

ALL ABOUT BOUNDARIES

<https://fiercemarriage.com/all-about-boundaries>

[00:00:00]

Selena: So, we've asked ourselves the question: why don't we have boundaries? Why do we not have boundaries? We all would agree the boundaries are good when they're motivated in love and by God. But why do we not have them? And you said there are two reasons why.

Ryan: There's at least two that I found. They're either unclear or unsaid. You either don't know what the boundaries are or you just haven't articulated what they are with enough clarity to be able to actually see them. The second one is they're unenforced. Either unclear, unsaid, or unenforced. And so, I don't know. I think a lot of couples struggle with both aspects of that. Because, like you said, I think everybody can agree boundaries are good, they are proper, they are good for health in your marriage, and they are useful. As we typically say, they're useful for keeping good things in, bad things out. But how do we go about enforcing these boundaries and clarifying what our boundaries are, and articulating what our boundaries are? That's exactly what this episode is all about. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:06] <Intro>

Selena: Welcome to the Fierce Marriage podcast where we believe that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and refuses to give in.

Ryan: Here, we'll share openly and honestly about all things marriage—

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

Ryan: Priorities—

Selena: Purpose—

Ryan: And everything in between.

Selena: Laugh, ponder, and join in our candid, gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage.

[00:01:39] <podcast begins>

Selena: April Fools on us. We already recorded this episode literally like five minutes ago, and somebody didn't check my mic. So it sounds like I'm talking in the room somewhere else.

Ryan: It's your mic, not mine. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Actually, you're the controller.

Ryan: You should be responsible for your own mic.

Selena: You're the controller.

Ryan: I just feel like you're encroaching on my boundaries of personal space right now and my heart. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: So we are re-recording it, which is probably good.

Ryan: It's April 1st too when we're recording this, *[Selena chuckles]* so it will come out in like five days.

Selena: It's the April Fools for us.

Ryan: We pranked ourselves. Frank Sinatra.

Selena: Frank Sinatra.

Ryan: Call me Frank Sinatra.

Selena: Strap and chords and things. Anyways.

Ryan: So it's all about boundaries. This actually is the kickoff episode to a series of week-long series—we'll probably cover them over the next three to four weeks, or two to three weeks rather—on boundaries and the importance of boundaries, what they should be, what that could be, how to enforce them all around marriage, and namely Christian marriage rooted in the Gospel, rooted in a biblical worldview. So today is kind of an overview of what the function of boundaries are, what kind of the philosophy and the form of what boundaries typically look like.

Selena: And don't worry, folks, we're going to have a whole episode on boundaries and in-laws.

- Ryan:** That's true.
- Selena:** So just buckle up. That's not this episode, but it is definitely coming up.
- Ryan:** So as we mentioned in the intro, one of the main reasons boundaries don't work or we fail to have healthy boundaries is because they're either unclear or they're unenforced. So, we're going to give you an overview on what that could look like. Here's the irony here is that we live in a culture that is increasingly completely averse to boundaries. In other words, averse to any sort of limitation on a human...
- Selena:** Unless it's their own. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Right. Unless they're their own boundaries. It reminds me of *[chuckles]* the game show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" It says, "Where everything is made up and the points don't matter." *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Oh, man.
- Ryan:** That's what the culture feels like nowadays is that it doesn't really matter what it is—everything's made up. They're creating their own definitions of everything, a very postmodern. Truth is completely relative. Truth is not absolute except for the truth that truth is not absolute. So it's this ironic kind of hypocritical, and just...
- Selena:** We'll leave it there.
- Ryan:** ...solicitous culture that we live in, *[Selena giggles]* full of fallacies and frustrating things. So as Christian people, it's our job, to know God's Word and to be able to call truth truth and lies lies. And I think that is the very foundation of boundaries. And that's what we're talking about today is how do we view boundaries correctly in light of God's Word, in light of His character, and what He's given us, both in His law, but also in the special revelation in Scripture and Christ Himself. But how do we view those in light of culture and how do we enforce those in our own lives, in our own marriage? Does that make sense?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Okay. Very cool. Real quick before I do that, I'm so encouraged. I'm encouraged for two different reasons. All right. I think it's for the same reason. But two different avenues for the same reason. And it is by you, our beautiful, wonderful listeners. You have been encouraging to us through ratings and reviews. We've gotten some of those recently that have been not so

encouraging [00:05:00] but I'm happy to say that the non-encouraging ones are far outweighed by the encouraging reviews. And the reasons that those matter is because it helps people realize what kind of content they're getting into.

So if you haven't yet, please take today, take a moment, take 30 seconds to leave a rating and a review in your podcast app of choice. That would help us greatly. It also helps future listeners. And you can trust that as long as God allows us to do this podcast, to do this ministry, we'll keep showing up for better or worse, and do our best to point people to Christ and point them to the gospel and remind them who they are in Christ and just how awesome He is and how worthy He is. That's what you can...

Selena: Take that one to the bank.

Ryan: Thank you. Take it to the bank. The second way we have been encouraged is we just closed up our month of March for our new patrons. I think we had over a dozen, I think 15 or so new patrons. If that's you, welcome aboard. I hope you've been enjoying the early releases. We actually are putting on our calendar, some exclusive Zoom conversations with our patrons. *[imitating Hans]* So exclusive. *[Selena laughing]* So exclusive you're only invited if you're a patron. *[both laughs]* That's my Hans voice. So exclusively.

