

BOUNDARIES AND SEX

<https://fiercemarriage.com/boundaries-and-sex>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: All right. For the past few weeks, we've talked all about boundaries. The first week we talked about boundaries in general, kind of the underlying physics of boundaries.

Selena: Physics and philosophy. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Philosophy is a better word. Last week we talked about boundaries and our children. In other words, protecting our marriage from our own kids. *[both laughs]* That might sound odd. If it does go back, listen to that episode. It should add some more context there. So today, we're actually talking about the activity that brings about the kids—intimacy. *[chuckles]* So intimacy and protecting and guarding our intimate lives, our sex lives from damage. Right?

Selena: Yeah. From the little foxes.

Ryan: Yeah, little foxes that would get into the garden and gobble up all that delicious fruit. *[laughs]* I'm cringing right now. Anyway, we're going to have some fun today, and we'll see you on the other side.

[00:00:54] <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.

[00:01:26] <podcast begins>

Selena: I like that segue. The one that now we're going to talk about how kids are made. Not how but the time when the kids are made.

Ryan: And if you don't know how kids are made, you may want...

Selena: Stop. *[Ryan laughs]* Oh, my goodness. Anyways.

Ryan: We're not going to fill in all those gaps, people.

Selena: Last week's conversation was really great. I definitely encourage you to go listen to us, I guess, talk about kids and marriage covenant. Because kids are so demanding, and like you said last week, many times, they'll just suck the life and everything else out of the room.

Ryan: We love kids.

Selena: Including all your energy. But this. They are a blessing. So how do we manage and steward those blessings in a way that glorifies and honors God, which would also reflect honoring our covenant and protecting it? There's three things that we are going to continually say throughout these...

Ryan: Boundaries episode.

Selena: Boundaries episodes. These three things are the three things that typically keep us from having boundaries. The first is that they're unclear. So there's not a clear or agreed-upon understanding. The second would be they're unsaid. Because how can you say something that is not clear? And then the third is they are unenforced. Because if you don't have any understanding or clarity, and you can't really say what they are, then how are you going to enforce them?

Ryan: Or just lack the discipline in the triggers to enforce those boundaries with diligence. In other words, you're not walking the fence line nearly enough keeping the boundaries in place. And all three of those really do presuppose the underlying of this philosophy of boundaries, that boundaries by the very nature, delineate between one reality and another, a bad scenario and a better scenario, a good and a better. However, you want to make that delineation. A boundary is there to delineate between things. And so you have to make sure those are very clear delineations and well communicated, and

then well enforced. If you fail on either one of those or you lack on either one of those, then you'll find your boundaries aren't there or they're breaking down, and things are getting inside and it's causing problems.

Selena: Right. A roadmap before we kind of talk about some of our housekeeping is just we're going to define some of these boundaries. Again, it's like a map, geographical lines that divide, like you were saying. And our conversation is centered mainly around intimacy and our marriage covenant. How do we implement boundaries that protect and promote health within that area of our marriage?

So what do boundaries require? We've been going through these six boundary requirements every week as well. It's been very illuminating because the topic or the boundary's sort of purposes remain the same, but the functionality and enforcing those changes depending on kids versus in-laws, whatever. And then, of course, how does the Bible instruct us in walking this out? What does that look like?

Ryan: In this specific area of our intimate relationship, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Very cool. It's going to be, I think, a lively discussion. I'm excited for it. A lot of timeless truths we're going to retouch on, but we are going to, I think, add some new texture to this conversation.

Before we do that, if you've been helped by the Fierce Marriage Podcast, I would greatly appreciate it if you would leave a rating and a review in your podcast app. That means a ton. It does actually work kind of an algorithmic magic, if you will. *[Selena laughs]* If those who are governing the algorithms or the algorithms themselves see that people are commenting, they are giving ratings and they're leaving reviews, that does help increase exposure. Which if you value this content, then we hope that you would want this [00:05:00] content to get to more people. That's our whole hope. We do this because we want people to hear it. We want people to hear God's truth in the area of family and marriage. So leave a rating and review.

Finally, we had a conversation with our good friends Dimitri and Mary around boundaries. He's a pastor. They come from big families. Lots of kids. A really intense in-laws dynamics because of their families of origin.

Selena: Yeah, they're from a big Slavic community.

