

SKILL #3: FIGHTING WELL (BACK TO BASICS, 3 OF 4)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/skill-3-fighting-well-back-to-basics-3-of-4>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Fighting well is an essential skill for a healthy marriage. Right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: It's inevitable that you are going to clash. You're two human beings with two individual minds, individual sets of desires. We talked about some of that last week with teamwork and how to kind of be on the same page with that sort of stuff. But it's inevitable that you will get out of rhythm, out of sync with one another. So it's just a matter of time until you fight.

And that's where communication comes in. *[both chuckles]* Because you don't always know your way back to that path just intuitively without... you have to be able to talk it out. Right? And so that's why today, again, we're continuing our series on back to basics, where we are presenting to you what we believe are four essential skills that every healthy married couple needs for the life of their marriage for the rest of their lives if they're going to have a marriage that is thriving.

So today we're talking about communication and conflict, kind of how those two ideas intersect, and how to build a skilled conflict life in your marriage. So it's going to be a lively conversation. We'll see you on the other side. *[chuckles]*

[00:01:07] <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.
- [00:01:41] <podcast begins>**
- Selena:** I think we found that no matter how long we're married, we still deal with conflicts. They typically center around our communication and our ability or lack of ability to communicate well.
- Ryan:** Yeah. It's not often that one of us does something as a quote-unquote offense toward the other.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Right. It's almost always the offense is a result of poor communication, *[both laughs]* where we're not either relaying information adequately-
- Selena:** Clearly.
- Ryan:** ...or clearly. And that creates a low-grade sort of tension.
- Selena:** Yeah, there's some dissonance, and then...
- Ryan:** And it ends up kind of leading to a fight. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Usually. Yeah.
- Ryan:** Fight is a strong word. But an argument or, you know, maybe some sort of dysfunction. I'm amazed at that phenomenon. It's uncanny to me that we've been married going on 19 years now. We just had our 18th anniversary. We celebrated that one last time. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** Last time.
- Ryan:** It was awesome. I never know when these things are going to release. It was a couple of weeks ago, a week. So anyway, we still are figuring this stuff out. And that's why we're here talking about it because we don't have it dialed because we are sinful people, unfortunately, and that we don't live in habitual sin. But we're not perfect, right?
- Selena:** Hmm.

Ryan: Trying to live in habitual sin, God is revealing that in our lives if need be. But the point is, is that we're hoping that we can help some of you couples through your own stuff and give you tools to work through that stuff. So yeah, it's going to be a good conversation.

But first, I want to make a quick mention of our kind of promo we're doing for Gospel Centered Marriage. It's our online learning ecosystem. You can get onboard for 20% off for this month using the coupon code BASICS at checkout. I actually found out from one of our listeners, they tried to go and redeem it, but it wasn't working.

Selena: Oh, oh.

Ryan: Hopefully not too many. My fear is that people went and tried to redeem it and couldn't, gave up, and didn't say anything. And so if you tried that and it doesn't work, I apologize. I did something wrong in how I configured the coupon code. It didn't apply to the right thing. So anyway, go try it again, use the coupon code, coupon code BASICS and you'll get 20% off. And we hope that that is worth your time. I think it's worth your time and it's worth your investment.

Another way you can invest in your marriage in this podcast is by leaving a rating and review. The reason I say in your marriage is because it's those ratings and reviews that help us get the word out and keep doing content like this. And those ratings and reviews do bless us immensely. Thank you for those who have taken the time to do that. I can't thank you enough.

And then the last one. If you want to partner with us, we would be so honored. And the way that looks is you go to fiercemarriage.com/partner, and there you'll find a number of tiers where you can jump on board for really any amount. I'll say \$5 on up. Where basically if you feel God calling you to be kind of in - what's the word? In league with us [*both chuckles*] as we do this work and that you're saying, "Hey, we want to be a part of it, you can do that by going there.

That's actually how we support this whole ministry. We sell books, we do those sorts of things, we have the online marriage stuff, but Patreon is a big part of just our family [00:05:00] kind of just being supported. And we really appreciate that. Because who knows what's going to happen to the book sales in a moment?

