

TRULY ENJOYING YOUR SPOUSE (JOY, 2 OF 4)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/truly-enjoying-your-spouse-joy-2-of-4>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: If there's one thing that I think all couples desire is to have a joy-filled marriage. Would you agree with that?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And that's the entirety of our ministry is to kind of get couples to think outside of themselves so they have a deeper, longer-lasting, more steady joy. By what? By conforming their marriage and their lives to the Word of God. And so this whole series is getting really deep, hopefully, *[both chuckles]* deep into this idea of joy, the biblical definition of joy as a fruit of the Spirit.

We talked last episode how joy is a fruit of the Spirit that is actually attached to some very tangible outworkings of emotions and a response to what God is doing and what He has done. In this episode, we're talking specifically how to enjoy one another, how to take joy in your spouse. As we'll discuss, there are three I'll call them ingredients into enjoying one another. And I hope it's helpful to you. Thanks for joining us. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:03] <intro>

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

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

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

Ryan: Priorities—

Selena: Purpose—

Ryan: And everything in between.

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

[00:01:38] <Podcast begins>

Selena: When you say ingredients, I'm like, oh, we're going to make some joy cookies or something. *[laughs]*

Ryan: You wish.

Selena: Cookies are on the mind, on the brain. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Selena is the ingredient for salty and sweet cookies. *[laughs]*

Selena: That's one ingredient? No.

Ryan: I think I'm going to buy that domain by the way. Somebody wrote in, they are like, "Man, you should have bought Selena's special sauce, salty and sweet. Oh, what a treat! There's Selenasspecialsauce.com. It's cold, right?"

Selena: I think that's what it's called.

Ryan: So these three ingredients. And it's really interesting. Think about joy as an outworking of this reality that exists, that God is God, and we are not God. We are creation, He is creator. And how is joy kind of this connecting point between creation and creator?

And we as unique image-bearers in all of God's creation, humanity has been created as image-bearers of God in that we have a unique relationship with Him. And joy oftentimes is in that relationship, in the right standing of that relationship. And we'll talk about how that works itself out as we go through this episode.

And then taking that definition of joy and then kind of extrapolating from that how we are to enjoy one another. I think it's a very interesting way to approach it. Hopefully, through that, we'll all gain a little bit of understanding and how to enjoy one another more circumspectly.

Selena: Sounds good to me.

Ryan: All right. Are you there with me? Are you good?

Selena: Mm-hmm.

Ryan: Okay. I've been talking a lot. I feel like...

- Selena:** You kind of took the lead on this one.
- Ryan:** Well, great.
- Selena:** So I'll follow you blindly. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** I'll follow you blindly.
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** Well, in that case, before you hear the episode then, leave a rating and review in your podcast app of choice. If you want to partner with us and be on mission with us, if we've helped you and you want to help us help others in their marriage, in their family, in their relationships, planning for marriage or just living out the day to day grind of marriage, you can partner with us in this ministry by going to patreon.com/fiercemarriage. There's all kinds of goodies there for you, including books and silicone rings that have a lifetime warranty. Ding, ding, ding, that's a little pitch to Fierce Rings. We love them. I'm wearing one right now.
- Selena:** Same.
- Ryan:** And Selena is wearing the gray one. I got the stone-cut version. Anyway, you have to go check those out. But if you go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage, you can join in there and get all those goodies plus enrollment in Gospel Centered Marriage, which you don't have to be a patron to participate in that. You can just go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com.
- We have a few different ways to join there. But basically, it's our core marriage content, so that you can finally get on the same page with your spouse and stay there by doing the ongoing enrichment courses which happen roughly once or twice a month. We drop new enrichment courses and those just stay there. They're at your own pace. You can do them in one or two sittings each, and they just give you an excuse to connect around the gospel on at least a monthly basis. So check out gospelcenteredmarriage.com. We hope that blesses you.
- So with this episode, this is one of those topics that I fear... *[Selena chuckles]* Honestly, I fear that it is cliché.
- Selena:** Okay. I was like, "Why do you fear joy?"
- Ryan:** I love talking about it because I feel like it's not something that people hit directly at.