- Ryan:** Yeah, big, Slavic. They're first generation raised here. They moved when Mary was like 10 or something and Dimitri was, I think, around the age as well, and when they all migrated over. So the in-law's conversation around boundaries happens there. But here's where that happens. That conversation happened in our Gospel Centered Marriage. It's a mini-course that we filmed just last week.
- Selena:** And it was good. It was good.
- Ryan:** It was good. Dimitri is an amazing communica... they both are amazing communicators.
- Selena:** Yeah, very brilliant people.
- Ryan:** So if you want to see that, we are going to talk about in-laws, I think at some point. Next week we'll talk about it. But we go into a lot of depth in that conversation. Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. You can learn how to be a part of that. Get access to that mini-course when it goes live. But anyways, I want to make that make sure that's known by all of you that that content body is actually growing quite a bit. There's seven mini-courses that have been filmed. And I think three or four are live by the time this podcast episode hits the airwaves. They are not airwaves, they are internet.
- Selena:** Internet waves.
- Ryan:** Internet wave flyers. Finally, sorry for all the housekeeping here, but patreon.com/fiercemarriage. Honestly, that's what feeds our family. You don't hear a lot of ads on this podcast, because we just want to get to the content and we want to build a community that's not just about getting you to listen or entertain you. We hope that we're entertaining. But it's really about being gospel-centered and winsome in gospel-centeredness, and that we are pointing you to Christ, and that is feeding your heart, and your soul and your spirit and making you stronger, better, sanctifying, all that kind of stuff. And that happens through your support on patreon.com/fiercemarriage. Pray about that. If God leads you to join us, we would be honored.
- Selena:** All right. So we are going to jump into our discussion around guarding our intimacy, setting those boundaries up. How do we guard sexual intimacy? What does the Bible say? How does it talk about this area of our lives? Well, there's lots to be said, of course. Proverbs 5 is where we're kind of going to sit for a moment before we start talking about... You know, I mean, I can address those while you're looking that up real quick.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah.

Selena: Some of the problems and excuses that that kind of push against our boundaries of why we don't have sex or why we... basically, why we don't engage in it. I think that's probably the biggest problem is we either we're too tired, we're not connecting, we have no margin, we don't feel the need maybe even. And that can be for not a great reason. It could be awkward. Maybe there's some new things you want to try, you're unsure how to go about that... that's pure. Or there's something or someone that's polluting that relationship or coming in—there's a third party there.

Some of these problems range from kind of an internal struggle to external. But I think it's good to just kind of identify where do we fall on this spectrum and how can we guard this very powerful part of our marriage. Because although it is such a small part, if you look at the actual time that it takes during the course of a marriage—Scott [inaudible], he did a whole study on that—it's not a large amount.

Ryan: It's like point 0.06% to 5% of your marriage.

Selena: ...of your marriages is spent in actual having sex.

Ryan: And that's if you're fairly active. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Just small time percentage.

Selena: It's just a small percentage, but it has a big effect, I think, on our spiritual growth and the health of our covenant in our marriage.

Ryan: So, around our intimate lives in terms of boundaries, there tends to be two main ways, that whatever this are intimate... there's a lot of analogies for this in the Bible. There's two primary ones that I find super helpful. Proverbs 5. I love it because it's just so crystal clear. And I mean that pun because it's talking about a cistern, a thing that stores clear clean water. That's one of the analogies. We also see in Song of Solomon 4, I believe, where he talks about the beloved...

Selena: Foxes?

Ryan: It's talking about the little foxes who get... Okay, it's on Song of Solomon 2, where they kind of break into the garden, they get in, they start eating the fruit, and they basically ruin what's inside the garden, which in this case, it's their intimate lives.

So you think in terms of these boundaries, there's typically two ways to think about it. [00:10:00] You want to keep bad things from getting in. You also want to keep the goodness that's in there, you want to have it stay in there. You don't want it to seep out, you don't want it to leak out, you don't want to be stolen.

Selena: You want it to thrive and grow.

Ryan: Yeah. And in that spot. That's the thing. You don't want it to get outside of that. Right? It has its place.

Selena: It has its purpose.

Ryan: So the analogy that I'll use for intimacy, and you've probably heard us say this in the past, is it's like fire. A fire well-wielded will warm a house, it will cook meals, it will bring life and nourishment to your family. But a fire that gets out of control will burn your house to the ground. Or a fire that's not cared for will die and provide no nourishment.

So it's the same kind of living dynamic in your intimate life. So it does require us to be wise, thoughtful stewards. That's where we talked about this, or that's where those three things that you talked about, Selena, is you have to have clarity. We need to have communication around this, and we need to have enforcement. In other words, stewardship and diligence around these boundaries.

Selena: So good.

Ryan: Let's read some from Proverbs 5. You've heard us talk about this passage. I love this passage. It's so vivid. But the early proverbs is a lot of warning against adultery. There's a lot of that. In Proverbs 5:6 and even into 7, I think even earlier than that... It's a theme at the beginning of Solomon's Proverbs hears. But let's read the first couple verses in Proverbs 5, then we'll jump ahead to verse 15. Let's do verses 1 through 5 here.

"My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol..." That's verse five. Let's go to verse 15.

"Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths." I want to make sure I got to turn the page here. "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray."

We're going to focus in on that, that picture of the cistern. So in ancient Near East culture, cisterns were vital for life. They represented a certain type of wealth, a certain type of security. That if you had a cistern, a functioning large cistern, it meant that your family would have a year-round supply of clean water. And so what they would do is they would usually dig them out into the bedrock kind of wherever the community is. They would dig them out and it would be large enough to catch water. So a lot of water would run into it.

But before the water would run into it, in the dry season, they would somehow seal the walls of the cistern. They would seal it and then they would end up putting something on the top of it to keep debris and animals and insects and things from getting in, falling in. The whole point of that is that throughout the rainy season or throughout the winter, whatever that that season look when you had more water coming, you would use that water, and then to fill up your cistern, and then it would hold the water. And then you could use the water throughout the rest of the year.

