

## HOW TO PRAY AS A COUPLE (WITH LESS AWKWARDNESS)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/how-to-pray-as-a-couple-with-less-awkwardness>

[00:00:00]

**Selena:** Praying as a couple can often feel super awkward. And I don't know if you struggle with it. I struggle with it.

**Ryan:** You struggle with it now?

**Selena:** No. Well, I think early on in our marriage, we struggled with it a lot more. And I think the struggles changed. I don't know. Sometimes it was like I didn't know what to say. You don't want to be like, God, I pray that my husband would finally hear what I'm trying to tell him.

**Ryan:** You're like sub texting your spouse in prayers, praying for things you want them to change in their life.

**Selena:** Yeah. So prayers are hard. a) It's a hard thing to understand. b) I think we can get into a rut like anything else. And we're like, "I'm just saying the same things over and over again. Does it even matter that I'm saying them?"

So in this episode today we want to talk about some of those struggles, and how we can overcome them through different methods maybe, but also just what a beautiful gift prayer is. So with that, we'll see you on the other side.

[00:00:51] <music>

**Ryan:** I tend to think that the reason couples struggle with prayer is because we have too small a view of God and too high a view of ourselves. And here's what I mean by that. Either we think we're going to pray and God will not work, we think we're going to pray and God does not want to work, or we just think that God maybe doesn't actually care. That's having a small view of God-

**Selena:** Or we think we're not praying enough.

**Ryan:** Oh, yeah.

**Selena:** Like we're the ones that actually-

**Ryan:** That's good. So, if we just prayed enough... well, I can't pray enough to make it happen. So I guess I'm not going to pray. after all. That's having a low view of God.

Having a high view of ourselves is that if I pray I'll actualize it, right? Or more subtly, I don't pray because I actually don't think I need God's help. If you've ever struggled with prayer, if you've ever felt awkward praying in your marriage, if you've ever felt like you run out of things to say, or you just you don't know how to kind of break that ice, then this episode is for you.

Because I will tell you, aside from God's word, aside from the work of the Holy Spirit, there's nothing more important and more life-changing in the life of a marriage, in the life of a couple than prayer, than praying together, praying separately for one another.

**Selena:** As a couple, we long for unity, we long for the spiritual unity, and we long for, of course, physical unity and intimacy. But the one way that I think we both agree on in terms of how we can spiritually be unified is through prayer.

I would put reading scripture right with that. But oftentimes, we can pray scripture, which we'll get into that shortly. But unity is one of those big, beautiful blessings of prayer.

**Ryan:** Wonderful. While we do that, make sure you rate and review this podcast, this video either on YouTube or in your podcasting app. That means the world to us. If you're not a subscriber, make sure you go ahead and subscribe.

This content, we're here to create this so that your marriage can hopefully, by the grace of God, flourish a little bit more so that your children will be the benefactors, the beneficiaries, I should say, of a much healthier couple, of much, much healthier mother, father, husband and wife. So that's why we're doing this. So make sure you subscribe so you don't miss anything.

We do appreciate you giving us the time it takes to listen to these episodes, to apply the principles in your life. That's why our promise to you is that if you're going to give us your attention, if you're going to give us your time, we're going to do our very best to present to you the biblical case for the various issues that we talk through in marriage, specifically on this show, the Fierce Marriage side of things, but also on the parenting side, which that's a Fierce Parenting podcast, Fierce Parenting channel... not channel but it's like a playlist that we do. Yeah, make sure you rate, review, like, subscribe, all that good stuff.

And then also Patreon. So if you want to partner with us, we would be honored and very grateful. This is how we support our families by God's grace. So go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). That will redirect you to a place where you can actually become a monthly partner with us or you can do a one-time thing. It's completely up to you.

We just ask two things: that you pray about it. And if God leads you, it's big IF, if God leads you to support, then you would go ahead and act on that leading by the Holy Spirit. So we'd be honored to have your partnership there.

**Selena:** All right. As we probably mentioned at the beginning, we are going to talk about what prayer is. Now, this is not going to be a huge, extensive definition, deep theological conversation because there are many, many minds, greater minds than ours, people that have come before us that have tried and have successfully in some form nailed down and defined what prayer is. However, it is still like anything of God beyond some of our own understanding I think this side of heaven, maybe forever, because God does bigger, greater, deeper, more purposeful things than we can even comprehend. So-

**Ryan:** Will there be praying in heaven?

**Selena:** I don't-

**Ryan:** No. We're going to be with God Himself.

**Selena:** Yeah. I was like, "Well,...?"

**Ryan:** If we're talking to God and you call that prayer, then yes.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** Lots of praying in heaven

**Selena:** So what is prayer? We're going to go through a biblical definition of that. And then by consequence, what is prayer not. Or so what is... [00:05:00] I don't know how to phrase that. What prayer is not, what's not prayer.