Selena: We joke about that because I think exclusive things are silly.

Ryan: Exclusive things are silly because boundaries matter. But not those ones. *[Selena laughs]* So if you want to be within the patron boundary... *[both laughs]* How's that? You like that one? Segways are my part time job? *[both laughs]*

Selena: You ride Segways.

Ryan: Yeah, I'm a mockup. So what? *[Selena laughs]* The point I'm trying to make is if you want to be part of our patron community, go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. That's patreon.com/fiercemarriage. We just ask you do two things: you pray about it, if God leads you to support the Frederick's Fierce Marriage, everything that we're doing, that you would pray about that. And if God leads you, that you'd go ahead and pull the trigger and do that. And trust. On the other side of that boundary, you will find lots of free goodies, namely books, rings, and even admission into Gospel Center Marriage, our online learning platform that is growing by the week. In fact, next week we're filming three brand new mini-courses. Can you believe that?

- Selena:** Nope. I'm a week-to-week person, sometimes day-to-day. So that's a little overwhelming to hear. But we'll be there. I'll be there with bells on.
- Ryan:** Selena is the person that once you sent her a calendar invite, she accepts it five minutes before the meeting? *[both laughs]* She is that person.
- Selena:** Okay. You have three kids. And tell me after that.
- Ryan:** I do have three kids.
- Selena:** Well... *[both laughing]*
- Ryan:** The point is we would love to have you as one of our patrons and you can be the beneficiary of all the stuff we just talked about.
- Selena:** Are you still talking about this? *[laughs]* We're still talking about Patreon.
- Ryan:** [Patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://patreon.com/fiercemarriage). *[both laughing]* It's important, people. It matters.
- Selena:** All right. I got a quote for you. I got a quote for you from Gotquestions.org. They said, "Healthy boundaries define expectations and show respect for others. Biblically speaking, boundaries are related to self-control. The Bible commands us to control ourselves, whereas our human nature desires to control others." Interesting fact, interesting quote here.
- Ryan:** I'm so intrigued by that, especially given the whole postmodern discussion that we keep touching on on this podcast.
- Selena:** Well, we touch on it because it influences our world and we're learning how to set boundaries to keep worldly influence out, right?
- Ryan:** Okay. Again, I don't want to belabor that point.
- Selena:** It's an easy segue to conversation.
- Ryan:** Segues are my job. *[Selena laughs]* *[Ryan chuckles]*. The point I'm trying to make is everything in our culture is saying like, do not confine me. In other words, I am...
- Selena:** Or conform me.
- Ryan:** Or conform me. ...I am self-defined, self-actualized. I say who I am. And you have to say what I say who I am.

- Selena:** This is not new, people.
- Ryan:** But the irony is, is the more you try to rid yourself of healthy boundaries, the more enslaved you become or the more captured you become to whatever that thing is.
- Selena:** Sin.
- Ryan:** To sin. It's a sin. That's scriptural. I mean, those words, that is Paul talking about being slave to sin, and instead being made alive to Christ. We are made free in Christ. And that comes from the boundary of conforming, of humbling ourselves.
- Selena:** Death to self.
- Ryan:** Death to self. And so, it's just...
- Selena:** Well, it's believing and walking out the fact that Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the boundary. He is the only way to God Himself. There's no other way. We have been given instruction, we have been given truth... not just instruction, but truth in the Bible to follow. And I don't know any other boundary other than that truth of who God is, who we are.
- Ryan:** And it's so funny the popular belief is like, "Hey, whatever works for you is your religion." As long as you don't press it on anyone else, as long as you don't tell anyone else that yours is the only way. Of course, they like Jesus until they read that verse, [00:10:00] that He's the only way the truth and the life.
- Selena:** We like Jesus as a friend; we don't like Him as our King and Savior.
- Ryan:** Yeah, we want Him to be just the guy that kind of walks alongside us instead of the King who's reigning at the throne, right?
- Selena:** Reflecting back to us how we are called to live and showing us the sin that only He can deal with and pull out of us.
- Ryan:** But here's the hypocrisy in that is that when you say that... everyone's view goes, you're basically imposing your own worldview saying, "Listen, your worldview that He's the only way is... my worldview is actually more correct that there's any way and the only way is the any way. Anyway, the point is everybody has some sort of delineation here. Everybody makes delineations. And that gets down to the root of what boundaries are. And we take those routes for granted.

So I think we'll talk through some of the underlying principles that reinforce the existence and the need for boundaries. Let's reiterate though kind of the failure in this. And this is where most couples fall short and why boundaries are so necessary. Why we don't successfully have them is because they're either - what? Unclear?

Selena: They're unenforced.

Ryan: Unenforced.

Selena: Or unsaid. I like this. I like the three. They're like U boundaries. Unclear, unenforced, and unsaid. Because if they're not clear, we can't say them, and therefore we can't enforce them. So they kind of work hand in hand.

Ryan: Yeah, that makes sense. As we're going through this, I just want you to be thinking through those three things. What were you going to say?

