

FIRST THINGS (PRIORITIES, 1 OF 4)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/first-things-priorities-1-of-4>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Fierce Listeners, all right, hear this one thing if you hear nothing else for this episode. If you don't prioritize your life, someone else will. Now, that was a quote by Greg McKeown from a book called "Essentialism." I think it summarizes fairly succinctly what we're trying to get at with this episode and indeed this entire series. And we are covering priorities. What do you think about priorities? Let's say you. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Sometimes I feel like they're really strong and we're nailing it, and then other times I question every single decision in my life. *[both chuckles]* So that's kind of what I'm saying.

Ryan: Real hot and cold. Real hot and cold. I think the reason for that is a lot of people don't truly understand their priorities, let alone what priorities are in general or what they should be.

Selena: Well, should they clash? And if they do, then which one do you choose? Right? It's like-

Ryan: Well, yeah, I think they naturally do clash. But-

Selena: Should they, though?

Ryan: What do you mean?

Selena: Like if you have an order of priorities, shouldn't things go in that order, and then they don't just like work-

Ryan: You mean conflict?

Selena: ...intergratingly, and not be so conflicting with each other?

Ryan: That's a good question. And we're going to talk about that mainly around general priorities. That'll be this episode. And then we're going to get into the weeds in terms of how those priorities filter through into the life of your marriage, your life as a husband, your life as a wife. And so we're hoping to bring some clarity in this area, because now more than ever, we as Christians need to have clear priorities that we are executing with conviction and clarity. And we're going to talk about that today. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:35] <Intro>

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

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

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

Ryan: Priorities—

Selena: Purpose—

Ryan: And everything in between.

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

[00:02:10] <podcast begins>

Selena: I think it's important for us to realize that we do have to fight for our priorities, and we have to set up I think, even boundaries around our priorities. Priorities are sort of setting a boundary, I guess, would be a better way of saying it.

Ryan: Yeah, and defend them. So that's what you're getting at is like it's not something that just happens naturally, it's something that we as Christians, more than any other people group, I would say, have this clarity around what our priorities can be. Because we know what truth is. If we look at God's word and say, this is actually God's word, it's what's important to Him, He's revealed it to us for our life and for our godliness.

Selena: And if we think of our marriage like kind of our backyard, you know, it sounds terrible, but if we're not actively tending to it, weeds are going to take over, chaos of Ivy or whatever terrible things are going to grow. They're just going to grow if left unchecked.

Like you said, if we don't prioritize our life, someone else will. So if we don't decide and then stand up and fight for those things that are going to take effort and time and energy, someone else is going to determine those things

for us. That's not how God wants us to live our lives. He wants to be the determiner of our priorities.

Ryan: Yeah. This episode is called First Things. That's kind of a nod to a philosophical, I don't know, the idea of getting down to the very first cause of thought. And that's a philosophical thing. I'm not going to go there, but it's more so a nod to these as a Christian married couple, again, we're trying to stay on scope there, these are the things that should be the most important to us as individual married people, but also as a couple in unity.

So the breadth of this series is dedicated to unearthing those important things to God, unearthing the important things in our own lives, like what is actually important to us, functionally speaking, what's important to us.

Selena: In light of.

Ryan: And we'll look at Romans 7, where Paul very overtly has a struggle with the things that he hates, but he still does them. He doesn't do the things that he wants to do. We're going to look at that. And then we're going to talk about, again, the unity piece and then how do we practically reorient our priorities and realign how we actually live our lives with what we say we believe and who we profess to be.

So I think this is going to be... I honestly think and I don't mean to be too heavy-handed with this, but I think this is probably the most important issue that married couples are facing today is how to reorient and align our priorities with those of God. Because it's so easy to go off the rails.

And you had said this, but that Greg McKeown quote is if you don't prioritize your life, someone else will. I mean, that couldn't be more viscerally clear than it is now. Think about things like Gmail. We use Gmail. Why is Gmail free? It's a very intelligent email program. [00:05:00] It's free because they want your attention. They want your time. They know you're going to spend time in your inbox. So if they can create a tool for you to use, then they can serve ads to you and they can sell you things.

They know if they can get your time, they can get your attention. And if they get your attention, they can get your heart. If they get your heart, they can get you to spend some money. That's essentially what the surveillance economy is all about. What is it? Shoshana Zuboff wrote a book called "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism." It's on my read list. But I think I know the abstract of it. And it's basically this the idea that these corporations are... it's all about the attention economy. It's not just about money anymore. It's about getting your hearts and minds.

So if we are not mindful, if we aren't standing at the gates and guarding our hearts, guarding the time, guarding how we're spending our energy and where our heart's affections are, that's really the root of it, then we're going to be completely at the culture's whim. We're going to be going however the currents flowing. This isn't a liberal and conservative conversation. We're not going political here.

Selena: Is it a sin?

Ryan: It's a sin and needing Jesus conversation, because we tend to go off the rails on whatever side you happen to be on. And so we're trying to, again, align ourselves with God's Word, with God's character, and then be sanctified and enabled by the Holy Spirit to walk in that. So a very, very long intro. But that's where we're heading.

