

GOD IS LOVE...BUT, LOVE ISN'T GOD!

<https://fiercemarriage.com/god-is-love-but-love-isnt-god>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: So here's something you won't hear very often. God is love, but love is not God.

Selena: What?

Ryan: What? In our culture nowadays we tend to treat love as if it is God. Now, that's not biblical. God is love. Meaning that love is an aspect of God's character, but love itself is not God.

Selena: Right. And I think we do that because we elevate these feelings of love into the definition of love. And so if I don't feel it, then it must not be, which therefore whatever I feel is what I bow down to or I make others bow down to. And so it dictates-

Ryan: Right. Well, it's like the old adages all is fair in love and war. Well, no, not biblically speaking. Not all is fair in love and war. God determines what is just and fair and true.

And yes, love is an aspect of his character. But no, not every desire that we have needs to fall at the altar of love. In other words, any loving quote-unquote, "desire" that we have, doesn't rule over us. Instead, we submit our definition of love unto God, and He determines what love is. So if you're joining us, we'll see you on the other side.

All right. I think this is an appropriate topic, because this is the first video that we are posting since kind of our revamp of our YouTube channel. *[Selena chuckles]* It's a podcast episode. If you're listening and you are wondering, "What is going on?" Yeah, it's still a podcast episode. But we're recording these videos and we're posting them on our brand new or at least revamped YouTube page. That's what they're called. And it's called the Fierce Family. So it's the Fierce Family.

Selena: It's awesome.

Ryan: So it's the Fierce Family. It's going to be our YouTube presence. We're going to have parenting stuff, marriage stuff there. We're going to do maybe man talks, so I'm going to get on and talk to guys just one on one. You're going to talk to the ladies as the Lord leads.

We might post some random bread recipes because that's something that I love doing as a family. So anything has to do with what does it mean to live out the full implications of Scripture as a family, mainly as a married couple, as parents, and then whatever else. So we're going to have that all kind of out in the open via YouTube, including our full-length podcast episodes, and probably some chopped-up versions as well.

Selena: Yes. Now you get to see us and watch us. And we actually have to get dressed when we record these podcasts. *[Ryan chuckles]* It's not that we're undressed. But-

Ryan: Well, who's to say whether or not we have pants on.

Selena: Who is to say? But we actually-

Ryan: You don't know what's going on below... *[laughs]*

Selena: ...are getting ready for y'all see our faces.

Ryan: So yeah, this is having a very appropriate first video because we're talking about this idea of love. And love really is such a foundational human idea. I think, intuitively, we understand what love is, but we don't often intuitively route ourselves in God's version of love. Meaning that we know that there's this gap in our guts for love. We want to feel love. We want to give love. We want to receive love.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Why are you looking at me like that? *[chuckles]*

Selena: When you said it's a human idea, I was like, "Well, no, it's not." *[laughs]* It's God idea."

Ryan: I think the human instinct, I should say.

Selena: It's a human desire. I think there's like a hole inside of us that naturally just longs to be loved and known. But it is not something that we came up with in our own heads, obviously.

Ryan: I didn't mean to say.

Selena: It's okay. You are forgiven. *[chuckles]*

- Ryan:** All right. Well, since this is on YouTube now and our podcast listeners have been putting up with this for years now, go ahead and do whatever you do on YouTube to express appreciation for this. On the podcast world you would comment, rate, review-
- Selena:** Subscribe.
- Ryan:** Subscribe. On YouTube, you can probably hit a Like button, you can subscribe to the channel, all that good stuff. I got to figure out what to say there.
- Selena:** There's links and things.
- Ryan:** Links and things.
- Selena:** Links and things. We're getting old. We're getting on [inaudible 00:03:43].
- Ryan:** Nonsense. *[Selena laughs]* Nonsense. Internet is just evolving at a breakneck pace.
- Selena:** It's true.
- Ryan:** You got to figure this stuff out.
- Selena:** It's true. So if you want to partner with us too, fiercemarriage.com/partner, that's how you can figure out where to go to help support this ministry. That is something that they can probably link into as well.
- Ryan:** Yes.
- Selena:** Just check it out.
- Ryan:** Who's they?
- Selena:** The listeners and the seers. The viewers. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** The seers. Welcome Seers. Come, come unto the channel and be fed the bread of whatever.
- Selena:** Oh, my. So we've been doing a bunch of different series over the last I'd say, three-
- Ryan:** Nine months, 10 months.
- Selena:** Nine months. Wow, it's been that long ago.