And the problem that could happen was sometimes it wouldn't hold the water. So you'd have the water leaking out of the walls and they would end up in the soil around you. And it's useless to you at that point. Or, you know, say a goat falls into the cistern at night and you don't realize it, and suddenly this goat is dead and it's rotting. If you haven't looked in your cistern in a while and pretty soon your family starts getting sick, because you're drinking this water and... I don't know if that ever happened. I'm just saying an example. Stuff again, in there. Maybe could be a stick or something that's just accumulating debris. The point is, is there would be this need for sealing off the cistern to keep the water in. And you have to put something over the top of it to keep the bad stuff out.

So Solomon is using this analogy because he is wanting to remind people that this area of your life is best kept pure. It is God's design for this area of your life—he's talking about intimacy—to be kept pure so that it can be a spring

from which life flows [00:15:00] in your marriage. I just love that. Because he goes into this language and it's so vivid here. And you never really hear the Bible talking about intoxication in a good way, except for when... this happened in Song of Songs as well. Except for being intoxicated with your spouse's love in an intimate exchange.

So he says, "Drink water..." He's encouraged "drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your well." Should your springs be scattered abroad? The thought there is that it's your cistern for your family, and it shouldn't be scattered because when that happens, the clarity of it, the cleanliness of it goes away into the streets where all the filth and the dirt and everything, it would be useless. And don't share it with anyone. It's just for you.

Selena: Right. There's that boundary, that lines being drawn.

Ryan: Yes. Let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you. This is the part I love the most. "Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth. Lovely deer, graceful doe. Those terms land kind of on in a funny place for us because we don't compare..."

Selena: Modern times, yeah.

Ryan: Yeah. But back then that was like... boom, she's a lovely woman and she's delightful in every conceivable way. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight, be intoxicated always in her love. So very clearly there are boundaries around the intimate life that God's designed for the intimate experience. I think the biggest clearest boundary is marriage itself.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I don't want to assume that people understand or really embrace that truth. But biblically speaking, if we're going to think and act biblically, we have to embrace and believe this truth that sex is designed for an exclusive union between one man and one woman for life. That's its design. It flourishes in that. And so that will begin to inform a lot of these other boundaries. We can get into the actual boundaries now if you want but...

Selena: Well, I wanted to talk about Song of Solomon, too, just so we have a little bit of a picture for the foxes. And then we were talking about Philippians 4 as an encouragement. When we are setting up boundaries, how are we thinking about truth and good things? Song of Solomon 2:8-15.

Ryan: Do you want to read that? I got it right here.

Selena: "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.'"

Ryan: Why don't you just read the next two verses?

Selena: Sure. "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains."

Ryan: Clefts and crannies.

Selena: Clefts and crannies. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Oh.

Selena: Rocks and mountains. Gazelles and...

Ryan: This passage is amazing. But I really want to focus in on two kind of aspects of it. There's a lot happening here. So we're not going to do it full justice. The two aspects I really want to focus in on for the sake of the boundaries conversation is the season and this idea these little foxes getting in.

So the season being the time has come. What does she say? "My beloved speaks and says to me, 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold the winter is past; the rain is over and gone.'" Think about the correlation between maybe that and a cistern. We talked about cistern being filled in the winter. I'm not saying that needs to be a direct connection, but it's just interesting. Solomon has similar pictures in his mind. He also talks about stags, basically a male deer versus the doe, which he talked about in other places in Proverbs in here. It's just interesting the cistern is there.

He says, "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom and get forth fragrance." It's a very rich time.

Selena: Yeah. He's identifying the season of now is the time. Now is the time to embrace and to engage in all that God has given us in this area.

Ryan: To graze on the lilies, so to speak. *[laughs]* [00:20:00]

Selena: I mean, there's probably commentary on everything that it's talking about. But what I imagine and kind of subscribe to is that we are married, we have said... because it says a bride adores her beloved. So they are married, they have been in entered into this covenant...

Ryan: The wait is over.

Selena: ...relationship. The wait is over. It is now time to...

Ryan: Drink deep of this fountain.

Selena: And so this is the season. So identifying that our marriage that we're in is not just the season of being like newlyweds and all of that. But this is the time. This is our covenant. This is our marriage. We should at all times be embracing and engaging in this gift that God has given us. So talking about foxes.

Ryan: So it's a garden. Obviously, the garden has fruit in it, it has vegetables in it, and therefore nourishment. She says "Catch the little foxes." Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom. So she's not just talking about her kind of.. it's about a shared experience. It's about a shared reality. That's so interesting that she's asking her husband, to catch the foxes, to be the hunter. To be the one that...

Selena: That guards and protects.

Ryan: ...that guards and protects. And I just wonder what is there in terms of the role of a husband to be a protector and to be a provider and to be that one who walks the fence line of the marriage, guarding over his little flock as a shepherd would. That's under shepherd.

Selena: So that would be empowering to you as a man to say, "This is my role." When I hear the roles that God wants me to fulfill, it doesn't feel like a burden at all. It enlivens me. It excites me to say like, "My role is to be a mother and to be a wife and to do these things. And there's much to be done in those roles.

