

**THE FREEDOM IN FINDING UNITY (PRIORITIES, 3 OF 4)**

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-freedom-in-finding-unity-priorities-3-of-4>

- Ryan:** Every no is a yes. In other words, anytime you say no to something, you're actually saying yes to something that's more important than that thing. So many people view defining priorities as a constricting activity, something that takes away from their life. But I would argue, and I think you would argue too, that the opposite is true. That when you live by a bound set of unchanging, immovable priorities, or first things, as we've talked about, I would say your life expands, your freedom multiplies and your joy becomes overwhelming. Do you agree with that?
- Selena:** I do. I think I might interchange the word expands to deepens. Because expanding stresses me out a little bit, that word. But "going deeper" seems like a more accurate term. But yes, I fully 100% agree with that thought there.
- Ryan:** It enriches your life. Is that better? It infuses your life with richness?
- Selena:** Deepens.
- Ryan:** Depth, okay *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Like a seed going in the dirt.
- Ryan:** Okay, get it. Okay. So in the last two weeks, we've covered first things and last things. Hopefully to create really clear, not bookends, I think first things was really talking about the idea of priorities. Last things was seeing ourselves in an eternal context. Which is completely, eternally changing for us as people of Christ. And today, we're looking at, okay, now we've talked about those things, how can we be in unity? And what is the value and necessity of unity, as a married couple, around these priorities? I'm really excited for this talk, and we'll see you on the other side.
- [00:01:34] <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.

**[00:02:08]** <Podcast begins>

**Selena:** Didn't you take a poll a while ago, that talked about how priorities was one of the biggest issues that couples struggle with? Because, I think, obviously, you can't find unity around what should be a priority, and what should not be. And so we, the last few weeks, talked about first things, I think, kind of filter through or help you filter through what some of those first things should be, and why they should be? That is because of the last things.

**Ryan:** Yes. Here's the trick, though, is yes, we did take a poll. And a lot of couples don't understand, and I mean this sincerely, not trying to speak over from high above. But most couples don't understand that the source of their conflict, is almost always going to be some underlying disordered love or misplaced priority.

So they're going to say, "Listen, we always struggle with communication." Well, the reason you struggle with communication is because you haven't prioritized that in your marriage. So either you're just misfiring or you haven't done the work, you haven't given yourself the space to do it.

So a lot of couples don't understand that. So I would argue that it's probably the most important thing, I think I said this in the last episode, but it's the most important thing. That's why we always talk about beliefs first. Listen, if you get your beliefs right, if you get your heart right, you trust the Lord, you live your lives according to His Word, I'm pretty confident, I mean, I staked my whole life on this, that the rest of the pieces will fall into place. Not that everything would be perfect, because we're still sinners, and fallen, and all that. But that tends to be where I hang my hat.

**Selena:** I agree.

**Ryan:** So getting that unity is tricky. Because here we are two individuals, here you are listener, you have your own opinions, your own desires. Your spouse came

into your marriage with their own opinions, their own desires. And some of the times those desires started out aligned, they've been misaligned since, or they never were aligned in the first place. And so here we're talking about how to actually get and be unified as one, in the area of your priorities.

**Selena:** Well, and to take one step further into that, we're going to talk about why it's imperative that you are in agreement with your spouse around priorities. What they are, why they should be in place, because there is freedom and joy to be had there. And I think just a deeper understanding of purpose, and identity. So we will get into that in just a few minutes. But-

**Ryan:** Housekeeping, we all love to do it. If you haven't done this yet, please do subscribe, or follow, I think they changed the terminology recently.

**Selena:** Oh no!

**Ryan:** Oh no. So however you get your podcasts, just make sure you keep getting them. Because you know what, we're going to keep showing up. And hopefully, many of these episodes will help you in ways that are lasting beyond just the 45 minutes that you give us your ears. So make sure you like, subscribe, follow, leave a comment, leave a rating, leave a review. If you haven't done it, and you've gotten any benefit out of this podcast, that would be a really small way to show us that we've helped you, helps others as well.

If you want to lock arms with us, you can do that. And what I mean by that is being a financial partner with us. So we don't have a lot of ads, we've done one ad series on this podcast in the last four years, we've done maybe a few little, I don't know, pitches here and there. The point is, is that's not the lion's share of Ryan and Selena Frederick's support for this. That comes from our lovely patrons on [patreon.com/fierce marriage](https://patreon.com/fierce-marriage). There are benefits, namely, you get to call yourself complicit with everything that we're doing. You can say "I'm a part of that. Listen, you hear that awesome episode..."

**Selena:** For better, for worse.

**Ryan:** "Yeah, I'm a part of that. I support that." So go to [patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://patreon.com/fiercemarriage), we'd be honored to have your partnership there. Finally, in light of our priorities theme over the last few weeks, and the next few weeks. We're offering a discount on our Gospel Centered Marriage course, which is an online learning ecosystem that's available to you as a couple. It helps you get first things first. And that is our absolute heart with it.

Currently, I think there's like seven mini-courses in there. There's also our six-week core Marriage Material in there. There's basically enough to keep you

learning for the months to come. And we're adding to it constantly. We have currently three mini-courses that are just in the final stages of editing. I think one of those is on dealing with in-law dynamics. One of those is having a healthy marriage when you've come from dysfunctional homes. We brought Ron Deal in on that one. That talk was extremely elucidating.