**Ryan:** What prayer is, what prayer isn't.

**Selena:** There it is.

**Ryan:** Yeah, there it is.

**Selena:** So smart.

**Ryan:** And smack. *[chuckles]*

**Selena:** And smack. So two parts: What is prayer? What is it not? What is prayer isn't? *[both laughs]* What prayer isn't. Number two, why do we struggle with prayer as a couple? We did mention some of those struggles. We're going to kind of

define those again because the answer to those struggles often helps us understand the struggles.

And then how then should we pray? So looking at Jesus' instruction and format. I feel like that's such a small word for what it actually is of Him showing us how to pray. And then some other resources to hopefully be helpful for you. So...

**Ryan:** First, what is prayer?

**Selena:** What is prayer?

**Ryan:** What is prayer? Our good buddy TK, Timmy Keller- *[Selena laughs]*

**Selena:** We do not know him.

**Ryan:** Timmy, if you're listening to this-

**Selena:** We do not know him.

**Ryan:** The [inaudible] Timmy. Timothy-

**Selena:** No disrespecting, you mean?

**Ryan:** Timothy Keller. *[laughs]*

**Selena:** Timothy. So yeah, of course, it follows we've been reading Tim Keller's book on prayer. And he defined it... So there's a little bit more to this picture, but he says, "We can define prayer as a personal communicative response to the knowledge of God."

**Ryan:** Let's talk about that a little bit.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** Personal meaning that it's I myself as an individual, as a person responding to the knowledge of God in a communicative way, in communicating. So how-

**Selena:** Which is good because I tried to define prayer as verbal, and I was like, "Well, you can pray in your head, though. Or you could write. So it's not really verbal, but it's communicative. Of course. When you're Tim Keller-

**Ryan:** Selena loves to pray through interpretive dance. That's like Selena's favorite mode of prayer.

**Selena:** How dare you reveal that to everyone here?

**Ryan:** It's really awkward when I walk in and she's praying. *[laughs]*

**Selena:** Well, it's my prayer closet, so do what you want. *[Ryan laughs]*

**Ryan:** Communicative. And I love what he said. It's in response to knowing God. Now, here's the big question. How do we know God? And there's a thousand answers to this question. And there's only really one good answer. And that's through His Word.

And here's why I say through His Word. General revelation we see that in Romans 1. And is that we know by virtue of how God made us, how He made creation, if we didn't have scripture, if we didn't have Jesus Christ, we would know somewhere, somehow there is something out there. *[Selena chuckles]* Okay?

And that's why you have all the pagan kind of worship of, you know, ancient times and even current pagan worship, because we know in our guts like there's something more to life. But the problem is, is that we don't know who God is until He does something different than just general revelation. He has to reveal Himself in a special way to us.

And the way that God has chosen to reveal Himself is through His word or logos. Without having God's Word, we don't know who God is. God's Word through scripture, and God's Word through Christ. God's word has Christ. In other words, God's decree is special revelation.

So when we pray, at the very root, our prayer is a response to that revealing of God's character to our human hearts and speaking into our human situation.

**Selena:** Right. And we distill what prayer is down. There's two, which you've already mentioned one. There's two sort of categories, I guess. You could put them in from our studies. Of course, there's many more. But for the sake of this conversation, prayer is both an instinctual... a spiritual, I'd say, and instinctual response to the revealed Word of God. But it's also a gift from God.

**Ryan:** So you had a really good analogy before this. You said prayers are like swimming. Can you explain that a little bit? *[Selena chuckles]*

