

10 REASONS MARRIAGES STRUGGLE AND FAIL – PART 1

<https://fiercemarriage.com/10-reasons-marriages-struggle-and-fail-part-1>

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Ryan: If only there was one thing that we could say to couples that would guarantee their success in marriage, if only-

Selena: If only.

Ryan: Well, I think there is one thing and it's look to Christ, obey Christ, both of you together. Do so with open eyes, clear hearts. Can't lose, so to speak. Friday night Lights. Is that what that is?

Selena: Yes. You just quoted Texas Football.

Ryan: No. So there are things I think that we can go into being Christians. We have the worldview that can withstand every manner of scrutiny. And when we have a marriage built on that same worldview, on the truth of the everlasting God, we have something to tell couples. We also can see, I think, clearly what could be causing issues and themes that arise among marriages that struggle and fail.

In our years of working with married couples, we've been married 20 years, been doing this type of work for 10 years. Can you believe that?

Selena: No.

Ryan: Talked to, worked with-

Selena: Just yesterday.

Ryan: Yeah. [Selena chuckles] Just I keep getting younger. Now we've worked with a ton of couples and we've seen some themes arise in couples that perpetually struggle in marriages that never quite hit their stride. So we're gonna talk about that in detail today. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:18] <music>

Ryan: Selena, I got into a little bit of an internet dust-up as I like to do once in a while.

Selena: This is not new. This is not new.

Ryan: Now, they're not dust-ups in terms of they don't make headlines, but you know, I end up having dialogues with people that disagree with me, which I appreciate. I enjoy it. If they just stay engaged, we can get somewhere. Usually, they end up calling me an idiot and leaving. [both laughs] And I'm trying to, you know, keep my composure, do the Christian thing, be nice, and don't call them an idiot because everyone knows they're the idiot, not you. [both laughs]

Selena: Everyone knows.

Ryan: Anyway, everyone knows. In one of these recent exchanges, I don't even know if this is a dust-up, but there's a gal on the internet, she's what you would call maybe a red pill YouTuber, right? Somebody who is advocating for conservative values, conservative political, sociological viewpoints.

But, you know, they are non-Christians in that space. So they'll advocate for conservatism but they will do so without the undergirding of a Christian worldview. So inevitably what ends up happening is you get these distortions of what the solutions to societal ills might be.

So this particular girl, she's on YouTube as PearlyThingz. You may know the name. Her name's Pearl. And she's on Twitter too, which is where I spend my time. So I'm interacting because somehow the algorithm decided that I'd be interested in this content. So I was. I commented on something she said. And it was interesting.

Selena: Do you want to read what she said?

Ryan: Yeah. We're gonna read what she said. We've skipped our intro part, so I'm just gonna say that real fast. I'm Ryan. This is my lovely wife, Selena. If you don't know who you are, we're the Fredericks.

Selena: This is Sunny. She fell asleep.

Ryan: Yes. Sunny's with us again this week. So if you want to follow the podcast, obviously you're listening to that. If you're watching, find the podcast. Search for the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We do parenting and marriage podcasts. Thank you for joining us.

So again, Pearl, red pill conservative. She's Catholic, but not Christian in the sense that we use the term, I would say. It's not evident, I'll say that. And here's what she said. She's kind of got this... this is the chord that she's been playing over the last few weeks talking about how women are the reason men are no longer interested in marriage because the laws, the family courts are

also corrupt that men effectively are disincentivized to get married because it's a huge investment in terms of your emotional, you know, you're coupling your life with somebody where, and at any point Pearl contends women can just... they'll just run off for no good reason because of no-fault divorce.

So she's saying that men don't have a reason to be married, and the way to fix that is to change the laws. Now, I agree, we need to get rid of no-fault divorce. I think it's tearing apart the fabric of our society. People don't understand what marriage is, and that's no fault divorce makes that problem worse.