**Selena:** So awesome.

**Ryan:** And then we have another one on how to pray together. In fact, and we're also going to release... we just finished uploading it, our six-week book study of our book called "Fierce Marriage," which is in there now. And that has all kinds of discussion guides. All that is there and available to you. Just sign up for Gospel Centered Marriage. Go to [gospelcenteredmarriage.com](http://gospelcenteredmarriage.com), and get 20% off whatever you sign up for using this code PRIORITIES. All right, see you there. Also, sorry, Zoom calls. We have some Zoom calls coming up.

**Selena:** He likes to do all the things.

**Ryan:** I'm excited for that. We're going to get to meet some of our listeners, all of our Gospel Centered Marriage people who decide to tune into the Zoom call. We're going to do a live kind of teaching Q&A, it's going to be awesome. That's happening in the next coming couple of weeks. Sorry about that, I interrupted you.

**Selena:** It's okay. Are you done?

**Ryan:** It's for the listeners.

**Selena:** It is. *[laughs]* Oh, my goodness. So again, we are in the middle of our series about priorities. And over the next couple of weeks, this is kind of a heads up as well, so we're going to talk about, get more tangible, I think, in the next week about how to practice godly priorities in your marriage and as a family. So it's just some tangible resources there. But the following week, which we end all of the series with a Q&A.

So as you're listening to this series, text your questions in to 971-333-1120, so that we can start going through those. Pick out the themes, and maybe pick a few really challenging questions that would help a lot of people. So please write in for that. And we will do our best to answer all those questions.

Today, we're talking about priorities. We can all agree it's really challenging to figure out what they are? But then how do you find agreement around them? And the real question again, is why? Why do we need to find agreement around them? What is not just the promise here, but I think kind of a duty and

obedience aspect of finding agreement and working, and fighting for that in your priorities. Because it's not easy, and it's not always clear.

So we're going to go through Scripture, of course. And we're going to talk about what unity will require of us. Because there's always a requirement to getting something or going somewhere further in your marriage. The blessings that come when you fight for marriage, right? What your life can look like with your spouse, just trying to really I guess, paint the picture, but not overstuff. Not make you super promises, but just say, "Hey, these are things that are available." These are things that happen, like cause and effect kind of thing.

And then where and how to begin. So we're going to talk about where and how to begin, sorry, your priorities, your pathway kind of finding agreement. Because maybe you guys are like, "I feel like we're in agreement on a lot of things, but there's always some tension points." We always end up back here." Why do we keep fighting about what you want to do on the weekend? What I want to do on the weekend, and how we need it, blah, blah, blah. So, we are going to lift those big stones and talk about them.

**Ryan:** So we've been, as what usually happens, we're learning about these things in real-time. Not that this is the first time we've ever thought about priorities. But it's amazing how when you're studying something, when you're doing research, when you're compiling thoughts, and you realize just how important and foundational it is. I'm just going to lay it all out here for a minute. Selena, don't get too nervous *[laughs]*. Like, "Wait, what out? Wait."

So our church, we're part of a small home church plant, it's now turning into a church plant. We're very kind of excited, also wondering, what is God doing? How is He working? And as an elder team...

**Selena:** Guys, we're just white-knuckling it here. *[laughs]*

**Ryan:** We're holding on. We're holding on.

**Selena:** I was just like, "Okay, Lord."

**Ryan:** So we started out meeting in our friend's house. It was an amazing, just blessing. Clearly God was moving. And we were amazed to see how He's been using that time to refine and disciple us and disciple others. Unbelievable! I'm so thankful for this community. And then we recently moved, and part of our new house is there's a shop that came with it. This guy that owned the house was into woodworking and things. I'm not into woodworking yet. I don't have all the tools or anything. But he was very much into it. So it's a shop that is

large enough to have the seven or eight families there. And there's more space, and it gives us a place to have teaching.

**Selena:** And to store our books eventually.

**Ryan:** Yeah, because we ship all... if you order books from our website, those all are shipped by our team, and it's okay. But it's a way to save money from having to store those in rented space. Anyway, the point being is we've had a lot of frustration internally, Selena and I, because while we do love the gathering of the saints, the church coming together, there's by far more kids than adults, and it tends to be very chaotic.

**Selena:** It can be.

**Ryan:** It can be. I love that. That's the thing where we're finding unity. It doesn't bother me at all that there's-

**Selena:** I feel like I have a high capacity for chaos.

**Ryan:** It need you to.

**Selena:** It's not the chaos, I think it's the destruction that can be left in the wake of the chaos.

**Ryan:** Yes. And we do love our community. And we're trying to say...

**Selena:** Kids are kids. I mean, we home educate. We're around kids and our own kids, and wild kids, and we don't expect them to be perfect and sitting quietly all day Sunday.

**Ryan:** And to be fair to the parents in our gathering, all the kids are very well-behaved.

**Selena:** Yeah, for sure.

**Ryan:** But they're just kids. And so they do kids things.

**Selena:** Yeah, it's a big front yard, and they just want to go play and be wild, and I get it.

**Ryan:** And so we're in agreement on that. But we're trying to find unity in how we're prioritizing creating boundaries so that the kids can flourish even more, so that the space is sustainable for our family. So we're not living in a community outreach center that we happen to have beds, because people tend to come

and go. So we're trying to find unity around this. And so all that to say, a lot of what we're talking through here is real-time.

