

HELP, I HAVE A PASSIVE HUSBAND!

<https://fiercemarriage.com/help-i-have-a-passive-husband>

[00:00:00]

Selena: Help! I have a passive husband. *[both laughs]* I have a passive husband.

Ryan: You do?

Selena: What do I do? *[Ryan laughs]*

Ryan: I don't know if I should laugh.

Selena: So you married a lump on a log. Maybe I should just take this one then. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Go for it. Go for it. Did you, Selena? Did you marry a lump on a law?

Selena: No. I'm the lump on the log right now. Let's just put it that way. I got a big one right here.

Ryan: You're the opposite of a lump on a log. You are the opposite. *[Selena chuckles]* So today we're taking another question from a listener and it has to do with a husband being passive. Passive in the sense that he's unwilling to change in areas that he knows he needs to change but is unable to sustain lasting change.

Selena: Right. And I think it is from a wife about a husband. But I do think some of the answers can go both ways.

Ryan: Okay. Maybe. Some.

Selena: Some. That's what I said. Some.

Ryan: Oh, precise words. I love it. More precise words on the other side.

[00:00:55] <music>

Ryan: Well, hello, hello, and welcome back. My name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We're the Fredericks. Thank you for checking us out. This is the Fierce Marriage Podcast. If you're watching us on YouTube, you can also catch the parenting videos on Thursdays. Those drop on Thursdays.

But yeah, we're here to just talk about family, marriage, parenting everything in between all in light of who Christ is and what he's called us to as people who believe in Him. So thank you for joining us, for giving us your eyes, your ears, your attention, your time. We trust that this will be a fruitful time.

So today, like we said in the intro, we have a question coming in from a wife who is really struggling at home.

Selena: And if you have questions... Should we take a moment to say that upfront?

Ryan: Okay, sure.

Selena: Because we like answering these questions. Because you're probably not the only married couple that has a question about whatever the question is you have question about.

Ryan: Yeah. So you go to fiercemarriage.com/ask. That will take you to a form. You can either text us this question, you could fill out an email form, you can even call, leave a voicemail. We haven't gotten any voicemails in a long time. Voicemails are so-

Selena: No one likes that. *[laughs]*

Ryan: They're so 2012.

Selena: It's too vulnerable. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: You have three ways to do that. You can also leave a question. If you're watching on YouTube, you can leave it down in the comments and we will read that there. Actually, the last question that we did, it was Aaron who was talking about his wife, check out last week's video. His wife was texting another man, he's caring for her in the hospital. And we spent some time kind of unpacking what he wrote. And then somebody got in the comments and started giving out some really horrible advice.

Selena: It happens on YouTube. It happens.

Ryan: I think they deleted their comment and blamed it on us. And I said, "We didn't delete your comment but was full of trash," is what I told her.

Selena: Just to confirm.

- Ryan:** YouTube is a funny place. So anyway leave the comments or the questions down in the comment section if that's helpful for you. So we're gonna read this for you. It is long.
- Selena:** But it encapsulates a few sub-questions and things that you would think about and have questions in your mind as you're hearing this. You're wondering about, you know, this piece or this piece. We think it should be read entirely.
- Ryan:** Yeah. I do appreciate the amount of detail that this gal, which we're calling her Anon, which was a joke-
- Selena:** Couple years ago.
- Ryan:** A couple years ago Selena thought Anon was someone's name, but we meant anonymous.
- Selena:** Anonymous short. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** So I appreciate the details that were provided in this because I think it will connect with a lot of wives. This conversation goes both ways, like you said. There is a such thing as a passive wife. The passivity looks different but there's such a thing. So...
- Selena:** I will read it because I'm the wife.
- Ryan:** You should read it as the wife. And I trust you to read it with full gusto. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** "What is the middle ground between loving your spouse where they're at and being passive? There are a few issues in our marriage that caused contention. I have come to him aggressively and nagging in the past and after failed attempts with basic communication. After listening to your podcast and praying, I do understand that this is not the right way and I've begun to work hard to approach things differently." Good job.
- "Since then, I've come to him with love, empathy, and understanding, trying to have conversations and not fight. Things might change for a while, but nothing changes long term, and sometimes not at all. I understand that I'm called to love my husband, and I respect him. He's the head of our household but this is a struggle when constantly being treated with such little regard. It comes through in how our children talk to me and carries into all aspects of our marriage.

