

**SHOULD NON-BELIEVERS EVEN BOTHER WITH MARRIAGE?**

<https://fiercemarriage.com/should-non-believers-even-bother-with-marriage>

[00:00:00]

**Selena:** I got a question for you, Husband.

**Ryan:** Okay, Wife, what've you got?

**Selena:** Do you think that unbelievers should get married? People that don't believe in Jesus, that don't believe in God, should they get married?

[00:00:17] < music >

Interrupting in conversations is not a good way [Ryan laughs] to communicate with your spouse, but for the sake of drama [Selena laughs].

**Ryan:** Sure, we're all about that drama, you know us. I actually do have an answer because we've talked through this and I already had convictions when I first read this question. But we will share that with you once we get done with all of our preamble stuff [laughs].

**Selena:** Announcements.

**Ryan:** Yes, biggest announcement. We have new books that are pre-ordering as of this recording, and as of you listening to this, they're called *How a Husband Speaks*, *How a Wife Speaks*, and together they're called *How They Speak* [both laugh]. I don't know, at some point when you're writing a book and you're editing, you hit your creative max [both laugh].

You're like, "I can't positively squeeze any more juice from this orange that I call my noggin here." So, anyway, check those out. You can go to [fiercemarriage.com/speak](https://fiercemarriage.com/speak).

We have a special pre-order thing where you'll get access to our couples' communication masterclass. We're working on that right now [both chuckle]. But it's bound to be helpful. The thing about communication is, and we talked about this few episodes back, is it can feel very obvious.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** But what we need in communication is not, "Hey, you should communicate more." I think every couple knows that, intuitively. They've also been told it probably-

**Selena:** Bazillion times.

**Ryan:** Yes, but what you need is heart transformation and a heart transformation comes by looking at God's word, honestly, in terms of the words that we speak. And, so, that's what these books, hopefully, offer. That's why we wrote them with that purpose in mind. Lord willing, that purpose will happen.

So if you don't know who we are, I've just given you that whole pitch. I'm Ryan, this is my lovely wife, Selena. We're the Fredericks. We do the Fierce Marriage Podcast on Thursdays.

We released the Fierce Parenting Podcast, and we are thrilled to do this work. It's been a blessing from the Lord. And in that vein, we wouldn't be able to do this work if it weren't true for our amazing patrons. So if you aren't a patron and you've thought about becoming a patron, I'm here to tell you now, more than ever, it's important.

I just sent a message out to our awesome patrons, basically, saying like, "They're the..." if you've seen that meme of the shield, and arrows hitting someone holding the shield. Our patrons are the ones protecting us from not being able to do this work. And, obviously, the Lord is using the patrons to that effect.

So I want to give a shout out to one of our patrons, we've not ever done this. But Lance H. and Christopher C, two of our newest patrons. I want to just shout out, say thank you so much for joining. You didn't ask for that, we didn't offer that, but here we are doing it.

I think we're going to start doing that more and more because we really want to build up this base of people. We're almost to 300, we'd love to get to 500. I think, at 500 we should do something funny, and daring, and hilarious.

**Selena:** Sounds good, something for you to do *[laughs]*.

**Ryan:** Like Selena is going to shave her head. Selena will shave her head when we get 500 patrons.

**Selena:** I will not.

**Ryan:** No, I wouldn't allow that *[Selena laughs]*. What should I do?

**Selena:** What do you think we should do? Let's get some ideas from out there.

**Ryan:** All right, so ideas [fiercemarriage.com/ask](https://fiercemarriage.com/ask). You can ask questions, which is where we get one of these questions, today. But you can also leave ideas for what Ryan should do upon reaching 500 patrons. That's going to be for patrons only, by the way *[both chuckle]*.

So [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). That's how you become a patron, there you go. [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). What have you got, Selena? What are we talking about today? Will you ask this big question, sorry.

**Selena:** We did ask this big question. But it didn't come from us, it came from one of you, a listener, going by the name of Tess. She said, "Note, I am joyously married to a wonderful man of God." Praise God, I love hearing that.

"This question does not apply to me, personally, but more to answer a curiosity of something he and I have discussed our thoughts and opinions on. But have yet to come to a conclusion on what is clear. What's a clear biblical answer or what's a clear viewpoint?"

