

OUR SECRET WEAPON FOR COMMUNICATION

<https://fiercemarriage.com/our-secret-weapon-for-communication>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: All right, friends, well, today we are going to share with you one of our secret weapons in communication. *[laughs]* Which is ironic because it's not gonna be very secret after we share it.

Selena: It's not gonna be very secret. It's probably not actually that secret.

Ryan: And we don't have secrets, which is why we're gonna talk about it.

Selena: It's true.

Ryan: So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:00:16] <music>

Ryan: You know, it's funny, we did an interview with some folks back in July. So a few months ago. And these people are not Christians, but we had conversation around-

Selena: We always talk to Christians, but-

Ryan: We had a conversation around-

Selena: Polyamory.

Ryan: They were for polyamory—I'm sure the video will come out sometime in the near future—and we are not. We are for biblical monogamy. And they blew their mind that we... I think I'm accurate in saying this. They blew their mind that we don't have any secrets. Am I right?

Selena: Well, except this one I have. No, I'm kidding. They couldn't believe or understand... Like we were the anomaly which we felt like they were an anomaly maybe to ask but they were baffled by the whole thing. Which was interesting because... why?

Ryan: I don't know. You started the conversation. *[laughs]*

Selena: Why did you go to talking about them? *[laughs]*

- Ryan:** Because when I started the episode, I said, "We don't keep secrets and we're gonna share the secret with you."
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** It was a very pleasant exchange.
- Selena:** It was.
- Ryan:** It was very different worldviews. And we pray that the Lord uses it to bring them to Christ. And we told them as much *[laughs]* during the interview.
- Selena:** We got to share Jesus with them.
- Ryan:** It was awesome.
- Selena:** That's pretty cool.
- Ryan:** It was really awesome. So, Selena, I picture little Selena-
- Selena:** Okay, well, before that, I am Selena, this is my husband Ryan. We're the faces and voices behind all things Fierce Marriage, Fierce Parenting, Fierce Families. Welcome to our space. I hate to say "show" because we're not so showy. *[Ryan laughs]* So welcome to our space. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Selena's show. Salty and sweet. Oh, what a treat!
- Selena:** Stop. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Mostly treats.
- Selena:** He names everything after me.
- Ryan:** We put up a home gym. It's called Selena's gym for muscles. She never used it. But I'm inspired. I go in there-
- Selena:** I did use it this week. Okay, how dare you?
- Ryan:** You did. You did some kettlebell-
- Selena:** I'm growing a baby here. So that's fine.
- Ryan:** No excuses. *[laughs]*

- Selena:** Excuses. All right. Well, let's take it back- what? Like 30 years? *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Oh, my goodness. Sure.
- Selena:** 25 years? So we've been married for almost 20 years. We met in high school. And this was the beginnings of Ryan and Selena.
- Ryan:** So good.
- Selena:** Just a little teenager beginnings of-
- Ryan:** This goes all the way back to the very early stages of our relationship.
- Selena:** All the way back. All the way back.
- Ryan:** All the way back. Ground zero. Day one.
- Selena:** Well, you liked me for longer.
- Ryan:** I know a good thing when I see it. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** And I am just slow.
- Ryan:** And it took me a millisecond to know that woman is incredible. Of course you were about 14 or 15 at the time we were doing that. It was eighth grade when I first saw you.
- Selena:** Okay, weirdo.
- Ryan:** That fateful morning. I was in eighth grade too, so it wasn't weird. *[Selena laughs]* That fateful morning across the gymnasium-
- Selena:** You came to visit and you were playing my favorite game ever. Okay. So we're talking *[chuckles]* about our secret but first of all, we're going back in time, going to high school years. You had transferred from one Christian school to ours because his mom was an administrator and was hired on as vice principal or something like that.
- Ryan:** She got a job so I had to-
- Selena:** So you got to go to school for free at our school, my school. *[laughs]* It was in the fall. We remember high school... I remember.
- Ryan:** You're remembering it wrong.

