

**UNITY: WHY YOU NEED IT AND HOW TO GET IT**

<https://fiercemarriage.com/unity-why-you-need-it-and-how-to-get-it>

[00:00:00]

**Selena:** All right, friends, we are so excited to announce that we have our first ever Fierce Families Conference, and it is October 20th and 21st in Tacoma, Washington. So, if you're here, sign up. If you're not here and you want to be here, get here, sign up. We would love to have you.

**Ryan:** We'll Be covering marriage and parenting in light of God's design and the cultural context that seems to be completely opposed. Speakers include us, Ryan and Selena Frederick, but also John Lovell of Warrior Poet Society and-

**Selena:** His beautiful bride, Becca Lovell, will also be there.

**Ryan:** Space is limited so don't delay. To learn more, go to fiercefamilies.com and sign up. That's fiercefamilies.com. And if you sign up before August 1st, you'll get the early bird rate. We hope to meet you there in Tacoma, Washington, October 20th and 21st. Until then, stay fierce.

[00:00:49] <Music>

**Ryan:** We get an awful lot of couples writing in to us. And a lot of times by the time someone writes in, a husband or a wife, they're writing in because somewhere downstream from their wedding day, they're experiencing a very painful amount of disunity, amount of discord. And sometimes it results in terrible things happening. You know, affairs happening...

**Selena:** Addictions beginning.

**Ryan:** Addictions manifesting, worsening.

**Selena:** Manifesting, yeah.

**Ryan:** And you have these husbands, these wives putting their hands up saying, "What is going on? I do not know where to start. I feel lost. I feel like our marriage is completely lost." But if I'm honest, this episode is actually the culmination of reviewing a number of those questions and saying, how can we help? At this point in the game, how can we help?

We lament not being on the front end of many struggling marriages, not having the ability to speak into them, you know, maybe in the months leading up to 10 years ago when these couples get married. But the hope here is to

speaking into it in a way where God can realign. What does that look like? Well, in one word, unity. You need unity. So we're gonna talk about that today. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:02:02] <Music>

**Selena:** I was gonna leave the audience a bit titillated before you said, "Hey, this is what every couple needs." [Ryan laughs] I was like, "We should ask each other. Ryan, what do you think every couple needs?"

**Ryan:** So now you have to answer it. What do you think every couple needs?

**Selena:** Well, first and foremost, every couple, as in every human being as well, needs Jesus.

**Ryan:** Amen.

**Selena:** So we all need Jesus.

**Ryan:** Yes and amen.

**Selena:** We all need the gospel. We all need grace and love. The one thing that I would say every couple needs if I had not already read what we're gonna write and say, [laughs] I would say love, but I think that's kind of very generic answer. Of course, we've unpacked love on many, many episodes.

**Ryan:** Interesting.

**Selena:** ...in the actual definition of love. But you said something else. Well, I said truth when I asked you when we were going through this, the pre-show stuff. I was like, "What's the one thing every couple needs? Truth?" Right? And you're like, "No." [laughs] And you said?

**Ryan:** Well, unity is what I said. [Selena laughs] Well, I think it's all of the above. Now, what couples are that write in that ask us, you know, they'll say, "Our marriage is in shambles. It feels like it's been going this way, but now we're at our wit's end for whatever reason." Something has happened, some sort of addiction has manifested, either pornography, substance abuse, you know, alcohol. There's maybe an infidelity they're trying to deal with. And they get to this place in their marriage and they write and they say, "Help."

Well, those couples are feeling... what they're feeling more than anything is not that they... Honestly, it's not that they lack unity. It's not that they lack the

tools. It's that they feel that they've lacked connection. They've lost their connection. You could say, well, connection is unity on some level.

**Selena:** But I would say connection disrupts unity, right? The lack of connection. Sorry. The lack of connection disrupts unity.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** So when people are writing in, yes, they're saying like, "We want help." And yes, from the outside in, yes, you need help. But what are the things that you really need help with?

