

SKILL #1: SELF CONTROL (BACK TO BASICS, 1 OF 4)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/skill-1-self-control-back-to-basics-1-of-4>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Selena Amanda Frederick, happy 18th anniversary. Woohoo.

Selena: Wooh!

Ryan: Go us.

Selena: Ryan Glen Frederick, happy 18th anniversary.

Ryan: Thank you. Yes. I can't believe it. 18 years.

Selena: 18 years married, four years dating.

Ryan: Four years dating. We've been together for far more than half our lives. It's cliché to say, but clichés exist for a reason, right? Every day is better than the last. I really believe that with you. And I love you. And you're the best.

Selena: Same.

Ryan: So, Happy anniversary, my love.

Selena: [inaudible]

Ryan: So it's kind of cool because we coincidentally started the podcast right around this time about four years ago in 2017. Believe it or not.

Selena: It's crazy.

Ryan: We are actually headed into our fifth season as well of this podcast.

Selena: That's awesome. I remember when we were starting, were like, "Meh."

Ryan: We were like, "Let's just go for like maybe three months and see."

Selena: Yeah. "It doesn't seem like a lot of people are doing this. We'll just try it. It might be a good thing."

Ryan: We were doing it before it was cool.

Selena: It's true.

Ryan: You know what? It was kind of cool when we started it. But it wasn't like-

Selena: But it was like it could teeter either way. *[chuckles]* Like you're just kind of, "Let's see how this goes."

Ryan: It's been a lot of fun. We've really enjoyed it. Listener, thank you for being on this journey with us. We hope that our efforts have been fruitful in your life.

Our other hope is that this next season is no exception to that, right? We have a lot to celebrate. We also have a lot of work that needs to be done still in our own lives, and by God's grace in the lives of our listeners. So thank you for joining us for Season 5 of the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We will see you on the other side.

[00:01:36] <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.

[00:02:11] <podcast begins>

Ryan: So we're recording this right before we're going on an anniversary date. What are we doing on the anniversary date?

Selena: We're going to get some food and we're going to take it on our little boat, and we're just going to go hang out in Puget Sound adult style.

- Ryan:** No kids.
- Selena:** No kids. So we don't have to be making sure everybody's alive, not falling in the water, jumping off things.
- Ryan:** You end up being like a stewardess because you're constantly having to serve up water and snacks and giving them safety briefings kind of stuff. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** Yeah. So we're just going to go sit and read some books and eat some food and celebrate just because it's sunny still in Washington. And we're just going to take it all in.
- Ryan:** Yeah, yeah, well, I can't wait for that. Let's get the show on the road. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** So we're just going to go through this real quick.
- Ryan:** Actually, today we're starting a new series. To be honest, listener, we've struggled with this name. But the concept hopefully comes through. The name that I'm going to run with right now *[chuckles]* is back to basics. I don't want this to be confused with foundational things, okay?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Because they are foundational things that you could say they're basic in the sense that they are absolutely the basis for a strong marriage. But what we're talking about here are really the practical of basics, the practical outworking of those foundational pieces. In other words, these are the skills... over the next four weeks, we're going to say these are the four topics or four kind of areas where you need skill if you're going to have a marriage that is-
- Selena:** A fierce marriage. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** If you can have a marriage that is-
- Selena:** Fierce. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** ...marriage that is flourishing, a marriage that is everything that you kind of want it to be and more, right and all in light of the gospel. Not just for our own good, not just for our own enjoyment, but on to Christ's glory and of the glory of His name.

So we're starting this episode or this series today with self-control is what we're talking through. So if you don't have self-control of marriage, that's going to create a lot of problems. Obviously, we'll get into that in greater detail.

Next week, we're going to do teamwork. *[chuckles]* You said, "I can't believe that... I thought we were past these types of clichés." But you said, "Teamwork makes the marriage dream work."

Selena: Hey, full transparency. We were having a big ol' fight when I was trying to write this. So I read it how I want to write it. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: It was. Actually-

Selena: Guys, margin-

Ryan: ...we're recording this late, on our anniversary, because we had a fight.

Selena: Margin is important. It's all I'm going to say. Margin is important. We had no margin for the last two weeks.

Ryan: If it's so important, why don't we have any?

Selena: I know. It's like we had all these things, great things happening, and lots of things to do within our household and our community. And then Thursday comes and we're just like, "Who are you? I don't like you." Just crush. [00:05:00]

Ryan: When did we kind of break the ice? The way that you broke the ice, I gave you a hug and you said, "Why are you acting so messed up with me?" *[both laughs]* And I said, "Why are you acting so messed up toward me?" If you know what movie, that's from the [inaudible]

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So, yeah, we've had a tough go. So teamwork is something that we haven't quite mastered every second of every day.

Selena: No. But it definitely makes the marriage frameworks. *[Ryan laughs]* There it is. So that's Week 2 for you. Week 3 is going to be communication and conflict, which flows very nicely out of teamwork.

