

THE ONE MARRIAGE SKILL TO RULE THEM ALL

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[00:00:00]

Ryan: Oh boy, Selena, do I have some news for you? I do. *[Selena laughs]*. You don't seem to care. Never mind then. I'm just gonna keep the news to myself.

Selena: I do care. Tell me. Tell me quickly.

Ryan: You know what, Selena? I will tell you on the other side.

[00:00:15] <music>

Selena: Tada.

Ryan: The baby's here. If you're watching, you can see her. *[Selena laughs]*. Hi, Sunny. Hi, baby. She smiles at me every time I say hi to her. It's just the most heartwarmingest thing.

Selena: She's our little sunshine.

Ryan: She's our little sunshine. Names are prophetic. We nailed that one. *[both laughs]*.

Selena: I. I nailed that one.

Ryan: Selena nailed that one. *[Selena laughs]*. So, like I said, I have some news.

Selena: Oh, yes, your news.

Ryan: We have some news. Yeah. Sunny does not like suspense. She's not a big fan of suspense.

Selena: Not a fan.

Ryan: So the last book that we released was *See-Through Marriage*. Do you remember the year that we released that book?

Selena: I'm sure I was pregnant or we had a baby. So, '16?

Ryan: 20- *[laughs]*. Oh my goodness.

Selena: '19. 2020?

Ryan: 2020.

Selena: Okay

Ryan: Okay, I won't hold it against you. *[both laughs]*. We actually did the book launch because that was when Covid was shutting everything down.

Selena: We launched it at people. Like we threw them at-

Ryan: We drove around. It was drive-by book launch party. It was ridiculous. *See-Through Marriage*. Well, actually, for the first time since that release, we have two other books we're releasing. And that's what I'm announcing here. And actually we're gonna talk about communication today because these books are on the topic of communication. So the husband's book is called *How A Husband Speaks*, and then there's a wife's book called *How a Wife Speaks*. They kind of complement each other, but really it's just meant to help husbands and wives grow in parallel, not necessarily in series if you're an electrician. *[laughs]*.

So it's not like our *31 Day Pursuit Challenge* where the challenges intersect with each other. But this is actually where you're growing in parallel. And the whole premise of these books is that if you can get this one skill right, if as a couple you can learn to communicate just a little bit better, you will see an immediate improvement in your marriage. Every other aspect of dysfunction usually stems from some dysfunction in communication, or at least it's not remedied because there's dysfunctional communication.

So we're announcing those books today. You can actually pre-order those. If you go to fiercemarriage.com/speak, if you pre-order... They'll release in, I think, the second Tuesday in June. So don't delay because you'll get the best deal right now. But also it helps us to bootstrap the printing.

Ryan: We have our own publishing company, and so we're actually publishing. It's taking us a lot of time to edit and do all that sort of stuff, type setting. But we're publishing this. So we need your help, our lovely listeners. Go to fiercemarriage.com/speak.

I want to read a quick quote from it because it'll actually-

Selena: Quick quote.

Ryan: Quick quote. It'll actually prime the pump here as we head into this conversation. All right. This is from the intro to the *How a Husband Speaks* book. I can't speak apparently. *[both laughs]*. Here's what it says.

Selena: It's hard to talk.

Ryan: It's hard to talk. It says, "By communication, marriages either flourish or die. If a couple can't communicate by which, I mean they can't share ideas, meaning and the experiences, not necessarily only through speech, then they can't meaningfully work through anything: Not sin, not frustration, not life's big questions, not even dinner plans. Without effective communication, marriages die on the vine. But with it, they have a chance. This isn't to understate the necessity of gospel centrality in Christ like love, both required, but only to say that communication quality is high on the list of determiners for marital success. This is a biblical notion borne out by data."

There is some data that supports that that's cited in the book. But yeah, that's in the intro to the book. The big premise is that marriage communication matters. God cares how we speak to each other, and it's a skill that can be learned and even mastered. So even in the book, there's the chapters, there's discussion and application questions, and then there's a communication mediocrity and mastery in the grids at the end of each chapters. Eighteen chapters in each book. Right. I talked that whole time. Do you have anything you want to add?