Before we go there, again, we're talking about priorities. So I want to talk about Gospel Centered marriage. And it's funny because it's called Gospel Centered Marriage. It's our online learning platform. Gospel centered. Why? Because at the center, it's the very, very first thing. In our worldview, in our Christian worldview, it's the very first thing that should matter to us as individuals, and therefore, to us as a married couple. And yet, it's so hard to get couples to understand it's worth spending an hour a month or more specifically building your marriage.

So in the name of that, we're going to offer you a discount for this month, for the duration of this series. We really want you to get on board with gospel center marriage, because I believe that if you can get the foundational pieces right, you can start reorganizing, reorienting yourselves to God's Word, your marriage will flourish. It's amazing how when we submit ourselves to how God designed things to be your marriage will flourish. And we do our very best within Gospel Centered Marriage to show you how God has given us what... excuse me, a second draft here. We're going to show you how God has instructed us to live within our married life as a couple.

So go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com and check out. You can do a monthly thing, or you can do an annual subscription to it. But we'll give you 20% off. How does that sound? Is that a good discount? Do you think that's enticing enough? I'm doing this on the fly. What do you think, Selena? It's a priority, people.

Selena: It is. Do it. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: 20% off. Use the code "Priorities." Right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Priorities. If you don't know how to spell it, look it up. *[laughs]* Okay. Other than that-

Selena: That's every teacher an element.

Ryan: Secondly, if you haven't yet, please make sure and leave a rating and a review for this podcast. It helps us a ton. If you want to join us and lock arms with us in this mission that we're about in Fierce Marriage for your families, go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. And you can read all about that there. We just ask you pray about it, and if God leads you and your family to support our family because this ministry has helped you, the second thing we ask is that you just act on how God leads you. Okay. Let's get into this.

Selena: I think it would be good to kind of lay out the next couple of weeks real quick, too, because that always encourages me when I'm listening to a podcast to know what the series is about. And I can anticipate some of what's coming down the pipeline.

Ryan: We did that a little bit, but we'll do it more clearly here.

Selena: Yeah. So we're talking about priorities. This is a new series on priorities. Today, we're talking about first things from a biblical perspective, and what does the Bible say about priorities? How do we kind of begin to define those? We're going to go through some scripture. Next week, we're going to talk about how eternity determines our priorities now. So heaven, salvation. So kind of the last things, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: How do we calibrate ourselves with the end in mind? The week after that, we're going to talk about unity and priorities. So united in our priorities, how do we find unity as a couple in our priorities? And then the fourth week, how to practice godly priorities in our marriage and as a family. So definitely more tangible tools there.

And then, of course, we'll have our Q&A. So be thinking of questions as you listen to the series. They can come up anytime, so you can text them to 971-333-1120. We'll start collecting those, going through some themes. I think they've been pretty helpful in the past to do this at the end of each series. So we look forward to getting those from you.

Ryan: Yeah, our last Q&A [00:10:00] I think we answered some really challenging... It was all about trust and betrayal. And some really challenging questions come through on that. So that was very fruitful. I'll just say it again in case you missed it. Text in or call this number 971-333-1120. I will say texting is better for us. Short, succinct, clear questions.

On the series, so week two, next week, I'm really excited. The last things. Because I feel like our culture has lost perspective of what... it's going to sound funny. But what it means to die, and what it means to prepare for death as a Christian, and why it's a hopeful thing. It's not a despairing thing. We don't die well. A lot of times, our priorities are misaligned because we never want to deal with it. We don't want to look at it clearly. So I'm excited for that week. And especially how that bears his weight in a marriage, things like making sure that your family is taken care of if you pass away or whatever into eternity.

Selena: It puts into perspective and really prioritizes eternal things.

Ryan: But otherwise you despair, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But otherwise you're...

Selena: But sometimes I don't think we come to those conclusions fast enough. And I feel like I wish... And maybe that's just an age and maturity thing. Like we're almost in our 40s, so now we're like, "Oh, yeah..." You know, that midlife crisis thing.

Sometimes I wish I would have had more of a call in my 20s to live more fiercely, I guess, in my priorities and not just about kind of the here and now but there and then in light of the gospel, and what does that mean. God's sovereign. But I hope that conversation will be helpful next week. I'm excited about it.

Ryan: Cool. So here's the big problem. A lot of onboarding here today, so bear with us. I promise-

Selena: We're starting a new series. It's fine.

Ryan: The big problem here is that as Christians we live our lives in a certain way. And yet, oftentimes, the way we live our actual lives does not align with the way we... Two things. We either want to live according to God's word or we don't want to live but we should be living. Okay. So there is a dissonance or disconnect.

When I say dissonance... I want to be clear. There's harmonics in music, right? You have notes that complement each other because of their wavelength that has to do with the physics of sound and why different curves complement each other. Well, dissonance happens when say you have two notes that are like a half note away. They're really close, they're not in harmony with one another. It sounds horrible. It creates this like...

Selena: Maybe to you. But other people might sound really creative.

Ryan: No, no, no. Actually, no. Actually, I push back on that. There are, yes, fringe avant-garde, there's even parts of like I was in the middle a lot. They would use Stinger notes, which are like dissonant notes that are meant to create kind of that tension. But they do that specifically to create tension. And so I would argue that we are hardwired as human beings—this is a sidebar—to enjoy certain types of resonance and not dissonance. Dissonance causes weird emotional and even biological discomfort. That's what I mean by dissonance is that it's not as it shouldn't be. Things in our life are not as they should be.