- Ryan:** But what gets me about it, and that's absolutely right, so I'm going to one blow it out for the guy side here, is that who's in the vineyard. And what does she say? She says, "Catch the foxes, my beloved." Like keep them from our vineyard. Who's in there? She's in there and she's saying, "I'm in here, protect me. I'm in here, enjoy me. I'm in here being about the work of cultivating this vineyard, this place for us to enjoy together." So in terms of like catching those foxes, there's so many. We're going to talk about some foxes here. But I'm thinking just really clearly like in terms of my own integrity as a husband... And men, if you're listening to this, just be encouraged. If your wife says, "Catch the foxes for us," please go catch the foxes.
- Selena:** She says that in different ways, right?
- Ryan:** In your mind, catch the foxes for us. In our lives, that catch the foxes for us. On the internet, catch... With your eyes, catch the foxes. So if I'm walking that fence line and guarding that, and I'm on my computer almost every day working, and I see maybe a tempting image come across my feed because it happens all the time, then I can remember my wife saying, "Catch the foxes for us, beloved, because I'm in here and I'm waiting for you." So I can eat more easily fend off and identify those foxes, what they really are.
- Selena:** Right. She's delegating but she's saying, "Catch these. Do this for us because they're going to spoil this." She's giving him all the reasoning behind it. I don't know, I just imagine, as a wife, I'm not saying catch the foxes. But I'm saying, "Hey, can you guard your eyes? Can you guard your heart? Can you help protect that area of our lives?" Wherever the struggle is. One way...
- Ryan:** I also want to make one more note on this. And it's the vineyard. So it is a garden but it's also a vineyard which they grow grapes.
- Selena:** There's specific purpose, right?
- Ryan:** What is the vineyard? They make wine? A vineyard is for making wine.
[chuckles]
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And if you think about wine in terms of your intimate life, does wine get better or worse with time?
- Selena:** Better.
- Ryan:** It gets better. The profound nature of that particular analogy... Like right now it's grape juice. It's sweet, it's awesome, it's really good.

- Selena:** But it's got to go through a fermenting process. Is that what you're saying?
[laughs]
- Ryan:** Okay. As newlyweds, you're experiencing the fresh crop.
- Selena:** The newness.
- Ryan:** The newness, the grapes, the grape juice, it's very sweet, very kind of unadulterated in a really different way. It's fresh. As time goes on, if you're tending to your vineyard, the vine gets better, the grapes get stronger, they get sweeter, they get richer, they get better. And then if you actually pluck those grapes, you put them through the winepress, you put them in the casks, they age, and now in your decades in, 20 or 30 years in, now you've got this fine wine that is this experience because you've protected your vineyard.
- Selena:** Right. You've tended to it.
- Ryan:** You've cultivated it. Yes
- Selena:** I think we're just going to jump right into the purposes of sex because we've talked a lot about the reasons, the cistern, the seasons, [00:25:00] the foxes. So why is she asking for protection there? Why is God or Solomon, I guess, in Proverbs, God ultimately, of course, it's His word, saying, "Don't share your cistern. This is exclusive." Because when we look at the Bible and we look at the purposes of sex, which we talked about in our first marriage book, and we define the purposes biblically, you can see why God has said: one wife, one husband; one man, one woman. Go forth and multiply. Genesis 1:28. This is the first purpose of sex that we see in the Bible. Go forth and multiply.
- Ryan:** So she's saying, "Catch the foxes for us. They spoil the vineyard."
- Selena:** Right. You can't multiply seeds that's not there, right?
- Ryan:** Right. Because...
- Selena:** Grapes won't grow.
- Ryan:** That multiplication will be hindered. It will be ruined by these foxes coming in and eating all of our fruit. *[both laughs]* The second one. Unity. So go forth and multiply. That's the call to fruitfulness as a married couple bearing children, so on and so forth. There are nuances there if God blesses you with children versus if He blesses you to not have children in a different way. So I don't want to gloss over that, but there's that caveat.

Secondly, unity. So this is the second purpose of sex. That one flesh image that we get in Genesis 1, two became one flesh, there's a special spiritual unity there. There's a physical consummation unity there, which is also present in the fruitfulness aspect, being that you actually are physically, literally merging two fleshs into a son or a daughter in that case.

Then the third big purpose is it's a kind of a shadow picture of the gospel, in that you never feel more vulnerable, and therefore more loved, or more ashamed than when you are fully naked and fully known in front of another person. But thankfully, in the Gospel, we can be fully known and fully loved by God in Christ. And as we love each other in marriage with that same I love because he first loved me attitude, and you do the same to me, then we can be vulnerable with each other in this way.

Selena: Right. So having these purposes sort of outlined in our mind, and we're talking about boundaries, and how they're either unclear, unsaid, and unenforced, how can we begin to set up boundaries? Well, there are six requirements for boundaries I think we might jump into here. I think these are kind of a bit overlapped in terms of what we're talking about. We'll go through what an example of enforcing what a boundary would look like, but first let's talk about the requirements for boundaries.

So we talked about these last two episodes. Governance and discipline being the first one. So another word that we would use biblically speaking is self-control. A fruit of the Spirit. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise self-control. We enforce the boundary trusting that the response will promote growth. So this discipline, you will probably see it with screens, most obviously the vigilance and our thoughts, words and how we even approach each other, you know, being disciplined and not selfish, and seeking that out from each other.