- Selena:** Yeah, we had a conversation about this.
- Ryan:** Well, you were having a hard time. I mean-
- Selena:** I was having a hard time getting hooked on to this whole series of joy. [00:05:00] I'm very one-sided. One-dimensional is what you said. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** You were thinking in the moment.
- Selena:** Just thinking very one-dimensional.
- Ryan:** You were very flustered, and I was like-
- Selena:** I wasn't flustered. It was hard for me to engage with content. And that's just being honest and transparent. Last week we defined joy and we looked at it from kind of a 50,000-foot view. We walked through John 15, and talked about how abiding in Christ produces the joy that we so long for and that we were created for. And we even wrestled with the ideas of happiness and joy and how they are basically one and the same. The Bible does not differentiate between the two in a very drastic measure.
- Joy is produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a fruit of the Spirit. This week, like you said, we're figuring out how to take joy in your spouse. Because obviously, there's a lot of marriages out there that are struggling with this idea of joy. And how do I even have joy in my marriage when we are just roommates or we are just barely hanging on by a thread or we're just... I don't know. We have joy, but what is that? I mean, is that important? kind of thing. We had that conversation right before we recorded.
- Ryan:** It's one of those things I feel like you take for granted until it's not there.
- Selena:** Exactly.
- Ryan:** And then you're like, "Whoa, something is miserable now about this." It's the same thing with peace. When you have peace, all is well. And then when it's not there, it's like your whole world is upended. Joy feels the same way. A lot of couples will come to us, or you're listening to this and you've known those times. You might be in one of those times where there's no joy to be found. And you're trusting, you're staying in your covenant, you're trusting the Lord, which is a huge piece to it. And that's one of the ingredients. In fact, it's trust. But you're wondering, "How do I get back to... I want to just be friends. I want to enjoy the friendship that I had, at one point with my husband or wife."

- Selena:** And I don't want to confuse joy with an emotional high. Because I do think that joy can produce that. But we're not called to live on the emotional mountaintops of our relationship.
- Ryan:** That's funny.
- Selena:** What?
- Ryan:** Well, I disagree. *[both laughs]* And that's based on our last episode.
- Selena:** It probably is. I still am just caught in this like joy is so much deeper and happiness is supposed to be the same as joy. I don't always agree with that. But I think the case is made and I just need to bring myself over to that side of thinking. But I do think that there are emotional highs in our marriage or there's certain points, like celebrating anniversaries. We can't live on that mountaintop.
- Ryan:** See, I don't equate that with joy. And maybe that's where we just need to shock through it. Because I feel like there's bigger joys and smaller joys.
- Selena:** We did talk about layers of joy.
- Ryan:** But joy is definitely something you feel.
- Selena:** Right. Okay. I agree with that.
- Ryan:** I would suppose that if you haven't felt joy in a long time, then joy is going to be a mountaintop.
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** So I would say as believers, we have as our birthright, as our gift from the Holy Spirit, as one of the gifts and one of the ways of walking with the spirit or one of the indicators of walking with the Spirit is the gift of joy.
- Selena:** Right. And I think that's the key there. Because I guess what I'm explaining or what I'm grappling with is that in order to have joy, you have to be in this place of bliss. Like conflict-free, everything's great, nobody's stressing out. It's just this unrealistic moment that I think we do tend to strive for in the name of wanting health, or joy, or peace. And it's like, No, God has called us and given us those in the midst of whatever we're going through. And so for me, that's the power of God at work in us that we can have those things in the midst of circumstances that are less than ideal.

Ryan: And that's why we take joy in our salvation. I think of the verse from Habakkuk. What-

Selena: Habakkuk.

Ryan: Habakkuk. I just missed it. Where did it go? Oh, it is Habakkuk 3:17. I love it. It says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places."

That's where the deep [00:10:00] well of joy springs forth for the believer. It's not in your circumstance. But it is an emotional reaction to the reality that my salvation is from the Lord. And it's unshakable. So if you don't feel joy and happiness in that, then that's just what we talked about last episode is, I'd say that's not joy. It's okay to not have joy. You just have something else. You have peace or you still cling to hope. But joy to me is when that wellspring fountains up and comes, and it's visible now and it's spouting above-

Selena: And as believers, we don't necessarily have a reason to not ever have joy. God has saved us. God has come to us.

Ryan: The flesh keeps us from that.

Selena: Right. There's always going to be a battle for our joy.

Ryan: And that's why Jesus says, "Come, taste and see that the Lord is good." Because He knows that when we actually do taste and see, the reaction is going to be joy-filled.

Selena: A joy-filled response.

Ryan: [inaudible] of our affection and trust.