- Ryan:** You were going to say, "In the last few days."
- Selena:** No, we've been doing different series and kind of exploring topics more in-depth. This time we are going to kind of go to some fan favorites or some of the most downloaded episodes and re-discuss some of those things and kind of bring to light some, I think, just different... not different truth because the truth is still the truth-
- Ryan:** We have new insights and new wisdom around things that we discussed [00:05:00] four years ago. So it's okay to revisit some of this stuff.
- Selena:** Because stuff is always bubbling to the surface, I think especially with the culture that we're in now. So...
- Ryan:** And one of our kind of ongoing things that we say is that marriage is really just an excuse, and family is just an excuse to talk about the gospel. And so we're always learning. The gospel is unchanging, but our understanding of it is being deepened every day by God's grace. And the way that we're able to hash that out as a married couple-
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And so that's where we're going to revisit some of these... You said, they're kind of fan faves. And the way that we're able to know that is we look at our downloads. Last time I checked, we had over 10 million downloads on the podcast.
- Selena:** Wow.
- Ryan:** Which is fun. Podcast analytics are weird. So I don't know what that actually means. The point is, there's been a lot of people listening to this stuff. And we said, what are the episodes that have been the most kind of perennial favorites?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And this is one of them. Because I feel like the question "what is love?" is probably one of the most important and most difficult questions that we have to answer as humans and as married people.
- Selena:** But I believe that the music video was played while we were doing our research. *[laughs]* If you know you know, right? No.

- Ryan:** [inaudible 00:06:11] What's love?
- Selena:** Of what love is. Yeah, what is love?
- Ryan:** I was singing, "I want to know what love is?"
- Selena:** You were. *[laughs]* That was his song.
- Ryan:** Caught her off guard.
- Selena:** Okay, so we're going to talk about three questions today. What is love? Or who is love, rather, I think is the phrase we're using. What are the markers of love being at work in our life or our lives as believers? And then how can we then love each other better because of who we know and believe about love? Who we know and what we believe about love.
- Ryan:** What or who is love?
- Selena:** Okay, well, you got to go to the Bible for this, which we will go there in a moment. We're going to contrast these definitions of love. And listener, viewer, you might be saying, "Yeah, yeah, I know what love is in the Bible and I know what the world is saying about love."
- Ryan:** Or maybe not.
- Selena:** I know. I'm challenging that and I'm saying that sometimes our view of love, our default is to drift away from God's truth. And so let's reorient ourselves with what it is by first contrasting what it is not.
- Ryan:** Yeah. So what is it not?
- Selena:** What is it not? *[chuckles]* We went to a few different websites and I'm not going to name any of them because I don't want to give them any traffic. *[both chuckles]*
- Ryan:** What? Because their definitions are just not that great, is that you're saying?
- Selena:** Well, we're contrasting what love is and what it's not.
- Ryan:** So this is the first red flag. Okay, you brought up this article. The first red flag: 10 people explained what love means to them.
- Selena:** To them. And so this is-

- Ryan:** To them. Is it relative? *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** Okay. They're classified in people that are not in a relationship. This is what they say love is. They say love is security. Love is indescribable. Love is about give and take. Love is respect. Love his being in sync. Love is commitment. That's what is at sync if you're single. I don't know.
- You can see how the ideals when you're not in a relationship. There's kind of some high expectations and ideals about what you believe love is.
- For couples that have been together for a year or more, love is vulnerability, it's growing together. We can use quote fingers and you can see it. I don't have to say it, even though I just did it for you. Love is knowing your spouse's love language. Love is healthy communication. Love is equality.
- This is just to get you thinking. For couples in long-term relationships, love is accepting their flaws. Love is patience. That's all they had. That's all they had. So the ideals get less as you... *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Apparently that's all they can only find with people in long relationships. Go ahead. I don't know if want to keep going. But the thing that gets me about every single one of those definitions is every one of them has some semblance of truth in there.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** No one's saying love is punching someone in the face. Like no one is saying that. No one is saying love is giving up on somebody. However, but we live it out differently.
- Selena:** We do. We do. Love is not something that we fall out of as believers. It's not just this feeling. There is an overflow of I think feelings of love, which is a grace of God but that's not what we're-
- Ryan:** I think the feelings of love, the affections of love are a good and in some regard, worthy of pursuit. Like I want to feel like I love my wife. That's an okay thing. Now, if those feelings are not there, and we'll talk about this at length in this episode, does that now say that love is gone? Or is there some other truth-
- Selena:** Governing there.
- Ryan:** Yeah, governing there. Because if love is just a matter of can I get those specific neural pathways firing so that I can feel the affections of love, the happiness,