But the patrons are the ones that we can kind of count on day in and day out to be on mission with us, letting us do this ministry. They're the lay ministers alongside us who I would say in the space we are the ones kind of taking the

lead. And so you can be a part of that at least in the Fierce Marriage, Fierce Parenting side of things. Anyway.

Finally, Fierce Parenting in case you missed it, we had an announcement a couple of weeks ago, the Fierce Parenting podcast is now live. We've got four or five episodes, I think the fifth one drops this week, that are there for you. The reviews have been awesome. We're so thankful for the people that have done the early reviews on that and just the ratings and all that.

But the point is, is I love getting to explore new space with you. We're very passionate about the family if you couldn't tell, excuse me. And we wanted to see God's plan magnified. And as a result, we want to see His people flourish, and we want to see ultimately Him glorified to the max when it comes to family and relationships and marriage and therefore the church and society.

So this is our lives, people. And we love doing it, we love being a part of it, and we will keep doing that. Fierce Parenting is the newest way that God is allowing us to do that. So check out the Fierce Parenting Podcast wherever you get yours. *[Selena chuckles]*

All right, let's get into this conversation. Selena, are you doing okay?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You seem a little bit under the energy. Your energy-

Selena: Just because I'm quietly yawning over here doesn't mean that I'm tired. Okay?

Ryan: Oh, please.

Selena: It's the afternoon.

Ryan: I'm like, "We just started." I'm like, "What's it going to be like?" *[both chuckles]*

Selena: I can relax listening to you talk. It's like listening to you read or whatever. It's just... ahh. Just a happy place.

Ryan: Okay. Let's talk about communication and the sub texting you're doing right now. In other words, I'm bored. I'm boring.

Selena: No.

Ryan: I'm boring you. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Didn't say that. See, we're not having good communication right now. *[Ryan laughs]* Why is that? No. So we're in this back to basics series talking about all kinds of things. The first week we talked about self-control and what that looks like in marriage. If you want to listen to that, go back. It's not just like, you know, self-control on your screens. We went way more into depth about what the Bible and how the Bible would have us live out self-control and how the Holy Spirit produces His fruit in us.

And it's not just about like self-control, but it's also about building unity, which led us into our last week's conversation about teamwork. Talking about who we are as.... we even had a TEAMS acronym. So if you want to hear that cool thing- *[Ryan laughing]*

Ryan: I forgot about that.

Selena: ...definitely go check it out. Guys, we're trying to keep it basic here. Okay. But we each have a role to play on quote-unquote, "the team." So go check that out from last week. And then this week we are talking about communication and conflict, which surprisingly flows out of the teamwork and conversation. Because ideally we would walk out these roles that we have in our marriage, this team with all faithfulness, all submission, all joyful hearts, and wonderful attitudes. However, that's not always the case.

So when we don't have the idealistic moment together of communicating, what happens? Well, typically conflict. Our communication is broken down. We have frustrations.

So how do we deal with conflict? How do we communicate through that conflict, in the conflict, around the conflict? How can we do this well, and do it in a way that is living in the light? Which is what we talked about in our See Through Marriage book about how to have a transparent and see-through marriage and how we feel like that is the way that God has designed and purpose for us to live.

And so this idea of communicating with transparency and also communicating through conflict with kind of a vulnerability and transparency really is the path forward. But we're going to need some instruction on that. We're going to need to know how to kind of navigate that. So we are here to help you, and we will have five Ps to help you in having your trans... What? *[Ryan laughs]* I know.

Ryan: Sorry, it's just-

Selena: I have little fingers out here like doo doo doo doo doo.