Ryan: How do you fight well? And a lot of couples... I'm just shocked at how-

- Selena:** How can you fight well? Yeah.
- Ryan:** I'm shocked at ourselves, I'm shocked at other couples and how rarely couples seem to have mastered this topic of communication and conflict. And so, yeah, we're going to spend some time going deep into that one.
- Selena:** All right. We're only human. Okay?
- Ryan:** Week 4 is going to be intimacy. In other words, how do you get unity around your intimate lives and mutual understanding, mutual shared expectations, so you're not always kind of pushing and pulling and going against each other on this topic, you're not chasing and avoiding, in fact, you're actually meeting one another?
- Selena:** Each of these subjects or I guess weeks build off one another. They flow into one another. I feel like these are the main areas where we fight the most and where we need those basic skills of self-control, teamwork, learning, and knowing how to communicate effectively.
- And then intimacy is always a challenge. It just really is. It's a blessing, but it takes work. So a big basic, but very necessary for a flourishing marriage.
- Ryan:** Cool. So let's do some housekeeping real fast. Subscribe, follow, rate, review if you haven't done that. That helps us a lot. Please do do that. Especially we're going to fifth season. The podcast space is so, so saturated.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** And so if you think this is valuable content, you can help others come to that same realization by leaving a rating and a review. If you want to partner with us... I'm actually really excited. We just invested in some new microphones. Now, we're going to use them today.
- Selena:** Oh, these are not new ones?
- Ryan:** These aren't the new ones. The new ones are over there on the chair.
- Selena:** Oh, they're pretty looking over there sitting on the chair doing nothing.
- Ryan:** It turns out you need what's called the preamp for those ones.
- Selena:** Oh.
- Ryan:** Anyway, we can't use those. We're going to start Season 5 with a new sound.

Selena: Yeah. We've been using these for four years.

Ryan: Yeah. And we've gotten our money's worth out of these little mics. But all that takes resources. And that's part of this ministry and Fierce Parenting, which did launch last week.

Selena: Woohoo.

Ryan: If you missed that, go check that out. Thank you so much, everyone who's left a rating and a review on that podcast. We are so encouraged by that. But anyway, if you want to partner with us, the way to do that is to go to patreon.com/fiercemarriage, or you can go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. I think they both end up in the same place. But yeah, that's how we keep things going.

Finally, I think and I hesitate to say this, I think we're going to do an October cohort for Gospel Centered Marriage. *[laughs]* The reason why I hesitated is because it means that we're going to be involved in it. We have an online course, it's an ecosystem called Gospel Centered Marriage. Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com to learn more.

However, one of the things that I really wanted for that is I want couples to have, I guess, incentive and reason to go further, kind of faster. Because what happens is a lot of people will start the course with great intentions, but life happens, they get busy, or maybe they're not on board together for whatever reason. And I'm just concerned that the throughput is not as high as it could be or the experience isn't everything it could be.

So I'm like 60% right now that we'll do an October cohort. So if you want to be a part of that, stay tuned, keep listening to the podcast, follow us on social media, we'll announce that. But we're going to give you 20% off of Gospel Centered Marriage for this whole month. Use the coupon code basics at checkout, and we'll give you an extra 20% off whatever that lowest price is to jump on board. So please do take advantage of that.

Okay. Is that everything? I think that's everything.

Selena: Okay. So we're talking about self-control this week. It is a big topic, especially within marriage. It is a fruit of the Spirit. We're going to hover around three different scriptures sections, I think. So Romans 12, which talks about the life and fruit of a believer. Mark 10:6-9, this call to unity and oneness. There's also Ephesians 4, and then 1 Corinthians 7, talking about authority over our bodies, that they're no longer our own when we're married.

You can probably start drawing the lines and seeing the connections between self-control and authority and governing and oneness and how all that will mix together. But hopefully through a bit of our story and us going through some of the purposes and desires for marriage you can see how important it is for the Holy Spirit to be [00:10:00] involved in our hearts, in our souls, in our lives and growing and producing His fruit in our lives. In this case, self-control.

Ryan: Very cool.

Selena: Our story, when we first... it's actually kind of funny that we're talking about this [*chuckles*] because it's our anniversary. I wrote this a week ago when we were fighting and I was like, "Well, this is a good story." So whatever.

But it's kind of just to illustrate our expectations and our lack of vision for them when we got married. Ironically, I was excited to get married because I had a lot of expectations on Ryan. That he would make me happy, we'd be married, we didn't have to save by anymore, goodnight, we could sleep in same bed. We could do all the married things, right?

Ryan: That was a big, important thing to remember about not having to say goodnight. Because we had so many of those excruciating-

Selena: So many good nights. Guys, we waited. We were virgins until we got married. So there it is. It's out there. We waited. Totally worth it.

Ryan: Yes. Not that we were perfect.

Selena: No.

Ryan: We were virgins in the technical sense of the word, and more than the technical sense of the word. But we weren't perfect is what you're trying to say.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Is I'm trying to say.