Selena: I just think we need to define boundaries a little bit.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: By definition, boundaries are limits. So if you look at a map, you see state lines or you see rivers or something. These are all limits or boundary of some sort, which is a division showing one side and another. The walls are barriers. You know, you said they're meaningful...

Ryan: Right. So, you look on a line on a map, isn't just arbitrary, it means something.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It means this is - what? What's the boundary. This is Scotland, this is England, right?

Selena: Sure. We've been studying American history in our school. So...

Ryan: In our personal lives? *[both chuckles]*

Selena: No, in geography. We've been doing the United States. The Mississippi River is huge as most people know. It divides pretty much the whole country. So seeing that big line on the map, it gives me a sense of where I'm at. If I'm looking at a map or I'm trying to find where I'm at, I look for something that I know, I look for something that I'm familiar with, and I can understand and say, "Okay, I am here, I'm trying to get here. Here's the path forward in that."

- Ryan:** So they're orienting.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Is to help us orient ourselves with reality in real-time and space. This is a revelation. This is good thing we're recording this twice. Because you think about the orienting quality of boundaries and how they help you see up from [inaudible].
- Selena:** Rightly.
- Ryan:** They help you see correctly. Yeah.
- Selena:** The contrast to Jesus saying "I'm the way, and the truth, and the life" is saying that everything else is not. Does that make sense?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** The contrast is...
- Ryan:** Yeah, it's exclusive.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** It's very clear and it's the whole narrow gate thing. There's a right way, there's a wrong way. There are people who will be allowed into heaven, into the eternal glory, and presence of God, there will be people that will be disallowed from that. And that's a boundary. Of course, that grates on our culture, that there are some people that... there is evil and evil will be punished, there is good, and good will be blessed. Now here's the thing is all of us are fallen, all of us fall short of the glory of God, therefore, that's why we have to follow Christ, we have to put our full faith, trust in Him. And that is at the very foundation of who we are as believers, of course.
- So we talked through the faith component of it and the functional aspect of boundaries that keep bad things out, good things in, they delineate, they orient, they're meaningful, they're strong, they're impervious. But what about the philosophy of boundaries?
- Selena:** What do you mean by that?
- Ryan:** Well, I want to *[breathes deeply]* kind of... you can go really deep into this and I think that could be really boring, and we get over our heads really quickly.

But the point I want to make here is that boundaries, by nature, they presuppose a standard. They presuppose or they assume, or they take for granted that there is a standard for goodness, truth, badness, and falsehood.

Selena: Right. A biblical view of boundaries is touch. It's all about self-control. So what are we controlling ourselves from or for? Right?

Ryan: Right. It means that there is a better. There is a standard. There is something better and something worse. There's objectively a thing that is on one side of the boundary and another thing that's on the other side of the boundary. Again, that kind of books against our culture, but we can rest on it. It might sound super simple, but it's important to recognize that reality. That as you talk about boundaries, as we talk about boundaries in marriage and in life, we are presupposed [00:15:00] that there are better realities and there are worse realities.

Selena: Based on God's truth.

Ryan: Based on God's... yeah. And hopefully, we made that case already. But there are better ways to go and worse ways to go; better outcomes, worse outcomes.

Selena: And the thing is I think about boundaries is that sometimes we don't know what's worse because we don't have that boundary. Boundaries are orienting. So if we just call each other names as husband and wife and there's no limits or boundaries on how we talk to each other or about each other, we may not know that this is really destructive to our marriage, to our relationship, to how we think about each other. So until we put that boundary in place and say, "Okay, we're not going to call each other names, we're not going to say these things when we're absent from one another," then we can begin to see the growth and the thriving in that, we can begin to see the good in that.

Ryan: I'll take that even a step further and say we have that boundary, it is orienting, but we only have that boundary because we were able to look at God's word and see Him show us this is what healthy communication looks like...

Selena: God's Word is clarifying.

Ryan: ...this is what listening, speech, awareness, empathy, sympathy, whatever that is. So the point being made that they are orienting, they're important, but they presuppose that there is a right and a wrong, there's a better way. So you have to acknowledge that in your marriage. I mean, you can acknowledge it listening to this, but here's the thing. Do you acknowledge it when you're in the middle of a struggle? When you're in middle of a fight, when you're in the

middle of making a questionable financial decision, when you're in the middle of sexual tension, do you understand acknowledge and articulate and defend the boundaries that are there? Do you say like, "Talking in this way is unhealthy. Therefore, we will not talk in this way." What happens is we don't enforce it.

Selena: Right. Because the moment comes, the emotions are hot and just enthralling, they're taking us over, and we just want to throw all boundaries out, and we want everybody to know it. And we're just going to be loud. Speaking from experience here.

Ryan: I love what you said in the beginning. It's all about self-control. Because a lot of times we know the boundary, we don't enforce it because it just feels better, or it's easier, or it's more expedient to do whatever we want to do...

Selena: Right, boundaries require something of us.

Ryan: ...and throw off that restraint.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And that's not healthy.

Selena: If we can, I would like to jump to what boundaries require of us because I think it'll set us up for talking about them a little bit more in the biblical sense as well. Boundaries require discipline. The word we like to use is probably self-control, I'd say, which is a fruit of the Spirit. We enforce the boundary trusting that the response will promote growth. Disciplining meaning, you know, it's consistent, it's coming back to it. You think of the toddler who's just going to hit that boundary as much as they can and eventually they learn over time that the boundary is immovable, and I need to respect it.

