

## HOW TO FIND (AND AGREE ON) A CHURCH

<https://fiercemarriage.com/how-to-find-and-agree-on-a-church>

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**Ryan:** Fierce couple, this, I contend, might be one of the most important decisions you make as a family and as a couple. And surely you might make this decision more than once. But whenever you make this decision, I think it's one of the most important decisions that you're going to make.

And that is where to attend church. In other words, where are you going to invest your time, invest your resources, invest your energy? Where are you going to serve? Where are you going to attend? Where are you going to plant your family? And how do you find agreement around that as a couple? So we're going to respond to that question here today on the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We'll see you on the other side.

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**Ryan:** Welcome back, fierce friends, listeners, viewers. Hello, my name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the proprietors of all things fierce. Welcome to our little tiny corner of the internet, a little tiny corner of the podcasting world. Thank you for giving us your ears and your attention.

So we do this ministry, Fierce Families, Fierce Marriage, Fierce Parenting. This is a Fierce Marriage Podcast. We have a parenting podcast as well. And the whole mission is just to help couples live on mission for Christ. What is marriage in light of who Christ is? What is parenting in light of who Christ is? We are families created for the glory of Christ, and we hope to help you live that out to its fullest.

So, Selena, what are we talking about today?

**Selena:** Well, you already mentioned it on the other side. *[both laughs]* But we're talking about how to pick a church as a couple. It's kind of a coincidence for us because we have been... which I don't know how many of you probably have gone through some transitions over the pandemic. Churches have gone through transitions.

So we did a home church for... If you know anything about our story, for last couple years, we did a church at our home. And then as things begin to open up, we decided that while we pray, there was a lot of prayer and consideration-

- Ryan:** A ton of prayer.
- Selena:** ...but discern that, you know, it's not really time for us to begin a church, but to actually start getting back in the community and finding where God would have us. So after several months of trying different churches and having some hard conversations with each other, with close friends that we pretty much call family, other believers that we trust, we have finally sort of landed at a local church-
- Ryan:** Yeah, praise God.
- Selena:** ...which has been so wonderful for our family.
- Ryan:** It was an answer to prayer, literally.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** I mean, we will share more of that story later on as we're kind of going throughout this episode-
- Selena:** Make a mental note [*chuckles*] because I didn't have [inaudible].
- Ryan:** Well, essentially what it was, we were... Selena said a lot of prayers around the home church situation. At one point they're like 10 families meeting. So it was a church. The question is, what was I called, and these other men, what we called to be elders and pastors of these people?
- And it came down to "it don't feel at this time that'd be responsible of us, nor you don't just decide to be a pastor." So I feel like you have to have a strong calling and conviction to do it or you're going to phone it in and it's going to hurt people, you're gonna get hurt.
- So we decided to wind that down. And yeah, it's been a journey. It's been about five months of looking, active looking and praying over until finally I just said, "You know what? I need to make this a daily commitment to pray for the church/whatever church God has us in or would have us in."
- And it's funny because as soon as I started praying that, after like a week or two of praying that on a daily basis, and not like hours in the prayer closet, just remembering and then taking a few minutes to pray about it intentionally to align my heart with what God is maybe asking of us, within a couple weeks doing that we found this church. It's just been a godsend. And it's just around the corner. So we're going to share that.

But how did we land on that? That's been quite a process. And we'll get into that. But first, we want to read the question that came through. If you want to ask a question, by the way, you can go to [fiercemarriage.com/ask](https://fiercemarriage.com/ask). That's where this question came from.

This question came from a listener named Faith. So Faith, thank you for asking. Selena, do you want to this question?

**Selena:** Yeah. You're not the only one asking. And this is where we're at. So praise God. "I would love to hear from you guys some biblical guidance and or tips for choosing a church together with your spouse. My father in law pastors a church in a neighboring town so we feel a lot of pressure to attend that church and are fearful of hurting their feelings. However, we, or mostly I, would love to plug into our own community but we are struggling to have that conversation. It's become such a difficult conversation to have that we have not been attending church at all the past few months, which is definitely not the vision we have for our family."

**Ryan:** So there's a few kind of facets to this question. I think I get the sense there's a family dynamic there that is clouding this decision.