So as I was thinking through this, I thought, why... you know, obviously, yes, we're falling, we have this sin nature, we have our flesh. That is the entirety of my Christian life is being made new. All right. When we place our faith in Christ, there is a resurrection that happens, a new birth. We become a new creation and we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

And now there is an ongoing walking out, that truth that it's already but not yet. And we will not be perfect. We will not be perfectly sanctified, perfectly holy, just as Christ as holy. We are positionally holy before the Holy God. That's justification. But the sanctification is an ongoing lifelong process. So there is that and I'll give you that.

But I'm still thinking, I'm scratching my head, why is it that when we want something that we don't do that thing? Why is it that when I don't want to eat a whole carton of ice cream, *[laughs]* but yet I do it? I'm kidding. I know why I do that. It tastes delicious. That's just it. I'm joking, and I was going to get to this, but my point is that it all comes down to appetites, cravings, and desires. And it comes down to different layers of appetites, cravings, and desires. And I like the words cravings and appetites because I feel like those words really capture the primacy of where those desires come from. Right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And if you think about people who are addicted to something, there's something physiologically that's happened there that is leading [00:15:00] to

craving and the desire and appetite. And it's primal. And I don't mean that from a non-biblical standpoint. I just mean that we have this flesh that is actively leading us one way or another. And as Christians, we're called to walk in step with the Holy Spirit, not according to our flesh, and not according to our baseline primal sort of desires.

Selena: Just, you know, how primal and priority start with P-R-I.

Ryan: Because they're first.

Selena: Primary.

Ryan: And that goes back to the Latin I'm sure on some level, right? *[Selena chuckles]* They are the first kind of desires. And you think of food, right? Foods that are fatty and sugary, those are meant to kind of make you want them because there's a lot more calories in there. And I feel like God designed it in some way to help us have enough sustenance for our lives. But because of the modern technology and things like that, now we have way more access to fats and sugars. So we have things happening there.

You can take that same line of thinking into things like entertainment. Super stimulating things. Entertainment music, they've gotten just so stimulating. Does that make sense?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And so they plague those desires because they're trying to get us to spend our lives on them.

Selena: To prioritize them.

Ryan: To prioritize them. And that is the essence of priorities is what are you going to spend your life on? Your time, your energy, your money, your opportunity cost?

Selena: Because if you ask someone who's probably not a believer, they're going to have a very different answer than someone who is a believer, obviously. But that helps me if you compare and contrast kind of what the answers would be based on their beliefs, which is why we harp on that courts so much here at Fierce Marriage, and fierce all the things. Because beliefs should inform our behaviors and our behaviors should inform and reflect and glorify God. They should be informative to us to glorify God.

- Ryan:** I'm going to take what you said, I'm going to put a small tweak on it. Our beliefs absolutely do inform our behaviors. The question is, what are true beliefs? Because you get people... If you're in the Bible belt or the cultural Christianity is kind of a thing—it's not kind of a thing, it is a thing—you'll talk to somebody says, "Are you a Christian?" "Yeah, I'm a Christian. I haven't been to church in years, and I don't live my life like a Christian, but I grew up one."
- Selena:** "I believe in God."
- Ryan:** "Call me that. I'm fine with it." Like your beliefs are not what you say they are. You calling yourself a Christian does not align with what it actually means to be a follower of Christ, which is what Christian actually means. And so all of our efforts, like you were saying, are around actually conforming our beliefs to the truth of God so that the behaviors in our lives will be fruitful and will events those beliefs.
- Selena:** So if we are forming our decisions, we are asking God to work... I just envisioned like, okay, let's just pause and we're thinking about priorities, you're listening to this podcast, you're looking at your own marriage, and you're just going to hit pause. How do I begin to identify like God's priorities in our marriage? Do we have right order of things? And what does that even mean? It's a calls for question on every level.
- So we got to first identify God's priorities. What does God desire? How does he order things? He is a God of order. And His order is not arbitrary. Like there's-
- Ryan:** And it's supreme.
- Selena:** It's supreme, yes. Sorry, I was just thinking of the verse in Proverbs. He gives us the desires of our heart.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart.
- Selena:** Delight yourself in the Lord. It's where our desires are more aligned with His desires. And then our desires become His desires. We desire things that He desires for us.
- Ryan:** Yeah. I think we have that Proverb in our scripture section. We have like 10 or 12 different scriptures we're going to go through.
- Selena:** Real quick. *[laughs]*

Ryan: The reason we're spending all this time upfront... Hopefully, you're still with us. But the reason we're doing that is because you have a brain, listener and you have a life. And we are not your brain and we are not living in your life. And so I'm hoping that by talking in these ways, we can get you to think more deeply and more biblically about your priorities. And then you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit and your spouse, figure this stuff out.

Because what you don't need is for Ryan and Selena Frederick in the Pacific Northwest, living in a certain day and age in a certain culture to tell you what God is calling you to. Yes, there are some universal priorities we have as Christians, we're going to talk through those, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty of like what you're spending your life doing, that's going to be between you and God. *[Selena laughing]*

Selena: Nitty-gritty. That's not... I mean-

Ryan: Sorry.

Selena: It's also big things.