Selena: But he's saying, "Though the fig tree should not blossom..." So even though our circumstances are dire, food is not being produced, we have no cattle, we have nothing to count in this world, the stalls are empty, yet I will rejoice. So there's almost this command it feels like to his flesh, right? There's this command of I will rejoice in the Lord, I will take joy in the God of my salvation. He is my strength. He is the one who makes my feet like a deer. So the source, which is what we talked about, I think last week also is the source of our joy is important.

Ryan: So it's the taking of the joy. That's there. That's available to us. And that's the beholding of the person and work of Christ. The Christ crucified and risen again, unto our salvation unto our resurrection, into the new life as believers. So we have to take that joy.

This is where the psalmist would say, "Why are you cast down O my soul? Remember who God is? Remember the promises of God." And that goes back to even what was credited as righteousness in the Old Testament. Because before the law had been handed down in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, before the Egyptian... exodus out of Egypt, before all that, there wasn't a law. So how did the people of God, how did they find salvation? Well, it says Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. He had faith.

So there's this sense of trust that is paramount and it is foundational in faith for believers. The faith is foundational, excuse me, for a believer. And I think from there, that trusting in God then that wells up from us, remembering who God is, remembering the promises He made, that He is a promise keeper. Now, we can take joy, because our hope isn't in vain.

We're kind of kicking a dead horse here. I just want to be very clear that I feel like joy is a very visceral response to placing our hope consistently in God. I want to back out of that kind of theological or that ideological conversation and now just actually look at what does a joy-filled marriage actually look like? What is a joy-filled marriage?

Selena: How would you, listener, define a joy-filled marriage? So we're asking ourselves that as Ryan and Selena.

Ryan: I asked Selena, I said, "Selena, what do you..." It was in our study time before this. Is that what we call it? That's the first time I've ever called it that. A prep time. I said, "Selena, what's the joyful marriage?" And you just looked at me because you were still in the funk and you said, "Ours." I said, "Well, okay. I'm glad that you said that. Thank you. Why? Why is it joy-filled?" So why don't you-

Selena: I said because it was safe. I felt safe. We laugh together. You're my friend. I want to spend time with you. I want to do things with you. There's trust. We were talking about how there's I think trust that creates this emotional safety. I think there's maturity, there's also maturity. *[laughs]* But I can live with you and I can pray with you. We can worship God together. We are on the same page about 99.9% of things. That's what brings me joy is that you are leading our family in the things of God and you are teaching, you're discipling.

Ryan: What do you say that it's because you feel loved and you feel a sense of closeness?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And the way that that kind of manifests itself in our relationship is through laughter and connection and feeling safe.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: And feeling like you can trust me and I trust you.

Selena: Right. And there's a healthy perspective of identity and roles, I guess. I think—and we'll talk about this a little bit later in the conversation—but [00:15:00] I look to you, and I honor you, and I want to help you and please you and be that wife. But our flesh can twist that into an idolatry and idolizing of I only want your approval, I need your approval, otherwise, I'm not okay, fix everything and all that. But we're not quite there yet.

Ryan: Oh, wow. As you're talking, this is hitting me. Is it possible then to have joy without some underlying kind of foundational other things in place, other truths in place? For instance, could we have a joy-filled marriage if we didn't have a peace-filled marriage? Or can we have joy with God if we don't have peace with God? Can we have peace with God-

Selena: Those are big questions because I think that there's moments that we can share of joy by God's grace through our children, or enjoying something together even if there's a lack of peace in some other area of our relationship. Because I think you and I still kind of laugh at things even when we're mad at each other.

Ryan: Sometimes it's how we stop being mad at each other.

Selena: Sometimes I'm not ready to be done being mad and you try to laugh and like timing is terrible.

Ryan: I have to take a little detour here. One of our toughest fights, I'll say in the past five years, it was because I hadn't felt very respected by you. And I was cooking, I was making dinner and Selena is like, "What's the deal?" And I looked at you and said, "I just don't get no respect." And it sounded like Michael Scott doing his Rodney Dangerfield impression. And that immediately just shattered. It shattered the anger and we both started laughing. I was so mad but I had to laugh because it was ridiculous and funny.

