

WHAT IS A WOMAN... BY DESIGN??

<https://fiercemarriage.com/what-is-a-woman-by-design>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: All right, Selena, the question that everyone seems to be asking these days, right, it's a hot question and it's this. Very controversial. What is a woman?

Selena: A woman is a biologically female human being made in the image of God for His glory and for the good of humanity. That's my final answer. *[Ryan laughs]*

Ryan: Final answer.

Selena: I'm sticking to it.

Ryan: All right, well, what you just said was extremely controversial. And why are you so hateful? *[laughs]* I'm just kidding.

Selena: I will tell you on the other side. *[laughs]*

Ryan: You know what? We're making light of it. It's a very weighty topic. It's all the rage right now because our society has lost its mind. We've lost our collective mind, okay. The pandemic and all the stuff that happened over 2020, all the way till now, all that stuff, plus the latest kind of wave of gender ideology is really kind of disorienting.

And so our goal for today it's the first-ever fierce marriage series parenting mashup, okay? So I represent the marriage side, Selena is on the parenting side. I'm kidding. We're both on both sides. *[Selena chuckles]*

Today we hope to kind of, I don't know, give you permission to really press into your identity as someone who's created in God's image, and hopefully give you some language around, specifically for women, the roles that you have as a mother, the roles you have as a wife. To really own it, enjoy it, and then use that as a light in your community to share the gospel and to share love with people in your community. So with that said, we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:34] <music>

Selena: It's funny, though, you say love. I'm like, I don't even think our culture defines love *[chuckles]* the way... There's many definitions. We've done many episodes on love.

- Ryan:** Interesting.
- Selena:** So-
- Ryan:** That's not a connection that we've made. Real quick, when we wrote *Fierce Marriage*, I did a study, and I looked far and wide for how do people without a Christian worldview-
- Selena:** Define love.
- Ryan:** ...define love. And there were as many answers as there were people. Because there is no objective definition of love outside of a Christian worldview. When you start saying that God is God and His word is authoritative, then you start to wrap your arms around what love might be. And here's a hint. It has very little to do with how you feel. It has a lot to do with how you act.
- So the loss of that, not just of love, but the objective standard of truth has led us to where we are today. And so we're here today to kind of talk through that a little bit. And hopefully encourage you while not making too light of a serious topic, but also not taking it too seriously as well. So here we go. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Striking the balance.
- Ryan:** So Selena, you said this very controversially, "A woman has a biological female who is made in the image of God for His glory and for the good of humanity." We hashed that definition out. It took us about two seconds to hash it out but we wrote it down *[Selena chuckles]* because we didn't want to mess it up.
- Selena:** We didn't want to mess it up because we can mess things up.
- Ryan:** Because it's important these days. And so that is a burden that we've kind of been carrying for a few, I'll say months now. We've been thinking about this idea of what does it mean to be a woman by design?
- Selena:** Well, because we are in the marriage and family space. And so how can we not answer this fundamental question? How can we ignore the foundation on which our covenant sort of exists, right? We believe and you can look this up on our - what is it? Our beliefs page or whatever?
- Ryan:** Sure. On the website, yeah.
- Selena:** Yeah. We believe marriage is between one woman and one man.
- Ryan:** For life.

Selena: For life.

Ryan: Like, we need to address this issue at least during one episode here. And so there's implications there. So if you embrace the idea that you're a woman made in the image of God by His design, that will have amazing and vast implications on your role as a mother, your role as a wife.

Now, I'm talking to you here. I say the same for myself. Like if I know that I'm a man by design, that then changes my whole perspective on my job in terms of how I love and lead you, love and lead our kids and love and lead wherever the Lord places me.

So it's been on our mind so much so that we actually went out and got a t-shirt designed and got a sweatshirt designed. Selena is wearing it here.

Selena: I'm wearing the comfy sweatshirts.

Ryan: Woman by design. That's what it says if you're not watching this. We're gonna make those available for preorder. We haven't made those yet because we don't know if people are gonna want them. So we're going to make them available for pre-order at a good price. The best we can do.

These are nice sweatshirts. They're not cheap, but we think they're worth it and they'll last you a long time. You can go to womanbydesign.us, and you'll find how to preorder those. There's only three different sweatshirt colors and two t-shirts. Is that right?

Selena: There's three t-shirts.

Ryan: Go check that out. *[chuckles]* Womanbydesign.us. [00:05:00] But we've been mulling this over for quite some time for that reason, because we've often wondered, How can we bring truth in a loving way to address the cultural narrative?