the elation, [00:10:00] the, I don't know, being twitterpated, whatever you want to call it, if that's what love is, then Oh man, we're in trouble. Unless there's something deeper.

Selena: That is what I believe love is.

Ryan: Unless there's something deeper there. So you have another definition of love here. Do you want to read that?

Selena: You know, you can just go in dictionaries and find all kinds of things online. "A strong feeling or affection and concern towards another person as that arising from kinship or close friendship. A strong feeling affection and concern for another person accompanied by sexual attraction.

Ryan: My goodness.

Selena: A lot of these are being classified by a strong feeling or affection. That's the key word throughout a lot of these definitions.

Ryan: Intense emotional attachment to something as to a pet or a treasured object. That's one of the definitions.

Selena: I mean, I get it, but-

Ryan: To feel love for a person.

Selena: There are different types of love. And we can talk about that biblically speaking.

Ryan: What dictionary is this? This is a weird diction. Anyway. You know what? There's no mention of love as a verb.

Selena: Right. Or governing, instructive-

Ryan: Or any sort of governing... Here's the question I want to ask today. Is love objective? Is it fixed? Is it a fixed thing that we need to figure out? Or is it something that is not objective? It's subjective.

Selena: Always evolving.

Ryan: Always evolving and dependent on other factors. And the world would say like... this is the common refrain and it's like nails on the chalkboard, but "Oh, I love you, but I'm no longer in love with you." Meaning that I don't want to

be committed to you and I just don't want to feel bad about that. *[both chuckles]* That's what that means.

Selena: It is. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: I love you, but I'm not in love... Like, have you ever heard a more ridiculous statement?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: If you love somebody, then you love somebody. Like there's no ifs, ands, or buts. Now, I can only have one wife. So I can say to my good friend, "Hey, I love you, man." But I don't want to be with him.

Selena: That's a different type of love.

Ryan: I love my wife as my wife. So I'm committed to loving her as my wife. Now, sometimes the feelings aren't there.

Selena: Of loving me?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: What?

Ryan: Sometimes I don't feel like-

Selena: No way. I always feel 100% percent all the time of loving you. I'm just kidding. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I mean, just who you're married to.

Selena: Oh, it's backfiring.

Ryan: I will say this. No, I'm kidding. You're joking because I know that you don't always feel that way toward me. And I'm far from perfect. Of course. You, however, are not. The reasons my feelings go away is because I am imperfect not because you are. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: You're so kind.

Ryan: But the point is that we made a covenant to one another. And I think we should probably talk about covenant pretty soon again, revisit that

conversation. But we made a covenant. It's not a contract. It's not based on what I can get from you. It's based on what I've committed to give to you.

That is that the world appending revelation when it comes to love covenant and marriage is that my marriage to my wife is because of what I've promised to give to her not what I have to gain from her.

And if both spouses take that and internalize it and live that out, what happens is you have this marriage that is flourishing. It's a contest of generosity where you are giving to one another without strings, without bounds.

Selena: And within those moments of not feeling strong to love one another, not feeling those... like it's easy to love one another, I think that's where the Holy Spirit comes in. And that's where we can rest in the Lord and ask him for help and petition Holy Spirit to help empower us to love our spouse and to just be obedient to living out what we define as love.

