like in Scripture, and choose your words wisely without inhibiting your communication. Like if you need to talk to connect, do it. [00:35:00] But just be wise in it.
- We said that we had this conversation over lunch today. I can't just have word vomit on you all the time and then expect you just to always be able to clean it up.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** I need to be considerate of you too in the words that I use. You're called to listen, but that doesn't mean that I'm supposed to subject you to everything that I can possibly throw at you. So there's wisdom on both sides.
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** All right.
- Selena:** There's blessing and restraint, I think.
- Ryan:** Yes. And there's freedom and discipline. There's freedom and discipline.
- Selena:** The medium, the middle would be selective hearing during conflict or cherry-picking. Like we were talking about kind of taking things out of context and not hearing the whole... I think listening to understand and not just to respond. So finding that listening, finding that place of agreement, trying to understand before... I'm so guilty of this. And I continue to be. I think one telltale sign is that I interrupt. Like I'm so excited to find the agreement sometimes or I just want my thoughts to be heard that I always interrupting you. And you'll be like, "What?" And I'm like, "Why don't you finish your thought?" And you're like, "Because you're interrupting me." I get mad at him for not finishing thoughts. But he must have been interrupted the last 17 years.

- Ryan:** You know what? Next week we're going to talk through deep listening—the art and science of deep listening. Listening to respond is the enemy of deep listening. And usually, people that are listening to respond are the ones to offer the do one, two, and three if you want the fix part. I know we've talked about that a little bit.
- Selena:** It's a sensitive part.
- Ryan:** I know that it's a sensitive topic. Because there is a time to actually offer prescriptions for changing things. But deep listening is not that.
- Selena:** It's hard to identify those times I think.
- Ryan:** Well, and that's why you jump the gun. Like if you interrupt, it's because you're assuming that you know what they are going to saying.
- Selena:** But at what point when people are... Here I go. But at what point are people...
- Ryan:** I got to interrupt. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Like when do you just say enough is enough and you just need to strap on your big girl panties and just deal with some stuff. Do you know what I mean?
- Ryan:** Well, I don't own big girl's panties. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** You don't.
- Ryan:** Sorry.
- Selena:** You barely own underwear, right?
- Ryan:** I own very little clean underwear.
- Selena:** How dare you!
- Ryan:** That's a fact.
- Selena:** No, it's not. If you'd hook up our washer and get the drier going.
- Ryan:** We talked about this. *[Selena laughs]* It'll happen. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** It'll happen.
- Ryan:** Now we're waiting for the gas guy. Gasman.

- Selena:** Gasman. *[both laughs]* ... to come and hook up our dryer. So, yeah.
- Ryan:** Okay. So how do we get through this? Listener tend not to respond. We talked about that. I think humility is the biggest piece of this. Like, seek not your own... I keep forgetting the words that Paul use. But do nothing from selfish ambition. Vain conceit is what I think the NIV Version says. Vain conceit in and of itself it's empty. But instead, listen with humility and genuine desire to know one another. So this is again, combating the tendency to selectively hear to interpret based on what I want to interpret.
- Selena:** Right. I think as a married couple too, knowing each other, we can call each other out lovingly when we're doing this even which hard to do.
- Ryan:** That is wisdom and tact and timing.
- Selena:** I feel like you're pretty good about that. It's usually after the fact that you can be like, "Hey, you know when you were talking about that? I think you were being little uncharitable."
- Ryan:** I don't want to jump into a hurricane when it's raining on the front door. I'll let the dust settle a little bit, and then I'll throw a rock at the hurricane from two feet away.
- Selena:** You know me too well.
- Ryan:** You don't poke a hornet's nest.
- Selena:** This is me, people. God is sanctifying me, even in this podcast.
- Ryan:** Some really practical ways to begin to speak humbly to each other in those moments and to listen with humility instead of selectively is to respond with the verification statements. Things like "I hear you saying this. What I hear you saying is," or "what I'm hearing is..."
- Selena:** "Is this what you mean?"
- Ryan:** "Is this what you mean?" And actually ask them what they mean instead of doing the opposite, which is just you're saying it's just what you mean, but really, you're throwing it back in their face. There's a way to do that. Hoping all things. That's 1 Corinthians 13. We talked about this a lot. But love hopes all things. You're expecting the best.

