

10 REASONS MARRIAGES STRUGGLE AND FAIL – PART 2

<https://fiercemarriage.com/10-reasons-marriages-struggle-and-fail-part-2>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Today we are picking up where we left off last week. We left our listeners very titillated. I venture to say.

Selena: You venture to say. I was like, how do you know?

Ryan: [both laughs] I ventured to say. I myself I am constantly titillated. [both laughs] Constantly. Now that I've sufficiently weirded you out, [laughs] we'll continue where we started last week on the other side.

[00:00:22] <Music>

Ryan: You don't live your life in a constant state of titillation, Selena?

Selena: You aren't really living. [both laughs]

Ryan: If you ain't titillated, you ain't livining it. That's gotta find some way to make that run.

Selena: Gotta find something.

Ryan: Which reminds me... Quick little rabbit trail here. I recently got a wild hair and I was like, I'm gonna look up some Southern idioms that are hilarious. There's some really funny ones. [laughs]

Selena: You may share one because we have a baby that's still sleeping and we gotta-

Ryan: One that I found that was... You know, you're making me pick. There's more than one that's in here, in the brain.

Selena: We have limited time, my love.

Ryan: Someone said, I'm so hungry I could eat the north end of a southbound pole cat, which you have to like really pick that one apart.

Selena: Maybe there's people listening and they're like, yeah, just said that yesterday. [laughs]

Ryan: Or if you're grumpy one day, I could say, well, who licked the red off your Popsicle? Or something like that. [laughs] Right off your candy.

Selena: Anyways, you don't know us, this is my husband Ryan. I'm Selena. We are the Fredericks, behind everything Fierce that you may see or listen as far as Fierce Family, Fierce Marriage, Fierce Parenting, all that goes. So hello and welcome.

Ryan: Everything fierce, ladies and gentlemen.

Selena: Not everything. Anyways, you got your oats. You're filling your oats, huh?

Ryan: Yeah. In cold brew coffee, homemade.

Selena: Just kicked in.

Ryan: I make it strong.

Selena: Okay. So we are picking up from where we left off last week.

Ryan: Yes, we are. You interacted with a woman on there named Pearl something-

Ryan: On where?

Selena: On Twitter. And she was talking about marriages. You said she's like the red pill. I don't know what that means. I'm not on Twitter. She's a conservative who just doesn't really anchor-

Ryan: Think of red pill-

Selena: ...really anchor herself in Christ.

Ryan: I would say it's like the anti-feminism movement.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: And I think that's probably anti-woke, all these sorts of things.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Conservative, but not necessarily Christian is what I'm trying to say.

Selena: Yeah. Because everything she says like it just kind of just fall out, I feel like.
[laughs]

Ryan: Yeah, much of what she says has truth to it, but it's always the execution that gets a little wonky because when you're executing based on secular underpinnings, presuppositions. You're discounting a lot of what reality is-

Selena: A lot. Yes. Yes.

Ryan: ...in that we are humans made in God's image and that we have a sin nature, and we are only righteous because Christ. So there's a lot of-

Selena: Or God has an actual design for family and marriage and flourishing.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So go back and listen to that. I don't know. Should we reread the... I don't think we should reread the tweet, but what we were talking about is that there's ten themes that we've seen in our own work here that show us whether marriages are gonna fail or not. Or just that they struggle. So do you wanna quickly run through the first five and then we'll go into six through ten?

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. We'll recap them quickly just in case you're picking up without having heard that episode. Number one, people underestimate marriage in general, including what it will require and what is at stake.

Number Two, people have an underdeveloped idea of covenant, which is the backbone of the whole thing.

Number three is people misunderstand love. We talked about what that means. I won't get into it.

Number four is familiarity is a result of ungratefulness, and if left unchecked, it will kill a marriage.

Number Five is basically bad communication. And here's the reason. Many people assume they're great at communicating, but in fact, most people are terrible at it.

Selena: Right. Because what does assuming do?