- Selena:** Laughter is powerful.
- Ryan:** It is powerful.
- Selena:** It is very powerful.
- Ryan:** It disarms. It disarms.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** We've talked a little bit about what a joyful marriage might look like. But I want to emphasize here for you, listener, and please hear this. Joy is a function of relationship. Here's what I mean by that. It's that whole peace thing. So peace and hope and joy in our relationship to and with another person. We'll come back to that, but that's kind of crate those little coat hangers there or whatever we hang...
- Selena:** Little pegs.
- Ryan:** Yeah, pegs. ...relationship to. So in my relationship with. Now we're talking about marriage. That's going to be to your spouse, relationship to your spouse, and relationship with your spouse. That becomes a factor in the function of joy being a part of relationship.
- And then enjoying as a definition of something is to be desirously affectionate of another. And that's what you said is we want to be together. Ideally, in your marriage... the more we talk to couples, the more we can't take this for granted is that couples struggle to want to be together.
- Selena:** A lot of couples don't want to be around each other. And then they want to hang out with us. And I'm like, "Go away, because I want to hang out with my husband." *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Well, I was having a talk with some of the elders of our church this morning. And they were like, "We should do this guy's thing." We haven't told you about this. So I'm sorry.
- Selena:** Here we go.
- Ryan:** This guy's retreat to kind of instruct the men in our church on how to have a relationship with God and their relationship with their wives that is God-honoring, relationship with our children that's God-honoring. And it's going to take a number of days to do that. *[Selena laughs]*

- Selena:** It can take one night and two days.
- Ryan:** Well, the proposed duration is four days.
- Selena:** Yeah, right. Sorry. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** It's real-time, folks.
- Selena:** Four days. Okay.
- Ryan:** Because of the drive involved is mainly why. So just put that somewhere else. We're not going to argue with that right now. Hold on. The point that I made and what one of the guys got, he's like, "I got approval from the wife." And I said, "I'm going to need to talk to Selena on this one." Because I was like, it's not that we can't make time. It's just that we like being together and we don't want to get away from each other."
- Selena:** He got approval in that moment. Wow. That was pretty fast.
- Ryan:** Yeah. So I was like, the issue is I want to be with my family. I want to be with my wife. It's not that I don't want to be with you guys. It's just that I want her more. I want to be around her more.
- Selena:** That's nice. But also it can be burdensome *[inaudible]*.
- Ryan:** We'll figure out the details of that later. But the point is, is that being affectionately desirous towards your spouse is not as something as common as you think. If you have a lot of spouses that because they haven't dealt with problems, issues, problems with trust, which we talked about trust at length in past episodes. What was it? Episode 212 to 216. So if you want to learn about trust and betrayal and that kind of stuff, go back to 212. Start there. But sometimes there's this kind of low grade tension that just kills all joy. So they actually don't want to be together.
- Selena:** Like you can laugh and connect, but then it's like, "Oh, no, wait, we're still fighting." Like you just pick it back up. It's like, Oh, I'm putting down this offense, I'm putting it down. No, I'm not ready. He was wrong. All these things. Yeah, I'm right. *[00:20:00]* I think it's such a slippery slope to...
- Ryan:** So I want to start this conversation of looking at joy as a function of relationship by looking first at our relationship to God and our relationship with God. So those are the two pegs that we talked about earlier is that relationship to and relationship with another. And this is where this came from.

Again, speaking with one of some of our elders at our church, one of the things that we talked about is he came up, he said... It's Cliff, one of the guys that was talking. He said it occurred to him that God wants our hearts more than He wants our minds. Because specifically in reformed or more liturgical or more theologically minded churches, we tend to love the Lord God with all our minds and not with our hearts necessarily.

Selena: We like knowing a lot.

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: We enjoy the knowledge of God and the things of God. How quickly that leads to self-righteousness, at least for me.

Ryan: And imagine that in a marriage. I just want to know all about Selena, but I don't actually want to know her. I don't actually want to spend time with her. I just want to know about her. How much would you feel loved by me if I just could rattle off all your favorite things, I could rattle off all these facts about you? And then when it comes time to actually spend time together, I'm like, "No, I'm good." Would you feel loved?

Selena: No, I think I would like you to know all those things sometimes. I'm like, "Well, that sounds kind of nice."

Ryan: I do all those things.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Why do you think I got Peperoncino on your Subway sandwich.

Selena: It's true. Without being asked.

Ryan: Without being asked. I don't like those.

Selena: It's very much like a cut-off. It's an early cut-off of, "Oh." It's misleading because I want you to know those things. But then if you're like, "No, I don't really want to hang out with you, though," it's just like, "Oh, but I thought you cared about me?" Well, I know about you, but I don't actually care.

Ryan: And that's it. That's the affection piece. Like I don't actually want to be with you, I just want to know about you.

Selena: God's like, "I don't care how much you know, I want your heart."