- Selena:** Right. Your spouse isn't just being combative to try to win all the time. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah, instead of assuming they're out to get you, assume that they love you.
- Selena:** That's hard to do sometimes because... *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** They haven't built that trust, yes. But we can tend to do that if we're in a defensive posture, even if they have earned that trust. Then we can start making them the enemy. And I say this to you all the time, but I'm not the enemy. I'm on your side. And it takes some time for you to believe it.
- Selena:** Yeah, because it doesn't feel like you're on my side sometimes. *[laughs]* It's like you're on their side. Whoever "they" are. They're just not on my side. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Another really tangible one. We have a whole episode on manipulation tactics. [00:40:01]
- Selena:** Oh, man.
- Ryan:** So avoid manipulation tactics. There's hundreds of these, you guys. There's so many manipulation tactics. You can't keep them all straight.
- Selena:** And you may not even be aware of doing them because you are always... This is your lack of tact. Sometimes you're like, "That's a manipulation strategy." And I'm like, "I'm not trying to be manipulative." Because I feel like a part of being manipulative is you're actually intentional and maliciously trying to do it. But apparently, you can be manipulative and not intend to be.
- Ryan:** Well, it can become so homey to be there. Like it can make so much sense to respond in that way and you think it's fine. And that doesn't change the fact that it's still a tactic. It just changes whether you believe it's bad or not. *[both laughs]* So go back and listen to that episode. It's Manipulation Tactics in Marriage. I'll just do a search for that.
- And then non-defensive listening. It's hard to defuse your defenses in those moments. But if you hear your spouse saying, just try to take a deep breath, de-escalate. That's a big piece of defusing hot argument.
- Selena:** So take control of your emotions and know that you're feeling them and just let them be and don't respond out of them is what you're saying.

Ryan: Right. And then that takes being other-focused. Like thinking, why is he or she responding this way?

Selena: It takes practice and listening to the Holy Spirit.

Ryan: "What is going on in his or her head that she is... I know that she loves me. I'm very upset right now. I get it. But how can I respond in a way that isn't just based on me being upset?" That's easier said than done but that's something to consider.

Selena: Yeah,

Ryan: All right. So let's go on to the next one. The heavy version of selective hearing is "I don't trust your words." This is a huge one. We say it's heavy, because it is. It's very tough to tackle. If there's something that you're struggling with, just prepare at the outset to invest lots and lots of time. It's not something you'll get over in one argument or in one discussion. But here you're stepping your foot on the path to healing in this area. And that looks like this. You're going to have to work to identify why trust has been broken or lost or degraded in your specific relationship or in your life in general. That's a huge, huge topic, you guys. Again, it takes a lot of time.

So here are some things. Again, the big question: why don't you trust your spouse's words? It could be an insecurity and that you're impermeable to their encouragement no matter what they say. You don't trust their words just because you don't believe that you're valuable. If they say you're awesome, you'll think, "Well, that's not true because I'm not awesome" instead of actually internalizing what they say. So there's insecurity there. And that happens a lot, especially if you have hidden sin. We've talked about this.

If you're living in darkness... I'll talk to men right now. If you're hiding some sort of pornography addiction or some sort of thing that you're ashamed of, or even any addiction or some sort of behavioral sin, then whenever your spouse says, "I love you. You're so great," you'll never really believe it because you'll think, "If she just knew this piece of my story, this dark part of my heart, she wouldn't love me. Therefore, she does not love me."

Selena: I think another part of that, a different side of that could be... And I don't feel like I have any hidden sin. I mean, God help me and show me if I do. But for me, I think there's this family of origin piece of maybe either not getting the encouragement or I did, but it felt with light and without weight, because they didn't know. So there's just this mistrust of words that you didn't know me or you didn't... I'm not saying my family, but you don't know the struggles I face, therefore, your words cannot hold weight.

- Ryan:** The problem is, is that's a nonstarter. Like how can I possibly understand your experience?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** I mean, the bottom line is I can't. I can never be you.
- Selena:** Right. And that's where I think, as a male listener...?
- Ryan:** I feel like that's a tactic of the enemy to just shut down communication. And we see that a lot in our society right now...
- Selena:** We do. We do.
- Ryan:** ...in that you can't speak against anyone's lived experience.
- Selena:** And maybe that's where the humility comes in of saying, "Okay, I don't know this, I don't feel this, and I'm not believing this, but I'm just going to humble myself to trust that what Ryan says about me is true."
- Ryan:** We're talking about encouragement.
- Selena:** Right. No, no, no. Yeah, no, no, no. I'm talking totally about encouragement. But I mean, we joked about this at the beginning that you can say these things and I don't... Again, is it a question of me not believing it for insecure purposes or a past experience? Or is it me not receiving it because of it's a love language of some sort? Right. So there's that. I think that it's both and but to how much... I don't know if I can be accurate.
- Ryan:** But your past experience, past trauma could be fueling this lack of ability to trust your spouse. The point we're trying to make here is there's a lot of reasons for that [00:45:00] deep distrust. It could also be fears based on consistently being disregarded or dismissed. If you had continually terrible communication, of course, one of you is going to be like a wounded animal. You're not going to trust the person who's been abusing you.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So that's going to take a two-sided willingness to heal. And we use the word "abuse." I can't say that word without this caveat: that you should not be in any sort of relationship where you are being abused. If you are, get away. Sometimes the best thing you can do is get away, find safety, and then call the authorities if it's a physical abuse, or any sort of authority needed abuse.