**Selena:** I didn't think it was that great.

- Ryan:** I thought it was great.
- Selena:** But you thought it was great. Prayer-
- Ryan:** I'll paint this picture. Have you ever had a little dog and you hold a little dog over water? What does the little dog do?
- Selena:** It starts paddling. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** It starts paddling.
- Selena:** We have a little dog, we've held him over water. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** And that's kind of like what prayer is. When you get thrown into a body of water, what do you do as a human? You start to swim. So prayers a little bit like that. So what did you mean by that?
- Selena:** Again, it's much more of an instinctual response. So as a believer, we can't not... that's a double negative. So we almost have to be praying. If we're a true believer, if God has done the work, we have to.
- Ryan:** Almost?
- Selena:** Almost. Sorry. *[Ryan laughs]* That was a little-
- Ryan:** No, we have to be praying.
- Selena:** We have to be praying.
- Ryan:** Because if you stop swimming... This is why I love that analogy. Because if someone pushes you in the water, you have to swim or you sink.
- Selena:** Right. And you're taken wherever the current takes you unless you are actively engaging in swimming and on a path to something else. Current is strong. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** That's very similar to the picture that Jesus paints for us around the idea of prayer in Matthew 5, the Beatitudes and reliance and trust in God, and the priority of glorifying God. And how he, in Matthew 6, now tells us how to pray. It's very [00:10:00] parallel with the idea of listen, if I don't... In Matthew 5, he's going through the beatitudes, he says, "Don't be anxious." Right?
- So what's the response to our human-like propensity for anxiousness? We need to trust God. How do we trust God? We give over ourselves to Him

through prayer. He says, "Don't worry about money." He say, "Don't worry about-

**Selena:** What you'll eat, what you'll wear.

**Ryan:** Yeah. And when you fast, like don't fast out in the open. Instead fast in the secret essentially. What is that a reflection? That's a reflection of I trust that even if nobody else sees this, God does. I can trust Him.

And so our sinking tendency is to want to be anxious. If we stop giving it up to God, we want to be anxious, we want to share the burdens ourselves, we want to seek approval anywhere else, then it will always inevitably lead to our death. But when we pray, it's as if we're swimming and we're realizing that I have to trust God in an ongoing way.

**Selena:** Well, and I think of, you know, friends who were swimmers. They didn't naturally just like know the butterfly stroke, right? Like I still can't do that. I look like a flopping fish. And I was always like, "Man, it looks so cool. And I wish I could do that."

**Ryan:** You can do it.

**Selena:** I can do it right with more practice, with better coaching. I don't know if this analogy goes this far. But I think that we can understand prayer at a deeper level if we also dig into knowing God and understanding, again, what prayer is as a response, and then secondly, as a gift.

You know, when we respond to God's gift of salvation, we can then converse with Him and know Him. Like you said, through scripture, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can now cry Abba Father. So he has now become our Father. We are not strangers to Him anymore. We are His children adopted in through Christ's sacrifice and atonement.

Look at the Old Testament. This was not the case. Not everyone had free access to talk to God whenever they wanted to, whenever they felt like it, whenever there was a small inclination. You could be stoned for such actions.

When you think of how far we've come and how there used to be a tabernacle, and the Levites and the priests were the only ones that could. They had to go through all these ceremonial cleansings and whatnot to even just enter in. And not even to the Holy of Holies, but just enter into the tabernacle, in the tent of God's presence.

And now you and I get to sit here and talk to God anywhere at any time, freely, without fear, with full confidence. We can, as Hebrews says, approach the throne with full confidence to interact with the king and creator of the universe. I think that if we're frustrated and struggling with prayer, then we need to understand that our heart is not probably oriented in the right direction or the right way.

**Ryan:** Well said. Well said. And again, to go back to the beginning where we said, typically if we're struggling in this, it's because we have a low view of God and we have a high view of ourselves. And that can go both ways. We can think, just to reiterate, we don't... I don't pray because I don't need God. That's one way I have a high view of myself. But I also don't pray because I feel like if I don't pray right, that my mediator, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit in me who's showing me how to pray, I know more than Him, I know more than Jesus. That's why I can't pray because if I don't do it right, then somehow I'm going to dictate God's response to me. That's a high view of self.

**Selena:** That's a high view of self and a low view of God. And that's not what we're saying you should do obviously.

**Ryan:** Yes. So prayer is instinctual. You said it's in response to the revelation of God.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** And then secondly, the second thing you said was prayer is a gift. I love that.

**Selena:** So looking in contrast of what prayer isn't, it is not incantations, or recitations to call on some higher power to give you what you want. It's not this genie in a bottle-type relationship or conversation. And you can probably see why that's problematic, right? Because you're assuming, again, your place rather than actually knowing it, you're assuming that if you say something, then something will happen. I mean, that's taking a very, very high view of self, a lot of pride.

