

MARRIAGE IS NOT GIVE AND TAKE

<https://fiercemarriage.com/marriage-is-not-give-and-take>

[00:00:00]

Selena: All right, friends, we are so excited to announce that we have our first-ever Fierce Families Conference. 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.

[00:00:48] <Music>

Ryan: Ladies and gentlemen, we are back. And I gotta say recording the episode without you, I felt all-

Selena: Worst day of your life, huh?

Ryan: It was the worst podcast day ever.

Selena: I'm sure it was awesome.

Ryan: Well, I hope it was helpful. I just missed you because I feel like I like to talk to you. I can talk to our lovely listeners-

Selena: Did you look over a few times?

Ryan: I did. [Selena laughs] I did.

Selena: And I wasn't there.

Ryan: So, Selena's back. Baby is still struggling. Actually, the episode that released this week I recorded yesterday. And this episode that we're recording today will release next week. So baby is still feeling not quite well.

Selena: Not a hundred percent.

Ryan: Yeah. How are you doing?

Selena: I'm okay. I'm here. I'm getting it done.

Ryan: Getting it done. Just like mama does.

Selena: Mm-hmm.

Ryan: All right. So we are going to talk about this topic today. And the topic is this, marriage is not give and take.

Selena: What? It's all take.

Ryan: It's not... [laughs] I give, she takes. Am I right? [both laughs]? No, it's not give and take. In fact, it's so much more than that. And the very notion of give and take, I think we'll make a case for this, is counter-biblical. So, of course, that may surprise you, it may not be surprising to you. Either way, we trust this episode will be edifying. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:02:04] <Music

Selena: It's a very catchy topic.

Ryan: Oh, it is.

Selena: Not topic. Title. There it is. Both topic and title.

Ryan: You know, you gotta get that clickbait. [Selena laughs]. No. We try to find that balance between how can we title this in a way that's gonna tell you what it's about, but also be interesting so you want to give it your time, give it your attention. And then we try to make the content quality.

In fact, if you don't know who we are, my name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the Fierce Family on YouTube. You can find the Fierce Marriage Podcast, which is what probably what you're listening to on Tuesdays in your podcasting app of choice. We also do Fierce Parenting. If you're a parent, particularly a parent of young kids, or if you're expecting kids, because that's kind of the stage in life that we're in-

Selena: Yeah. Or you're praying for kids.

Ryan: Yes. Head on over to the Fierce Parenting Podcast because we just spend all our time there doing what we do, but drawing lines to the parenting aspects of the marriage life.

Selena: Sharing all of our wisdom from all of our mistakes. [laughs] I'm just kidding.

Ryan: Hopefully give you a-

Selena: Mostly our mistakes. [laughs]

Ryan: That's it. Yeah, because that's the thing with parenting is like all kids are different, all families are different. So it's like, what are the biblical principles that we can really ground ourselves in and then discern our way into our reality and apply that truth accurately and well?

So thank you for giving us your time. If you want to support this ministry, we'd appreciate it. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. That links you to our Patreon page, and that gives you a way to support it. It's, I think, about 50% of our ability to continue doing this it's because of our loyal patrons. I want to say hi to our new patrons. We have to welcome Jordan, Stephanie, Joey, and Lance.

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: I'm pretty sure those are the same... They might be repeats because we wrote this rundown a while back. So thank you guys for your support. Question, Selena. Why didn't we record our podcast last week?

Selena: Because we were camping?

Ryan: No.

Selena: We were sick? Oh, we were in a fight. [Ryan laughs]. I could've done it, but could've pulled it together.

Ryan: Selena can power through it. I cannot.

Selena: My Husband was like, Ah.

Ryan: I was like, "I can't."

Selena: It was a very... [Ryan laughs] Yeah, that was a rough one.

Ryan: What did we fight about? Oh yeah. That was your fault. [both laughs]. Oh, the dogs of our lives. Anyway, we'll maybe podcast about that later. [Selena

laughs] Not the dog that you got me recently, but the dog that you got like 15 years ago.

Selena: For me. Myself.

Ryan: For herself. Every dog we've ever owned is Selena's fault. [both laughs] In fact, every animal we've ever owned is Selena's fault. So anyway. All right.

Selena: No, you bought one dog.

Ryan: But then you returned it and [both laughs] gave it to a friend, actually. Okay. So let's get into the topic. Marriage is not give and take. Not give and take.