Ultimately, my question is, what does the day to day look like for a wife in such a position? How do I navigate life? I pray for God to work on both our hearts and to guide us. I know God is big and big enough to fix our marriage but I also know sometimes God's answer is "not right now" because it is part of something bigger I'm not seeing. So in the meantime, what is the godly behavior a wife should have? What should my biblical responses and reactions be?" Good questions.

"I understand withholding sex is not right and it's not out of malice or punishment. It's just very hard to get myself there physically for someone who makes me [00:05:00] feel so small, I've tried to explain this, along with other roles I feel. It's hard to want to come home after a long day and prepare a meal for someone who makes me feel like hired help. But if that is what I'm called to do, I will do it.

I know he isn't a child, but I'm torn between feeling like I'm rewarding cruel behavior but he's my husband and I care for him. I've spoken about all of this to him. At what point am I nagging and not loving him where he's at and at what point am I being too passive? I want to follow God in my marriage, whether I'm the only one or not, but I'm genuinely not sure what that looks like at this point. I'm all for killing them with kindness and love, as they say, but is there a point where that is wrong?

Some points of contention include frequency and amount of drinking alcohol, taking our kids to church, how he speaks to me, listening to me and helping when asked, spending quality time, all things we agreed on before marriage, but as soon as I said we do, things changed. We went to counseling in the first year of marriage, things got better for a while, but it didn't last. We've now been married for six years, I've tried so many things and ultimately understand I must give this to God. And I'm trying. I'm just trying to figure out what a healthy behavior is in this."

Ryan: Yeah, so this is, obviously, very tough situation. And I appreciate the amount of detail that Anon, *[both chuckles]* we will call her, I appreciate the amount of detail you provided because-

Selena: It's relatable to, I think, many wives.

Ryan: It is very relatable, yeah.

Selena: The struggle is real.

Ryan: I think I would put this response into two categories here. It's like how, as a wife, can she respond biblically? That's a big, overarching category, and we'll

address that. Well, scripture will address that and we'll talk about what Scripture says. And then there's these different points of contention where how do you tactically, tangibly live out the honoring of your husband in each one of those...

Selena: Without enabling him, right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: I think that's one of the real points of contention.

Ryan: Right. Right. Let's go right to Scripture. We're gonna read 1 Peter 3, starting in verse one all the way through verse six. Since Selena read the whole question, I'll read the scripture.

Selena: I'll let you read the Bible. *[laughs]*

Ryan: Okay, thank you. Okay, so starting in 1 Peter 3:1, "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands..." Note, it's not every man, it's not every husband, it's your own husband.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Okay? So Peters, calling women up to the standard, the standard that was set back in the Old Testament by the matriarchs of our faith, by the women of the Lord who were married to the men of God. And how did they do that? They did that by submitting to their own husbands and honoring them and calling him lord. *[chuckles]* What are you smirking at?

Selena: I figured we're going to unpack the story of Abraham and Sarah just a little bit, just a piece of it.

Ryan: Yeah, well, let's do that. Because, I mean, if we look... Where was it?