**Ryan:** I want to read a scripture real fast.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** I want to go back to Matthew 6, specifically, where Jesus is talking about "here's how to pray," he says it explicitly, "When you pray, don't do this, but do this." And He has two things not to do. And what you said the incantations piece really does... It sounds funny kind of in our Western ears. Like incantations. What we mean by that is sometimes we feel like if we just say

things enough, we just say things the right way, with the right music, with the right mood, with the right-

**Selena:** Feelings.

**Ryan:** ...emotions, then the prayer must be getting through. Because if I don't do those things then it's getting lost. Like somehow it's getting lost on its way up to heaven, it's getting intercepted by the radio waves by the satellites, and it's just not getting there. So I need to pray harder, push harder.

And Jesus explicitly speaks against this. This isn't the first thing He speaks against. I'll go back to that next. But this is the second thing He says. "And when you pray, do not heap up, heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do..." Remember the Gentiles were the non-Jews. They were effectively the pagans of the ancient world. [00:15:00] "...like the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words."

When you say incantations, that's what I think. So I feel like that's especially rooted in pride. Because we feel like if we just turn the right knobs, if we make the levels look just right and we say the right things, we do it enough... that's effectively... it's almost like casting a spell.

**Selena:** Yeah. And what a good lie for the devil to say, "You know what? It really is up to you. So if you could just get it right, I mean, if you just figure it out, if you read the right books, say the right things, do all the things, then you'll get what you want."

**Ryan:** And that's a high view of self because-

**Selena:** High view of self.

**Ryan:** ...think of like Harry Potter, think of any sort of modern, you know, wizardry kind of magic and all kind of stuff. It's always like, do you say the right things with the right kind of buy in with the heart? Effectively that's what magic and spells is, okay?

And here's what Jesus says after that. He says, "Don't do the things as the Gentiles do, don't pray like Gentiles for they think they will be heard for their many words." And he says this. "Do not be like them..." High view of God, "for your Father in heaven knows what you need before you ask Him."

**Selena:** That's so good.

**Ryan:** And then he goes on and gives us the Lord's Prayer.

**Selena:** I love that you see the father, the child relationship, it's not just... You know that God your King, your... you know, it's a familial relationship. And He knows. So I have to know that He knows. Right?

**Ryan:** Right. So if you have a high view of God, you say, "God, you actually already know what I'm going to pray. But still you're asking me, you're telling me to pray as if I know that you know."

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** See how that changes our whole orientation. Like when you're going to God in prayer, you're not somehow like revealing knowledge to him. Like, God, I sinned against you. Hope you didn't see it, but I'm telling you right now because I'm confessing to you."

**Selena:** "I just want to come clean."

**Ryan:** He already knows.

**Selena:** Right. He doesn't tell us to tell Him because He doesn't know. He tells us to tell Him because we need to know.

**Ryan:** Because at its core prayer is about orienting our hearts and aligning our hearts toward and with the living true God. That's the first thing that He does. The first one is we don't pray with many words. Okay. That's what Jesus says. And the other one is-

**Selena:** I would say along with that is prayer is not just event sesh either. And some people would argue this, like, "Well, can I just go to God and just be like, 'God, these are all the things I'm struggling with and dah, dah, dah.'" And I would say that you can. I believe that you can write out what your anxieties are, what your struggles are, what your frustrations are-

**Ryan:** He does say cast your cares on Him.

**Selena:** Cast your cares on Him. However, with the knowledge knowing that He cares for you. So it's not just, "I'm saying all these things and venting, and then I'm out." We need to stop and sit at the feet of Jesus.