It's like hitting a wall sometimes, literally. If you take your fist and hit a wall, keep hitting it, maybe it's concrete wall, I should say because sometimes people can punch through it. But if it's a concrete wall and you're hitting it, at some point, you're going to realize, "Okay, this is a boundary. I cannot go through anymore." Which is why it requires us to have self-control, to be disciplined. Because growth can only happen when those boundaries are in place. If we have nothing around us, nothing protecting us, nothing driving that growth, we will just continue to go wherever, do whatever, say whatever. And there's no safety in that. There's no assurance or confidence or anchoring in that.

- Ryan:** That's really interesting. So you use the word "discipline." And as you're talking, I kept thinking of the word governance.
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** And that's maybe a little bit too bland of a word. But I think of those mapped... those lines and how there is a governing boundary. This is within the scope and purview of this governance, this government. So we talked about self-discipline. We should talk about self-governance.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** I am adjudicating, *[both chuckles]* if you will, or whatever the term is, I am discerning what is right what is wrong and I'm enforcing that. So, yeah, it does take self-discipline. Now, we have agency and God has asked us and commanded us to live with self-discipline. Read Proverbs. It delineates between the lazy, the slothful person, the diligent person, the wise man and the fool, and so on and so forth.
- Selena:** Governance is a fruit of the Spirit. The self-control is an indicator of the work of Spirit in our lives.
- Ryan:** So this is the first thing. We're going to go through five different things that boundaries require of us. So governance or self-discipline is the first one. The second one is trust and obedience. I love this. Selena, can you expand on this a little bit.
- Selena:** Trusting, being obedient to God will bear fruit. So trust and obedience, they have this type of relationship where I may not trust sometimes as much as I just need to obey. Or I need to obey but it's taking a lot of trust for me to do that. [00:20:00] As you can understand that relationship, right? Maybe I didn't do it justice.
- Ryan:** No, I think they definitely co...
- Selena:** They coexist, but sometimes in different instances, the challenge is more in the trusting versus the obedience. Sometimes it's more in the obedience than the trusting, right? The weight falls to one of those.
- Ryan:** Here's, I think, a poignant *[both chuckles]* application of that, is if you're in a marriage and it feels really hard at the moment, or maybe you're going on six months of we haven't connected or our intimate life is decimated by whatever for whatever reason, and it would be easier to walk away right now. But what keeps you from walking away? Well, there's a boundary around your marriage.

It's called a covenant. And you know in your head, and hopefully in your heart, that it is a God-ordained boundary, a God-designed boundary, not just to trap you in, but to help you, give you a place to flourish, not just so you can be happy. And that's Gary Thomas. He asked the question, and it's this perennial question: what if marriage was not just about your happiness, but it was about your holiness?

Again, boundaries presuppose a good and a bad, a right and a wrong. Not only that. Eternal boundaries presuppose an eternal good, an eternal bad. So the point I'm trying to make is we can judge too hastily the goodness of the boundary based on our immediate result of enforcing that boundary. In the covenant of marriage, if it seems really hard and you're not happy in that marriage, and you forget that marriage is maybe about an eternal good, that could be your sanctification, it could be the sanctification of your spouse, it could be showing you a more vivid picture of Christ's love, a more vivid picture of the gospel. And if you forget that, then you'll be tempted not to enforce that boundary.

So, it takes trust, it takes obedience. And you obey because you trust and you trust in the process, and you pray that God can bring you around to the other side as you conform yourself to His way.

Selena: Often there's a submission piece to this as well. Submitting our own desires, maybe our own emotions that we would rather express in a more explosive way. Submitting and trusting and being obedient, that you know what? I don't have to express that right now. I can trust that God said my anger right now is not going to produce His righteousness. So I'm going to just rest and quiet myself right now.

Ryan: Great. The third thing that boundaries require of us is.... and I love this, Selena. I want to hear you expand on this a little bit with boldness and clarity. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Boldness and clarity. We cannot be wishy-washy about our boundaries, which, again, would enforce us or force us, I guess, to be clear. It forces us to have clarity, it forces our identity to be anchored in Christ, and not in the response of what this boundary is going to cause, the effect that it's going to cause with the people involved. But clarity is an absolute must. And if you can't be clear about a boundary, then you need to go back to the table until it's clear because having something... it's not even a boundary. I would argue it's not a boundary if it's not clear. Wishy-washiness everywhere,...

Ryan: Well said.

Selena: ...then it's not going to help anybody. It's just going to bring harm and confusion and frustration.

Ryan: Yeah. And it's not going to actually do what boundaries are designed to do. And it's to delineate between a right and a wrong...

Selena: Exactly.