Selena: No. I like the grids. Those are probably my favorite parts of the books. I mean, yes, the writing is hopefully helpful anyways. *[Ryan laughs]*. But the mediocrity versus mastery, you know, what are things that I'm doing now that are really just contributing to the mediocre and less than communication versus what can I do to master it? Not just to be good at communicating, but to connect with my husband to be unified around the things of God and just live out His plans for our lives.

Ryan: Yeah. So check that out. Go to fiercemarriage.com/speak. We would love to have your support there. We'll continue talking about it in the coming weeks.

So for today's discussion, we're gonna tackle communication generally. [00:05:00] But the problem with talking about communication is that so much of what we can say is so obvious. It's like you hear us talk and you're like, duh, duh, we have to talk, we have to listen. Duh, we have to understand each other. Duh.

The problem here is not that we need more head knowledge. But we need heart change, and we need habit change. So better communication is rarely

solved by just more head knowledge, which we address this mostly in the book. It's not just about teaching you tools. That's part of it. But you need to have a changed heart. You need to understand how does God want us to communicate to each other.

Selena: Well, and who's the changer of the hearts, right?

Ryan: Yeah. Exactly. How do we look to the source of the very catalyst of our sanctification, Christ himself, the Holy Spirit working in us? But then how can I set up habits in my life that will facilitate healthy communication toward my wife? Or if you're a wife, toward your husband.

One of my favorite quotes in terms of habits is that we don't rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems. So creating habits and triggers and things in our life that will facilitate healthy communication, that's like 90%, I contend, of the communication battle is just having the boundaries and the systems in place so that you actually communicate in a healthy way. And then being emotionally mature enough to turn your gaze inward, as a man especially, and think about what I'm actually trying to communicate here, what I'm actually feeling, what I'm actually dealing with, so I'm not just reacting all the time to myself and to my wife, but instead I'm responding to those things.

So that's a hard thing. Because when we talk about communication and podcast like this, it's very tempting to say, "Hey, here's five really quick things to talk about and to have better habits. But we have to understand it comes from a heart change.

So here's a discussion. We are gonna give you five things. *[both laughs]* And they're gonna be very basic, but we're asking you to engage in this topic maybe a little bit more than you would otherwise because we've given you the whole preamble. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Well, it's rooted in God's word. I feel like that should be enough. If you value God's word, then you're gonna value what it has to say and you're gonna value how it teaches you to communicate and how to love your spouse better through how you communicate to them.

Ryan: All right, number one key toward establishing rock-solid communication. Which by the way, when we asked couples, what do you face the most issues with in your marriage-

Selena: What do you struggle with the most?

- Ryan:** What do you struggle with the most? Thank you. It was communication. It wasn't money. It wasn't schedules. It wasn't sex. It was communication. We cannot get on the same page.
- Selena:** I think sex was a hard second though, wasn't it?
- Ryan:** Sure. We cannot get on the same page. So these are five ways that you can get on the same page. Take them in order or not. So number one is talk. Okay? Like I said, super obvious, super insightful here. But here's the thing. Actively engage your minds in the discussion and learn to articulate your own thoughts in a loving way.
- Selena:** Hmm, that is a hard thing. That is a hard, hard thing. Because you have thoughts and you think you're articulating them well and yet still, you don't hear what I say to you. *[Ryan laughs]*
- Ryan:** We'll get into the hearing after this. *[Selena laughs]*. But yeah. So it's taking the time to actually, like I said, turn your gaze inward. We're not talking about naval gazing. We're talking about being able to pick apart... I know in my own heart, I feel like it's a bit of a rat's nest until I get in there and actually start pulling at the threads, getting to the bottom of what I'm actually feeling, and then honestly articulating that to you, to my wife.
- So here's a verse from Proverbs 12:18. It says, there is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." What are you laughing at?
- Selena:** No, I just sneezed *[both laughs]*.
- Ryan:** Oh. It was a covert sneeze.
- Selena:** Trying to not mess up the video rule there.
- Ryan:** I cannot do the covert sneeze *[Selena laughs]*. I have to like grab the pillow and shove my face in the pillow. Okay. So men struggle with talking in unique ways in that I think it's easy for guys to shut off and be passive when it's hard to express something.
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** They don't always know how to articulate what they're dealing with. I just mentioned that. And I think men can also, with familiarity, with being overly familiar, can get sharp and terse and cutting and dismissive with how they speak to their wives.