**Ryan:** It's always because that... what you just described is I'm going to God, not just-

**Selena:** I'm going to God for me

- Ryan:** ...to throw it against the wall and just walk away. But instead, I'm going to God to bring these things to Him. You don't just bring them to Him and then take them back. You bring them to Him and you say, "God, what am I to do with this? What would you have me do with this?"
- Selena:** Lay them at the altar, lay them at the cross.
- Ryan:** "Can you take from me those things which I cannot control? I'm going to trust you with those things."
- Selena:** "And leave me in the things that you've given me agency over."
- Ryan:** Yeah. So that's the first piece. Don't pray like the pagans who heap up many words. And then the other piece was don't pray like the Pharisees who think that by praying these magnificent prayers, these loud prayers, these out in the open prayers that they'll somehow be more pious, right? What does that do? That's about our glory. That's all about me taking some glory away.
- If you ever noticed, like when people Christians get in like a circle and start praying, it's weird how they talk one way when they're talking to you, and then they talk a completely different way when they're praying to God. It's a weird cultural sort of thing. But like they're always repeating God's name or just, just, just... *[Selena laughs]* It's very wordy, it's very different than it would be if they were just having a conversation with you. And that's the wordiness. But also out in the open is like why do you change that when you're with us?
- Selena:** It's a heart indication too of, like you said, trust and glory. In Tim Keller's book, he was talking about how your prayer or prayers of people around you often reveal your prayer, your lack of prayer in your own private life. And so I think that is a very interesting point.
- Ryan:** So just to close it up, it just says, "And when you pray you must not be like the hypocrites for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen by others." Okay, so there are two orientations there. Jesus' contrasting and says, they either pray to be seen like the hypocrites, or they pray to make God hear like the pagans. And Jesus is saying, No, we pray in secret and we pray to trust God more and more and to glorify God more.
- Selena:** So we're going to get into the three main struggles, which we've already kind of touched on because at its root we struggle with prayer, like you said because we think too highly of ourselves, too little of God. But everything we see that Jesus is laying out in Matthew 5 and 6 is pointing us towards the opposite of having a high view of God and a smaller view or more I think

sobering [00:20:00] and just humble view of ourselves. And that is a very relieving-

**Ryan:** And freeing.

**Selena:** Yes, a freeing, relieving place to be. So the three main phrases I think we say when we struggle with prayer is we don't think we need prayer, we don't want to pray, or we don't know how to pray. So it's kind of a method question rather than maybe a heart issue.

So when we say we don't think we need to pray, I think we've harped on this quite a bit, we don't pray because we don't think we need to, we have too much pride in our own abilities. I mean, just think about the times when you pray the most. That's when you're in the most need or you feel like you're in the most need, right?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** The other side of this I think that can maybe just be like demoralizing when you hear 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." I remember hearing that as a kid and being like, "I have to pray all day without stopping? How do you even do that?" I don't understand what that means."

**Ryan:** Interesting.

**Selena:** And so it sounds like an impossible task that's been heaped onto you. And so you're just like, "I don't really need to do that. Like I can just get along with my day and my life, my marriage without God's help in this area. I'll throw up a prayer when I get desperate."

Secondly, we don't want to pray. So we were talking about how it can feel really awkward to pray with your spouse, especially if it's not something that's familiar to your relationship. How can we overcome this? It just feels, you know, clumsy and weird, and I don't really know what to do. We don't think, you know, again, we struggle with does it actually work? I don't know. I feel like maybe we say the same things over and over again. This feels kind of stupid, right? Just really circular.

**Ryan:** When you're praying through your thinking.

**Selena:** I would just say, as like basic instruction, typically when we're praying as a couple, like we sit together, we hold each other's hands, we close our eyes, and we pray. And one of us prays, and then the other one can close or we can keep praying back and forth.

Maybe we pray about a specific thing. Maybe we're praying for a certain part of our relationship, or maybe there's something externally happening outside of our family that has been just a weight on us, works been hard, the kids are extra stressful, there's a lot happening in the season. How can we manage and love them?

Well, again, sitting face to face, hands held, eyes closed. Not because that is the format or way that you're supposed to pray, but it's eliminating distractions and it's also unifying?

**Ryan:** Yeah. Many husbands talk about praying as an awkward experience. And here's my really blatant encouragement to you. If you feel awkward during prayer, it's probably because on some level you don't actually think God is there and listening, you're not talking to Him. You're paying more attention to how you sound to yourself, how you sound to people around you, your spouse, or maybe anyone else who you could be within earshot.

And I think by recognizing that prayer isn't just some mystical thing. It's a command. We're called to pray, and that God is real. When the focus is on ourselves, that's when it feels awkward. So my encouragement to you is take your eyes off yourself. Husband, wife, take your eyes off yourself when you're praying because you're not talking to your spouse-

**Selena:** Or yourself. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** Or you're not talking to yourself. You're talking to the living God. And if that's hard to wrap your head around that then I would encourage you to pray, God, help me. Help me understand the truth and the power of praying to you and the opportunity here to know you. I think that's the first step. So awkwardness is usually the biggest-

**Selena:** It's the biggest hurdle.

**Ryan:** ...hurdle that we hear couples articulate. Yeah.

**Selena:** So getting into the next step and the struggle of why we don't pray, often we feel like we don't know how to pray. We're going to go through quickly Matthew 6 about... and you touched a lot on it, of how you should pray, when you should pray, and why you should and can pray the way Jesus lays it out for us. And then we're going to kind of talk through a few supplemental resources that might be helpful for you on this journey of prayer.