**Selena:** Yeah, it's priorities versus home life. And I just have fundamentally questioned, how much of home life is supposed to be home life and how much is selfish, right? I don't know, when you look at ancient times, people lived communally a lot more. And in the Western culture, we're much more individualistic. So trying to find that balance of obedience and not just wiggle out of discomfort. It's like, "Okay, Lord, if you're sanctifying me help me, give me a clear path."

Because usually, I think with sanctification comes clarity so that the sanctification can happen, but not always. I mean, I can just be struggling in a bunch of mud and just say, "Okay, Lord, I'm just going to trust you in this time and season." And just allow Him to work and do the things that He's going to do. So that's been my, I think, internal struggle of like, we want this place to be a blessing, we want it to be like a river, where people can come and go. But I'm like, "How often are people coming and going? And does that hurt our family? Or how does that impact our family? Would be a better question. And how can we steward this place well, and in a way that honors God?"

**Ryan:** Well, I'm super thankful for your heart and that you've... and that's been one of the keys is staying soft-hearted toward, like, "What is God doing?"

**Selena:** Of course, what God is doing? I feel that's the only thing I ask is "Okay, God, what are you doing?"

**Ryan:** Well, it's the first things. We want to be sensitive, and we want to be useful tools in the hands of a faithful God, while also being sensitive and soft-hearted toward one another. Because I could just say, "No, this is what it's for, and it's not really up for debate, wrap your mind around it." And you're like, "You're missing me in the all of this chaos, what feels like chaos. You're missing me and you're not loving me well." And so I'm thankful for your softness of heart, I'm trying to keep my heart soft in that. Hopefully, that helps as we have this conversation.

**Selena:** Hopefully it paints a picture. We're very much diagnosing and dissecting the why behind the decisions that we're making. And praying that God is clarifying. And He's also, I don't know, just saying, "Yes, this is what I have, this is what I want." He doesn't audibly speak all the time. And we've got other things happening in our life, too. And there's people here all the time, and so we're learning to prioritize margin and prioritize home life in a way that honors God. And we've been working on finding unity around that.

**Ryan:** And that's the difficulty, and that's where we're going to spend our time here today. As you said earlier, our objective here for the rest of this time is to help you, I guess, find agreement and unity, and at least moving forward and figuring out what your priorities actually are. And that's been the challenge, as we've walked through this recent, I want to say trial, it's just been this recent conversation that we've been going through. We know that there's no unity, we know that our priorities are somewhat in the right spots. But where exactly are they? Why is there disunity? And how can we work through this?

**Selena:** I'd say dissonance, I think.

**Ryan:** Dissonance. Dissonance.

**Selena:** So we're going to jump into Scripture. I think I want to go out of order here because last week we talked about Last Things. And when you and I were talking in the car yesterday on the drive, you said, "This is why we talked about Last Things first and upfront." And if you haven't listened to that episode, obviously, go back and check it out. But it is having that Christian and biblical perspective or worldview really gives us the context for why we have certain priorities. And why they're important to fight for, and why they're important to let some of our own selfish desires die to them. Do you want to expand on that a little bit?

**Ryan:** Yeah, I mean, we talked through some of the stuff in Revelation, how people can approach the book of Revelation, and be intimidated or try to decipher it. And really, the theme of Revelation is, there's lots of stuff to be mined out of the book. But the overarching theme is that God is sovereign over all of human history and will bring it to its culmination in the Second coming of Christ. That's the theme. And so if we put our faith in Christ, which Christian, that's who you are. If you put your faith in Christ, you are in Him, you are justified, and you've been sanctified, and you have been made right before God.

So the Book of Revelation is a book of hope. And death is a hopeful thing, it's not a scary thing, if we really think through it. Sickness is terrible in this place, but our hope is not bound by our state of being. Instead, our hope is bound in heaven with Christ. And so that reality changes everything about how we live our lives here and now. The problem is, is that we lose sight of that reality because we're fleshly beings, we're here on Earth. We are not in heaven right now, we have trials here and now.

And so the Christian fight is keeping that faith, is running that race. And we talked we run the race to win the prize. What is winning the prize in the Christian life? It's beholding the personal work of Christ, it's sharing the gospel, it's discipling one another, it's loving God. First loving each other, and doing



those primary things, those are the first things. But that's in light of the last things. We can do the first things because of the last things. We can love each other well, because I don't have to be saved by your love, I'm saved by God's love.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** So the first thing now becomes loving God because of the last things, because of the promise that I have in Christ. Loving my wife well because of the promise I have in Christ, the last things. Loving my children well, my neighbors well, whatever the sacrifice is.

**Selena:** Well, loving them well, if we look to Christ. We looked at Philippians 2, all of Philippians pretty much... *[laughs]*. We looked at Christ humility and how He loved, and how He prioritized people, for lack of a better term. How He prioritized relationships and how He treated them, and how He taught us and instructed the people of His day to order their love, and to how to value even their life. In Philippians 1:21, "To live is Christ," Paul saying, "and to die is gain."