So as she's interacting with this topic, I'm wondering, Okay, what are the themes that we've seen arise among the couples that we've worked with? In other words, why are they struggling? Why are they failing?

So for you listener, the reason we want to bring it here is so that you can be aware of these things in your own marriage, you can be aware of these things in the lives of those you love, your friends, your family. If you have kids, eventually they're gonna be headed into marriage, Lord willing. You can avoid a lot of heartache by just understanding, I think, a few of these themes that we've seen having worked with married couples for 10 years.

So, Selena is gonna read this tweet, we'll interact with it and we'll go from there.

Selena: All right. "The other issue you get is tradcons think they're the authority on marriage when they have not even made it to the 25-year mark. It's pretty easy to say marriage is great in your 30s, but things change.

So no, I would not say just being marriage makes you an authority.

They often have spent 0 time listening to the men who marriage has not worked out for and tell them to just "pick a good woman" as if that will solve everything.

When you start interviewing men on this stuff you come to find out that many married men are in sexless marriages. Many married men have to ask their wives permission to do things. They don't even have authority in their own home. Many married men are in emotionally abusive relationships with women.

But men don't complain or talk about this stuff. You wouldn't know unless you investigate it."

Ryan: So again, it's kind of hard to get the full context of what she's talking about. She's sub-tweeting people. She's quote-tweeting them. She's interacting with other people's ideas around the topic.

A few days before this, I think she had quote tweeted me saying, "Here's the key. Here's the solution. One, find a good woman. Two, make lots of babies. [laughs] Like have a good marriage and teach your kids to love kids. And, you know, that's a good start to rebuilding a society. Because I was interacting with something she said."

So I don't know if she's talking about me when I say, "Hey, marry a good woman because that was something that I said to her."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But the point being, I doubled down and I wanted to go even further. But then I'm thinking through what causes marriages to fail. I'm not trying to invalidate the idea that we need to revisit our marriage and family laws. I think those need to be revisited. But we need to get down to first things.

Selena: Yeah. You gotta get outta the roots.

Ryan: And it's gonna come down to the heart. Legislation is always gonna be a function. It's downstream of culture.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So our battleground, so to speak, is we aim to transform culture by the power of the gospel in the home. That's our whole long game, you guys. So we're looking 30, 40, 50 years down the line praying, hoping that God will give us fruitfulness through you, our listeners, through your kids who you're gonna be discipling, through our own children, through the legacy that is whatever fierce families, fierce marriage, fierce parenting will be through our publishing efforts.

So we're looking down the line hoping that the cultural shift that happens by the power of the gospel in the home will find its way downstream into laws that are more aligned with the goodness of God and the law of God.

So here's what I responded with and said, Yes, pick a good woman, but also be the good man. I work with countless couples via Fierce Marriage. We've been married 20 years and we've seen just about all one can see when working with married people in the West. Here are 10 themes I've seen in marriages

that struggle or fail. In hindsight, I would add one more, but it's not as round as 10.

Selena: You always do.

Ryan: I think one of the main reasons clearly... I mean, we're teaching our daughters about this right now. One of the main reasons marriage is struggle and fail is that we're not great at selecting a mate. [laughs]

Selena: Get great at selecting a mate. There you go.

Ryan: A tagline for you.

Selena: It's our pre-marriage.

Ryan: I feel like a lot of people get married, they do so not because they're looking for a spouse. They do so because it's whatever the next stage is with whoever they happen to be with.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: And people don't have their eyes open looking for. And that comes down to the other 10 reasons I'm gonna give. So the first one is this: people underestimate marriage in general, including what it will require and what is at stake. That's reason number one.

Selena: Right. And that goes hand in hand with what you were just saying is, you know, people don't... I don't think they see marriage accurately. They don't know what it is. It's just like, "Well, we've been together and I love you and you love me. We seem to work. So I guess I should propose. Like, let's get married. When's a good time? What is our schedules?"