- Ryan:** By the way, we're working on getting video podcasts so you can see Selena's fistal finger. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** That means I actually have to get video-ready. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** No more podcasting shirtless for me. *[both laughs]* Well, maybe that'll be your thing. I don't know.
- Selena:** Not mine. Definitely not mine.
- Ryan:** It's not like you to have acronyms and like Ps. That's more my thing.
- Selena:** Yeah, I know. But you know what? It helps me think better. And we're trying to keep it somewhat basic. And I want-
- Ryan:** *[inaudible]* so no-nonsense though. I love it.
- Selena:** The thing about basics is that if you have basic acronyms and things that people can remember, then I feel like it can be more helpful. So that's my goal. *[00:10:00]*
- Ryan:** All right. Well, I'm excited for that. What are these five Ps?
- Selena:** We're not there yet. *[Ryan laughs]*
- Ryan:** I'm so titillated.
- Selena:** Okay, well, you can just be with all the other listeners and wait till we get there. *[both laughs]* Okay. So we are going to look to Scripture. We've talked about communication and conflict a lot on this podcast. I think we had a whole series on it if you want to check that out as well.
- Ryan:** It was just communication I think. It wasn't the conflict piece.
- Selena:** Conflict was one of the weeks I think.
- Ryan:** Oh. You know, we've done a lot of these a series now.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Anyway.

Selena: So we are going to take a look at some scripture about communication. The Bible is filled with how we should talk good to each other. Right? *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: We can start in the Proverbs. Proverbs 29:11 is one that comes to mind. "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." That's one that needs to be tattooed on my brain, heart, body, everything because I contend to get to the heart point and vent.

Ryan: That's interesting.

Selena: It's not always good.

Ryan: Especially in light of last week's talk on self-control, selflessness, and really, this is the opposite of having self-control given full vent to your spirit. It's like I just want to make sure those, you know, like in the cartoons when like-

Selena: The Hawk?

Ryan: ...the gas meter is maxed out and the valve is starting to blow-

Selena: It's like Donald Duck when he just-

Ryan: So there's no gauge on there. There's no control on there. It's just full force, full vent.

Selena: It's like, Whoa, she's going to blow."

Ryan: So there is a correlation between our communication and our ability to be self-controlled.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Okay. And, and this is what we talked about last week at length, is how that fruit of the Spirit has to well up from within us. Because in those hot moments it's not in your flesh to say, "I'm not going to just blow up, I'm not going to just vent however I want to vent."

Selena: Not even that I shouldn't. Like you may think those things but-

Ryan: Right. You may not even be convicted in your flesh. But by the Spirit, we say, "Wow, this is actually not loving. I can't just give full vent to my emotions because it's not loving. It's going to leave a pile of dead bodies behind me.

Selena: Metaphorically speaking. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: And then my husband, and my wife and my kids... Metaphorically speaking, yes. Be crystal clear about that. *[both laughs]* Okay. Sorry, that's just the first one. Proverbs 29:11. We have Proverbs 12:18 here as well. "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Rash words.

Selena: Yeah. Proverbs 15:28, "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." We're also going to jump into Matthew 12:33-37. So this is the passage where Jesus is warning us about how our words are an indication of what is actually going on in our hearts.

The title of this passage is a tree is known by its fruit. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Ryan: Wow. Yikes. Yikes. Okay. There's a lot of context that we're glossing over there. But I think the underlying truth, not necessarily underlying truth, but actually, really surfacey truth is just that the fact that your words have to do a lot with the condition of your heart.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And Jesus is speaking in deep, profound ways to the condition of the pharisaical spirit, the pharisaical heart in that moment. But the point is our words are usually a fruit on a tree of our poison. I think within the context of just our conflict we think we're right, right? Just like the Pharisees.

We have the pharisaical heart when we're communicating in conflict. Not that that's like a direct correlation or anything, but oftentimes, we aren't hearing, we aren't listening. We're ready to speak in haste without full understanding. And so our words can be an indication of that.

James 1:19 I think is the one that we really should be hanging our hat on for this conversation. It says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;" Because what does this do? "for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." So I was in

verse 20. So then there's encouragement to put away all filthiness, rapid wickedness, and to embrace meekness.

Selena: That's so convicting.

Ryan: The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. So we're in the parenting space now. So that's thinking about how we talk to our kids, that somehow our anger will produce righteousness. That's just not the case.

