

WHAT IF SATAN TOOK UP MARRIAGE COUNSELING?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/what-if-satan-took-up-marriage-counseling>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Selena, I have a crazy question for you and for our dear listeners and viewers today. And it's this. Now, please don't just dismiss me right off. But what if Satan took up marriage counseling? What would he say? What kind of things would he want the couples that he's counseling to believe unto his nefarious ends? I think it's something worth considering.

Now, this isn't something that we thought of. Actually, we're gonna read through a very well put together... Well, we're gonna read parts of a blog post. We're gonna talk about it. It's put together by a gentleman named Tim Challies. He is a blogger, pastor, writer. I trust his theology. So he's opened up some unique points of conversation for us. And we're gonna do the same thing for you on the other side.

[00:00:45] <music>

Ryan: Hello. Hello. Greetings and welcome to the Fierce Marriage Podcast. Our dear listeners, if you're a long-time listener, welcome back. It's good to have you. If you're new, good to meet you.

Selena: Howdy and hello.

Ryan: Howdy and hello. [both laughs]. I'm feeling extra relaxed right now. I'm feeling festive.

Selena: That's funny. I'm feeling a little bit wound up here. [Laughs]. There's more going on behind the scenes, but-

Ryan: There's a lot going on.

Selena: Yeah. So I was scrolling on the gram, you know, you know how I be sometimes and-

Ryan: People don't think it'd be like it is.

Selena: A friend posted this in her stories and I wanted to go read it because, you know, of course, it's just this clickbait of like, If Satan took up marriage counseling, dot, dot, dot. And I was like, Oh, let's check that out. Save that-

Ryan: Which is why-

Selena: ...in my Fierce Marriage topics folder.

Ryan: Which is why we use that clickbait title to titillate you on the other side.

Selena: Old Timmy Challies. Old Timmy. He's just rocking and rolling.

Ryan: Had you ever heard of Tim Challies before?

Selena: Yes, I had.

Ryan: Okay. Okay. Because you were like, "I don't know who wrote this?" And then you told me.

Selena: No, I know him, but I don't read a lot of his stuff.

Ryan: Got you.

Selena: Anyways, he wrote this whole article. They posted a few slides about it. We're not going to read the whole article, although I would encourage you to do that. We can probably post the link in the notes. But it's probably a three-minute read, four-minute read. He's just, you know, deconstructing all of these ideas of, you know, marriage being something that man came up with, and so therefore, you can take it apart. It can look however you want it to look, and it's where sex goes to die. It's where men relinquish their headship and women just become disappointed and they start disrespecting them because they don't deserve the respect. They're not acting like it, you know?

It's so interesting to just hear this narrative that he comes up with. So we thought we'd read a few of the paragraphs and just discuss them with each other and with you all here.

Ryan: The main thing I want our listeners, viewers to take away from this and us is, okay, we're opening our eyes to some of the lies that maybe we've come to believe and have been normalized in our culture. We're opening our eyes to those, but even I think more important than that is to behold the beauty and wonder of this wonderful thing that God has given us called marriage.

You may be expecting that from people like us for, or you might be expecting me to say that and to think that, but let me just tell you that we've been doing this for a decade now. It'll be a decade this upcoming... well actually, no, it'll be 11 years this coming January.

But I can tell you that it's only gotten more beautiful the more I've understood it. And I think that is the key. I won't say the key. It's a critical part of having a flourishing marriage is beholding marriage as God beholds it. So when we do that, when we read scripture and we understand God's covenantal character, we understand how love is part of God's character, He is the definition, and - what is it? The enabler of the love that we share with anyone, but especially in marriage. When we behold that, it dispels every one of these lies. Wholesale.

So that to me is the biggest thing I want to take away from this, is how big and beautiful and wonderful is this thing called marriage. It's a gift. And I think when we see it as a gift and a beautiful one at that, we want to fight for what is good, right, beautiful, and true.

Selena: It's true. We'll talk about that. We'll kind of end it with that. Because it just ties it up. He does such a great job. So first paragraph. We're going to kind of read through real quick. This is Tim Challies. He writes, "If Satan took up marriage counseling, he would want people to believe that marriage was invented by human beings, either for reasons related to humanity's evolutionary origins or related to men's need to control and dominate women. He would want people to believe that because marriage came from within this world rather, it in no way reflects any kind of divine design for human beings or human society. This makes it not only unnecessary but possibly harmful and oppressive."