Trust and obedience. Trusting and being obedient to God will bear fruit. I think submission does play a small role in terms of sex. And I'm not saying that every wife just has to submit and do it. I'm saying that God is calling us to a place of purity for the marriage bed, a place of transparency and intimacy. So sometimes submitting just our own feelings. For guys, maybe that's the selfishness aspect of wanting something for themselves. For women, I mean, we'd fall into selfishness as well. We don't want to engage or we're tired or whatever. Tiredness is real. I get that. But that's not necessarily what I'm talking about right now.

I think that we can submit those, just the feelings of being tired, to the Lord and find strength in Him to lovingly give to our spouse. Again, not being a

doormat, but saying, "You know what, I'm going to engage in this. I don't feel like it. I'm tired. I don't really want to, but I know that my spouse needs this and this is one way that I can love him in this way." And trusting that the fruit of that will be better than not engaging. *[chuckles]* Trust in obedience. Did you want to say something?

Ryan: Yeah. I just wanted to add some texture around the idea of [00:30:00] obedience and trust in terms of offering yourself to each other. That does come from 1 Corinthians 7.

Selena: I should clarify obedience to God, not to each other.

Ryan: Thank you. That's what we mean. We're here saying, I have a relationship with God and He has called me to love Him and love my spouse according to His love for me and according to His Word. Now, I'm being obedient to Him in that, and I'm being obedient, and then I'm trusting that if I establish and maintain these boundaries, the governance piece, and if I'm obedient with these boundaries that that will lead to flourishing, that that vineyard will grow more fully.

I think 1 Corinthians 7:4, it talks about like, your husband, you're no longer your own, but you're your wife's. Your body is your wife's as well as yours and her body is hers and yours. You share basically this complete and utter blurring of these lines and meshing, stripping of these boundaries between mine and yours in terms of our bodies, and how that then becomes a means by which we enforce the boundary around our intimacy. Do you see how that picture... as our boundaries are removed from one another, the boundary around us grow stronger?

Selena: Yeah, yeah.

Ryan: And that takes trust, if you haven't ever done that, or you've never been vulnerable to this place, or you've always... and this will take a lot of work depending on where you're at. But you may have had damage in this area in terms emotional. Like you've damaged your relationship somehow...

Selena: Or you've experienced...

Ryan: ...because there's been a breach of a boundary in the past or you've experienced some things.

Selena: Abuse or sexual abuse in that way. It's difficult to try to walk through and navigate that, which is why we shouldn't do it on our own. As you know, we are big advocates of having people involved at a healthy level in your marriage,

whether that be a guide couple, or a pastor, or a Bible-believing counselor. We are very much advocates for each of those.

Ryan: I just want to quickly say it's not so much about get from A to B as quickly as possible and to find this place of trust and obedience to God in this area. It's being willing to trust with whatever the next step is that God gives you to take in this area. You're not automatically going to just act like nothing has ever been damaged in that area. It's going to take time to rebuild, regrow, retill that land. And it's going to take even more time for that land to bring forth a crop. So you have to that takes trust. Because you don't know. Like when we planted crops last year...

Selena: Crops. We had a little veggie garden. I love how you said crops. Crops to me is like 40 acres of like food. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Okay, well. Alright, farmer. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: I'm not.

Ryan: When we planted our seeds in the soil in our little garden, in our... You're so... You need to just clean it up.

Selena: This is a sex episode and there's just nothing you can say that's...

Ryan: No there's nothing you can say because I have a pure mind. *[both laughs]* You're a weirdo. No. But you put... I can't even talk now because... I was going to say "you put it in there." *[both laughs]* The seed.

Selena: You planted the seed in the dirt.

Ryan: You're trusting that your work will bring forth whatever the crop is?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: The crop. Because crops are great. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Moving on. Boldness and clarity...

Ryan: Third requirement.

Selena: Third requirement. Boldness and clarity. We just can't be wishy-washy. I think clarity in any boundary is an absolute must. So, clarity around intimacy might look like: what are our weekly rhythms to set those pre-discussed kind of

expectations, knowing yourself, knowing your capacities energy-wise, what works for us. You know, discussing that. Being confident in discussing that.

I think we can be very, I don't know, feel ashamed or just kind of set back about how do we talk about sex and how do we how do I tell you my expectations without putting pressure on you? You don't want to have to shy away. God has created it. We have to remember that God has created it. God has purposed it. We are in this marriage covenant, therefore, we have permission and agency to engage in these conversations. We did a whole episode on intimacy and communication a few weeks back.

Ryan: How to talk about sex.

Selena: Yeah, how to talk about sex.

Ryan: All this note, the boldness, and clarity piece, I'm going to go on a different angle here. Because so many times our intimate life is suffering for results that aren't directly related to sex. You know what I mean?

Selena: You're talking about like priorities?

Ryan: Sorry, for reasons that aren't directly related to sex. Yeah, it's priorities. Exactly. So say we're carting the kids around every which way or I'm working...

Selena: You're carting the kids. *[Ryan chuckles]*

Ryan: Or I'm working 60 hours a week, because, you know, for whatever reason... the reasons is another thing. If I don't have clarity and [00:35:00] boldness in this area, and I say, "My family is important, that I'm actually going to be obedient to God in this area. I need to steward my wife's heart well, our relationship, our marriage, our kids' hearts well, therefore I cannot be away from the home so much, or I can't say yes to so many... Even if you're a pastor, and you're just being pulled every which way, which I think pastoring is probably the hardest job you can pick...