So let's just go into this next question of who is love. And as believers, as people of God, we believe that God is love. We see this throughout all of Scripture being defined. 1 John 4, we're going to read that in just a few minutes. But God is love and love was personified through Jesus Christ.

So let's stop and talk about defining love and love personified in Jesus. So in our book, "Fierce Marriage," we do talk a lot about... I don't know if you want to show it or if it matters. We're open to showing things right now because we can.

Ryan: We are really going to be showing stuff.

Selena: Because we can. In this book, we talked about how Jesus is our only reliable definition and source of real love. So how can we say that?

Ryan: Can I take a small detour? I'm not going to too far off, I promise. I think it's an Exodus chapter 3. Was it the burning bush chapter?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Honestly, either three, four, or five or six. One of those.

Selena: Somewhere in Exodus, in the beginning. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Early. God is speaking to Moses through the burning bush. And Moses says, "Well, okay, I'm supposed to go [00:15:00] get the Israelites. I'm supposed to

get my people..." Not Israelites yet. "But let's get my people. I guess they weren't Israelites at point. And get them out of slavery.

And Moses is like, "Well, who should I tell them you are? Who should I say sent me?" And God's response is so profound, so profound. He says, "I am that I am. Ego eimi. I am. There's no other standard by which you can measure me." God was talking, like, "You can't say that I'm good because I'm the very definition of good. To say that I'm good is to say that I'm something other than what I am. Because there's no thing that is good outside of me."

Selena: Yeah. Wow.

Ryan: When we say God is love, to say God is loving is to degrade God Himself. Because God is not somehow subjecting Himself to an external standard of love, and then conforming to it and then being a loving God. He is Himself love.

So when we say God is love, we're saying that the very foundation, the very root, the very source of our definition, our understanding of love itself is in the person and the character of the everlasting God.

Now think about how profound that is, in that when we say, "I want to love somebody," I need to don't look to Him and say, "What are you like? What have you done to show me that you love me so I can understand your love? Now I can take that understanding, that experience of love, and now I can give it to another."

Selena: It's not an easy thing to do. I mean, I don't want to jump into Ephesians 5 too much because that is obviously a hot, controversial topic of how we love one another and the roles that we have in marriage. But the idea of a husband being called to love his wife as Christ loved the church.

Again, if we look at the definition of who love is, what He gave up to love, to make us His own is something we can't ever pay back. And so this calling to love one another as Christ loved the church, this calling to love because God is love...

At 1 John... is it 1 John 4:19? We're going to jump into 1 John in just a minute. But we can only love because He first loved us. I mean, there's a lot of profound-

Ryan: And so what happens in a culture that is godless like our own, is we want all the gifts of the giver without the giver himself. Love included. And we'll say, "I want to love" because I had this hole in myself to feel and experience love and

to give love and it's part of the humankind of DNA is to love, "but I don't want God."

And so now I'm going to start defining love based on what I... because real love is hard. Real love, as our own God showed Himself, requires sacrifice. But fake love will never require sacrifice in the same way. Because with fake love, with worldly love, with love that is defined by anything other than the definition God gave us, at the end of the day, it will always be self-focused. It'll always be rooted in self and not rooted in the other or rooted in Christ Himself.

Selena: Is it too strong to say that any other definition of love is a lie of love, outside of God?

Ryan: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Now, there's a lot to be said about what that means that God is love. And so there's a lot of texture to that ultimate definition. But any definition outside of God's I'll say is a lie, for sure.

Selena: Ryan is my seminary student. He's in seminary. So he helps me. I can say these things and be like, "Is that true?"

Ryan: I love being patronized. *[laughs]*

Selena: It's not. Because I really do. I'm like, "Am I saying the things that sound what I'm saying in my head?" Because sometimes they come out and he's like, "You can't say that. People don't know what you mean." It's like, "I don't know how to say it clearer." *[laughs]*

Ryan: We're a team. We're a team. So let's look at 1 Corinthians 13 quickly, and then we're going to jump into 1 John 4 because that's kind of the passage I want us to hang our hat on. But as we look at Christ, as we look at Him as love personified, we start in verse 4.

" Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away."

And then you can keep reading that passage. We are not trying to prove text any of this. We are looking and going to the definition of love being worked out the way of love is what it says. If God is love, how can we live out God in and through our marriage?