- Selena:** So Abraham and Sarah, yep, they got married, and they were traveling through - was it Egypt? And Abraham was scared for his life because Sarah was this beautiful woman. And so he's like, "If we go in there, they're gonna kill me and take you because you're so beautiful. So what we're gonna do is you're gonna be my sister." *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** And what that means is that basically she's free game.
- Selena:** Right, to Pharaoh and to whoever.
- Ryan:** I think the angel of the Lord think appeared to Pharaoh at night and said-
- Selena:** Yeah, things started happening and Pharaoh's like, "What have you done? You've cursed us because you said these things."
- Ryan:** There's two instances where this happens, by the way.
- Selena:** Yes. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** I guess what we're trying to say here is that it's not that Abraham was... I mean, he was the founding father of our faith in many ways, the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant that God made with him for the people of Israel. And we are inheritors by way of Christ into many of those same promises, into that covenant, the New Covenant.
- Selena:** But he was also human.
- Ryan:** But he was human and he wasn't-
- Selena:** We don't look to humans.
- Ryan:** ...a perfect husband.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** In fact, he failed epically in at least a few scenarios. But yet Peter is saying... He's not saying, look at how Sarah honored Abraham because of his righteousness and therefore Sarah was righteous. No. He's just focusing in on Sarah and saying like, "This is what she did. [00:10:00] This is how the holy women who hoped in God..." We can't gloss over that. They hoped in God.
- Selena:** Right. There's an eternal aspect of that which we'll touch on in a minute.

Ryan: Their faith was not necessarily in their husband. Now granted, there's a certain amount of faith and trust a wife has to be able to place in her husband.

Selena: Should be able to, yeah.

Ryan: But to highlight Sarah is to highlight her hope and God. And because of that she submitted to her own husband and obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord even though he was not doing lordly things.

Selena: He was not acting very lordly, yes.

Ryan: That's even a word? We like to make up words around here. *[Selena chuckles]* So let's apply this to this scenario. So as Peter is saying, even if some do not obey the word... Okay, what are the contention points here that Anon has brought up for us? So frequency and amount of drinking. We'll talk about that. There's a form of drinking that is disobedient, directly disobedient to God's word.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Drunkenness. Taking our kids to church. That's a point of contention. Well, we should be going to church as a family. Do not forsake the gathering. "And how he speaks to me." That's a point of contention how he speaks to her.

Selena: Right. Not treating her as... not giving himself up for her and loving her the way Christ calls us to love one another in how he speaks to her.

Ryan: In just the verse following, what we read today, Peter says, "Husbands treat your wives, you know, with..." I think I forget the word he uses, but it's gently because they're the weaker vessel. In other words, the husband has to wield his words very carefully with his wife. She is a coheir with Christ.

In fact, we have books to this effect coming out in January. And it's funny because it's called how he speaks to me. Well, how the book is going to be called How a Husband Speaks. So stay tuned for that. The fourth one is listening to her and helping her when asked.

Selena: So he's not listening and he's not helping it sounds like.

Ryan: Right. And the final point of contention is spending quality time. That she's obviously feeling starved for-

Selena: Or overlooked.

Ryan: Or overlooked.

Selena: Or dismissed.

Ryan: She's hungry, I'll say, for quality time.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: This is the first big category. How might a wife respond when the husband is being passive or just straight up disobeying God? So to do that, we're gonna pull up this passage from 1 Peter. And I want to look at the structure, okay?

So in the Greek language, they have verbs that they function differently based on the type of verb that it is. I'm not a Greek scholar. I know enough to be-

Selena: You know more than most. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: So the point is that you've got participles which are verbal nouns, and then you've got verbs which are either active or passive or whatever that voice might be. Typically, when you have a verb that is in an active or passive voice, it's not in the participle form, it's going to be the central verb in that passage. And all the other verbals, the participles will point to that central verb.

So in this passage, we have one main verb with two participles around it. And the passage goes like this. I'm not going to read the Greek, so don't worry. It says, "Likewise wives..." So here's the verb: "...be subject to your own husbands." Be subject to. To be subordinate to.

There is a hierarchical meaning here in the Greek. In biblical marriage is you have two people of equal value worth and importance before God, but there is a hierarchy there that is an orderly hierarchy, not a power or value hierarchy. There's a head and then there's not the head. You have head and helper. The head is—this is what biblical marriage is so wonderful—is the head is actually the one that's serving through that servant headship. But the verb here means to be subordinate in that sense, and that's the participle form.

So be subject unto your own husbands so that (this is the active) even if some do not obey (that's the active). So again, "be subject to" pointing to the "even if some do not obey. And then below that we have "that they may be won without word." So they may be won. That's the other participial form.