**Ryan:** Yeah. So you need what you said. You need love. You need connection.

**Selena:** You need truth.

**Ryan:** You need truth, which honestly truth, if you look at even Proverbs, Proverbs are immensely practical. Well, they're tools. The proverbs are tools to apply biblical truth practically. But what's paramount even to those two things is going to be unity. And what I mean by unity is what are you building your life around? Do you value and see the same thing on the horizon?

**Selena:** You and your spouse. Yes.

**Ryan:** Yes. Together. So, C. S. Lewis said this, he said, "What draws people to be friends is that they see the same truth. They share it." He, in other places, I think it's in his book called *The Four Loves*, he says, you know, "What brings people close to each other is that you're walking basically shoulder to shoulder, traveling toward the same horizon." Inevitably you're gonna be closer.

Now, what he also said was, if you're just clamoring for the other person's affection and attention, you're never gonna get it. The true way to get it is to be in unity and traveling toward the same goal. And of course, that grand goal for every human is Christ.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Unity is one of these... it's like one of those things that I think you underappreciate it when you have it and when you lack it, it feels like nothing-

**Selena:** Can fix it.

**Ryan:** Can fix it.

**Selena:** Bring it back, yeah.

**Ryan:** So this actually comes from our very first devotional. It's called *Two as One*. It's meant for couples to go through together. So for instance there's 30-day devotional. You go through, read it, you talk about it, you pray together, you answer questions together. The main goal of this book is to help couples build unity. And the reason we're going through this particular study is because, as I mentioned, I think we have a number of-

**Selena:** We've received a number of questions, and, you know, we sit there trying to sort through, what are some of the main themes that we see coming out of these questions. And I think one of the biggest themes that we've seen, like we mentioned before, is that people are struggling to be looking at the same horizon, pursuing the same truth that is Jesus, that is God. So how can we, as a married couple, first identify what truths we are, you know, seeking out and why they're disrupting our unity? How can we ask the Lord to help us uproot those and then begin walking in unity towards the same horizon which is again, Christ Himself.

**Ryan:** So we're gonna talk about unity, where it comes from-

**Selena:** Covers a lot.

**Ryan:** Cover a lot. Then we're gonna give you some very practical things toward the end of this episode. So if you're in a spot where you feel like, "Man, I feel like our marriage is really just teetering and I'm not sure what's holding us together," well, we're hopefully gonna give you something very tangible to put to work in the coming weeks. But first, let's just read through this.

**Selena:** Unity covers a lot.

**Ryan:** It covers a lot.

**Selena:** That's what I'm trying to say.

**Ryan:** And here's how we start this particular chapter. I mean this sincerely. If we could sit down with every one of you, every young couple, every couple who's been 10 years married... We're going on 20 years married, by the way. You know this. Did you know that? You know that.

**Selena:** Of course, I know this. [Ryan laughs].

**Ryan:** Which-

**Selena:** Absolutely I do.

**Ryan:** ...honestly, it feels surreal. It doesn't feel like it's been 20 years.

**Selena:** No.

**Ryan:** But there's no one else I'd rather do it with.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** So we have some years under our belt. I still love you. We have a happy household. We still have an amazing intimate life, in my opinion. This is where you would say you also think the same thing.

**Selena:** Oh, I was just saying, you're welcome. I'm kidding. [both laughs]

**Ryan:** Classic. Classic Selena answer right there. Never gets old. [laughs]

**Selena:** I never stop surprising you. [laughs]

**Ryan:** You never. You know it. I think we've got some experience to speak into this.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** So I wish I could sit with couples and have this conversation with you. And the one thing that I would want to tell you is get unity. But not all unity is created equal.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** And what I mean by that is you don't want to just get unity around, yeah, let's be married. You don't want to get unity around, yeah, we share the same kind of value system here. I say that on purpose because that in most cases is inadequate.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Now, if that value system happens to be surrounding the person work of Christ, that your life revolves gravitationally around the redemptive work of Christ, then yes, you could say values. But that's the thing is if I could sit down with every couple, I'd say, if you want a marriage that thrives, you have to have unity around who Christ is. And that's not enough. Hear me out. It's not enough to say we're Christians.