What is the purpose of marriage for unbelievers? They're already living in sin. Not marrying for the purpose of following God's commands. They're not seeking to glorify God with their marriage. So what is the purpose of marriage for unbelievers?" And I think we need to take one more step back and say, first of all, and which is what I ask you, should unbelievers get married?

And you had an answer, so we're going to answer both of these questions. But, I think, we should start with-should an unbeliever get married? They will have overlapping answers, on some of the front.

**Ryan:** So my first response, we were in the pre-game and we were talking about this.

**Selena:** Pregame *[chuckles]*.

**Ryan:** And you asked me this question. And I thought, "Well, what's the purpose of marriage for a non-believer?"  
I said, "Well, what's the purpose of eating for a non-believer? What's the purpose of sleeping for a non-believer? What's the purpose of making responsible financial decisions for a non-believer?"

What are the purposes of these things? Are they somehow detached from that person's worldview? Or, and this is what I would contend, are they so baked into the fabric of humanity, in the fabric of society, in the fabric of creation, by God who sits outside of creation. Are they so baked into that, that it doesn't matter what you profess, in terms of your faith? If you follow these ways, it'll be better for you than if not.

I mean, if you choose not to eat or if you choose to eat garbage, it's baked into the universe that you will lack nourishment. If you choose not to sleep, if you choose not to marry, you will lack a certain blessing that is built into the marital structure. And, so, the answer is—should unbelievers get married? Absolutely.

Now, are they going to view it the same way as somebody who is a Bible-believing Christian? Probably not. I mean, a non-believer could be somebody who is raised in a believing home.

They understand what covenant is, basically. They understand what love is, biblically. Though, they've chosen to reject the faith, they can still step into a committed relationship and say, "I'm committed to this woman or this man."

**Selena:** Well, and I think there is a desire for commitment no matter... again, like you said, I think it's baked into the fabric of who God created us to be. And, so, remember when we did that interview with Blaze, and what was his name?

**Selena:** Oh, I don't remember his name.

**Selena:** Man, I feel so bad.

**Ryan:** I could look it up. Ian, it's Ian.

**Selena:** Ian, thank you.

**Ryan:** Hi Ian and Blaze, can't say you're not watching this *[both laugh]*.

**Selena:** They were a couple, we got brought in for an interview to talk about polyamory. And Ian had come from, I think, his parents were Jewish. They were religious Jews, practicing Jews. And, so, they were monogamous. They had just been married to each other, all of that.

**Ryan:** His parents were.

**Selena:** His parents were and he saw that, and he was like, "That's great." But he wanted this other lifestyle. But I don't know if-

**Ryan:** I contend with that, to be honest. I remember what happened was he loved Blaze.

**Selena:** Well, yes, that's what I was getting to.

**Ryan:** And Blaze demanded this lifestyle and she said, "If you're going to date me or be with me, you're going to have to be okay with me being polyamorous."

**Selena:** "Being with someone else."

**Ryan:** And, so, Ian, I think, he was caught up in that.

**Selena:** Well, thank you, that was the whole hook of what I was trying to say is that there are unbelievers. But you could see in his eyes that he wanted a committed relationship. You could see that he wanted. He loved her and he wanted-

**Ryan:** He said it, he would've preferred it. But he wanted to love her so badly that he basically said that "You can do what you want as long as you don't leave me."

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** And it's heartbreaking.

**Selena:** And, so, there's a lot of good to be had from people getting married-

**Ryan:** Monogamously.

**Selena:** Monogamously. There's fruitfulness that can happen. I mean, there's countless stories of pastors who grew up in unbelieving homes. But, again, God used that situation for His glory. And, so, I guess, I question, I'm like, "Who am I to think that God can't use a situation of unbelievers coming under His design for marriage and not really knowing that they're doing that." It's been so much of a social construct. I'm sure there's a flip side to that, which we'll get to.

**Ryan:** Let me be clear, it's not a social construct.

**Selena:** It's not. People believe-

**Ryan:** But they view it as a social construct, is what you're trying to say?

**Selena:** Yes, thank you.

**Ryan:** So they see it as optional and they think, "Well, we can get married because that's just what people do in our society." Well, did it occur to you that the reason that people do that, in society, is because it is foundational to human flourishing? Because God made it that way. Did that occur to you?

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** And when you remove God from that equation, you're left with, "Well, what for?" And, of course, we can then argue from pragmatism. I don't like to do that, but I think in this case you can. It is almost, not almost, it is always better for a man to have a committed relationship with a woman.