And they're pointing to the central theme of even if they don't obey. What's also kind of really telling about this and it's worth, I think, unpacking a little bit, we have to be careful not to read in different lexical meanings into this

passage. There's a certain meaning of the passage is getting out. You can throw whatever meaning of the word add it that you feel like it, but this verb for "they disobey, they do not obey" is actually a negative version of the verb for "obedience".

Selena: So there's a positive and a negative version?

Ryan: Typically, if you want to make a verb negative in Greek, you'd add the negative particle before it and it would turn the verb negative. Like, "you did not jump." So you negative "did not jump." But this particular verb has a negative indicator in it. So it's like you think of you're a theist or you're an atheist. So you put the A before it. So here it could be rendered as not just he did not obey, but he actively disobeyed. But it's rendered in this translation that he did not obey or those do not obey. [00:15:00] You could actually render it as those who disobey, which there's different nuances to that. So if you read that "he did not obey," it means he may or may not know what's right.

Selena: But it sounds like in this case he does.

Ryan: The husband may know that drunkenness is wrong or he might not know that drunkenness is wrong. Either way it's wrong. But the question is, is it active disobedience or is it just disobedience by default or not obeying?

Selena: And the Bible is saying that this is active disobedience.

Ryan: Well, it says-

Selena: If your husband isn't an active-

Ryan: If it's rendering that way, it has more of an active sense to it. It's not just failing to obey. It's actually disobeying.

Selena: Right? It's an active sense.

Ryan: Again, it's pointing to this disobedient husband and saying that you'd be subject to him so that even though he's disobeying, he might be won over. He might be won over.

Selena: He might be won over. Which is a clear phrase too that you have to take with a grain of salt, right? Like, it's not just, "Okay, I'm going to strive, I'm going to be pure, I'm going to be respectful. I'm gonna impair my conduct, do all the things and then he'll be saved." Well, no, God doesn't promise that in the Bible or in this passage.

Peter is saying "he might be won over," which means it is uncommon for a husband to see a wife loving him when he is treating her badly and continuing to love him and continue to be steadfast in that. How can she do that? How can she continue to almost strive to win him over in such a way, not just going through the actions or saying the words but in such a way that there's an actual heart change, and you can see that in her right? And part of that will unpack... I would recommend, you know, to her to obviously be reading the Bible, which sounds like you are. Good job.

But also checking off this wonderful book, I call it an oldie but a goodie but "Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas. He really unpacks a lot about persistence and perseverance. I mean, if you look at suffering, right, look to Christ, the Bible talks about, and we will unpack a few verses, but it's in our suffering where we're most like Christ.

Like we have to have an eternal perspective, in order to be able to serve a husband who is not acting very lordly, to submit to a husband who is not acting very lordly... Again, we're not talking in the sense of being a doormat and being abused in any form. We are talking about someone who's usurped their role, who's indulging in things that they shouldn't be indulging in, who's speaking just unkindly or without respect, who's ignoring the needs of his wife, and she is responding to him in such a way that it's just obvious that she has Christ at the home, in her heart and in her mind. He is her sustenance. She goes to Him. She is sustained by God, not the reaction or responses of her husband. And this is not an easy thing to do. Right?

Ryan: There's a genuineness to it that has to be there. And that's what Peter is talking about.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Because a wife who's wanting to kind of check the biblical boxes-

Selena: The husband is gonna see through it.

Ryan: He'll see through it. But she could be trying to find a way to be self... I'll say it like this. Maybe it's not the best way to say it. But to be self-righteous in whatever she's feeling. So she like, "I did the stuff. I made dinner. I took care of the kids. I even gave my husband intimacy when he asked for it. I checked the boxes, even though my adorning..." I'm putting myself in the shoes of a wife here, which sounds really weird. But my adorning is external. In other words, it's all on the outside.

Selena: And what does that do?

Ryan: And let that be counted as my glory, my-

Selena: And ironically, what does that do to her heart? It just makes it better.