Selena: There was struggles there.

Ryan: That's part of the reason why we decided not to have to say goodbye because it was just this continual longing that we were having to snuff and stifle.

Selena: So basically, I was just like, "He's going to meet all my needs. Can't wait to get married and just be together all the time." Ryan, what were you excited about? What were your expectations going into our marriage?

Ryan: Oh, you put me on the spot here. I think I was obviously given the fact that we had waited and stuff and-

Selena: Just like things that you didn't know. Like basic Ryan getting married. Before we were getting married, what were your expectations? I was like, "He is going to meet my needs. He's going to do all these. He's going to make me happy." Like it's really about what you were going to do for me. Right?

Ryan: Yeah. I don't know that I had some overt thought along those lines for how you were supposed to meet my needs. I did have really high expectations in terms of this adventure called marriage. If you remember I had been working for a painter, commercial painting company and they had painted a lot of apartment buildings.

And while we're painting the apartment buildings, I'm looking at these people, like they have their own place, they hang out and they like... I don't know, it's just like this... I don't know what I was imagining, but this freedom to just be independent and together. Like independent as a family and together. To me, that was the ultimate adventure.

And so I was excited for that. So I thought you and I embarking on that adventure was going to be so fun. Because we did have an apartment because I was working on an apartment complex maintenance janitorial stuff. So I was excited for that most of all.

Selena: Okay. So you were maybe less selfish coming into marriage. I was trying to use those to illustrate our selfishness coming in. Our level of...

Ryan: I did kind of have the classic Christian misunderstanding of sex and how all of my sexual desires would be completely and utterly satisfied in you. Now, with that said, by God's grace, I wasn't addicted to pornography headed into our marriage because that just was not something that I had dabbled in necessarily.

I wasn't completely ignorant of it. Like I had seen things so I wasn't completely blameless in that area. But I didn't have this big kind of backlog of behavior that I'm expecting you now to satisfy. But I did have kind of the classic Christian understanding of "Oh, when you're married and you want to have sex, you just do. Your wife is always on board and it's always like a no brainer. It doesn't matter what time." *[laughs]*

Selena: Because she obviously wants it as much as you want it all the time.

Ryan: It's completely obvious.

Selena: I mean, listener, you can probably see in here the level of selfishness that kind of came out of the early days and early years of our marriage. I think we both had good expectations. But we quickly learned that marriage was not 100% about what I wanted or what he wanted, but it really... We had to grow in the knowledge and understanding that marriage is about what God wants for us. And I think we had some of those desires. But working those out was really challenging because of our selfishness.

You don't realize how selfish you are until someone else comes along. Hello, spouse; hello, kids. Like, oh, I thought I was a really selfless person. I'm showing up and serving at church and I'm giving of my time. But wow, the level of selfishness that exists in those early days in marriage is... for us, I think that's probably where it was at its pinnacle. God has quickly and graciously grown us to produce more fruit from Holy Spirit, mainly in self-control.

That has been an adventure and a journey and a challenge. And it's only by His grace that we've been able to walk through this and grow in our self-control. [00:15:00] It's definitely a skill to be built, but it also has to come from the Lord because otherwise you're just kind of doing the same things over and over and you feel like you're never going to actually develop self-control in your marriage.

So what do we mean, I guess, by self-control in our marriage? What does that actually look like? I think we should start in Romans 12. So I can just read the first two verses, and then we can skip down even to nine and stuff.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Stop.

So what we see here is the message of, to me, selflessness. "Do not be conformed to this world." When I read that I think of the world's desires, the world's messages of I need to... if I get married, then it's about me and what he can provide for me and what he can do for me. And if I'm reading this correctly, God is saying, "Don't be conformed to this world. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

Well, what does that mean? If I'm getting married and I'm thinking that I'm selfless, and I think that I've got all of this together, then I'm just going to automatically be able to love my spouse really well. I'm going to be super good at it. Right?

Ryan: You are. You're pretty good at it.

Selena: All right. But then you go down a couple of verses talking about how to love. I mean, we have 1 Corinthians, but in this passage in Romans, Paul writes, "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." There's this call to love in a deeper way from a deeper well that is authentic and genuine. And really it's not about us. Right?

Ryan: Interesting you say that. I could just interject here because we're talking about selflessness or selfishness, and being kind of the thing that you need to overcome, self-control. I don't know if that... is that the-

Selena: Self-control is the means that we overcome them.

Ryan: Yeah, self-control is an actual fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: So we start there, right? It's a fruit of the Holy Spirit, not a fruit of human goodness is I think what strikes me. It's like true self-control, true love, true joy it's going to come from somewhere else, someone else.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Namely the Holy Spirit working in us in the life a believer. So it begs the question, can a non-believer, can a couple who is not professed Christians, who aren't indwelt believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can they live in this way? Can they have self-control in the ways that we're describing?