That's a terrible way to say that. But if the authorities are needed, call them. That's the way you can love your spouse.

But if there's emotional abuse, things like that, don't let it continue. Get help. Get help. Tell someone. Tell a trusted friend. Tell a pastor. Tell a counselor. Tell a social worker. Tell somebody who can help you step your foot on the path not just in any direction, but toward reconciliation, toward dealing with that in a healthy way. So if that's why your trust is broken, that's why your hearing is so selective, then maybe that's the next step.

The final one is that you could just be a generally mistrustful, suspicious, anxious person. It doesn't matter who says it or what your spouse says, and how often is it. Yeah, generally you're just suspect because think, "Yeah, no, I don't believe you." Of course, we have to pray and ask God to humble us and to not see our own opinion as the only one and the only valid one.

Selena: There's some pride, I think, in there. I say that as one that is probably in that boat slightly. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: So those are maybe some reasons why you might not trust your spouse's words. The point we're trying to make is it does have to be built or rebuilt. And it takes two who are engaged in that process. And that process looks like a lot of talking and getting help as soon as it's needed. Don't try to do it alone. You have to be persistent. So one of the ways you can be persistent in that is to actually set goals and timelines to help you keep you on track. So things like regular trust-building conversations. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Get some friends who they have a rhythm of because they've lacked trust in this area, that they have to have certain types of conversations every other day or so, so that they can begin to create a new culture, a new vocabulary in their relationship, because it was poisoned for so long. And you know what happens? It actually works.

Selena: It does.

Ryan: It actually starts rebuilding trust, because you're investing together, and you're trying and you're learning and you're growing.

Selena: So good. So good.

Ryan: Okay. So, couple's conversation challenge. So you're listening to this, you're thinking, "Man, we selectively hear each other. I feel like I listen to my spouse,

and I only hear parts of what they're saying that are light, some are heavy, some are medium, whatever," how can you move forward? Whether you're listening to this together or alone, I would just say, ask yourself these questions. When I say "ask yourself," I mean actually ask yourself, don't ask your spouse these questions. But go sit with your spouse and then ask yourself these questions of yourself.

Do I selectively listen? Write down your answer. To what level? Light, medium, or heavy? And why? Now talk about your answers to that question. And then this is the important one. How can we begin improving in the areas that we tend to selectively listen? Couple's conversation challenge. It's a challenge, people.

Selena: It's a challenge.

Ryan: It's a challenge. That's our episode for today. I'm going to say a prayer. But I want to do a quick reminder first. We have our new online learning ecosystems called Gospel Centered Marriage. Just go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. That includes a six-week marriage core. That is basically all the foundational things. If we could sit down with you over dinner for like six weeks in a row, these are the conversations we would have with you.

And then we have what's called the Enrichment Library, which actually we just shot two more enrichment videos this week. One of them is... what were they about?

Selena: Marriage and community.

Ryan: Marriage and community. The other one was how to affair-proof your marriage. Man, they were a challenge. I'd say that the affair-proof one was actually challenging to write because it's such a hard topic. But I actually feel like it could be really helpful to a lot of couples.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: But that would be yours. If you are part of the Gospel Centered Marriage online or learning ecosystem, it costs you a little less than a cup of coffee an hour. *[both laughs]* I'm kidding. Actually, it's very affordable. You can go on there and find all the information. But we'd love to have you in there. And we're constantly adding to that.

Those courses we just mentioned will be live for a few weeks, but they will be live in the near future. We're going to have over probably 20 or 30 by the end

of the year, those mini-courses. And our hope is that you just sit down once a month and do one of these mini-courses together. You can do in one sitting. That's the whole goal. So gospelcenteredmarriage.com. [00:50:00] That's the pitch. Selena, do you want to pray for us?

Selena: Sure. God, thank you that you hear us when we pray and you don't just hear parts of us but you created and know us and purposed us for this time. We trust you. We trust your answers. We trust the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts. Father, for those of us that are struggling with communication and struggling with hearing, I pray that you would soften our hearts and you would open our ears, that you would quiet our minds and our emotions. O Holy Spirit, empower us with self-control to put those on the backburner and to actually pursue listening and hearing from our spouse.

I pray that there would be an increased graciousness in each of us to hear, to respond, to seek agreement in response. Thank you for this podcast and all that you are doing through it, that it continue to honor and glorify you in the work that happens here. In your name, amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right. Thanks for listening to the Fierce Marriage Podcast. This episode is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:51:13] <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

- **[00:20:29]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Philippians 2, ESV

- **[00:30:49]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Philippians 3:12

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