Ryan: ...or a better outcome and a worse outcome.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That's why, if you're in a marriage, and say you're on a bad streak of communication, your communication is completely soured, gone toxic, a healthy boundary in that place that's bold and clear would be "I'm not going to allow you to speak to me in a way that is demeaning, that is manipulative." That is, you're not doing that in a way that is 'I gotcha and I'm going to stonewall you.' That's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about understanding with clarity and with boldness that you are a person made in the image of God, have equal value, worth, and importance with your spouse. And there's a certain level of communication that is appropriate in that relationship and there's another part of communication that's inappropriate. So you have to be careful how you enforce these, which we'll talk about at number five here. But the point is, is you have to know what those are so that you can boldly and humbly I would say enforce them.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: Okay. This actually leads to the fourth thing boundaries require of you. And that is vigilance. I think there are times when we feel like we can just enforce this boundary for one... Okay. Here's a clear example. Around pornography. Like if a husband goes to his wife, and says, "I've been struggling with this. I want you to know about it and I want to be [00:25:00] free of this. I'm going to start meeting with my accountability group. I'm going to start getting, you know, we'll have all these transparency measures in place." Okay, good, we've drawn a boundary around this area. That this is okay, this is not okay. Looking at pornography is not okay; being pure is okay. It's within the boundary.

Now, if you don't enforce that boundary and you're not vigilant with it, there's a good chance that boundary won't do any good. So the husband has to enforce it. That's self-governance. And the wife can help in that. Now, I want to be careful. It's not the wife's job to make the husband holy.

- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** It is God's job. But God wants to use us to sanctify one another and to encourage and then help and to edify one another. So those boundaries have to be policed. And they can start to loosen up as the integrity grows. As your neural pathways are rewired, and that addiction loses its stronghold, then you can start to say, "Okay, now maybe you don't have to meet with your accountability group every week. You can meet with them once a month," or "I'm not asking you these hard questions every night. Instead, I'm just asking you once a week."
- Selena:** Right. Because there's growth that has been allowed to happen within the smaller boundaries, which then will extend the boundaries a little bit further. But you can't just send yourself off like, "Okay, we've had one talk, here's the boundary. And now I can have free access to the internet at any time. No questions."
- Ryan:** I would tease that a little. I'll tease this out of your response real fast is that the boundary around something like that is fixed. It's not going to change. My sexual purity and integrity is not going to expand at all.
- Selena:** Sorry, yeah.
- Ryan:** What's going to happen is the vigilance with which I need to guard that boundary is maybe I can lessen up on the vigilance.
- Selena:** Thank you for your clarity. That was good.
- Ryan:** But what you're saying applies in other instances where it's maybe...
- Selena:** Finances.
- Ryan:** Yeah, exactly. Where at one point in our marriage, the financial boundary was we don't spend \$25 without talking to each other first. That boundary can grow.
- Selena:** To \$28.
- Ryan:** To present... *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** To \$28.50. *[Ryan chuckles]*
- Ryan:** \$28.50.

- Selena:** I think we have two more. But with the vigilance, I would say hand in hand goes love and patience in enforcing the boundaries, because it can feel hard, it can feel like you're hurting your spouse or hurting your in-laws. You know, the circumstances push you to feel like you just want to give up. Like, "I just want there to be peace. I just want to make it so there's no conflict." There's a lot of us that are out there that are just conflict-averse. Raising both hands here.
- Ryan:** So you'll let the boundary get encroached on...
- Selena:** Or go away completely.
- Ryan:** ...because you just don't have the guts, frankly, to say...
- Selena:** How dare you!
- Ryan:** "...let my kids watch 10 hours of TV when they're at your house."
- Selena:** But in those instances, we really need to remember the promises. Again, there's this trust and obedience in God's goodness and His truth that He's given us. And so, in those instances, when I need to like police you in a certain way, we've given each other permission. Say we're, you know, dealing with pornography and there's an addiction here and we've given each other permission, like you've given me permission to ask you questions and to check in on you and police you—I hate using that term—but with love and with patients and with...
- Ryan:** Policing is... Yeah, I wouldn't...
- Selena:** I wouldn't use that term.
- Ryan:** It's not bad. It's a...
- Selena:** It's like whole traveling and unhealthy.
- Ryan:** It's you're walking the fence line together.
- Selena:** Yes, you're walking your fence line together of your covenant, and you're checking in in a loving and patient way, knowing that the road ahead could be long, it could be difficult, and it could be not over as soon as we always want it to be, but we're trusting God's goodness in the healing process. We're not just going to forsake making true peace just to keep peace, if that makes sense.

Ryan: So we're talking about what boundaries require of you. We're talking in that about love and patience. Now, I would add to this love and patience piece that sometimes love and patience means you have to repair a boundary that's been broken, a fence that's been knocked down, or a wall that's been crushed. You need to do the hard work of putting those stones back in place.

Selena: And remembering why they're in place, and communicating that. Remember, we talked about in the beginning that we don't have boundaries, because they're either unclear, they're unsaid or they're unenforced. And so if we can enforce boundaries with love and patience, I think those are markers of a believer enforcing boundaries rather than an unbeliever that would just... there would be no love and patience. It just is what it is, and you have to deal with it. Right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So, a mark of a believer is someone who can enforce boundaries clearly but with love and with patience and wisdom.

Ryan: And we see that modeled in the New Testament, namely in how to rebuke a fellow believer caught in sin, and how to go to another [00:30:00] believer when you yourself are in sin. So that's love and patience. And this one—I think it's technically the sixth one. I think it could be folded up into the fifth one, but you seem to like it to be separate—is empathy. What do you mean by that? Boundaries require empathy.