It's always better, vice versa, for the woman to have a committed relationship with the man. It's always better for a child to be raised in a stable home environment. Where the husband and wife are together and they're both in the life of that child, that's always better.

**Selena:** Always better.

**Ryan:** And, so, absolutely, should a non-believer get married? Yes.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Because even if you don't profess faith in God. Even if you've catechized your children into the ways of the world, in the secular humanism, evolution into whatever crazy ideology you have. It's still going to be better for that child, if you're together. Now, I wish you would follow the Lord-

**Selena:** And pray for that.

**Ryan:** I'm going to get the baby.

**Selena:** Bam, baby.

**Ryan:** We're back. Sorry, we had a baby break there. So this begs the question, yes, we, obviously, want couples to embrace the gospel, to be transformed by the grace of God, and to then teach their children those things. But by and large, it's still, regardless, I don't want to say across the board, but in general, for human flourishing, marriage is better.

But it begs the question can non-believers love? Can non-believers stay committed? Can these things happen? Now there's degrees, and you could argue definitions.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** But I would contend based on the common grace of God. So common grace is this idea that the sun shines on all humankind. Whether a believer or a non-

believer, we still get the same sunshine. You can still plant crops; the crops will grow. You can still taste a delicious steak. You can still enjoy a day with your family, even if you don't profess faith. That's called common grace.

And, so, yes, I do think God has inbuilt into humanity the capacity for love, and the capacity for selflessness. Now, where the rubber meets the road-

**Selena:** To a degree.

**Ryan:** To a degree, of course. But really the most selfless thing you can do is, and is only enabled by the Holy Spirit, and that's love and obey God. And then for Christian, how we love and obey God within marriage is we love more selflessly. As parents, we raise our children faithfully. We disciple them faithfully.

So should a nonbeliever get married or what is the purpose of marriage for a non-believer? It's for the flourishing of humanity, flourishing of that family. Can they love? Yes, I believe they can. Can they stay committed? Yes, I believe they can. It happens to this day.

When the rubber meets the road, their worldview will be put to the test. And I believe, and I know you do, too, that the Christian worldview is the only one that can stand the test, in a way that is most joy-filled and eternally meaningful.

**Selena:** Yes, I agree. I think marriage really is a place for sanctification or sinfulness. So you either grow in one of those, and whether you acknowledge them or not that's what's going to happen. I think it's just at the end of our time and when we're faced with eternity.

Yes, we can all experience the goodness of common grace. But I think how much more motivating is it to be self-controlled in a marriage that is centered on Christ? And how much more joyful and hopeful is it to forgive and learn to rebuild trust when Christ is, again, your standard. Christ is your rock. The gospel is your motivation.

The Holy Spirit is leading you and indwelling you. So, again, these are things that we can do, but I think only to the extent that our humanness allows, I guess. When we have the Holy Spirit enabling us, there's a conviction that happens. And we can't just stow it away, and stuff it down, and ignore it.

I think, at some point, it comes out. Whether it's bitterness that's going to build up over time or it's just explosion after explosion. I don't think that you

can really get rid of resentment, or a hard heart, or unforgiveness without the gospel.

And, so, yes, a non-believer should get married and they might even have a better marriage than some believers. I mean, that's also something, too. But better, I mean, define better. Maybe they get along, they have great vacations, they seem to enjoy each other. But when something happens, where do they draw their strength from? What well do they draw from?

**Ryan:** You asked this question, how do you define better? For the believer we don't define better, again, based on pragmatism, based on what works. We define better based on what's most glorifying to God.

So you can have a marriage that is broken. Where the husband or the wife, they're contending for their spouse and their spouse is rejecting them or rejecting their covenant. That marriage, hear my words, could be better in the sense that it is glorifying God more. If that spouse is contending faithfully with hope in the gospel, with hope in Christ. They're persevering in the middle of hardship and still praising God in it. Absolutely, that can be better.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** It's interesting. I wanted to raise this question because we mentioned, yes, do humans have the capacity for love outside of being saved? The theologian in me, if there is one, wonders about this idea of total depravity.

Now that's a reformed doctrine and many contend with it. And, basically, the total depravity it gets caricatured, it gets straw manned, I think, in this way. And what the doctrine is, is not that humans are incapable of good.

Some would say that, and I think they're wrong. I think that's not what Calvin meant. Now, the doctrine is that I am incapable of calling upon the name of the Lord, aside from Him working that out in me.

