

THE GREAT MARRIAGE KILLER

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[00:00:00]

Ryan: So I was thinking recently, and I was considering what is the most damaging thing to a relationship? And we think about couples that we've known closely, friends, family, they've been in otherwise stable marriages and families, and then something happens along the way and it starts to go sideways.

And I thought, "What is that? What is it?" And I thought to myself, well, it's almost like a sense of entitlement. Because what happens in a lot of couples is, again, aside from any big kind of catastrophic betrayal-

Selena: Breaking trust.

Ryan: ...or breaking of trust, the thing that gets subtly underneath the skin of a couple's marriage is usually going to be some level of entitlement. Like, "I'm worth more than you're able to give me. You're not the wife that I deserve. You're not the wife that I should have. I deserve happiness. I deserve to feel love. I deserve all these things that you are not giving me and I'm entitled to it."

And I thought, well, that is just so insidious. And I thought to myself, that is the one of the greatest enemies of marriage. And I thought, well, actually, entitlement is a symptom. It's a symptom of something much deeper, much more insidious. And we will explain and go there with you on the other side.

[00:01:17] <music>

Ryan: You thought I was going to tell you what it was, didn't you? *[chuckles]*

Selena: No. I had another thought. I had another thought.

Ryan: Wait-

Selena: But I can't remember it. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I think I just had a thought.

Selena: I think.

Ryan: So the insidious thing is... so there's this quote-

Selena: Oh boy!

Ryan: Yeah, what was your thought?

Selena: My thought was just that when we start entertaining those voices and that vocabulary of entitlement, you said it's a symptom, and I'll let you get to what it is a symptom of. But I think the danger starts happening when we start at that first step of hearing a voice and then internalizing it of "maybe I do deserve more. Maybe I should be more happy. Why am I not so happy in my marriage? Why is he treating me like this? Why is he not value me the way I want him to value me or I think you should value me?"

Ryan: I'm thinking about those questions. They are valid questions on some level, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Because wife deserves to be valued. A husband also deserves to be valued in his marriage. But there's a small tweak that happens that turns it into something that is devastating to the fabric of a marriage. And we'll get to that.

But first, our housekeeping. If you haven't yet, please rate, review, like, subscribe to this video, this podcast. We're both video and audio at this point. So if you're on YouTube, smash that like button. That's what they say, right? Smash that subscribe button. I don't even know. We'll get used to it at one point because all the YouTube people are just so cool.

Selena: They have such awesome vocabulary. We're catching up.

Ryan: Well, this is the time. It was not time to do video until now. And I'm confident of that.

Selena: It was not. It was not.

Ryan: Audio too. Thank you podcast listeners. We're not going to leave you behind. Thank you for listening. Like, rate, review, subscribe, all that kind of stuff to the podcast.

Selena: Share.

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Okay, we're talking about this kind of insidious, deep root of things like entitlement. And I do want to be clear that no person, regardless of their own personal contribution to a marriage, I think... well, I don't want to say regardless. I think every person is equal value, worth, and importance. Worthy of dignity because of who God has said you are as a human being created in His image.

So, in other words, it's not wrong for a wife to think, "I wish my husband would treat me better." But there's the subtle tweak in there that says, "I deserve more and he is not that. Therefore, I deserve to leave this marriage. I deserve to, whether mentally emotionally I'm checking out or I'm literally checking out, you know, leaving and going away. So...

Selena: Not right, but yes, I agree that is the insidiousness of it is that little twist of the lie that because someone does something my only and next response can be this. It's not taking that step pause and saying, "Whoa, wait a minute. Wait a minute. What am I listening to? [00:05:00] And how am I letting this affect and direct how I'm living out my marriage with my spouse?"

Ryan: Yeah. So that entitlement is a symptom. And it's a symptom of pride. That's the big, insidious thing that I think is the root of every human sin is going to be pride. It goes all the way back to the garden. I'm probably going to talk about this.

Selena: We are.

Ryan: Okay. So I'll let you get into that. But I want to share this quote by C. S. Lewis. Everybody loves C. S. Lewis. "For pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense." It's spiritual cancer. It eats up, it consumes, even it crowds out. That's what cancer does, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Even the possibility of love or contentment, or of the third thing, which I can't see now because it's off the screen. *[laughs]* Or common sense. There it is. *[both laughs]*

Let's dive into Scripture. Let's see where this comes from. We're not just making this stuff up. This is a biblical idea that pride is poisonous.