Selena: When did-

Ryan: Of course, it was fall.

Selena: Oh, okay.

Ryan: You didn't give me the time of day, and you were just sophomore.

Selena: Right. I'm saying we're just sophomore year. We're talking over-

Ryan: You were just too cool for school.

Selena: Okay, there's a sophomore year. So we had already acknowledged one another I think the first-

Ryan: I thought you skipped an entire year.

Selena: ...the freshman year.

Ryan: So I spent a year. I saw you in eighth grade, the spring of eighth grade.

Selena: Because you came to visit. Your mom was interviewed.

Ryan: I said, "Wow, I'm gonna marry that woman someday. We're going to do marriage ministry for life." *[Selena laughs]*

Selena: You don't even know if you're going to the same school next year. *[laughs]*

Ryan: "We're gonna write books together. We're gonna make babies." I just knew it.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: You know, I'm a man of- *[laughs]*

Selena: Some things.

Ryan: God has been gracious. So I ended up transferring in ninth grade. I spent all of ninth grade basically thinking that I'm just trying to find my place in this new microcosm of society.

Selena: Breached his hair.

Ryan: And Selena was part of this elite group-

- Selena:** 90s grunge.
- Ryan:** She's the upper class, *[Selena laughs]* I am the proletariat... *[laughs]* Is that the right one? I think it's the right one.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Yeah. I just had given up at that point. I thought, "She's out of my league."
- Selena:** You know were kind of settling for someone else I think a little that time.
- Ryan:** Of course, I was. Everyone was settling for someone.
- Selena:** Everyone was settling.
- Ryan:** I would settle... anything else would have been settling but me. *[Selena chuckles]* [00:05:00]
- Selena:** So were in English class-
- Ryan:** You keep jumping ahead. So ninth grade, and then summer happens, and then we go to 10th grade. I think I got-
- Selena:** You have your walking moment of-
- Ryan:** I didn't watch that movie. She's all that. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** He's all that. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** I was going through Grunch thing, I had braces on, I was a total dweeb. I ended up getting like... my hair grew out, all the bleach tips, got the braces off. I had been lifting weights for football.
- Selena:** Went to football camp. Walks in like the pre-day to school actually starting. And you had to be all dressed up. I think it was like a football requirement or something. And you walk in and I'm like, "Who is that?" *[Ryan chuckles]* And all the girls are like, "That's Ryan. Oh, that's Ryan. He's so nice. That's Ryan."
- Ryan:** We were in a tiny little Christian school. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** I was like, "Ryan who?" "Ryan Frederick."
- Ryan:** I have been here the whole year, Selena, pining for your attention..

- Selena:** Well, you didn't make much of an effort. *[laughs]* Until this day-
- Ryan:** I was glowing inside. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Until this day, which you didn't even make the effort, I just noticed you. Anyways, we're reminiscing too long. We're an English class, I don't remember what book we're reading but we're just discussing it, and Ryan raised his hand to answer a question. And he's giving this precise, scholarly, articulate answer using these big verbose words. And I was just like, "What? Who is this guy talking in here? He's so smooth." *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** I never once thought I was smooth.
- Selena:** No, he didn't. But that's what made you smooth.
- Ryan:** We had just learned the word "sesquipedalian" though in word powers.
- Selena:** Oh, we did, yes.
- Ryan:** So it was not hard to sound smart when you know that word.
- Selena:** What does it mean?
- Ryan:** Somebody who uses big words I think. *[Selena laughs]* I think that's what that means.
- Selena:** So anyways, he caught my attention not meaning to, just in how... I could tell that he enjoyed reading and that he enjoyed words, and I assumed writing, right? I was smitten. He was not... I think he thought the ship had sailed there.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Were you surprised when I started giving you attention? No. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** I think I was pleasantly delighted. The prophecies were coming true.
- Selena:** Finally. Finally. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** So the whole point of this is that we were an English class, you finally took notice, we started becoming friends. I think we had maybe another class together too. But we ended up becoming friends and we started exchanging these notes. It started out just kind of just friendly banter back and forth.