**Selena:** Mm-hmm.

**Ryan:** Okay, it doesn't mean that I can't do anything good. And, so, I just want to be clear on this because I know we have some reformed brothers and sisters, they be like, "Wait a second, how can non-believers love? They're totally depraved."

Well, and I'm telling you that maybe you've misunderstood the doctrine. Then it's important to understand the categories we're operating within here. I



absolutely do think that if that couple can operate in a loving way, in a kind way, they can be selfless toward one another.

But when it comes to their salvation, they need to be drawn. And, I think, Scripture is blatantly clear about this. But it's the work of the Lord and the heart of that believer. Anyway, I don't want to get too deep down that rabbit hole.

But all I've to say a marriage is good because God said so. Marriage is good because God designed it for the flourishing of humankind. And, absolutely, it would be better for every couple to be married than not. And for every couple, the more they understand and embrace the idea that marriage is between one man, one woman for life, and I'm supposed to love them in the selfless way. The closer we get to that biblical norm; the better society will be. And it starts with that gateway of we're committed in a legal way.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** This is not something I can just walk away tomorrow with zero consequence.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** I heard, recently, that Reagan was the one responsible for the no-fault divorce laws that were passed, and he said it was the greatest regret of his life.

**Selena:** Mh-hmm.

**Ryan:** I would say that the no-fault divorce laws are tantamount to the abortion laws that were passed back in the '60s and '70s, and the birth control laws that were passed, and the various things that have led to, I believe, the undermining of the fabric of our society.

**Selena:** Mm-hmm.

**Ryan:** Making no-fault divorce normative, massive mistake. Massive mistake. I wish we could roll that back and maybe, the Lord willing, we will.

**Selena:** She is going to cry about it.

**Ryan:** Yes, Sunny, it's true.

**Selena:** She's very sad about the no--fault divorce-

**Ryan:** She does not like doctrinal sloppiness, and she does not like presidents making broad-sweeping, cultural shifts unilaterally. So, anyways, did we cover the topic?

**Selena:** Yes. I think, just some thoughts about this briefly, as we close. You showed me this Twitter thread that talked about who you marry matters, obviously, I think that's an obvious statement.

But they are who you will spend, aside from the outliers, but most of your life with. You will spend your time with your children, which is so sad and sobering, but, okay, Lord, typically peaks when they're kids, and then when they're 18 it starts to dramatically decrease.

**Ryan:** So if you're watching on YouTube, we'll show these graphs on the screen. If you're not watching on YouTube, go to our YouTube channel and check it out. And, so, you can see these graphs.

But, yes, it's a series of graphs in a Twitter thread and it says, "Time spent with family; it peaks at ages 15 through 24, this is your life, the time you're spending with your family. And, then, it basically goes down to one hour per day, on average, for the rest of your life.

**Selena:** Mm.

**Ryan:** And then time spent with friends, it peaks somewhere around age 18 and then it begins to fall until you hit 30 years old. And then it's down below an hour a day, on average, for time spent with friends.

Now, time spent with children, which you mentioned. As you're 15, 18, 21, you don't have children, yet. So on average it's zero hours a day, for most people. And, then, when you're in your 30s and 40s, you're spending four to five hours a day with your children, every day. And that, then, plummets by the time you're in your 50s and now you're down to one hour a day on average.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Okay, and the thing we want to draw attention to here is a time spent with your partner and or your spouse. We would say spouse.

**Selena:** We would say your spouse, yep.

**Ryan:** It's non-existent, obviously, when you're 15, because you're not married. Then when you get up into your 30s, which is the current average first marriage age,

in the U.S. It's going to be in the early 30s now, it used to be in the mid to early 20s, 30, 60 years ago.

That goes up to not just one hour a day, not two hours a day, but three hours a day for every day for the rest of your life. And then in the twilight years you're spending twice that, five to six hours, a day with your spouse.

**Selena:** Let's do it. I got to start a list when we're old. Things we need to do when we're old.

**Ryan:** So this is why commitment matters.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Now, think about this graph, and we're going to bring it back to our earlier conversation, who you marry matters. But think about you're in your 40s. You've not married someone, you've built a life with them, but you're not committed to them. You may have said you're committed, but you've not put your money where your mouth is.

