

THOUGHTS CONCERNING MEN AND MARRIAGE

<https://fiercemarriage.com/thoughts-concerning-men-and-marriage>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Today we are tackling a topic that is near and dear to my heart, and it is concerning men and marriage. And what I mean by that is, how do men view marriage? Why do they view marriage that way? What impact does their view have on the marriage itself and their own experience of it? And therefore, what impact does their view of marriage have on what God is doing in the kingdom, on earth, in His kingdom on earth, meaning in the church, in families, in society? This is a big deal.

Selena: It's a very big deal. Last week we talked about men and... or lies that men believe. We're just talking about men a lot.

Ryan: Well, you know, I'm gearing up to actually go to a conference in Nashville. I think it's the second... it's called the Family Captain Conference. I'm gonna be speaking there. So this has been on my heart. And actually, we're gonna talk about a book I'm reading called *The Masculine Mandate*. I'm really excited to share some of what the author has for us. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:00:54] <music>

Ryan: Selena, how are you doing? I feel like you're floating on cloud nine. Why? [laughs]

Selena: Because I got to Wakeboard last night.

Ryan: You did.

Selena: I did on a smooth water. Smooth water?

Ryan: You know, I think I'm gonna edit some b-roll into this video.

Selena: I know.

Ryan: Selena Wakeboarding footage. Go! Woo. Go, Selena! Wakeboarding

Selena: I feel like you're patronizing me right now.

Ryan: No, you did great. It's my honor to pull you.

Selena: It's been about two years. So the time was right. The sun was setting, the lake was calm. There weren't too many boats out, and the kids were chill, and we had friends there. So we pulled them ashore, and they're like, "Yep, we'll hold the baby. Go have fun." 15 minutes of fun. [laughs].

Ryan: It was awesome. Selena did a great job as you saw in the footage that only our YouTube subscribers got to see. [both laughs] Which actually that reminds me... And Selena's made an appearance and now the baby is here. We've got the baby.

If you don't know who we are, my name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the Fredericks. You can find us on YouTube. If you're listening to the podcast, we are the Fierce Family on YouTube aka The Fredericks. This is the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We do this on Tuesdays. We do the Fierce Parenting Podcast every Thursday. It's a joy to do this.

And we couldn't do this if it weren't for our lovely Fierce Families patrons. So we have three new patrons this week. We have Jesse. Welcome, Jesse, to the Fierce Family patron force. [both laughs]

Selena: Guys, give us a name here. [laughs]

Ryan: Yes. Lindsay, welcome to the Fierce Families Patreon's community. And Sandi with an I, it is an honor to have you.

Selena: Woo-hoo. Thank you. Welcome.

Ryan: Thank you so much for joining us. If you're listening, Sunny is here. She has been getting louder and louder, so we're gonna do our best to power through. All right.

So men in marriage. Now, where does this even come from? Like I said in the intro, it's a longstanding kind of developing passion of mine. I'm firmly convinced, and the data bears this out, if we can win the men, if we can win the young men for the kingdom of Christ, everything follows, everyone follows, the families, the young ladies, the children. It all follows the men. So I'm very passionate about this. That's on one end of it.

On the other end of it, Selena, you don't actually get our messages. I'm typically the one that filters through the messages we receive, and I'm always a bit saddened by the common sort of theme in a message that we'll get. You'll get a man who is fighting for his marriage. You don't often get the details as to why. But he'll say something like, "My wife, you know, we're living separately right now. She wants a divorce. I'm fighting tooth and nail to get

her back. If only I would've heard this sooner, if only I would've come across Fierce Marriage sooner, our marriage would be different." And that saddens me.

Selena: No, it's not praise to us. It's the... clearly, I mean, it's-

Ryan: Oh, yes, yes.

Selena: It's the message of the gospel.