Ryan: Wow. Wow. In just a few sentences, he's unearthed all of the kind of cultural paradigms of our day, the humanism aspect, that somehow marriage is... it's not an absolute institution. It's a relative. It evolved because humanity evolved and it just was the way that worked. That's a very humanist perspective.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's not being put upon us, it kind of welled up from within us, and therefore we can do whatever we want with this thing that we essentially came up with. Well-

Selena: Right. Scripture says otherwise. [laughs]

Ryan: Here's the thing. Throughout all these lies, we don't necessarily think in our conscious minds, I can do what I want in marriage. Now some would go that far, but I think Christians especially, most likely Christian professing Christian in this, if you're watching or listening to this, we don't say that overtly because, you know, that's not part of our vernacular, but we believe it. We believe that marriage is anything... It's not covenantal. It's-

Selena: It's more contractual. We treat it more contractually in our tendencies when we get lazy and how we deal with one another, in our communication and how we prioritize one another, how we spend our money. Our beliefs will come to light through those different avenues.

Ryan: Yeah. Well, when it's time to forgive, when you have been severely sinned against, or when it's time to overlook, you know, a quirk or an offense, or when the affectionate feelings of love are few and far between, well, then you start questioning why is marriage even valuable? If that's what gives value to your marriage, yeah, that value is going to... it's going to be like the Dow industrial average. It's going to go up and down with whatever's happening in society or in your life. But that's not what marriage... Marriage is externally valuable because God has assigned the value. And that value is fixed.

Another thing that Tim is... a can he's opening, I'll say is this. So we've humanism and now feminism. He said that it has evolutionary origins, of course. And then he relates that to the man's need or men's need to control and dominate women. That just checks the feminist box.

Selena: Right. Actually in scripture, when we read Genesis 3, it's the woman who wants to dominate. It's her desire will be for the man, but he shall rule over her. So once again, you see the roots of truth being contradicted. You see feminism here.

Ryan: Wow. I mean, the antithesis of feminism is basically the mirror image of what the women's version of the fall is. Meaning that they think that the man is just trying to control and dominate when in reality they're the ones that are saying those things by means with the intent of controlling and dominating. Now, there's always the one-offs where you can say, well, look at this case or look at this case. And so what about isms, right? Well, no, the normative model that we were given in scripture is the antithesis to feminism. It's funny the thing that they're decrying is the very behavior they're displaying.

Selena: Right. It always is.

Ryan: It is. Sorry. I went on a little tangent there, but it's interesting. But if you find yourself in a situation where you're starting to believe that that's, you know-

Selena: Yeah, you can start entertaining those thoughts, you know, just scrolling and thinking and wondering, you know, Hey, is this really what marriage is for? If you're not clear on things, the world's out there will start to help you clarify. Right?

Ryan: Think about how self-fulfilling and sabotaging it is. Like if someone ever told you, Hey, you're crazy, and you said, no, I'm not crazy. He's like, that's what crazy people say. Or you're a liar. Well, you're just saying that because that's what liars say. Or you're a controller and a dominator. So if that husband tries to do anything, that's just what a controller does. He's trying to leave. He's trying to love. He's trying to be gentle. He's trying whatever. You're just trying to control me some way. Do you see how that happen? Anyway, it's interesting.

Selena: Yeah. Next paragraph. It's not the second one, but we're just kind of jumping around here. "If Satan took up marriage counseling, he would want people to believe that marriage is where sex goes to die rather than to thrive and that a lifetime of sex with one person can be nowhere near as satisfying as fleeting moments of sex with a long succession of people. He would want them to be suspicious that to enter marriage is to settle for sexual mediocrity rather than fulfillment. He would make sure this message is so endlessly repeated in popular culture that it becomes almost a given.

Ryan: This is just a classic case of people looking at marriages that have failed or have not flourished and saying that's the norm. Now, there's one thing to say that there is a cultural kind of baseline that we've witnessed. There's another to say, like, this is the normative model that God has given us.

So what I would do in this case to illustrate Tim's point is I would say, talk to a couple who's been married for 50 years. They got married in their 20s, they're in their 70s and they've had a good marriage. Measure that couple's happiness and then talk to the bachelor who has slept with countless women over 50 years, talk to the woman who's slept with countless men over 50 years, and look at the who's going to be having a more fulfilling sex life, right? Who's going to look back and say, oh man, I have had this... This is a garden, a cornucopia of fruitfulness in our lives.

Selena: And it's not just because they've been married for 50 years, right, it's because they have actually made an effort to... They've cultivated the garden. They have watered the garden. It's not just an automatic thing that happens, right? If you believe that your sex life is just something that should happen, then friend, you need to reestablish some of those beliefs and figure out what's going wrong.

Because if you're just left to your defaults, sex is not going to be thriving. It will feel mediocre. It won't be fulfilling. It will feel empty and dutiful. Not that it doesn't have those moments, but overall the fulfillment and the flourishing that God designed it to be, all of that is there. God has given it to you as a married couple. You have to till the garden, take care of the land and take care

of that aspect of your relationship. It will not just happen to you. So I think that is... And then he moves into this next point. Do you want to read that one?