So, again, ordering and prioritizing the things of God. So even this life, to live is Christ. To live is to live humbly, and selflessly, and emptying ourselves, and living in obedience. Yes, to be emptied out, but to be filled up with Him and by Him, not to just be emptied out to be empty and broken. But to be filled up and redeemed, and hopeful, and full of the gospel, and spill that out and share that. So, again, looking at the model of Christ, and living our life that is in a manner worthy of the gospel.

So, again, our priorities reflect our beliefs, our priorities reflect our values. It's so interesting to me when you talk to somebody about, "Oh, hey, have you sign up for the sports team?" or "Are you going to go do this activity?" Because you can see what people's priorities are by what season it is. If it's winter, people are hitting the mountain. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. I'm just saying we all have different priorities for different seasons. And why are those priorities? Why it is that so important to you? Why do you have to... and they could be all good reasons. "Well, this is our family time, this is what we like to do." And that's awesome.

But then you can take that same coin of like, "Well, it's what we do. And it's what all the people we know do." It's not actually something we maybe enjoy doing as a family, we all yell at each other on the way up to the mountain, Ski by ourselves, and then come down. So it's just like, "Okay, let's question what this is doing to our family life?" And does God really even care about it? Why do we care about it so much if it's really not aligning us with the things of God? Because I do think that there are things that we do that distract us away, that

cause us to focus on the process of doing something, rather than the purpose of why we're doing something.

**Ryan:** I mean, this is why in Scripture we say, it says "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Why is that? Sacrifice was obedience at one point. But what was it about the sacrifice that made it obedience? It was the faith. It was the faith. It was the heart orientation, that God You're God, I'm not. I am a sinner, you're holy. This sacrifice will atone for that sin. Obviously, Christ is the atoning sacrifice once and for all. But that's the point that you're trying to make, is that the "Why?" is at the core of the Christian ethic. That's why it's all about the heart orientation. That's why Christ could say, "If you look at a woman with lust, you are committing adultery in your heart." Because it's the heart orientation.

And it's the same thing with our priorities. You can do all the right things, you can try to do all the right things, good luck, by the way, but if your heart is not in it, in other words, if God has not re-oriented the affections of your heart and the Holy Spirit is not rooting out those little enemy outposts and defeating enemy outposts in your heart, you'll always be at odds with biblical priorities. And that's the beginning is getting there so that as a married couple, you can begin to find unity at that place.

**Selena:** So I think it was last week is it Matthew 6 or 16:33? of "Seek first," I feel so dumb, I should know this. I'm blanking out because I was looking at a bunch of other Scripture.

**Ryan:** I think it was 6:33.

**Selena:** Matthew 6:33 of like, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." So seek God's kingdom first. So again, talking about priorities, first things seeking God's kingdom. But then, not only seeking God's kingdom but how can we and why can we? When we look at John 6, Jesus is the bread of life. So Ryan and I are doing the... well, I'm doing The Same Page Summer Reading program, or reading plan.

**Ryan:** I'm doing it.

**Selena:** You are.

**Ryan:** Just a few days behind. *[Selena chuckles]* Don't judge me.

**Selena:** We're trying to stay in the Word, obviously, every day and in big chunks and then trying to discuss-

- Ryan:** I'm going to catch up, I'm going to lap you-
- Selena:** It's not a competition.
- Ryan:** It is now. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Everything is to Ryan. He just won't admit it.
- Ryan:** So you want to bet? *[both laughing]*
- Selena:** So John 6:22, talking about Jesus is the bread of life. And he talks about the manna coming down from heaven with Moses. In verse 32, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I tell you it's not Moses who gave the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." I didn't know that the manna also a representation of Jesus, the bread of life, the sustenance. The reason why they can live and they are not dying is because of Jesus. How profound is that for us in learning what priorities are. Not only is Jesus our priority and our pathway. Gosh, that just reduces Him.
- "He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes the Father except through Him." So that should prioritize, we are dead, we are only alive because He is the bread of life. And He because of the Father we are given that true bread of life. We are given Him.
- Ryan:** Let me jump in, because the typology there is looking at Christ in the Exodus. All the way from... I'll make this short. But from Egypt, all the way through the Red Sea, through the desert for 40 years, into the Promised Land finally, over the Jordan.
- Selena:** Through the Jordan.
- Ryan:** Through the Jordan. Is that the right river? I think so. Correct me if I'm wrong. I forget those types of facts.
- Selena:** It's the Jordan.
- Ryan:** Okay. But the point being that manna in heaven sustained them in the already but not yet. So they're in the desert, they're living by the grace of God in the desert with the food that He'd give them, the sandals. By the grace, in the desert, they had yet to enter that promised place, that promised peace. And here we are.
- Selena:** Thinking that we are different than them.

**Ryan:** Here we are. We've already escaped slavery, we've been saved. We've crossed over the Red Sea, which, people studying typology would say that that was a type of baptism. That points to a future baptism, which is our sign of the covenant, the New Covenant. We've been baptized. But here I am in the desert being sustained by the grace of God, the bread of heaven, Christ, by the living water of Christ, being provided for my every need in Christ, yet to enter into that promised rest of the promised land of heaven in unity with Him.

That's a beautiful thing, and that does re-orient us. Because if we realize that our end is sure, our promise is sure, that my sustenance is sure, now I can start to live in obedience to God and not trying to... What did they do when Moses went up to get...?