Selena: Because I think that it requires the person enforcing the boundary to seek understanding of the other person or party or wherever the boundary and division is going to happen. Because it'll help set the trajectory for that boundary. So I'm not going to set a boundary... it may seem hurtful so... Gosh, what's a good example of setting a boundary?

With in-laws, we will set a boundary. Possibly you're saying, "We're not going to allow them to talk about our marriage in this way. Like they need to be advocating for it and not being adversaries and pitting us against one another." But we need to understand that they're probably just at some point trying to protect their kid. I'm trying to emphasize maybe they grew up in a certain way, trying to grow our understanding of the other person in order to have a healthy boundary in place, and one that we can communicate in a way that is loving and that shows or models patients to them rather than, you know, just policing them. But you can't always control how somebody is going to respond. I think empathy is a big piece to help us enforce boundaries in a Christ-like way.

Ryan: So, you just use the words loving and patience, which is the one before it, which is why I feel like empathy is such a component of being loving and being patient.

Selena: Absolutely. That's fine. You can fold it in two.

Ryan: It's just being so one-sided that you only care about your side of this boundary. Now, let's see. In the case of in-laws, you're not keeping the in-laws out. But you are saying that this toxic behavior is not allowed.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And if they can't seem to detach themselves, they can't detach themselves from the toxic behavior, then that means that they're not allowed in.

Selena: For the health of your marriage.

Ryan: But the empathy piece and the love and patience piece says, "Listen, we want a relationship with you. But it will not work..."

Selena: If it's like this.

Ryan: ...if it's like this, if you are constantly either complaining, or you're constantly nagging, or you're constantly berating and talking badly of my spouse," or you know, whatever that behavior is. And that's just one example. I mean, you could use this for any relationship really. The point is, is the person is not kept out, it's the behavior that's kept out. And that's important to remember.

Okay. We were going to build a big biblical case for boundaries. I think some of that is important, some of that's good for today. We already went through this in the first version that didn't make it, that had to be buried and we sacrificed it. The point is that boundaries are created to protect and delineate. And when they're transgressed, they create more boundaries, namely, around relationships. And that's what we just talked about.

So really quickly. I'm not going to go through the original spiel that I had, because I think it doesn't feel totally relevant.

Selena: Right. But if you look at the Bible chronologically, and the events that happened...

Ryan: It's riddled with boundaries, whether they're physical boundaries, moral, ethical boundaries, biblical legal boundaries, God's law. But the big one that I wanted to look at here is in Eden. In the Garden of Eden, which itself was a

bounded place, a perfect place where God decided to begin creation or at least begin mankind. And then He placed within the garden another boundary that says, "You can eat of every tree that is good for eating but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree is off-limits." That's the boundary. Do this, don't do this. This is right. Eating of it is wrong. Not eating of it is right.

We obviously know how that ended is they ended up transgressing the boundary. And what did that do? It cast them out of the perfect place. They're no longer allowed within that boundary—perfection. They're cast out of Eden and they're no longer allowed to have unfettered community with God. And so it created this relational boundary.

We went on to say how the promised land is a boundary around God's specific land for His specific people. There are delineations between realities: good reality, bad reality.

Selena: I want you to talk about the veil being torn because we're coming up on Easter, we're in Holy Week right now recording this, but I felt like that was a big piece to the last time we went through this.

Ryan: So, speaking of that, Adam and Eve, the fractured relationship, the boundary that was put up between God and man, the boundary of sin, and the way that man was able to commune with God throughout the history of Israel was through the tabernacle, when they were in the wilderness, and through the temple when they were in the promised... or when they were... the nation of Israel in Jerusalem. [00:35:00] So that was the place where they would go to commune with God.

But the thing is, is that not everybody was allowed to go in there. Only the priests. And they were allowed to go in there and do the specific thing: to follow God's law, to make right relationship with God to be atoned for their sins. And that was the only way. But here's the beauty of it. As we go into Easter, as we go into Good Friday, which is tomorrow, when Christ said on the cross, "It is finished," what happened at that moment? The veil tore. That boundary that was between us and God was obliterated. It was torn and it was satisfied that that perfection that we couldn't attain was attained by Christ, and the sacrifice that we deserved to give was given by Christ on the cross. He paid the price for our sin, but then he did what? He gave us His righteousness. He imputed to us His righteousness. And that boundary has been obliterated. But then Christ comes, again, to say "I am the way, the truth, and life."

So he has created this conduit. I don't want to use that term. That's a weird term because it can have new-age connotations. But He created the way for us to be saved.

Selena: He is the way

Ryan: He is the way. Yes, that's way more accurate. *[Selena laughs]* He became for us the way to know God. That to me is a beautiful truth. We talked about boundaries, that there was this boundary between us and God and now Christ has given us a way to the truth and life.

Selena: It's powerful. It's powerful.

Ryan: In a similar way, and I want to bring it back to marriage, is that we can feel like our marriages have this uncrossable schism, this uncrossable chasm. You might feel like your husband or your wife is on one end of it, and you're on the other side, and there's nothing that can bridge that gap. There's been a betrayal, there's been a lack of trust, a loss of trust, a lack of intimacy in the relationship, you've completely lost the notion of what it means to be married to this person. And here we are reminding you that that was the case for you until Christ came and he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." To me, that's the hope of the gospel for every broken marriage is that God heals things; we don't.