Selena: Well, because it's such a fiery conversation, right? We can't share the gospel without it offending someone or hurting someone or feeling like they are hated by us. That's kind of just where we're at.

We aren't even able to really have conversations. But we're trying to have those conversations. So what does that look like as a Christian walking out into the world wearing a shirt like this in a hotbed of lies and shame? Everything I think that the enemy would dream up for a society absent of God, how can

we navigate the truth? How can we share the truth boldly and with humility as well?

Ryan: Yeah. Well, you said lies and shame. Yeah, the contrast that is truth and freedom. And one of the lies that our culture and we as humans... Okay, I don't want to just make this nebulous culture our universal scapegoat.

The problem we have as humans is that we seem to think that we can have freedom when we are completely and utterly we cast off every restraint. There's no freedom without restraint. Freedom only comes in Christ. And Christ gives us loving constraints. He's made us human. God has made us finite.

One of those constraints is He has not made me a woman. He has not made you a man. And that we believe and we predicate that statement on the foundational truth of Scripture. It's a beautiful freeing thing.

And you know what was really cool about the Christian faith is nature it just resonates with the voice of God and His creative voice when it went out said, "Let there be light." Like it resonates with that. We see His fingerprints throughout creation. We see it on ourselves, if we have our eyes open to see it, and we're ready to give Him glory, ready to fall in line as the created, not the creators.

And that's one of the things with our cultural narrative of late is that our human nature—Again, I don't want use this scapegoat—is to want to be our own god. That we want to be masters of our own destiny, the architects of our future.

Selena: Center of our universe.

Ryan: The center of the universe. We saw that in the garden when the enemy said, "Are you sure God said that? Did He really say that? He's just afraid of you being like Him." And Eve took the bait, Adam acquiesced and he abdicated his responsibility and went along with it, which that's a whole different topic to talk about. But culturally speaking, the way it's played out is that identity has been, I guess, turned into a threefold equation.

Selena: Right. So it's you have your biological sex, which proponents of this ideology, we do not agree with this. We believe they're all interconnected. But people that will hold this view, say you have your biological sex, and then at some level there's the gender identity, which tragically they will say that some are assigned a gender identity at birth that happens to match their biological sex. And they would make an argument that you shouldn't do that, doctors

shouldn't do that. I think in one state they took sex off the birth certificate. I don't know, they change that somehow.

And then there's a third aspect of your identity, and that's your sexual orientation. So you've got your biological identity, your emotional identity, your gender identity, and your sexual identity.

Selena: Which is?

Ryan: Your sexual orientation.

Selena: What you prefer.

Ryan: Yeah, what do I prefer? Yeah. So I couldn't be a guy but I maybe identify as a woman and I happen to like women. So I am, you know, a transwoman lesbian. Don't take that out of context, please. *[both chuckles]* Don't quote me saying that. There's a context here.

And that's why it's so complicated. That's why it's viewed as very complicated and nuanced. Not only that. It's not just you have a choice between this binary. Now there's this whole spectrum of things. And it's all around, again, actualizing your own identity to where there are schools... We don't get very political very often and it's because we want to focus on the mission. Now we this cultural moment has forced us into this conversation.

Selena: And that's okay. We don't have to be afraid of it.

Ryan: That's okay. I want so much to see just married couples just love one another well, love their kids well, and disciple their kids for Christ. That's all we care about. But this is part of that.

Selena: That's part of it.

Ryan: But there are schools in—I forget where—in the US somewhere where there were kids showing up and they were refusing to engage in conversation because they identified themselves as cats. Instead, they would purr, they would meow. They wouldn't answer questions. And the administrators are enabling this sort of behavior. Cats.

We're not just in the human realm anymore. [00:10:00] Now we've gone into the animal kingdom. You know, those are very extreme examples, but you just... It's no longer a slippery slope. Like we're on it. Like we're headed down. This is not a threat of a slippery slope. Like we are on the slope headed down. The logic is taking us where it will.

And so here we are, people in the marriage and family space, and we want to help you kind of put some stakes in the ground and say, This is true. And we want to encourage you in that as a woman, as a man to say, this is truth. That God has created me in His image, biologically male, biologically female. And that's a wonderful thing. And I can love others while proclaiming that truth.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I just want to make a quick mention. Like, the irony of secular humanism and this movement. Because secular humanism is basically this idea that men can be moral and they can - what?

Selena: Self-fulfill.

Ryan: Self-fulfill.