Ryan: Yes. Yes. And it's not because we're so great, it's because we are just shining the light of scripture into the area of marriage. Frankly, there's "marriage professionals", quote-unquote, that have done the psychology courses, they know all the buzzwords, they do great help. They help marriage a lot. That's not what we're doing. We're trying to shine scripture on the areas of marriage and then let that work itself out into the various psychological avenues that maybe someone else might address.

The point is, is that there's a dearth, or in other words, there's an empty void, I think, of teaching in many men's lives, specifically around what marriage is. So I want to ask this question. Why is that there? Is it because they didn't hear it or is it because they weren't open to it, they weren't listening, they ignored it? Why? Right?

So I'm actually gonna grab a book real fast. One minute. I'm back. This is the book. *The Masculine Mandate* is by Richard D. Phillips. I'm going through it right now with the discipleship group of men. We're just going through a chapter a week. We meet every other week. So we do two chapters per meeting.

And it's all about God's design for men and how are men to view their own masculinity, how they are to view their call in light of scripture. Not their call... what is their call given in scripture? It's published by Ligonier. So it's a really solid resource. I've really enjoyed it.

But the author makes this point. He says that men don't understand marriage, and it's more than we realize. So he asks this question, what is the key to men understanding marriage? How do we get men to understand marriage? What do you think of that? How do we get men to understand marriage? [Selena laughs] Shoot from the hip for me.

Selena: Gosh, you know I'm terrible at this.

Ryan: No, you're great at it.

Selena: I mean, it starts with the heart, right? Like everything, it starts with how they view and understand marriage. But in order to view that rightly, you have to know who God is and what the Bible says and understand things like covenant and love and where those came from and why they're important and what's the purpose going forward. [laughs] Like, why did God create them? [Ryan laughs]

Ryan: It's almost like we've been doing marriage ministry for a decade together. [laughs] That's exactly what I would've said. And I do say it right here. Covenant love, purpose, and or glory. So that's what I would say.

Now, I want to go first into Genesis 2. That's where we see the first marriage unfold. And I think that's the best place to start. And it says this. "Then the Lord God said, it's not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. Now, out of the ground, the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. The man gave names to livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field, but for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him."

So that's gotta be your starting place. And like Selena said, how do we give men an understanding of marriage? Well, yes. Okay. They need to have kind of a systematic view of covenant. In other words, what is covenant biblically, systematically? That's a term just for like, what does the entirety of scripture say about this one topic? What is a systematic view of godly love? They need to know that.

So if we know what covenant is, we know what love is, we have the strength and the structure of the covenant, and we have the fuel of love to live out within that covenant. But then you said purpose.

Selena: Can I jump in real quick?

Ryan: Yeah, please. I just think that if you contrast those, covenant versus contract, if we start viewing our marriage as a contract, that's where I think that when love is not defined rightly, we start viewing marriage as a contract and things start breaking down and breaking apart. Right?

Ryan: Yeah. And then there's the last one, which you said was purpose, but I would call it glory. What's the context of marriage? What's the reason for it? Why did God make marriage what it is? Why did He put it in the covenant? Why did He say love-

Selena: In the covenant form, yeah.

Ryan:in this way?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: The author, again, of this book, *The Masculine Mandate*, he says it like this. He says, "The Bible's teaching on marriage begins with man's need for a partner." And the way he teases that out, he says, it's fun... So there's a need there. So it's fundamentally necessary and it's fundamentally good. He says this. This is a quote. He says, "When it comes to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual well-being of a man, it is not good for him to be alone." He's echoing obviously what we just read in Genesis 2.

So we don't see that teaching promulgated in our culture. Men are told the other end of it. They're saying, Don't lock yourself down, don't pursue marriage. It's this idea that you're committing yourself to torment by saying I do. Now, obviously, a lot of men overcome that, but it's having a negative trend in our society.

There's a graph that we're gonna show you in a few minutes of how that is fleshed out. But we need to reinvigorate this idea that it is inherently good, inherently necessary for a man to pursue marriage. Now, I can hear the people already saying, Well, what about singleness? What about the gift of celibacy?

Selena: What is Paul saying?