**Selena:** They made idols. [inaudible 00:26:45] Ten Commandments. No small feat people.

**Ryan:** As soon they lost sight, they began erecting idols to false gods. And it is an affront to God, it is abhorrent to Him. And we can do that in subtle ways in our lives. That's why our priorities are so contingent on knowing where we've come from and knowing where we are going, and it's all because of Christ.

**Selena:** So good. So good. John 8:31-32... well, we're starting in the book of John for the reading plan, if you haven't gathered. And it's going really well. No, I really am enjoying it. Jesus is talking about how the truth will set you free. And John writes, "As Jesus spoke these things, many believed in Him. So He said to the Jews, who had believed Him, if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Sorry, and back in John 6, they were asking Him, what was to do to perform the works of God? And Jesus replied, verse 6:29, "Jesus replied, 'The work of God is this to believe in the one He has sent.'"

So not only are we given instruction on how to live, and this belief should weigh in, not just weigh in, it should direct the whole river of our priorities. It should direct them, but it also, when it does that, it's not limiting us. Like you talked about in the beginning of the episode, priorities is not about constraining all this stuff in our life and trying to order it in a way that doesn't just fall apart every day. It is a way for us to order things in a way that is obedient to God.

**Ryan:** Because there's life in the law of God.

**Selena:** There's life and there's freedom.

- Ryan:** And sometimes, again, we juxtapose the law and grace, and we forget that the law of God is a grace of God. That He told His people, "This is how you have a right relationship with me. And now here's how you atone for the transgressions against the law." That's freedom to us.
- Selena:** Yes. We have to believe that.
- Ryan:** Right. And I love that you doubled back on yourself, you said that truth informs how we live. And you say "No," it doesn't just kind of augment our life, it is our life. And that I think is the Christian condition in Western culture right now, is that we have a back pocket Christianity. Where it's like, "I'm living my life and I'm going about my day and my business. Oh, by the way, I need a little encouragement." I pull my Bible out of my back pocket, blah, blah. "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you not to harm you."
- Selena:** Oh stop. Oh my goodness.
- Ryan:** "Ah, I feel better." "Now I can put that back in my back pocket. I have no idea the context or anything for that verse, it just made me feel better." That's moral therapy. Moral therapeutic deism is the term I picked from somebody.
- Selena:** There it is.
- Ryan:** The point being is that I just love that you're correcting yourself there, because it is not just an augmentation to our lives. This truth of God completely orients our lives.
- Selena:** Yes, that was the Holy Spirit correction for sure.
- Ryan:** Okay, but thank you for doing that.
- Selena:** Thank you, God.
- Ryan:** So listener, let's be there. We're not just trying to say, add this into your other life, and just like-
- Selena:** How to have a good marriage.
- Ryan:** You know what, you need to have like good... this is absolutely foundational. It's not just part of, it's central to your entire life. At least it has to be if we're going to live faithfully according to God's Word. On that note, we have the three concentric circles piece.
- Selena:** I think you talked about this last week.

**Ryan:** I did.

**Selena:** You just touched on it. So maybe re-explain it and then take it a little further.

**Ryan:** Well, I do want to get to the unity thing, too. So for couples, they have a lot of dissonance around their priorities. How are they being unified on them? I think we've alluded to it. And I just want to say very clearly, the best way to be unified on your priorities as a couple is to get unified around the Word of God, is to just read it, to get your doctrines in order. Now, let me explain that for a minute, because...

**Selena:** What are you saying, Ryan? I got to go to seminary with my spouse?

**Ryan:** No. Fifteen years ago, that would have fallen on deaf ears for me. But I'm realizing that doctrine matters. And everybody has doctrine, whether you think you do or not. The question is how well have you defined it? How orthodoxy is it? And by orthodoxy, I mean, is it tried and true? Is it gone through the filters of the years and the centuries of other faithful Christian men and women who've said, "This is what God's Word says and here's what it means." So doctrine is just way of organizing God's truths in ways that we can adhere to them. And that's why catechisms are so great.

And we grew up in not in those types of traditions, not in any sort of liturgical tradition, that's all very foreign to us. The point is, we have to have solid doctrine in our lives, if we're going to have any sort of unity. So if you don't believe, as a couple, if you don't actually believe in the inerrancy of God's Word, in the inspiration of God's word. Then you'll have a hard time finding unity around God's Word. Because you're going to read a hard passage, and you're going to say, "That doesn't make sense to me, therefore, it's nonsense."

And one of us is going to say, "Wait, it should make sense because it's God's Word." And you're saying, "Well, it's not really God's Word. Somebody translated it. It's translated incorrectly or it's not inerrant, or from Him or inspired by Him, therefore, I don't actually need it." That's putting you in a place of authority over God's Word and your spouse is in a place of authority under God's Word. You're never going to have unity there. If you don't agree in the doctrine of say, like, I don't know-

**Selena:** Let's hold on. I think the humility... you love doctrine, and I love that you love that. When we talked about Christ humility last week, I think it's very key here also. Because anytime we are placing ourselves above the authority of the Word and not humbling ourselves, we're going to be in a place of dissonance. We're going to be in division, not only with God, but with each other, of

course. So like you said, align yourselves with God's Word, there is freedom to be had. You were talking about harmony and music notes, and you're more of a musician than I... Well, maybe I was, at one point, used to be.