My quick answer is not in the ways we're describing. So no. I think you can have some semblance of self-control because God, in His goodness, He has given what's called common grace, right? So even unregenerate people, even non-Christian people have the ability to do good things, have the ability to exercise and practice wisdom. And I believe self-control being that it's fruit of the Holy Spirit is wisdom.

But I think there's just a level of depth there that is not available to the believer. And I think if you really get down below the surface, you can have

the behaviors that resemble self-control, but you can have a heart orientation, a heart motivation that that doesn't.

Selena: To the unbeliever.

Ryan: To the unbeliever, yeah. So what that does then is that puts us, even though you're doing maybe biblical things, if it's not rooted in the Holy Spirit, is not rooted in the Gospel, then it doesn't really... it puts you on the same plane as an atheist or a pagan or an agnostic or somebody else who just happens to be doing the pragmatic thing.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And the problem is, and this is what I'm getting around to, the problem is that God's way is rarely pragmatic to the end. In other words, it's not always going to be the easy, most expedient thing to do.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's very pragmatic in the sense that it produces righteousness, it bears fruit, it produces good things. It's pragmatic in that sense. But it's not pragmatic in that it will cost you something you don't want to pay at some point. And I think that's got to be at the absolute core of this idea of self-control, selflessness.

It has to be the gospel, it has to be the Holy Spirit it has to be a fruit of the Holy Spirit welling up from within us, growing. Otherwise, we're just basically... I've used this analogy all the time, but you're stapling fruit on a tree. It might look good for a few days, but eventually to fall off, it'll still rot. It's not alive. Holy Spirit fruit is alive and it wells up from within us. And it is essentially, at its essence it's different.

And we know that when the rubber meets the road, [00:20:00] when it's no longer pragmatic to do the hard thing because the only Holy Spirit fruit will say, "You can still do the hard thing even though your flesh says no." Because without the Spirit, without walking in the Spirit, all you have is flesh. All you have is flesh.

And even if you make the right choice, a lot of times, it's going to be rooted in the idea that it's going to end better for me. In other words, it's still a selfish desire, I'm still doing it for myself, it just happens to look a certain way. And like I said, at the end of that, that eventually will... you'll wear of that argument out and eventually you'll want to do something different.

Selena: I think we should talk about an example of this maybe in marriage. That might illustrate it better. Because when you think self-control, I mean, you automatically go to addictions or struggles. And I'm thinking for the married person, right?

Ryan: Can we just use ourselves as an example?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: This last week... we laughed about it, but the fight that we were having was pretty rough because we weren't communicating... I think at some point, we were like ships passing in the night. We would just walk by one another in the house. And it's like, "You're dead to me." *[Ryan laughs] [Selena chuckles]*

I remember thinking like, "Wow, she's really cold." I'm like, "I'm cold to her too." But I wanted to be. And I think that's the part that our flesh... We were doing what was pragmatic. Like I was not fighting my flesh in that moment. I don't want to speak for you.

Selena: I was. I'm kidding. *[both chuckles]* I was trying to, but I felt hopeless and empty and unable to because I was looking to myself to overcome that.

Ryan: Yeah. I don't want to backpedal but I do want to add some nuance and some texture to it.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Being regenerate and being filled by the Holy Spirit doesn't mean that all of a sudden we have this ability to bear perfect fruit all the time. It's a process of sanctification. Paul talks about it in Romans and other places where he does the thing he knows he shouldn't do, but the thing he is not supposed to do, the thing he doesn't want to do, he does that thing. He basically caves into his flesh more than he wants to.

And so this idea of sanctification is basically like, how good am I becoming at hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, hearing the voice of Christ, and obeying that, not just in action, but in heart orientation desire? How good am I becoming at wanting God so badly, wanting His Holiness, His righteousness so badly that it is second nature to me?

Because my first nature is my flesh. So how do I change that to where it's not just second nature, but now it's my first nature that I want the things of God?

Selena: Right. And it's a lot like working out. It's a lot of muscle memory. It's the repetition of practice, and practice and practice. And God is faithful to present those opportunities [*chuckles*] in our marriage and in the struggles of, you know, I can on-

Ryan: I just want to jump in because I remember in the middle of even just the last few days when we were going through our stuff, and I was just praying, "God, what do I do? I honestly don't know. Help me."

Selena: I was praying the same thing.

Ryan: Like I'm going to God. And you know what? He didn't just give me some lightbulb moment. He didn't give me some breath of like new inspiration and fresh perspective. It was like, "No, I had to kind of go through that and slog through it. It was drudgery in a sense.

I think killing and searing and setting aside the flesh at times is painful. It's very painful. And that can only be done through struggle and through pain. And so I think that's what we're talking about here. Self-control, that's truly, truly Spirit-led. Spirit-borne fruit is going to have those moments where you are killing and mortifying the flesh. And that's a painful process.