Well, again we looked at the person of Christ. The way Jesus loved us was a very like... we say the word gritty, right? It's a very pure and gritty way.

If you think about the cross and you think about the fleshliness of it, there's a grit that it took to... Yes, He is fully God and fully man, [00:20:00] but he wasn't the only one crucified. And so to know that He went to that level of I think just pain and sacrifice and cost should speak volumes to us about how we can love one another beyond the feelings being absent or even us being angry and feeling fingers... feeling feelings of anger. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Finger of angers.

Selena: Fingers of anger.

Ryan: I think we can gloss over the weight of what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 13 because it's just one of those verses that if you've been around the church, you've been a number of weddings, you've heard love is patient, love is kind, blah, blah, blah. Like you've heard those.

And the thing is, okay, remember who Paul was. A Pharisee among Pharisees, the guy that had satisfied the law. Every jot and tittle, as they say, had been satisfied by Paul.

Selena: Paul?

Ryan: Yeah. In the fact that he was this Pharisee that had been...

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: He was obeying the law, right?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Like he says, he was the Pharisee among Pharisees. As somebody who's been radically transformed with his encounter with Christ now turns a 180 and is now telling the people in Ephesus... or excuse me in Corinth what love is.

Now, what occasion precipitated this response from Paul? Remember, Corinth was a busy, bustling city. It was right on isthmus in, I think, modern-day Turkey. Corinth was right in the shadow of, I think, the Areopagus, which I think... don't quote me on that. I'm pretty sure I haven't studied it in many years since we wrote this book.

But the point is, is that temple was a temple to the goddess of love, if I'm not mistaken. And they were very in tune with their ideas of love is what I'm trying to say. And it started to have all these weird expressions within the Corinthian church.

And Paul, as somebody who loves them and who knows them, writes them a letter and says, "This is actually what love is. This is actually a love it." So in many ways, it's almost... I feel like they were probably having the same misunderstanding that our culture has today about love.

Selena: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Ryan: So we need to let this passage really bear its weight on us and tell us definitively, very descriptively what love actually is.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: What's next? Sorry. And we can go through that line by line or we could..

Selena: Yeah. We talked about how Jesus is gritty and pure in His love for us, how he demonstrated it, the perfect lover of our souls. He's never arrogant or rude. He was obviously incredibly selfless as you can get. He does not grow irritable or resentful.

With us in Jesus, love never fails or ends, which is very hard for us human, I think, to comprehend. Because I think many of us have probably experienced a break or divorce or brokenness that is... I don't want to say divorce. I want to say, if you look back at your life, there are some markers of brokenness where things have been severed and it feels like love ended there with that relationship.

And maybe that is your marriage, or maybe that is your parents or some sort of close relationship. And so to contrast that breaking of love or feeling like love has been broken and ended to a love that never ends, that was there before we existed, that will be there when we're not here on earth.

Ryan: Again, that's rooted in the character of God.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: When scriptures tell us love never fails, anyone who's been in one of those situations like you're describing, they've been betrayed, or they've experienced the brokenness, they will say, "Yeah, love failed me." And I guess

what we're here to say is that love didn't fail, that person failed. Love doesn't fail, people fail.

And does that mean we abandon love Himself? Does that mean that we somehow turn our back on loving the way that we have been called now to love as those who are recipients of that perfect love of God in Christ? And that's the challenge is that love never fails, we fail.

Selena: We fail.

Ryan: Now, where does that leave us? I think is the question.

Selena: So finally, we're going to get to 1 John 4. We're going to begin in verse 7. The title is "God is love." Imagine that.

Ryan: All right.

Selena: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." I don't know how long I should go because [00:25:00] it's so good.

Ryan: I would say go a little bit further.

Selena: Okay. "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

Ryan: So that's a full gospel appeal there. And this word propitiation it's a 25 cent word. And I just think it really does make it clear I think what is happening here in this passage that John is writing. Propitiation is this idea that not only has my debt been paid, but now I've been credited with the righteousness of Christ.

Selena: So good.

