

SHOULD WE LIVE TOGETHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED?

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[00:00:00]

Selena: Should we live together before we get married?

Ryan: Should we live together? Is that what you're asking? *[both chuckles]*

Selena: People are asking this question. As Christians, I think we know the answer to that. But-

Ryan: Do we though?

Selena: Do we though? Because it seems like there's a lot of believers out there that are not living the way God would advise and instruct and command.

Ryan: So we are here, the Fredericks, Fierce Marriage to talk through this, to clarify if you've had these questions of is cohabitation okay? Why or why not? What does the Bible have to say if we choose to cohabit as a couple? Not us, obviously, because we're married. So we are cohabiting as a married couple and it's awesome.

But if you're not married, should you cohabit? What are the implications of that? And what are the implications of the various biblical texts that talk about the pressing issues that have to do with cohabitation? So we'll talk about all that and more on the other side.

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Selena: When we were talking about that, where you said, "Is it though?" when you asked my question, I just thought of Eve and the garden. And the enemy is just like, "Did God really say that?" It's like we ask ourselves that when we're asking hard questions about living together before we're married, which we'll define. I mean, it's basically having sex, living together, pretending you're married. So if you're in that kind of scenario, then we're here to talk to you about that.

Ryan: Yeah, lovingly but also truthfully. Before we go there, before we do that, as always we want to remind you, if you haven't yet, please do leave a rating and a review on this podcast episode if you're listening. If you're watching it, go ahead and subscribe. If we've earned it. I think we have. If we haven't-

Selena: Just subscribe.

Ryan: ...we will. Subscribe and leave a comment. If you have a question, it doesn't have to be related directly to this video, but leave a comment with your question there. And that gives us an idea of how we can serve you better. Those are some of the easiest ways you can support this content, this channel, the Fredericks, this work that God has placed on our hearts to do.

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Selena: So, a little map, a little direction of where we're going today. We're going to answer some questions about cohabiting. Why do believers and unbelievers cohabit? I think the reasons are kind of the same. Should Christians live together before they're married? We're going to investigate that a little bit.

We're going to talk about some statistics and the truth behind cohabitation and if it actually functions the way people are hoping it will, and why or why not. And then biblically speaking, again, what does scripture say and how are we living in obedience to God's word?

Ryan: So, first big question, what is cohabitation? My first question is, is it cohabiting or cohabitating? That's my first big question. I think it's cohabiting.

Selena: Cohabiting. We say cohabi... I can't say it.

Ryan: As a verb, it's cohabiting. As a noun, I think it's cohabitation.

Selena: Cohabit. If you are not married and you're living together and you're having sex, that's what we're talking about.

Ryan: That's what we're defining as cohabiting or cohabitation.

Selena: That's what the dictionary defines it.

Ryan: Let's expound on that. I can picture maybe friends. When we were in dating and getting married age, it was part of the kind of dialogue that we were having with friends where a couple could be dating and maybe they find it pragmatic to move in together.

And if they're calling themselves a Christian couple, then obviously, the conviction is you probably shouldn't be having... not probably. You shouldn't be having sex before you're married. We're going to talk about that a little bit later—what the Bible has to say about that premarital sex. And that's not a mystery to us. We do have an answer from scripture on that.

So as a Christian, that would be the challenge. And so they would say, "Well, we're not going to sleep together. We're just going to live together."

Selena: Or they would say we're engaged so we're pretty much married.

Ryan: That's probably more common. So they kind of just jumped the gun, then they'd start playing a household right before they've actually made that covenant to one another.

Selena: And it begs the question like, does it really affect your marriage? If you're like, "Well, we've already committed, we're engaged, we're just waiting a few months, why does that even matter?" And there's something to be said, I think, about anticipation. I mean, we talked about that in conversations about sex. It's married sex when you're married.

Ryan: So cohabitation as the dictionary defines it—you looked this up—is you're not just living together, you're living together as a sexual couple. You're having sex. Now to speak to this other kind of, well, what if we're not having sex as Christians, but we just decide to do the pragmatic thing? [00:05:00] There's not a biblical case that says a man and a woman can't live platonically in the same house.