Selena: I think for us personally, our anger typically produces angry words. It's not necessarily actions. I don't feel like you respond in action when you're angry. When we're having a conflict, typically it's in too many venting, not thought through words or a lack of... just no words, and it's just cold shoulders. *[chuckles]* So either way, there's some communication with or without words happening.

But I think what this verse in James is really pointing us to is that haste is never in our favor, especially when it comes to communicating clearly and with love and all graciousness towards our spouse. Haste is just never the way forward.

So if we want to develop the basic skills of learning how to have hard talks, the first thing we can do is I mean, look at James. What does he say? He says, to be quick to hear. Hard conversations don't just... we're not going to sit one day and say, "Okay, let's have a hard conversation about this." No, typically, they're spontaneous, they're a result of a trigger, there's a hot button word circumstance, or somebody used the wrong tone, you know, you name it, whatever it is. We are just in this conflict, it's happened to us. And we tend to be reactive about things. I mean, some examples that we might see in our marriage would be-

Ryan: You're looking it up in See Through Marriage.

Selena: Yeah. Nobody is to look it up. But I just wanted to give some concrete examples of like fights over finances. They erupt when an unforeseen bill arrives, or we're talking about sexual intimacy, and someone feels rejected or hurt, or you're both tired. Sometimes this is spontaneous. Sometimes you're not anticipating these things.

Maybe there's just tension on the surface while you're having dinner with your in-laws or family, and there's harsh words may be exchanged. When there's a hidden sin that comes up and is exposed. Maybe you're just tired and worn out. You know, one spouse just condemns the others, work schedule, because the kids have been acting up all day, or maybe there's just this lack of

gratitude. There's just something that is causing the need to have a hard conversation with your spouse.

Again, our tendency is to be reactive. Our tendency is to get defensive. Our tendency is to move in haste. So how can we have a proactive plan in place when we get to these points of conflict in our marriage?

Ryan: And by proactive plan, you mean how can we build the skill of conflicting well and using communication as a tool to the end of actually having productive conflict?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Because it is possible. And I think conflict is... and we said this at the outset, but it's not only part of marriage, I think it's part of healthy marriage, too.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And that's what sharpening is, right? I think anytime I've been sanctified by a brother or a friend, and you, my wife, it has oftentimes taking on the form of conflict. And it doesn't mean that we're being mean to one another, but there is a disagreement, and there is a need to kind of hash through things together.

So I would add one P here. And I'm going to put it up in front. So you have 5 Ps. Let's make it six.

Selena: Oh, boy.

Ryan: Six Ps. We give our listeners the best. *[both laughs]* Maybe we'll have a seven by the time we're done here. I'm forcing it in. So pardon me, but I couldn't be the one to blow up the P train. *[both laughing]*

Selena: Oh, no.

Ryan: Who knows what that is? Don't be nasty. The first one I would say is personhood. And seeing the personhood of your spouse. Because it's so oftentimes we don't realize what we're viewing them as someone to be defeated and not-

Selena: Our enemy.

Ryan: Yeah, they're our enemies. That goes back to two more Ps. But actually seeing you as this woman that I do love. Even though in the moment I might not feel the emotions of that love, even in that moment, by God's grace-

Selena: "I don't even like him."

Ryan: I can still say I love this really infuriating woman. That's not you though.

Selena: I really love you, but I really don't like you right now.

Ryan: Speaking theoretically. And so yeah, I think it starts by endowing and I guess reminding your hearts that this person is a person. They're not just someone to be defeated. They're not just an objective to be overcome.

Selena: Beat and win. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Your spouse is a person. And not only that, a person made in the image of God. Okay. Now I can actually calibrate and say it's not just about me, it's about loving well. Let's get into the other 5 Ps. *[Selena chuckles]* Maybe six, by the time we're done. A total of seven. *[both laughs]* So number B. Number BP.

Selena: Number two P. The second P is planning. So if we are going to give it our best shot to have good communication through hard conversations, we are going to want to plan for those talks. And I know I just said at the beginning like we don't plan for these talks. But we don't.