The argument I'm trying to make is that without the Holy Spirit driving that and producing that fruit, why would I want to modify my flesh when all I have is my flesh? So anyway, there's a lot of nuance to that. But all that to say is that I think it's a good thing to fight and wrestle. And it's still a Spirit borne fruit if you're fighting against your flesh. The difference is, where does it end? And at what point do you wear out? I don't know, I could go on and on. I'm just kind of thinking in real-time right now-

Selena: No, I agree. I think that's-

Ryan: ...to move the conversation along. [*both laughs*] That's our story. You wanted a practical example of how, listeners, self-control can work itself out. If you take that and you extrapolate from there and you say, okay, how does that work itself out in our sex life or in our financial life? Listener, you're smart. You can intuit some of those ways that it could work itself out. You know when [00:25:00] you want to do something that is not healthy, not right, not selfless. You know that.

And I would argue that when it's the hardest, when it's the hardest to push back into the flesh, that's going to be the most critical junction that you're going to face at that time.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: And that's your greatest opportunity, therefore, to trust God. And that's the hard piece, right? You don't want to jump off that cliff because it takes you resigning yourself to Him, it takes you turning away from your pride, maybe going to your spouse who you think has wronged you, or they've been acting messed up towards you. *[both chuckles]* That's very hard to do. And that's a great opportunity to trust God in that moment.

Selena: Right. And something interesting to I think grab ahold of is when you're dealing with the selfishness and the lack of self-control in your marriage, it's not just about compromising and moving on to the next thing. It's not about just, okay, I'm just going to give in, I'm going to cave in, and we'll just get past this whatever. Like, that's not actually being selfless.

Ryan: Right. You're being pragmatic, yeah.

Selena: Right. So we can still compromise and still have a hard heart and a bad attitude, which is what I think you were trying to say about a decision that we're trying to make. That it can be more damaging rather than helpful when we're just trying to get through it.

Like you said, the difference in how we end everything is what you look at in order to see what is at the helm. Is it self-control? Or is it selfishness? And they will take us to two very different places.

Ryan: And it's also driven by the motivation that you have to be obedient to God and conform to His word and conform to the likeness of Christ. If that's not something that we genuinely want, then we're not even going to ask these questions. All these questions are moot at that point.

Selena: Again, Romans 12 paints us a great picture of what it means to be a living sacrifice. I mean, sacrifice, the word sacrifice, you can't get any higher than that as far as like self-control and selflessness. And then, looking at the marks of a true Christian, someone who is loving one another with brotherly affection, they rejoice in hope, be patient, tribulation.

I felt like this was like our week of just God's just like, "Just be patient in it and be constant in prayer." And it was hard. I felt like I was constantly praying, constantly just hitting a wall, hitting a wall, hitting a wall. And life still has to happen. Like we still have to work. We still have to feed our children. We still have to do all the things that we can't just sit in it. And I think that was challenging for us. We really had to face some struggles in the selfishness arena.

Ryan: I don't want to gloss over this before we move on from Romans 12, 12:1-2 and the rest of Romans 12 are all in light of the first 11 chapters of Romans. And so it's like if we just start there, we kind of we're missing the first whole [inaudible]...

Selena: Right.

Ryan: ...of what Paul is saying. You've probably heard many people talk about this, but he's developing a very rich kind of systematic theology of grace and of God's love for the Jew and the Gentile and what that means for the life of the believer. He's developing all that very systematically over chapters 1 through 11.

Selena: Romans 12 is kind of like a quick recap of it. The cream.

Ryan: It's the "if then now what?" It's the "therefore." "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, now do these things." That's, I guess, what I'm trying to say is that a lot of us want to go from Romans 12 forward without a full grasp or understanding or submission to Romans 1 through 11. Which read Romans 1 and find connection for like our desires to basically act as the functional gods in our own lives. And that never ends well.

Romans starts out with like we have to resign ourselves to this truth that God is God and we are not; He's creator, we are created. Therefore, He sets the rules, we don't. Again, that resignation and the fruit there and the theology that develops around that is what gives birth to this practical outworking, this back to the basics of self-control is that we now have a basis, a sound basis to present ourselves as living sacrifices under God. And the way that looks in our marriage is self-control, selflessness in times when we absolutely don't want to.

Selena: So good. All right, I think we're going to spend some time talking about what we call the three scarce resources in our marriage where selfishness can kind of skew and ruin the purposes that God has for them. Maybe that sounds a little gray.

Ryan: Yeah, let's get into it.

Selena: But let's talk about it, and I think it'll come become clear very quickly.

Ryan: Scarce resources. What do we mean by that? Again, we wrote this *[laughs]* rundown last week.

Selena: Well, you were the one that coined that. I should [00:30:00] maybe not say that. Sorry. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Okay, here's kind of the thought process. These are things that are limited in our abilities to... like we don't have unlimited abilities for these things. So intimacy, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Intimacy is one of these scarce resources. You're the only source for my... the only terminus for my intimate desire, I should say. The only ending place for that—from a healthy God-honoring standpoint. So that's scarce. And you're a scarce resource. Like you only have so much energy, time-

Selena: There's only one of me.