Selena: If you're dating, then there's going to be serious temptation. But if it's just like-

Ryan: There is a biblical case for avoiding unnecessary temptation and not putting yourself in a place to sin. I think there's biblical cases to be made around that. There's also I think a pragmatic case to be made around... There's more to a relationship than just having sex. So you can act like we're having this relationship that is covenantal but it's not covenantal yet because you haven't stepped into the role of a husband or a wife.

Selena: You haven't made the covenant.

Ryan: So why are you acting like your husband? You're not one yet. Living together to me is there's a strong, pragmatic case to be made. That living together is a function that flows out of being married.

Selena: I think that's probably one of the base arguments. But then that's the same argument that can be used to just get out of it too. Like, "Well, you're not my husband, so we don't have to stay together." So the door is wide open for no commitment really.

Ryan: We've asked this question and provided an answer. What is cohabitation? What does it actually defined as? Now we want to ask this question. Why do

Christians or believers choose to cohabitate? Why do they choose it? Most of the arguments around it are going to be pragmatic. They're not going to be found in Scripture. They're not principled by nature. They're all going to come out of just practical reasoning.

The first one is they just kind of slide into it.

Selena: Yeah, it's just kind of that next step of, well, we've been in a relationship for a while, so should we move in together? I guess that's the next step. And culture and entertainment, they just paint this picture of "this is what you do next." Obviously, it's not-

Ryan: And a guy might feel pressure from his girlfriend to say she wants to know that he's committed. He hasn't given her any indication that he's actually committed. And so it's like, Well, I don't want to propose because for whatever reason some guys are just cowards like that. I'm sorry that's the word that comes to mind. If you love this girl and you want to commit your life to her, ask her to marry you. Don't be a coward. Do the right thing.

But they want to express commitment without actually expressing commitment. So they'll say, "All right, we can move in together." Unfortunately, most of the time it's not even you're sharing a lease. Like he'll move in with her or she'll move in with him, and this is one person on the lease, so it's not even really even that formal. That's the first reason but we just kind of slide into it.

Selena: Right. They don't really see the benefit of marriage. They may not take it seriously. I think this might fall more on the unbeliever side. I think believers do take marriage seriously. I just don't know if we always understand the level of commitment, the idea of covenant and the depth of that promise and how God created it, and why He created it, the purposes behind it, and how we see it all through Scripture.

I didn't know that going into marriage. I knew that I was committed to him for my whole life but I didn't fully understand the depths and the beauty that is in the covenant.

Ryan: So the first one is they just slide into it. Just the natural next step. The second one is they don't-

Selena: Lack of understanding.

Ryan: ...understand what a covenantal relationship is, or why it's even important. And that can be learned. And that's partly why we're here doing this video.

The third one is as a matter of convenience. We talked about the lease thing. But if you're dating somebody seriously and you're both renting an apartment and you're both paying, you know, we'll say \$500 a month in rent, you maybe you're sharing an apartment or \$1,000 a month in rent each, you're thinking, "Well, we can just move in together and save a bunch of money. Why not do that? We'll just cut our costs and we'll share groceries." It just becomes a matter of convenience.

Selena: Right. And the fourth one I would say is that there's this element of I think cultural and society pressure. They devalue an old tradition of abstinence perhaps. And they're just like, "Oh, it's old. Nobody does that anymore. So why wouldn't you live together if you're both paying for a place, you're both committed to each other, you're both... by every sense of the word?" And it's like, well, not really committed if you're doing this beforehand. I mean, really.

Ryan: I think that plays into the previous one, which is you just don't understand.

Selena: Right. Right. For sure.

Ryan: The fifth one. This is probably the most popular. We should have put this one first. But "try it before you buy it" type of thing. Well, we don't really know if we're compatible. Here's a spoiler alert for you. No couple is truly compatible.

Selena: It's called sanctification, my friends.