**Selena:** Yeah, sure.

**Ryan:** And not that family is not a consideration and not that, you know, having a relative who's pastoring a church is not a consideration. I just don't think it's primary... I mean, I don't use primary. I don't think it's even maybe even secondary in terms of the things we need to be considering as a couple making this decision.

So we're gonna just address how do we find a church based on principle, [00:05:00] based on God's word and then based on what that precipitates in terms of the convictions that it gives us as Christians. Then the encouragement is so we can have those hard conversations, even if they're hard. You can't control how they respond but you can control how you present it, how you speak it in love.

**Selena:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ryan:** Somebody, if your father-in-law is a pastor of a church, he should want you to be in a church that meets all the criteria we're going to walk through here and the convictions that you have.

**Selena:** There's some deep relationships, though. You know, if her husband has growing up as a pastor's kid or in that church, then there's definitely going to be some, you know...

**Ryan:** And that's a consideration.

**Selena:** It's not primary. Absolutely. So a few things to think about here. Just the direction we're gonna go with this conversation, talking about how it's not about preferences with church. I think the Western culture of church has evolved into how can I be served the best or how can I get the things that I want, which we'll talk about. And then asking the right questions. We will walk through that.

Again, is it a faithful church? Is the church healthy? What are the primary issues, location, things that we have had to consider in our own journey.

And then we just want to end with some encouragement, some scripture encouragement to keep meeting, keep gathering with the saints. Just because you may not have a church home necessarily doesn't mean that you shouldn't engage, I think, in the discipline of going to a church and trying to and being consistent and knowing that one time is never enough.

Actually, for us, this church that we went to, we tried it in the summer, in the beginning of summer, thought maybe it's a little too liturgical, we're not really sure. And then the Lord just took us on a journey through the summer. And we had a few hard conversations with each other. And then we landed at the same church that we were like, "I don't know. It feels little too-

**Ryan:** And it ended up being the perfect fit.

**Selena:** It's actually not. We were the ones that I think were- *[chuckles]*

**Ryan:** God was conforming us to what we believe to be a picture of how a church can operate or should operate. And there is some charity in there, so we're not here to kind of paint too rigid of a picture.

But it does come down to, again, his heart orientation. And that was, I think, our biggest contention as we were having... Because we agree on obviously the big stuff like we're both Christians. We're assuming that you and your spouse are both Christians in this conversation. And I mean classical Christian, not like the deep-end weird doctrine, cultish Christians that don't believe things that are in the Bible. Which, believe it or not, there's people that do that don't realize it.

But by Christian I mean, this we affirm that the trinity of God, we affirm that God is triune, we affirm that Christ is fully God and fully man, we affirm that Christ was resurrected bodily from the dead, and He ascended into heaven, He remains there to this day.

And we believe in things like the inerrancy of Scripture. We believe that salvation comes by faith alone, by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. So kind of the five solos of the Reformation, we cling to those. And we affirm every aspect of the Apostles Creed.

And that's kind of the most vanilla creed, I think that you can affirm. We would affirm other confessions and Creed's as well, like the Westminster Confession with a few exceptions. That's what I mean by Christian. So we hold those beliefs very tightly together.

So now we have to talk about okay, what is the role of church in our lives? Our biggest contention was that. What role does the church play in the Christian's life?

**Selena:** Because then there's some... Again, when you start at one sort of premise, and then you say, one way or another, there's going to be things that sort of branch out from there, other points of either contention or agreement and issues that you need to talk about. So again, talking about what is important versus what you prefer.

**Ryan:** I want to dig into that one *[laughs]* a little bit more though. Sorry.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** We have a long outline here so I'll make sure you get through it. But I want to flush out what you and I were disagreeing about.

**Selena:** Varying degrees though. Because I don't want to say-

**Ryan:** We were working through it together and having... We weren't automatically agreeing on this stuff is what I'm trying to say.

**Selena:** Right. Which is weird because we always are kind of locked in step with each other on everything. But again, I feel like this was more of a communication issue than it was an actual primary issue beliefs.

**Ryan:** Oh, yeah. So very quickly. Very quickly, as you approach church, you asked this question, what role does the church play in the Christian's life and what role

does the Christian play in the life of the church? Those are the two questions at play. So the first side is Church exists to give me an experience of God.