Ryan: But it comes down to execution and actually living your life on that mission. That's going to come down to you and your spouse doing so in unity and according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. That's why we're spending time kind of defining priorities in general. [00:20:00]

Selena: I think it's a good conversation and it's good for all of us to hear people talking about it and around it and to try to pin this down just a little bit more so that we can use our minds to the glory of God. So identifying God's priorities. What are the best things to spend our life on?

Ryan: Well, we're going to get into that further on. This is an overview.

Selena: Just kidding. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: So let's actually go into-

Selena: I'll follow you, my love.

Ryan: It's okay. I was doing the same thing. But we're going to go into this part here, number five. So we've talked about the concept of priorities, we've talked about the need for good priorities. Now let's get a little bit up from that deep thinking here for a minute and think, how do we actually define priorities functionally in our lives?

So I would look at it like this? What are the things in your life that take precedent over everything else? When it comes down to it, what are the things that take precedent over everything else? If something has to give, what is the thing that does not give? Does that make sense?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Everything else would give around it. The trick here is that we have kind of our idealized version of that answer and we have the actual answer. And so we're trying to get down to what is the actual thing that when it comes down to it, I will not, you know... that way I can actually get at what's actually important to me and then I can see how God maybe needs to rework that in my own heart and take that heart of stone, and put in a heart of flesh in that area.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's one way to look at it. This is another way to look at it defining your own priorities. What are the things, people, or ideas you would pay the most for? And here's what I mean by that. Not paying with money, but paying with the biggest cost. So time, energy, resources, and yes, opportunity cost?

Selena: So, that is?

Ryan: Like things you're giving up to do the things.

Selena: What you'll lose out on.

Ryan: Yes. So all the other things that you're skipping to do, or be with, or participate in whatever the thing is.

Selena: Don't let FOMO set in, people. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Well, I mean that's-

Selena: *[inaudible]* causes the bedrock FOMO. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: And that's why comparison is such a big deal because comparison would distract you. When you're on a path and you're feeling fine in that path, and all of a sudden, there's a shiny object off the left of that path, well, you say, "Oh, I want the shiny object, because everybody else has that shiny object." I'm using an analogy, of course.

Selena: It's our four-year-old right now. This is her life. *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** But then what happens if that shiny object is out of reach?
- Selena:** Or it's not on the path that God has for you?
- Ryan:** That's the given is that is off the path. It's out of reach. In other words, so you're now having to go off the path, but now you're sacrificing everything else so you can reach it.
- Selena:** All the things that you had maybe initially said, "I'm not going to sacrifice."
- Ryan:** So financially, this always comes to bear in people's lives. Like you want the house that looks like all the houses you look at on Instagram, Pinterest, or in your friend circle. And so you go into debt to get the house. Not just the house, but to remodel or to decorate or to whatever. That's just a clear example of that.
- Here's how we always say. If you're wondering, hey, what are my actual priorities? Here's the clearest way to know your priorities. We always say this: If you want to know someone's true priorities, you don't ask, you don't ask them. Instead, you look at their calendar and you look at their bank account. So you can clearly know your own priorities listener by looking at how you spend your time and how you spend your money.
- Selena:** It's not always been a good report for us either. *[both laughs]* It's so telling. And you can justify it away but the truth is, is that we spend our most precious resources on those things that we prioritize and that we desire. What did you say? Are you looking at Luke or Matthew?
- Ryan:** It's Matthew 6:21, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." That's a biblical concept. Like where you're spending money and your time-
- Selena:** And it's why we are called to guard our heart as well. The Bible says, "Guard your heart."
- Ryan:** Well, because it's a wellspring of life. And so yes, some things that get into your heart tend to well up into... it's a different take on the heart. But the things that go into your heart tend to well up into fruit. And if you're putting poison in your heart, you're going to have poisoned fruit, you're going to have rotting fruit.
- Selena:** And this is not talking about that?
- Ryan:** It's saying that, well, the things that you're putting your heart into is an indicator. So one of them is prescriptive, one of them is descriptive.

- Selena:** Got you.
- Ryan:** So one of them is prescribing you to guard your heart, the other one is saying, "Listen, where your treasure is, there your heart is also."
- Selena:** Describing what happens.
- Ryan:** Describing what's already happened.
- Selena:** Good job. Go you!
- Ryan:** So, yeah, we have to be really careful we're not being wishful in how we're analyzing ourselves. Here's the thing. With your bank account, you can go... and there's no like masking it. You can just go... and if you take the time to look at it-
- Selena:** And there's ways you can even organize it.
- Ryan:** Yeah. For a little while, we were using mint.com. And that was-
- Selena:** To show you how much you spent on food, how much you spend on clothing or just on Amazon, which Lord knows how much you've spent and what you've actually spent on that. That is do easy to... [00:25:00]
- Ryan:** In fact, I was... I'm going to try to find it here. I was reading an article on the New York Times, and it was all about how people have spent their money. The article is called "What We Spent in a Month." It's one of these interactive articles that they do, which is very interesting. It was intriguing to me to see that people would spend more on caring for their pets than they would spend on their own mortgage payment. And it's not like it's way out of line. So I'm trying to find the example that I'm using right now.
- Selena:** I mean, I could tell you right now. From the beginning of our marriage when we had well-paying jobs, and I owned a horse, how easily we spent money and how quickly it went over what our mortgage was. We would pay a third of our mortgage just to have a house. And then that doesn't include like the feed and all the-
- Ryan:** Mmmm, I don't like this. I'm trying to get the cold sweats. *[both chuckles]* I'm trying to get cold sweat. And you know what? It was interesting how much tension that caused in our marriage. Because it just all trickled down because I didn't have the same set of priorities as you. And therefore, there was a conflict in priorities. I think that's an interesting microcosm. I'm not able to

find the one I was talking about. Oh, yeah, pet care. There it is. Of course, \$739 on pet care, their mortgage was \$584.