Ryan: You're always going to have to work through stuff. So this attitude that says, "I just have to see first," I think there's a lie there that you're believing. And that could be "it'll be perfect and we'll know it." And if it works well, if the car rides and drives the way I think it should. Pardon the verbiage there. Maybe bad choice of words. [00:10:00] But then I know that I can commit to this thing. Well, the reality is, is that bright, shiny car, so to speak, is going to need maintenance, it's going to start to break down, it's going to need to be washed, kept up. It's going to get older-

Selena: Wouldn't you rather be in the commitment before you're making all these big decisions, right?

Ryan: But the thing is if your commitment is rooted in the attractiveness of the car itself, in other words, your marital covenant, as soon as that thing becomes kind of outdated, old outmoded, then you're going to start looking for something shiny, or the whole heart orientation, whole attitude-

Selena: Stepping into it, yeah.

Ryan: ...with which you step into it is... you're destined to fail because it's not going to get newer over time.

Selena: Definitely not.

Ryan: But only as you invest in it will get better and stronger. I'll stick with the analogy "faster." Another reason is the flexibility of it. So people will say, "I just don't want to commit because it's such a big commitment."

Selena: Convenience and flexibility I think go hand in hand.

Ryan: Then I'd say if you don't want an actual marital relationship, why act like it? You need to learn what covenant means. You need to learn why marriage is good as a lifelong covenant. And that's not going to be easy and perfect all the time, but that's better. You need to learn those things.

Some people will say, "We don't need to get married. It's just a piece of paper. It's silly. It's just a piece of paper. Why should I do it?" And my answer to those men typically is, if it's so silly, it's just a piece of paper, why don't you get one? *[both laughs]* If it's that simple, just get the paper.

Selena: Just get the paper.

Ryan: Make it official. Do you love her or not? If you say yes, then get the paper. *[both laughs]* Anyway, if you can't tell, I get frustrated around this topic.

The final one is that maybe you don't know better. Maybe you came from a broken home and every model of relationship you've ever seen was always just not marital, but you're living as if it is.

Selena: Maybe you're new to the faith and you just don't understand God's plan and design quite yet for relationships and for marriage. So we're here to tell you that all of these reasons are not good enough to disobey God's word on how we should proceed in a marriage relationship.

Ryan: They're not good enough from that standpoint, but also, frankly, they don't work. Cohabitation just doesn't work. So next we're going to explore this idea of does cohabiting actually work? Should a couple seek to cohabit because it pragmatically solves some sort of problem?

We've done a good bit of research on this. Selena, you uncovered a dearth of materials here. So let's see.

- Selena:** I think you did. There's a Barna study that said that 84% of people just cohabitated because they wanted to evaluate their compatibility. 41% of those said that—they were practicing Christian—saying that cohabitating is a good idea. Pew Research found that 50% of white evangelicals approve of cohabitation if the couple plans to marry. And despite all these trends of living together, the Bible still is pretty clear about its message. And we want to know why. Right? Why are Christians saying that it's a good idea?
- Ryan:** I'm just shocked. Out of both studies, there is a large swath of Bible professing, I'll say,-
- Selena:** Active Christians.
- Ryan:** ...professing Christians saying that basically it's not a big deal. 41% of evangelicals would say-
- Selena:** It's a big percentage.
- Ryan:** ...excuse me, 58% of evangelicals approve of cohabitation if the couple plans to marry. So, in other words, all the reasons that Ryan and Selena has talked about. "That's totally fine, so long as your trajectory is headed toward marriage."
- Forget the fact that what cohabiting actually implies or what it means in and of itself, which what we're saying is usually it means you're not just being platonic, there's going to be premarital sex happening in there. It's going to be acting as if you're married without actually having a marriage.
- Selena:** All these stats basically point to the fact that it doesn't work. The divorce rates among couples who cohabit are higher.
- Ryan:** So here's the craziest thing about the research that we've done is that as the rate of cohabitation has increased, the rate of marriage has decreased. So it doesn't naturally lead to "we're just going to try it, then we're going to buy it." No. It's just like, "We're going to try try, try and then maybe try something else" is usually what it leads to.
- Selena:** And who is left in the wake of that?
- Ryan:** Right. And we'll get to that, but there is damage being done in that it's not just like, Oh, we tried, let's try something else." No-
- Selena:** It's permanent damage.