**Selena:** That's very westernized, I think.

**Ryan:** It's very Westernized.

**Selena:** Yeah, very much more modern.

**Ryan:** And that's where we grew up. And that's where we met. We met on that. It's very experiential, very seeker friendly. A lot of the charismatic churches fall on that end of the spectrum.

**Selena:** It's more dependent on you.

**Ryan:** Not charismatic, but like mainline Protestantism, evangelicalism as the US knows it usually it's going to fall on the experiential modern end of that spectrum. [00:10:00] And there's some good to be had in there. But the main conviction I had was that that foundation of that premise is wrong, in that church does not exist to give me an experience of God. You gotta hear me out because-

**Selena:** An I agree with him. It's not an experience of God.

**Ryan:** It doesn't exist for that reason. It exists for the glory of Christ, for the glory of God through the communion of the saints. So it doesn't exist for my edification. I do get edified. I do get edified.

**Selena:** But it's primary-

**Ryan:** And Paul has a lot to say about believers edifying one another.

**Selena:** But its primary existence is not, you're saying, for the believer. You're saying it's for-

**Ryan:** For the glory of Christ.

**Selena:** For the glory of Christ.

**Ryan:** And for the worship-

**Selena:** First and foremost.

**Ryan:** ...of our holy, great, good and mighty God.

**Selena:** And remembering everything that He did, which we're in agreement on that.

**Ryan:** So then if you take that premise out, it doesn't exist for my experience, it exists for the glory of Christ. And that flips on its head, now I come to church not to receive but to give and to participate. And so then it becomes a question of what is that church doing to facilitate the participation and giving of what God has asked for on His terms. I think that's a big difference.

**Selena:** It's an obedience issue.

**Ryan:** And there's different ways to discuss this kind of with, I don't know, more scholarly theological terms. I don't think they're very helpful right now. But basically, are we going to God to worship Him on His terms? And does the church in question do that?

So things like preaching from the word. Things like singing songs that are right and true and hopefully beautiful, too. I think good songs are beautiful. Are we confessing sin together? Are we partaking of the sacraments together, the Lord's Supper? You know, is the church actively, you know, baptizing? Is the church led by Godly men to the glory of Christ?

These are all questions that to me help answer that main question, which is does this Church exist to glorify God on His terms?

**Selena:** And I think the disagreement came from, well, yes, I go to church to receive from God. Like I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Again, communication, right? The order is for us to go and worship God first and foremost for His glory. In turn, we are edified, in turn, we receive His forgiveness, we are reminded of His forgiveness, of the blood that was shed, of His body that was broken for us, and we look forward to eternity, and we have time to confess our sins to Him and we have time to worship together as a family.

So trying to bring along all the baggage from, you know, your own family or your own experience of church over your lifetime and bring that together with someone else. I mean, we're going on almost 20 years married and we've always been in agreement on a church. And this was the first time where we were like, "I don't know. You like this one, I like this one, but I don't know."

So digging deeper into some of those questions? It's not about the coffee and the doughnuts. It's really about asking the right question, excuse me, to be on mission to be fulfilling the great commission and living in obedience to God.

So what are some of those right questions? What are some of the questions that we asked as a couple? We have a few here. I think there's like four, maybe five here.

**Ryan:** The biggest kind of group of questions is this. As you're looking at a church and questioning whether or not you should be going to this church or if it's the right church, the most important question is, is it a faithful church? In other words, are they preaching the word of God?

If you go and listen to a sermon, and a few popular preachers come to mind, we have a few in our area, you could go listen to a sermon and they might have a little snippet at the beginning, and then a whole bunch of, you know, kind of self-help stuff. And then that might be the only scripture you get, that's not teaching the Word of God. That's using the word of God as a launchpad for whatever ideas the pastor is trying to get across.

And so expository preaching or exegetical reading of the word, reads the whole counsel of God's Word over time. I think a healthy church is going to go through large swaths, if not the entirety of Scripture every, you know-

**Selena:** Few years, yeah.

**Ryan:** ...however so many years. And you're going through it trying to mine out of it the meaning that God put in there. We're not reading into it. So that's exegetical preaching. Are they valuing God's word and are they preaching it in that way? Again, is it a faithful church in that do they worship God in spirit and in truth? That's John for, right? John 4:23?