**Ryan:** I've been known to dabble a little bit. *[both laugh]*

**Selena:** But we're talking about dissonance and resonance with music notes. And even, I mean, any musician out there will tell you about the physics, the mathematics behind the music.

**Ryan:** One of our joint experiences as a couple, very young early on, before we were dating was calculus, pre-calculus class with Mr. Stein.

**Selena:** Oh, man.

**Ryan:** And Mr. Stein was a phenomenal calculus teacher, who was so patient with us adolescents.

**Selena:** I need to tune in my inner Mr. Stein. That's so great.

**Ryan:** And he was an amazing teacher, but one of the things he always said was "math is the language of the universe." And I always loved that, because it is.

**Selena:** He's right.

**Ryan:** Because God made the universe with laws, and principles, and physics, and things that He hard-coded into it. And here we are, math is explaining it. We're explaining the truths of the universe.

**Selena:** And communicating it.

**Ryan:** And communicating. Well, here's what I said, and this was me and my adolescent brain, whether that's true or not, but he'd say "Math is the language of the universe." And I always said, "Music is the means by which we communicate that." And the reason I thought that, and it's debatable, but the reason I thought that was because when you listen to music, it does something to you, it's subconscious.

I've seen Alzheimer's patients, who are completely... they're almost catatonic. And you start playing music and they come to life, and they start singing. Or I've seen people who can't speak, but you play music and they'll start to sing the song. Or you put a piano in front of them, they'll start to play a familiar tune.

There's something about music that... we used the word primal, primacy, a couple weeks ago. Something very primal, very fast about music. Because I feel it's connected. And I don't want to be hyper-spiritual about this but I just feel like God is so gracious in how He designed us, within His Creation, He's designed music.

And the reason why music is so compelling too is because it's all laws of physics at play. So you have sound waves... and the way harmonies work, and this is where we're getting to, is finding unity as a couple. And the thing that we talked about earlier that I'm getting to now is that the beautiful thing about harmonies is that you can be playing different notes, but still playing in the same song, you're harmonizing. In that you might be playing a G note, I'm playing an A note...

**Selena:** But we're playing in the key of-

**Ryan:** G. *[both laugh]* And so the point being... I don't know if that would actually work. *[both laughing]*. It wouldn't work, maybe it would, I don't know. They're not harmonies, I will tell you. Maybe they are, I don't know. The point is, we can be playing different notes, having different opinions, they don't have to be exactly the same, but we can find unity around the things that matter because there's an underlying physics at work. There's an underlying physical law at work.

**Selena:** I think it's almost simpler than that, I'm going to argue. It's just the key that you're playing in because you can't... can you play in different keys? I'm thinking piano, purely piano.

**Ryan:** Because you can play it in the key of G, and I'll play in the key of E minor and they're the exact same key. These are different notes.

**Selena:** Get out of here. We're done. We got to go argue about this. I'm just kidding.

**Ryan:** The reason you have keys is because you're agreeing to play a certain set of notes. Because that set of notes will always harmonize or work together.

**Selena:** Exactly. That's what I'm saying, I feel like is that underlying physics or that underlying truth is being in the same key. Well, guys, the gospel is the same key. So play in there. There it is.

**Ryan:** Very long-winded getting around that. So if you're playing by the same music, and the music is God's Word, then it's going to be a lot easier to play things that sound beautiful together. You're going to have a lot more unity around these things.



- Selena:** So talking about what unity is going to require of us, there's some of us that would like to play the whole piano and sound beautiful. Well, we're not all musicians like that. And we can't just say yes to everything, right? We've all tried that. How did that go for you? How does that work for you? Has that ever worked for you? *[both laughs]* There it is.
- Ryan:** Never worked for me.
- Selena:** Never. When is that ever worked for you?
- Ryan:** Never. Sorry, that's an Office reference, but I wasn't picking it up.
- Selena:** It's okay.
- Ryan:** So we can't always say yes. And so unity requires us to not only know what our priorities are but then to stand by them together. If you as a couple, if you say "Okay, we're sitting down at a marriage workshop, we're listening to the podcast together." You know what Selena, church is important. God's Word says church is important. And we agree as a couple that church is important. All right. Sunday morning rolls around, "Football game is on."
- Selena:** "Kids are at their worst. They're so crazy right now."
- Ryan:** "Well, I'm pretty tired. I was up late last night. And you know what, I'm not going to stand by that priority, I'm going to stand by some other priority, which is either rest or sleep or entertainment, or any other thing." When you say God's family is important, that the body of Christ gathering is important, you have to stand by that. And so that's the first thing that we require of you is saying the priority and then standing by it. In other words, defining it and then defending it.
- Selena:** Mm-hmm, love that.
- Ryan:** We talked about that in the Boundaries series a couple months back.
- Selena:** Boundaries and priorities, man hand-in-hand. That's what they do.
- Ryan:** Boundaries, they're that place where you draw the lines and say, "This is important, this is not."
- Selena:** These are our priorities, these are not.
- Ryan:** And those are priority decisions, exactly.