Selena: Find fulfillment in themselves.

Ryan: Without God.

Selena: Without God.

Ryan: And that tends to lend itself to a very materialistic rationalistic worldview. Meaning that if I can't see it, feel it, hear it, touch it, taste it, it's not real, except for in this area in this space. And the taking away or the separation of a physical, corporeal body and the spiritual self is something that it's so ironically happening because we are so quick to dismiss anything other than what I can experience and touch.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But that is nothing new. Here's the good news. Not good news but the oldest heresy like in the New Testament goes all way back. It's the Gnostics, right? John in his gospel, in his prologue, he is addressing the Gnostics. The Gnostics believed that basically everything material is evil and that true enlightenment, true spirituality, salvation comes from how this light within.

And if you read John's prologue, it's specific. It's very prevalent and easy to see, I'll say, in the Greek when you look at how he juxtaposes things and he makes this argument. He lays it all out in the Greek. He was talking about the light of man. And Jesus came, He was the light of man. John was not the light, but he was only bearing testimony to the light.

Right then if you're gnostic, you're reading that saying, "Yes, yes, yes, the Savior that we've all been waiting for, of course, he's gonna be filled with light. Of course, He's the light of man. Of course, He was around before the beginning of time. And of course, yes, yes, yes, and amen."

And then John, just bait and switch, he says, "And the light became flesh and tabernacled among us and dwelt among us." Right? So the Gnostic isn't just hitting the brakes and "What? He became flesh? How could the Savior of the world condescend and become flesh?" So in the Christian worldview, there is no separation between my body and my soul, right?

Selena: Our bodies are temples and they are temporary being for this earth.

Ryan: They are temporary and eternal because in the new creation we will have new resurrected bodies. And it's not, am I going to look different? Is this body got throw away body? Or is it a body that will be redeemed and resurrected?

Selena: Well, we will be able to recognize one another. So I imagine that there will be similar attributes of what you look like.

Ryan: I mean, did Christ throw away His body? No, His body resurrected with Him. Christ, you know, in the flesh ascended into heaven. And so there's a lot of implications if we don't understand the Christian view of identity and of self and of the doctrine of man, what it means to be made in the image of God, and why we should embrace that.

Now, that's from a broad standpoint. This has trickled down effects on how I view my role as a husband, how I view my role as a father. Same for you as a wife and a mother.

So we've kind of gone through what the narrative is. The Gnosticism thing, the John thing. Now, how can we respond as image bearers of Christ?

The first one is knowing who you are. Do you want to read this verse? It's Isaiah 45:9. I just love this passage.

Selena: "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles?'"

Ryan: So this is Isaiah talking about the basically the creative sovereignty of God. Who are we as the created to look up at our Creator and says, "What have you done? You made a mistake."

You read the ESV version, which is "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him..." The Berean version says, Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker..." The King James version is just so poetic. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" What hubris for us to shake our fist at God and say, "Not only [00:15:01] do you not exist, not only that, but I am, in fact, God. And by the way, you made a huge mistake in the way that you made me. And I need to set right the things you did wrong." Woe to us those who striveth against our maker.

There's other passages here that we'll get to. But it comes back to this big question of what is the chief end of man, which comes from the Westminster shorter catechism. And the chief end of man is this. What is it, Selena?

Selena: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Ryan: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So if we are pushing against that... And this is the trick is I believe this is such a foundational issue that even believers who would say that they affirm scripture, they affirm that God is God. But if we refuse to acknowledge this aspect of His created order, we're not functionally believing what we say we believe. We're believing something else. That God created a mess, He made a mistake.

Here's the thing with the male-female thing. He didn't just make a mistake with me; everything was a mistake. Everything was a mistake. And I don't know about you, but I'm not ready to say that to God. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: No. No.

Ryan: So this is the truth that we are standing on, is that we believe that God is a creator. He has a created order, He has made it, He called it good. Hey, notice we're male and female in the garden before the fall. So you can't just blame that thing on the fall. No, it was there before the fall.

This is what we're standing on. But now how do we share this with others? And that's one of the reasons why we went ahead and created these sweatshirts, or at least sweatshirts and the shirts and whatnot, is specifically because I feel like women and girls are under attack.

By the way, there are "girls by design" shirts as well. You'll see those when you go to the site. Because we have three daughters, and we want to make sure they know, "That your girl because God said He's gonna make you a girl. And He is wonderful. And own it. It's good."