Selena: Not give and take.

Ryan: Adamantly so not give and take. Now, what do we mean by that?

Selena: And how can you say that?

Ryan: Oh, well, here we go. [Selena laughs] That's what we're gonna talk about. First question is this. Where did that even come from? We have to ask ourselves when we have these ideas that kind of work their way into the fabric of our society. And you talk to anyone, kinda the conventional wisdom, and say, Hey, what's good wisdom for marriage? They're gonna say, You know what? Marriage is a good, you know, relationship-

Selena: Compromise.

Ryan: ...compromise, give and take. You know, you just have to be willing to compromise. And I disagree. And that's the definition of give and take. Give and take. It's an idiom. It means the process of compromise of accommodation. So am I, as a husband, supposed to accommodate you, to compromise for you?

Selena: It depends on what we're talking about.

Ryan: It does, doesn't it? [Selena laughs]. So that's the first. We have to ask ourselves, where did this conventional wisdom come from?

Selena: Where are we applying this. And then we need to say, is it biblical? So let's talk about that. In some sense, I would say that yes, the idea of give and take is biblical maybe. Now, we look at the marriage passages in scripture. You can look at Ephesians 5. You can look at some of the passages in of Galatians. You see Jesus talking about marriage in the gospels. In 1 Corinthians 7, let's talk

about that one. It says this, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights. And likewise, the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have the authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."

So we've heard this passage before. In fact, we talked about it just I think probably a month or so ago when we talked about should a husband demand sex?

Selena: Right. Right. Because the whole context of the verse is about sex, which is conjugal rights.

Ryan: Yes. Gotta get them conjugal rights. [Selena laughs] Sounds like you're in prison. Marriage is not prison. [laughs] It's like a conjugal visit.

Selena: Just nailing it right now. Well, that was a bad term. [both laughs]

Ryan: The adults hopefully will get that and let it go. So note in this passage... And here's the thing, and we'll see this throughout every passage we'll explore in scripture, is that the husband and the wife are both called to what?

Selena: To give. Self-sacrifice.

Ryan: It's not-

Selena: But it's not a give to get, right? I mean-

Ryan: Is it?

Selena: Kind of is, kind of isn't.

Ryan: That's what we're asking.

Selena: Well, if you're giving only to get, then that is called manipulation.

Ryan: Are you giving at that point?

Selena: Are you giving? That's a good...

Ryan: You're trading.

Selena: Yeah, there you go.

Ryan: You're trading. Note in this passage, it's not "take from your wife your conjugal rights." [Selena laughs] Wife, take from your husband. No. He's talking to the active party saying, you are responsible for you, you give. You are also responsible for you, now you give.

Selena: Right. And if he has authority over my body, then there's gotta be a trust built there. He has to be a good, sacrificially loving authority. One that leads when we talk in Ephesians 5, which we'll get to that. So what the question begs, I guess, if you're not a loving authority, scripture still stands. How does that...?

Ryan: Obviously, if I'm trying to obey Christ, I'm trying to obey God's word. I'm going to be striving to be loving you in this way. And ideally, you are to be striving as well. But the result of that mutual striving is mutual giving. There's no part of Christian striving that says, Okay, I'm striving really hard in marriage. Give me what's mine. There's no Christian notion of that in marriage.

I can go to you as my wife and say, Hey... Taking this passage, again, as your husband, I desire you and I can make a request or I can express a desire. But at no point, I don't think biblically, at no point can a husband say, "Give me what's mine. Look at this verse. Look, you're failing." Now, we can call each other to obedience and repentance and those sorts of things. And those shouldn't be off limits in a marriage so long as it's done in love and not in self-righteousness, and not out of anger, but truly out of love.

Selena: So this give and take, you're saying it's all give?

Ryan: Yeah, give, give.

Selena: The Bible's saying give, give.

Ryan: And we'll talk about that more at the end. But that's gonna be our proposed alternative. Instead of give and take, change your paradigm and say to your spouse, say to yourself, our marriage is not give and take. It's give and give.

Selena: Well, and how can we come from a place of that? That first is, again, starting with Jesus.