- Selena:** Though women are the same. Right? We know how to cut you down and cut you sharp, right, when we're familiar. Again, how do women struggle when it's... differently or maybe in the same way? But I think as a woman, when we feel it, we gotta tell them, right? Timing is not everything for women. And it should be. [00:10:00] If you're just kind of being that dripping faucet, then you're just gonna be nagging, you know? Ironically, you're not gonna achieve what you're hoping to achieve in telling him.
- Ryan:** One of the things that we've had to work through is you actually making requests overtly because you-
- Selena:** It sounds silly, but I feel like when I'm asking him I'm nagging him. But when I'm not asking him directly, he's like, "I can't read your mind, woman. *[Ryan laughs]*. Like, what do you want me to do? How can I help you in this moment?"
- Ryan:** You did that this morning. This morning you go, "The dogs are out of food."
- Selena:** I'm teaching my three-year-old this and my six-year-old, and here I am.
- Ryan:** And I'm like, "That's a fact." *[both laughs]*. You've said a true thing. And she goes, "And I don't think the food's gonna come today." You're like, "Okay, Ryan."
- Selena:** I want you to offer.
- Ryan:** "Selena, do you need me to go to the store?"
- Selena:** I don't think my three-year-old wants me to offer. My three-year-old just expressing what's happening.
- Ryan:** But I come to you and I say, "Selena, do you need me to go to the store to get dog food?" She's like, "Well, if you're gonna go to the store, that would be great if you got dog food." I'm like, "I'm not going to the store if you don't tell me to go to the store." *[both laughs]*. I'm like, "Ask me to go to the store and I will go."
- Selena:** Thank you for instructing me in this. I'm still like, "Oh, that's what you're doing. *[both laughs]*."
- Ryan:** Anyway, you gotta talk. You gotta be able to get out what you're actually looking to get out. Many times we think we're getting it out, but we're failing at it. But we can help each other in this. And one of the ways we help each

other is, number two, is we listen. So we need to give each other the time and the promptings to be able to speak in a way that is efficacious. It gets it out and into the conversational space in our marriage.

So as your husband now, I'm not always just like spurring you along to... You know, I do read into what you're saying and I try to... but I also need to decipher sometimes too because I don't actually know. I need to actually decipher and learn how to listen. So we don't often listen as well as we think we can.

Selena: Well, because I think some of us are so loud in our own heads of how are we gonna respond to this? Like, he just said this, well, I'm gonna come back and say this. He said this. How dare he even thinking... he said that? *[laughs]* In your own head, you're just... it's really hard I think to hear truly what your spouse is saying when it's either about you or about your marriage because it's just... at least this is me. The emotions just... All you see is white. You're like, I don't know. So much is happening.

Ryan: Which by the way, so much is happening. And speaking of listening, we have a baby here, we have seven chicks in the closet not far from here that I can hear chirping and pecking away, and our dog is barking outside *[laughs]*. So there's a lot of listening going on. I'm trying to stay focused.

Selena: It's okay.

Ryan: Another aspect of listening and then we'll pick up pace here a little bit, is we need to listen with charity. And we need to assume the best and not the interpretation that just reinforces what we feel/ already think.

Selena: Well, and somebody's gotta start that pattern, right?

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Because so easy for us to just assume the worst and not think that they're actually... you know, we're just gonna assume the worst. It's easier, it's faster.

Ryan: So we're speaking and articulating, honestly, taking the time to articulate what's in. And then as a listener, we need to listen with charity... speak with clarity, listen with charity. And number three is to seek understanding. Okay, this goes to the first point. But we need to actually try to understand what they're saying. And sometimes we need to ask clarifying questions. We also need to understand their perspective. So Selena was saying... I'm gonna get personal here. You're saying you don't want to go for a walk around our neighborhood because you don't feel safe.

- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Because sometimes it doesn't-
- Selena:** It doesn't feel safe sometimes. Yeah.
- Ryan:** I think it's a very safe neighborhood. *[both laughs]*. But my wife is not just saying... I forget what you said but you were trying to communicate to me that you want me to help you feel safe. You want me to give you the assurance and perhaps the tools that you need to-
- Selena:** Right, to feel safe.
- Ryan:** Feel safe. And in fact, my argument was that you are in fact safe whether you feel it or not. Your argument is-
- Selena:** I feel vulnerable.
- Ryan:** "I don't care if I'm safe. I don't feel safe. I feel vulnerable." So I needed to read that situation and say, Okay, I don't need to just lay the facts on her. I need to actually help my wife feel safe and understand your perspective.
- Selena:** Because facts don't harm.
- Ryan:** I've never been a woman. *[Ryan laughs]*
- Selena:** And you never will be. Let's just put that there.
- Ryan:** I never will be a woman. And I won't know what it's like to not be a six-foot tall man-
- Selena:** Able man.
- Ryan:** ...able man who doesn't have-
- Selena:** Who can defend himself.
- Ryan:** And generally people don't mess with me.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Or approach me or anything because, I don't know, I look mean maybe, I don't know. *[laughs]*

- Selena:** You look very nice to me.
- Ryan:** The point is, is we need to understand one another. So confirming meeting... meaning, excuse me. I hear you saying this. What I think you mean is this and this. Is that true?
- Selena:** Is that true? Or "I hear you saying this. Is this is what you're actually saying?" [00:15:00]
- Ryan:** And just seeking that understanding. How disarming is that?
- Selena:** Yes. You feel seen, you feel heard, you're ready to try to articulate it again rather than just shut down and say, I don't care.
- Ryan:** Even if your spouse has completely whiffed it, like, I hear you saying this, but what I think you're saying is this. Nope, that's not it at all. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Be gracious.
- Ryan:** Let me articulate.
- Selena:** Have charity.
- Ryan:** Be kind how you respond to their whiffing it. *[laughs]* Yes, whiff. So Proverbs 18:2, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." So take pleasure in understanding. Learn to want to understand what's going on in the heart, mind of your spouse, as opposed to just winning the conversation or getting out the next thing you want to say.
- Okay, this next one is maybe less intuitive on the communication side of things, but it should be. And it's act. Okay. So number one, speak. Number two, listen. Number three, seek understanding. Number four, act. So all the conversations in the world, all of the skills we have in the world, they mean nothing if our conversations precipitate no change. Meaning that if we talk about... You know, if you said to me, "Ryan, I appreciate all you do. I would really appreciate additional help with the garbage because I feel like when the garbage gets full, I feel like you care for me when you take it out. And when you don't take it out, I feel like you hate me." *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Basically.
- Ryan:** That would be sloppy speech.

- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** You know I don't hate you. But you feel maybe uncared for or whatever... or whatever. Yes. Something like that. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Seek to understand. Seek understanding *[laughs]*.
- Ryan:** But if I say, "You know what, Selena? I love you and I want to serve you, and I'm gonna start taking the garbage out. And then-
- Selena:** Say that every time.
- Ryan:** ...and then I never do it. Right? The surest proof that you can listen is that you act on what you hear. And frankly, if you say you're gonna do something and you don't do it, then you're a liar. And lying is a sin, and generally not something men should do.
- Selena:** 1 John 3:18, "Little children let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth."
- Ryan:** In deed and in truth. Good. All right, number five is rest. Okay, what do I mean by that? Part of resting is trusting and leaving space for the communication to, I'll say, ferment. And I think fermentation is a great process. *[Selena laughs]* So fermentation is a good thing. Let it ferment, let it mature. Let the leaven work its way through the conversational dough. Rest and trust that if you've spoken true things, you've sought to listen with charity, you've sought understanding, you've been acting in good faith. And if you're not seeing the change happen, rest and trust.
- Selena:** And be patient.
- Ryan:** When we align ourselves with the word of God, namely what the word of God says about communication, which the books that we've written it's all based on God's word and the communication principles we have in God's word. When we align ourselves with that, we can expect that to bear fruit in our lives. But it doesn't always bear fruit on our terms and on our timelines. So we have to rest and trust.
- Selena:** Well, and what's the difference, quickly, about resting versus just relinquishing and throwing your hands up? Resting is acting in a way of trust. Relinquishing is giving up. So I think it's not just, well, I'm just gonna rest and who cares what happens? It's like, no, I'm gonna rest in the knowledge that I have tried and done what I feel like the Lord has led me and instructed me in His word. I'm gonna rest knowing that maybe seeds are planted, even though I can't see the

growth right now, that there will be change. I need to give some things some time. Let it marinate. I like marinating. You like fermenting.