Obviously, there's some of the underlying teenage tension that happened to be-

Selena: Well, because we didn't have phones. You didn't text. We wrote notes, people.

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah.

Selena: How would we pass them off? Because you'd walk that way and I'd walk this way-

Ryan: We would just give high fives to pass the notes, which it's really cringey in hindsight.

Selena: But so cute.

Ryan: I think it's cringey.

Selena: It's so cute.

Ryan: Anyway, because I just wanted an excuse to touch your hand because we weren't holding hands yet.

Selena: Sometimes we held a little bit.

Ryan: Just a little longer. Just a little longer. You know how it is.

Selena: Just a little bit.

Ryan: Anyway, ended up passing notes. It became kind of a means of communication for us and a means of connection for us. Now, long story short, clearly, I got the girl. We started dating sometime after that. We dated two years in high school, two years college, got married. The rest is history.

But that kind of cemented in our minds. And here we are 10 minutes in getting to the point which is the secret weapon is the written word. The written word. Specifically, the handwritten word. Not the text message-

Selena: Not the emails.

Ryan: Not the DMs.

Selena: Because everybody writes. Everybody writes. But you're actually writing something with your own hand. I don't know. I treasure something like the recipes that my grandma hands down that she's written in her handwriting,

right? Or, of course, the letters that he wrote me with his chicken scratch of high school.

Ryan: It's still chicken scratch.

Selena: It's still chicken scratch. *[chuckles]* I mean, we look at those notes, and we kind of giggle at how we process information about each other, how we cared about each other, or the things of God, right? We were so Christian. *[laughs]*

Ryan: I was trying to impress you.

Selena: I was so impressed.

Ryan: These notes are special. They can be the markers of time, like you said. They carry with them... One of the things I love about them is there's no shortcuts, right? You can't fake it. Everybody's got-

Selena: You can copy and paste it. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: Everybody who owns a house, you've gotten a postcard in the mail, it's like they try to act like it was handwritten. They try to make it look like ink. It's very clearly not ink of that kind. So you can't fake it. And it takes time. You can't rush it.

We're writing books on communication currently and I think the analogy I used in this chapter—we talked about this—is it's like Scotch. Like a good scotch, right? If you're a Scotch fan, you know what I'm talking about. It can't be faked. There's no way to fake the time and what happens. It's the same thing with... I may have lost all the Baptist- *[laughs]*

Selena: Right. It is that much more important and valuable. Again, I think it's so important to write things down [00:10:00] as far as being markers of time on anniversaries or kids' birthdays, things they can collect over the years. He always gets me a nice card. I think I get you nice cards too.

Ryan: I try to find funny cards.

Selena: He always gives me funny cards. And I'm always like, "You're the love of my life," and always so serious. And he's like-

Ryan: I write that sometimes.

Selena: He sends funny ones. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Now, that's the main premise. Like there's something special about the written word. And encouraging you here, like, when it comes to communication, this to me is a secret weapon. Because there's three reasons why we should write to communicate in marriage. We're gonna get through those here. I think there's something special about just giving those-

Selena: It's disarming too, which we'll talk about.

Ryan: Selena you wrote this. You said, "Whatever your objective, writing is a uniquely powerful and productive way to process your feelings and emotions. Powerful and productive." And we've discovered that this is true in our marriage.

So the three functions are this. I'll say them quickly and we'll explain each one. So venting through rough drafts or rough first drafts. That's a good one. Responding to tough situations and organizing emotions. And the last one is letters of love—expressing your love to one another.

So, Selena, again, we are writing these books on communication, there's going to be a book for husbands and a book for wives. We're taking a lot of this from Selena's chapter on this topic. And Selena, you wrote this: "Venting through rough first drafts." So what did you mean by that?