Selena: We're going to lay out kind of three discussion points for you so that you can kind of hang your hat on where we're going. We're going to talk about pride. So he's kind of stepped into we're defining it, what does it look like in marriage, and how does it affect our marriage. Because I think pride can look the same, but we're going to talk specifically how it kind of rears its ugly head within our relationship.

And then the gospel, how does the gospel kill pride and then redeem that time or redeem maybe that brokenness and lead us into what we call gospel-fueled humility. So defining what that is, how that might be different from unbelievers view of humility? And what does that look like in marriage? How does it affect our marriage? And how does it preserve and protect our marriage into the future?

So talking about pride, looking at Scripture, we have a few listed out here that we're going to talk about. You were talking about Genesis 3 and the fall, which is obviously where we started talking about pride.

Ryan: Well, if you're not familiar, we don't know where you're coming from as you're viewing this, listening to this. In Scripture, okay, when we talk about the Bible, we're talking about scripture that starts with the book of Genesis. In the beginning, is what Genesis starts at, God creates the heavens and the earth, He creates mankind, and everything's perfect. They're all in the garden, there's perfect, for lack of a better term, harmony, there's perfect communion with God. Man and woman are walking with God in complete, perfect relationship.

Then there's this antagonist that enters into the human story. And the antagonist is the serpent in the garden. And the serpent is the enemy. Satan essentially saying, "Eve, you should basically disobey God." Now God had given them the command. "You can eat of any tree of the garden that is good for eating. Everything is for your health, and everything is for your flourishing, but do not eat of the one tree in the center of the garden. It's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

And serpent says to Eve, "Did God really say that?" Basically, he's giving her these kinds of these half-truths. And the long story short is she eats up the fruit of the tree. And of course, it was wrapped in this idea.

Selena: How is that prideful? Wasn't she deceived? *[chuckles]*

Ryan: She was deceived. So the first thing the enemy does is he will remove God from His rightful place as the one who should reign as the King as the creator, and say, "Did he really say that?"

Selena: He disqualifies Him.

Ryan: Yeah. He's coming from the back angle and saying, "God is not actually God. He's not actually all you think He is." Think about how that might happen in your own marriage. Maybe something in you says, "Did God really say we have to stay together like if I'm unhappy? Did He really say that?"

So we start to kind of take God out of that place of being the Lord over our marriage, the one who's sovereign. And then the enemy now says, "Don't you want to know all that God... He's just trying to hide something from you."

Selena: So he takes God out, which goes beautifully with our conversation. And this was just a little thing happening. But he takes God out of His place and then elevates self.

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. So you have to dethrone the King and you elevate yourself in place of King. And that is pride. Pride is saying, "Wait, God's not really God. I can actually now be God."

Selena: "Did God really say?"

Ryan: "Did God really say? He just doesn't want you to know what He knows because He's trying to hold out on you." It's a lie.

And that's basically the third piece is that not only can you step into place and be the God and your own authority, but the lie is that [00:10:00] "and that will be better for you." And that somehow God is holding out on you. And of course, Eve takes the bait, hook line, and sinker-

Selena: With apparently Adam right there.

Ryan: Adam was is not blameless in this. In fact... this is a different conversation altogether. But God doesn't go to Eve and say what did she do?

Selena: Oh, yes. God goes to-

Ryan: He goes to Adam.

Selena: But the enemy went to Eve, which is interesting.

Ryan: The enemy went to Eve. Which is a very interesting thing. So we're not trying to talk about that. He wants us to even gender and all those sorts of things and how God-

Selena: The roles.

Ryan: Roles, which are beautiful. We're just not going to talk about that today. But this idea of pride and the dynamic of the first there's the dethronement of the king and then now you are basically mutenizing [SP] against the Lord. And it's all based on this lie that He's holding out on us, that we know better for ourselves.

Selena: And it will be better. So again, we see the themes of pride. Proverbs and Psalms are littered with pride and foolishness. A few that come to mind is Proverbs 16:18. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Psalm 10:4 "In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'"

1 John 2:15-17. We're going to read through quickly and talk about. And then we're going to kind of hang our hats on this last section of scripture in Mark 7 about what actually defiles a person.