Ryan: You only have one body, you only have one day.

Selena: So many days I wish I had more than one sometimes to get some stuff done.

Ryan: And then another scarce resource—we'll just do a quick flyover and then we'll go back into detail—is your time. So that's a scarce resource. Therefore your priorities are a very important function of how you want to spend your time recognizing that it is scarce.

Now some of us delude ourselves into thinking that we have more time than we actually do. That's another conversation entirely. And then finances—that's a scarce resource. I don't know anybody in my life that they don't have limited finances. There's nobody that we know that just doesn't have to think about how they spend their money, how they steward and how they work, and how they prioritize their income and their outgoing money.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So let's talk about the first one: intimacy.

Selena: So I think the way selfishness and a lack of self-control can kind of roar its ugly head in this area is that, you know, asking the questions, is it selfish for a husband to want sex? Well, no, not necessarily. When does it become selfish? Or for the wife if she withholds sexual intimacy, is that selfish? Where's that line of selfishness and giving. And then understanding authority. In 1 Corinthians 7, authority over our bodies.

How do I connect all these pieces in a way that helps me understand and therefore walk in this selflessness and this self-control? Like if I don't feel like having sex but you do, how can I be selfless in this? Right?

Ryan: Can I just use another example?

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: *[laughing]* Guys, we've been going through I'll tell you what. And it's not just been us, but life I think has been extra chaotic around the Frederick household. So I think it was like a week and a half ago and you're having a rough day. I got home. I don't remember where I was, but you were just like, "Yeah, it's been a very hard day. Like all of us have cried multiple times."

Selena: Oh, you were fishing.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Sorry. I didn't mean like that. *[chuckles]* We had all... Yes, it was something we had planned for.

Ryan: It was a church thing. Some guys invited us out. It ended up being a longer day than planned. The point is, I got home and I'm like thinking full well... and we hadn't been close in about three, four days. And that's typically our rhythm.

Selena: Being close means we hadn't had sex. Translate. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Sorry. I'm using our own vernacular. It might not translate. So I remember thinking to myself, "Okay, obviously, my wife is having a hard time." I was like, "I shouldn't bring that up." Here's my exact thought process. I was like, "In the past. I've not brought it up, and she's told me that I should have brought it up, even when she's like this." *[both laughs]*

Selena: She is like this. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Well, I'm sorry.

Selena: I get it. I had two really rough days that I have not... the Lord was leading me to the end of myself.

Ryan: You've told me in the past, you've said, "I don't care how I'm acting, feeling, whatever, you should be able to tell me if you're wanting this. You've told me that."

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I'm not trying to get myself off the hook.

Selena: No, I'm laughing because of my response.

Ryan: Well, I said, "Selena..." and I tried so hard. I was like, "Please don't hear this. Feel free to say no. Feel free to say no because I can see the day that you've had. However, you've told me not to not bring this up. So I just want to bring this up. Is this something that you've thought about and is this something that we can pursue tonight?"

Selena: Tears. Immediately sobbing.

Ryan: And she immediately start crying and balling. And I'm like, "I don't know how to play this game. [Selena laughs] She's playing 40 chess and I'm playing checkers. I don't know what to do." I'm like, "It's fine. No worries, no worries. I was just bringing it up." I'm like backpedaling and you're like, "No, it's okay. Just I can't do anything." And you're just going for...

Anyway, the irony of it was after we hit that, that actually created a conversation point for us. And as hard, as tired, and as bedraggled as you were in that moment-

Selena: I also needed to feel loved and I think we needed to connect. That was one of the biggest things for us.

Ryan: And it wasn't that I was avoiding. We were talking, just we hadn't gotten to that point yet where you felt like we had had the kind of connection.

Selena: There's natural progression of some things. [00:35:00]

Ryan: And so that night ended up being a great night for us. [both laughs] It ended up going the way I'd hoped. And apparently Selena had hoped that as well. The point is we're answering this question of how do we know if it's a selfish desire or not?

And I think the way that you can tell if your sexual desire is selfish or not is (a) is it for your whole spouse, not just what they can give you as a physical being, but really do want their heart, their soul, their mind and their body? That to me is the first kind of litmus test of this. Is it intimacy, is that a selfish desire?

The second one is if you don't get the thing that you're hoping to get, if you don't get that connection, what's your response?

Selena: So good.

Ryan: If your response is bitterness, anger, frustration, and indignance, and instead of seeking to understand, then that might be a clue for you to say, "Hey, this is a selfish motivation. I'm not thinking about my spouse, I'm just thinking of myself. And how can I be self-controlled in this?" Is that I can say that anger is not founded in... it's not godly anger. It's fleshly anger. And so then we can begin to turn away from it in self-control by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then love our spouse in a way that actually connects with them in that moment.

Selena: And 1 Corinthians 7 is a great passage. It's talking about the principles for marriage, and outlining, you know, authorities over our own bodies. I mean, when you're married, you are two becoming one flesh. So if Ryan's going through a hard time... if I take that example, I was going through a really difficult time and just having, I don't know, a really tough day-

Ryan: And we had been talking.