A lot of times, there are external forces, things that happen that we can't anticipate. They are spontaneous events, whatever. But I think if we can plan a default kind of response to know, okay, we're going to have hard talks... or this feels like a hard talk, what do we do? What's our plan here? Well, utilize the "let's talk about this later" phrase, or "can we talk about this later?" or "I would really like to set aside sometime later for you and I to talk about this more in-depth."

The key here is to set aside time. Set it, make it clear, communicate it clearly so that the other person doesn't feel rejected, doesn't feel like you're just leaving the things just open ended, and you just really don't care and you're trying to avoid them. No.

The point is that you are having a plan that, "Hey, these bombs just dropped. If we talk about them now, it's going to just be a disaster, because I think we both are emotional beings, we're going to have responses, things that we need to kind of sort through. So let's set a time after work or after the kids go to bed that's not too late. So that we can start talking about this hashing through it, giving each other kind of the benefit to have the initial response, whatever that may be, and then for the smoke to kind of settle and say, "Okay, what actually happened here? How maybe am I at fault in this situation?" Or if

there's some, external factor that's happening outside of your marriage, and you both are reeling, how can we have a hard conversation about this? Okay, we need time and space.

Ryan: Yeah. We actually talked about this at length in our six-week marriage core course. I'm not going to do the whole thing, because that's what the course is for. *[chuckles]* But I will say that this piece to it, I think, has been one of the most, I think, helpful pieces for a lot of couples that go through it.

We talk through it in terms of peacetime communication strategies and wartime communication strategies. In other words, when you're in a peacetime, that's when you have different ways of maintaining that peace-

Selena: And building it even.

Ryan: ...and you build strategies for when wartime hits. It's almost like you're building up your arsenal, not against one another, but against bad communication itself. Anyway, on that note, there's so much to be said there, there's so much gospel centering that needs to happen around that conversation. We can't get into it here and now. But what you're talking about really is having those peacetime and wartime strategies clearly delineated so that you can flourish even through the wartime and get back to peacetime as quickly as possible. That's what you're saying.

So again, not to do a plug, but I'm going to because this is our podcast. *[laughs]* Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com, use the promo code BASICS and you can get access to that module. That's one of the parts of the six-week marriage core as well as the intimacy stuff, all that kind of stuff. But anyway, I just thought that was a relevant plug. So Pardon me, dear listener.

Selena: There you go.

Ryan: Number C. These are ordered with weird numbers I'm using. Physiology, it's a third P that we're going with. In other words, physiology, knowing yourself, and the fact that you are a physical being. In other words, if you're realizing that a lot of your fights are happening late at night, you know what I got? I got a hint for you. It's probably because you're tired. *[both chuckles]* Or if a lot of your fights are happening, you know, maybe in the late afternoon right before dinner, it's probably because you haven't eaten.

Selena: Guys, we're speaking from years of failure and experience. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Yes. So you can think and act proactively. Instead of saying, "We're just going to fight whenever the..." "Fight" is such a strong word. "...we're just going to

argue whenever the argument decides to happen." You can actually be emotionally kind of aware and emotionally mature and..."

Selena: Exercise some self-control.

Ryan: Again, we're speaking to ourselves, too. We can be adult about these things and say, "Listen, we can see what's happening here. Let's stop the unproductive thing and let's do the productive thing." And say, "Let's put pause on this, press pause until the kids are asleep or until tomorrow morning or till after dinner or till we've had some time to let the dust settle." And that's called being self-aware physiologically.

And again, we talked about that quite a bit in our book, "See Through Marriage" is knowing yourself well enough to be loved by your spouse and also love them in an intentional way. Did you want to add anything?

Selena: You said, "Pause on that."

Ryan: Just put a pause on it.

Selena: Just put a pause on it.

Ryan: Put a pause on it. *[laughs]* That was the third P.

Selena: Quick recap.

Ryan: Okay. The first one is personhood. Remember [00:25:00] that your spouse is an actual person made in the image of God plan. Be proactive. Physiology. Be aware of your physiology. In other words, are you tired, hungry, emotional? Are you feeling bored? Like, what is going on there? And how is that contributing to the dysfunction and the conflict?