Ryan: Can we pause real fast before we go into 1 John? Psalm 10:4 is exactly what we're talking about is "In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, 'there is no God.'" That's the essence. That is basically the stance we have to take if we're going to ignore all that God has commanded us is to basically say, "You are not God in the sense that actually matters to my life. It doesn't actually govern me."

I could go off on this, but our western model for Christianity has become so me-focused, so consumer-centric that we no longer think that God requires something of us that we don't want to give. We think that God will only give to us, and I will consume the things of God without actually being consumed by Him. That is not a Christianity that Christ gave us.

The Christianity that Christ gave us, a faith that Christ gave us was all-consuming. The Scripture say our God is an all-consuming fire. And that includes us that. That of every buddy in the universe, God is God alone, and He alone deserves all the glory. And he will have it. And he will have it through

our lives, whether we give it voluntarily or not. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess.

And so for us to say to God, "I'm not going to obey you," is for us to say if effectively there is no God. Because if we actually beheld the God of the Bible, we would obey perfectly. And that's [inaudible 00:13:03] keeps us from seeing him perfectly, the whole Adam and Eve thing.

Anyway, I just found that profound. That at the root of our rebellion toward God is the exact same lie that Eve and Adam believed is that God isn't really gotten. In other words, there is no God. So let's go on at 1 John 2. Is that where you wanted to go next?

Selena: Yes, I did. 1 John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

Ryan: Do not love the world or the things of the world. Now, let me ask this. Again, going back to the sense of entitlement that we might have as married people, could that include the world brand of happiness?

Selena: Or like we talked about last week, the world's brand of love?

Ryan: Yes. Or the world's brand of self-actualization? Again, I'm thinking of actual couples that we've known that have been stable at one point, but then there's a crack. Something gets into their relationship, and either the husband or the wife they start thinking thoughts like, "I deserve..." whatever the thing is.

Instead of rooting their reality in God, His word, rooting their reality in something else, something else happens to be.. some worldly ideology that you just, you know, "I deserve better than this. She isn't giving me what I'm entitled to. Therefore, I can do the thing that is counter to Scripture."

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: And I can either go have an affair or I can walk away from this marriage or I can... And I will feel good in that.

Selena: Live in addiction.

Ryan: That's the thing is I will feel justified in that. [00:15:00] I'll feel righteous in that because I've bought a lie.

- Selena:** Momentarily. *[laughs]* I would argue momentarily.
- Ryan:** You feel justified in taking the bite of the fruit. And then as soon as you do, as soon as that gavel hits the bench, so to speak, and it's done, the divorce is done, or the fair is done, or whatever the thing is, it's done, then all of a sudden you realize, "What have I done? I bought a lie. And now I have to live in fallout of this atomic bomb that's just gone off in our lives."
- Selena:** So, Matthew... sorry, Mark 7, the other M book in the Bible. *[Ryan chuckles]* I'm just kidding. Verse 20 through 23. We're talking about what defiles a person. So Jesus is talking to the Pharisees I believe, and they are going through some of the commandments and traditions. And I think they were talking about... He's trying to clarify.
- Jesus is saying, "Hear me, all of you, and understand:" in verse 14. "There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." So looking at the laws and traditions, in the Old Testament, there was many laws on what people could eat or not eat. He's saying this has now changed.
- "And when he had entered the house," verse 17, "and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, 'Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?' (Thus he declared all foods clean.)
- And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'"
- Ryan:** Interesting.
- Selena:** I think we tend to put pride not in that category of sin. *[laughs]* We try to categorize our pride and our sin, what's worse? You know, murder feels worse than pride. But God's saying, "Nope, covetousness pride, deceit..." I thought even anger was on here. Maybe that's in Matthew when he talks about-
- Ryan:** Murder is in here, which is akin to anger in Jesus's teaching. It's funny you say that because you could I think make a pretty strong case for every one of these flowing out of pride in some way.
- Selena:** For sure, yeah.

Ryan: So think about wickedness or think about deceit. Like someone who deceives willfully, who goes out to deceive someone else basically says, "I'm worth more than you. I'm above you. I'm above telling you the truth because I need to get what I want from you or the situation or whatever."