Ryan: Because the actions are attached to the affections. Knowledge very rarely leads to any sort of heart transformation. I want to say that knowledge very rarely leads to actions of affection unless the affection is actually there. Does that make sense? I don't know if I articulated that well.

So I'll use this example. This was such a relief to me. I was listening to a podcast last week and one of the things that came up was this idea of agency and responsibility before the Lord. And that could depend on a number of things, like maturity level, your age levels. Maturity is usually a function of age.

Like at what point are children responsible before the Holy God for their actions and therefore culpable and capable of being sent to hell or allowed into heaven? You gave me a funny look. Of course, their salvation depends on Christ alone, and so on and so forth. So this was talking about that kind of age of accountability and that devolved into just accountability. Not just aided accountability, but accountability itself and responsibility.

Then the question came up, what if someone's mentally handicapped, and they don't have the mental capacities of somebody who's not mentally handicapped? Can they respond to the gospel? One of the people talking, and this got to me, and I'm not going to actually address that issue here. So I'm sorry. But one of the things that they came around to was we are all mentally incapable in a lot of ways, especially when standing next to the eternal God of the universe, the creator of the universe.

Selena: Standing next to. I think even just trying to perceive...

Ryan: Not even next to but in light of who He is.

Selena: ...what He's given us of Himself. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Our shortcomings are insurmountable. There's no way we can overcome. Like we can't just learn enough, enough, enough, enough to finally understand all there is to understand about God. His depths are unfathomable. So to Him, we're all just inadequate when it comes to our mental capacities to know and understand and grasp God. So He wants our hearts.

What does that mean? How do we give God our hearts? I'm asking rhetorically, but I'm also asking you just to kind of shoot from the hip here. How would you say, Selena, we give God our hearts?

Selena: I think it's just a constant surrender. I mean, our affections have to be involved. You catch me off guard here but-

Ryan: Sorry.

Selena: I mean giving God our hearts is giving Him [00:25:00] ourselves, our desires, submitting everything to Him no matter how we feel. I don't know.

Ryan: I really feel like we're getting down to what does it take to build a joy-filled relationship? And that comes from looking at, again, the two and the width components of that relationship: my relationship to God. And that's the trust piece. God is God, I am not. So my relationship to Him. He is creator, I am created.

Selena: I'm just trying to put all this together. The knowledge of Him. Is that what you're talking about? Even though we know about Him, unless we have relationship with Him, our knowledge is never going to bring about transformation?

Ryan: Yes, I would say that. The reason I got to this place is because I'm like, "Okay, this God..." Cliff said this: "God wants our hearts more than He wants our minds." I think He wants both things, by the way.

Selena: For sure.

Ryan: Because we have to be renewed. Romans 12 verse - what is it? Transformed by the renewing of our minds. There it is. So there's a sense that He wants our mind, but the thought was, if we just give Him our minds and we don't give Him our hearts, then we're falling short of what it means to have a relationship that is trusting and affectionate, it deserves the affection of Him.

Can we worship God with our minds? Yes. Abraham had faith and it was credit to him as righteousness. He trusted God. That my relationship to God, that He is promise-making, promise-keeping God. I need Him to keep the promise. I'm going to trust that He will keep the promise. That's one piece to it.

Then there's actually wanting God Himself. So there's trust in that God will do what He says He's going to do. That's the relationship to Him. And He's a creator, I'm a created being. But my relationship with Him now is, "God, I want you. I don't just want what you can give me. I don't just want the promises you have for me, but I want you. I want to be with you. I want to glorify you. I want to be found."

Selena: Right. Which is interesting, because when I think that I want God, I think quickly what follows after that sentence is I want to know you. But what does that mean? What do I mean by knowing? I mean, the Bible describes sexual

intimacy is like He knew her, in the Old Testament. I'm just saying there's an intimacy aspect of that relationship of knowing. Not just a knowledge, not just a mind cerebral understanding, but there's a relational aspect that wants to. I want to know God. If I want God, I want to know Him and experience Him. And that requires being present with Him. So I'm just trying to put a little more meat on those bones because...

Ryan: Yeah, I appreciate it.

Selena: ...wanting God is so ambiguous to me. Does that make sense? I want God, I want the things of God, I want Him. But at the same time, I don't know what exactly am I wanting. So I want to know what I'm wanting. Does that make sense?

Ryan: Yeah. I mean, you have to want the true version of God. There's all kinds of false religions and cults even that have a different version of Christ. That is not a saving version of Christ and it's not God himself, but it's a different version of Him. And that's why we have to be so focused on what the scripture says about Jesus. I mean, that's a bit of a sidebar.

