

THE DANGERS OF DMS

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-dangers-of-dms>

[00:00:00]

Selena: Before we get started, we want to recognize-

Ryan: Oh yeah. Thank you.

Selena: ...that this is the first episode of-

Ryan: Season 6-

Selena: ...Season 6.

Ryan: ...of the Fierce Marriage Podcast.

Selena: Of the Fierce Marriage Podcast.

Ryan: However, this is the second time we've recorded it. *[both laughs]*

Selena: It's the second time we've recorded it. Hopefully, third time is no charm because I don't want to record it three times.

Ryan: Once in a blue moon we have a technical hiccup, of which we cannot recover.

Selena: Oh, man!

Ryan: Yeah. So we had that happen. And then we skipped a week on the podcast because it was our anniversary. So big day.

Selena: Yeah. Especially for married people, right?

Ryan: Season 6, Episode 1, 19th anniversary for us.

Selena: Woohoo!

Ryan: Which by the way, welcome. If you've not met us, my name is Ryan. *[Selena chuckles]* This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the Fredericks. Been married 19 years. And for the last nine or so we've been just doing stuff like this, just sharing open and honestly the goodness of Christ as we've seen it in Scripture, as we've seen Him work in our marriage. And we're here to do it as long as the Lord wills it.

That was unusual intro but here we are. Season 6. Today we're talking about... we're launching Season 6 with the dangers of DMs.

Selena: The DM dangers. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Dangers of DMs. And you know what? They're not as benign as you might think.

Selena: Well, what is it?

Ryan: They are malignant? *[both chuckles]* A DM is a direct message in private context in some app online, whatever. We're gonna talk about that.

Selena: Virtual private area.

Ryan: Okay, that's not how I worded it. *[both laughs]* But we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:30] <music>

Selena: Virtual private space. *[Ryan laughs]* That's what you said the last time. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Virtual private area. I am keeping it. I am keeping it.

Selena: I am keeping it. Virtual private space. This is a touchy topic, I think because people get defensive because they struggle to see the balance between being a complete and utter prude, *[laughs]* which-

Selena: At least you're safe. At least you are safe.

Ryan: ...that's probably me.

Selena: I feel like that's for me.

Ryan: I don't need to have Instagram anymore. But not for that reason. But it's-

Selena: Social media is the Wild Wild West. I feel like they're just now starting... I know, there have been some age laws and things that they're trying to pass for different apps and platforms and whatnot, but it still is hard to manage. And so you as individual, as believer, as a married person, is it okay for you to DM someone of the opposite gender who is not your spouse?

Ryan: The opposite sex. So is that okay? Is it acceptable? Or should we just keep it?

- Selena:** Cut ties. Cut it off.
- Ryan:** You know, don't touch it with a barge pole, just keep it far off in the distance. I don't talk to girls and you don't talk to boys. *[Selena laughs]* Is that it? Is that it?
- Selena:** We're gonna talk about that today.
- Ryan:** So let's start. We're starting in scripture. Ephesians 5:15-17. "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Because the days are evil. And so are the DMs, I would say. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Well, I think the problem with DMs is that we feel like they are harmless. You still initially feel seen right? You still like, "I'm not hiding this." Maybe it begins with a like, a comment, or a question, an old friend from high school is asking you a question, and then all of a sudden you kind of find yourself being a little too familiar with them, and you're frequently DM-ing them. Where's the line there? How do we know that there is a line? Where is it and have we crossed it? Those are kind of the questions we're gonna hover over today.
- Ryan:** I will say this. There is one particular fan of mine, it's this woman, she slides into my DMs almost daily. And the stuff she sends! *[laughs]* It was me.
- Selena:** I send you funny things because that's all you send me.
- Ryan:** I send you hilarious things-
- Selena:** Hilarious things. Okay.
- Ryan:** ...and or birds of prey doing things that birds of prey do.
- Selena:** Why wouldn't you?
- Ryan:** They do incredible-
- Selena:** I love those things.
- Ryan:** Selena is white by the way. She loves fire trucks and she loves- *[laughs]*
- Selena:** I pray when I see fire trucks.