Ryan: What did Paul say? And he doesn't address that in the book. I'm not gonna address it here. Just know that he's not trying to make men feel ashamed for being single. That's not the goal. However, he is saying it's good and right and true for a man to pursue marriage because it's necessary and beautiful and good. So he does talk about that.

Now, as a sidebar, I don't think singleness is a gift. I think celibacy a gift. [laughs] Like if you're single without the gift of celibacy, it's a curse. Right?

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Can you imagine being single and not having the gift of celibacy, of always having to deal with that? That's a curse. So I just want to be really clear about that. So here's what he says. So he said, God gave Adam Eve and he called her his helper. And this is what I loved.

He actually teases it out. He says, "There's also an important point to be seen in God's use of the word "helper". A wife is indeed the best possible companion for a man. But God did not call Eve a quote, "companion" to Adam because that would suggest the primary purpose of mankind on this earth is fellowship and relational fulfillment. In the same way a wife is clearly and uniquely designed to be a mate to man, but God did not call Eve a mate to Adam because that would suggest her primary purpose or our primary purpose is procreation and sexual pleasure. God said Adam needed a helper because it places the primary emphasis on the shared mandate to work and keep God's creation under the man's leadership."

Selena: That's so incredible. Because everything you read there is what I hear culture shouting. Can I see the book for a minute? It says God didn't call her companion because that would suggest the primary purpose is just fellowship and relational fulfillment. And how many times are we hearing, you know, like, "I want to be fulfilled in this way. I want to have multiple partners, or I want to be, you know, with this person or that person? They're placing the relational fulfillment above-

Ryan: The mandate.

Selena: ...the mandate and everything. And God. And then He didn't call her mate because then you hear, you know... what is the pro-abortionist people that are like, women are not just baby factories?

Ryan: They're not incubators for you.

Selena: Yeah, they're not incubators. So you see that all of these really kind of are addressed in the word "helper" because in contrast, God didn't use those words.

Ryan: Yeah. Now, those words are true, but in a subservient way. Like you are a mate. You are a companion.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But they're not-

Selena: They're not the objective. The objective is helper in terms of...

Ryan: This is chapter 6 in a 12-chapter book. So you don't have the benefit, viewer, listener of knowing how he's laid out the case for *The Masculine Mandate*. Before this he talks about things like Lordship is one of the things he talks about. That Adam was made to be the Lord over the garden and how lordship

is different than servant leadership and why He prefers Lordship versus the idea of servant leadership even in the home. Because there is an ownership that's implied by the term lordship, but also responsibility that's implied. And then it's a subservience. There's a hierarchy that's implied that I am lord, but I'm an under Lord to my great Lord.

He lays out the whole case. I'm just giving you... we're dropping in via parachute into the middle of this book. I want to read another quote. This comes from the next page here. He says, "By God's design, that's in Genesis 2, a man is completed by a woman, and not just any woman, but by a wife." I just thought that was compelling because the wife is the helper fit for him. And it's not just any woman. It's specifically a wife who's the fit helper.

I got warm fuzzies when I read that because I think of you. And how many times do I say to you... I just look at you and say, "Hmm, wife." I just love that you're my wife and that there's so much depth in that term. Like, we got in a little bit of a kerfuffle recently-

Selena: Kerfuffle. That's better.

Ryan: ...when I said, I believe that calling you my best friend is a demotion from wife.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And I think you know what I mean-

Selena: Right.

Ryan: ...ultimately speaking. That there's no greater term of affection.

Selena: You're my husband, you're my best friend. That's the order it would be in.

Ryan: Yeah. I just love that this need is met by a wife, not by a woman in general, but by a wife, a partner, a helper.

Selena: Well, this is interesting that he says it this way. Because I feel like there's that whole, like, you complete me kind of phrasing or framing of when a man or a woman is looking for a companion or... not a companion, in this case, a mate or looking for a spouse, they don't necessarily... I don't know. It's hard because I've grown up in saying like, they don't actually complete. Like you don't complete me. I am a whole unique being on my own made in God's image? Do we make a more full image or fuller image of God though, more complete image of God?