Selena: Well, for some of us that feel like the emotions just run high, they run hot, and we just got to get them out. It's not always productive to just direct them verbally at our husband or our spouse.

Ryan: It's never productive. *[laughs]*

Selena: It's never productive probably when it's just emotionally charged. You know, something his mom actually suggested was... She doesn't meddle at all. But if I asked her a question or something, and it was kind of in the early years of our marriage, she said, "Well, why don't you try writing a letter to him? You can decide to give it to him or not, depending on what it is." In this case, typically, it's better for me not to give those letters if I'm feeling very venty in the moment.

But it does kind of release some steam, right? You can blow off some steam. But you also have to be careful that you are not just like shaking your fist at God, like angry with Him and you know, would caution you and your anger, in your venting.

Ryan: Or being otherwise unhealthy. Like it's not healthy to... You wouldn't just imagine that you... Like you don't want us to go off and dishonor your spouse

because they're never gonna see it. There's still something happening in your heart.

Selena: You're still creating a habit of thought or you're giving into something that is not honoring to your spouse.

Ryan: We are never in Scripture given the permission to just let our hearts just kind of... Let our flesh our heart out, if that makes sense.

Selena: Right. Sometimes it's good to get some first draft thoughts out of, you know, "This made me really angry or something." And I guess, you know, that's okay to say that. But if I write that and then I sit there for a moment say, "Well, why did this make me so angry? Well, here's some of the reasons? Are those reasons even valid?"

Then you start kind of getting down into the actual deeper issues, which hopefully lead you to communicate more clearly with one another and in a more productive way that... we may still have some emotion, but it won't be so charged. Very good.

Ryan: So it's a way of processing through that, which is actually the next one. So the first one is just venting to try to like begin to untangle that rat's nest, and then to begin to kind of freeball the yarn, so to speak. The next one is responding to tough situations, okay?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So now you have the full intent of sharing this letter. So the other one is kind of like you might not. The point of it is to help organize your emotions and thoughts. This letter responding to tough situations is written to express something very specific to your spouse. I mean, you can think of any type of trial that a couple would go through. I mean, you can have things like sin that's been committed against one of the spouses by another spouse, you could have a tragic event that you go through like a miscarriage or a diagnosis that is dire or a loss of a relative or loss of a job or any sort of tough thing.

Selena: External. Yeah.

Ryan: Or it could be an ongoing kind of slow burn issue where we have a lot of wives write that their husbands—it tends to be husbands—are addicted to video games. And we have good friends, Nathan and Anna Sutherland. They do the Gospel Tech Podcast. I've talked about this topic a lot with him. And the issue is not the Video games, the issue is the neglect of your spouse.

- Selena:** And family.
- Ryan:** So that can be a slow burn thing. And as a wife, you may feel like you have no way of bringing that up that doesn't create an argument, doesn't create division, doesn't make it so you don't talk for three days.
- Selena:** Well it's hard in the moment too to have all of your thoughts organized, everything, at least for me and to be able to like, "Okay, I've got all my gear, my guns or whatever I've got ready to go." And then all of a sudden he responds [00:15:00] the way he does and you're all of a sudden just thrown off and the conversation just becomes attacking rather than, again, productive.
- Ryan:** You put it on paper and now a husband who would otherwise have witty retorts or argumentative retorts or thoughtful but convincing arguments against what you're trying to say, that husband doesn't have the forum to say those things until the letter is read.
- Selena:** Right. Ideally, yes. But he would read and not just-
- Ryan:** Ideally, yeah. Obviously, he needs to engage. This goes both ways.
- Selena:** They're very disarming and they're not as threatening, I would say as well. So it's a medium or a mode that is not so attacking. And hopefully there would be more of an openness.
- Ryan:** So we picked on the husbands. Let's pick on the wives for a second.
- Selena:** Bring it. *[Ryan laughs]*
- Ryan:** You have a husband who feels beat down because his wife is naggy or his wife is degrading or emasculating to him, and he doesn't feel like he can talk to her because she's the arguer, she can articulate things that he can't, and she can always come back with the tone and the retort to be right.
- Selena:** That just shuts him down, yeah.
- Ryan:** So now this husband... Again, we said secret weapon. Again, you're not trying to hurt your spouse with a weapon, so to speak. But it's a weapon against the dysfunction, against the broken communication. So this husband now has a way to say, "Listen, this is how I feel. This is what my hope is. I want to have closeness with you. I want to be able to lead and love you the way Christ has commanded me to. I don't feel that I can because of this insecurity, because of this insecurity, because of how... typically this situation. You know, you start

