

ARE PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENTS BIBLICAL?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/are-prenuptial-agreements-biblical>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: You know, when we first were engaged, one of the biggest concerns I had was that Selena would make me sign a prenup because I just married her for her money. *[laughs]* I'm a gold digger.

Selena: Jokes on him. Jokes on him because I was not rich at all. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Neither was I. I don't know. My janitor salary... I mean, I was bringing home the bacon.

Selena: You were bringing home the bacon.

Ryan: A little bacon that people would throw in the garbage. *[both laughs]*

Selena: God gave you that job right when we needed it.

Ryan: Absolutely. And bacon is delicious. *[both laughs]*

Selena: So we're talking about whether or not a Christian couple should get a prenuptial agreement before they get married. Or if you have one in place, maybe we would hopefully encourage you to question that decision.

Ryan: Talk about that.

Selena: Talk about it. The caveat here is that we will be talking about divorce at some level, but we're talking about it from the standpoint of you getting married, like a new couple getting married and already considering what will happen if there's a plan B. Like, this is the plan B, right? What if we get divorced? You know, there's that question. So we're not talking about it as-

Ryan: We're not saying ask that question. Let's get into the episode. *[both chuckles]*
We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:17] <music>

Selena: Truth be told, we have done an episode on this before, but it was one of our first episodes ever. And it was-

Ryan: Really?

- Selena:** Yeah. It was number like 36 or something.
- Ryan:** That's why you couldn't find that rundown. *[Selena laughs]* It was a long time ago.
- Selena:** It was a long time ago. However, it did come in as a question from a viewer. They were wondering... Or a listener. We didn't have viewers at that point, but...
- Ryan:** This came in again, though. No, it did. Yeah, it came in again, through somebody's writing into our website. So if you're not aware, we haven't mentioned it in a while, but fiercemarriage.com is the site where we put all of our marriage resources. On there, if you go to fiercemarriage.com/... I think it's "ask." Is that what it was?
- Selena:** A-S-K.
- Ryan:** Yeah. That was a point of contention early on really is pronounce that K. *[both laughs]* There's a forum there where you can submit questions. It's on our website. We haven't mentioned the website on the podcast in a while.

So we got this question that came through to the website. I'm just going to read it. It comes from a gal named Heather. So Heather said this: "Help! I'm crazy in love with and about to marry someone I love very much. He's 50 years old. I'm 49. He's a widower, I'm divorced, so second marriage for both of us. Except the other day, we were talking about the legalities and estate planning and he essentially told me that he had been planning to have me sign a prenup. He's since changed his mind," so good man, "he's since changed his mind and has had different papers drawn up but I'm having a hard time getting past his original intentions. How do I get past this hurt? It doesn't even seem rational. But it's there nonetheless." And she's saying that her being hurt doesn't seem rational because he changed his mind." I don't think it's irrational to be hurt after that because it reveals something about his intentions.

So for the sake of this episode, we're gonna set aside the... there's a remarriage question in there as well. We're gonna set that aside because we really just want to talk about the prenup, what a prenup is, what it hopes to accomplish, and why, okay, we're just gonna say it right out the gate, why we think it's antithetical to biblical marriage.

Anyway, those questions do come in. We're addressing a question here today. And that happens to be the question. So the question remains: is a prenuptial agreement... Is that okay?

- Selena:** Is that something that Christians should participate in? Let's just define some of our terms here. So a prenup according to the dictionary is an agreement made by a couple before they marry concerning the ownership of their respective assets should the marriage fail. So-
- Ryan:** Which is why you made me sign one because of all your assets. *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** I did not make him sign anything. So do we know what a prenup is? There's the definition. Do we understand its purpose? What does the Bible say about it? Because I think sometimes we can, as Christians, take these things too lightly, just add it to the stack of paperwork of getting married. Like we're combining accounts, we're doing these things. It's just kind of like a checklist thing. But I think that we should... And maybe I'm minimizing it in my own head. But I do think that we run the fear of underestimating the impact of this type of decision, which sounds like may have been the case with this couple.
- Ryan:** Sure.
- Selena:** I mean, he changed his mind. I think...
- Ryan:** So he probably had... So Heather, to speak to you directly, he probably had some people in his life that had seen him become a widower. They're concerned with the wealth that he's amassed, and they're seeing another woman come into his life and they're saying, "Well, aren't you going to protect yourself? I mean, you don't know. You don't know the motives of this." They don't know you, right, [00:05:00] and so they are questioning.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So they're putting this in his mind or he's getting inputs from somewhere and so he thought, "Okay, yeah, I guess that makes sense."
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** And then when he had to face the actual reality of that decision, that's when he backpedaled and said, "Okay."
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** And backpedaling is okay if you learn something, you're updating your knowledge.