Selena: Well, that's not horse boarding. Like they had horse boarding organized-

Ryan: That's not included.

Selena: Yeah. And I mean, things come up, right? Things come up. But if that's like a consistent priority, I don't know. There's just things you got to-

Ryan: Well, they said, "We pay monthly fee for vet appointments and their shots." They have big dogs, they get groomed every other month. "But we love our dogs, we do anything for them." That's the priority statement. You love your dogs to the tune of more than your mortgage and even your utilities on top of that.

Selena: It's interesting what we sacrifice for priorities.

Ryan: And I don't mean that to be a judgement statement on what their priorities are. That's not the point. What I'm trying to illustrate is that you can know someone's priorities by how they spend their money.

Selena: We know our own priorities by how we spend our money.

Ryan: Yes, yes. And we can know our own priorities by how we spend our time. Time is a lot more elusive. Because you have to be very honest with yourself about how you spend your time because no one's going to audit your time but you. So if I audit my day, and I've been trying to get my workdays down, and I'm finding that the easiest way to get my workday down is just to not be distracted.

Selena: Imagine that.

Ryan: But the thing is, is focused work, I call it like a burns really hot like when you're working really focusedly. *[both laughs]* You get words like that.

Selena: Without distractions.

Ryan: Without distraction, I can only do it for two, three, four hours at a time. But if I'm distracted, then I can kind of meander throughout the day and work for... "work," quote-unquote, for eight to nine hours.

Selena: This gives me the sweat. *[both laughs]*

- Ryan:** Anyway! So point being is if you want to know your priorities, that's how you look at them.
- Selena:** It's a good indicator.
- Ryan:** That's how we look at our own priorities. What are good priorities?
- Selena:** "Good" being defined as biblical or just good in general?
- Ryan:** I'm going to say just good in terms of... Well, let's see. So it's one thing to identify your priorities, another to say whether they're good and right. So we can look at them and say, wow, pets are our priority, or whatever the thing is.
- Selena:** Buying books.
- Ryan:** Now ask yourself—now that's a judgment call—is it good? Is it right? And there's kind of conventional wisdom that can help us. God's word doesn't say, don't spend more than x percentage of your budget on pets or on books.
[Selena laughs]
- Ryan:** Do you want a greenlight on this? *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** It makes Ryan uncomfortable. You are just going to find books.
- Ryan:** I don't mind finding books as long as you read the books, which you do.
- Selena:** I do.
- Ryan:** Shockingly, you read all those books. On bottom are kids' books, though.
- Selena:** Heeeey. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** I read over 150 books this year. *[Selena laughs]* Some of them I read twice. 10 times. Goodnight Moon. I read that one like a baker's dozen a month.
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness.
- Ryan:** That's the judgment call. Because a lot of times we don't have clear directives from God's word on what our priorities should be. Instead, we're called to live lives of wisdom.
- Selena:** And discernment, I would argue.
- Ryan:** And discernment, yeah.

Selena: Discernment from the Holy Spirit. We can't underestimate that. I think we can tend to take too much agency in the area of discernment. I think we really need to sit and wait for the Holy Spirit on some things and not be so uncomfortable in the waiting. It's my own journey, folks.

Ryan: Okay. So we're getting closer to the scripture piece, which we will get there. But the bottom line here when it comes to discerning good priorities that aren't necessarily clear in Scripture, we need to put on our Christian worldview glasses.

Selena: Should never take them off. Why are they off? *[chuckles]*

Ryan: We need to make sure that they're in tune and looking clean, I must say. *[chuckles]* *[Selena laughs]* [00:30:00] And then we need to recognize very clearly that we don't care... As Christians, we don't. It's not we shouldn't, but we don't. As Christians, we don't care about the same things the world cares about. We don't have the same operator's manual when it comes to this.

Selena: Yes!

Ryan: And so we have to make consumer decisions, time decisions, commitment decisions. We always say that every decision in parenting is discipleship. And this is a function of this Christian worldview piece where it's like, yeah, our kids maybe want to do a sport every quarter, whenever sports are up, or they want to do all these different things, and we say, "Well, that's a discipleship question." Is that going to take away from our ability to disciple you? Or is that going to disciple you in a different direction? We have to use discernment because again, the Bible doesn't give us clarity on some of that stuff.

So the question then becomes, okay, how do we now calibrate our hearts and our households according to Scripture? So let's look specifically at what the Bible calls our first things and then we can kind of go from there. And here's the philosophical meaning I was trying to get at early on is "first things are axiomatic truths that can't be reduced down any further."

In other words, what are the very baseline most important things in the Christian life? That's what we're going to get at now. And then from there, we're going to come back out of it and you listener can go apply wisdom as you do an audit on your own priorities in your life. Does that sound a good path?

Selena: Mm-hmm.