- Ryan:** And she gets super, super jazzed about birds of prey. What's your favorite bird of prey? Sorry, I gotta know.
- Selena:** I don't know. It's a mix between falcons, owls, and eagles because a falcon you can actually like train to be yours. Owls are just amazing. *[both laughs]* Get out of here.
- Ryan:** I love that you're like-
- Selena:** And eagles are just incredible. We see a lot of them around here.
- Ryan:** It's a mixture [00:05:00] between these... I love it.
- Selena:** What are your favorite birds of prey?
- Ryan:** Oh, man. Okay. Osprey. They are awesome. Awesome prey is what I call them.
- Selena:** So say you're DM-ing somebody of the opposite sex about their favorite birds of prey.
- Ryan:** Thank you for bringing that back around. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** It's harmless, right? Seems harmless. However, one of the biggest dangers we see and we've been, you know, told is that it really is a slippery slope. It goes too far too fast. Like sin, it can carry you a little bit-
- Ryan:** A lot further than you can go.
- Selena:** A lot further than you want to go. Right. The other piece I think that is a big danger with, particularly to direct messaging... having to do particularly with direct messaging is that things can get lost in translation. So there can often be a misinterpretation of what you're actually trying to communicate because tone, body language, that kind of thing, although we have emojis, right, but some of us are better at it than others, things can get lost in translation and just misinterpreted. And all of a sudden maybe someone misinterpreted something, and then you feel awkward to call them out and saying, "Well, that's not really where I was going," and so you kind of either play into it or you just ghost them. *[chuckles]* That's usually the safest way to go, I think. But maybe not.
- Ryan:** Okay. So here is actually a real example of aside from the woman who constantly DMs me, named Selena. Most often the messages that I get, which, by the way, if you've messaged me, which is not likely, because no one does, but-

Selena: I thought you said a lot of people do.

Ryan: On Fierce Marriage they do, but personally... And our team manages a lot of that. So I'll post a funny story, I'll repost something that Selena posts... My Instagram feed is full of like-

Selena: Cats?

Ryan: Well, no, it's full of heavy machinery, monster trucks. Now I've got a good number of birds of prey coming through because I want some stuff to show off to my lady friend. *[both laughs]* And then I have a lot of office memes. So I'll post something that's really funny to my story and people will respond. And when you respond to a story, it ends up in a DM.

So I'll like their response or say something. And they'll say, "Hi, this is hilarious. Did you see this quote?" And sometimes that's a woman doing that. It's all in good fun. It hasn't gotten down the slippery slope yet? And maybe that person will ask, "Hey, did you see this?" or "Did you see this meme?" And they'll send it. And I'll be like, "That's great. Thanks for sharing." And hopefully, that's the end of it.

But I can see how if you're unguarded in that instance. This person shares your sense of humor, you're laughing around the same things. You're already kind of... you have somewhat of a relationship built on the backdrop of the things you find mutually funny. And I could see how if you were just had the smallest inclination to watch that kind of bend out of, you know, be distorted into something wrong, it would be so so easy.

So for that reason, I almost never respond to female DMs, which again, they're not frequent. I think that's probably a good idea. So we'll go down this again. So we had dangerous DMs, slippery slope, that's kind of what I was just talking about. Lost in translation—that you can misinterpret things. The perceptions of the circumstances. So no matter how well you try to explain yourself, if someone comes in-

Selena: To your spouse.

Ryan: Yeah, to your spouse, right? If all of a sudden, like you're having a hard time, and you know, we'll talk about the phone drop test in a minute, but she says, "Hey, I noticed on your phone... you left it open or whatever and I saw these DMs between... Who is this woman?" Or "Who is this man?"

Selena: Britney. *[both laughs]*

- Ryan:** Sorry if your name is Britney. *[both laughs]* I don't know why you said that.
- Selena:** I don't know.
- Ryan:** "Who is this?" And you're like, "Well, it's nothing." So then they start scrolling through the conversation and they're like, "Doesn't look like nothing." No matter what-
- Selena:** The fact that you have to even bring up a question, though, that's the thing.
- Ryan:** This is true.
- Selena:** And the fact that you're saying, "Oh, it's nothing," oh, gosh, there's already traction there.
- Ryan:** It's clearly not nothing. It may not be something *[laughs]* but it's not nothing.
- Selena:** You're right. But it's not nothing. You're right. The perception of the circumstances, just avoiding that at all costs. It's just not worth the unity of your marriage. Yeah, it's just not worth it. So...
- Ryan:** The fourth one. So the fourth danger of DMs. There's just practical considerations and here it is. What good could possibly come out of it?
- Selena:** A private message with someone of the opposite sex?
- Ryan:** Yeah. And here's what we're not saying. Maybe we should have said this sooner. But we're not saying you can't have friends of the opposite sex. That's not a biblical thing to say. Because the body of Christ has men and women and men and women have complementary gifts-
- Selena:** Brother, sister-
- Ryan:** Brother and sister. Like there are relationships to be had-
- Selena:** It's not about that.
- Ryan:** But in private conversational space online, what good can possibly happen with that? [00:10:00] That could also happen if you include one of your spouse, if you include another man or another woman. So it's multiple people in there and there's accountability in that. And I would contend that there's not anything that can uniquely and only happens in a one-on-one DM between a man and a woman in any sort of Christian capacity that would be necessary.