Selena: And also if they are older and one's a widower, how long have they been on their own making decisions on your own, right? I mean, we got married really young and so a prenup was not honestly something we ever thought about. But you do see people getting married later or they wait, and maybe they've accumulated more in their career. So there's more of this kind of "this is mine, and I want to protect it." I think like a bent or an attitude or default. I think that the battle becomes a bit harder as you get older and as you live more life, right?

Ryan: I mean, I can see that. I think you can only really have that sort of hesitancy if you don't truly understand what biblical covenant and biblical marriage is.

Selena: Right. Absolutely. And there's two ways that you can approach a prenup, which we're going to talk about.

Ryan: I just want to lay the foundation here. When you are engaging or agreeing to a biblical marriage, it comes with it rights, it comes with it responsibilities from both sides. The husband has responsibilities, the husband has rights.

This goes all the way back to the Israelite people. Like if a husband died, his widow had rights and the relatives of that husband had an obligation that came along with that covenantal arrangement between that husband and wife. All the way into the New Testament when Paul talks about, you know, do not deny, do not deprive one another of your kind of marital rights. And he's talking about intimacy in that sense but there's other rights there.

So the husband has rights and responsibilities, the wife has rights and responsibilities that go along with marriage. Now, when you introduce a prenup into that situation, it's like you're saying, "You get all these rights and responsibilities, but I'm going to take back some of those. Those aren't included." Well, now it's no longer a covenantal biblical marriage.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: You've changed the nature of the covenant.

Selena: Right. It's become much more contractual. I mean, think about what it says to your spouse or your future spouse. Like, "I'm committed to you, we're gonna get married. I love you. You're the one for me. Except. Like, except." Right?

Ryan: "I'm committed until I'm not" [*Selena chuckles*] and then I want my stuff back. [*both laughs*] That's what it comes down to.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: And that's like, why are you getting married if that's the mindset going into it?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Again, I applaud this man that we're talking about, who raised the question.

Selena: Yeah, they worked through it.

Ryan: They worked through it. He saw the error and he turned. But if someone is holding on to this kind of like, "No, this is right because I want to protect," why are you getting married? You're not covenant really committing yourself to this person." It's something else.

Selena: And I think just an encouragement to Heather, you know, it's hurtful but we will be hurt in marriage still, too. And it's frustrating. I think that you can't just stew in it. We have to go to our spouse, we have to go to our husband and say, "I know we've kind of resolved this, but this just keeps coming up in my heart. This just keeps coming up in my... I'm hurt. How can we work through this? Because I don't want it to fester." You want reconciliation. You want it to end. You don't want to sit here. Clearly, she's written that. So I think just voicing it and helping, you know, make sure you're on the same page.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. And try to find that place of forgiveness again. Forgiveness is a... You can have... Oh, how do I say this? You can be living in a state of having forgiven somebody without feeling the effects of that forgiveness. It doesn't mean that forgiveness isn't there. It doesn't mean you haven't extended it. It just means that you're still working through the consequences of that action.

So I guess don't let this skew your view of what forgiveness is. You've forgiven him, it's done. You're not gonna hold it against him morally. Christ is not going to hold it against him morally because you've forgiven. It's done.

Now, work to get through those emotions. Work to get to the effects of that forgiveness, which again, is that oneness. It's that thought that you're not wondering if he's, you know, having second thoughts. I would hope that you'd be encouraged by the fact that he did so quickly turn around so.

Selena: So there's two approaches, of course, to the idea of a prenup. We have the biblical worldview, which we were going to list out a few things. We've already kind of touched on some of them. But the second one is the secular, more of a pragmatic approach. Again, what are you actually saying to your spouse in these different approaches?