Also, side note on that prayer is a journey. It does often start as feeling more dutiful rather than delightful, I guess it will say. But you as it becomes a discipline and as you push through that kind of dutiful season, there is this delight to be had and the discipline will definitely bear fruit. There's a lot of Ds in there. So...

**Ryan:** Yeah, okay. So how to tangibly pray. Now, are you talking about as an individual or as a couple?

**Selena:** I think it can be applied to both. And maybe you can give examples, I don't know.

**Ryan:** One of the things that I really want to make very clear is that prayer is a dialogue. You said it early on, it's response to God's word. Well, He's initiating. That's what I love about prayer. He's initiating the conversation. He's not up in heaven like doing the chores, minding His own business, and wondering, "I wonder when Ryan's going to call."

**Selena:** Chores of heaven. What are those? *[laughs]*

**Ryan:** "I wonder when Selena is going to... you know, [00:25:00] she has tal..." He's initiating always.

**Selena:** So good.

**Ryan:** And so we are responding to Him. And so the way we respond to God is in reading His word and we pray through scriptures. We talk about that a lot at length in our prayer books. 40 Prayers.com. Check those out if you want some really tangible teaching that goes beyond this.

So if I'm stuck, what I've tried to do is I'll start with the Lord's Prayer. And that's because I just think to myself, "Jesus said when you pray, pray like this." I'm like, "All right, well, I don't know how to pray so I'll pray like he said." And so you go, Our Father in heaven, Holy use your name. And what's He doing there is He's automatically setting Himself apart in station and in His own nature.

**Selena:** Or he's orienting who He is, who we are and God is.

**Ryan:** Yes. He is Father, authority, but loving authority, familial authority. Okay? So there's a level of respect there, but also level of intimacy. Our Father. Where is He? He's in heaven. He's not here. He's above it. Right? He's set apart in station and in His very nature.

Holy is Your Name. Hallowed be your name, right? That's the ways different translations say it. Holy means set apart. It doesn't mean good. It means set apart, different, perfect.

**Selena:** So good.

**Ryan:** And so He's set apart in both station and in nature. Our Father who is in heaven, Holy is your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. See, I'm just going down Matthew 6.

**Selena:** Your kingdom, not my kingdom, not my will be done. Yours, God. And if mine should align with that praise be to you that you've transformed my heart and my heart's desires to be yours, right?

**Ryan:** Yeah. So He's setting himself apart both in priority and in power. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in on earth as it is in heaven. And only you can make that happen.

**Selena:** So good.

**Ryan:** I can't say, "Lord, I'm making your kingdom come here on earth. Just relax." No. It's like, yes, that needs to happen and you need to make it happen because only you are king. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. What is that?

**Selena:** Sustainer and recognizing Him as our source.

**Ryan:** Yeah, setting him apart as our provider. If it weren't for Him providing, there's not a piece of land I can work hard enough that would provide my [inaudible].

**Selena:** Would you say apart and above?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Apart and above.

**Ryan:** I mean, he's done that at the-

**Selena:** Our Father in heaven-

**Ryan:** Holy is Your name.

**Selena:** And a provider usually is someone who's above the person they're providing for usually, right?

**Selena:** Give us this day our daily bread. He is of course looking back into the Exodus when they were they were given the bread from heaven as the sovereign provision. It was each day. That bread was only good for the day in which it was given. You couldn't stockpile it, which meant they had to go back and trust Him every day for that bread.

**Selena:** So good. *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** So give us our daily bread.

**Selena:** I just wanted to pause right there really quickly. Give us this day our daily. Trusting God in the middle of the struggles that we're facing in our marriage. For a spouse that is not following the Lord, for a spouse who has been given over to addiction or infidelity, the troubles, and the struggles that you're facing, and that you feel like you're in the hot, fiery furnace, Jesus is our bread. God gives us sustenance for the day. We must go to Him. We must go to Him both in Scripture and in prayer.

**Ryan:** Yeah. And Jesus even mentioned the manna back in Matthew 3, I believe. It's one of the first things He said was the devil was tempting him. He said, "Make this food for yourself." And Jesus said, "No, man does not live on bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It's Matthew 4:4. Unbelievable this revelation. And He Himself is the bread. Now, giving Himself daily, in a daily way to us.