Selena: Or beneficial, yeah.

Ryan: Or beneficial. And then the fifth one. This one to me... it just occurred to me, and I wanted to include it. But you know how like when you... I think my message is set to private. But if you start having a conversation with somebody, how are they getting there, whether you don't have any sort of barriers between the internet and you, which I don't recommend, you want to have some sort of conversational barrier there. The internet is weird. People will send you stuff just directly.

So if you've accepted their message request or whatever, and now you're going back and forth, there's virtually nothing that they can't just put in front of your face via images, via videos, via whatever. And so basically you are leaving yourself wide open. You're giving somebody out in the ether, whether you know them before or not, you're giving them a direct kind of pipeline into your eyes, into your mind, and even into your heart. There's no boundary there.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So that's a huge red flag.

Selena: Again, this is not to be prudish, not to be legalistic or moralistic. This is really about preserving the unity of our marriage. This is about preserving the love and the depths and the intimacy and our covenant that we have committed to one another. There's no one on the internet that I want to talk to you that I would risk any level of trust or intimacy that we have. There's no one. There never will be. I can say that confidently.

So God has given us instruction. In Ephesians 5, we see that and throughout the whole Bible, especially in Psalms and Proverbs about acting foolish, letting your tongue just go wild, or having no restraint. And so the importance of restraint and boundaries, again, is not to crush your social experience. It's not to crush it, but it's actually to preserve your marriage in order so that it may flourish.

So a few marital rules of thumb to help ensure our unity and the integrity of our covenant. All of these boils down to there's safety in numbers. So direct messaging is just never a good idea one on one with someone who is of the opposite sex.

Ryan: That's the first rule of thumb. So no DMs, no texting one-on-one between the opposite sex. If I've got a surprise or something—this is one caveat—and I

want to coordinate with one of Selena's lady friends, because let's just be honest-

Selena: Lady friends. *[both laughing]* That sounds so [inaudible].

Ryan: What's better than that? Nothing's better.

Selena: My godly sisters in Christ.

Ryan: I'm not gonna say that. *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: You're not gonna say that. One of our friends.

Ryan: Okay, if I'm trying to coordinate with one of your godly sisters in Christ-

Selena: Your girlfriend.

Ryan: One of your lady friends. All of the guys that... like their husbands who I'm friends with, they're not great at that sort of thing. So what I would do is text him and her, and they would both be in on it. And it would be on the up and up. That to me is a really easy, quick solution. If you don't know their spouse personally, then find another way.

Selena: Yeah, absolutely.

Ryan: Write a letter. Don't write a letter. That's the old-timey version of DMs. *[laughs]* Don't do that.

Selena: Don't do that.

Ryan: Figure it out. I am confident that you'll be able to figure that out. Another rule of thumb-

Selena: You mentioned this: the phone drop test.

Ryan: Yeah. What is it?

Selena: So kind of a standard in our marriage is that anytime, anyplace, anywhere, he or I can ask each other to drop our phones. Obviously, we have the codes to all of it. We can unlock and get into everything and we can check anything we want, whenever we want at any time. That's kind of just been the standard. I don't know that we ever have-

Ryan: I was gonna say-

Selena: But again, it's a boundary that's in place in order for the flourishing of our covenant. And we don't have to get close to it to know that it works, right?

Ryan: People get their feathers ruffled over that one, because they're like, "What about my privacy? What about my personal privacy?" And I always want to say, well, you don't have any privacy in your marriage. That's first and foremost. You shouldn't have privacy from-

Selena: Well, that's not privacy. I mean, that's secrecy. *[chuckles]* Right?

Ryan: Okay. So be it. The second thing is, it's not about the person being suspicious and untrusting of you and them inspecting you. It's about you saying "I have nothing to hide," right?