**Selena:** Amen. We know a lot of Christians-

**Ryan:** It is not enough.

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** You have to be clear. What do you mean by saying you're a Christian? Do you mean to say that if you're asked in a poll that you're gonna check the box? Is that what you mean by that?

**Selena:** Do you go to church occasionally? Do you understand who Jesus is? Do you understand what He did for you? Like the actual truth? These are things that I wish we would've known even more-

**Ryan:** It's only by God's grace that we're—and we've said this before—that we're still together. And it's because our ignorance was so profound on a lot of this stuff. And God is gracious. So that's why I think this quote by C. S. Lewis is so relevant. I'll read it again. It says, "What draws people to be friends is that they see the same truth. They share it."

So what happens is... I forget who said this. Oh, well, who was it? I want to say it was like Shaw or someone like that that said... actually I got the book, and it was in fact, George Bernard Shaw. He said this: "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." Here's a tweak on that. The single biggest problem with calling yourself a Christian is the illusion that you mean the same thing. So when we read CSS Lewis's quote, where he says they see the same truth, my question is what truth are you talking about?

**Selena:** Right. Right.

**Ryan:** Because I can talk to 10 people today-

**Selena:** 10 Christians probably-

**Ryan:** ...10 Christians, people who call themselves Christians, I can say, "What do you think of Jesus?" And I would get 10 different answers. Who is Jesus? I get 10 different answers. So we need to have a clear vision around who Christ is and all he did. That's absolutely important. It's relevant to marriage because relationships that start with that same vision have friendship. And friendship needs to be at the core.

**Selena:** Yeah. We've talked about this many times on various episodes, that our friendship is what keeps us... It's kind of what brought us together, I mean,

personally speaking. But I also hope for many other couples, friendship is what brought you together. Not only that. It kind of keeps you together. It kind of holds you together through different seasons of life, parenting. But then it's gonna be what's left once the kids are out of the house and it's just you two again, that whole empty nesters thing. Your friendship... It's the glue throughout every season and every life event.

**Ryan:** What happens is, if you don't have this strong foundation of Christ at the foundation of your marriage, you end up weathering the storms of marriage and you can maybe survive the storms. But what happens is whatever that glue is that's keeping your... you remember the movie *Lemony Snicket's* series, one of the unfortunate events?

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** There's that mansion on top of the cliff and it's like teetering on. It's held up by like... you're just a-

**Selena:** Two by four? [laughs]

**Ryan:** Two by fours nailed together. And it's just waiting for that big storm to come. Well, what happens if you don't have the foundation of Christ? That's what you're effectively... you're just wait... you're biding your time until that big storm finally takes you out. And usually, that big storm is, you nailed it, our kids are outta the house. They were our source of unity. And now that they're maybe outta the nest, they've got their feet beneath them, they're maybe pursuing marriage on their own, then you can say, "Okay, well, what we have effectively is a dilapidated house on the top of a cliff, and let's just kick this thing into the wall."

**Selena:** Well, and I want to clarify too about the foundation being Christ and then the peace that is friendship. Friendship is the fire that keeps you warm. And then the foundation of Christ is really what anchors you to truth and anchors you to unity.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Because you can have people that are resolutely unified in their marriage, but their marriage lacks affection and warmth because they've not let the actual... I'll say, the character of Christ infuse their marriage, and they're not loving one another well.

**Selena:** Right. Right.

**Ryan:** That's the other caveat is we need to let this foundation be the foundation, but then also build on top of it with the fear and trembling we're called to, to walk out our faith.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** Think about your first time that you met. Now, not us. I'm talking to our listeners. Think about when you met your spouse. What drew you to him or her? Something drew you together. Same truth. You had a similar vision. Now you might've been drawn first, and then they caught up later and eventually you said, Let's merge our lives because we see the world the same way. We care about each other, but we also know that we can walk alongside each other. And we're gonna basically be going in the same direction. Now, what was that that you saw?