And then finally, he says, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." So he's setting himself apart as our leader. Lord, lead me in the path that is holly. Tell me where to go. Help me avoid the pitfalls. I am prone to sinking in this water. Help me float. Lead me to life. He's set apart as our leader.

People are going to like this, but as our controller, as the sovereign, He's the one with control over everything. Now He doesn't control us like puppets on strings. That's not what I'm saying. But give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. He is sovereign. He is good. He's our leader. He is sovereign. He is our Father. And so going to the Lord's Prayer I think is really helpful. Tangible thing for couples to do together. Now-

**Selena:** And doing this in private, remembering the Pharisees, remembering Jesus said, This is how you should pray, go... And when you're fasting, go away, go away. Trusting again that your efforts in this area are being seen by the one [00:30:00] who it matters to be seen by.

**Ryan:** And that's the trust component. There is a really strong connection to be made. Maybe we can talk about this more, but we're running out of time. Look at how Jesus shows us how to pray in the first half of Matthew. There's a very strong connection between prayer and forgiveness, us forgiving others. Jesus at one point says-

**Selena:** That is interesting.

**Ryan:** ...when you pray-

**Selena:** Sorry.

**Ryan:** ...forgive those who have sinned against you so that your Father in heaven might forgive your sins of you.

**Selena:** And the fact that forgiveness is a part of how you should pray. It's not just give us. Like provide for us. Lord, we worship you. Amen. It says, "Forgive us that we may forgive others."

Again, as believers, our lives are marked by how we love one another. We can't love each other well without forgiveness being a part of the equation, especially as a married couple, because there will be offense, there will be problems, there will be struggles, there will be frustrations with each other. And if I can't forgive, my heart will continually be hardened as stone and I will need the King, the Rock to come in and crush and give me that heart of flesh.

**Ryan:** And can we just grasp for a moment the audacity of a child who is sinned against and holds that sin against their sibling, and then sins against us, and now is asking us to forgive them. Say, "I'd love to forgive you but you're holding that sin against your sibling." The audacity. We see that in Matthew 18, the parable of the unforgiving servant. And that always results poorly in the person who doesn't forgive. So forgiveness is strongly correlated with our prayer life.

**Selena:** Right. So don't let your lack of understanding on how to pray keep you from praying as a couple. Just a few quick supplemental resources we'd want to go through first is Donald Whitney's book, "Praying the Bible." It's a smaller book. I love the size of his book. Super helpful, easy to read, gets right to the point of how you can pray through Scripture.

Prayer, again, can feel circular, can feel dry. But when you go to Scripture and you can start in the Psalms because they're very poetic, they're very hymn-like, they lend themselves to being expressive and can help reorient your own

heart because David the writer of Psalms, he was reorienting his own heart during war, during peace, during internal struggles all the time. So it's a good place to start. And there's a lot of instruction on how to pray. He starts with Psalm 23. As the deer pants for the water, right?

**Ryan:** Isn't that the Lord is my shepherd?

**Selena:** That's the one. There's deer and shepherd, sorry. That's my favorite song and I can never remember.

**Ryan:** Shepherds don't watch over deer though. *[both laughs]* Some shepherds maybe. I'm not very good at it. *[both laughs]*

**Selena:** It doesn't really make sense.

**Ryan:** Terrible flock in... It's very nomadic.

**Selena:** Oh my goodness.

**Ryan:** That's interesting. Yeah.

**Selena:** So the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Praying that scripture and focusing on God is my shepherd. So what does that mean? I shall not want. When do I want? Why do I want? Lord help form my desires, right. And so stepping through each of those.

He says, Just keep praying until you either run out of Psalms or run out of time. And before you know it, you know, time is just passing you by and you're engaged in this conversation with the Living Word.

**Ryan:** Two more resources. "Prayer" by Timothy Keller. We mentioned that earlier. Incredible book. It's a little more dense, it's longer, but it's good. We also have our books 40 Prayers. That's specifically for husbands, for wives to pray prayers. The book that I wrote is as if I'm praying over my wife, as if you're a husband praying over your wife, and vice versa for Selena's book that she wrote.

**Selena:** I would say it's a good devotional type format. It's 40prayers, one prayer each day, takes on a certain theme. One you like to do is like head to toe. The other I like to pray for his heart and his mind, God, and maybe his eyes. Like whatever he sees, Lord, I pray that he would be honoring in that and honor me in that. And that the battles that he faces that you would give him strength.