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: We're not pastors thankfully. I'm not a pastor.

Selena: God really picks you for that.

Ryan: That's true.

Selena: He gives you the strength.

Ryan: Yeah, you would hope. You would hope that He would be the one picking you, not you picking it. The point is, is that you have to be bold and clear about those things that are causing your cistern to leak, they're causing that well to run dry.

Selena: And it's hard I think when it seems like these are all good things. That's my struggle anyways, is that "oh, they're good things," and we probably shouldn't be doing that, right? That should come in there.

Ryan: But then the big question, though, becomes one of why is that a struggle? And it quickly boils down to the need for approval of man or woman. You know, mankind. You want people to like you. I don't want to say no because then they won't think I'm available. I have to answer the text because if they think I'm not available, then...

Selena: We can't be friends. *[laughs]*

Ryan: We can't be friends. Or you know, you're at church, like, "It's my job. My boss expect me to perform." That could be church, could be your vocation. *[both laughs]* I don't know if your boss is expecting you performance at church. That's kind of messed up. But the point is, is that you have to be bold and clear about what you actually care about, what's God actually calling you to. Is He calling you to succeed so well in your career that your intimate life, your marriage life, your family suffers? I can confidently say probably not.

You just have to have those hard conversations around whatever's causing your cistern and to leak or causing these contaminants to get into the little foxes to find their way through the boundary...

Selena: We got to learn to be comfortable with these conversations, too. And we may not ever come to that. I think that's one thing I really when I was listening, and we were talking with Mary and Dimitri was just it seemed they were somewhat comfortable in having these challenging conversations, and then letting the responses happen. They may not have been, but they seemed very calm about it when they were talking about it. And I'm thinking in my own head that I do have... you know, I have this fear of man. And so to have hard conversations is so tricky for me, and I'm not good at conflict. And I don't know how to be bold in this area and confident.

So I guess just like he said, God has given us this covenant. This is the priority. God is calling this a priority. Therefore, I'm going to submit anything else on my schedule and my mind and my heart and my energy to this. Because this is one thing that God has said this is a non-negotiable.

- Ryan:** And without the clarity, it's hard to have the boldness to say those things.
- Selena:** Absolutely. Absolutely. So the quick review, governance and discipline, self-control, that first one, trust, and obedience.
- Ryan:** Reviewing of what? These are the six requirements...
- Selena:** Sorry.
- Ryan:** ...of boundaries. Okay, requirements for boundaries.
- Selena:** Six requirements for boundaries. Governance and discipline, also known as self-control, trust, and obedience. The third is boldness and clarity. The fourth is vigilance. We talked a lot about walking the fence line, quote-unquote, consistently. When you were reading in Proverbs 5, you passed over this verse. It was in verse 8, which is fine. But it says, "Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house." Talking about the adultery, the adulterous woman. So being vigilant.
- I would think it was just such a picture of vigilance. Like don't even go near her. Don't even go in that direction. Just keep your way far from her. If that's not a boundary, I don't know what it is. Stay far away. Don't go near the house.
- What is this telling us about how are we walking our fence line? I mean, as a wife, how am I living consistently in line with the gospel in terms of our intimate life? Am I going off on rabbit holes on social media...
- Ryan:** Rabbit trails you mean? *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Rabbit trails.
- Ryan:** Rabbit holes, that's a different thing.
- Selena:** Am I engaging in things that are unhealthy for my own mind and heart that are not consistent with loving you? Who are we inviting into struggles that we may be having sexually? Are we isolated and just trying to go at it alone? Or are we including the appropriate people, meaning guide couples, pastors, Bible-believing counselors, not just our friend that is going to be an adversary to this part of your marriage?
- Ryan:** So what you're saying is it's being willing to revisit these conversations regularly with consistency so that you can mend the fences where maybe they're starting to fall down?

Selena: Right. And don't let things go ignored or let them linger. Again you're walking this fence line, you're going through, "Okay, what am I digesting? What am I listening to? What am I seeing? [00:40:00] What are the consistent things that I'm engaging in like a hobby or something? Are these taking away from my ability to love my spouse in this area and this time? Again, who are we allowing to speak into this? So, again, walking the fence line of our life and saying...

Ryan: That's good. I wanted to add. Sorry.

Selena: Yeah, go ahead. You may.

Ryan: This also could look like in your own heart, in your own mind—I think I've talked about this recently on the podcast—going to the gym more lately, just because I realized I can't just be in my own head all day. I need to like move my body too. So I'm there. And when I walk in, it's like immediate battlefield. So my prayer has been, "Lord, lead me not into temptation to, deliver me from evil. Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Help me to turn from temptation."

The reason why I talked about the gym is because you go there and there's all kinds of people in gym clothes, and their whatever." It's a rich environment for temptation, I'll say. And so I want to be really vigilant and walk that fence line around that areas. So I'm not just going to go in there without guarding up with prayer and like saying, "I need to be here on mission. Even with my wife not here, I'm here to honor her even in my interactions with everyone in the gym."

Selena: To get that chiseled gazelle body?