Ryan: Right. Well, not only that, it usually points to a pretty nasty trajectory.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: And the wife is trying to find a kind of a justified way to discard that relationship in some case. I don't think the listener here is doing that because she's genuinely trying to find a way forward.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Which we're gonna get into that, by the way, for each of these tangible kind of areas. But I think generally, the whole... And Selena you're talking about perseverance and persistence here. But generally, it's recognizing that it's possible and it's even required of wives to honor and respect husbands who aren't always honorable in these areas.

And it's hard to find out sometimes the tangible ways to do that. But we have to do that work of finding out how to do that. And we do that in light of what Scripture tells us about perseverance, persistence, especially among trial.

Selena: And I think that it's important for us to remember that marriage is not just about making one another happy. Marriage is not just this place that we get to have intimacy, this covenant. It is so that we can be sanctified. It is an image of Christ and the Father... the church, sorry. Not the Trinity. It's an image of Christ and His bride, the Church, the body of Christ.

And so with that, we're broken sinners, there's going to come suffering there's going to come the big ask for perseverance. Like when you're getting married and you're on that wedding day, it's beautiful, it's amazing. It's all the things you want. [00:20:00] You're committing to one another.

But as you're committing joyfully to one another, these moments will happen in your marriage. You are going to be required to persevere, you're going to be required to put your hope in God when all seems lost, or when your husband isn't acting the way you want him to act or you think that he should act or that God thinks he should act.

Ryan: I want to add one thing to what you said and then I want to hear from Gary Thomas that you're gonna read. We're not meaning to ignore the husband.

The husband has his own issues here. Like he's gonna stand before Christ. He has to give an account to God-

Selena: Again, eternal perspective.

Ryan: But here, you can't change your husband's heart.

Selena: None of us can change anybody's heart.

Ryan: But Peter does say, "So that by your conduct he might turn, he might change." You notice it's not your conduct that's changing his heart. It's through the conduct that God is going about the heart change. And so there'll be one without a word by the conduct of their wives. As opposed to, like you mentioned, listener, the nagging-

Selena: Or confronting.

Ryan: No husband ever say, "Oh, man, my wife just nag me into just... she nagged me so much I just want to love her better." *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: "I want to do exactly what she says with gusto." *[laughs]*

Ryan: No husband ever said that. But I think husbands have said, "Well, my wife loved me so well, I want to love her better." And that takes a very strong wife. It takes a wife who understands the power of perseverance and persistence.

Selena: That is rooted in Christ, I think.

Ryan: Amen.

Selena: That is where I want to root that in. Let me just pull up... I think there was one or two quotes in here. Gary, he's just a beast, right? He's just awesome. We love him. "Persistence doesn't make sense unless we live with a keen sense of eternity." Right? He says, "The Holiness that will be rewarded in heaven is a persistent holiness. Read through the entire Bible and I promise you you won't find one reference to a crown in heaven that goes to the person who had the happiest life on earth. The reward just doesn't exist. Nor is there a heavenly ribbon for the Christian who felt the least amount of pain. The priority of a sacred history is an eternal priority. Marriage is a beautiful and effective reminder of this reality." So he says holiness that will be rewarded in heaven is a persistent holiness.

Ryan: I mean, there's a-

Selena: There's a benefit to struggles too. Because I think we want to avoid the pain, we want to avoid the discomfort. We hear about fierce marriage and we want our marriage to be a fierce marriage. Well, guess what? Fierce marriage is not just about making you happy and having fun and life is just [lolly doll?] all the time. It's how do you work through these types of things from a biblical perspective, and how are we keeping God at the center and what does that look like tangibly? Which is what she's asking, right?

Ryan: Yeah. So I want to read from Romans 5:3-5. And it says this, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings..." Pause there. That's insanity. We rejoice in our suffering.

Selena: That's insanity to any other religion too.

Ryan: It's insanity unless it's in light of eternity.

Selena: Right?