- Ryan:** Oh man, that's a bit of a minefield-
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** ...because people let go off both ends of that.
- Selena:** Right because-
- Ryan:** Yes and no. Yes. Okay-
- Selena:** You complete me in a lot of ways, but I'm already a complete me. You gotta categorize it correctly, I think.
- Ryan:** There's an interdependence that is good and right and true. Now, some people when they think, Oh, you complete me, it means that you're codependent.
- Selena:** And that's, I guess, what I'm addressing is that when you search for a spouse in terms of that vocabulary, you're gonna fail or you're gonna be incomplete ironically. You'll feel even more incomplete. I just think of like the person searching, the person that is sleeping around, the person that is just wanting to be completed and ironically they're gonna be more incomplete on this quest for completion. And he's saying here, like, it's not just any woman, it's not just any man, it's not just any spouse or not just any person on their own. Under the covenant of marriage, it is the wife. Right?
- Ryan:** And this is where it goes off the rails because you get men and women who are not looking for heads and helpers.
- Selena:** Yes, that's exactly what I'm trying to say. [laughs]
- Ryan:** So if You've got a husband who has married somebody he doesn't view as helper, she becomes an object of sorts. When you have a woman who's married a man who's not her head, he becomes a tyrant or he becomes somebody to be opposed. Now, if you-
- Selena:** Or bitter towards.
- Ryan:** If we teach our young men, we teach our young women to seek the design that God gave and seek it earnestly and seek it as the good treasure that it is, he who finds a wife finds a good thing. It's good. We teach our daughters this. You want to find a head, you're looking for a godly head, a godly man who can be your head. And that's good and right for them to look for that. I tell them, you have the choice and you need to choose wisely. So I'm gonna do my darnedest to show you what a godly head does by how I love your mom, how

I treat you when we are together, father and daughter, I'm gonna show you how a young man should treat you.

So the point we're trying to make here is that men, I think, have not been shown this to the degree necessary. And I don't mean to heap blame and shame on men, but I do want to heap a responsibility and I want to encourage and break the cycle so that in 30 years... This is why we do our ministry, you guys. Because in 30, 40, 50 years, the fruit will be on the vine. That's what I'm banking on. So here we are doing this.

So what does the lack of proper teaching mean? We touched on this earlier, but I want to show a graphic. And it means this basically, that men don't value and pursue marriage. And I think you could say this about women as well, culturally speaking. Now in the church, you're gonna find pockets where men value it.

Selena: Sure. Yeah.

Ryan: That's fine, and I don't want to discount that. But culturally speaking, statistics they can bear their weight. There's a graph. You can see here there's a trend of people who have been married at 40 years old. Back in 1900, there were only... 16% of 40-year-olds had never been married in the year 1900. 16%. Now you bring that all up to 1980, it's 6% of 40-year-olds had never been married. Now between 1980 and 2021, that's gone from 6% have never been married to 25% of 40-year-olds in our population have never been married. Never been married.

Now you can say what you will about the divorce rate and how that plays in, but this is a pretty objective thing. It's not I've only been married once, I've only been married twice or whatever. It's you've never said I do. You've never engaged in marriage. And I actually, about a week and a half ago when I first saw this, I said, we need to reverse this. I said this trend will undo us as a society.

Selena: For sure.

Ryan: It will undo us. Because if you have a quarter of the people in our population aren't being married for whatever reason, which we've talked about, that means... Think about that bearing itself out in 20 years and 30 years.

Selena: There's fruitlessness.

Ryan: Fruitlessness, broken homes, single-family homes, kids being raised without a mother or a father or both. It will undo us. [sighs] It's a Pew Research Studies

where this came from. Here's a quote from the study. "The share of 40-year-olds in 2021 who had never married varies by the following demographic characteristics. They talk about gender. So a higher share of men than women had never been married at 40 years old. They talk about race and ethnicity.