Ryan: Who is it? Ruth Graham Bell, maybe. Is that her full name? She said, Healthy marriage is a contest of generosity. And that speaks to this. Another quick passage is the marriage passage. Ephesians 5:22. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

Husbands aren't off the hook. Paul goes on, there's a taller order, I think, for husbands, because husbands ultimately bear the headship burden.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." How did He give up Himself for her? He died an unjust death. Was tortured, died an unjust death, gave Himself up. "...that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way..." Just when you start to think Paul's being allegorical, talking about the church, he reels us back in. It says, "In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

You notice here the language is always to the act of party. And it's as an imperative to give, not take. Not to enact justice on our own or to seek it out. Now, that's completely countercultural. Because how many times do you hear if a husband or a wife are struggling and they go to their friends and they're venting and they say, "Oh, my wife is just... she's the worst. She's nagging me. She won't let me go do the things I want to do."

Selena: Not respecting me.

Ryan: "You know, she doesn't trust me and I've not done anything to... Well, they'll say, well, you need to get yours, man. Like, your wife is off the rails. You need to set it straight. You need to tell her this is how it's gonna be."

Selena: Not necessarily. I think that's obviously Christian advice. What would be the Christian advice there? I think, husbands, well, what have you been doing wrong? How are you loving her? Are you not loving her well? Let's look at what you're doing and... Love your wife well. I mean, it's like with our kids, right? We don't ask them, what did your sister do? Although that does happen a lot. But it's more of, what did you do? Let's own this in order to own, repent, sacrifice, give yourself up. How can you be generous in this situation? Again, how can we give? How can we be enabled to give and love as Christ has loved us?

Ryan: You nailed it. Anytime a guy comes to me and says, "Man, my wife is just X, Y, and Z."

Selena: Anything that starts with "my wife" is probably from-

Ryan: And I always say to him, "Let's talk about you. I want to talk about you. Are you doing like... this is a tall order for you. You've got your hands full. Are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church? Are you giving yourself up for her?"

Selena: Are you acting as the head of your family?

Ryan: Are you leading the... Let's talk about you. So it's always giving. It's never "go get yours. Go take what's yours, demand what's yours." It's always gives-

Selena: Well, and I do think the same goes for women, right?

Ryan: Absolutely.

Selena: If they're coming to us saying, "Gosh, my husband is usu... not usurping. Letting go of his role.

Ryan: Relegating.

Selena: Relegating his role or he's not giving me attention, he's not telling me that he loves me, we're not going on dates, we're not connecting, he's just distracted, always gone, not engaging. Well, let's talk about you. Yes. I mean, it's probably a fair thing to say, Well, yeah, that sucks, he's playing video games all the time or he's addicted to something. But what's your role in this? How can you love your husband? How can you submit in a godly way to him?

Like, we can only submit the way God wants us if we know how God wants us to submit. We have to know God. Right? We have to know who He is, to know how that looks within our marriage. So, again, how are you sacrificially loving? Are we just picking at each other?

Ryan: This isn't to say that there's not imperfect spouses sinning against one another.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: It's very possible that the husbands or the wife are distressed, they're being sinned against. The question is, what is their response to that? It's always gonna be one of faithful prayer of selfless love and of generosity in these ways. And that is completely counter-cultural. And this view is a biblical view. And it's in contrast to popular thought for one that we say marriage is 50/50. And we used to think marriage is 50/51 in the sense that... [Selena laughs]. Do you remember?

Selena: We should probably delete some of those episodes. [laughs]. I think the foundation is correct.

Ryan: And the point-

Selena: Because you do have the... You are held accountable to God.

Ryan: Right. And that's more in terms of our decisions. Like, I'm the one that... Like if we're making decision about buying a car and we are at an impasse, and you have... I disagree with buying or, you know, I want to get the car... I'll put myself on this end. [laughs] I want to get the car. because I think it's right for our family.

Selena: Let's talk about a dog.

Ryan: You think it's not right for the family. Now say we don't get the car, I'm responsible for us not getting the car. I'm not gonna be like, "Selena didn't let us get it, so it's on her. All the inconvenience or whatever the..." You know, I would say no, we decided not to get it.

Selena: That's good.

Ryan: I'm standing behind that really. So that's the 50/51 thing. But it's not 50/50, it's 100/100. I bring 100%. I give 100% of myself to you. You give 100% of yourself to me. But the popular thought is 50/50. Meaning it's a fixed pie. You get your half, I get my half. If I get anything less than a half, then I need to go get it from you.