Ryan: It's permanent damage because you're building a life together even though you haven't committed to building a life together. A lot of times there's kids in the mix. There's dependent people in the mix. A wife is usually going to be the vulnerable ones. The wife and the children are going to be the ones most hurt by cohabitation.

So, it's not only is it not leading to marriage, but it also leads to the people who do get married out of a [00:15:00] cohabitation scenario, they're far more likely to get divorced. And that's the crazy thing is that you'd think we've tried it, hey, we know it works, so let's buy it, and let's go ahead and move into the next step. No, there's an attitude they're bringing into the equation. That as long as this works for me, it's good. As long as I like this, as long as it fits our lifestyle, we can stay married. And that's a completely different heart orientation, attitude orientation.

The danger is that you've completely jettisoned what the Bible has to say about it. You don't actually care, if that's your attitude. We don't actually care about what God's Word says. We just care about how it serves us, how what we want serves us. That is a path riddled with death, with hurt, with sickness relationally speaking.

So we actually did a poll of our lovely Fierce Marriage viewers, listeners, readers. It's going to be skewed definitely toward a Christian worldview because that's-

Selena: That's who we are.

Ryan: ...that's who we are. It's our commitment. We are very overt about that. So we asked our audience, did you choose to cohabit before you got married? And the findings were, I think, kind of on par with what we're talking about given our audience.

69% reported to cohabiting after marriage. So the majority, 7 out of 10 of the folks, couples that follow Fierce Marriage waited to live together until after they were married. Then 31%, so the remainder, lived together before they got married. 64% of those couples, so two-thirds are actually having sex before marriage.

So that's interesting to me because there's a smaller percentage of people who are living together than there are that are sleeping together. Honestly, that kind of echoes our experience as a couple because we didn't live together, and by God's grace, we saved sex until after we were married. But it was not easy. It would have been very easy to-

Selena: Just give in.

Ryan: ...go down that road without actually going down the road of cohabiting. A lot of that's a function of who's around us. Because it's very visible. If you choose to live together, it's a very visible thing that anyone in your life can see. If you have one night together and you make a mistake, so to speak, and you you have premarital sex, that's not necessarily something you would broadcast to everyone in your life. So I think it's easier to fall into that versus overtly saying we're just going to live together before we're married. So I found that interesting. And I think it speaks to maybe the struggles that Christian folks might be facing.

There was another study done by the National Marriage Project, which concluded this: cohabiting unions tend to weaken the institution of marriage and pose special risks for women and children. And that's what we were talking about. They pose special risks to women and children.

Because let's play this out. Let's say we are 22, 23, we've just finished college and we're dating and maybe you have a job and you have a job and we start living together and acting like we're married, but we're not actually married. So we're building a life together.

All the while Selena, your emotional makeup is committed. You've already committed. Well, by virtue of the relationship being together doesn't mean that I have that same commitment.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Maybe I'm the one leading that because I don't want to commit because it's scary, because I don't feel ready, we don't have enough financial stability yet or I don't know for sure because I've been conditioned-

Selena: Those are nice ways to put it.

Ryan: Well, I'm conditioned as a man to think that or as an individual to think that there's one person out there and Selena is not perfect. So maybe there's a more perfect person out there.

Selena: It's so interesting how these conversations really play on the role of who we believe we are instead of who God says we are. Right?

Ryan: Yeah.