Ryan: Mm, we all know.

Selena: Yeah. We can't say those things here.

Ryan: Okay.

- Selena:** We don't want to say those things here. Anyways. Number five.
- Ryan:** Number Six.
- Selena:** Six.
- Ryan:** Okay. So, again, reasons why marriages struggle and fail-
- Selena:** Well, one of the things that she said in her tweet was that a lot of marriages are...
- Ryan:** They're sexless marriages.
- Selena:** They're sexless and that men are... they have to like get their wives' permission to do anything and they're just... yeah, there's nothing that's keeping men.
- Ryan:** And to even go back just one step further, the reason why Pearl is saying what she's saying is she's basically saying that we've raised the cost of marriage to such a place that is no longer of interest or of benefit to men. So men aren't pursuing marriage because at any point a woman could walk away. So part of the response was, and I told her this: find a good woman.
- Selena:** Find a good woman.
- Ryan:** As a man, you need to find a good woman. And she's like, well, that's does not the fix because, you know, 10 years down the line, they change, whatever. And I'm saying, Well, yeah, also be a good man.
- Selena:** Right. Find a godly woman.
- Ryan:** Also submit yourselves to Christ.
- Selena:** And be a godly man. [laughs]
- Ryan:** Also, all these things I'm outlining here. So one of the things she said that you mentioned was that there are many sexless marriages. So it's costing them that too. And then when the divorce happens, the courts always favor the women over the men, men can't get custody, all these sorts of things. So, again, we're revisiting what we've observed the thieves are, why marriages struggle and fail.

All right, number six, sexual depravity. And what we mean by that is porn use, adultery. Sexual depravity wreaks havoc on men and women alike. And even

couples who don't cheat deal with twisted sexual desires being imported into the marriage bed. This creates an asymmetrical sexual entitlement and expectations that lead to discontent, coercion, or both.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So how Does that strike you? I mean, obviously porn is poison.

Selena: Yeah. And it's run rampant. It's just everywhere. It's accessible to everyone at every age. And the types of porn have just... I mean, just seared consciences. It's-

Ryan: Everything is escalated.

Selena: It's horrific.

Ryan: Everything is escalated.

Selena: You and I were talking about sadly how common adultery is even among-

Ryan: Ten years ago, getting into this, I would've never anticipated how common it is, how often we get messages from couples where it's just like, I had an affair, you know, two years into our marriage, I never told my wife about it, and then I had another one and I told her. So like these guys are coming to me and saying, help. Or even women have affairs too. It's not just men.

Selena: For sure. For sure.

Ryan: It's on both sides of it. It's wreaking havoc.

Selena: Right. So you were trying to highlight these are some of the reasons why men might be in a sexless marriage is because they're addicted to porn, because they've had affairs, because there's been a breach of trust, essentially. I mean, on either side, right? It's not just men. But she's addressing men saying... yeah. And so-

Ryan: So there's the porn use, the adultery problems, which obviously you're gonna wreak havoc on a marriage. But there's a sneakier version of this, which I mentioned is that twisted sexual desires are being imported into the marriage bed.

Selena: And where would you say those are coming from, I guess? Well, if they're not coming from... I'm assuming they're coming from the internet. Right?

Ryan: Okay, so if you spent your entire married life and all the only instances of sexual expression you saw were between you and your spouse, things would stay pretty... I mean, it's not impossible for people to get deprived on their own.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But what I'm saying is a lot of times it's, yeah, you're importing it from-

Selena: It's influences-

Ryan: ...from Pornography. You're importing it from movies. So most oftentimes... if you have kids in the room maybe turn it off or get earbuds or something. But oftentimes it's men who are watching porn, they're addicted to porn, they've gotten into more and more depraved things.

Then they want to actualize their fantasies and they have a wife. And their wife is not a person to them, their wife is an object to them. And they spend their time trying to get their wife to do the things that they are seeing and fantasizing about. They're importing it in.