You think about coveting. "They shouldn't have the thing. I deserve the thing." If you think about foolishness, "I know better." [*chuckles*] I mean, I preached on this at church on Sunday. And what I said was, the world is full of smart fools and wise idiots. And what I mean by that is there's a brand of intelligence of heart application.

Wisdom is knowing what is right and then doing what is right out of an acknowledgment of who God is. That's what wisdom is. That I live and have to give an account unto not just God, but the way he's designed his sovereign decree, and how He's designed the world and how He's designed even the universe to work, the ethics, the arts, and not knots that come along the philosophies of knowing God's law.

So like being a smart fool would mean that I know better. That's pride. Whereas maybe wise idiots not a good term. Because I think you can have somebody who has maybe a low IQ, but they're very wise because they just love and they obey the Lord. And idiots may be more of a pejorative term than should be used, but I use it on Sunday mornings. So I used it here.

But the point is I just think every one of these things that Mark is outlining here... sexual immorality is rooted in pride. Think about getting into watching pornography, right? What is your heart doing in that moment? You're saying that this person or these people that I'm consuming, I'm consuming their bodies in a way for my own pleasure. I'm watching, I'm consuming.

What does that say? It says that that person is actually not of any value because I'm just going to consume them. And you know what? When I'm finished, I'm going to discard them.

What is that if that's not a prideful orientation toward another human being, a prideful propping up of oneself and saying, "I can literally consume anyone in anything because I want it, because I deserve it, because I [00:20:00] deserve satisfaction or whatever urges-

Selena: And because there is no God. Because there is no God, there is no... in that belief. Just because you don't believe that God may be said the things that He did, doesn't mean that they don't exist, that He didn't say them. He-

Ryan: I don't mean to interrupt you. But people live out the way of foolishness and then they wonder why they get-

Selena: It doesn't work out. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: ...the fruit of foolishness. We always say this in our household. We say play dumb games win-

Selena: Dumb prizes.

Ryan: Dumb prizes. But stupid games win stupid prizes. That's what happens.

Selena: Play foolish games, you get foolish prizes.

Ryan: Yeah. It's like you can't continue to just act like gravity's not real and jump off any cliff that you happen to see. You're going to fall to your death. And that's what we do from a moral-ethical standpoint, when we act as fools. And we do so because of pride.

Selena: So you've touched a lot on what pride is, what it looks like. We want to just kind of give a few more examples. So we talked about how pride puffs up a person, kind of this "I deserve this" mentality, very much the entitlement causes ourselves to kind of be supreme. Others don't get it. I see all the variables. "Don't correct me, don't call me out, don't hold me accountable because I'm right. I see it. I know it. I am, you know, the higher being here."

Again, it dehumanizes our spouse. And it typically can come out and how we communicate with one another, how we interact, how we treat each other when it comes to... what are those? You know, priorities, our finances, intimacy, everything. It just kind of leaks out this puffing up of oneself.

And pride is also self-sovereign. If you're puffing yourself up, then you are believing that you are your own sovereign. And you're trying to make others see that as well. I answer to myself and no one else. I don't know if anybody would actually say that. Maybe some people do say that.

But again, how you act and how you communicate to one another is going to show what you believe about yourself and how you believe yourself to either be under God's authority or above it. Things like, you know, you wrote my intellect, my desires, my reasons, my emotions, they're all sovereign.

Basically using that as just a way to justify your sin and not learning to submit to the authority of God and how God instructs us to love one another, to give ourselves up for one another. What is giving ourselves up? By giving up an

emotional response that we think and rightfully should have towards them, because of the way they just spoke out and talked back to me and argued with me or, you know, undercut me or whatever.

Again, we see this laying down. But that can't happen if we're living and existing in this heart attitude of "I'm sovereign. I am God. God is not God. He is but He is not. I feel like what I feel and the things that I want are way more important."

So then we kind of work ourselves into this self-seeking, like a self-worship of, "Since I'm both supreme, then it's appropriate for me to want the things I want, to disregard how it affects others to like you said, just dispose of them and their feelings." And I think we see this I think at the ultimate level of things like infidelity and addictions, and the emotional affairs.

Ryan: I want to draw a quick example out from our own lives. *[chuckles]*

Selena: This is not in the notes. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Think of any time when I've been unloving towards you in my communication.

Selena: Never! *[both chuckles]* Never.

Ryan: Think of that one time-

Selena: That one time. Okay.