But then they talk about education levels. It says, "40-year-olds without a four-year college degree were more likely to have never married than those who had completed at least a bachelor's degree. One-third of those with a high school diploma or less had never been married." And it goes on to describe the statistics even more.

Here's what I want to draw. It says, "The overall decrease in the share of 40-year-olds who have married is especially notable because the share of 40-year-olds who had completed at least a bachelor's degree was much higher in 2021 than in 1980. So more highly educated 40-year-olds are more likely to have married. But the growth of this group has not reversed the overall trend of delaying or foregoing marriage.

The humanist in our culture says this: we just need to get smarter and we need to throw more money at the problem. And what this study is revealing is that despite the higher levels of education, people aren't getting more married. It used to be that there was a correlation between education level and marital rate. Well, that's not the case. That despite so many more people being highly educated, it's not reversed the overall trend of delaying or foregoing marriage entirely.

So what does that tell me? It tells me that this does not have to do with intellect. This does not have to do with economic opportunity. This has to do with parents teaching the generations that follow that marriage is good and worthy of pursuit.

Selena: Right. Family is God's idea.

Ryan: It's God's idea.

Selena: We did a whole episode on women. Remember that video of that girl, that lady that, you know, she-

Ryan: We did that on the parenting side. We talked about fertility rates.

Selena: Sorry. Yes, the fertility rates are going down. So not only do you have men not marrying and not committing to create a home where children can be raised, but you have women who are also delaying getting married. Maybe they're

not delaying their sexual promiscuity, but they're also using contraceptives, obviously, or aborting.

Ryan: We've decoupled sex from marriage from procreation.

Selena: Right. It's all-

Ryan: They're all on their own.

Selena: Yes. And God is saying no.

Ryan: And the Biblical design is marriage, sex, procreation.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And so this is a-

Selena: It's very saddening to question the order and purpose of God.

Ryan: Sure. And that's why we're sharing this on the marriage podcast. You may be listening to this thinking, well, how's this gonna help my marriage? Like, I already got married, I need help with my marriage. Well, I'm trying to illustrate, I think, the potency of what God... what you signed up for and why it's so important to stand at your post and to teach your children and to look at your spouse in the eye and say, This matters, not because I want be able to smile at you, because I want to have a happy marriage. That's important too. But this matters because it's not just about you. It's not just about us, it's ultimately about God. It is about you, it's about your kids. It's about our society.

Selena: I guess I think when it's about God, it flows... He's created it to flow out. Like it's for our good and His glory. When He's glorified, we are sanctified. [laughs]. When we are sanctified, He's glorified. There's just this continual give and take. And how can it not be? Like He created it. So questioning His authority, deconstructing the order, you know, pulling things apart like we like to do.

Ryan: Or just being way too haphazard with your time and frittering away your 20s and your 30s chasing after, you know, [inaudible 00:21:45] and trying to find things. So what Phillips makes the case for is that this view of marriage ends up causing men to not pursue it. And because of that, they slide into a sexual sin and they cultivate what he calls antisocial behaviors that perpetuate emotional and social immaturity.

Selena: Oh, gosh, yes.

Ryan: Again, I'm on Twitter and somebody posted, what do you think when you see grown adults who are obsessed with anime and dress up as anime characters and go to anime conferences? And they said, what do you think? And I responded, I said, "It's arrested development is what it is." Like, you've stopped developing emotionally. On some level, it's antisocial because you're just you're not becoming an adult.

Now, you could say, well, it's just a hobby, whatever. But we're talking about people who obsess about these things. So it's not that. And I think that's what he's getting at, is we have perpetuated emotional and social instability with these anti-social behaviors. Philips calls them unfit helpers. So men will find a helper. But these are the unfit helpers, not wives, but unfit helpers. Things like porn, video games, sports or career obsessions, hobby obsessions. And then he says, empty pizza boxes. They're unfit helpers. In other words, he's just illustrating with a little bit of humor the antisocial behaviors that this begets typically.