The fourth one, number D is place. I'm just going to keep going. Place. So sometimes people decide to have arguments in the most inopportune locations, right? You could be at Applebee's just enjoying a nice artichoke dip appetizer.

Selena: He's joking because-

Ryan: I can't stand up Applebee's. I'm sorry.

Selena: Maybe we have bad chains up here. It's fine.

Ryan: It's the worst.

- Selena:** The key here is minimizing distractions. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Like if you have the TV on, it's loud, and you're having an argument—I'm trying to say fight all the time—that's probably not the right place to try and have that. Or your in-laws house.
- Selena:** Let's minimize the distraction, minimize other factors or other people. I know, you can be fuming in the middle of all the things. Trust me, I've been there. And you don't mean to throw the darts with your eyes, but you do. You throw them hard and you throw lots of them. But let's remember that this is not the ideal place to be having our conversation because we are risking embarrassing ourselves.
- And that's not the first thing but as we are image-bearers of Christ, right? And I'm not saying you have to be perfect and getting along all the time in front of people. But I do think that as image-bearers, we want to be modeling unity, we want to be modeling love and devotion to our spouse and respect.
- Ryan:** I'm going to jump in because you said something that I think you hit the nail on the head. And that is, it is not an ideal place to have a conflict productive conversation. And what's your assuming, and you should assume this, you're assuming that people want a truly productive conversation. A lot of people don't even want that. They want to win.
- Selena:** Or they want to vent.
- Ryan:** They want a productive conversation that makes them feel better. And that's their definition of having a productive conversation. And you started going and like, here's what love looks like and here's how we love one another through our words. None of this makes sense unless we resign ourselves to God's vision of loving dialogue, loving, honest, transparent, gospels saturated dialogue. None of this will make sense if all you care about is venting or anger.
- Selena:** Or winning.
- Ryan:** Or winning. So we're kind of presupposing that in that moment you'll have the—I'm talking to myself—you'll have the emotional maturity to stop and say, "All right, what do I actually want here? I don't just want to win, I want to honor God, I want to honor my wife, I want to have a conversation that matches and deepens our friendship, and makes our marriage healthy."
- Selena:** Right. So these Ps are part of the proactive plan, right?

Ryan: Two more P's. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Yeah, the default. Okay.

Ryan: Hop on the P train. *[laughs]*

Selena: I'm frustrated with my spouse, we're having this hard time. Okay, first I'm going to remember that they're a person that I actually love, and that's not just attacking me, and that knows me and loves me also. This is not a great time to talk. This is not a good place to talk. I'm not in a good emotional state to talk or my body is not in a good state to talk.

So it's identifying all of these factors that I think, if left alone, you're not going to have any skills in terms of having these hard conversations. You're going to get washed away in one of them and then... And that's okay. You know what? That's okay. Because there's practice, there's many opportunities, and God is so good to give us opportunities in repetition to live in the sanctification, live into the grace that He's given us. Again, just identifying these factors that will help us have better hard conversations if that makes sense.

Ryan: Did we get into number E yet?

Selena: No.

Ryan: Okay. Can I?

Selena: Go ahead.

Ryan: Number E, preparation. Come prepared to give generously. So there's a heart preparation that happens. So it's almost like having this pep talk beforehand, where you're saying to yourself, okay, if and when this happens, here's how I can be a loving husband or a loving wife. And that means... Looking in Scripture, we talked about James 1:19, saying, "Okay, I'm going to be quick to listen, slow to anger, slow to speak. I'm going to respond well." In other words, I'm going to... 1 Corinthians 13, "Love hopes all things."

I'm actually going to look at my spouse and say, "What you're saying is not just the first way I interpret that. It's possible that you're saying something that I don't understand. It's possible that you don't mean what I think you mean. You sound like you're just sugarcoating everything but you..." Actually, you're are hoping for the best from your spouse.