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Those who have nothing to hide, hide nothing. And it's in the spirit of saying, "Listen, anytime I have nothing to hide from you." Now, if I had something to hide, okay, you have two options. You either say I'm not down with the phone drop test. Or you say, "Listen, I've been hiding this from you. I don't like that I've not [00:15:00] been known by you in this way." That's a separate conversation from today's podcast. But that's the point of the test is it keeps us transparent with one another.

Selena: Right. Well, it kind of plays off of this next one that if anything does become questionable, bring it to your spouse immediately. Don't hide it. Don't delay. Resist the urge. Bring it into light. The book of John says, walk in the light as He is in the light. Bring it out. Because nothing good can come from hiding anything in the darkness.

So if you or your spouse have been dealing with something like this, first repent. Repent to God, repent to one another. Check out some of our episodes on rebuilding trust. There's quite a few there. Again, the breaking of trust has many different layers, many different levels. So you kind of have to go at it from whatever level of trust has been broken. There's plenty of books and resources out there.

If you or your spouse have been dealing with something like this and there's been some breaking of trust, first of all, go repent. Repent to God, repent to one another. Bring it into the light. Live in the light. Check out some of the episodes on rebuilding trust, because... trust again, it can be broken at different levels. And so finding, you know where you guys are at. Don't hide. Expose it. Trust that God will use it for His glory and your good. And be willing

to do what needs to be done to get you back in unity, to get you back feeling safe, secure, having that integrity and trust within your marriage.

Ryan: So we want to center this around some scriptures. We started with Ephesians 5, reading some verses out of that. But we also want to just kind of round out this. So DMs is definitely not something that you see mentioned directly in Scripture. We have to infer what is wise. We have to infer what is going to honor-

Selena: Yeah, discern.

Ryan: ...the Lord, what is going to honor one another. What is going to honor your brother or sister on the other end of that DM.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: So we're going to just go through some verses here that compel us to think-

Selena: Biblically and discerning.

Ryan: With discernment and biblically. 1 Corinthians 10:23. "Do All to the Glory of God. All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." DM-ing somebody-

Selena: And hiding it.

Ryan: ...unscrupulously is not thinking-

Selena: Of your neighbor.

Ryan: ...of your neighbor's good. It's thinking of your own good, your own selfish good, right? Not good proper, but good as in my selfish good.

Romans 14:19, "So then let us pursue what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Also, these verses just sit on their own.

Romans 15:2, "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up." 1 Corinthians 8:12. It's similar to the earlier passage.

Selena: 6:12.

- Ryan:** Excuse me, 6:12. "Everything is permissible for me but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."
- Selena:** I think that's another kind of red flag or trigger. If you find yourself running off to answer a DM, running off to go check something, running off to continually entertain this, you know, it is becoming sin, it's becoming enslaving, you're being mastered by it, then is clearly not beneficial, even though it may be permissible for you to talk to someone else through a DM.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, we don't want to stand on the edge of a cliff and then wonder why the slightest breeze blew us over the edge. Right.
- Selena:** Yeah. And I guess some of the final encouragement here of just this is a worthy boundary that we should fight for out of love for our spouse, out of our desire to glorify God, and to live within the obedience that He's commanded, again, because we love Him, because we are so grateful for the work that he has done through Christ.
- John 13:34-35, Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- Ryan:** Wow. Wow. Here are some closing challenges to consider. Some closing questions, I should say. If you are feeling challenged, you're feeling frustrated, or you're still wanting to question whether or not you should be sliding into those DMs, we just ask you to think honestly about why. Why is that something that you want to do so badly?
- I mean, if you can easily say, "Well, I want to do it because she's cute and it makes me feel good about myself that a person like that would want to respond to me," or "I want to do it because I used to know her [00:20:00] from school or whatever, and I want to reconnect," why is that going to help you?
- Selena:** Yeah. How's that going to help you?
- Ryan:** How's that beneficial? How is that not in some way mastering you in that case? And here's another question. What's wrong with your marriage that is compelling you to go to those places to find those things?
- Selena:** Right. Or how are you viewing your marriage? Maybe there isn't something-
- Ryan:** Both and...

Selena: Yeah, both and...

Ryan: It could be both one or both of those things. We can't just sit here and tell you this and just expect you to, you know, if... You have to pray over these things. Let the Holy Spirit convict. I'm fairly confident that this is wisdom. I'm fairly confident that if an emergency did happen and you needed desperate lead to DM a person of the opposite sex to somehow relay emergency information or to save someone's life or to... that would probably be okay. It's not like this is a hard and fast thing. It's the other instances that we're asking you to think honestly about.