- Ryan:** Okay. Let's do Hebrews 12:1.
- Selena:** "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." That's so good. So good.
- Sorry, I just love the part that there was joy that was set before him. And so he despised the shame as he's embracing the joy. So good.
- Ryan:** Yeah. In Hebrews is all about kind of establishing the supremacy of Christ over his church, as the supreme priest over the church and, and calling believers to live out that reality. And so, if you remember, we are the Church of Christ in that sense, that we are the body of Christ. So he's saying, you're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, you're surrounded by people who have lived out this faith in this way, so let us also, just like they did it... that's talking to us.
- We're not in the Hebrew church, so to speak, but we are beneficiaries of this wisdom and the same church lineage that we're a part of. "Let us also lay aside every weight." Weight and sin. Why is weight and sin different? And maybe there's some things that some burdens we bear that aren't sinful, but they're just heavy. And maybe you need to put those things down. I'm going to speak very directly and succinctly [*chuckles*] and hopefully-
- Selena:** Hopefully.
- Ryan:** Maybe that mortgage is causing stress because it's too big for you. Maybe you can't afford it. Maybe that car payment, because you thought you wanted the car so badly. You don't want to take the car back because it's depreciated to a certain point and you're embarrassed because you just bought it a few months ago, you realizing that it's too much to bear.
- Selena:** You are an anomaly in this sense, because I will make him return things because I'm just full of shame and regret. [*laughs*]
- Ryan:** "I'm here to return a car but you have to sell it."
- Selena:** No. Right. But he can take anything back to like Costco and not have any regrets about things.
- Ryan:** I one time returned something to Costco that I didn't even buy at Costco. [*both laughs*]

Selena: He didn't mean to. We thought we got it at Costco. Apparently, we did not. But they honored it and it was very kind of them.

Ryan: They were like, "Here's 20 bucks." I was like, "That works." And I got home and I realized, "Oh, I bought that on Amazon. You bought it on Amazon."

Selena: Yes, it was me. But it's not always easy for us is what I'm saying to lay aside every weight. We can get comfortable with the weight and then we just feel like we're getting stronger instead of really pressing into the Lord and asking Him to be our strength and to be our guide in these areas.

Ryan: Another idea of a weight would be those relationships that you are claiming too much control over. What I mean by that is that you think it's up to you to help that person ultimately. That's a heavy burden to bear.

We just did this on Fierce Parenting. Excuse me. We had an Instagram quote, and it was "You be the parent, let God be God." That's a heavyweight to try and be God for your children. That's a heavyweight to try and be God for your spouse.

Selena: You can only lay out the feast in front of them but you cannot make them eat. And it's a hard thing to do because we can allow time energy, emotions, all of that to be sucked up by how can we try to show them Jesus in the best way? [00:35:00] And I'm not saying those are bad questions.

But if it's consuming us like it has consumed me for family members, I want them to know Jesus, I want them to live in freedom, and I want them to be with me in heaven, and I don't want their soul to go to hell. These are heavy, big, eternal things that I can only pray for. I can definitely bear witness and I cannot shy away from conversations, but ultimately, I cannot make that decision for them.

Ryan: The converse of that is that you might feel the weight of their approval more than God's approval.

Selena: Right. And that definitely plays into priorities. Like you just said, with cars and houses and decision, there's a lot of financial decisions, we definitely play into the fear of man.

Ryan: Or going to church because you can't handle a contentious relationship. You get the sense of how we can heap upon ourselves weights that would slow us down, that would take us off course or even halt our progress in terms of

Christian life. Now, let's move on. Set aside every weight and sin. Hear that? We talked about sin a lot simply in the last four weeks.

Selena: Trusting each other.

Ryan: But setting aside that sin, that's a huge, huge directive there. Setting aside sin. If you're addicted to something, coming clean with that, dealing with it, getting counseling, getting help, getting accountability, setting aside that unforgiveness. That's a tall order.

Selena: Starting over.

Ryan: And remember Hebrews is all about the supremacy of Christ. We have to lean into Him, we have to lean on Him, trust Him.

Selena: And live in him.

Ryan: Live in Him, be found in Him. Okay. Here it is. Which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder, and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

I mean, we don't have to spend any more time on this, but let us run with endurance the race, looking to Jesus. So that's the big question we're answering the next four weeks is what is the race? And how can we look to Jesus as a couple?

Selena: He modeled how to run the race. For the joy that was set before him. So are we seeing the eternal things right, which we'll talk about next week, are we seeing that joy that's set before us? Are we despising kind of the shame and sin and brokenness in the world? Are we seeing it rightly? And then are we making decisions based on that sin and making those a priority?

Ryan: On our good days, and here I'm just going to speak personally, on my good days, I think I do like see that rightly. The habits and the priorities that I have in place aren't always lending themselves to helping me see that thing rightly. And so it comes down to priorities to make sure that those things are actually first things right.

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." That one kind of speaks for itself. Seek first the kingdom, you guys. What does it mean? God's perfection, God's plan, God's mission, discipleship, namely, Christ called us in Matthew... I forget. I think it's the Great Commission. "Go therefore make disciples of all nations."

Be fruitful. I know that was... Be fruitful in different way. Make disciples of all nations. That's the kind of the first seeking first the Kingdom. That's running the race.

Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." I love that in light of the cravings conversation, and the primacy of those cravings, and how when we are a new creation the Holy Spirit now becomes the wellspring of our desires.

Selena: We hunger and thirst no longer for the things of this world, but the things of God.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Which ultimately defines our priorities.