to articulate it. You have all these reasons. And you can even interlace some scripture in there.

And if you want to be really vigilant about it, you could even say, I would love to hear your response in a written letter. And not just bring a letter to me, throw it on the table and start yelling at me, right?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: But instead, let's have this dialogue in a slower format so that we both choose our words more wisely, more carefully, more intentionally. That's the second one. The first one was it's a venue through which you can vent your most disorganized emotions and feelings. And whether or not you give that to your spouse is up to your discernment. The objective there is not to hide, but to untangle the rat's nest.

The next one is responding to tough situations. It gives you a very-

Selena: Time and space to organize.

Ryan: Time and space to organize your thoughts. And the third reason why writing to communicate is powerful is it gives you a unique place in which to express your love and affection for your spouse. It's a love letter. Classic love letter. And I think when you say, "Hey, write a letter to your spouse," that's immediately what you think: "I need to write a love letter. It's got to have..."

Selena: You know, we have this amazing thing that we can search the whole internet for, a love poem or lyrics to a song or something that speaks to you and your husband. And so what are you going to put in that letter? You can express your love, I think, in many different ways, but through words, right?

Ryan: Yeah. But you have the format to do that. And I dare even say, like, why not write something? Write a stanza or two that expresses your love. Poetry is such a lost art, I feel like, among mainstream people. It used to be that people wrote poetry to each other. They would write thoughtful words. I'm a big fan of the Haiku. *[both laughs]* It's easy, short, it takes nothing. But you have the time to actually articulate how you're feeling.

I love that you said, Selena, you said, "You don't have to be in high school to write love notes to each other and you don't have to be newly dating or married to get twitterpated once in a while. *[Selena chuckles]* You're a husband and you're his wife. You alone have exclusive rights to send and receive love letters between you. Take advantage of this unique benefit. Use those letters to not only express your love and appreciation for him, but also

to encourage him in the only way a wife can." I love it. I feel like it's such a powerful tool that every couple... It cost nothing, except a little bit time, a lot of thought. *[both laughs]*

Selena: It cost nothing. He always underestimates the cost of things. It's really funny.

Ryan: It's nothing monetarily. Felt like-

Selena: Financially, yes.

Ryan: I'm not saying the secret weapon to better communication is a seven-day cruise. That's not a secret weapon. It's this.

So where is this all coming from? We talked about the word and writing words. Again, we're coming off of this: we're just in editing process of these two books we've written on communication between a husband and a wife. Of all the ways, and this is the underlying premise, of all the ways that God could have communicated His love to us, He gave us His word. He gave us His written Word and He gave us His word made flesh in Jesus Christ. And in Christ is the maximal fulfillment and the proof of God's love.

1 John 3:16 says, "By this we know love: that he laid down his life for us." "So there's no better news than the Gospel. And if God chose the written word for us to know and experience Him," this is Selena's again, "we can believe that there is value and purpose in the communicative purpose, [00:20:00] process, excuse me, of writing." There's value and purpose in communicating through writing.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Even and especially, I would argue, in marriage. So I guess that's an encouragement for you.