I was gonna say we created the shirts so that it would give you a way to make the statement without being in your face. But it's also something that you are going to say proudly knowing that truth is good and truth is God.

Selena: Yeah, we don't have to shy away from it. I think that we can humbly... I have a friend Mary who just always speaks the truth. And I'm just never offended by it because she's just... I don't know, she's so humble and so confident in what she says, what she believes.

And she knows scripture, which again, it's an account to, are we in God's word daily? Are we knowing Him? If we are drowning in the narrative and the sin of putting ourselves at the center of our universe, then we need to go back to the Lord and repent. And we need to get back in His Word.

We need to go to the feet of Jesus daily and understand that there is a purpose in His design. And outside of that, apart from Christ, there's death. And so I can embrace that purpose of being a woman, being a wife and I can share that truth with others.

So Romans 9:19. We're gonna read this verse and talk about it real quickly.

Ryan: Okay. "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory."

So Paul is making a theological case here for God's sovereignty. And at some point near here he references Pharaoh and how, you know, a vessel destined for wrath. Now, this is going to bristle a lot of theological feathers.

There's still very charitable debate happening around what this passage is saying and the implications it has for the sovereignty of God and the will of man. But for today, we are looking specifically at verse 20. It says, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump..." Basically, whatever he wishes to make out of it.

So we're establishing that God is sovereign. He has made us this way with a purpose, a design. And it's better for us and for human flourishing for us to press into that design and not rebel from it, not reject it.

Selena: Right, to embrace it.

Ryan: Embrace it. And the implications go far and wide. Here we're gonna talk next about as a mother, as a father, as a husband, as a wife, so foundationally, how does this truth that God has created us [00:20:00] the way He wanted us to be? That's at the bottom line of this.

Male, female, whatever race, whatever body type, whatever you look like, wherever you came from, God created you the way He wanted to create you. And that wasn't arbitrary, it wasn't a mistake. When we embrace that big, big truth, then it has huge implications on me as a husband, as a father. So what are some of those implications?

Selena: I think, if you just look at your roles, I mean, beginning with the roles of husband and wife, I am the helper, you are the spiritual head of the household. He's given us those roles on purpose, again, with purpose. And it's not just the here and now and to make me happy and to make me look great as a good Christian wife. No, the eternal purpose is for us to, again, share and teach those to our children. So then it continues and continues until Christ comes again to reign.

But the headship and helper roles and responsibilities cannot function fully and correctly unto the glory of God if we don't first embrace that I'm a woman made in God's image. I am not pieced apart. My emotions are not disconnected from my physical body. I am not all of these pieces put together. I'm a whole human being.

Ryan: The trouble is this conversation gets very vast very quickly. Especially when we're talking around marriage and parenting, because what are the roles of a father and a husband? Those are long conversations to have because there's a lot to be said, really good stuff. It's not that complicated. It just needs to be said.

And so I think for this conversation, there's the main point is that this is something worth thinking carefully about and acting intentionally about. The very fabric of our society stands on these truths. So it's worth speaking out. It doesn't mean... okay, boldness is good; belligerence, not so good.

So we made this sweatshirt design. Selena's gonna wear it. We're all really excited about it. T-shirts, kids' shirts, all that kind of stuff. And it's going to come with some caveats.

Selena: Pushback.

Ryan: It's gonna come with some pushback. We want you to wear it with wisdom because we want you to be bold. We want you to own your role... we want you to own the fact that your Creator made you and that He made you the way He intended. We want you to own that. We want you to feel good with that and to not feel ashamed of that or feel like you have to kind of acquiesce to the cultural narrative.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But we also want to encourage you to be wise in that. Like, if you have a relative who's struggling with gender dysphoria, that person needs love, that person needs care. They probably don't need to see you wearing this shirt if you're gonna go have dinner with that person.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So you want to wear with... If you think it's gonna offend them, right, they might need to see... It depends on your discernment, your relationship with them. But we want to encourage you to be wise and not try to just... It's not a middle finger up to the world. It's not what we're trying to say.

Selena: No, not at all.

Ryan: It's a-

Selena: Let's shine some light and truth in this dark world that cannot see, that is confused, that is hurting, that is in bondage, that is living under guilt and shame, and they don't know it yet. And so let's bring truth. Because only when you bring truth can healing really have a chance and for God to really kind of get a hold of their heart.

We can be okay with some resistance and pushback. And it's okay to say, "I believe this and I know that you don't. And that's okay. Like we don't have to defend ourselves."