So that's where you get the coercion, you get manipulation, this asymmetrical sexual entitlement. "Hey, why won't you do that act that I see happening?" They think it's common because they watch porn that has that all the time in it.

Selena: Right. Their ideals are everything's messed up and on the wrong levels. Yeah.

Ryan: So here's the thing. I think there's very little that's actually off-limits in the bedroom. And I mean that. And it's clear what that is.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: In Scripture, I would say sodomy is always off-limits.

Selena: Right. And we've-

Ryan: And I'd say anything that involves anyone else is gonna be off limits. So viewing pornography. I'm just gonna say it. Okay. So viewing pornography, you know, or obviously bringing anyone else into the marriage bed, whether that's actually bringing them in, which believe it or not, sadly, people think that that's somehow okay if it's consensual. Not okay. Bringing other people in through your fantasies and through your thought life. Okay? Those are the off-limits parts.

Selena: And anything that is not edifying.

Ryan: And anything that's not edifying.

Selena: ...that you discuss.

Ryan: So I'm not here to harvest from you what I want from you. I'm here to love you within the bounds of marital love. I mean, read the Song of Solomon. We've written at length on this. We did an episode on it, and why sensual speech is good. We see that modeled in the Song of Solomon. You can make a lot of cases for what's happening sexually throughout that book. And scholars have done it. I've studied myself.

The point is, is you have a lot of freedom in there. But you have guys that are importing things that they're not in the spirit of love, they're not in the spirit of that freedom. They're in the spirit of selfishness and lust.

Selena: Love is what changes everything. I mean, we're talking about that. Like, if you aren't loving while you're having sex, it's just an object. It's just an experience.

Ryan: You're objectifying yourself.

Selena: It's nothing. It doesn't really mean anything.

Ryan: I want to add this before people... Ladies aren't off the hook here.

Selena: No.

Ryan: Because ladies have a different way of importing things. And that could be, you know, their own version of sexual sin, right? They're reading novels that are torrid, steamy, and they're-

Selena: Or watching shows.

Ryan: Or they're watching shows, and they're wanting their husband to be like the guy on the show.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Well, you didn't marry the guy on the show. Also, the guy on the show is an actor, and all of his lines are scripted, and all of his wardrobe is selected for him. And they've done that take 20 times to get the perfect expression, the perfect micro expression to win your heart. And you're importing that into

your marriage and into your sex life. And now that's becoming the thing that your husband needs to rise to in order to get your sexual attention. Well, it's just as insidious.

Selena: Right. So the question is, where are you getting your expectations from? And where should you be getting your expectations for a healthy sex life?

Ryan: So couples, marriages that don't understand this, and therefore sexual depravity runs rampant in their marriage, it's a theme among marriages that suffer, struggle and fail.

Selena: A hundred percent.

Ryan: Okay. We've said a lot there. [Selena laughs]

Ryan: All right, number seven. Number seven and eight kind of go hand in hand. I'll just read them. Number seven is this: wives hold on longer, but they give up harder. What I mean by that is this, if a man neglects his wife, she'll try to win him back. She'll try and she'll fight and she'll pray and she'll go to her friend, she'll go to her family and say, "My husband is not engaging. Help. He's not showing up to the marriage."

She'll try to win him back and she'll hold on for a long time. But this is what we've observed. I'm not saying it's right or wrong. I'm saying this is what we've observed. Once that switch flips in her head that she's given up on him, she's gonna be way harder to win back at that point.

Selena: Yeah. It almost seems like it's a self-preservation act after that. Like, I have tried so much and I have been dragged through the mud 10 times over that I'm finally like picking my hands off of you. Like I'm giving up. But now you're not gonna stand there and take what you like... the man begging on his knees when it's like that's what I wanted for so long. She's already turned her back and is running the other way because she's protecting herself. She's like, "We've already gone through this."

And in my experience that I've seen even, you know, with my own parents, like, wives hang on for a long time. My mom gave my dad a year. She was like, "I fought for him for so long because I loved him so much."