It's just kind of this next thing you do. It's not farfetched to say that, yeah, this is just where people have headed. They have had no direction, they've had no instruction, they've had no... there's kind of left to their own. Like, why should we get married? Well, it's the next step. There's no actual undergirding of "these are my moral convictions. This is what I believe. These are the things that are important because God says they're important."

Ryan: Right. They think it's gonna be easier than it is.

Selena: Yes.

- Ryan:** So they're stepping into it with too light a notion of what covenant is. That's number two. But they don't anticipate that it will actually be hard. I think they know kind of in their heads it'll be hard but then when the rubber meets the road-
- Selena:** Which it always does.
- Ryan:** Which it always does, and if they don't have the... what's the word? The fortitude. And they've underestimated just how much it's gonna cost them. Now what I mean by that is it's gonna cost you yourself. You're gonna die to yourself. You're gonna die to your own desires. You're gonna have to learn alongside someone what it means to be righteous in loving them and to receive their love.
- We'll get into more of the details, but I think people just underestimate what marriage is and what it will cost.
- Selena:** Yeah. I think that we, at fierce marriage, are trying to paint the picture, show people the roots, show people where, you know, the trouble spots are gonna be, where you want to be looking. But again, if you've never experienced it, you have nothing to go off of. You're limited in your knowledge and understanding.
- But get around people and get into resources that are saying, here are the things that will be required. Know these things. Not just head knowledge. You gotta start getting familiar with it because once you do get married, it will all start to make sense.
- Ryan:** The beauty of this particular one is that you can at any point look at your marriage with sober judgment, and say, Okay, I want this to work, it's gonna cost me something. Well, you've just fixed number one.
- Selena:** And it should cost you something.
- Ryan:** Let's go to number two. People have an underdeveloped idea of covenant, which is the backbone of the whole endeavor.
- Selena:** Underdeveloped. I don't even think people use the word "covenant" hardly at all outside of our circle-
- Ryan:** I would say Christian circles, they'll say, yeah, it's the covenant of marriage because that's just what it is. But yeah, they have no idea where the idea of covenant even comes from.

Selena: Well, but we got married and we didn't use the word covenant. It's like just marriage. I don't recall that ever being used in our-

Ryan: It wasn't in our daily vernacular, but-

Selena: Promise.

Ryan: But we knew what it meant, and we understood that it was more than just a contract. Because my dad had taught me that. And what we mean by this is that if you're listening, watching, you don't understand what covenant is, I'll just say it quickly. Every ounce of how God has revealed Himself to us has to do with His covenant with creation, with His covenant with mankind.

He's a covenantal God. It's His chosen vessel through which He relates to the created world. He's a God who keeps His covenants. He's a God who keeps His promises. So when we see God as a covenantal God, and we see Him carrying out the covenants as He does, we have a developed view of covenant at that point. And then when we see marriage as that type of covenant, then we can live it out. But if we don't have covenant in our-

Selena: In the context and in the understanding. Yeah.

Ryan: Yeah. ... it's not in the forefront of our minds, our marriage will lack a backbone.

Selena: Yeah. We go into it very selfishly, unfortunately. You don't realize how selfish you are until, again, the rubber meets the road and you're like, "Ooh, this is hard. I thought we got along. I thought everything was good. And now, ooh, this feels hard." You know? And it's like, Well, that's what your covenant's there for. I always think of the Roman Coliseum when I think covenant. [laughs] I don't know why.

Ryan: We used to use that example because it's the venue within which-

Selena: Yeah. When we went there, we were like, "Wow, they really fought here and they really duked it out." But the idea of covenant, I feel like I'm still learning about it. We learned about it when we started Fierce Marriage. It's just layers and layers and layers, which is so good. Because your marriage needs a backbone.

Ryan: Okay. Yeah. But you think about anytime you... I mean, do you want an invertebrate marriage or do you want a vertebrate marriage? [both laughs] Are you a slug as a married couple or jellyfish? So if you imagine trying to operate as a human being without a spine, I mean, you're dead in the water.