Ryan: ... that I was... *[laughs]* And it's kind of the caricatures of husbands and wives. The husband just always wants to fix it, or the husband is so logical or so like... and women, rationally speaking, you know, tend to be more emotionally-driven, feelings-driven. And some of that's beautiful and good. I'm not trying to say one's better than the other. I think they both need to work in complementary roles to one another.

But anytime that I've been unloving to you, it's because I have taken a posture of my way is the right way, and I just need to get you on board. And you could be. Husbands I'm talking to you. Or wives. You could be factually correct. You could be completely factually correct with what you're saying, but completely utterly wrong in how you're saying it.

Of course everyone knows that right now. If you're watching this or listening to this you know that. But when you're in the heat of a battle and you're entrenched in your arguments, I wouldn't then... the habit that I've had to

break over the 17 years we've been married... It's 18 now. I think it's 18 years now.

Selena: It's 18. It's fine.

Ryan: The pattern I've had to break as a husband is [00:25:00] to notice when I can feel that welling up within me that kind of that self-righteous pride that says, "I'm right. I just need this." And just instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, say, "How can I love her in this even though I could name a hundred reasons that I'm right factually, and I just need to set the record straight."

Instead, I can communicate to you in love and say, "I can see that you are hearing something, experiencing something that I need to be sympathetic to you and loving to you in this. Or instead, all this aside, am asking myself this: How can I love my wife well in that moment? Don't do that perfectly.

See the difference between pride and the humility that we're going to talk about later is this sense of I need to first and humbly before God. I'm going to answer to how I love my wife. I'm going to answer to God for that. I'm also going to answer to my wife because we're equal in our marriage of value, worth, and importance. We are both on the same plane here. She's my helper, yes, but in many ways I am serving her from underneath. And so that's a posture of humility. I don't have this perfected. I don't want it to sound like that. But that's what causes me to kind of break that pride.

Selena: I think there's a piece to it. I don't want to just say... and not to disqualify the Holy Spirit at all, because there's a piece of I need the Holy Spirit to empower me to be obedient to Christ, to God, to His word when it comes to loving my husband, submitting my own feelings and emotions that are not biblical or right in that moment.

However, for me, I have found that a lot of my growth spiritually, I guess, comes down to a decision. And I think identifying that decision as being obedient or disobedient to God, knowing that the Holy Spirit empowers me to be obedient, despite how I feel.

So I sometimes get really angry and heated about things occasionally in our marriage. And I started reading a book about... it's called I think dealing with this big problem or something. I can put it in the show notes or whatever. But it talks about just kind of the effects of anger on those around you. And I started looking at that, the Holy Spirit started convicting me, of course, in such good ways.

And then it just came down to that, that moment of like, "I'm heated. These are things I want to say. This is how I want to act." However-

Ryan: Oh, oh.

Selena: ...the Holy Spirit has said, God's word said, if I love God, then I'm not going to act this way. But I really, really want to act this way. But if the fruit of the Spirit is at work in me, how can I not respond differently? I have to respond with gentleness and patience and kindness and love. Like I have to.

Otherwise, I am denying Christ in my life. Which yes, we do when we sin, and God's grace covers us. But to willfully do that, over and over again causes me to question my own belief and the weight that I'm actually putting into who God says He is. Therefore, who am I? And how can I respond?

Ryan: There is, in calculus, what's called... in any sort of, I guess, mathematics, or statistics, there's what's called an inflection point. So if something is curving upward at a sharp curve, and if it's exponential is going to keep going and going to get more drastic? Well, the inflection point is the point at which that goes from being a concave curve. Or convex. However, you want to look at it. It changes now its orientation. So it goes from shooting upward even higher, and now it's tapering out over the top.

So what you just described is that I know that these feelings are real in this moment. And in my flesh, this will escalate kind of until it's just going to die out on its own. But in the spirit, that's when I can say, There's this inflection point that says, No, I am not a slave to the flesh. I am instead a slave to Christ. And I'm empowered and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And I need to make a decision as a mature Christian, as a mature disciple of Christ, as a mature husband, wife, mother, father, whatever.

And you take that moment and you change the inflection point. So now, instead of just sloping upward, it's now sloping and tapering off. And you begin to actually see better health in that area.