The point is, is you kind of see these ingredients crop up is there's trust. Again, what are the ingredients to enjoying another being? So trust. Enjoying God. I trust that He is God, I'm not. I'm going to trust that He is good. I'm going to trust that He is worth my affections. Not only that, because He has proven trustworthy, I want Him. So I want to know Him. I want to know of Him, I want to know Him personally.

Then there's the third piece of position. The joy that comes from being positionally secure with Him, I guess that's what I'm trying to say. So trust, affection, and security. So now let's take that same kind of framework and think through our relationship to and with each other in marriage. So what does it take to truly enjoy one another? These three ingredients. So affection, trust, and relationship.

Now, relationship is not... I don't mean that word in the way that you usually would hear that word. Relationship not just in the terms of we have a relationship. But now it's instead my relationship to you. And what I mean by that is the position that I hold in your life, the position that you hold in my life.

Selena: As a wife or as a husband.

Ryan: Yeah. So I'm thinking more like what's the relationship between these two variables. Not that variables have a relationship. *[both laughs]*

Selena: There you go.

Ryan: So what do we mean [00:30:00] by affection? That's the very first piece to enjoying one another. And I think it's very intuitive. But just to be clear, it's a wanting, a desire, a longing for, a fondness for the other person. I actually like the person.

Selena: Right. And plays out in different ways with God. Because I was like, emotionally, yes. There's this affection. But there's also physical affection that flows out of that emotional affection and fondness and liking each other. So the friendship kind of moves to that next level affection. So, like you said, wanting to be around each other. And those are all just, like you said, ingredients for enjoying one another.

So we kind of touched on it a little bit earlier, but how could this go awry? How could this longing to be with someone, liking them, and wanting to be around them? The flip side, or the flesh, or the broken side of this, the sinful side of this could land in idolatry. What I mean is idolizing our spouse, wanting their approval in order for my own self to operate, needing their affection in an unhealthy way of I can't... being always worried that maybe...

This is not the case of where trust has been broken again and again. I'm just saying that in your day to day, you're constantly having an anxiety about whether or not your spouse approves of you or you're just fixated on meeting their needs, pleasing them, fixing everything just to make sure things are good. You can just basically kind of become a doormat in a lot of ways.

I think it's a slow transition. We just have to be aware of, okay, when the affection is not there and maybe we're not enjoying each other, can we still have joy? Or how do we get back to that healthy place of friendship and desire and fondness for each other?

Ryan: The way I like to think about if something is going kind of sideways is if at any point my identity is at stake, if I don't get that thing, that's an idol. If my security is at stake, if my husband or my wife doesn't love me the way that I need to be loved, my life is ruined, everything in my life goes off the rails. I guess, assuming there's an underlying security that comes from Christ alone. And that's what we talked about that last week is that the very root of our Christian joy is in a fixed person and a finished work. That's Jesus Christ on the cross. and rose again for us.

With that said, it's still right and good and true to want your spouse and desire for them to want you back. And that's, I think, what the affection is, is that you actually want to be together, you can give each other a hug without shuttering

[laughs] or a kiss without gagging. And I'm laughing. Obviously, brush your teeth in the morning, that sort of thing. That'll help. So affection is a big piece.

Let's move on to the second ingredient here to building a joy-filled marriage. And that's trust. So this one's a little bit tough to nail down. But here's what I mean by that. It's reliance on the relational integrity. And I mean relation on that same sense that I used earlier. An interdependence on one another in healthy ways. In other words, I trust you to be faithful to me.

Selena: I rely on you to do what you're going to say and say what you're going to do. I don't have to question everything that you're doing. I don't have to question where you're at. We've built this level of trust that doesn't require a lot of question-asking, it doesn't require a lot of interrogation. Because we've built the trust and God has allowed us and grown us in these areas.

Ryan: Vulnerability is another way to say. And I think you made that note. That vulnerability is the sense that if you decide to hurt me, you can. But because I trust you, that's now freed me to enjoy you and to be enjoyed by you in a much deeper, richer way. Now, I try to imagine having a joy-filled marriage where there's no trust.

Selena: It's hard.

Ryan: I'll never believe your motives are pure. Or I'll never believe that I can give myself to you without being hurt. And that's emotionally, physically, spiritually and all these different ways I'm being vulnerable to you. So we have to be able to be trustworthy and to give our trust over to the other person. [00:35:00]

Again, we talked about this at length in episodes 212 to 216. About two, three months back, we did a whole series on it. So go back. If you haven't heard those episodes, we talked all about trust and betrayal, the nature of trust, and that cruciform trust and what that looks like. So go back and check that out.