Quite literally. So that's the number two reason why marriages struggle and fail is they have an underdeveloped idea of what covenant is.

Number three is people misunderstand love. They think it has to do with feelings, which it does, but only on a tertiary level. Primarily love is received from God. That's one. Secondly we love because we are loved and it's an action. So we have the receiving of God's love. One. Two, we love as a result in our actions. And then the third way we experience love is the emotions of love. So many people want number three without numbers one and two.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So people misunderstand love. And this is most prevalent when you hear... what's the cliché? I love you-

Selena: I love you, but I'm not in love with you.

Ryan: Doesn't that just grate on you, listener? By now, if you're a Fierce Marriage listener-

Selena: You should be grated on.

Ryan: That should grate on you. We choose love. Love is not something that happens to us, it's something that we do.

Selena: Right. And God is love. I mean, if we know God, then we will know love. And if we feel like we don't know love, we feel clumsy in how to love our spouse well, go to God. Go to the scriptures. It's very clear. Been writing a whole talk on submission and what that means and what that looks like. Submitting to your husband is one way you can love your husband well, right?

Ryan: Wait a second. What does that have to do with my warm fuzzies?

Selena: Once again, there's an order to love. It's not the epitome. Well, no, no. What's the top?

Ryan: The pinnacle?

Selena: The pinnacle. There it is.

Ryan: The pinnacle.

Selena: The pinnacle of love. [laughs]. No. The Christian ability to love comes only from God as the Bible tells us—to love rightly.

Ryan: Yeah. Imagine if God were not love, if He wasn't love. If He says, you know what, I love you, but I'm not in love with you. [both laughs] What if he said that to us? What if to His creation He just said, You know what, creation, mankind, creatures, stars, planet? I love you, you're good because I made you good, but I'm not in love with you anymore, so I'm gonna turn my back. Well, that's the second we all implode and stop existing.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So we have a God who is a God of love, and His Character is love.

Selena: He sustains us through His love.

Ryan: And His love is acted upon. So that's number three. Number four reason marriages struggle and fail is, is I said familiarity is a result of ungratefulness. And if left unchecked, it will kill a marriage.

Selena: Go back to our last episode. Learning the language of gratitude that came from I think chapter nine or something in my book, How a Wife Speaks. Not being grateful, grumbling. I mean, I'm going through Exodus right now in my Bible reading plan, and it's just like they forget so quick and they grumble.

And who are they grumbling against? God. They are grumbling against the holy living God who's a pillar of smoke and fire and mountain-shaking power. And you're just like, "Ooh, this is..." You know? And it's the ungratefulness we are so familiar with, we are so comfortable with in our relationships, especially in our marriage. So completely it goes unchecked, your language starts changing, your actions start changing everything.

Ryan: That's the key: it goes unchecked. So we can all have moments of ingratitude-

Selena: Being ungrateful. Yeah. Like you were last week.

Ryan: I remember nothing. [Selena laughs]

Selena: No. It was more me for sure.

Ryan: Hmm. And there it is. So it's a difference between one... it's small choices every day. It's like, when I see you in the morning, I have a choice to make. We talked about micro-decisions that make a huge difference a few weeks back. I see you in the morning, am I grateful for you or am I taking you for granted because I'm ungrateful for everything God's given me? Namely in my wife, in my family, in this life He's given us.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So if the ungratefulness goes unchecked, it breeds a type of familiarity that will eventually lead to—this is a big word—a disgust, and even a bitterness toward one another. It sounds like a big leap, but it's not. Ungratefulness. Familiarity. Disgust.

Selena: I mean, why does God address grumbling and complaining so much, you know?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Because that's where it starts. That's where those seeds of bitterness take root.