Ryan: If we don't actually believe this stuff, we don't believe that it's going to produce in us something that is of eternal value, then we cannot possibly rejoice in that thing. So Paul is calling the Romans into this. "Not only that, but we rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character," we're getting closer to eternal, "and character produces hope," more eternal, "and hope does not put us to shame, because why? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Now what's the big why to this? For that we turn to 1 Corinthians 15:58. "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," this is the big why, "knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Selena: So when you're coming home and you're making that dinner and he has been resentful or ignoring you or not treating you with the love and respect that you are hoping for and praying for, you know that this labor, what you're doing, how you're loving him, how you're fixing your eyes on Jesus in the middle of the frustration or the suffering or the problems, it's not in vain. It is not in vain. And you can have that hope you can. You can rest in it.

Ryan: Well, we can only have that hope if we really trust that this means what it says it means and it's the word of God and that Jesus is who He promised He was.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: You can also see James 1 for more of that and 2 Peter 1 as well on rejoicing in our suffering. So I want to get into these issues, the very specific issue. In general, okay, here's the attitude is okay, we're going to stand fast, we're going to hold the line, we're going to stay at our post, love as we are called to love within marriage as wife or as a husband, whatever side of the equation you're on. That's the big overarching theme.

Now, within each issue... okay, so for the first one, so tackle these really quickly, one by one. Frequency and amount of drinking. Assuming—we have to assume some things—assuming he knows it's a sin, that drunkenness is a sin and he accepts that [00:25:00] and then he acknowledges that it is a problem, if it is a problem, because there is a type of drinking that is not a sin.

Now, we just got back from a trip to the South and there were a lot of Baptist churches that would very much disagree with us. However, I don't think they can make biblical case for it. Now, does that need to be set? I don't know. All you can do at that point is you can pray and practice patient love. Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Anybody who's ever known an addict will tell you that until that addict accepts that they're an addict and decides that they want to change, you can't make them stop.

Selena: Well, and I think the one question you might be able to ask yourself, wife, is, you know, you're wondering like, how do I serve and love him without enabling him? Well, don't do a beer run, right? *[both chuckles]* You're not the delivery person of beer or alcohol.

Financially, what does that look like? I mean, that's something that you would have to, I think, talk about with your husband in a loving and respectful manner. And of course, don't be subjected to any type of abuse through that. But patiently just wait for the Holy Spirit to convict and pray and hope. Again, you can rejoice in the midst of the sin, because God has already won. Right? We have the hope of hope in the King of kings and He... This will not be lost. What did it say? "Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Ryan: In the Lord. I'm sorry, sidebar. I'm tickled that you said beer run. For some reason that's really hilarious to me. I think you need your own branded IPA. *[laughs]*

Selena: Just like my...

Ryan: A little salty, a little sweet.

Selena: ...salty and sweet? *[laughs]*

Ryan: An extra hoppy.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Okay. That's a yes. That's a yes from her. So here's the second one.

Selena: Okay, let's move on. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Taking our kids to church. And this one to me is a little more cut and dry. Oh, it's cut and dry just like the previous one. Take them anyway. We are called not to forsake the gathering... That's the Lord's day. Sundays are the Lord's day. They're not ours.

We worship God together with the body on those days. If a husband is unwilling to take his family and a wife, at that point, bold statement cannot obey her husband. She must obey the Lord. She needs to gather with the saints. Now, it's one thing to miss a couple of Sundays, for whatever reason, but if it's a habitual thing, it's time to-

Selena: And I think that's the question is "Am I usurping my husband's role as head if I take my kids to church?" That's the underlying question here. I mean, you just answered it. I'm just articulating it.

Ryan: And the answer is no. Because when you're refusing the gathering, you're disobeying God at that point. And we're accountable to God more than-

Selena: First and foremost, yeah.

Ryan: And how he speaks to you. So I'm gonna say this, get the set of our books that are coming out in January. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: Communication books.

Ryan: How a husband speaks. I address this in the book fairly clearly.

Selena: We do have a lot of communication episodes.

Ryan: We do.

Selena: Also in Fierce Marriage, our book, we talk about communication, and our other book See Through Marriage, we talk about transparency and communications, but clearly-

Ryan: Really important.

Selena: But clearly he is not loving or he is not treating her with the value that she's hoping for and desiring I guess.