We did some research, and we can't even name the article, but I was talking about like 10 reasons why you should get a prenup. So this is the logic and the idea- [00:10:00]

Ryan: It's the worldview.

Selena: ...behind why the world thinks you should get those, or get a prenup. Quote unquote, "It shows your partner that you're realistic, responsible and a forward thinking person. *[Ryan laughs]* It's an attractive trait and something ladies like to see for men." *[both laughs]*

Ryan: I hope you see this in me. But I'm so realistic that I don't think it's really going to work. I'm realistic enough to know that this has about 8 to 10 years in it and then I'm going to want my stuff back. *[both laughs]*

Selena: I'm gonna want my stuff back.

Ryan: That's so ridiculous.

Selena: Right. I don't know if we should contrast it with a biblical view or if we should just kind of walk through this. But you know, it's a backup plan, a safety net. Your stuff is kind of spoken for. Right? So you're protecting...

Ryan: Oh, my word! *[laughs]*

Selena: Well, it could be you're protecting like a forthcoming inheritance, right? They said in this thing there are real gold diggers out there, which is true. There are people that they want money. And so it's supposed to be a means of protection, and you're just like, "Protecting from what?" If I'm marrying this person, then there's gotta be something... This just doesn't make sense.

Ryan: Just don't get married if you can't confidently covenant with that person. Like, no one's making you get married to that. Why are you marrying somebody that you can't trust?

Selena: Well, it changes the playing field, right? Because instead of living into this covenantal view, which is what we would advise, right, with a biblical worldview, it's becoming more contractual once again. Marriage is more of a commodity to you than an actual covenant and relationship with your spouse. It's this attitude of you will add value to my life so we should get married, right? Like, you're gonna add value, you're gonna make me happy. But as soon as you stop adding that value, as soon as you stop making me happy or you get fat or something- *[both laughs]*

- Ryan:** Why did you look at me? You know I'm sensitive.
- Selena:** Because I am the one right now because there's a baby in here. But as soon as you stop adding value to my life, then I'm gonna walk away. So it's very contractual. It's not anything near what the Bible has purposed for marriage, what the Bible says and instructed us in terms of marriage. So God's design for marriage, the biblical view, unless you have something else you'd like to say about the secular pragmatic.
- Ryan:** Well, I'm still a little bit baffled. The objectives are contrary to one another, right? It's like you say, "I bought a house. Let's build a house right here. And I'm going to build it on this like set of wheels but I want to live here, but I'm actually gonna put the wheels there if you want to live here." Just in case. Well, the house is supposed to be here."
- Selena:** Sorry, I'm just thinking of Michael Scott when he's like trying to adopt a baby. It's like, "I don't even know if I want a kid in nine months."
- Ryan:** That's exactly it. Find me a cheaper baby.
- Selena:** That's expensive. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Go find a cheaper baby. That's a Michael Scott quote. In other words, this marriage, if you're not willing to covenant, if you're committing to something, but you're adding a prenup to it, I'm willing to say it's effectively not a biblical marriage.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** Now there is going to be a covenantal component there and God will have his own... Like, if you stand at the altar and you say I do and you make the vows, but the financial pieces out... Okay, so you can still have a marriage of that person. I just think... I don't understand why you... It breaks my brain. I don't understand why you would do that. There's more to marriage than just money, of course, but I don't understand it.
- So let's talk about the... do you want to contrast here?
- Selena:** Biblical world.
- Ryan:** The biblical side. God's design for marriage is permanent, right? Ideally-
- Selena:** In this life, on this earth.

Ryan: In this life. Again, we see examples in Scripture when the ideal was not met. And so their concession was made among the Israelites and Moses said that "the people appalled me to concession." In 1 Corinthians 4, when the ideal is not met, but the design of marriage isn't changed. Marriage is designed to last between one man and one woman for their lives, for their lifetime together. That's what the institution is for. It is effectively permanent. Now, it's not permanent in eternal sense. Marriages don't persist into eternity. But that one flesh here and now is-

Selena: You can't undo it.