Ryan: Got to get the gazelle body. *[both laughs]* I can't keep up with all the sweets I've been eating lately.

Selena: Word.

Ryan: You can't outrun a bad diet. I tell you what! The point being it takes a certain amount of mental, emotional vigilance to say, "I'm headed into a place that is kind of rife with temptation." And, you know, if it ever became problem where I couldn't go there without being tempted and stumbling, then I would probably have to stop going. Because that's another form of vigilance at that point. The same thing when you're online, like, listen, I'm starting to go to work, I typically will follow these rabbit trails and be tempted. Now walking that fence line says, "Lord, help me." Like you're not doing it alone. That's the key. "Lord, help me. Selena, help me. This is something I'm struggling with. I

don't want to be this kind of man. I want to be this kind of husband for you. I want to honor you when you're not there." I think that's...

Selena: That whole process and that idea of walking the fence line consistently leads us to our final... Well, I guess our fifth one is love and patience. All of this takes love and patience. To walk the fence line, to invite your spouse into your struggles, to be the spouse that has been invited into the struggle and not just shaming and putting guilt and anger, and frustration on someone. Yes, there's moments for those anger, and there's moments for the frustration to... you got to work through diligently and by the grace of God. But it's going to take huge amounts of patience and love to enforce those boundaries.

It can feel difficult. You may just want to be like, "You know what? I don't care. Just do whatever you're going to do. Go to the gym. I just don't want to know about it." Right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: But we have to enforce those boundaries. We have to trust God's goodness and instruction and submit in obedience, knowing that God's plan is way better than ours, even if there's a struggle within it because there most likely is. Be gracious with one another I guess is my encouragement.

Ryan: Be loving and patient.

Selena: It's all of marriage, right?

Ryan: Having the body of a gazelle or a young stag, that takes time. Right? Patience and love... *[Selena laughing]*

Selena: That's not what I'm talking about.

Ryan: When I'm on that elliptical *[both laughs]* just bounding like a gazelle... I don't do the elliptical, for the record. *[both laughs]*

Selena: You don't do the elliptical for that reason. *[laughing]*

Ryan: I think it's the most ridiculous machine. I never use it.

Selena: He doesn't like to look like a gazelle.

Ryan: No, I don't like doing cardio. *[both laughs]* That's what our love life is for.

- Selena:** The man with a heart issue. See, that's why I don't go to the gym. I'm good. *[laughs]* Anyways, the last and final piece here...
- Ryan:** Five-minute sprint. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** ...is empathy. So again, this is rooted in selflessness, serving and loving one another, seeking to understand your spouse in this area definitely helps, I think, set the trajectory for a boundary. So this might look like a person, a spouse, or a wife understanding that her husband does have physical needs, he also has emotional needs and spiritual needs. So physically, even though I may not be feeling it, I know that you are and I know that it's about that time and I can empathize with you, and I can see that this is not just a physical activity. This is something that really helps your heart and your mind and your soul. And so I can empathize with that, and I can see that this is not just us going through the motions, this is deeper and more purposeful.
- Ryan:** This is going to sound weird. Empathy kind of helps you humanize the boundary if that makes sense. Because empathy is the thing that lets you call audibles *[SP]* *[00:45:00]* for the sake of the boundary that is your actual relationship, not just the boundary around the activity.
- Selena:** Gotcha.
- Ryan:** Activity.
- Selena:** Activity. An example?
- Ryan:** An example is like—we've talked about this—every two to three days is good for our marriage. That works for us. There are many times when it's two days, many times when it's four or five days. And that's because the boundary is not around the day count, the boundary is around the intimacy, the boundaries around us connecting. And so if I look at Selena, and it's been three days, and we've had a really hard week, or you're especially tired, or whatever the circumstances, I can look at you and say, "I'm empathizing with you, I can see how you feel pressure now..."
- Selena:** I feel bedraggled. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** You feel bedraggled, you feel tired, you feel just worn out emotionally, and I know that if I pressed that you would give to me. I know that because that's just who you are and you're generous in that way most times. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** All the time. *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** But I also know that's not loving of me to do that. To just say like, "I have to mindfully enforce this boundary because I'm being selfish, essentially." I can just say because I'm empathizing, the boundary is not around us having sex. The boundaries around am I loving my wife well?
- Selena:** That takes discernment and practice and knowledge.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Empathy humanizes that and it puts the human context in it.
- Selena:** So good.
- Ryan:** So it's not just about being so rigid that you're actually breaking the boundary by your rigidity.
- Selena:** Gosh, I feel like we could just end it there. Good job, babe.
- Ryan:** All right.
- Selena:** Praise God.
- Ryan:** So you have to be discerning, and you have to be loving. And you have to think of your spouse actually, more highly than you think of yourself.
- Selena:** Right. That's a boundary right there. That's hard.
- Ryan:** Here's the key and here's the trigger for that is that when you absolutely want what you want and you're angry and you don't want to give in, that's the key that is now it's time for you to be selfless and to actually think more highly of your spouse than yourself.
- Selena:** Man.
- Ryan:** It's hard. It's going to be difficult. And that's when you know it's time to actually start flexing that muscle a little bit, get that stag bod. *[both laughs]* Hopefully that was helpful.
- Selena:** Yeah. We're going to round this out with just three ways to guard your intimate life. The first one is be rooted in God's purposes for your intimacy. We just went through those three purposes. Knowing God's purposes, I think for your life, and especially for your intimate life is just being in the Word daily. So the second one would be transparent with each other. Struggles, things you enjoy, fears, whatever, you need to be transparent, you need to have conversations, you need to just embrace the awkwardness or the fears and take that first step.