Selena: Man.

Ryan: And don't fall into the what abouts, all that. We're trying to make a case, a broad case. So what's the conclusion? As men, in terms of our own lives, but also in the lives of our friends... By the way, if you're thinking about doing a men's group, I recommend this book, *The Masculine Mandate*. In terms of our friends and our children, we must see, number one, we must see God's vision for marriage, but we also must embrace it. Must see and embrace. In other words, we get a clear vision for it, and then we say, Yes, that is good, I'm going for that.

And friend, brother, you need to go for that. Child, you need to go for that. And that starts with the men. And women as well can say these and do the same thing.

Selena: Absolutely, but it's much harder. You know, wives write into us all the time that men have relinquished their role as head of the house and they're not sure how to proceed with that. Which again, we've done a whole podcast on that. You can look that up. But we need men to lead. It is loving for them to lead homes. It is right and good and godly for them to lead their homes, to lead the communities, to lead. Like women, we are to lead in the sphere that God's given us to lead, but we lead under that lordship and headship of our husbands, which they then lead under the Lordship of Christ, which we are ultimately all lead underneath.

Ryan: Yeah. And it's for men to be the ones to... I picture Adam and Eve in the Garden. Eve had eaten of the fruit and she gave it to Adam, they realized they did something, they ran away, they hid. God said to Adam, "Where are you?"

Selena: He went to Adam. He went to Adam.

Ryan: It's up to the head to be that representative.

Selena: And then he blamed his wife.

Ryan: Yeah. Well, Adam failed. [both laughs] And we're dead in Adam but we can be made alive in Christ. We'll talk about that in just a sec. So the conclusion, again, see and embrace God's vision for marriage. We need to perpetuate it among our friends and children and in the church. I mean, actively perpetuate it. Do not assume it's there.

Selena: Right. That's good.

Ryan: I think where we're get into trouble is that we think that you're in the church with other Christians and everyone has the same vision for marriage. No. It's more often the case that you do not. And they don't understand covenant, they don't understand love, and they need help. So perpetuate it.

And then finally, we must stand on God's promises and remain obedient in the storm, in the hardship. We need to be people of faith, honoring the covenant that we've stepped into, loving as Christ loved, especially when it's hard, and then ultimately seeking God's glory in both those things.

We just mentioned it, but I'm gonna come back to it. We're dead in Adam, but we're alive in Christ. What does that mean? We're dead in our own flesh because the head that we had in Adam, the federal head that we had sinned, and all of humanity is now accountable for that, that inherited sin nature. But Christ came so that He could enter into humanity and never sin, not be beholden to the sin nature of Adam, but instead to give us His perfect nature for those who would put their faith in Him.

In a nutshell, that's what Christian salvation is. If you don't have any idea what that means beyond what I just explained, that's okay. Because there's probably a Christian that you know that you can call and you can say, Explain this to me. Let's read the Bible together. And I would encourage you to do that. Find a church where they're gonna preach outta the Bible. If you can't find either of those things, then we have a website, thenewsisgood.com. We pray that you go there and it blesses you.

Let's pray. Father God, I pray for the men within earshot of this, people watching this. I pray that they would be... and also the men that are being maybe represented by their wives who are listening to this or watching this. I pray for them. I ask that You would enliven their hearts, embolden them to live as men of faith, as men of integrity, as men of conviction in their context. That they might see the goodness and the beauty of what it means to have a wife who is fit for him in a marital covenant that you've designed to withstand so much more than sometimes we realize. Ultimately, it's all for your glory. I pray you'd help us understand and embrace your vision for marriage as men. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Thank you for joining us. I would be remiss if I didn't mention it one more time. If you want to partner with us, go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. Thank you to our new partners. There's some goodies to be had there, but ultimately we just ask that you pray about it. If the Lord leads you that you would just follow through with that. We'd love to have you in that community. If not, we'll be here in about seven days. So this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Genesis 2

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com
 - [The Masculine Mandate](#)

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