Selena: It wasn't selfish of him to bring it up. I told him that I want that to be our marriage of, you know, we can talk about these things even in the midst of the hardest times. Why? Because that might be the breakthrough that we need is to step into that knowing that this is the way that we're supposed to be together in this moment. I don't know if that's clear enough, but-

Ryan: And believe it or not, and this is a bit of a sidebar, and by the way, next month is going to be all about sex. And it's going to be great. One of the pieces and one of the purposes of sex in biblical terms is comfort, and how it can be a way to comfort one another.

Selena: Right. And it's also—we'll talk about this too—comfort and protection too. We should save that for the next one. Anyways, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 6:18, and 1 Corinthians 7 just talk about sex and the parameters for it, what God designed it for.

And so sex is one of those areas in marriage that it's basic in that every marriage should be experiencing it. But it can very easily fall into selfishness if we're not approaching it with the right heart motivation, thought. And that takes the Holy Spirit producing in us patience, producing in a us self-control, and how we approach our spouse in this area.

Ryan: Yeah. Again, three scarce resources. The next one, time. And as a result, your priority. So how do you decide and determine your priorities as a couple.

Again, we'll talk about this fishing trip *[both laughs]* because I don't really go fishing a lot. I go once a year probably. And it's usually-

Selena: And they all fall apart. I'm just kidding. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: I'm late for one day and everything goes pot. No. So that was kind of an anomaly. But I think the basis from which we decide how to use our time, basically, how do we use it as a couple? And how are we using it as individuals in the context of our marriage? So one thing that doesn't work for us is that you get a day I get a day. The tit for tat thing that works for some couples. And to each his own. We're not saying that's a bad way to do it. But we kind of keeping tabs like that I think quickly creates animosity in our marriage toward one another. We start feeling like there's a sense of, you know, injustice... or injustice, rather. So, I don't know. What else do you want to say?

Selena: Well, the dialogue around that is kind of like, "Well, this is my time. It's me. I deserve this. I've been with the kids all day, it's a cost to my family. The finances don't matter, I just need this." It's kind of we just go blindly into what our desires and what our needs are.

Like that Tuesday, I was pretty empty on everything. I was not feeling like a great mom, not feeling like I could even get a thing done to take care of and steward this home. School was the only thing that I felt was consistent and I was like, "Praise God for home education right now because it's grounding us in a day where everything feels like it's just spiritual attack, tornado, selfishness, all the things are just coming to light."

But here I am. We're here, my priorities are just all... everything just felt like we're in a tornado. And it was really hard to get back to understanding why was this a priority, why is this a good thing that he went fishing. There was a lot of good things around those decisions. I think there's merit to saying like, "Mom needs a timeout, and mom needs some time to regroup." It's not the right word I'm trying to say.

Ryan: Be refreshed?

Selena: Yeah, something like that. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Here's our attitude. I do want to move on to the next one just because I know we're running out of time. But our attitude, in general, we try to send more than we try to kind of walk away ourselves, right? So instead of us saying, "Can I go to this thing?" it's me saying, "You should go do this thing."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "You need to go be a part of that gathering." You're going to a conference this next weekend. It's going to be an overnight thing, which is not usual. But you want to go and you've expressed that, but I also know that you need to go. So we do that as a team. We send mom. I send my wife. We say, "You're an ambassador, for our family, go and be blessed."

Selena: Right. Just one more thought is that I think we do need to steward and filter our desires, because a lot of times our desires determine our priorities, and those determine how we spend our time. So if I desire certain things and they are very selfish desires, I know that it's going to put too much of a burden on my family and my spouse, then I need to reassess those things. I need to be putting those underneath the Holy Spirit.

How am I walking? Am I keeping in step with the Spirit? Like in Galatians 5, am I keeping in step? Am I doing these things by being led by the Holy Spirit? It's not always going to be easy. But I feel like Galatians 5 really clarifies how I can exercise self-control and how I can delineate if this is a selfish desire or not.

Ryan: Good. I want to make sure we're saying kind of with this big goal in mind is that, again, these are the kind of back to basics. These are things that if we can't get our arms wrapped around God's idea of self-control, then it's going to continually create problems in our marriage, it's going to continually bring chaos.

Selena: It kind of unravels. Just keeps unraveling.

Ryan: Yeah. So in light of that, we talked about kind of these typical areas where we have scarce resources and intimacy, and therefore one another. Like I'm a scarce resource, you're a scarce resource, our time is scarce.

And now the third scarce resource in marriage is, as you probably guessed, finances. So how we spend our money, how we approach even spending, how we look at earning. A lot of people, especially in the modern American culture, or even just Western culture, post-industrialized culture, all that kind of stuff, somehow our work has become so intertwined and are woven with our identity that it's been completely detached from our geographic location and our greater familial community context.