Now, a lot of couples, if they're honest, your same truth, maybe it may have been a common interest. You may have realized, Oh yeah, he's into... I don't know-

**Selena:** Hiking.

**Ryan:** Hiking. He loves being outdoors and I also love that. You know, we've had a lot of good times, so we're gonna build this life that this is maybe-

**Selena:** Our thing.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Or that's an aspect of our budding relationship. Or yeah, it could be a way, like I said, way of seeing in the world. Selena, you mentioned kids. But here's what we're proposing, Jesus is so much more than just an idea or a hobby. He gives us an entire life and worldview. And when we see Jesus and we see Him together, we're not just seeing a truth. We're seeing truth Himself. John 14:6, "I'm the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." So when we see the truth for Himself, and we behold Him for who He is, that governs-

**Selena:** Everything orients. And govern. Yes. It's is oriented correctly, things are governed and ordered correctly. It reorients your heart and your soul, and your spirit and your mind, everything about you. Because no longer are you... No longer is your relationship dependent on what you do, hiking, hobbies, whatever, and kids. No longer is it dependent on you being good enough or you saying the right things. But it is fully dependent on the most reliable Truth, capital T truth that there is, which is God. So again, that having Christ in everything, it changes. It changes everything.



**Ryan:** So I'm gonna use this analogy real fast. It's, again, C. S. Lewis. Big fan. In his book called *God in the Dock*—I highly recommend it. It's a series of essays written by C. S. Lewis—he writes an essay about beholding truth. I forget the name of the essay. But he's likening it to... He's in a shed, it's a dusty wood shed and you see the sun coming through one of the cracks. And the sun shines through and you can see it, and you can behold it.

On some sense, you can describe, the beam of light. But it's not until you align your vision with the beam of light that you're able to actually see outside, you're able to see by the light what's out there, and you see blue skies, you see... So it's one thing to observe it from the outside, it's another to align yourself with it and observe it.

And that's what this truth does, is it gives you a vector now upon which you can actually build something real. So it's not that we know who Christ is objectively and that we both see the value in Christ. It's that we are actually aligned ourselves with Christ in a way that we are gonna be on his vector. So now we're not on the vector of, so long as we enjoy this together, marriage is gonna work. You're now on the vector that we can actually grow together because we're both headed the same direction because we have a common master—and his name is Christ.

So we're trying to make that crystal clear. We're belaboring the point because it's of paramount importance. If you want a marriage that is Christ-honoring, first and foremost, but honestly, it's just... you enjoy your friendship together. You have the framework within which to weather sinning against each other, forgiving each other's sin, and being sanctified through that process.

**Selena:** And you love learning about Christ together. One of my favorite things about our relationship is that the first person I want to tell when I learn something new about God or I am just coming across some encouraging truths that He... is you. It's always Ryan.

**Ryan:** Same.

**Selena:** I'm like, "Oh, I can't wait to tell Ryan about this." Like, "Oh, I can't wait to share this with him." Like he is the first stop outside of my own heart that I want to share.

**Ryan:** And what happens is now I'm not just observing you travel your path. We're on the same path together, and you're pointing out the stuff that you're seeing along the way.

**Selena:** So good.

**Ryan:** And I can now behold that with you, and we can process it as we step down further and further down this path on our walk with Christ. You may be feeling like, "Well, this is great. You guys are painting a great picture of what unity is. However, we don't have it."

**Selena:** And we don't know how to get it."

**Ryan:** "And we don't know how to get it." So here's some questions to get you thinking along those lines. And then we got some practical things for you to begin stepping down kind of if this, then that; okay, now, if this, then that process.

First question. I already asked this once, but I'll ask it again and I want you to think about it. What drew you together when you first met? What same truth or truths did you see then and which do you see now? What truths did you see then and which do you see now? In other words, you're trying to take a survey. Okay, here's where we started, and here's where we are. And hopefully by doing that you can realize, okay, here's where we got off the rails. And if you want to, you can go back a few months or years in relationship and see, if there is a divergence, where did that happen, where did that begin?