- Ryan:** That's a love that doesn't just satisfy the requirements of-
- Selena:** The debt.
- Ryan:** Of sin, of debt. It's like, Selena, if you owe me \$5-
- Selena:** You owe me \$5. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** Okay, let's just be clear. All right, I owe you \$5. *[Selena laughs]* If Jesus came and gave you \$5 on my behalf, now you and I would be good. We'd be even. Instead, Jesus didn't just give you \$5, He gave you \$1,000 and said it's from me. That's what propitiation is. When we stand before God, not as somebody who's just merely just somehow slipped in to the kingdom of God, but no, we are now credited with the righteousness of Christ. Co heirs with Christ. Think of the implications of that for how we love-
- Selena:** Each other.
- Ryan:** How we love each other. Okay, husbands wives, okay, you're watching this, you're listening to this, your spouse sins against you? Is it loving in this way to just say, "All right, I forgive you. Fine, that's paid. No, no harm, no foul, water on the bridge."
- I would contend that that is maybe halfway there. It's not just we're okay and I won't bring it up again. But you know what? I'm still going to love you all the more. And I'm going to give you generous love in return. I'm not just going to say we're good but now I'm going to go over it again.
- Selena:** You're letting go of that future bringing it up or holding it over or any sort of "You hurt me again. I knew you would do this." It's I'm letting go of all that. And that is a beautiful example of Christ's love at work in us.
- Ryan:** Now, here's the big caveat. Does that mean that we're just these doormats in our marriage? No. Because love also calls out sin and love also lets consequences bear their course. In other words, if a husband or wife is in habitual sin and you've had habitual infidelity or emotional affairs, or whatever that looks like, it's not just "Oh, I'm good."
- Selena:** I forgive you."
- Ryan:** "You're forgiven." Forgiveness needs to happen. Make no mistake. But trust that takes time. And so we're not talking about just blind trust where someone has not earned your trust or has not maintained trust.

- Selena:** Because trust is different in that fact.
- Ryan:** That's different than what we're talking about. Love is very essence and it's different.
- Selena:** Yes, I think trust is something that you can work at and earn. Love is not. I'm trying to think of-
- Ryan:** Love is a choice and it's given.
- Selena:** So good.
- Ryan:** And trust is something that is built and maintained over time.
- Selena:** I'm going to read just a few more verses here. Verse 15.
- Ryan:** 1 John 4:15.
- Selena:** 1 John 4:15, yeah. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.
- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."
- Ryan:** Wow. So we just read a full chapter of 1 John 4.
- Selena:** There you go. That's your Bible reading for today. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I mean, you can see it so clearly there. There's a part in there where it says, "Those who love abide in God because God is love." It's one and the same. Like by loving in this way I think is what he's trying to say. By loving God's way you're actually abiding, in a sense, in God Himself. And that's why it's so important.

We started out this whole episode talking about kind of the world's definition of love versus God. That's why we have to not look at whatever we decide love

is. Words have meaning. And we're telling you the meaning of the word love, if we're saying that we're Christians, because obviously if you don't have a Christian worldview, we happen to believe it's the ultimate worldview, [00:30:00] the ultimate truth. And so we are going to live our lives according to this.

This is the way I need to live if I want love. Anything else, John says you're a liar. You're tricking yourself.

Selena: Right. Right. So the markers of love in the life of a believer it's how we love one another, how we are loving God if we're God's people, and we are interacting with him, we are experiencing His love, we are you letting his definition, who he is bear weight on our lives, which should create an overflow of love towards one another.

And what does that love look like? Markers of love of a believer. One that can forgive when forgiveness feels or seems like it shouldn't be an option. If a nonbeliever is looking into your marriage and they see you forgive and they know your story, they know the pain or the regret or the abandonment, whatever the brokenness is that your marriage has faced, they're going to question, "Why are you doing that? How can you still love that person? How can you still give of yourself to that relationship? You're not getting anything in return."

Ryan: And it's backward to them.

Selena: It is. And it's not a call to being a doormat, right? We talked about that. This is a call to... God has given up everything for me. I want to live out this idea and this person of love that Jesus... He loved me so much that He died for me and he gave me new life, and I'm credited this eternal life-

Ryan: But your husband's a total creep. How could you even stand here and not just bad-mouth him with me?