So what you have is you're leaving the home now, you're leaving the family to go into some geographic center, usually a city. And that is going to define you to those people, and therefore it should define you to your social groups, and so on and so forth. That's a very modern thing. It's a very unusual thing. And it's certainly not a biblical thing the fact that your work is your very identity.

Biblically speaking, our identity is Christ. Biblically speaking, our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. Our family is the family of God. We are co-heirs with Christ. So, finances, if we don't have the understanding, then this is going to be a spot where it's going to be riddled with selfishness. I'm going to want to spend on what I want to spend on because I'm the breadwinner and blah, blah, blah and you're going to have whatever those reasons are.

Selena: Well, and I think it's easy to hide money as well and it's easy to just spend it without talking to one another. Granted, you know, if you come home with a new car, that might be a dead giveaway.

Ryan: Usually, that's like credit card bills, or Amazon purchases, or whatever that thing is, and it just kind of flies under the radar.

Selena: Books.

Ryan: Yeah, books. *[both chuckles]* Your love language is books. And I'm always like, "Literally stop buying books right now you can't spend the rest of your life reading."

Selena: Just five more. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: So being selfish in that area will wreak havoc. And the thing is, is you can sneak it for a little bit, but you can't sneak it forever.

Selena: Right. And the ironic thing is that finances are not scarce in God's economy. He is our source. He is our provider. He is Jehovah Jireh. We are called to be stewards of what He has entrusted us with.

Ryan: It's all His.

Selena: It's all His.

Ryan: We just happen to be kind of the ones handling it at that moment until someone else by God's grace stewards it unto His glory.

Selena: Right. And I think that self-control really you can see how it plays a role in understanding, okay, this is God's money. He's given it to us to steward well. This is no longer my money and his money. We are combining incomes. We are one on every front. [00:45:00] So this is just going to combat any other inklings of selfishness by combining and being one.

Really the unification I think of hearts and finances is a beautiful boundary of protection against just division because money is so attached to the heart. It can be. There's just this weird like heart tied to money right? 1 Timothy 6:10 is like, "The love of money produces evil." Not money itself, just the love of it. So getting our identities wrapped up in it, getting this affection that starts growing for more of it because of what it gives to us on all the different levels is just detrimental and it's selfishness.

Ryan: Yeah. I think maybe that's where we could have our couples' conversation challenge-

Selena: Absolutely. Go through these three.

Ryan: ...is take the... okay, the big topic here in self-control and how self-control... being able to innocence master it. I'm using that term loosely. We'll never truly master self-control on the side of heaven. But mastering self-control as much as you can, as a fruit of the Spirit—remember it comes from the Spirit. It doesn't come from us—in these areas.

So talk about self-control in your marriage, specifically around your sex life, around your time and your priorities, what fills your calendar and why, and how you spend your money and why. And so talk about how maybe you've been selfish. That's okay. You don't have to feel shame. But just respond to this honestly. How have you been selfish? And how can you be more selfless? And how is self-control a component of your selflessness?

Selena: How self-control really leading us down a path of freedom. Right? It feels like the control part might be the restraint. But it's actually the piece that allows us more freedom.

Ryan: Wow. Well said. I don't want to say anything more. You should have said that at the beginning. *[both laughs]* You're so wise.

Selena: And there's the lead. *[inaudible]*

Ryan: We're out of time. Would you mind praying us out?

Selena: God, thank you so much for loving us, for being the example of selflessness. Help us, God. Holy Spirit, I pray for listeners right now that you would develop fruit in them as you do in us. Develop self-control. Help us to have eyes that see and hear and be able to pick out selfishness in our own hearts. Help us so lovingly walk alongside our spouses as they pick out or we see something in them. Help us to partner with them and to come alongside and to lovingly be their partner and their helper.

We are grateful for this time, grateful to dive into your word. Produce in us Holy Spirit. May we glorify you with the fruit from you. In your name, amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right, this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: I almost forgot it. One quick reminder, go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com and use the promo code BASICS. It'll give you additional 20% off the annual price there, which is already reduced from the normal price. So we hope that you'll take us up on that offer. Like I said, we are like 60% doing an October cohort. We'll see. Again, don't hold me to that. We'll do a cohort at some point. Maybe October with the students.

So please do consider that. Take advantage of that offer. We'd love to meet you in person through that cohort. With that said, let's go have some anniversary festivities.

Selena: Woohoo.

Ryan: Yeah, food and fun is on the menu for the Fredericks.

Selena: Woohoo.

Ryan: Anyway, the episode is in the can. We'll see you in about seven days. Till next time— *[chuckles]*

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:48:44] <outro>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit FierceMarriage.com, or you can find us with our handle @Fiercemarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:15:20]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Romans 12:1-2, 9

- **[00:37:30]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Hebrews 13:4
 - 1 Corinthians 6:18
 - 1 Corinthians 7
 - Mark 10:6-9
 - Ephesians 4

- **[00:45:23]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Timothy 6:10

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