Ryan: It's a lot of tit for tat. It's not actually building unity, I think, within your marriage. I think it creates more division than it does... You're not practicing, you know, sacrificing for one another. You're just giving so that you can get yours later. Which I know this is very unpopular. I mean, I think we even have friends that operate in the more... Well, he gets to do this, so I'm gonna go do this. And it's like, well-

Our approach to it is, well, if you want to go away for a weekend or if you want to do this, that's great. But like, what is your overall orientation? Is the wife's orientation towards the home or is it towards stuff out there and getting her bucket filled and all the things that she needs or whatever out there? Because if you're always going away, you're always trying to do these things, then there's a problem with that.

But if it's like an occasional, Hey, I'd love to go do this, love to do that, like, we can have that conversation. But it's not like, Okay, well I did my weekend, so you get to do your guys' weekend.

Ryan: And now I can then take my pound of flesh when it's due. And it can be when you don't want it or it's not serving your family. Well, I can say, "You said you... you owe me."

Selena: You see how that creates division. It doesn't actually build unity with one another. So if he wants to go away and do something, which is very rare I'm like, Absolutely, go. There's a giving there. Because we've been fostering this generosity, we've been fostering giving to one another, we've been practicing and messing up a lot, but practicing what it means to give a hundred percent in every capacity of one another.

Ryan: What is it on The Office when Michael's trying to do the game or whatever, and Jim's like, "We can't do this. We're going under," or like the branch is going bankrupt.

Selena: Oh.

Ryan: And he goes, "You owe me this gym, Tube City." [both laughs] Remember that? The hamster tubes that Jim made. That's what it feels like. It's like you owe me. So even though it's not up to-

Selena: It's definitely creating division.

Ryan: So do you have Tube City in your marriage? [both laughs] So the point we want to get across here and why marriage is not give and take is because that is an inherently secular idea. It's not a biblical idea. It's a notion born out of compromise. It's born out of contractual thinking. Compromise gets us to only this tit-for-tat thinking.

Selena: It creates division.

Ryan: "I'll give this, you give me that."

Selena: No unity.

Ryan: You can do and have this as long as I can do and have that. Marriage then becomes what? It becomes a perpetual negotiation as you're always looking for ways to placate one another. If the wife is happy, we're all happy. That notion. Happy wife, happy life. Like just kind of placate the wife, do what it takes because she's basically demanding it.

The risk we run of doing the 50-50 thinking is that what happens when we stop being able to find our agreement or we're at a stalemate?

Selena: Oh yeah.

Ryan: We're at an impasse, we have nothing left to give or take? I'm not gonna give you anything now. So

Selena: Once again, it's-

Ryan: You're not giving to me. So what do we have? Well, there's a wall between us and now it's just a matter of time until the deal is dead. Because it's already functionally dead but we have yet to ratify the deadness of the deal.

Selena: Right. Instead of building unity, once again, you're just building division. You're building a wall instead of continually tearing it down with self-acts of self-sacrifice, words that are encouraging and bringing oneness and bringing you together.

Ryan: You just nailed it. Self-Sacrifice. That's the one aspect... Oh, maybe not the one aspect.

Selena: No. Jesus came not to serve but to... I mean, not to be served, but to serve. Right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: He was-

Ryan: He give His life as a ransom for many. The only unjust death ever to happen happened to God Himself in the flesh. He gave himself sacrificially. And we are called into that same death of self in a sense.

Selena: Right. And there's contentment and peace to be found in that too. I mean, we can't... It's not-

Ryan: Oh, absolutely. I

Selena: I don't want to overlook that, I think.

Ryan: The contentment is found in obedience to God.

Selena: Absolutely.