Selena: Right? And sometimes love just looks like not saying-

Ryan: You're saying like I can't do that because... again, all the caveats we just said. But here's what happens. When that person sees you faithfully living out God's definition of love, they're not just seeing Selena or Ryan, or you living out love. They're seeing a glimpse into the very character of God Himself.

And what that does is that puts up your antennas as an individual, you're thinking, "I don't know what that... What is this? I want love. I want whatever

that is." And that then becomes this amazing opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work. He's always at work, whether we give him opportunities or not.

But it gives us an opportunity then to say, "Listen, do you have questions? What else is our marriage for but to reflect the eternal love of God in Christ in some dim fashion here on earth-

Selena: So good.

Ryan: ...in this manner.

Selena: So good.

Ryan: So love is an amazing concept. It's so twisted in worldly ways. If we can untwist it, and we can align ourselves to God's vision of it, I'm confident that your marriage will flourish. Generally, your life will flourish. It's not a guarantee that everything's going to go your way. But it is a guarantee that you are going to be living out God's version and vision for love, and will always be better when we align ourselves with the very character of God.

Selena: So we talked about the definition of love, who is love, what are the markers of love as a believer-

Ryan: I thought you said makers of love. *[laughs]* What hat we kind of channel is this?

Selena: I mean, if your married, you can make the love. The last question that we're going to talk about here is how can we then, with the knowledge that we have received and we know and understand and believe about who love is, who God is, how can we then love our spouse better? So a bit more tangible, I think.

For me, when I thought about this question of how can I love you better because of who I know love to be, when I think about how I respond to conversations that are maybe frustrating or triggering or... I hate to say the word triggering because there's just some things I just don't like. Like words like "always" and "never," those kinds of things are very frustrating to hear, I think, in marriage.

So how can I love you in those in those conversations? For me, it's taking that moment to not just react but respond. And I think you said or someone said, the difference between a response and reaction is three seconds. Reaction and response.

- Ryan:** So the three seconds is a difference between reaction and a response. It's all it takes. And you'd be amazed how just taking that extra three seconds will defuse all manner of landmine in your marriage.
- Selena:** Right. So even if I think that I'm right, and I know that I'm right all the time, *[Ryan chuckles]* I can still be loving in how we seek out that truth together. And I can be selfless in that response, not just respond how I feel, but respond in a way that will hopefully bring us closer to one another.
- Ryan:** And we need the power of the Holy Spirit for that. And that's I think maybe where the next step is. We've covered a lot of ground today, so I even hesitate to go into it. But here's the thing as if we try to live out what we're describing aside from the very given [00:35:00] of love Himself. I mean, if you're a nonbeliever or your spouse is a nonbeliever, and they say, Oh yeah, I love that. I love the idea that love is a covenant. It's not a contract. Love is an action, it's not a feeling. Like love is primarily a choice, and so yeah, all that makes great sense. Okay, but when the rubber meets the road, what's going to-
- Selena:** It only takes a few seconds-
- Ryan:** Without the help of the Holy Spirit, I will 100% of the time, go with my own flesh. Meaning I'll do what I want to do. What I think is right according to Ryan's thinking. That's why we need the gift that Christ gave, the Holy Spirit, our counselor, to help us well up from somewhere inside that realization that I am in fact loved.
- Now I can love my wife, even though she's acting real messed up toward me. *[both laughs]* I can still love her. And that's a profound, impossible thing to do outside of the help of the holy spirit.
- Selena:** It becomes clear, I think, when you start thinking about things like intimacy, and how we can love each other more selflessly and more patiently, more kindly. What about our finances? How can we love each other within our financial decisions?
- Ryan:** We honor and respect one another. We consult one another. We value one another's desires, opinions, and observations.
- Selena:** And everything you're saying too about the Holy Spirit being at work in us, there's the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And so patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, all of these things are fruit that has been produced. And so again, we can't necessarily do it on our own. We might for a short time, but he always says it's like stapling fruit to a tree. It's not going to last, it's not going to grow, and it's not going to be good. It's just going to fall and die away.

Ryan: Everybody knows you did it. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: And everybody knows you did it.