The third one is what we've kind of been talking about most of the time here is guard your intimacy from little foxes, the critters that would sneak into your marriage...

Ryan: Critters! *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: But you said that. That's why I use that word. ...and eat the fruit and spoil it. You know the obvious ones like pornography and emotional affairs. But I think less obvious are the time and priorities, like you said, the margin, the good things that would kind of suck all of your focus and ability to say no to work.

Ryan: Selfishness.

Selena: Selfishness.

Ryan: It's a rampant critter.

Selena: It really it's a big old fox. Big old, fat fox. *[Ryan laughs]*

Ryan: It's a fatty. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: Yeah. So, that lack of intentionality, I think, to love each other and the love language is knowing how your spouse experiences love and giving that even though you don't experience love that way is the one way you can definitely guard your intimate life.

This is rounding out our boundaries conversations we've had. This is number three I think of four. The next week, I think we're going to be talking about in-laws and extended family, because that's pretty much what you guys all write in about anyway. And then I think we're going to do a Q&A. So you may extend this another week, because we did get a lot of questions and we want to sort through those, I think there's some good ones that would be helpful.

Ryan: And I'd love more questions. If you have some questions, text or call in this number. Text is easier to be honest. 971-333-1120. We get those in. I get those in my email inbox, and I can copy and paste them into a question and answer document. Feel free to include your name or not, but just be as clear and concise with your question as you can.

For a couple of conversation challenge around this, I would say try to identify what are those foxes? What are the little foxes that are getting into your vineyard? Think through some of the categories we discussed and then just... maybe think of foxes on your own, and then go to your spouse and say, "Here,

I feel like... Be kind in this and be loving and be tactful, and be patient and all that. But you say, "I read this passage in Songs of Solomon 2, it says, 'catch the foxes for us, little foxes.' It's 2, verse 15. "I read this passage and I feel like maybe there's some foxes that are hindering and eating our fruit in our vineyard." And here's a few that I've noticed. Can we talk about these?" Start there. And try to be really kind and don't like, "The fox is that you're at work and you're...!" Don't throw the book at them, but instead just try to open a [00:50:00] conversation and see where the Holy Spirit leads you, see where the conversation goes. With that said, Selena do you mind praying us out?

Selena: God, thank you so much for this gift of intimacy that you have allowed us to enjoy that doesn't have to ever get old but can just get better with time. Father, I pray that you would give us clarity and discernment, Holy Spirit, around boundaries in this area. Help us to lovingly and patiently embrace each other, but also the flaws that we all have. And this idea of just sex and being together, how do we protect it, God? It is a delicate and beautiful thing. Help us God to honor you in this area of our marriage. In your name. Amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right. So one thing I want to notice, too or at least mention, we haven't talked about kind of what goes and what doesn't go in terms of the marriage bed. Like what are the boundaries within the sexual experience itself. We have covered that at length in the past. But in general, it's anything that's degrading, painful would be off-limits. Anything that's sinful would be off-limits. That's a really clear kind if...

Sex between you and your spouse shouldn't be edifying, it should be mutually enjoyable, it should be an act of service to one another, not an act of one person taking the other person giving. It's an act of mutual generosity and self-sacrifice. That's a huge, huge boundary. If anything you're doing in the marriage bed is selfish and you're forcing your spouse to do something they don't feel comfortable with, they don't want to do by manipulation or otherwise, that is a boundary that you have crossed.

The second one is never invite anyone else into the marriage bed. That sounds obvious. Obviously, we're talking about people, yes, but not just that. Any sort of imagery, any sort of pornography or thoughts. Some people think they have to have pornography, it's okay that pornography as part of their sexual experience as long as it's consensual. That's ridiculous. Pornography is poison. It's sinful.

Selena: On every level.

Ryan: On every level. That's a boundary that is crossed at that point

Selena: Repent and turn away.

Ryan: Yeah. I think those are the big boundaries there. Other than that, inside the marriage bed, there's a lot of leeway. And as you'll read in Song of Solomon, if you read it correctly, there's a lot of colorful language in there in terms of the sexual experience. So the boundary there is, is enjoy yourself, have fun, and be in service of one another. All right.

With that said, this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Thanks for listening, ladies and gentlemen. We'll see you again about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:52:44] <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

- **[00:11:29]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 5:1-5, 15-23

- **[00:17:18]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Song of Solomon 2:8-17

- **[00:30:04]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Corinthians 7:4

FIERCE MARRIAGE RESOURCES

Main Site: <https://fiercemarriage.com/>

Shop: <https://shop.fiercemarriage.com/>

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage>

Podcast: <https://fiercemarriage.com/podcast>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/fiercemarriage>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fiercemarriage>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/fiercemarriage>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/fiercemarriage>

Pinterest: <https://pinterest.com/fiercemarriage>

Ask Us Anything: <https://fiercemarriage.com/ask>