Selena: Yeah. When was the last time you wrote your spouse a letter? And what did it say? And what could it say? These are things that you can keep, you know, well beyond your own life. Your children can have these letters. I don't know, there's just something about the written word. Again, the marker of time and you know, having a spouse read into your heart and read what is going on, and how you not only just feel about them, but your affections for them and understanding those in a deeper way.

Ryan: I wanna spend a moment just kind of debunking too the sense that you have to be a good writer to do this.

Selena: Right. It's not about how well you write.

Ryan: I wouldn't consider myself to be particularly skilled at this sort of thing. Because you can edit and erase and think. You can kind of muster up and you can put together enough to make it-

Selena: Well, and you know your spouse. You know me. And so what you say rings true with me. So it doesn't have to be perfect letter because I would be like, "A perfect letter by whose standards?" Right. It's between husband and wife.

Ryan: It needs to be distinctly from you. And that's again, you can't fake it. So that's the encouragement is it doesn't have to be perfect. You don't have to be William Shakespeare to write a thoughtful letter to your spouse. You don't need to be a trained psychologist to express your emotions well. It just takes some intentionality.

So here's the encouraging for the other side. If you're a wife receiving a letter from your husband or vice versa, receive it with charity. Don't look at it critically, don't read it critically. Read it so that you might understand and hear of the heart of your spouse, because there's nothing that will shut down communication faster than a critical spirit.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Especially when you extend yourself in an emotional and vulnerable way like this.

Selena: If you get that letter, you know, take some time with it. I wouldn't respond, again, right off the cuff. I would definitely let some time settle and try to process as much as maybe you need to write a letter of your own as well.

Ryan: So we hope this has helped you. Again, this is our secret weapon for communication. I feel like when things get the toughest, this is kind of the ripcord that we can pull to say like, "This will get us going again. This will get us talking again." And like we said, with the word and God giving us His word and sending His incarnate word, words have power. And the word with the most power is scriptures of God, the Bible, the Word of God, and the fulfillment of those scriptures, Jesus Christ Himself, who was the incarnate word sent forth by the Father.

We'd be remiss if we didn't mention that He is inviting you into placing your faith with Him so that you might understand life. He says, "Those who drink water will be thirsty again but those who drink from my everlasting water, my living water, will never thirst again." He's talking about drinking of Himself.

So we want to invite you to place your faith in Christ. And if that feels like something God is pulling you into, we encourage you to take that next step. And the next step for you is this: go to thenewsisgood.com. There's an outline of what it means to be Christian. There is also a way to find a church there. We just ask that you would make that step. Take that step of faith because we're telling you, friend, God is good, His Word is true, and the love that He gives is everlasting.

Let's pray. Jesus, thank you for your word. Thank you for the gift it is to be able to communicate. Thank you for the gift it is to have a spouse. I pray that you'd help us communicate well to the gifts that are the spouses you've given us and you've given the various couples that are watching or hearing this. I pray that would embolden them to try new things that might be hard or inconvenient or just maybe a little uncomfortable so that they might experience new growth in their marriage and they might glorify your name all the more.

Encouraged the discouraged spouse, husband, and wife who feels like their marriage is on the brink. I pray that you've encouraged them and enliven them. Lord, I ask you to heal their marriage for their good and your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, thanks for joining us. Again, Ryan and Selena. Those are our names. *[chuckles]* We're doing this ministry, but it's largely possible (a) because the Lord allows it, of course, and (b) because we have partners, patrons that say that this work matters. And you kind of helped us. Our patrons are the reason we're still here. Because we sell books, that's how we primarily raise money to support this ministry but that's not always easy to do.

And so our patrons are a huge part of that. Thank you. If that's you, please just hear our hearts. Thank you so much. If you want to become a part of that team, part of that small community, go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. There are some details there. Other than that, if you can't do that, fine. You're still welcome here. We love doing this.

Selena: Yeah. Pray for us. We'll take prayers.

Ryan: Yes, by all means. All right, this episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce. [00:25:00]

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - 1 John 3:16

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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