Ryan: I'll ferment, you'll marinate and come together in a delicious stew. *[both laughing]* A boozy stew.

Selena: Goodness.

Ryan: Philippians 3:12 says this, and I think it's really apt right here, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." So there's this pressing on in anticipation, in faith. And that's what you were saying about rest and trust. And it's not just throwing up your hands.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But it's an eager pressing in with a God-centered contentment around that work.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: And of course, the big kind of underlying piece to this is to pray through it all. As you're working through communication issues, pray, pray on your own, in your time with God, pray throughout the day. Let prayer be the attitude of your heart. But also if you can... and a lot of couples struggle with this, and I think it's a tragedy. Couples struggle with praying together. Grab your wife, if you're a wife, grab your husband... *[laughs]* Okay, grab him by the neck, lay one on him, and say, "Let's pray, sweetheart." But pray together. [00:20:00]

And it's okay to say, God, help us communicate better and to admit to one another we don't communicate well. We're actually pretty bad at this. But guess what? I'm not going anywhere. You're not going anywhere. Let's spend some time on this. Let's apply ourselves and let's pray that the Lord allows *[baby crying]* us to become fruitful communicators. Sunny is about ready for a nap. Speaking of prayer, we're gonna pray in a second, but first I want to invite you into a relationship with Christ.

If you don't know who He is, you need to know Jesus. You need to know that He died for you. He loves you. He's the Son of God. He's not just a good teacher. He is the Son of God incarnate. And He died, but He didn't stay dead. He resurrected to new life and He wants to bring you along with Him in that new life. We're trusting that if He's calling you, that this might be a way that He is re-articulating that call in your life.

So if you want to know what it means to follow Christ, my first encouragement is this. Find a friend you know is a Christian, if you have one, and ask them to pray with you, ask them to read the Bible with you. If they're are a Christian worth their salt, they will.

If you don't have one of those, find a good Bible-preaching church. Sometimes that's hard to find. So we have a website for you that kind of lays out some of these steps, some of the core ideas behind what it means to be a Christian. And it gives you a step down that path toward finding a church. And that website is this: thenewsisgood.com. Check that out. We would love to call you brother or sister in Christ. We're gonna meet one day in glory, Lord willing.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the gift it is to communicate as husband and wife. I pray for the husbands and wives listening to this or watching this that they would strive for Godly communication as a means to an end of being sanctified, as a means to an end of giving and experiencing the love that you've set aside for the covenant of marriage.

Lord, I pray that you would help husbands be kind and patient in their communication. I pray that the wives would also be kind and patient in their communication and that they would flourish in this area so that every other area of their marriage might improve. All for their good and for your glory, ultimately. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Well, as a reminder, we have our new communication book set. This is just scratching the surface, you guys. 18 chapters of depth. We labored over these books for the better part of a year, I want to say. And we're finally ready to release them into the wild. If you want to pre-order those, you'll get a screaming deal. There's probably gonna be some benefits with it. I don't know what those are gonna be yet. Maybe we'll do some sort of communication course or something that you'll have access to with it. But more than anything, you'll get both books. Excuse me. You'll get both books and you'll get them for an awesome price. Go to fiercemarriage.com/speak and that will be your ticket to a better communication life. *[both laughs]*. That was cheesy.

Anyway, thanks for joining us. This episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Proverbs 12:18
 - Proverbs 18:2
 - 1 John 3:18
 - Philippians 3:12

- **Recommended resource**
 - [How A Husband Speaks](#)
 - [How a Wife Speaks](#)
 - thenewsisgood.com

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