**Selena:** John 4, yeah.

**Ryan:** "They will worship me in spirit and truth, my believers." So what does that mean to worship in spirit and in truth? Well, is there a life to the worship, right? Because there is a sense that... because...

**Selena:** I think this is where the question of experience can come in too. [00:15:00] What kind of worshipping in spirit and in truth?

**Ryan:** That's not subjective, but people can tend to read a lot into that statement. So if it's worshipping in spirit, that means you're full-on, charismatic, and everything. What we're getting at here is, is their worship good and true and right? Are they singing true things? Are they doing it in a manner that is aligned with God's word?



And then the last one is around polity. So how is the church set up organizationally? This one's very, very important. Because there is a fairly clear way to do this biblically. We came from a church that didn't have any of this and we've kind of seen the bad sides of that.

**Selena:** We came from a church. Like when we were younger, in the beginning years of our marriage.

**Ryan:** And what I mean by polity, I mean, how's the church set up? Namely, is the church led by a plurality of elders? Namely, male elders? Are they governing well? Do they meet the standards set forth in Scripture? I think it's in 2 Timothy and Titus and others other spots in Scripture. Are they godly men?

There are different ways to have governments for church setup. So like the Presbyterians have their presbyteries and they have different ways of reporting. I'm not super up on that stuff because I didn't grow up in it? And then you'll have... I don't know, the Lutherans have the... I think there's like the Missouri Synod and there's all these other basically presbyteries more or less.

And that's a little bit different. That's extra. But on the local level, you need to have a plurality of elders in contrast to having a church that's led by maybe one pastor. He's the CEO and everybody reports to him.

**Selena:** There's just a cult of personality, a risk of that, a risk of becoming, you know, just unhealthy based on one person. One person should not, I don't even think desire to be in charge like that.

**Ryan:** It's not biblical. And that's the biggest problem is you never see that model in Scripture.

**Selena:** It's too heavy alone.

**Ryan:** In contrast, you'll see a church that's led by a pastor, but then you'll have a council. They're not elders. Because in the Bible, elders and pastors are pretty much the same. They're the same word. But a counselor is somebody that maybe the pastor reports to, but the council is not accountable for the care of the souls in the same way that a biblical elder is.

**Selena:** No.

**Ryan:** So there's not a true plurality there. It's more of like you're running a nonprofit and you have to report to the board on whatever the health of the nonprofit is. So we're kind of stretching this out a little bit

**Selena:** So it's just asking questions about, is the church faithful? Is it healthy? What are some signs of a faithful church teaching the word, worship in spirit and truth? How is it set up? And do these things facilitate the health of the church?

So if we have elders in charge, are they there for quite a long time? We're not switching pastors every few months, the leadership is not being changed over all the time. But there's a consistency... We talked about growth and multiplication as a means of, I mean, seeing the fruit right of a church. But it's hard because we've been to very large churches that the door is just revolving. There's no actual depth of roots.

But then we've also seen churches where there's roots that are really deep and generational, but we're not sure if there's actually life there.

**Ryan:** And pragmatism is always a really poor way to judge these things. Like if you say, "Well, look, it's working, therefore, I'm not going to..." If it ain't broke, don't fix it type of thing. "Look, all these people are coming..." Like the biggest churches in our nation are run by heretics, you guys. So that's not a good measure of whether or not a church is healthy, whether or not has people showing up.

Take, for example, in small town USA, you have a tiny church with the faithful pastor, and you have maybe a silver congregation. And sure, they might not be growing, but that could be a thriving body of Christ.

**Selena:** Right?

**Ryan:** So you have to look at are people's-

**Selena:** It takes time.

**Ryan:** ...hearts growing? And you don't really know that until you interact with those people for at least some period of time.

**Selena:** One thing that I think has really been an indicator to us about the health of a church is the men, at least for me. How are they leading? Are they leading their families? Are they singing? Are they engaging? Are they stepping into their roles as men, as fathers, as husbands, or as single men serving in the church? What does that look like as an outsider coming in? Do I see the men engaged? Do I see... Not that they have to have 12 children *[both chuckles]* and be dictating to all of them. What I'm saying is that there's a health there, there's a vibrancy there.