**Selena:** And there's always a lot of pushback. So again, setting boundaries to preserve and protect your margin for each other and your children. That was under what unity will require of us. I think that's maybe more personal for us right now is just being able to protect some of that margin. Not just to necessarily keep for yourself, but to be able to give, and serve, and love others, in a place of crisis or whatnot. So that may come up, and I believe we as believers need to have margin for each other's things. What is the Bible verse we talked about, "Don't just look to your own needs, but also to the needs of others?" And so walking in that, having boundaries around that priority of margin.

**Ryan:** I want to read 1 Peter 3:8 real fast, because I feel it's a beautiful thing. "Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic." Another word translated in there is, "Be of unity, be unified." So "Be like-minded and sympathetic. Love as brothers, be tender-hearted and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with blessing. Because to this, you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." You see the perspective there? "To this you were called." That's first things. You're standing on the rock of Christ in this. "So that you may inherit," that's last things "a blessing."

And then he's saying, "Here's how you live in the middle, be like-minded, be sympathetic." And here are the corollaries to that, "Love as brothers." How do you love a brother differently than you would love somebody who's not your brother? Well, it's easy to write off somebody who's not my brother, and say "You're out of my life, I am done with you." But with a brother, they're your brother. There's no un-brothering that person. *[Selena laughs]* So if I'm loving you, Selena, as my sister-in-Christ-

**Selena:** Sorry, it's such a funny word.

**Ryan:** Don't un-brother me. *[both chuckles]* It's like being un-friended but it's worse. So Selena, if I see you as the daughter of the king, somebody adopted and my co-heir with Christ, my sister in the Lord, I'm seeing you differently than if I'm seeing you as an opponent, as somebody who is here to make my life better. But instead, I'm here to serve you and love you, and live in unity with you. And then the corollaries there is: be tender-hearted, be humble. You've mentioned humility, but the tender-heartedness, the soft-heartedness... it going to be really hard to find unity without soft-heartedness on tough topics.

**Selena:** Oh, man. Yes. Yes. So I just want to, again, kind of recalibrate us for this conversation of unity in our priorities. The why behind the decisions that we're making. And then I feel like it does touch on a part of our identity. Whenever I'm questioned about a priority, sometimes I begin to question my why behind

it, and who I am, and should I be doing these things? How do I stand firm in the things of God?

There's plenty of verses out there to talk about standing firm. "Putting on the armor of God," Ephesians 6:11, "so you'll be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." So things like questioning my identity, questioning my purpose, questioning whether I'm good enough, if grace applies to me. 1 Peter 5:9, "But resist him firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." 1 Corinthians 15:58, last verse I'll go through, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

So, standing firm, being anchored in who you are in Christ, will definitely feed into, I think, your strength and ability to stand firm in those decisions of standing up for those priorities. Whether the feelings are there or not.

**Ryan:** Yeah, that's good. So we're running low on time so I want to make sure we're getting through this. So the blessings of fighting for unity. So what is to be had by fighting for unity? I think some of these are fairly intuitive. Let's go through the quick list, it's not all-inclusive.

**Selena:** I think couples could explore this for themselves. It would be a good exercise.

**Ryan:** Okay, so if you're lacking any of these blessings, maybe you don't have unity, how's that? *[both laughing]* So, first one is peace in your marriage. And it's possible to have peace while you still have disagreement. Can you believe that? We can still say, "We're not on the same page here, but we're in unity on the big things." So we can have peace, even though we're disagreeing about something at the moment.

The second one, contentment. You wrote that down. Explain what you mean by how does fighting for unity bring contentment in a couple's marriage?

**Selena:** I think, well, it might be redundant to what you just said of when we find agreement, we can have peace despite not having an agreement or not. I think contentment is as a result of the deep unity with our hearts and our souls. Agreeing on the things of God, seeking God first together. Because maybe sometimes our priorities are around activities, around things that make us look good as a family, or make us look financially good, or whatever.

And for me, I know that contentment has been a journey. And when I can rest in who I am in Christ, can rest in you and I are unified... Remember how many times I was like, "We need to have more than one car; we only have one car. We need a bigger house, because we're living in an apartment and we have

two kids." We had talked about those things, but the Lord used those things to sanctify me and bring me contentment because you and I... I found my way into agreement with you and trusted you.

**Ryan:** I bought a U-Haul van, you didn't want to keep it. *[Selena laughs]*

**Selena:** You're so funny.

**Ryan:** I love that thing. My mobile man cave. *[laughs]*

**Selena:** Hopefully, that is helpful to people is that there is contentment to be had with unity.

**Ryan:** Yeah, that's pretty cool. Contentment, I don't know, it's like you have this subtleness about you. That's because you're realizing that God is truly God and He's got you where you are, it doesn't mean you're complacent, but it gives up the striving, which brings a lot of unity, because you can finally-

**Selena:** No matter the dissonance around you, I think. That's what it is to me. Freedom is next one. To deeply enjoy the things of God and kind of live deeper into them. Because your priorities are few, you can go deeper into them. And then joy. We talked about John 15. You know what, go check that out for yourself.

**Ryan:** Check out John 15. So how do we begin gaining unity. So the picture I like to have here for couples listening, is you got two circles, almost like a Venn diagram. They're overlapping, and you've got your husband on one side and wife on the other. And the husband has his priorities on in his circle, she has her priorities in their circle. Now, add a third circle above that. It's got to be above because it's God. It's God's Word. That's God's priorities.