Selena: I just wanting to disenchant this, like, "Well, the Holy Spirit just takes me over and something happens." And it's like, well, no, that's not what I'm saying here.

Ryan: Well, yes, but also no. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Yes.

- Ryan:** I know what you mean. Good. So we've talked about pride puffs up, makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. It's self-sovereign. I mean, that makes us self-sovereign, that I answer to myself and myself alone-
- Selena:** Dangerous.
- Ryan:** ...and I just want to reiterate. We answer to God and we answer to one another. We are not islands unto ourselves. No matter what Western philosophy would have us believe,- [00:30:00]
- Selena:** Marriage covenant.
- Ryan:** ...I'm not self-actualized. I am part of a community and I'm one of God's children. I have to answer to Him. And then the final one is pride is self-seeking. It naturally leads to self-worship. This follows, right? Since I am both supreme and sovereign, it's appropriate for me to get what I want.
- Selena:** And to seek only that.
- Ryan:** Even if it means disregarding everything else, everyone else. So think of any time-
- Selena:** The world says, "Get those things." And then you get them and you're like, "Why is everyone broken and hating me around me?" Well, what do you think? You've engaged in the pride, you bought the lie. You've said, "I'm the only one that matters?" Well, you can't say those things and live those things out and expect everyone to be on board with you. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Yeah. I was actually reading an article and I don't know how... It's probably just clickbait. *[both chuckles]* But I think it was like-
- Selena:** Oh, no.
- Ryan:** forty or like some vast majority of percentage of couple, like 60% of couples or 70% of couples report having financial infidelity within the last six months or something. This is very common, very whatever... And I'm just thinking, "Really? What?"
- And then I was thinking, "What is financial infidelity?" As it turns out, it's things like making big purchases without telling your spouse or consulting with them first. Or having maybe money socked away somewhere that they don't know about that's just for you and for what you want to spend it on. Hidden bank accounts, hidden credit cards, financial infidelity

- Selena:** Those things are like symptoms of-
- Ryan:** That's what I'm saying. We talked about if we are sovereign and we are supreme, then it follows that it's appropriate. It's not just okay, but it's appropriate, it's right, it's right for me to get what I have coming to me because I'm the king and I deserve it. And you're only holding me back from what I really deserve and what I really want. So, therefore, you don't deserve to know. In fact, it's none of your business. How dare you? Do you see how the script completely flips?
- Selena:** It goes fast. It's a fast turn.
- Ryan:** Pride ruins everything. It is the Toby of marriage. *[Selena laughs]* It is the Toby. It ruins everything, makes everything not fun. So how do we get out of this rut that we're in? What is our hope? What is our hope in this? Selena, bring us home? *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Well, thankfully, we are not without hope. As you know, we have the gospel. We have the good news of the gospel. This is where we're talking about gospel-fueled humility. So is it Romans "while we were still sinners Christ died for us"? This is where we get to rightfully see ourselves.
- In Genesis, Adam and Eve commune with God. They were in the presence of God all the time. Sin came, broke that relationship. And then Christ came many, many years later, obviously and he died, he restored, made us right, in right standing. Nothing that we deserve. While we were still sinning. We are still. While we're still sinners, he died for us. How anti-pride is that as far as humility, as far as...
- I was really excited to talk about this part because... and maybe I'm going to get out of order here a little bit. But gospel-fueled humility versus just the unbeliever's version of humility.
- Ryan:** Yeah, that's interesting.
- Selena:** I think that the thing that makes it different is there's an eternal peace. And that would make anything different of the unbeliever versus a believer is this eternal peace of my confidence in my identity is in Christ. Therefore, who He is bears weight and determines who I am, and how I can then act towards my spouse. I don't have to be prideful. Because he's king, I don't have to.
- And so this gospel-fueled humility is one that trusts and kind of lives with eternity in mind. So that there and then versus just the temporary here and now. I think an unbeliever might just think, "Well, I'll just be humble and let

them have this. That should make me feel good." And it just ends there of giving up-

Ryan: Interesting.

Selena: It lands there. Okay, now I just move on to the next thing. Whereas this humility that is rooted in the Gospel understands it on many levels. I don't even think we fully understand the humility of Christ and how it fuels us.

Ryan: I would argue that true humility is impossible outside of the gospel. And you probably would say the same thing.

Selena: Probably.