**Ryan:** It's clear that the men are acting as men-

**Selena:** Absolutely.

**Ryan:** ...in a loving capacity.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** I love this quote. I read it on Twitter. It says, "You can judge the health of a church by how loudly the men sing true things." I got lit up on Facebook because of that. [00:20:00] Because some guys don't like to sing. I don't think it matters. You can still sing loud. Just do it to the glory of God, not your own glory.

**Selena:** So good.

**Ryan:** I echo what you just said. I'm glad that you brought that up. So on top of those two big questions, is the church faithful, is it healthy, what are our primary issues?

**Selena:** What do you mean by primary issues too?

**Ryan:** You're a couple here trying to figure out how to decide, you're also a rubric through which you're going to select the church.

**Selena:** And I want to say these terms that we're using, primary issues, hopefully, you know what those mean. We didn't know the young couple that this was kind of how things were broken out. This is the vocabulary used within churches to understand okay, primary, tertiary, expository preaching versus exegetical. So these are terms that we're trying to help everyone... I don't know, just be educated and understand and know the water you're swimming in.

**Ryan:** And so we're using the word "primary" here not in the salvation doctrine sense. So in Christianity, you have primary issues. Like if you don't believe that Jesus was the Son of God made flesh, that's a salvation issue because you're believing in a false Christ. If you don't believe in the triune God, that's the salvation thing.

There's other aspects that have to do with salvation. That's not how we're using the word primary. We're talking about primary in that they're the most important issues for church. And that may have gone without saying, but I thought I'd at least explain it.

Like you're not going to go to hell if you go to church that doesn't affirm the Apostles Creed. Right? Now, if the church doesn't affirm the Apostles Creed, that's a huge red flag because it's basic Orthodox Christianity. But that's another topic of conversation.

So we're gonna go through these really quickly. Primary issues. Does the church affirm the teaching of the trinity? Does it affirm the Apostles' Creed? Again, that's a big important thing. Primary in terms of Orthodox Christianity.

**Selena:** This is part of your due diligence, right? A lot of this stuff you can find online by searching through their mission, beliefs, and statements of faith.

**Ryan:** And if a church doesn't have a statement of faith, then that's a huge red flag. If it's like a fancy mission statement, and there's no like, "Here's what we believe about Scripture, here's what we believe about Jesus," that's a huge red flag, run, find another church.

Does it affirm and teach the authority of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and the sufficiency thereof? Very important. Does it support the sanctity of life? As an example, if we go to a church that doesn't want the complete abolition of abortion, that's a no-go.

**Selena:** And one I forgot on here too. Does it support the biblical model for marriage? Because there are now a lot of churches that don't support that. Or they do, and they support other forms of marriage, which we do not.

**Ryan:** In fact, we actually cross the church off our list simply because they are associated with a denomination that has gone off the rails. A local church-

**Selena:** May not.

**Ryan:** May not have been off the rails-

**Selena:** But unfortunately they-

**Ryan:** They wanted to change the denomination from within. But still, I'm like, "How can you..." I just couldn't play that in my head.

**Selena:** Right. For us, is it complementarian? This is a big one for us. Yes, we believe that it should be complementarian in that.

**Ryan:** In other words, there's an order in how God has made men and women to operate both within the family but also within the church. And the reason why this has become a primary issue in terms of church for us, because I feel like

how you approach this issue... And I'm gonna get some pushback here. That's fine. I'm okay with that. How you approach this issue and how you get, I believe, and fairly firmly I'm convinced by scripture, how you get to egalitarian view, you have to do a lot of kind of slicing and dicing of Scripture. And it feels like if you're doing that to get to that conclusion, then I don't know that I can trust you with the preaching of God's word.

A weekly communion.

**Selena:** Yeah, I think we have other podcasts and video on complementarian-

**Ryan:** [laughing] I just left that one to skin-drop that bomb. [laughs] So weekly communion. So a lot of churches will do communion on a monthly basis or sometimes they'll just do it on special events. We believe communion should be experienced weekly. And so we wanted to go to a church that had that prioritized it as such. Go ahead. Did you wanna say something?