We are in Christ. And as believers, yes, we want others to be brought into the fold. We want them to be saved from eternity of hell and damnation. But we are not going to stand here and compromise on what is truth. Because this is

truth that I am a woman by design, created in the image of God, I am biologically a female, and you can't take those pieces apart. Like I am who God created me to be, and He's the end all be all. What He says is the end and there's no more arguing or changing of that.

Ryan: And I think in that truth is where you will find true flourishing, true joy, is the sooner that we look to God as God and look to Christ as our Savior, that's when we begin to embrace His design. And it's for our joy, it's for our good, and it's for His glory.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That's our encouragement to you is really embrace that. And the hope is that others would embrace it too, not because we just have an ideology that we want to move forward. It's because we have a God who is a God of truth.

Selena: And He loves people.

Ryan: And He loves us. And His truth is there because He is... It's intertwined with who He is. So truth and love they go hand in hand because they're both aspects of God.

Anyway, we hope this was helpful. It's kind of a different episode in that we're talking about something a little bit more out there. [00:25:00] It's not like five steps to kind of, you know, fix a problem. But we do hope it gives some clarity and at least gets you thinking about it. And we hope that it has blessed you in some way. Do you have something you want to say?

Selena: What always helps me when I am fearing or nervous about having hard conversations it's just that I don't have to be afraid and to perpetuate lies to someone is not loving. And I want to love the most the way God has asked. That's the only way to love the most is to love how God defines love and how He leads us to love one another as believers and leads us to love unbelievers.

Ryan: Yeah. And here we are responding to the love of God that we've felt.

Selena: Don't be afraid. I just want to say don't be afraid. Be encouraged.

Ryan: Yeah, we're here to tell you... and this is the whole point of this, okay? The whole point of this is just to encourage you to stand firm. Stand firm as a man. Stand firm as a woman. Stand firm as the wife, mother, father, husband.

Whoever God has created you to be, stand firm and just hold your post. And do so not, excuse my language, but not as a middle finger to the world but as

a reminder to the world that there is a Creator God behind this and He is loving. And you are willfully allowing Him to be God and wanting to shine the light of His truth into these dark spaces of the world.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: So when you wife, mother, when you wear a sweatshirt like what Selena has got on here, we want that to be a statement to yourself as "I'm going to stand firm. I'm gonna own this part of God's creation."

Selena: I think it's a reflection of your beliefs and your convictions. It's a reflection of who God made you to be. And we don't have to be afraid of that. We don't have to sheepishly be in our posts. We don't have to belligerently be at our posts. But we need to steadfastly be sustained by God's grace and goodness and love and be faithful at our post that He's given us.

Ryan: Amen. Faithfulness. That's it. That's a life of a believer. Faithfulness, trust, believing, repenting and believing, repenting and believing and being faithful in the things that God has put in our hands to do. And that starts with the very person who's created you and designed you to be. Let's own that. And let's give God glory as a result.

Selena, why don't you pray us out?

Selena: Okay. God, thank you, that you've made us in your image, and that we did not have to fear man that can destroy the body. We can just trust in you, our holy God, preserver of mind, body, soul, heart, the fabric of our being, you knit every part of us together. We trust you. We trust your creative design.

God, may we be lights in a dark world, shining your love and your goodness to all around us. Thank you that we do not have to fear, that we can walk in boldness. Thank You that we do not have to have something to prove and walk in pride and arrogance, but we can walk in humility.

Jesus, that you came and modeled that for us and to us. And God that you loved us so much that you sent Him for us, your very own. May we rest in the news that is good of the gospel, that we are saved. May we live out of that joy and security. God that you are our salvation.

We pray for people struggling to know who they are or how they are or what purpose they have. Lord, I pray that they would find it in you, and that we as believers would not shrink back from these conversations, but we would be emboldened and we would be given wisdom, and you would prepare us and

you would give us everything that we need to be sufficient image bearers for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Ryan: Amen. All right, just as a reminder, we're making that available for preorder. It's a womanbydesign.us. Check that out. We hope that it becomes kind of a beacon of light in your life and in your community. Not just a political statement, but a statement that God made me in His image. And I'm okay with that. I'm more than okay with that.

Selena: I'm excited about that.

Ryan: I'm excited about that. So yeah, check that out. And I guess that's it. So this episode of the Fierce Marriage, Fierce Parenting podcast is—

Selena: They're all in the cans.

Ryan: They are all in the cans. *[both chuckles]* We'll see you again in about seven days. Till next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Isaiah 45:9
 - Romans 9:19-23

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