Ryan: And that's the delighting yourself in the Lord. And that He will give you birth in you have those desires, and well them up from your heart, because now He is in your heart, and He's the one informing that. So we're hungering and thirsting for righteousness. I mean, when you're thirsty, when you're really thirsty... And our daughters really good at this. When they're thirsty, the world stops.

Selena: Yeah. Like even just an ounce of kind of feeling thirsty or thinking about feeling thirsty, it's like-

Ryan: I'm like, "You just had water like two minutes ago. You're fine."

Selena: "I'm thirsty."

Ryan: "Daddy, I'm thirsty." And they start getting... it turns out how tired they are. But they are. *[Selena laughs]* The point being is that when you're hungry for something, you have a craving or you have a thirst for something, you'd pay any price for that thing. You would stop at nothing to get water, to get that thing that you're craving. Matthew 5:6. You want to read that one.

Selena: Blessed are those who hunger and...

Ryan: We just read that. Sorry.

Selena: I was like, "That sounds familiar." Luke 14:25, it talks about the cost of discipleship. And Jesus said in verse 26, [00:40:00] "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does

not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." You were saying he was speaking hyperbolically?

Ryan: Well, yeah. I mean, he wasn't saying literally go hate your father and mother.

Selena: Yeah, because that contrasts with honor your father and mother.

Ryan: I'm saying when if anyone comes to me and in comparison does not basically desire following me so much so that it looks... other affections almost look like hate because there's so much... I mean, think about the idea of whoever does not bear his own cross, come after me. He's not saying literally bear across. He's creating an image and an impression of this is going to be the greatest cost of your life. It will lead to dying to yourself, dying to your own desires, dying to your other relationships as you know them.

Selena: Dying to the approval of others and those desires, like he said.

Ryan: And that is the cost of discipleship. And we talked about the priorities being that thing, person, or idea that you will pay anything for.

Selena: Right. And Jesus is saying, "This is what it is."

Ryan: He's saying, "I am that person."

Selena: "I am that person." Thank you.

Ryan: "My resurrection is the event. My kingdom is the idea that will cost you everything and it's the only thing. Who was it who said... I can't remember. He says, "Wise is the man who gives up that which you cannot keep to obtain that which you cannot lose." Something to that effect.

Selena: I don't know who said it.

Ryan: If you know, send us a message.

Selena: I just want to go back real quick to Matthew 6:33 about seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. This whole section is talking about "Do not be anxious about your life." It's the part where "look at the birds of the air., they neither sow nor reap, and don't be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself."

I think it's interesting that he's giving this order, this priority, seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, all these things will be added to you of what you will eat and drink and all of those things. But God's kingdom, Him, God,

He is first. When He is first, everything else falls into place, which is why we talk about like gospel-centered marriage. Seeking first the things of God, then these other things of like communication and intimacy, they will start falling into place and they will be added, they will grow.

And then it says you don't have to be anxious because when you're seeking God's kingdom first, the anxiety will fall to the wayside because you're not so worried about what Joe thinks down the road of your house or what Paulie [*chuckles*] thinks of your car when you're taking the kids to school.

Ryan: Hey, Paulie. Hey Paulie-

Selena: It might be so terrible.

Ryan: ...leave my car.

Selena: But because you are rooted, your priorities are rooted in seeking God's kingdom first, in seeking His righteousness first, those things don't matter as much as they used to. And it has been a journey for us personally to come to those truths and to then step into them and live out of them.

Ryan: This is one of those passages I wish it would have gone back a few verses.

Selena: I know.

Ryan: Two verses ahead, it says "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" Jesus is talking, he said, "For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the..."

So He's not just dismissing everything else. He's saying, "Yeah, your father's got you covered. You, okay, you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other things, your worries, will be added..."

Selena: It's amazing how culture has shifted that. Let's get your attention on all these other things. What you can eat? What are you going to wear? You have 5,000 different options. It's like, let's consume you.

Ryan: And the Gentiles could do that. And that's what you're saying is that culture does all that.

Selena: I know. I'm just trying to put it into a modern day.

Ryan: Right. And I'm just bolstering what you're saying in that the same culture does this. You do something different. You do something different.

Selena: As believer and follower of me.

Ryan: Okay, now, thinking about marriage, you think about your communication. I think of the spouse or the husband, or the wife, who's listening to this, saying...

Selena: If you're married. *[laughs]*

Ryan: You're saying, "I want my marriage to be better. Our communications horrible. I want..." You know, whatever that thing that's tearing you apart you want to be made whole, you want it to be fixed. Maybe Jesus is saying like, "Don't be anxious about that thing. Instead, seek first the kingdom and righteousness." I'm not saying don't work on that. But I'm saying seek first. I don't know.

It's not the tendency to stop seeking wholeness or healing or health in that area, biblically speaking, it just means that you don't put those things at the pinnacle of your existence or the pinnacle of your problem-solving.

Selena: I think that goes back to kind of part [00:45:00] of our trust conversation, right? Like our trust in betrayal. We start trying to trust in the things that are around us instead of trusting in Him who has given us these things. We trust in this next book that we're going to read or we trust in like how can I fix this problem right now? Instead of recognizing maybe it's a really deep problem and maybe you need to go to the source and the king and the Creator, and the Knower of all the depths, all the complexities and everything that makes this issue messy. And not just go to the issue and try to take it on by yourself, but actually go to the king who can lead and instruct you and transform you in ways that you just can't. You can't transform yourself.