Ryan: Everybody can see it. That's all right. There's a fruit there but it don't look great. It's got to grow from the inside.

Selena: It really does. So looking at how we can love our spouse better through intimacy, through being patient, through being kind in those areas, finances, being selfless maybe and not always trying to just get ours. Priorities. How are you prioritizing each other, our marriage, our relationship?

I think one way we can love one another well is knowing each other's love language, as we say. He likes words of affirmation. How can I make that a priority in my day of affirming him in how I know he receives love? And how can he do the same for me?

And then I think the last just little point here of how we can love one another well through conflict. And we sort of have touched on this a little bit. But when you and I are having a problem, having a little fight and conflict, how can we love each other well in those moments? I think typically we try not... we don't... but like things like name-calling things like-

Ryan: Yeah, some really tangible things that we've... the boundaries that we've drawn. We said the absolutes are triggering. They are. And here's one absolute for you is they never work. In marriage, absolutes never work. In other words, absolute to be like "you always say" or "you always do." Or even comparing-

Selena: "You're never..."

Ryan: How did that work for?

Selena: "You never,"

Ryan: Or like comparing cheap shots. "Oh, you're just like your mother" or "that's just like you to do that." Like throwing that in your spouse's face because you know... it's one thing to say it because you've made an observation. It's another to say because you know. Like you know it's going to push that big red button. That's just immature.

And so as a married couple, if you're wanting to move forward in your relationship, you need to do mature things and not act like children all the time. And in conflict, it's like don't call each other names. That's very dumb.

Selena: Immature.

Ryan: We don't use absolutes. We don't take cheap shots.

Selena: We don't use intimacy as a weapon at all.

Ryan: As a weapon or a currency. One of the things I always say is we fight naked and then we don't bring weapons into battle. We'll talk about this at length, trust me.

Selena: Metaphorically.

Ryan: Metaphorically speaking. And literally. But fighting naked. You think about someone going into battle, you've either got armor, so you got your defenses up, or you've got places where you can hide your weapon or wield weapons. And we're saying, "Listen, I'm here to duke this out with you, my spouse, but I'm not going to defend myself in these ways and I'm not going to attack you in these ways."

Instead, we're going to work through it productively. That's the essence of what fighting naked is. And we'll talk about that at length coming up here in a future episode. But-

Selena: At length and fully clothed. You better believe it. This is not that kind of YouTube channel.

Ryan: And based on some advice from a good friend, we're going to I think probably come up with some T-shirts for that episode, where it says "fight naked" on the front of them.

Selena: All right, couple's conversation challenge to wrap up this conversation. Look at that. [Ryan laughs]

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Ask your spouse... This will really get you. Ask your spouse how you can love them better. Give them some time to think and respond about that. [00:40:00] Because I don't think well off the cuff.

Ryan: Here's another way to say exactly what you said. Sorry.

Selena: He always has to do better.

Ryan: I'm sorry. It's like moss on the Mississippi tree stump. *[laughs]* Ask your husband, ask your wife, do I love you well? Do you think I love you well? And then the follow-up is, how can I love you better?

Selena: That is better. Good job.

Ryan: Because then you're not just putting them on the spot. You're asking them to reflect on you.

Selena: That's good because he's learned that I don't like being put on the spot.

Ryan: No.

Selena: I don't respond well. It's okay. All right, y'all, we'll have to wait to find out what the next episode is. We'll just keep you at bay but-

Ryan: To keep you very tiltirated.

Selena: Yes. Do you want to end in prayer?

Ryan: Yeah. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for your word. I thank you for your love, that you have not just told us about love, but you've shown it to us, and you've allowed us to experience it. And now you've asked us and given us a way to participate in love through loving You, through being loved by You, through loving one another in marriage. So thank you, Lord, for that.

I pray for the husbands and the wives who are viewing or listening to this episode that you would encourage them and show them your love first and foremost. And may you empower them, Holy Spirit, to then live out love in their marriage. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, we'll see you again-

Selena: This Fierce Marriage-

Ryan: Oh yeah, that's right. This episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:18:45]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Corinthians 13
 - 1 John 4:7-21
 -

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