You know what will happen is the first, second, third argument you have and you're doing that, it may or may not bear any fruit, but what will [00:30:00]

happen is your spouse will start to realize, "Wow, he or she is actually kind of expecting me to rise to a certain level. And the way they're communicating is showing that they're like... they're playing 3d chess here and I'm stuck on a checkerboard and I need to kind of up my game." It's not about winning, but it's about "Wow, this is actually more nuanced, more complex conversation because it's about more than just winning at this point."

Selena: Right. I think we talked about this in our book about, you know, if you have some hard things that you have to discuss with your spouse, there might be a lot of anxiety and anticipation around, like, "what are they going to say?" or "did I do something wrong?" or "How will he or she respond when I tell them this? Will they blow up or whatever?"

So preparing to give generously when you know hard conversation is coming I think is one of the best things that you can do in really embracing James 1:19. Right? Listening. And part of listening, you will respond well if you're listening well.

So I will ask questions. If I'm listening and I don't understand something, then I'm going to respond with questions which validates Ryan, validates what he's going through. Not interrogating question, but an actual curious, "I'm trying to understand, please help me be a part of this. Because I don't understand and I'm having a hard time." So again, we can only hope to respond well when we've been generous in listening well. Listening is one of the most generous ways we can love and be prepared to have these conversations.

Ryan: Listening is one of the most generous ways we can love our spouse. Boom! Love that. *[Selena chuckles]* Love that.

Selena: Number three, well, this is under preparation. So listen, respond well and then expect. This third part, expect the best from each other. I think you kind of touched on that.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So don't try to assume your spouse's motives. That's always me. I'm always like, "He's just trying to be right. He's just trying to win." And we do that so easily and quickly because we know our spouses so well, or we think we do. So again, stopping those voices, saying, "Nope, they're a person. I don't know for sure. They haven't said that." They may be acting like it, but they haven't actually said it. So let's ask questions. I'm not going to assume that this is what they're trying to get at and why.

Ryan: Wonderful.

- Selena:** And the last one... do you want to read that one?
- Ryan:** Number F you mean?
- Selena:** Mm-hmm. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Petition. So ask for help. This is the idea of realizing that you need the help of God (a) through prayer, you need the help of others. We call them guide couples. That's part of the vernacular within the Gospel Centered Marriage ecosystem. Having that couple that you can go to, especially when, say, you're arguing with your spouse, maybe one of you has gone silent and you're trying to figure out how to love them well.
- Selena:** Right. Or it's just the same conflict over and over, and it feels like this hopeless cycle that you just get to this pass every time. "We keep having this conversation, we keep having this conflict. He's not changing. She's not changing. I don't know what to do. There's nothing else that I can do. I feel like we're at a standstill, and I want to move forward. And I feel like my spouse does as well. We can't really do that on our own. We feel like we're a bit at an impasse."
- Ryan:** Well, because a lot of times some of the arguments might not be because there's a clear right and wrong. We have one of those in our lives right now that we are constantly dealing with the tension of two rival decisions. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** Two good things.
- Ryan:** And we just both happen to fall on either sides of that issue. And it's very challenging for us to not get turned into personal kind of like we're personifying the problem and then wanting one another. You're the problem now, not just this other thing. And so that's a huge challenge. And these guide couples will sometimes help kind of break the log jams in those situations, they'll help you see clearly, they can help you see it more candidly, and with less intensity in some cases. They can kind of diffuse those bombs and you can say, "Well, it's actually not worth all of this that we're having to go through."
- Selena:** Right. Prayer—asking the Holy Spirit for his help and praying for the heart of your spouse as well, that there'd be a softening, that there'd be a clear path to unity and reconciliation as you're dealing with the conflict. Sometimes it just takes time. Sometimes it just takes time. So praying, again, for the heart of your spouse to be softened, for your heart to be softened.

Seeking help—I think you said this—from a pastor or a counselor. I feel like it's very important and not something... you should never have to suffer alone. I feel like you shouldn't be suffering alone. We are not meant to live isolated and in our problems. Even though life may look good online, that's not the real world. The real world works, reality works because of relationships. So go to those relationships that you can trust, that you can count on. That will point you back to Jesus, back to the gospel, back to His Word, and help you through this hard time, this conflict.