The final ingredient to enjoying one another in marriage is this: relationship. And that's, again, affection, trust, number two, and relationship. And again, the sense in which we're using that word is not that we have a relationship, but instead my relationship to you.

So when you think about my relationship to God is that He is God, He's creator, I am not. I am the created, I'm creation. He is completely on another plane. So I have to have a good accurate understanding of that view if I'm going to enjoy God as God. Otherwise, it's not God, it's something else.

The same thing happens in marriage when I understand our relationship: my relationship to you and your relationship to me. In other words, you are my one and only wife. Only you. There's billions of other people in the planet, and billions of other women on the planet. And only you are the wife.

Selena: That holds this position.

Ryan: That holds this position. And therefore, I can enjoy you in ways that are not accessible to anyone else or not accessible to me through anyone else. So I am now going to elevate you in a healthy way to a place of position, a relationship to me-

Selena: To the place of position I think that God has purposed and ordained through the covenant of marriage, His design.

Ryan: Another way to look at this is positional accuracy and that's like sounds like a really boring term, but like it accurately seeing you as my wife. In other words, you're the one that I'm going to find physical satisfaction in, emotional safety in.

Selena: Well, it's kind of that bar. I think it's just the bar of like, okay, you are my husband. Anything above that becomes idolatry. Anything below that is inaccurate, it's dehumanizing of-

Ryan: I think that's where you get into the... if I'm not allowing you to be the one and only wife in my life...

Selena: Wife in my life.

Ryan: ...I'm instead seeing you as a roommate or seeing you as a good friend.

Selena: Right. The intimacy is found elsewhere because you're not elevating your spouse, or you as a spouse are not elevated to that point of husband or wife in the way God has ordained. It's almost that... what would you call that line? I feel like there's a term for it.

Ryan: Threshold?

Selena: Yeah, maybe a threshold would be a good one.

Ryan: Hopefully that makes sense. But by seeing the other person, your husband, your wife in this very exclusive position, this relationship to you, that then frees you up to then enjoy them in ways that are unique to marriage. Because

it's easy to... I don't want to say it's easy, but the joy-filled marriage is going to be very different from a joy-filled friendship.

Selena: Yeah. I think friendship will lack the depth that the marriage can, the covenant can hold.

Ryan: All things considered and everything else equal, I think, yeah, there is a deeper level of enjoyment to be had. And you could make the case that it's a different type of enjoyment too. Because friendship is also a very rich gift that God's given us to have to share friendships with others.

So just a quick recap. Again, if you find yourself you're in your marriage and you're thinking to yourself, where's the joy? I'm proposing to you these three ingredients to cultivating a more joy-filled marriage: affection, trust, and relationship.

So now we asked the question, what do we do if we don't have joy? Well, I would say go back to those three areas, and start doing an inventory and look and say, "Are we affectionate toward one another, genuinely affectionate?" In other words, at one point you were. In most western marriages and most modern marriages-

Selena: When did it stop?

Ryan: ...you're there, you got married because you wanted to in most cases. What happened? At what point did you stop nurturing that affection? Or what broke that affection? And how can you start rebuilding? A lot of times trust is kind of the second piece.

Selena: If you don't know then you can always ask the Lord, "God, Holy Spirit help me to know my own shortcomings, keep my heart soft, reveal those things that are sinful to me." It says in - is it Proverbs or psalms? That I searched the heart I know the depth... I was reading it in Jeremiah. I take that back. He searches our hearts. He knows every ounce of us. So us requesting to know that brokenness or that lack I think is a good sign. And it shows again that we can identify that He is God and that we are not.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. So, begin rebuilding the affection for one another. And just going back to the foundation, asking for God [00:40:00] to help in that. Don't try to do it without the Holy Spirit's help. And stirring your affections for one another, rebuilding trust. If there's trust has been lost, how can you go about rebuilding trust and being vulnerable once again with one another? Again, go back to those episodes. We mentioned, 212 to 216, learn at length about trust,

and betrayal, and recovering from... Betrayal is not just infidelity, by the way. And that's something we talked about. It's not just-

Selena: It is not just. Not just just.