Ryan: I think to this day if he turned and came back, or that she might-

Selena: I don't know.

Ryan: We're talking like 30 years down the line.

- Selena:** I don't know. They're different people.
- Ryan:** Yeah. I've heard stories of women who have held on for decades and they're remarried.
- Selena:** Yeah. We know people. Yeah.
- Ryan:** So yeah, we know them personally.
- Selena:** But it is true. Once the flip switches... once the switch flips, there it is, it is harder. It's definitely harder.
- Ryan:** Well, because you've eviscerated her trust, which she gave you herself wholeheartedly at one point. And now it's, you know, fool me twice, you know, so to speak.
- Selena:** It's just interesting that once it's done, like I've also seen friends, you know, once the papers are signed, it's like, Oh, he's all super nice to her. And like, then I think there's remorse there and you're like, oh, what have I done? Oh, it's actually happening. You're like, what did you think was gonna happen when you signed these papers?
- Ryan:** Which actually leads to number eight, which is men take their wives for granted until it's too late. Now, these are patterns we see. We're not here just to bash men. I love helping men be the best men they can possibly be. I believe that men are the future of our society. I really mean that.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Women aren't off the hook here.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** Next one is gonna hit, I think, at some of the issues women face. But for these two, seven, and eight, men take their wives for granted until it's too late. It's only when it's too late that they see themselves, their situation, their behavior clearly. Up until that point, it's very easy for them to rationalize it.
- Selena:** I think that could be true for wives as well, you know?
- Ryan:** Sure.

- Selena:** I think that they can be the same way. They can take their husband for granted, they can take for granted, you know, that he's working hard for their family, that you can lose perspective, you can lose sight of what your husband is actually doing. Again, the grumbling, the complaining, the wrong perspective, that's gonna take you down this path. And then again, when it's too late and you're trying to fight, the door's gonna be closed at that point.
- Ryan:** Like you just mentioned, women can do this too. I wanna be clear, it's not just men are all the problem. That's not what I'm trying to say.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** Because the same can be true on the opposite side. But number nine, let's get into this one. Men want and need to lead their wives but the wife is unleadable. Gosh-
- Selena:** There's a lot that can play into that.
- Ryan:** And here's what I wrote. She undermines, she chips away at his confidence and wonders why he turns passive, why he effectively abandons the marriage when he's married to a drippy faucet. [Selena laughs] An undermine... usurper. [laughs]
- Selena:** Well, and I wonder if it's unaddressed, and I wonder at what point in the marriage. Because like early on, if the man has never been given the chance to lead and he's kind of just never led, but what if it's down further in the marriage where he has led and then she's trying to usurp? Like, what are the circumstances that are leading up to this? What are the conversations? What are the things that have happened to where a wife has become unleadable?
- I mean, clearly, yes, it's sin, but what kind of sin? What is the sin in a wife's heart that she is not submitting to her husband?
- Ryan:** Right. That's a perfect segue because number ten, okay? The whole thing culminates with number ten because all of these big why questions have to do with worldview. Meaning that, yes, it's sin, but what's the sin coming in? Well, it's, you know, different ideas, ideologies, expectations, actual sin-
- Selena:** Experiences that they've had. Past experiences.
- Ryan:** So, again, the number 10 reason I gave for why we see couples struggle and fail is this, is that couples fail for lack of unity around the big questions in life. So here's the big questions. What's the point of it all? What's the point of the marriage? Why fight? Why are kids good? And why is marriage worth fighting

for? Why should I apologize? Why should I forgive when I've been wronged? I need to get you back.

Well, why should I forgive you? Why should I love you when I don't feel like loving you? Why should I stay faithful when I don't feel like staying faithful?

Selena: Or you've been unfaithful to me.

Ryan: Yeah. Or you've neglected me. So you don't deserve my faithfulness. I need to get mine from wherever I can. If you don't agree on the big important reasons and you're not unified on the answers to these things, then you're gonna struggle and you're... there's a better chance you're gonna fail.