Ryan: We'll walk through these six Ps [00:35:00] real quick quickly as a recap, and we'll give you a couple's conversation challenge. But in general, this was a game-changer for me, just as a man and as a husband when I learned that you can conflict well. That the marker of a healthy marriage is that you never have conflict. That's not necessarily a marker of a healthy marriage.

A more obvious marker of a healthy marriage is when you do have conflict, but you do so in a way that is still God-honoring and still spouse-honoring, it still holds your marriage in high regard. That's what healthy conflict looks like. And that's a skill that you can learn.

And if you learn it, you're going to save yourself so much heartache, so much heart. You're going to have shorter fights, you're going to have faster reconciliations. We always say, be quick to quickly apologize and fast to forgive. That's what we always say. So if you're wrong, that's another thing, own it. Yeah.

Repentance is also a skill. I would argue that you can actually get better at repenting over time. You can behold your own self-righteousness more loosely. And you can instead look to Christ in His perfection and say, "You know what, I'm not a perfect husband. I'm not a perfect man. I have a lot of things that I'm struggling with. And you know what, that kind of comes along with being a human being and doesn't mean that the sin is excuse. It just means that I don't have to act like I'm perfect. I don't have to act like I'm perfect.

Selena: Important.

Ryan: So learning that skill helps you conflict well, which will help get you through these hard times a lot more quickly. And I'm convinced that this again, one of the key skills that you need if you're going to have just a baseline, just awesome marriage if I can just say it that way. Doesn't mean it's going to me perfect, but I think it will contribute to your overall awesomeness, fierce couple.

Okay. So what are the six Ps. Real quickly I'll just go through them. I'm not going to explain them all the same so that you haven't been top of mind. The couple's conversation challenge is to walk through these and get a plan in place. So discuss where you typically fall short and how you can be generous with one another.

Maybe pick out two or three of these Ps that you can specifically hone in on, zero in on, and find different ways that you can start thinking through these issues differently. The Ps are these: personhood, planning, physiology, place, preparation, and petition.

So pick couple of those, pick all those whatever, whatever works for you, go back, rewind this episode, write them down. But go through those with your spouse and think, how can these six ideas or these six P's, as Selena has titled them, thank you for the alliteration...

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: How can they help us learn to have healthier conflict? Where's the interplay between our conflict and our communication skills? And how can we grow in this area? And again, I remain convinced that if you can build this skill, it will save you a heap of heartache, and it will give you a healthier marriage. So with that said, Selena, why don't you pray. I think I'm prayed us out last time.

Selena: I prayed us out last time. But it's fine. I love talking to God.

Ryan: I already talked to God a lot. *[Selena laughs]* I have been talking to Him this whole time. Pray continually.

Selena: God, thank you for my spouse, thank you for how he communicates. Thank you that you've given us conflict as a source and opportunity for us to grow into the things and personhood that you have purpose as for. I ask you to continually grow the listeners, sharpen them. I pray that they would be encouraged and challenged and ready to jump into your Word and ready to seek out the answers, and again, the purpose and design that you have for communication for conflict, and what that means for our marriage and ultimately for Your glory.

Thank you for your word that instructs us. May we live according to it. And Holy Spirit guides us and counsels us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ryan: Amen. That wraps up this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast. I want to make a quick note. Remember gospelcenteredmarriage.com is your opportunity for ongoing marriage growth. How's that? *[laughs]* It's your

opportunity to have a gospel-centered marriage. Anyway, we hope it'll be a tool for you if you feel so inclined. We do think it will help you. Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com and sign up for a plan there. Use a coupon code BASICS to get 20% off.

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

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until then—

Selena: Stay fierce.

[00:39:38] <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

- **[00:10:52]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 29:11
 - Proverbs 12:18
 - Proverbs 15:20
 - Matthew 12:33-37

- **[00:10:52]**
 - Scripture references:
 - James 1:19

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