Another question. A challenge. Given this conversation is, does your spouse feel loved and sacrificed for and edified by the conversations you're having with the people you're DM-ing with? There's another side to this too. The opposite sex conversation has been the majority of this podcast, but there isn't a sense in which DMs between people of the same sex can also go pretty sour. And I don't mean necessarily in sexual ways. I mean, talking about of course, joking, I'm talking about how it is mastering you, maybe taking too much of your time, talking about the types of things and content you're sharing.

Selena: It's good. It's good.

Ryan: Those can also be equally as destructive.

Selena: Yeah. I think to the work that God might be trying to do in your heart if you are continuing to joke coarsely or to strive after things that financially that you just... you and your wife, if have discussed that we are not going to do those things, or we can't afford those things right now, how is that helping you? How is that actually building your unity? Really it's providing more division if anything. So...

Ryan: Yeah. So try to think wisely about this stuff. So if you're feeling convicted, we can't enact the change in your own heart. But we would pray that the Lord convicts you as He sees fit through this.

If you're just watching this or hearing this and you've never listened to an episode before, one of the things we'd like to do at the end of is we'd like to remind people why we do this. And that's why we're even still married, it's because of the goodness and grace of Christ and the love of God that was made manifest in Him, that was exemplified in Him and now has been given to us through the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit Himself.

And if that all sounds like Christianese, weird speak to you, that's fine. The bottom line is this. God loves you. And He's proven it to you through sending His Son to die the death we should have died. And He didn't stay dead. He rose again unto life and conquered death so that we might be raised with Him again when He returns. And that is the good news. That's the gospel. That you are loved by God, and He's proven it in Christ.

And we want to invite you into placing your trust in Him saying, "Jesus, I can't earn your love. I just have to receive it. I can't earn my salvation. It has to be given to me by grace and that grace comes when I believe that you are the Savior that you've claimed it to be. If you want to know more about that go to thenewsisgood.com. That'll get you on the path toward becoming a Christian, finding a good church. We pray that You would take that step.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for helping us hash through some of these gray areas of life and even marriage. I pray that you'd help us live as people who are wise not as unwise, but knowing that the days are evil, counting our days, understanding that we are called to live out otherworldly wisdom. It may be counter to maybe what the culture is telling us is okay. And you know what? That's okay because you're not calling us to live according to cultural wisdom. You're calling us to live according to your wisdom.

I pray for the husbands and the wives who are struggling in whatever area of their marriage, you may strengthen them. Bring them closer to you and closer to one another. Lord, change their hearts. You are in the business of changing hearts. We trust you to do that. We love you, Jesus. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, if you're still watching, thank you so much. Go and hit that subscribe button if you haven't already. If you're listening, do the same thing but in the app of your choice.

Selena: And thank you to our patrons who have supported us and gotten us this far and continue to support us. If that's something you'd like to do, we just ask that you pray about it and consider it and be in unity about whatever decision you make. You can go to fiercemarriage.com/partner.

Ryan: Nailed it.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Nailed it.

- Selena:** I don't do the marketing side of this.
- Ryan:** I always love when Selena does the request-
- Selena:** I usually mess them up.
- Ryan:** ...because more people become patrons. [00:25:00] *[both laughs]* Just saying. We love that salty and sweet.
- Selena:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.
- Ryan:** Oh, what a treat when Selena Frederick, my best friend, saltiest best friend- *[laughs]*
- Selena:** I'm liking this. Okay, moving on. Close this show down.
- Ryan:** I'd say that Selena... We're pregnant and Selena, your saltiness isn't quite as salty when you're pregnant.
- Selena:** No. I'm just trying to hold it together, okay? I'm just trying to keep this brain firing and keep everything firing and-
- Ryan:** Okay. I'll take it. I'll take it. [Selena chuckles] Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast. This episode is—
- Selena:** In the can.
- Ryan:** See you again in about seven days. Until next time—
- Selena:** Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Ephesians 5:15-17
 - 1 Corinthians 10:23-24
 - Romans 14:19 NIV
 - Romans 15:2
 - 1 Corinthians 8:12
 - John 13:34-35

- **Recommended resource**
 - [thenewsisgood.com](https://www.thenewsisgood.com)

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