**Selena:** Share weekly confession of sin. We had not grown up... I know that I went to church with my grandparents and they were Catholic. So there was that whole way of doing it. But for now with us at our church, we take a moment and they ask us to assume a position of-

**Ryan:** Posture.

**Selena:** ... a posture of confession. So either getting on your knees and having a silent time of confession that lead you to prayer and whatnot. And that has been so wonderful I think for us and for our kids to see as well. Mode of worship was the next thing that we were gonna talk about.

**Ryan:** I wanna stay on the confession of sin real fast.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** It's not like confessional.

**Selena:** Sorry, it's not out loud.

**Ryan:** We are not going to the church to receive forgiveness. The forgiveness is already actuated in Christ. He's already done it past, present, future saying it's all been forgiven now. But the confession of sin with it comes an assurance of pardon. And to me that's the most beautiful part of it because it's like I'm in this habit and rhythm of [00:25:00] thinking introspectively. "Lord, how have I sinned against you in this past week?" You're doing that on a daily basis anyway. I mean, ideally, but with the believers.

**Selena:** Doing is it with the saints. Yeah.

**Ryan:** And you're not saying it out loud. In your own head, "How have I sinned against You? Lord, help me, forgive me." There's something calibrating about that. Again, it's not like that's the place you have to go to get forgiveness. But it's just that assurance of your pardon and the communion of the saints [inaudible].

**Selena:** And training and modeling and teaching that to your children because our next point here is mode of worship, like family worship versus going to kid's church, and whenever. The church has a nursery for ages... until like three or four and under, and then they have a worship training room. So if you have a two-year-old and they don't go the nursery and they're just having a hard time in church, they can go in there, you can listen to the sermon, but you're also training your kids how to worship.

So part of teaching and training our children and helping them remember the things of God, confessing our sins. So, sometimes those moments are not really about me and confessing my sin, although I can slip in a moment or two. It's more about hey, you know, "Della, this is a time to talk to the Lord about the sin in your life and the things that you've struggled with this week or today." And you confess those to God saying, "God, I'm sorry for doing that." I think it can be such a beautiful and precious time for them to see other believers doing that as well.

**Ryan:** And not only that, and you've heard us say this in the past, perhaps, but we believe it's very important for children to sit on to the full counsel of God, under the shepherd that is assigned to them. Their pastor, right? This is their pastor too.

And so when he's preaching, he's preaching to them. They don't catch everything, but they catch enough. And they need to be there among the adults and participating and they can do worship with us.

**Selena:** Believe it or not, they do start when you train them... the beginning of summer was a bit rough. You know, they've been interested in home church with us and we've let them kind of have a little freedom to kind of run around in the shop as long as they're quiet, they can play in the back or something. The younger ones. But the older ones we've required more attentiveness.

We bring either a clipboard or a journal and they get to write. So we ask them to write something down that they heard in the sermon. They can draw. The sermon is probably 40, 45 minutes, and believe it or not, they do rise to the

occasion. And yes, mom and dad, you're gonna have to kind of invest in that time. And yes, Dad's gonna have to take stand and take some of the kids out once in a while if they're misbehaving.

But it's such a beautiful thing to just see our kids... They know what church is, they know what to expect, they know how to behave. And we've trained them in that. That takes time. And that's okay. And it's okay to mess up. There's going to be crying babies, there's going to be... I hate say mess up, because it's just life. Like there's going to be crying babies, there's going to be two-year-olds that are protesting and they don't want to sit anymore.

**Ryan:** But if you're a young couple and you don't have kids yet, then this is a different type of consideration for you. Because now you have to ask yourself, do you value integrated worship for your future children? And are you willing to endure some of the hiccups that come along with those-

**Selena:** Extend grace, yeah.

**Ryan:** ...who have young kids, and you don't. So I think you're I'm gonna help the church, you're gonna have young couples, even singles that understand, like, these are my young brothers and sisters in Christ and they need to be here just like I need to be here. That's a radical thing. It's very radical I'm realizing.

If we would have heard this podcast episode a year or two ago, we probably have some pretty strong opinions. We understand if you're reacting and having strong opinions here. But this is the journey God's brought us on and we believe it's the way to go. *[laughs]*

This one is actually also I think... I'll hold this one with a more open hand. But having a church that has one service versus multiple services. So the church that we're now attending, it's growing quickly, but it's been around 25 years, but they're seeing a surge in growth. I think God is moving, frankly.