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** I remember you had I'd say a high-pressure job [Selena laughs]. And I can mark almost to the month the moment when I saw you change in some really positive ways, in some not-so-positive ways. I'm sure you'd say the same about me.

**Selena:** Few negative. Just say negative. [laughs]

**Ryan:** So now that we identify that spot, we can talk about it. We can begin to pick it apart in a good way and resolve whatever the negatives are.

**Selena:** And even bring our Christian community into it. And as sounding boards and asking for prayer. Second question here. How can you increase your unified vision of Jesus on a daily basis? How can we increase?

**Ryan:** So the key with that question is the word daily? Because many will say, yeah, we have our unified vision of Jesus, but-

**Selena:** How's that?

**Ryan:** How do you increase it? Daily. [Selena laughs]. How do you increase your unity daily? Now, unless you say, well, we know all about Jesus that we're ever gonna know... [Selena laughs] Well, no one in their right mind-

**Selena:** Would ever say that.

**Ryan:** ...honest would say that. So how do you increase it? Now, here's some really tangible ways. I'm always surprised when couples who think they have unity around these things don't, which is why we always harp on this. And so the big question is, what do you actually believe? And this is where you kind of work down... You need to take an inventory. What do we actually believe?

All right, husband, ask your wife, wife, ask your husband, who is Christ? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is God? What is the gospel? Who are we, you know, as people made in God's image? And just go down the list. Now, if you're looking for a way to do that, you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Ask yourself, can we actually affirm some of the traditional creeds and confessions of the church? There's mighty men who've gone before us and written these things. The Apostles Creed. Can you read and affirm the Apostle's creed? Maybe go even deeper. Go into things like the Westminster Confession, the London Baptist Confession of Faith. They're very similar. They're not long. No, they're not short but they're not long.

**Selena:** I'm just thinking of the couple too that they're like, what are you talking about? Like, what are some of these confessions and things that you're talking about? And how are they actually gonna help us? And to that person I would say, you know, read your Bible. Get into it and understand the weight of it. When you're asking each other, who is Jesus Christ, well, what you say is going to reveal what you believe.

And if you're like, Yes, He's the Savior, okay, well, what does it mean that He's the Savior? And these are what these creeds and confessions actually clarify, actually bring answers to that are clear that will then direct and inform your beliefs, which then inform your behaviors. Right?

**Ryan:** Right.

**Selena:** These are not just a collection of big words and written things that Christian spiritual men wrote over ancient, you know, hundreds and thousands of years or whatever. Hundreds of years, sorry. [Both laughs] They're truths that have been fought for and they're are truths that have been... like people have died

over them. And there's reasons why. This is clarity not just for you... Your marriage needs this is what I guess I'm trying to say. You need this as a believer in order for your marriage to be able to go forth and do what it's purposed for.

**Ryan:** If you're not convinced of the necessity and the value of confessions, I have a book for you, if you're open to it. It's written by Carl Trueman. It's called *The Creedal Imperative*. He's the guy who wrote *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. He's a popular kind of theologian. What I mean by that is he writes for popular crowds not popular in that lots of people read him.

You said it beautifully. Ideally you could say, okay, let's read the Bible together and then agree on everything it says. All right. "So I'll see you at the end. We'll read it together. It'll be great." The trouble is the Bible's long, it's complex. The doctrines that have come to be the Christian faith are biblical, but they're hard fought for like to summarize them in this way. And the confessions just give you a way to do that. It's almost like a shortcut, like Cliff notes.

So anyway, we belabored that point. The point is, is do you believe the same things? And if you're going down the litany of questions and you're realizing, Oh, actually we don't believe the same thing about how the Holy Spirit works in life of believe.

**Selena:** Well, why don't we believe that?

**Ryan:** We don't actually believe-

**Selena:** Maybe it's because of how we're raised. Maybe... you know?

**Ryan:** Yeah. And we don't actually believe that, you know, confessing sin is as... Like, I believe it's more important, you think it's less important. Why? Let's talk about that. Or we don't believe that... Whatever the thing is.