Selena: So good.

Ryan: So we submit ourselves to Him and we trust this covenant is good. I'm not saying that no matter your circumstance, no matter what happens that if you just do X, Y and Z you'll be guaranteed a faultless, good marriage. I'm not saying that. But I am saying you have hope. And the hope is in Christ alone. And that's just a beautiful picture of what it can do for marriage.

There's all kinds of analogies in the Bible around marriage and Christ and His Bride, the church, and what it means to have that intimacy. Anyway, I won't go into that in exclusivity. The point is boundaries are good, boundaries are right, they're healthy, but they must be enforced, they require a lot of us.

So, quickly, in the next five to 10 minutes, I want to talk specifically around some boundaries in marriage. So we've talked about why we don't have boundaries in marriage. It's either unclear, unsaid, or unenforced. We talked about what boundaries require of us: discipline, trust and obedience, boldness and clarity, vigilance, love and patience, and empathy. Now, let's talk about areas within marriage that could benefit from having very specific boundaries just very quickly. Does that sound okay?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: We've touched a lot, I think, on communication, having those boundaries, we just finished a series. You can go back and listen to them. There's four or five episodes right before this that talk about communication and the health around that. That boundaries require us to have healthy communication. The Bible instructs us in how to speak to one another, how to listen to one another.

Ryan: And it's not just arbitrary.

Selena: No.

Ryan: That's the beauty of it is that we have wisdom for how to communicate well. And if we're just willing to submit ourselves to what those boundaries are, we might actually benefit from them.

Selena: Right. Another area that we struggled with early on in our marriage was finances. We tend to, I think, as a culture, live outside of our means for whatever reason. But God has called us to live inside within our means, to steward what He's given us well. So how would boundaries reinforce our stewardship of our finances? How will boundaries help us to grow and thrive and really flourish I think in the area of finances in order to live out blessing others and giving more of our financials?

Ryan: I think is on a very functional level, I mean, what is a budget if not just a boundary? *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Boundary budget.

Ryan: Right. It's a boundary saying that this is how much we can spend on X, Y, and Z. And if we don't, then we will be outside of our budget, and there's consequences for that.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I think there are also a missional boundaries around lifestyle, around income, around spending, where if you say, "We're not going to just maximize our consumer potential." In other words, we're not going to buy the nicest house, nicest car that we can afford, we're not going to go on vacation.

Selena: Just because we can afford it. [00:40:00]

Ryan: Just because we can afford them.

Selena: Or we want it even.

Ryan: Yeah,

Selena: Those are not...

Ryan: Instead we're going to question that, and we're going to say, "This doesn't matter to us as much as being on mission. And for us being on mission looks like X, Y, or Z."

Selena: Right. You could say a mission is a boundary, right?

Ryan: It is. We have a whole bunch of stuff on family vision statement, and what a family vision statement is good for creating boundaries around what really matters to us, and what we're going to therefore invest our time, treasure, and talent into as a family.

Selena: I was talking to a friend... I think this can go under maybe priorities. So I was talking to one of my good, good friends. She also homeschools. We're reading the Bible and we're talking about are we teaching our kids... not only are we teaching them things to live for and how to live, but are we teaching them something worth dying for? Is that boundary drawn there of saying like to live is Christ and to die is gain? Am I just getting so consumed by: are they getting their math or reading their writing and all of that? Yes, I need to be aware of that, and yes, there's formal stuff that you have to work through, but the ultimate boundary or goal is that I want them to know Christ, and I want them. And I can't always control that, right? We can set the feast, we can set the table, but as a parent, you can't control whether or not... even as a spouse, you can't control whether or not a person will respond to the gospel. That's the work of the Holy Spirit alone. God, Holy Spirit, all of them.

So am I, in my priorities, in what we are deciding to do and not to do, are they falling under the weight of Christ? Is it worth living for and dying for?

Ryan: That's kind of a big picture of priorities. I think in light of that, we could ask other questions around boundaries and priorities. Look at how you spend your time and look at your calendar. That tells you what your priorities are. Like everybody has to work make a living. We live in a post-industrial or industrialized society, in that it takes 40 hours a week typically for a husband to produce income. But what if your job is taking 60 hours a week? And what if 10 of those hours are unnecessary because you're trying to climb the corporate ladder? And what if those 10 hours are critical because of the stage

your family is in, and if you're home an extra two hours a day, it would make a big difference?

Selena: Yeah, boundaries are really questioning I think in pulling back some of the layers and asking why, why, why.

Ryan: So either that boundary has been unsaid...

Selena: Or unclear.

Ryan: ...or you've not been clear on "I actually care about my family in this way." Or that you have said those things, and you just can't help yourself, and instead you're breaking the boundary consistently. That could be also around how you're spending your time when you are home. Maybe you're spending way too much time watching TV, and maybe you're spending way too much time playing video games...

Selena: On your phone in general.