Ryan: Here's the challenge in Anon's shoes in this case. How you speak to your spouse should not be determined solely by how they speak to you. In other words, you have to take the high road. And that's hard, especially if you feel beat down, you feel like you've been belittled, or made to feel small, or in some ways degraded.

It's very hard. I'm not saying it's easy. But I think as believers, we have someone to lean on and to ask for strength and somewhere to get the affection that we so desperately and can only be found in Christ. We go to Him and say, "Jesus help me love this person well. Help me love my spouse well. And let that work not be in vain, please." But that's really tough.

One of the ways I think to move forward and maybe add some protection and in addition to speaking in a godly way, establish verbal boundaries. And then here's the key.

Selena: What do you mean verbal boundaries?

Ryan: Verbal boundary. This type... So we made... You first talked about this. But we made a decision early on that we're not going to use the word "divorce" in any sort of joking way or in a sort of ransom sort of way. It's just not on the table. It's not on the table. I'm not going to call you names. We're going to resist using-

Selena: And I won't call you names.

Ryan: And we're going to speak to each other with dignity. Well, those are boundaries we agreed on. Now, whether or not you agree on them, you can say listen, husband or wife, I think these boundaries need to be in place. We can't talk to each other like this. We can't say these sorts of things. To have a culture of communication or a home where there's cussing and yelling and-

Selena: And name calling. [00:30:00]

Ryan: ...vitriol and poison and venom. "This needs to stop. Will you help me with this?" So you invite them into that?

Selena: Yeah, inviting is very disarming.

Ryan: It's not just "here's the boundary deal with it." It's "can we have this boundary together for the health of our marriage, for the goodness of our union? And will you help me in this?" He may or may not take you up on it but I think that's a far better approach than just...

Now, if he doesn't take you up on and he continues to breach the boundary, then the boundaries get harder and more non-negotiable. That's another conversation. In all of this, make sure you're getting help too from a pastor. I don't mean to gloss over that but that's where you want to bring someone in.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Quickly here, the fourth one. I think it's the fourth one. He's not listening to her or helping when asked. It's funny we've talked about this before. And it's like, welcome to marriage. You've been married six years, listener, so you know this, that's kind of the struggle of every marriage, right?

Selena: Mm-hmm.

Ryan: Just today, I was trying to get Selena to listen to me and to help me and she was just completely ignoring me. *[chuckles]* Actually, that did come up earlier *[both chuckles]* and I won't talk about it here.

Selena: Off limits. *[laughs]*

Ryan: So you can still honor us as Sarah honored Abraham.

Selena: You know, when you bring up things like "it lasted for a while, but it wasn't a real, lasting change." And we all hope for that eternal change. But if we're honest with ourselves, yeah, there are some things that will be routed out of us because we are being sanctified by the grace of God through our marriage and through our spouse.

But there are things I mean, even our own marriage, that continue to come up. There's defaults and habits and just ways of operating and reasoning that are hard to uproot. And we still have, you know, discussions and tension around some of those things. So we can't really expect things to just disappear forever. I think we can expect to grow in those and to not remain the same. That would be the ideal.

- Ryan:** I would say this. We've never had a season in our marriage where it's been perfect. I think that maybe goes without saying. However, we've started reading the Bible intensely together in the mornings, and I feel like our marriage has been better than ever. We're also 20 years.
- Selena:** Imagine that.
- Ryan:** I didn't think it'd get any better. I've given up hope. No, I'm kidding. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Great.
- Ryan:** I'm kidding. So I think reading Scripture together is probably one of the quickest ways to solidify your love.
- Selena:** But how do you get a husband to listen if he doesn't want to?
- Ryan:** It's hard. It takes two.
- Selena:** And how do you get him to help if he doesn't want to? Again, resting in the Lord-
- Ryan:** 1 Peter 3-
- Selena:** ...remembering, yes, that your work is not in vain.
- Ryan:** Final one. Sorry, we're running out of time here. Spending quality time together. So I would say this, still seek it, still pursue him.
- Selena:** Even facilitate it. Get the kids out of the house or get a babysitter and get out of the house and to, you know, make it happen. Don't expect the first one to be amazing, honestly. I think it sounds like there may be some habits to break or something. But I think if you're working consistently at it, trying to be genuine with him, again, inviting him into the opportunity to connect, and with lots of prayer, I think there could definitely be some quality time there and some opportunities for connection.
- Ryan:** And we do have books for that as well. *[Selena chuckles]* Wife in Pursuit and Husband in Pursuit.
- Selena:** My husband is in marketing. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** I'm just saying the tools are there.