- Ryan:** There's a quote by John Seldon that I think is appropriate here. "The happiness of married life depends on making small sacrifices with readiness and cheerfulness." It's not a pithy quote, but it's so profound because he's saying the happiness hinges on making the sacrifices. But not just that. Because there's a way to make a sacrifice that's bitter. You're being begrudging in it.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** You don't do it willingly. You do it out of compulsion.
- Selena:** Or you're doing it to count it for later and... we've been talking about-
- Ryan:** Right. That's more give and take. That's more compromise. But he says it like this. Making small sacrifices with what? With readiness.
- Selena:** And cheerfulness.
- Ryan:** And cheerfulness. And that summarizes, I think, the spirit of Christian growth is learning to be self-sacrificial in the name of honoring Christ, in the name of obeying Christ, loving one another as Christ has loved us. Because there's no love, there's no true love that doesn't freely, generously, radically give.
- Selena:** Right. And I guess I'm thinking of the marriage where one feels like they're doing all of this, and the other is not.
- Ryan:** No one said it would be easy. That's just the hard truth is like-
- Selena:** Well, and I think in that struggle, though, we can't overlook... I think pastor talked about it this weekend. You want the struggles to go away. We pray that hardships go away. But what if those were intentional? What if God actually allowed you to go through them, right, so that fulfill his will of being sanctified of growing? We read that in 1 Thessalonians 5. We spent months in that with church.
- So it was like, "This is God's will for you to be sanctified, to grow in the knowledge of who Christ is, and to live your life as one that reflects the glory of God, reflects the growth and the goodness that He has instilled in you.
- Ryan:** One of the things you said last Sunday was that deliverance is the exception, not the rule.
- Selena:** Right. Right.

Ryan: I think that speaks to marriages in tough situations where... And one of the illustrations you used, we're going through the Psalms now, started six months in the Psalms. So talking about Israel and the number of generations that were in Egypt in captivity that prayed for deliverance that didn't receive it is 13 generations. And it was only the last one that finally saw deliverance happen.

So clinging to the promises of God isn't always easy. And that's the point I want to make here, is that you raised the question, what about the husband of the wife that are in a perpetually-

Selena: State of just take and take.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Or-

Ryan: They feel hopeless.

Selena: Yes, they feel hopeless.

Ryan: And their spouse has given up. Well, where's the hope in that? Well-

Selena: The hope is in Christ.

Ryan: The hope is in Christ. That can sound like a trite truism. It can sound like a cliché, but friend, it is-

Selena: It doesn't if you know who Christ is.

Ryan: It doesn't if you know who Christ is. Amen. Amen. And that's actually... I listen to a message by Sinclair Ferguson. He's talking about being in Christ. That's how Paul primarily identified himself as a Christian, he said. He wouldn't have said, "Hey, Paul, what do you believe?" He wouldn't have said, I'm a Christian. Paul would've said, I'm a man in Christ. He identified people as them being in or outside of Christ.

So that's our hope in this place where if you're trying to wrap your head around this idea of how can I possibly give any more or how can I build a marital culture that is give and give and not give and take or it's give, give and receive, receive, which I think that's a bit more biblical than give and take. How do we do that? Well, look to Christ. Look to Christ. Because healthy marriages, the best marriages are always give and give and receive, receive and never take. Never take. It's a contest of generosity in one. And there's the beauty of it. It multiplies itself. The more I love you, the more you love me, the more I

love you. Pretty soon our love is not a fixed pie anymore. It's multiplied. It's multiplied.

So if you don't know, if this is foreign to you, the idea of being in Christ, the idea of having this sort of boundless love that comes from a spring that is never ending that we're talking about, then you need to know Jesus. So we want you to place your faith in Jesus. If you don't know what that means, talk to a friend. If you have a Christian friend, go talk to them, say, Hey, I heard this podcast and talked about placing my faith in Jesus. What does that mean? Get them to read scripture with you. Get them to help you find a biblical church that preaches faithfully out of the Bible.

If you don't have a friend that's a Christian, or you can't find a church, we have a website that might help. It's thenewsisgood.com. We encourage you to check that out.

Let's pray. Father God, thank You for the fact that You loved us so much in such a way that You gave Your only Son so that we who believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life. You have set the standard, the model, You've given us the fuel and the example for what it means to give to one another in love. Lord, and you've called us to that standard. So Holy Spirit, we ask that You would help us. I pray for the wife who's struggling with this, that You would somehow supernaturally encourage her, help her to give. I pray for the husband who's struggling with this, that You would do the same for him. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Selena, it's been a joy having you back. [Selena laughs]. You know, your spot on this podcast is very secure. [Selena laughs] Mine-

Selena: Oh, good.

Ryan: Is mine secure? I'm feeling insecure at the moment.

Selena: Yes. No, you-

Ryan: I'm just kidding.

Selena: You are the head. You are the leader.

Ryan: I feel fine.

Selena: I follow you on.

Ryan: Anyway, thank you for giving us your time. This episode of The Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Ephesians 5:22-28
 - 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

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

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