And so picture, you're trying to move your two circles to where what you value is overlapping as much as possible. And then, simultaneously, you're aligning those with God. So it's not just trying to align with one another, but you're aligning with God, is the whole pyramid thing. As we seek God together or individually, we inevitably get closer together, that's true.

So the first piece here is, again, going back to who is God? Who does He say you are? What does the Bible say. Really rallying around the truths of God. That begs a bigger question, what are the truths of God? That's not here. But get good solid teaching in your lives, read Scripture. That's the first one.

I'd say the next piece of how to find unity in your priorities, is identifying the negotiables versus the non-negotiables. Because there are some things that

just don't matter as much as other things. And there's some things, that they are non-negotiable. Are we in unity on those things?

**Selena:** And why are we in unity or why are we not? Because you and I, we've gone through that a lot, I think. I don't see it as a non-negotiable and you're like, "Well, I think it could be." And you present a very good argument, and I'm like, "Yeah, sounds good, I agree with that." And so then we can move forward from there.

**Ryan:** So talk through those.

**Selena:** Always.

**Ryan:** One of those for us was how we're going to educate our kids. That was a quite a discussion we had years back, and we're weighing through all the options, and landed on home education. And now I would say that's almost a non-negotiable for us. And we're in unity on that, that we're not going to give up on that. There's a lot of things that would have to give way before that one does. And so go through what are things that are absolutely negotiable, what are things that are absolutely non-negotiable. And give up, slough off the things that are arbitrary, in the name of greater unity around your big priorities.

**Selena:** And we went through verses of you said, 1 Peter, that was the biggest one, I think, that can help be a big identifier. 1 Peter 3:8, "Having unity in mind, tender-heart, humble mind, sympathy," those kinds of things. I feel like those are the things that should be prioritized or seen in our non-negotiable. Does that make sense?

**Ryan:** Yeah, good. The next way to begin down this path of unity. Don't just figure out ways to give in and concede to one another, but instead, take some time to seriously sit and wait and pray on the Lord. And when you're doing that, ask Him to lead you to His priorities as a couple. And do that together. Take the time that it needs to let that conversation breathe, let that prayer breathe, make that a priority first and then see where it goes from there. Ask yourself this question, "What is God doing here?" He did everything redemptively in Christ. It's completed. But how is He going to use you as a family on mission?

And asking yourselves that: what is He doing in our family? What is He doing through our family? Talk about that. And then ask yourselves the honest questions of, where are the things in our lives that that are a priority that really shouldn't be? or maybe they're distractions to us and they're killing our marriage? Again, all that has to be a conversation. You can't expect to get unity

with your spouse without talking and having the bandwidth to have these hard conversations.

So that's the couple's conversation challenge is, sit down and have that conversation together. What are our priorities? Are we in unity on our big important priorities? You can go through them categorically, okay? So in terms of that-

**Selena:** That's the big overall question is, what is God doing? And are we in His Word? Knowing Him enough to know that this is a priority or not a priority? That would be my argument.

**Ryan:** Because if you're looking at that three-circle Venn diagram, you run the risk of unifying yourselves and being in disunity with God's priorities.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** And that's why you want to be going toward Him.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** I wish I could somehow show that. Maybe we should do a YouTube thing, I don't know. We need more things in our life *[laughs]*.

**Selena:** Mm-hmm. Sits beside the wife, it's like, "Okay."

**Ryan:** All right. So let me pray for you, and then we'll call it.

**Selena:** You're going to pray for me?

**Ryan:** For you, our listeners, for them, and for you.

**Selena:** You're sweet.

**Ryan:** Lord, thank you for my sweet wife. Thank you for this conversation we get to have together. Thank you for the unity you've given us. I pray that you would unify us even more. God I pray for the couples listening to this, who are wanting and longing for unity that is based on you. It might be a husband or a wife thinking, "Man, I wish my spouse would get on the same page with our faith and with me." God, I pray you give them hope and give them endurance to seek the unity, the deep unity they so desperately desire. And Holy Spirit, be gracious to help them get there, Lord. It's only by Your grace that we even read, and perceive, and understand your Word, and understand what's

important to you. And it's only by Your grace that we can live according to it. So, Lord, help us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, you can get 20% off Gospel Centered Marriage, it's a whole suite of marriage learning resources, go to [gospelcenteredmarriage.com](http://gospelcenteredmarriage.com) and use the coupon code PRIORITIES. And we hope that you take us up on that. I trust that it will bless you. But other than that this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can.

**Ryan:** See you again in seven days. Until then—

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**[00:51:29]** <outro>

**Ryan:** Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit [FierceMarriage.com](http://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**

- **[00:19:46]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Philippians 1:21, ESV
  
- **[00:23:03]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Matthew 6:33, ESV
    - John 6:22, ESV
    - John 6:32, ESV
  
- **[00:27:11]**
  - Scripture references:
    - John 8:31-32, ESV
  
- **[00:39:19]**
  - Scripture references:
    - 1 Peter 3:8, ESV
  
- **[00:41:42]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Ephesians 6:11, ESV
    - 1 Peter 5:9, ESV
    - 1 Corinthians 15:58, ESV
  
- **[00:45:11]**
  - Scripture references:
    - John 15, ESV

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