Ryan: You can't undo it. It's one flesh when that marriage is consummated. I heard it said, I won't get into that, but there is an actual... when the consummation happens is kind of the ratification of the covenantal bond. Some would say that a marriage up until that point can still be an old. Even if it's been ceremonially done, legally done, the consummation of it is when the one flesh union happens. That's what I've heard some say. Which is interesting. Regardless, it's not really pertinent to this conversation.

The nature of marriage is not what is... It's oil and water. You can't say, [00:15:00] everything except something. It's not everything then.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's some of the things. And this is some of the things.

Selena: It flies in the face of the covenantal marriage, sacrificial love, forgiveness marital community like with one spouse, right? You're saying that, well, if it gets too hard or if there's just something I can't handle or deal with, then it's like, "Okay, well..." But God has ordained and purposed marriage for those very reasons, I feel like, to be able to practice forgiveness and to be able to live sacrificially and more holy. It's an opportunity to be sanctified, but we've elevated our pleasure and happiness above everything else wrongfully. And so-

Ryan: So marriage is meant to be a dim reflection of the gospel in a sense, right? Like the church is Christ's bride, He's the bridegroom, we will be presented to Him spotless and blameless at the feast of the Lamb. Like it's this big analogy, right?

Can you imagine if Christ had a prenup with his bride? This is why this flies in the face, I think, of covenant but also in the face of God's very covenantal nature. Because can you imagine if we as believers, if Christ said, "Yeah, it's okay for you to follow me and it's okay for you to leave some of yourself out. I want all of you but it's okay... I don't actually mean all of you. I just mean,

whatever parts of you you're willing to give over to me." That's basically a picture of Western evangelicalism at the moment is to give Christ what you want to give Christ. It's not about Him, it's about you, it's about what you get from Him, and therefore what you choose to give in return, as opposed to Him being the king of kings who is demanding every ounce of me.

Selena: The authority, yeah.

Ryan: He alone is right in demanding that of us. So can you imagine if he had a prenup and he said, "You know, I'm gonna save you, yeah, you're saved, and I'll give you some of the kingdom but I'll tell you what? The golden streets, those are mine. Keep your grubby paws off of those, little jewels in your crown, I'm gonna keep those prenup. So, if you decide to go apostate, we'll take back that salvation." That's not the God we serve.

Selena: Right, right. In Malachi 2:16. You know, again, God hates divorce. It's not His ideal plan. It's not His original purpose for marriage, but He is good and gracious. Again, that is a whole nother conversation of remarriage. So getting into, you know, understanding why people get prenups. Because they think it's safe. They think it's actually better to do this. And we're sitting here saying it's not. You're actually not making a full covenant with your spouse when you have a prenup.

Ryan: I want to push back.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Well, not push back but agree with that. In that saying, like, so they would think a prenup is safe. And I would just say this marriage is not safe. Now, our covenant is safe, but the adventure of marriage, and that the covenant is here for us to endure and live out Christ-like love and to figure out what that looks like. It's like an arena.

Selena: And enjoy one another.

Ryan: And there's safety in that.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But it's not safe in terms of me preserving me the way I am today. Like marriage as a way of mortifying your flesh, has a way of drawing the unrighteousness out of sanctifying your soul. And in that sense, it's not safe at all. I think we kind of expect that marriage wouldn't be uncomfortable in any way or would actually cost us-

Selena: Especially as you're heading into marriage, right, you think that... I mean, it is such an exciting time. It is a wonderful time. It's beautiful to go to a wedding and watch people get married. If you're married, you're also like, "This is beautiful. This is wonderful." But you also know the reality of it, right?

You're going to grow. You're going to be put through the fire, put through the test. And whatever comes out of you is what's inside of you. And that's okay. And that's good. Because God is not trying to, again, trying to just take the best parts of you. He's wanting to come around you, He's wanting to consume you and He wants to make you more holy. And one of the ways He does that, honestly, is through marriage with your spouse.

I mean, I don't know that I've practiced more forgiveness with anyone else or practiced more [Ryan laughs] sacrificial love with anyone else than my husband. Right?

Ryan: I won't take that as an insult. [chuckles]

Selena: But I've also not experienced I think being the most known and fully loved with any other human being on earth than him. So there's these big ideas and big purposes, again, but they have to be held in this covenant. They cannot be in a contractual half-and-half-out sort of agreement.