Ryan: There is a component to trusting God for being grateful for what He's given you too. There's a godly contentment that has to be there. We'll get around to the worldview stuff. That's actually toward the end of the list here. But we'll do one more. We're actually running short on time. We'll do one more then we'll do a part two for next week. Because I want to do these topics justice as we're talking about, because I feel like it's got a cultural relevance that we really need to address.

Number five is many assume they're good at communicating while most are not. Men can and should lead this charge as women are naturally more inclined. So, again, number five reason why marriages struggle and fail is lots of people assume they're good at communicating. They just assume they are like. "Oh, we talk. Right. We're good.

Selena: I'm very good at communicating. [laughs]

Ryan: Of course. Like you always think you're right. You always give yourself the benefit of the doubt while being critical of everyone else. So it's-

Selena: Everyone else but your spouse.

Ryan: In reality, most people are not good at communicating.

Selena: It's a very hard thing to do.

Ryan: It's hard to do well. And that's why we wrote our-

Selena: See?

Ryan: See, precision. That's why we wrote our latest books. And we don't mean to plug them. But this is a fresh idea in our minds. And that's why I said men can and should lead in this. So when I wrote *How a Husband Speaks*, you mentioned *How a Wife Speaks* a few moments ago, when I wrote that, the biggest conviction I had is I want men to own this part of their marriage. Now it doesn't mean their wife can just phone it in. She needs to work on communication too.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But as far as it goes for the men, you treat it like the buck stops with you for the communication culture in your home.

Selena: And that is so assuring and it leads... For me, the effect would be, "Wow, my husband's really working on this. I see him really working on this. How can I encourage this, but how can I also improve in this area as well?" I think it just has that effect.

Ryan: Yeah. I mean, that's the ideal reaction. I think if a husband too-

Selena: It may take time. [laughs]

Ryan: ...sets out to be good at this, I think naturally his family will follow, starting with his wife. It will take an act of faith on the husband's part, especially if there's something to be undone damage-wise. But it's not gonna happen overnight. So that husband's gonna have to commit to communicating well-

Selena: Even if the feelings aren't there. Even if they-

Ryan: Even if the wife's not reciprocating.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Even if it doesn't appear to be working. And that's where you'll get through to the other side and you'll actually gain some of the skills that you think you had. You'll actually have them [both laughs] in being a good communicator. That's reason number five is a lot of folks think they're great at communication, but very few actually are.

I want to continue this on the next episode because we'll get into some pretty deep stuff. Namely sexual issues in marriage. We'll get into how wives are able to hold on for longer, but they give up harder. And we'll explain what that means. But for now, I think we'll probably call it an episode.

If you don't know who Jesus is, we want you to know Christ. He is the Logos. And what I mean by that, He is... that's a Greek term for He was the word by which God created everything. And by which He sustains the universe. You need to know who Jesus is because everything only makes sense if Christ is at the center.

So if that's you, you say, yes, I need to know Christ, here are the encouragement we have for you. Find a friend who knows Jesus, ask them to read the Bible with you. Number two, find a church that preaches from the Bible. If you can't find a church, we have a website set up for you. It also explains what the gospel is and what it means to be a believer in Christ. That's the website thenewsisgood.com. Sound good?

Selena: Mm-Hmm.

Ryan: Okay, let's pray. Father God, you are so good. Thank you for marriage. Thank you for the gift it is. Thank you for the ability to communicate here on the podcast to hopefully help couples understand what some of the pitfalls are. Lord, help us to be people that are wise and not only our own marriage, but in terms of culture and the different streams of thought that are coming down through our culture. Help us to refute them to give a reason for the hope that is in us, that we might then lead people into your truth, into knowing you, into walking according to Your ways, that we might flourish. In Jesus name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, we didn't mention it at all, but if you are still here and you'd like to partner with us, we would love that. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. And that's all we have for you this week.

So this episode of The Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com
 - [How a Husband Speaks](#), Ryan Frederick
 - [How a Wife Speaks](#), Selena Frederick

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