- Selena:** If you're a man and God is calling you to marriage, then you need to just step into that, like you said. As a woman not becoming emotionally attached and engaged to that level until... I mean, what does Song of Solomon say? It's like, "Don't awaken love." I know it's speaking about sex. But I think don't awaken those emotional feelings and those types of commitment until it's clear that you guys are headed down that path of marriage.
- Ryan:** Yeah, don't awaken love before it's time
- Selena:** So all these conversations and these excuses, I'll say, about why we can live together but we're not going to get married are all based on how we see ourselves and not how God sees us.
- Ryan:** So let's continue down this road. Ryan and Selena dated. We both have jobs. We now are living together for two-three years down the line. Selena is approaching 30 years old. You started getting the itch, "I want to have a baby. I feel like we've been building a life together, let's make a family together." So now depending on how a man will respond to that, it's either fight or flight, right?
- Selena:** Sure. I'm not a man. *[laughs]* [00:20:00]
- Ryan:** I don't want that. I don't know if I want kids and she wants it, I'm not ready to commit to that. Well, all the while she's aging. We're both aging. Our life is passing us by. And I've robbed you now of this desire that you have to build a life. And if I don't stay in fight for this and double down and I fly away, then you are now a woman in her late 20s-
- Selena:** Very young and wonderful and ripe and ready to have babies. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Of course, I'm not trying to say-
- Selena:** No, I know. That life is pathed.
- Ryan:** I'm just going to say that a big portion of your early adult life building a life with somebody who actually didn't want to build a life with you. So who's the vulnerable one in that situation? It's the wife. It's the woman.
- Selena:** Right. And you've kind of lost that time a little bit to build that foundation. I would say our marriage, some of the things that we get to live out today were because of decisions that we made in our 20s or 30. Not that God can't redeem those things.
- Ryan:** Of course.

Selena: But there's a trajectory.

Ryan: Of course. But I just want to encourage men watching this, that decision is not just an innocent decision to try and kind of hedge your bets. Not that that's innocent in itself. But you're actually spending that woman's life for her. Of course, she can make her own decisions. I'm not saying that you're forcing her to stay in the relationship.

But you're spending those years of her life for your own selfishness, saying, "I'm just going to spend these parts of my life with you." Because a man's desire for family and a man's even biological ability to create children is not as contingent on the age.

Now, of course, late 20s is not too late to have children. But I'm saying you take that equation now, you're now on the market, so to speak in your late 20s, and you're looking for somebody who wants to... Because now you're not going to make that mistake again. So now you're looking for somebody who wants to have a life with you?

Well, there's a huge swath of the population has now moved on to having kids. So now you're single. By God's grace, he finds... You see the problem here?

Now, take that same scenario and add a child. So Selena is feeling fulfilled in that. I now love this child, hopefully, obviously as the man in the equation. And there's still no marriage, still no covenantal bond, we go through a hard thing, raising kids is hard. It creates all kinds of different dynamics. Selena is a different person because now she's not just my girlfriend or life partner, she's actually a mom. And there's a deep connection between this mother and her child and I feel like she's not prioritizing me, well, I'm going to go find somebody who will.

And by the way, all the while, because she's a mother of my child, she has been dependent on me to be a breadwinner because she can't work as much as I can being that the child is dependent on his or her mother. So when I exit the scenario, who's the victim?

Selena: It's left in the wake.

Ryan: The wife and the child. And how dark is that? It's all because we failed to recognize that a covenantal bond is more than just a piece of paper, it's more than just a ring on your finger. It's a decision to commit to and value the things of God the way he tells us to. All of this is coming to the conclusion that don't

buy the lie that by cohabiting you're somehow doing your later self a favor. You're not doing really yourself any favor.

Selena: Much more problematic, to be honest.

Ryan: It's statistically not going to go well. Scripturally it cannot go well.

Selena: It will not go well.

Ryan: So let's talk about this. Here's the big kind of underlying question. Given that we've defined cohabiting as more than just living together platonically, but usually there's a sexual relationship that's being expressed between that man and the woman. So we want to ask this big question and kind of answer it fairly quickly. And this helps us answer the cohabiting question. Does God forbid sex before marriage?

Selena: Yes, absolutely.

Ryan: The answer is yes. Now, if you're an inquisitive person, which it's okay if you are, scripture isn't completely overt on this. It doesn't say, "Don't have sex until you're married." We don't see that lining, that string of words in Scripture. However, we do see the context within which sex almost always plays out. We see sex good here, sex bad here. That's what we see that scripture. So let's go through some of those passages real quickly.

Selena: Basically, the Bible promotes abstinence in the fact that, like you said, it doesn't have the word like abstinence, but anything like premarital sex, sex outside of marriage, sex with... anything outside of marriage, the Bible calls sexual immorality.