Selena: Well, you'll believe the lie that you might find what you're looking for outside of the marriage that you're already in.

Ryan: And none of these questions we're asking have answers outside of worldview. So what I mean by worldview is, yeah, how do you answer these big important.. like, where did I come from? You know-

Selena: Who am I?

Ryan: Who am I? And where am I going? Those are all worldview questions. Meaning that who is God? What does He say? Now what do I do? So most often couples coast on a sense of morality or of an ethic that is derived from the Christian worldview. Meaning that they think, you know, marriage is good. Okay. That's from the Christian worldview. They think faithfulness is good. They think love is good. They think altruism, being a selfless person, that's all good.

Selena: Right. But if you don't actually believe it to the point where you've internalized it, and the Holy Spirit has gotten a hold of your heart and given you a heart of flesh, taken out your heart of stone, then it's just a matter of time until that momentum ends when the coasting ends. And you might be able to, depending on, you know, your demographic, if you've got more distractions, you'll coast further.

Selena: Yeah, that's so true.

Ryan: If you've got more money, you'll probably coast further.

Selena: That's so true.

Ryan: Right?

- Selena:** So true.
- Ryan:** You know, there's certain factors that will let you coast further but the point is, is you're coasting. You're not actually fueled by the Holy Spirit.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So you'll get to the end of that Christian juice, so to speak and you'll grind to a halt unless you, like I said, you've internalized the beliefs in a way that actually changes how you behave.
- Selena:** So good.
- Ryan:** So unless you have a selflessness that is born from the experience of Christ's selfless love for you, that gratitude that comes from being saved, a sinner dead in sin, has been brought to life, unless you have that and you have some of the big context for marriage, like God says, marriage is good, therefore it's good, it's not good because it works, it's not good because I like it. It's good because God said it is.
- Selena:** Right. And it's not good because it's the next step. It's not qualified by man. It is qualified by God. It was designed and purposed by God. So I guess I would just add, if you're looking at your marriage and you're thinking those things, you're thinking like, why should I fight for this, what does it matter? Like, I can apologize, but he's just gonna do it again. Or he's not, sorry. I could apologize, but I'll probably sin again. Right? And it's like, well, of course, we're gonna sin again. Like that's part of the Christian walk and not being on the other side of eternity. Right?
- But if you look at the bigger picture, if you peel back the layers, if you kind of push through to the other side, you see that all of these trials and all of these hardships are sanctifying you. They're making you more like Christ. Well, what good does that do me? Oh, friend, like, what do you mean what good does that do you? Right?
- Again, if that's your orientation, it's still is about you, which is still the wrong perspective to have. Our lives are not our own. We are here, we are but a vapor. But we are here to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Look at your catechism. [laughs] They'll answer a lot of questions you have.
- Ryan:** What I hear you saying is that people will have a hard time making sense of all we're saying unless there's a bigger, deeper context for it all.
- Selena:** Mm-Hmm.

Ryan: And you're encouraging people to dig into that context.

Selena: Yeah, because you're made in the image of God. The truth of who God is will ring loudly in your heart and in your spirit, because that is who you are created by. So the truths of God are not just something that will, you know, it's just passing and it's kind of like you're throwing stuff at the wall, whatever sticks, great. If that's kind of where you feel like your Christianity is, then friend, you're a bit off.

Ryan: Well, we wanna encourage you to go deeper and to not settle.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: I just wanna finish with this thought and then we'll bring this plane in for landing. Here's what I wrote on the tweet. I said, "In summary, long-term marriage makes little sense to people unless they have context that makes it make sense. I am a Christian and I believe the Christian worldview is the only one that speaks to the entirety of the human condition and reality as we know it. As it pertains to marriage, the tradition and culture that are conducive to healthy marriage are all but completely gone. So those who manage to get married without a Christian worldview are sitting on a ticking time bomb that saved God doing a miracle in their lives will inevitably explode." That's a pretty dire picture.