And so I was sitting down with our pastor and was talking to him, and he's wondering, "Okay, what are we going to do? Because we don't want to go to multiple services, build out the rest of the building because they partition part of it and they rent that out. To basically take that last 6000 square feet, it's going to be astronomical for the budget.

And he's like, "What do we do?" He's like, "Well, we gotta plant churches. We got to raise up men and plant churches." That is the answer, you guys. Typically, what modern churches do... And pastors are responsible to lead their churches in this way. I have friends who have churches with multiple services. And I'm not gonna go call them and berate them over this.

But I love the attitude that comes along with having one service because if you have multiple services, you effectively have multiple churches, and you have some crossover in between, but it ends up becoming multiple churches. And then sometimes you'll see larger churches as they grow. They have satellite churches, which to me that's fine as long as it's a venue to plant a church eventually out of that satellite. Because church churches need to be planted in the community, not a pop up churches in, you know, just over the weekend or whatever. [00:30:00] That's a long conversation but that's the conviction that we hold.

**Selena:** You also had a conversation with him that same day about programs. Because again, we came from, I think, very program-driven origin of faith... not faith. Early in our marriage, we were heavily involved with a lot of programs and it about broke our marriage. *[Ryan laughs]* So what is our current philosophy on whether or not we should be a part of a program or a church that's driven by programs or not?

**Ryan:** I think it's up to the capacities of the church. Programs more often than not can end up being a huge burden on the people that are serving in the church.

**Selena:** Right. What do we mean?

**Ryan:** By program you mean like we have, you know, all kinds of different ministries, right?

**Selena:** And kid's church and all the things. And I think that there's a time and a place, depending on the community, because it really can serve to facilitate relationships. And the church should be a place of gathering and eating together and fellowshiping together.

So again, for us, we had to really be careful about how many programs there are, to what extent they're requiring involvement.

**Ryan:** And again, programs goes all the way back to the beginning this episode. We talk about what is the role of church in the life of a believer.

**Selena:** Absolutely.

**Ryan:** It's not to give me something to do. It's to facilitate the edification of the saints, discipleship of the saints in the worship of God. So if those programs are facilitating discipleship, they're facilitating edification, not just I'm busy, but it's actually growing-



- Selena:** Right. And usually that comes out of a need.
- Ryan:** ...relationships that are discipleship based.
- Selena:** Yes, absolutely.
- Ryan:** So our pastor's answer was, "Yeah, we have programs only... the programs we do have, there's a few of them and they are specifically because the people needed a reason to connect and the time to connect, because we found the relationships were not deepening like they needed to be." Some of that's my verbiage, but I think that's what he was getting at.
- Selena:** Quickly, talking about the location of the church. So I think this is twofold because like we were discussing before, a solid church will draw people from various areas, which is a plus. For us, the downside to that is that we were always kind of being pulled out of our community.
- So in this season of life, we were really praying for a church that was close to our home, that we can connect with people in our community. And if they were farther away, that's fine. You know, we can make that work. But the primary meeting place was not 30 minutes away, but it was 10 minutes away at the most, 10 to 15 minutes.
- And this was something that we had to kind of talk about, because there was a church that I liked that was 15 to 20 minutes and he's like, "Well, I feel like it's going to draw us out there again."
- Ryan:** What happens is, you're driving 15 minutes this way to go to the church or one way and then other people are driving 15 minutes from the opposite direction.
- Selena:** At minimum. Some, yeah.
- Ryan:** And now 20 or 30 minutes from the opposite direction. So now the people that you're getting into relationship with, you live 30, 40 minutes away from them. That's fine to have those friendships but I think it's really hard to live in authentic, sustainable Christian community with that. I think we talked about that last week.
- Selena:** Just depending on the season that you're in as well. I don't-
- Ryan:** So we wanted to be able to actually live life alongside the people that were worshipping alongside. And that required some geographic proximity. I was actually pretty white-knuckled with that.