So we see this in 1 Corinthians 7. The principles for marriage, Paul's talking about [00:25:00] conjugal rights, all of that. He's saying the husband should give his wife her conjugal rights likewise and how there's this shared authority over our bodies, and that sex is something that we need to continually, as a married couple, engage in and not take time away from unless it's for prayer, or it's a limited time because the enemy can come and tempt us. And if we have a lack of self-control, then that is even worse. So...

Ryan: And he specifically says in 1 Corinthians 7:2, "But because of the temptation of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman, her own husband." There's an exclusivity there and there's... It's exclusivity in that one man, one wife, and our sexual relationship is to be satisfied in that context alone.

- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So that's the first piece. The next one we will look at is Exodus 20.
- Selena:** That's just the Ten Commandments of thou shalt not commit adultery. I think it's number six.
- Ryan:** And that speaks to what you were talking about. That adultery, sexual immorality is any sort of sexual expression that's outside biblical marriage.
- Selena:** Like you said, one man, one woman; one husband, one wife. Anything outside of that is-
- Ryan:** And adultery is a specific type of sexual immorality that is extramarital. Because there's sexual immorality that happens premaritally. That's extramarital in the sense that it is outside of in addition to whatever that marriage could be in the future for you. It's not speaking to the idea of pornea, which is what we see in the Greek for sexual immorality, which is it's a whole kind of grab bag of things that are counter sexual in nature that God has given us and He's also laid out in the Old Testament.
- Selena:** It's good.
- Ryan:** Genesis 2:24. Quickly, that's in creation. It's the second parallel account. What we see is there's a concentration of a covenantal bond that happens between Adam and Eve. The two became one flesh. That one flesh union happened within the context of the covenantal bond between Adam and Eve as husband and wife.
- Then the next one we're going to go through. Ephesians 5:3. "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." And we can't really understand that because you could say, well, sexual immorality could be just lusting, right? No. It's a term that references anything that's outside of the biblical model for sex, which we've laid out, which is one man, one woman together exclusively in a covenantal bond for life. The next one.
- Selena:** Galatians 5:19, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, yadi, yadi, yada.
- Ryan:** *[laughs]* Yadi, yadi, yada. *[both laughs]* So we see the first one for the context of this conversation, for the sake of this conversation is sexual immorality. So, sex, again, outside of marriage, not within the covenant of marriage we see as wrong. The works of the flesh, sinful, breaking God's law.

Ryan: And just to clear everything up, if you're reading Old Testament, and you're reading guys like Solomon or Abraham and the many wives or the concubines, that is not a description of something that is good. What we see in that Scripture is a record of what happened. And what we're able to see in that is, it's almost in every instance, [inaudible] to say, in every instance where the marriage is outside of God's design, it doesn't go well for those people.

And just because Solomon had however many concubines and wives is not God saying that's good and right and everybody should do that. It's just describing the kind of sins that Solomon fell into. And if you remember, things kind of went downhill from there, despite all of his wisdom and despite all of his striving for finding whatever it is he was looking for, joy, some version of satisfaction that he wasn't getting from God. Solomon didn't find it in those things. He found it in the realization...

In Ecclesiastes, it's like, live your life under the glory of God and die and be with Him forever. That's it. Anyway, I want to clear that up, because some people have even gone on to our channel, onto our page, and started saying, "Well, God affirms polygamy and here's all the verses."

Selena: Absolutely not.

Ryan: We are here to say, No, he doesn't. You're affirming polygamy, you're describing polygamy, but that doesn't mean that scripture affirms that. And once it has said that that's the design.

Selena: We do not agree with that.

Ryan: So we've talked through what is cohabitation. We've talked through what some of the ways or reasons people get into it. We've talked about what does Scripture have to say about premarital sex and therefore what could it say about cohabitation.

In case you're still kind of wondering, "I'm not really convinced," let's just ask some broad questions about cohabiting, we'll just lob some things in there for you to think about. So the first big question is this. [00:30:00] If this is you or you're thinking about it, do you believe it's to the glory of Christ?

Selena: Do you believe that living with someone and having sex with someone that you are not married to is to the glory of Christ? That is the question we're asking right now.