**Selena:** I'm always amazed that even us, Ryan Frederick and Selena Frederick talk about our beliefs and things that we believe. Like he will question it, and then I will question it, and then we'll talk about where did this come from? And just the bonding over that type of conversational experience has always been so rich.

So if anything, just start with those beliefs. Ask the questions. Peel back the layers. Get to the core of the onion. Why do we believe what we believe?

**Ryan:** Now, if you're at the top of this question tree, and you realize, "Oh man, my husband or my wife is not a Christian," then your cue then is to pray. Pray for them. Love them. Display the goodness of Christ in your marriage, all the more

reason to go deeper in your beliefs. But pray. You can't make them believe. You can't change their heart. Christ does that.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** So, now assuming you're on the other side of that question tree, and you say, We basically do confess these same things, well, now you need the daily things.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** So the first one, and you've heard us say it, we'll say it again, read a scripture and read it together. It's so easy to just be... what's the word? Be lackadaisical about our Bible reading. And before we know it, if we're not careful, we've gone a week and we haven't even opened it. We brought it to church if we went to church, but we haven't opened it, we haven't read it. Now, sometimes you'll open it, but you'll read one or two verses or you'll read one...

So get a plan, read it together. Now that takes doing. And that's the thing is a lot of times when people come to us or a counselor per se, or a pastor for help, you know, people don't always want to do the thing that requires the change. They want to articulate how they're feeling, but they don't want to-

**Selena:** It's in the doing that we actually get what we [laughs] are desiring.

**Ryan:** Right. So this takes maturity. It takes a tenacity. It takes hard work. It takes diligence. And it's easy to be immature. It's easy to be lazy. It's easy to it, you know, not do the hard thing. So scripture, and then praying together will create unity in this area. And then to just to live out the various aspects of your faith together. In other words, confess your sin. If you sinned against your spouse, confess. Offer forgiveness. Be generous. Be thoughtful. Go out of the way. You go out of your way to love one another in light of what you're reading and praying about, and the Holy Spirit's prompting you.

**Selena:** I'm gonna recap these really quickly. So our recommendations for having the same truth, seeing the same truth, building unity amongst yourselves as a couple. Have a conversation, questioning what each of you believes and why. Dive into that. Pick up things like the Apostles Creed, the Confessions, the Westminster Confessions. Pick those things up. They're very easy to find. Start with questions from there.

Second thing. Read scripture and read it together. I would argue, sit together, and read it together. Not just you read in the morning, I read at night, and

then we find time to talk about it. Like, just do it right there. Do it in the morning. It's a discipline.

**Ryan:** Which may take some rearranging of your schedules of your life.

**Selena:** And it may take some time but it's a hundred percent worth it. Pray together and pray for each other. And then live faith-filled from there.

**Ryan:** Don't expect the obedience to be fruitless.

**Selena:** Right. Live in freedom. Live in the faith that God's given you. So with that-

**Ryan:** That being said, if you don't know who Jesus is and you want to know, we recommend you find a Christian friend, talk to him or her about who is Christ. Ask them to read scripture with you. Start in John 1. It's a beautiful book. Find a church that preached out of the Bible. If you can't find either of those things, you don't have a friend or a church nearby, we have a website that might help. Go to [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com).

Let's pray. Well, God, thank You so much for the unity that You've given couples around Yourself, that You are the ultimate unifying force in our lives. I pray that You would help husband, the wife, hearing this, watching this, that hearing these words would move them to action, to find unity around You. In Jesus name, amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, thanks for joining us. If you want to partner, we would love, love, love that. Go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](http://fiercemarriage.com/partner). Thank you so much for giving us your time, your attention.

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 books**
  - [Two as One](#), Ryan, Selena Frederick
  - The Four Love, C. S. Lewis
  - God in the Dock, C. S. Lewis
  - [The Credal Imperative](#), Carl Trueman
  
- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://thenewsisgood.com)

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