So again, getting a prenup, what does it say about what you believe about love? What does it say about what you believe about the gospel and forgiveness and grace? Do you have an eternal perspective truly or are you kind of just living in the here and now? [00:20:00]

Ryan: Think about 1 Corinthians 13. Love is patient. A prenup would say love is patient only to a point. Patience and long-suffering is something that's... by nature of what it is, it's got an endless aspect to it. Kind. I'm only kind to a point until it cost me something then I'm gonna... Think about.

Selena: It cost me too much.

Ryan: Right, until it cost me too much. I always throw this example. Mother Teresa, right? What if Mother Teresa was just... she was so kind, she was so kind, she was so kind but everyone knows once the 20th kid comes up to her she's gonna slap that kid in the face? [Selena laughs] Well, she's reached her limit of kindness. No. Like, people wouldn't be saying that Mother Teresa is kind. They'd say like she's kind of nice but at the end of the day, she's kind of a jerk-

Selena: Which clearly she's not because look at her model.

- Ryan:** There's this long-suffering. It doesn't end. So love is those things.
- Selena:** That is real love, though. I think the world would say that it's loving for me to get a prenup and to protect both of us. And we're here to say no, that's not protecting. That is-
- Ryan:** You're just protecting yourself at that point.
- Selena:** Yes. Absolutely. So I think we just encourage you to fight for your marriage. A prenup is not biblical. We would encourage any couple, if you have one, talk about it. Why do you have it? Should you have it? Go to the Bible yourself. Look it up. Ask. Go dive into God's word. It's there for you.
- Ryan:** Then burn it. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** And then throw it out and burn it. That would be our advice.
- Ryan:** And enjoy the whole process because gosh, there's so much freedom in just knowing that kind of love.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** Knowing the kind of love that has burned the ships that says like, "Listen, sweetheart, we're not perfect but I know this. I hope to love you better today than I did yesterday." And of course, that takes a love that is fueled, that is otherworldly, fueled by something outside of me.

And so that's why marriage is so beautiful. That's why we spend our time, our days talking about marriage is because we believe it's a picture of a bigger truth. And the bigger truth is this: that you are loved in that way and in eternal sense. You have a God who has loved you and knows everything that's wrong with you, and still He has called you His own if you place your faith in Christ.

So we want to invite you into that. If you haven't already, you know, we do this all the time. If you've heard a few of our episodes, we like to do this at the end of every episode. Even if you've heard it a thousand times, hear it again. Place your faith in Christ daily, daily, daily, once and for all. Find the love that you so desperately need in Him.

And in doing so, you're adopted into His family, experience that love and the benefits that come along with that. So thenewsisgood.com it's the website we set up for you. If you want to take your first step down that path, we'd love for you to do that.

Let's pray. Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for being the perfect bridegroom, without a prenup, without caveat, without us wondering if you will make good on the vows and the promise that you made. That we are a bride that will meet her bridegroom, and we will be one. And we don't have to doubt that at all. I pray that you would give us eyes to see your covenantal nature and give us the courage to live out the covenant of marriage biblically, faithfully, without fear, without reserve, without retreat, and therefore without regret. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Okay, thank you so much. If you're still watching, you're still listening, that means you might enjoy the content, which means you may want to check out our partner things.

Selena: Thing.

Ryan: Thing. Yeah. *[both laughs]* So we rely on faithful partners to basically say like this work is important. We want to make sure it continues. If you notice during this episode, there weren't any ads. Like we've chosen not to put any ads, other than on YouTube. Sorry about that. That's a YouTube thing. But on the podcast side and audio side, we don't do any ads even though we get... Selena, we get, I think, between 20,000 and 30,000 downloads per episode and there's about... I don't remember the exact numbers. I don't exaggerate. I'm gonna say 12,000 new downloads a day across all the episodes.

Selena: Wow. Praise God.

Ryan: That's by the grace of God. And if you want to be part of that ministry, part of that effort, you can do that. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. There's some options there for you. There are benefits but we ask you to pray about it and obediently go if the Lord leads you. That's it for this week.

Now this episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: See you again in seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Malachi 2:16

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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