Well, then I ended up with the, "Here, if you want to grow in your marriage, go to Fierce Marriage. [both laughs] Check out our podcast." So I did a little bit of self-promotion. I didn't plan on doing that on in the tweet, but I did because I'm like, "I can't just leave it there. I need to give people like some pathway toward this beautiful picture that is marriage."

But the point of all this, the point of why we're sharing this is because God is good, He's given us a good gift in marriage, and He's, I think, asking us as believers in this season. If you were born, you were born for this season of our earth's existence to do something. I think a big part of that for Christian couples, for Christian families is to champion God's design for biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, for biblical marriage and for biblical parenting. Like this matters.

If you're listening to the podcast, watching the video, this matters and it matters to you specifically because it matters to the future of your children, it matters to those around you. So our hope is that it can help you right where you're at. If you have some of these signs of marriages that a struggle, like ask God to help, find the help, do the work, get healthy.

If you see people in your life that you have the ability to speak into their lives to encourage them in their marriage, be the light in that dark place. And if you have, you know, kids, raise them to understand the depth and breadth of what covenant is, what love is, and what it means to have a pure heart and, you know, towards your spouse because they're saved. Like, teach them these things.

That's why we're sharing it today. This is kind of a 50,000-foot view sort of episode or this episode and the last one. But we hope it's helped you tangibly write up boots on the ground, but we also hope it helps lift your vision.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: ...to see God's beautiful picture for what marriage is and what it can do when it's lived out in society. Anything else?

Selena: No.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: I mean, these are the big themes that we see. I wish someone would've said these things to me when we were getting married, you know? By God's grace, we've not experienced any major breaches of trust or anything like that, but I can see where little pieces of this could take root in a marriage and then begin to grow deep roots and begin to sprout up trees and to begin to just kill whatever you thought your marriage was.

Ryan: I mean, I think we've dealt with probably eight outta ten of these. [laughs]

Selena: Oh yeah. On some level.

Ryan: In the seeds of them.

Selena: A hundred percent.

Ryan: So part of it's even experience and seeing how the seeds have grown into full-blown networks of weeds in our marriage and we've had to do the work to uproot those. So it's not that we've had a perfect marriage, it's just that we've been in it a while. We've seen some things together as co-laborers here. So speaking of seeing some things, we want you to see Christ. [laughs] Always working on that segue.

Selena: Nice.

Ryan: If you don't know who Jesus is, or you kind of know the name, you grew up maybe in a nominal Christian capacity, you've been to church on Easter and on Christmas, maybe you grew up, you know, where your parents said you were Christian, but you had no idea what that meant. Well, we want you to go deeper. We want you to have a genuine saving faith in Christ, which means you need to know who He is.

If you don't know who He is, we say find a friend, ask them to show you Him, ask them to read the Bible with you.

Selena: That Christian friend is waiting for you, praying for you.

Ryan: Yes, they are waiting and praying. Find a church. Hopefully that Christian friend has a good church that preaches outta the Bible. Go to church with them, hear from the word, get under the care of a shepherd who loves the Lord and can love you as a result.

If you don't know where to find a good church, we have a website that will help, thenewsisgood.com. Check that out.

All right, let's pray. Father God, we love You. Lord. I pray that this time here has been fruitful in the hearts and minds of those listening and watching. I pray that we would be fruitful Christians about marriage, about the business of raising our children, about the business of proclaiming your truth in the areas of manhood, womanhood marriage, and family. Lord, we love You.

We ask that You would help the couples that are listening to this, that they would have strong marriages, that they would not struggle and fail because of these reasons that we've laid out. And if they are struggling, Lord, that You would show them the light, help them get out to the other side of it, that they might be a testimony of Your goodness and Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, this has been a blast. I've had fun. Have you had fun? Was it good for you? [laughs] Oh, it was good.

Selena: Oh man.

Ryan: All right, well this episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

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