So there's a lot of different themes. There's blank pages to be able to write those prayers out in that book. And something neat, I think, is that you can give those books to each other and share them and see how you've been praying for one another.

**Ryan:** Yeah, with the journaling pages. A final thing I wanted to mention is as you're learning how to pray, remembering that it's a dialogue that's ongoing. So you're responding to scripture but Scripture also says that the Holy Spirit will tell you what to pray for. And so often we pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, Amen. We're done. Peace. I'm out. Like I said my prayer, I'm done. Can you imagine talking to your spouse that way? *[Selena chuckles]* Like one way conversations all the time.

**Selena:** That's what I do. *[laughing]* I'm just kidding

**Ryan:** It's true.

**Selena:** Because I have too many conversations and he gets tired of listening. It's true. *[both chuckles]* It's okay. Saying *[00:35:00]* facts, not an offense.

**Ryan:** But a healthy conversation is always going to have speaking and responding, speaking and responding, responding, speaking. And so prayer never gets boring when you start asking God what He has to say. God, who do you want me to pray for right now? And all I do is I just think who's dropped right into my guts right that moment. It could be a friend, it could be relative, it could be a situation, it could be a certain burden I didn't realize, I hadn't articulated in my own heart I can now give it up to him. That's an amazing thing. If you just breathe and give God the chance.

And of course, if God in your mind is telling you things that are counter scriptural, that's not God. That's something else. That's your mind. That's the enemy. That's how you can begin to discern when God is actually speaking to you when it aligns with scripture, when it's not contradictory.

**Selena:** One last thing is that prayer, I think, is also a means of breaking the ice. If you guys haven't been praying with one another, or you're kind of trying to reenter that place, you can just ask each other, "Hey, how can I be praying for you? Or can I give you prayer request?"

Sometimes it's easy to just kind of talk about that and then you can go and pray to the Lord. And then you guys can even come together and pray together about those things. I think it's always the big open up my heart, here's what's inside, here are all my prayer requests, all my needs. Everything that is

consuming my heart, my mind, my soul, my focus is just usually in that "How can I pray for you?"

**Ryan:** And why is that so disarming? I think it's disarming because it's orienting our hearts now as a couple. I'm not us. I'm not you. I'm not me. Instead, how can I be going to God for you? Because He's the one that we are oriented toward. That's totally disarming. That changes the whole dynamic.

And even if you have a spouse or husband or wife who their heart is hard, if you just genuinely sincerely ask, "I love you. How can I be praying for you?" it's almost always going to start cracking that hard shell around their heart. God is gracious. He's the one that does the heart change. I think we're contending here that He uses our prayers, and even go into one another asking about praying as a means by which he softens heart hearts.

**Selena:** So a little encouragement. Prayer is again, both a gift and a joyful duty. It's a journey that often begins with duty, but can end in delight. Be diligent, faithful with your own prayer life, your private and your secret prayer life, and also with your spouse.

And I think a couple's conversation challenge would be to get and begin the 40 Prayers book set that we have.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** It's just a great place to start. You want to pray?

**Ryan:** You write books because you hope people read them. So we're going to just shameless plug 40prayers.com. Check those out. Yeah, I'll pray us out.

**Selena:** Speaking of the prayer.

**Ryan:** Lord, we thank you for the gift it is to know you and to pray to You. I pray for the couples who are wanting to grow in this area. That you would help them, show them where to start. Give them the courage to do so. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, this episode of Fierce Marriage is—

**Selena:** In the can.

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

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

### PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:10:00]**
  - Referenced Scripture:
    - Matthew 5
  
- **[00:23:42]**
  - Referenced Scripture:
    - Matthew 6
  
- **[00:28:27]**
  - Referenced Scripture:
    - Matthew 4:4
  
- **[00:31:46]**
  - Referenced Books:
    - [Praying the Bible](#), Donald Whitney
    - [Prayer](#), Timothy Keller
    - [40 Prayers](#), Ryan, Selena

### FIERCE MARRIAGE RESOURCES

**Main Site:** <https://fiercemarriage.com/>

**Shop:** <https://shop.fiercemarriage.com/>

**Patreon:** <https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage>

**Podcast:** <https://fiercemarriage.com/podcast>

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/fiercemarriage>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/fiercemarriage>

**Instagram:** <https://instagram.com/fiercemarriage>

**Facebook:** <https://facebook.com/fiercemarriage>

**Pinterest:** <https://pinterest.com/fiercemarriage>

**Ask Us Anything:** <https://fiercemarriage.com/ask>