Ryan: Go check out Colossians 3:17 where Paul writes, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Can you read that passage without any conviction on cohabiting?

The second question: do you believe that what you're doing is pure? Is it to the glory of Christ? Is it pure? Again, we're asking you, Christian, we're not asking just anyone anywhere. We're saying, if you're a believer of Jesus Christ, you say scripture is authoritative, can you say with full conviction that what you're proposing, what you're doing is pure? Let's read Philippians 4:8.

Selena: Paul writes, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Ryan: That's a tall order. That's really good stuff to think about. The final one. And this is similar, but is it holy? Is it pure in and of itself? But is it holy and becoming behavior of somebody who would call themselves a disciple of Christ? If Jesus were to walk into your place where you live, what would Jesus have to say? Yes, He would say, "I love you." Yes, He would say so many other things. But do you know what else he would say? Repent. Repent. Turn from your sin. Turn to me, trust me, trust this model that I've given you for human flourishing."

And here's also what He'll say: it's not without a promise. If you conform yourself unto God's way of doing things, it's not that He just makes it hard for you, and you die and that's it. There is a promise there. The promise is that there's flourishing and obedience. There is blessing in obedience. There is goodness to be had through living it out his way.

Selena: There's unity in becoming one. And that sounds obvious but there's unity not only just sexually and spiritually, but we're also like living out this oneness when we're married, and we're in this covenant. And when intimacy gets difficult and we're struggling, we're in this covenant, we're bound together.

So we're forced to fight through it and to figure it out to find reconciliation. How much safer, I guess, how much more secure is that position? Rather than, Gosh, I don't want to make him mad. I don't want to be an inconvenience. I don't want to make it this terrible place that he doesn't want to be. Because he could just go somewhere else. Technically he could.

Ryan: And that's where, as you have an awesome opportunity to say, husbands to your wife, and wives to your husband, "I love you and I'm committed to you

covenantally." And anything that we have to work through, we will do so within our covenant. And I'm not going anywhere. We have a whole episode, whole video on that. It's called Burn the Ships. So check that out, what that looks like to actually step into with full vigor into what it means to be in a covenantal marriage. I think that'll bless you.

So here's our big conclusion. That cohabitation, yes, while it's on the rise, it is not healthy. And here's the bigger conclusion. It's sin. And those who seek to live in obedience to God, in obedience to God's Word, we encourage you to take decisive action. If you're in a space where you are cohabiting with your girlfriend, your boyfriend, we encourage you to take decisive action. You probably need to move out immediately.

Selena: Not probably. Move out.

Ryan: Unless you're getting married tomorrow. *[laughs]*

Selena: Even then I would say, just wait.

Ryan: Maybe don't move your stuff out but definitely get yourself out of there. *[Selena laughs]* But the point being made is take decisive action. And what that looks like is... I don't want to just prescribe here from the internet. But I'm going to say this. Go talk to somebody. Devote the whole situation to them. Somebody you know that loves Christ, loves His word and loves you, and then follow that counsel.

If that counsel doesn't lead you away from that scenario, then find better counsel. In that case, just get married. Anyway, I think that's it for this episode.

I'll pray. Lord, I thank You for Your truth. I thank You that even though sometimes Your truth bristles against our sensibilities, culturally speaking, that we can still trust You. That we can say, all right, well, we're going to get rid of what culture says and we're going to agree on and believe in what You say. And the things we don't understand, we're going to dig into your word, we're going to seek to understand, but also the things we don't understand, we're going to trust You.

Lord, I pray for the men, the women watching this, listening to this, that You would embolden them to live obediently to You, to not be scared of anything that could come of being obedient to You, but instead, they would fear You, they would recognize that you're God and they're not. [00:35:00] And then that they might have a deep desire to conform themselves into Your image, Christ, and to love You out of the love that You've so freely given by Your grace to them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, this was a long episode but we appreciate your sticking around. This episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: See you again in seven days. Until then—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:24:52]**
 - Scripture reference:
 - 1 Corinthians 7
 - Exodus 20
 - Genesis 2:24
 - Ephesians 5:3
 - Galatians 5:19
 - Colossians 3:17
 - Philippians 4:8

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