Ryan: There are other senses of betrayal within marriage, where maybe I communicated something to you vulnerably and you stormed all my feelings. You betrayed me in a sense. And so there's ways to recover and start to rebuild in those instances as well. And then finally, how do you have a right context for your roles in each other's lives? In other words, your relationship to one another.

Selena: Am I treating you with respect as my husband or am I treating co-workers with more respect than I am you?

Ryan: Or am I being very quick to dismiss my wife's needs because I have other more needy friends, and I'm not prioritizing her, because I've lost sight of the fact that she is my wife, my only wife. And I need to treat her with everything that God told us to treat our wives with. So I'll just say do an inventory in those three areas, and then you'll start to find kind of ways that you can begin to rebuild in the name of creating a place that is actually joy-filled and actually is conducive, I'll say, to having joy occupy your marriage. Does that make sense?

Do you still want to share that quote, or do you want to skip it? I don't know if the context was...

Selena: I mean, we're talking about trials. If you're going through a trial, it's pretty sure you're not feeling joy in your marriage if you're going through that. And this is what we're talking about in this part of the conversation. If we don't feel joy, what can we do?

I'm reading a book. It's a small one. "Christ-Centered Conflict Resolution: A Guide For Turbulent Times" by Tony Merida. Really great book. So the quote is, "The spirit also produces joy. Believers can have joy even in the midst of trials, because the Spirit has given them new affections. The Spirit produces a life of satisfying joy while the flesh only leads to dissatisfaction."

So if we are not feeling joy, I think one of the questions we can ask ourselves is, are we relying on our flesh to produce joy? Are we relying on our own means for producing joy in our life? And is that okay? I mean, there are, I think, some instances where we can be the producers have our own joy. Taking a vacation, that's a way that we can experience some joy.

But if in terms of our marriage, if we're not feeling joy, are we trying to look to ourselves to fix what's wrong? Are we looking to our spouse to fix what's wrong instead of relying on the spirit? And what would that look like? Sort of asking that question is important.

Ryan: And you had asked the question, and that quote elucidates it, is because we're walking in the flesh in some way in our marriage and we're not trusting the Spirit. But specifically walking in... the word is wickedness. And walking in a way that's rebellion to God. I'm not submitting to God in how I'm loving my spouse.

Selena: There is no neutral. You are or you're not.

Ryan: Yeah. That's a really interesting quote. So thinking those terms. Am I walking in the flesh? Husband, if your communication life with your wife is suffering, are you walking in the flesh in a way that you're not being patient with her or loving toward her or compassionate or kind to your wife? And the same can go for a wife talking to her husband. Maybe she is disregarding and disrespecting him in a way that is dishonoring to God. And that is sapping the joy out of your marriage because you don't actually have that connection. You've lost sight of your relationship to one another, and you've been vulnerable and you've damaged one another in the process.

So again, affection, trust relationship to one another. Get those three ingredients in place, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you with that, and then take steps together. Have that conversation so that you can acknowledge that maybe your joy is lacking, and then acknowledge the ways forward to find health in that area. That's it for this week.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Let's pray. Lord, I pray for our joy right now, that our joy would be found in you, God, and not even exclusively in each other in our marriages or in others, in other circumstances, but solely in you. Lord from that deep well of joy, knowing that our salvation is secure, that you were promised-making, promise-keeping God. That from there, we would have a sense of security in order to pursue [00:45:00] joy in our marriages in healthy ways that would honor you.

Lord, I pray for the husband who's struggling to find joy that you would be his hope and his peace in his marriage and in his life so that that joy can eventually come and that he would trust you until joy arrives. Lord, I pray for the wife who's also struggling to find joy. That you would be her hope and her peace as she works out what it means to create and cultivate a joy-filled marriage.

Lord, in all these things, we pray that you help us, Holy Spirit, in your name. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, ladies, gentlemen, thanks for joining us for the podcast. Once again, I want to say one more pitch for Gospel Centered Marriage. If you haven't checked it out, go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. I'm so encouraged by the community that's kind of unfolding there. We have another Zoom call scheduled for this month. I can't wait to connect with our enrollees. Once again, it's awesome meeting some of you and seeing you face to face online, not face to face in person. One day, we'll get to do that. But if you want to check that out, go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com. There's a bunch of options there and a bunch of courses available to you. And we hope that it blesses you.

So this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: And we will see you in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:46:23] <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](https://www.facebook.com/Fiercemarriage) on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:04:02]**
 - Recommended Resource:
 - [Gospel Centered Marriage](#)

- **[00:09:18]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Habakkuk 3:17-19, ESV

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