Selena: The tools are there.

Ryan: Thousands of people have gone through those books and we've got-

Selena: A lot of good feedback.

Ryan: I think there's over 1,000 good reviews on the Wife in Pursuit one. So do check that out. That could be helpful. This is all very one-sided. We're talking to a wife who's struggling. If the husband were here, it would be a different conversation. It takes two. But we can't control one another. So sometimes we have to be the one taking the high road, the one trusting the Lord in extraordinary ways-

Selena: Well, taking the high road with humility and genuineness.

Ryan: Right. So we don't mean to gloss over that this relationship has two people in it. But we're just talking to a wife who's kind of got her hands up saying, "What do I do?" We hope this is helpful. And of course, all of this is in vain if we try to do it in our own strength. In fact, I'm gonna plug one last book: Two as One.

There's the first chapter in Two as One, which is a devotional that we wrote for couples. It's called rocks, rockets, and the gravity of belief. It's what the chapter is called. And what it's all about is no matter how hard you try, if you strap a rock to the best, most powerful rocket to keep that thing aloft, you can't do it forever. It will always come down to earth. The only way you can keep that rock forever aloft is to change gravity.

In other words, to change behaviors like this, we can try and strive and do everything we can with all our might. Unless something changes in our heart and the beliefs that undergird that behavior actually change, we'll never be able to do it. So that's why Christ has to be at the center. If we're ever to live this ideal, the Christian vision for marriage, we need Christ in it. Sounds obvious, but it's, I think, most often overlooked. [00:35:00]

So we want to invite you into that. If you don't know Jesus, you need to know Him. You need to place your trust in Him. You need to know that He died for your sins so that you might be at peace with God.

If you want to find out more about what that means, we have a website for you. It's this: go to thenewsisgood.com. It lays it all out there and gives you some steps forward on your faith journey. We pray that you would take that step. And we pray that it would bear positive fruit in your life, first and

foremost, glory to God in that, but also by His grace, it might even bear fruit in your marriage.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for this listener who wrote in, who was so vulnerable with us. I pray that she would be encouraged, not by us, but by your word, by the fact that you are faithful by the fact that you know her struggles, you know her pain, and you are there with her in it. She is not alone.

Lord, I pray for the spouses who are struggling, whether they're husbands or wives. I pray that you would strengthen them, give them hope, give them a way forward, God. And I pray that you would allow them to see some fruit for their laborers. And if not, let them know that their labors are not in vain. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: If you've been around this long, thank you for watching. Clearly, this content means something to you. If you want to help us do more content, that would mean the world to us. We got a few new patrons this last week. It's always so encouraging. Honestly, that's how we keep things going. We sell a lot of books, but it's hard to sell books. So our patrons are huge.

If you want to join us there, we ask you to pray about it. If the Lord leads you, go to fiercemarriage.com/partner, and there are some options there. But yeah, we pray that you do that. That's it for this episode of Fierce Marriage. So it's... *[laughs]*

Selena: This episode of Fierce Marriage Podcast or Fierce Marriage show is—

Ryan: It's in the can, ladies and gentlemen. *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: Are you really saying it?

Ryan: Well, you know, you gotta change once in a while, Selena.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

Ryan: I'll let you do that one. *[both laughs]*

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - 1 Peter 3:1-6
 - Romans 5:3-5
 - 1 Corinthians 15:58

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com
 - [Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas](#)
 - [Fierce Marriage](#)
 - [See Through Marriage](#)
 - [Husband in Pursuit](#)
 - [Wife in Pursuit](#)
 - [Two as One](#)

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