Ryan: Here's how I would position that or at least posture myself to make that argument. *[Selena chuckles]* Is that you think of anyone who's... you know, thinking of others. And in doing so, whether it's altruism, you know, helping others or just thinking of their spouse or just trying to be a better husband, or whatever.

At the end of the day, I'm doing that because it makes me feel better because it makes me feel more [00:35:00] like a better husband. I'm checking the right boxes. And whatever my worldview is because remember this is without the gospel-

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: ...whatever my worldview is I'm saying that I'm doing the things that I... according to my morality, I'm virtuous person. Look at me. Look at how good I am. You might not say that. Look at these poor people, they need someone to serve them soup or whatever at the soup kitchen. Look at how good I am. And I can hear them say thank you. And I can get that little tiny bit of glory a little glimpse.

And I think at the end of the day, humility outside of the gospel becomes just another manipulation tactic. Just another way for me to use someone to my end. So if I'm being loving to you outside of the internal, the welling up from within, that experience that I've had with Christ, His radical grace, He not only died for my sin, but He gave me His rights, He imputed on unto me His righteousness so that I might stand before a holy, just God blameless-

Selena: Goodness.

Ryan: ...that from the inside now says I have to love my wife because I need to love God. Because what is the other op...?

Selena: There's no other option.

Ryan: There's no other option. What else am I to do as somebody who has experienced the saving grace of the eternal God? See, gospel-fueled humility always wells up from within. And notice it's not humiliation, I'm not just-

Selena: A doormat.

Ryan: I'm not just a doormat. I'm not just here now for anyone to use however they see fit. But instead, I am compelled now out of a sense of deep dignity, because of Christ, compelled now to love out of that. The story that always comes to mind, I don't have time for it, I'm sure I'll talk about it at some point in the near future, is Matthew 18, the parable of the unforgiving servant. That whole story of the guy... this is exactly what gospel-fueled humility is.

Remember this guy had a massive, insurmountable debt. In today's dollars, it's many, many millions of dollars. He goes to the king, king says, "Pay up." He says, "I have no money to pay." The king says, "All right, well, you're free to go. Your debt has been paid. Go, enjoy your freedom."

Now, the same guy who owed all that money then immediately went down the street to his neighbor who owed him basically the equivalent of like 20 bucks. Like, "Hey, give me my money." "I'm sorry, man. I don't have it. I can't pay you right now. Maybe just give me a few more days, I'll get the funds together." "Give me my money!" This is the guy that just had been forgiven millions and millions of dollars in debt. And now he's wringing the neck of somebody who owes him 20 bucks. And the king gets wind of this and says, "You wicked servant. You wicked, unforgiving servant, you now need to pay your debts."

So the humility that we have of being that servant, of being the one who has been forgiven now compels us to say, Of course, how can I hold your sin against you and God has not held my sin against me? Yes, you've maybe wronged me? Yes, as a husband or wife, I deserve better. I can say that objectively. But I also know that you're a sinner just like me. I also know that we're going to work together, and we're going to work through this and by God's grace, hand in hand. And I'm not going to stand over you throwing mud, so to speak, and I said, I'm going to get down with you. And I'm going to...

Selena: Well, it's this idea of like what you said in marriage. So the mutual respect. So no longer is one elevated above the other, lording it over the other, smashing

the other. But we are in a mutual respect because we have a right understanding of who God is, and therefore who we are and who we get to be. So if we understand that we are both created in the image of God.

I mean, contrast that with the pride of being puffed up, right? So instead of this, we are both valued. The same blood that covers him covers me. There's no difference. So even though we are different as husband and wife, we are both equal in value worth, and importance—and you did talk about that—in God's eyes and in the marriage relationship. And so contrast that with the pride of being self-sovereign, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So, now what I value, what I want, what I desire is no longer the end game. It's not even about what we desire together. It's about what does God desire for us in our marriage?

Ryan: That's why I just love Paul's vision for marriage that he gives us in both Colossians and Ephesians. He says, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives submit to your husbands as if unto the Lord."