Ryan: Or instead of just hanging out with the family and building relationship, maybe you're too busy remodeling or whatever that thing is like that is taking your energy hunting. I don't know. I'm thinking of hobbies that guys typically are into. I always just think of hunting, and motorcycles for some reason because I don't do any of those things. I wish I could. I'm not cool enough, apparently.

Conflict. We talked a lot about conflict. But basically, within conflict, you have rules of engagement. I'm not going to call you names and all these absolutes. I'm not going to say that you're just like your mother. There's just certain things that just aren't...

Selena: Unless you are. *[Ryan laughs]* I'm just kidding.

Ryan: There's certain things that just aren't beneficial or fruitful. You can draw lines around those things and say, "This is better, this is worse. Do the better thing." That's inside your marriage. Let's talk about outside the marriage. Around your marriage rather. So we've talked a lot about in-laws. We'll talk about that at length next week.

Selena: We talked about, in Gospel Centered Marriage course, having a guide couple. So somebody who is within sort of this boundary of our covenant to a certain extent, and in the fact that they have permission to ask us hard questions about our decisions, about our finances, or we can go to them with issues maybe around our intimacy that we're struggling with. But they are within this

boundary of, you know, there's this confidentiality, there's this safety that will promote our growth and sanctification.

Another, I think, problematic piece would be... I hate to say problematic, but you and I... I think we've all experienced hard times around church involvement and ministry.

Ryan: People are dysfunctional.

Selena: Right. So how can we begin to delineate those boundaries if you're always serving, always at the church, [00:45:00] and yet your marriage is suffering and you feel like you're roommates or ships passing in the night? So what is the church and the body of Christ look like in terms of a boundary and interacting in marital covenant?

Ryan: Another one that comes to mind is including your spouse in conversations when they're not around, speaking well of each other. That's a way of drawing a boundary around, "Hey, guys, we're talking and I'm not going to joke around the opposite sex." That doesn't happen with our friends very much where that type of humor comes up. But some friend groups are just really crude about they see an attractive person of the opposite sex, you know, they'll just flippantly just joke. You could say, "That's a boundary I'm not willing to cross. I'm going to honor my wife or my husband in this way. I'm not going to entertain that." That's one way of drawing that line among your friends. Or just being very clear with your co-workers that you're going to honor your spouse even when they're not there.

Selena: Right. Again, it's not about, you know, policing and saying, "My way is the better way and I'm going to do this." I mean, it's a mark of a believer, but it's teachable moments too to be able to show Christ in a different way, saying, "I'm bringing honor to my spouse. I just want to honor them in how I talk or don't talk when they're not here." Like you're saying that. I'm just trying to paint that picture a little bit more clearly...

Ryan: No, I appreciate that.

Selena: ...because that's where I tend to get a little nervous of "what are they going to think if I don't engage?" That's kind of the question.

Ryan: Thank you. I appreciate that. *[Selena chuckles]* The big picture here is that boundaries do keep good things in, they keep bad things out. But they're not just arbitrary. They're there so that we might steward what God has given us and flourish for our good and His glory. Not in that order. *[chuckles]* For His glory, and for our good. So they're healthy.

So for the next couple of weeks, we're going to be tackling kind of the most prevalent boundary-related topics. We've talked a lot about in last year and extended family. We're going to get into that at length. Hopefully get really practical next week.

The week following that, we're going to be talking about interesting technology and kind of the inner play between those two things, and the boundaries necessary for both. And then the following one is... we're kind of up in the air. Selena is thinking about parenting, like being in unity as parents.

Selena: Yeah. Understanding why we set boundaries, what boundaries we set.

Ryan: And that does have an effect on your marriage.

Selena: For sure.

Ryan: So we have to be really careful. We want to keep the marriage topic at the forefront.

Selena: I know.

Ryan: But still we can talk about it. *[Selena chuckles]* Or if you have any really pressing ideas, you can let us know and you can text into this number: 971-333-1120. And if we get enough responses in one vein, then we'll tackle that. So if anything that we've talked about here has resonated with you and stricken a note, you can tell us and we can maybe do some research and expand on that in the final week of this series. 971-333-1120. You can just text it in to us, and we will for sure see that and read it.

Okay. Couples conversation challenge. I think the best conversation you can have given this episode is think about those boundaries in marriage. I'm going to give you five topics right now. Communication and conflict, money, sex, priorities, and in-laws. Of those five topics, which one lacks boundaries in your marriage? Ask yourself that question and just talk about it. And if you want to go one step further, think about what's one simple boundary you can put in place that you can make clear, you can say it and acknowledge it, and then you can enforce it. I think you'd be on a path towards a slightly healthier marriage at that point.

But that said, let me pray us out. Lord, I thank you for the couples listening to this, the husbands, the wives. I thank you for the willingness that they have to better their marriage. I pray that you've used us to help them. I pray that you would enliven life in Your Word in their hearts. And I pray that you would use

these words to encourage them. Father, I pray for the husband and the wife who feels like their marriage is hopeless, like they've lost sight of the other side of the chasm. I pray that you would give them hope, that you can do miracles, you can repair brokenness, and you have done it. So I pray that you would do that in their lives, in their marriage for their good and for Your glory. In your precious name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Ladies and gentlemen, this episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Once again, we'll see you in about seven days. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce!

[00:49:45] <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.

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