This is why when I talk to couples who they've been together for 15 years, and the guy says, "Why do we get married? Now, it's just a piece of paper." And I always say to him, "It's just a piece of paper, why don't you go get it, then? If that's all it is."

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** It's not just a piece of paper, it's not. It is a commitment level that you are not ready for and you have not been able to man up, and stand up, and make that commitment to this woman that you are building a life with. The thing is, is you as a man, you can walk away and you'll pretty much be fine, she will not be okay. Emotionally, it's different.

**Selena:** Physically it's different.

**Ryan:** Physically it's different. The ability to earn is different. Probably she has spent that time raising your children, while you've been building a career. So your financial prospects are very different. So she wants the commitment because she's wired for it, but also because she has every reason to want the commitment. After all, if you love each other, this is what love looks like, especially, for a woman, is she wants longevity.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Now, if a man loves a woman he wants longevity too, but men are good at acting. If they get the milk for free, why would they buy the cow, that whole thing.

**Selena:** Right:

**Ryan:** I hate that analogy because usually it's referring to women as cows. That's, obviously, not true. Women, they're made in God's image.

**Selena:** Although we do produce milk *[laughs]*.

**Ryan:** Speaking of which.

**Selena:** Sorry, just a nursing mom over here **[both chuckles]**.

**Ryan:** Oh, that's sweet nectar to the babes. So the thought process here is imagine you're in your 40s and all of a sudden this guy goes off the rails for whatever reason. I mean, we saw the chaos and see *[Inaudible 00:21:39]* over the last three years. Minds have bent, worldviews are twisted, society has all but completely upside down. A lot of stuff can change fairly quickly without that commitment.

Now, you sever that relationship and now what are you going to do into your 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and into your 70s, where this graph is supposed to be going up? Tragically I think you'll see this change with time as the singles in our society age.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** And, so, your time with a spouse will not be not four to six hours a day, it will be zero to one on average. And there's another graph which we haven't shown, yet. Well, there's two, there's time spent with coworkers, which is between three and four hours a day for most of your life, on average. And then time spent alone, and the time spent alone is the scariest one to me.

So marriage matters because it's built by God for human flourishing. The closer we can get to the biblical norm, regardless of what you believe, I think, will help humanity flourish more. I think that's the point I want to end on here.

**Selena:** Yep.

**Ryan:** All right, well, if you don't know anything about the gospel. We want you to know what the gospel is, basically, here it is, it's the good news, it's not good advice. It's the good news that Jesus Christ came, He lived a perfect life. He

died the sinner's death that He didn't deserve, but we deserved, on our behalf so that we might gain His goodness, His right standing before God. He didn't stay dead.

He was risen again, and He resurrected into heaven, and He reigns there, to this day. He ascended into heaven and He reigns there to this day as King. And, we as believers, we look to His life and we say we are saved by His life, but we also are to emulate Him because we are saved.

You're not saved by what you do. You're saved by who you believe in, and that savior His name is Jesus Christ. We want you to know Him personally.

So go talk to a friend who's a Christian. Ask him to read the book of John with you, it's the fourth book in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Ask them to read that with you, it's amazing. Well, on top of that, find a Bible preaching church. If you need more help, go to this website [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com).

Let's pray, Father, God, thank you for your great design in this beautiful cathedral that is marriage. That we get to step into the beauty you've created and live it out.

God, I pray for the marriages that are listening to this, who are watching this, that you would allow them to flourish. Convict their hearts in the right way, whether it's through this episode or through some other thing that's happening in their life. I pray that they would feel that conviction, Holy Spirit, and they would then have the courage to act on it in obedience to you.

**Selena:** Mh-hmm.

**Ryan:** I pray for the husbands who are struggling, strengthen them. I pray for the wives who are feeling hopeless, fill them with hope. In Jesus name, Amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** I want to make a quick reminder, [fiercemarriage.com/partner](http://fiercemarriage.com/partner). We said it at the beginning, but that is vital. I mean it, it is vital to our ministry. If you feel led to partner, we would love it. We'd be honored. Go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](http://fiercemarriage.com/partner) there are benefits there. In fact, the biggest benefit being that when we hit 500-

**Selena:** Ryan is going to do something silly, something crazy.

**Ryan:** I don't know, Well, it's got to be good, but it can't be so good that I hate it *[both laugh]*.

**Selena:** All right.

**Ryan:** So we will see when that time comes, Lord willing. But 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.

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- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://thenewsisgood.com)

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