- Selena:** You were. And part of that, I think, was our season of life, too. You know, when we're young and married, and there's not as many responsibilities, like a 20, 30-minute drive isn't really that much, might give us time to connect. And we're a little bit more free to kind of connect with other people on our own. But when you have a family of six or whatever, which we're going on, and they're young, you know, a 30-minute car ride can be the end of you all.
- Ryan:** It's just they go up exponentially, the distance and the number of children.
- Selena:** It's something to consider. I think it's just one of those questions that needs to be asked unless you guys are just already in agreement on where you're at.
- Ryan:** And it's possible to really intentionally build a local community of people that maybe attend to the same church so that you're not being stretched too far geographically.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** That's definitely possible. We're not saying don't go to a church that's too far away. Like go where God leads you to go if it checks off these boxes and more. But just be very mindful of the ability for you to actually build lasting Christian community if there's a big gap between you physically where you live.
- Selena:** Not at the expense of your family. All that to say, just kind of wrapping up, the right church might just be around the corner for you. You have to give it time. It's not just a one-and-done visit. I think that's can go without saying. But just as a reminder, I think, to our own hearts, it's going to take some time.
- So hold fast to the truth of Scripture. Don't waver. Don't compromise. Know what the Bible says and stick to it. Do your due diligence, get online, look at where they stand. Do your research. I know Ryan did a ton of research for us. There were some churches that we were like, "I think we're gonna check them out Sunday," and you know, Saturday night, he'd be like, "Nope, they're associated with something that affirms this and we do not." So it's good to-
- Ryan:** Which is bummer because I decided. I'll be like, "This is just a deal breaker. I'm sorry." [00:35:00] We can't really double down on some of that.
- Selena:** And we're not sorry.
- Ryan:** That's true.
- Selena:** We are standing firm on that.

**Ryan:** Some encouragement though. If you're thinking, "This is great, but I'm going to town, I've tried all the churches, I know all the churches, none of them fit-

**Selena:** We've been there too.

**Ryan:** You have to be - what's the word? Humble. Maybe you don't know everything about the church. If you still find yourself at an impasse... We actually landed at a church locally. It was a faithful church, but it missed on some of the more negotiable things. It didn't feel like we needed it to feel. I'm saying that even though I said early on it's not about us. But I feel like there's a missional aspect that was missing. But we landed there temporarily and just said, "Okay, until the Lord leads us, this is our church home."

**Selena:** They're faithfully teaching the Bible. They have kids-

**Ryan:** And so we started building relationships and we started... And then one week we're just, "Let's just try this other one again." That was kind of we didn't anticipate. So we've not been going to new churches every weekend. We were at one church for a couple months, and then another one. So there's that.

Also, if you maybe have a good church, but it's too far away, ask the church that's too far away, say, "Hey, we feel like we need to be in church community in our geographic area. Do you know of any good churches in our area? And there was a few... There's a pastor that was only 20, 30 minutes away. We visited, he said, "Hey, it was great to have you. If you find that this too far and you want to go closer to home, I know of a few good churches where you're at. Just email me and I'll send you their names."

**Selena:** Super great. Super great.

**Ryan:** Anyway, this has been, I think, a good conversation. We have an encouragement for you. It's Hebrews 10:23-25. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

This has been a long episode. I'd be remiss if I didn't at least mention if you don't know Jesus, you need to. We are all sinners fallen short of the glory of God. We are without hope until we place our faith in Christ and then we have all the hope in the universe.

And so if you don't know who Jesus is, you don't know what He did for you, go to this website. It's [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com). It gives you kind of the basics of what

it means to be a Christian, to place your faith in Christ, and then some steps you can take on that journey of walking with Christ. Go check that out. Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for this time we get to spend with these couples, these husbands or wives, people listening and watching. I pray that you would edify them. I pray that, Lord, that you would build your church, that the gates of hell will not prevail against your church and that you've called us as Christians to be enrolled, enlisted in the life of the church, in the work of the church, the mission of Christ.

I pray that you'd lead couples who haven't yet found a church into a good one. I pray that you would lead couples who are in a good church, help them to serve their church more faithfully, more diligently. Lord I pray that we'd do it all with a glad heart, not out of obligation or some sense of we need to earn your love but Lord out of a sense of we have your love, you've granted to us, you're worthy of our worship, and we're going to give it. Thank you Jesus for this time. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, folks, this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can.

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

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**PODCAST NOTES**

- **Referenced scripture**
  - Hebrews 10:23-25
  
- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://www.thenewsisgood.com)

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