Ryan: So it's giving up of controlling. And that's the cruciform cross. So trusting God to be God?

Selena: And to do. Yes.

Ryan: So good. We can keep unpacking that. Let's work through these other scriptures really quickly. Let's see. John 12:25, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Revelation 12:11, " And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

Selena: Are we living our lives and do our priorities reflect this? That is a challenge, my friends. Ooh.

Ryan: I don't have the passage up in front of me but I'm thinking of the whole Golden Rule thing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. That's a prioritizing for us.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, as Christians, I want to at least put a stake in the ground here, and we'll continue building on this. As Christians here our priorities. We tend to see these as concentric circles, not a priority list.

Selena: Like a target.

Ryan: Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. First, that's pretty clear. That's our first priority: the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, sanctification. Jesus, God himself that God's law is good and filled with grace. But also it is by grace, we have been saved through faith and it's by Christ alone. Seek that first.

Selena: Seek Him first.

Ryan: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is very clear. That's the first. Now, where do we go from there? Love others as yourself. Make disciples of the nations. Those have to do with relationships with others. I believe neighbor has a radiating effect. My first neighbor is my wife. My next neighbors are my kids. My little disciples that we're making.

Our next neighbors, geographically speaking, are right across the street, are right next door, or the people that I spend the most time with, the friends that are close, Christian and non. They're my neighbors. And so now I'm loving them as I would want to be loved myself. And then outside of that, then it's experiencing God's grace, extending his glory.

So things that you enjoy are good. God has given you things you enjoy for His glory. So if you love hunting or you like fishing or you like going to the gym, or you like... whatever that thing is, this doesn't mean you can't do it. We're saying, in right order, that thing is going to give God the Most glory. It's going to give you the most joy. And it's not a to-do list of checking off Jesus first.

Then I called my buddy and say, "Go to church," and then now I can go and do the thing I actually want to do. No, it's everything radiates from putting Christ at the center of your life and seeking Him first in everything. So there's freedom there. It just takes a reorienting of our hearts. Not just a reorienting

of our time and our expenses, but a reorienting of our hearts. And that's a massive thing.

Let's get really practical here. So how can you identify your true priorities as a couple? And this is the couple's conversation challenge. I have a litmus test that I like to use. I say it's like a red flag. Look at whatever you fight about. *[laughs]* What do you typically fight about? What stresses you? You might not fight about it. But what stresses you?

Selena: You. I'm kidding. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: They're one and the same.

Selena: Only sometimes you stress me out. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: Just a hint. That can kind of put you on the trail toward whatever that priority is or whatever that disordered love is. There it is.

And then the next one's very practical. Look at your calendar in the past month, the past quarter, how have you spent your time? Thinking daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, how have you parsed out the time that the Lord gave you over the last year?

And then secondly, look at your bank account. If we just had a conversation with you, you could probably say, "Oh, yeah, this is the things I care about." I don't want to hear that. We want you to know what are your true priorities.

And over the coming weeks, we're going to be talking through what are the best priorities biblically speaking for a married couple by looking at last things, in other words, having an internal perspective, and how do we gain unity [00:50:00] around those things? And then how do we practically start making headway? That'll be the fourth week of this series.

As a reminder, if you have any questions around priorities—this is a vast topic. We can go a lot of different directions with this. So we want to make sure that we're addressing the questions you have—please text or call in, text is better, 971-333-1120. You can submit your questions. Usually, I do an Instagram story or something asking for questions. But that won't be till later in the month. So the sooner you get those questions in the better likelihood of us answering it or at least addressing it is. With that said, Selena you want to pray for us as we head out?

Selena: Oh, sure. God, thank you for Your grace and goodness in our lives. May we submit our life, our idea of priorities, our desires, God, everything about us.

May we submit them to You. May we lay them at the cross and allow You to give us what you want us to steward over. Father, may we not just choose all the time and decide for ourselves and live in our own agency. But may we live with you with the gospel at the center of our lives. Teachers what that means. Father, give us wisdom.

May we read your word daily and be changed by it. Thank you for all the marriages listening, I pray that there would be clarity and discernment and wisdom and questions being asked without fear and confidence to address those concerns and brokenness, to have confidence in You that You can restore and that there's a path forward. In Your name, amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right. As a reminder, we're going to have a bonus... What is it called? A discount? There it is. ...for gospel centered marriage. You can get 20% off for this month while we're doing this priority series. We want this to be something that we're helping you tangibly with to reorient yourselves around the Word of God in your marriage. So just use the coupon code... What was it? "Priorities" on gospelcenteredmarriage.com. Go there. You can do monthly or an annual pass. Your choice. But use the coupon code "priorities" to get 20% off. And we hope that blesses you and we hope to see you in there.

I think this month, we're going to be doing some Zoom, at least one Zoom session with the folks in GCM. So gospelcentermarriage.com, priorities. All right. With that, this episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Thanks, ladies and gentlemen. We'll see you in about seven days. So until then—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:52:37] <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

- **[00:31:31]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Hebrews 12:1
 - Matthew 6:33
 - Matthew 5:6
 - Luke 14:25
 - John 12:25
 - Revelation 12:11

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