He takes this biblical idea that we are both of equal value, worth, and importance and says, "By the way, you are underneath your Sovereign King who is Christ. Now husband's love. Come underneath your wife, and love her as a servant leader, just like Christ has loved the church. Die for her. Give your life for her. Sacrifice your desires for her. Do that daily." And then wife... what is it? [00:40:00] Submit. You go-

Selena: What is it? *[chuckles]*

Ryan: You are submitting in a way that's not just a doormat, but it's now out of this place of security of this place of feeling the love of God through Christ and through your husband is right ordering. Now there's this beautiful dance of mutual sacrifice, mutual generosity, mutual love that is just otherworldly.

Selena: Right. And pride has no place in that. Has no place.

Ryan: No place. Pride has no place in a godly marriage.

Selena: So the Gospel fueled humility causes us to thrive because it naturally just begins that mutual respect. So no longer can I hold your imperfections and your shortcomings against you and your sin because God hasn't done that to me. God has not held my sin against me. So again, what is my response? What can my only response be, but forgiveness?

And you might be sitting here wrestling with that: "How can I forgive? How can I move forward and pass this? I don't understand." And I would encourage you to pray, to lean into and seek the Lord through His Word, through prayer and communion with Him, through worship, and through your local community and your body of believers. And know God. Understand His love.

Because when we understand who He is, again, who He is and how He loved us, and how he didn't have to, only then can we allow this forgiveness to flow out and this humility to flow out and this grace to be extended.

Ryan: I love that you said "pray." Because I feel like if there is a silver bullet to be had, it's prayer in this area. In other words, aside from the gospel, aside from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, prayer is something that we cannot do with a posture of pride. At least not honestly.

And so if I contend that if you have a marriage that has a husband and a wife who are both constantly earnestly seeking the Lord in prayer and fighting for one another in prayer, they will have a very healthy marriage. Husband and wife both. Because it's possible for a wife to be a prayer warrior and a husband to be completely off the rails. We get those stories almost daily. The same is true for wives being off the rails and husbands contending. So it goes both ways.

Selena: It does.

Ryan: But we cannot pray with a posture of pride. We cannot. Because that very act itself is going to God saying, "I need you. I am not God, you are. Help me." I think that's the antidote if there is one to be had. And I think this is it. Pray.

Selena: Pray.

Ryan: Ask the Lord to imbue you with the confidence and the knowledge of being one who has been saved by Him. But now can live out that saving grace in a way that's tangible in your marriage.

Selena: And pride will keep our hearts hardened towards the things of God. Again, denying His existence, denying His promises for us, denying His commandments for us and His call, His instruction. But humility rooted in the Gospel, it should keep our heart soft.

Ryan: Soft hearts.

Selena: Our soft hearts, that, again, are just that result of experiencing God. So I think our just kind of encouragement to you would just be prayer and asking, saying, "God help us to seek humility towards one another. Help our marriage should be marked by mutual respect. Help us have soft hearts, to remain transparent with each other new levels."

And I think for a couple's conversation challenge, one would be, how can we embrace this idea of gospel-fueled humility in our marriage? And another, I mean, to contrast that might be to just first identify like, how is pride creeping in? How do we see pride creeping into our marriage and how we communicate or intimate life or our finances, our time, priorities, all of that? How do I see pride starting to creep in?

Ryan: And you mentioned, but I want to make them really clear, at least five areas of your marriage that you can be asking yourself: is pride creeping in? Intimacy, finances, communication, conflict, priorities. Those five areas are always going to have-

Selena: Like the pillars of the problems of marriage. *[both laughs]* Problem pillars.

Ryan: So yeah, that's a good question to ask yourself. I think that's it for today.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: All right. Let's pray. Lord, we thank You for the gospel. Thank you for loving us and humbling yourself to death, even death on a cross so that we might know you. Now, Lord, we humble ourselves before you and ask you to rid us of pride with our hearts of pride, with our marriages of pride.

Lord, I pray for the husband or the wife that are hearing this or watching this. That you would be we're at work in their heart, softening their heart, ridding their hearts of pride, showing them ways to love humbly as a result of how they've been loved in You. And Lord, may they see positive change in their marriage. [00:45:00] For your glory, for their good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast, Fierce Marriage show. *[both laughs]* Maybe we will start calling it show now.

Selena: This show.

Ryan: Welcome to this show. Anyway. So thanks for joining us. And we will see you again in seven days. Until then—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:11:00]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 16:18
 - Psalm 10:4
 - 1 John 2:15-17
 - Mark 7:20-23

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