Ryan: I was going to do this real quickly.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: So he talks about people being suspicious to enter marriage because they're settling for sexual mediocrity.

Selena: Our culture is so sexualized right now.

Ryan: What a worldly way to think about it. So this presupposes a number of things.

Selena: What a small way to think about it.

Ryan: And Tim is doing this on purpose. So when we were engaged, we had never been intimate up until our wedding night. It never occurred to me that I'm settling for sexual mediocrity. What occurred to me was, I can't wait to be one with this woman.

Selena: For my whole life.

Ryan: And I can't wait to build a life with this woman.

Selena: As opposed to, I've had any number of... I've bedded any number of women and I'm now comparing you to them. The world is so effectively detached sex from emotional relationship.

Selena: Become carnal and physical.

Ryan: So you've detached sex from the emotional. You've also detached sex from the physical through birth control and through abortion and through any... you know, just the mentality that goes into that. So what a worldly way to think about this. Of course, the devil would be all about the worldliest way to think about these things.

Let me read the next one. "If Satan took up marriage counseling, he would want people to believe that children are a hindrance to a happy marriage rather than a blessing to it and that people are happiest when dedicating themselves entirely to themselves rather than to others. And if they still insisted on having children, he would want them to think of those children as

a lifestyle choice, as a kind of prop to be used to enhance a parent's sense of personal satisfaction."

Selena: What do you call those people that dinks?

Ryan: Oh my goodness. What a fitting name. I get it. Like we were dual income, no kids for a good number of years. But the people that are online posting, yeah, you're a dink, dude. You're dinking around. It's interesting. I've said this before on the parenting side, I've said this at a Fierce Families Conference. Because there's commoditization of children, that they have become a lifestyle choice.

Selena: Yeah. Well, hello, abortion.

Ryan: I got lit up online, which I love it. I'm fine with it. You know, it's funny because half the time I'm trolling because I know what buttons and I want to push the buttons sometimes. Well, because the people... yeah.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: And what I talked about, I said, it occurred to me because... here's how silly it was. Okay. I couldn't find the charger for a laptop, you know, the cord and the little thing that goes in the wall. I looked everywhere and I go to our 7-year-old daughter, I said, "Em, have you seen the laptop charger?" And she goes, "Oh, yeah, it's buried in this bin of toys." I don't know how it got in there, but she knew exactly where it was. And she's like a beeline. She went to it, got it and gave it to me. And I looked at her, I said, Wow, the slow and dangerous behind-the-wheel children cancer purpose.

Selena: He's quoting a movie.

Ryan: I'm quoting Dumb and Dumber. If you didn't get that reference, he's talking about old people in the movie. But I looked at her and I said, "You are legitimately... I already value you. You tangibly bring value to our household because of these little types of things." Then I think about when they go and get eggs from the chickens or they help make breakfast in the morning or we work on stores together. They bring-

Selena: They willingly do these things and happily do these things. Like they come to us. And it's more of us trying to navigate the time it takes and energy and mess rather than... We're not always like-

Ryan: But they actually help. And this is not a new concept. It goes all the way back to biblical times. Kids are an asset. They are actual assets. Now, people are probably going to... They're probably going to comment on this video now. But

I said that, I said in this... it was on Facebook. I said, "You know what? What parents without kids who are considering kids need to know is that, yes, kids are a blessing, but they are tangibly adding value to your family. They're not just a net negative is what I was trying to say." And you know what? Some-

Selena: Some feminist person.

Ryan: Some feminist thing shared it on her page or their community or whatever. And I had all these people flooding in and I was just having the time of my life.

Selena: All these ladies. One was like a cat rescuer or something like that. Anyways, I shouldn't go there.

Ryan: Enough said. But they were convinced that I was a child laborer and I was exploiting our children for labor. And I was telling people, you need to have your kids for child labor. That's what they thought.

Selena: Nowhere in the poster or anything that it say that. Of course, we do not believe in that. Hello, we're homeschoolers. We're wanting them to be outside and breathe fresh air and play and run and do all the things kids should be doing.

Ryan: Well, that's the beauty of not caring what they think or feeling like I have to justify myself to them.

Selena: No, totally.

Ryan: But the point here is that the enemy would have us as married couples believe that children are anything other than what God said they were. And God clearly says children are a blessing. Period. Now, how are they a blessing? Well, it's for you to figure that out. But tangibly they're a blessing simply by being... Like any parent who has a child in biblical marriage is going to look at that child and say, praise God. I cannot believe this miracle-

Selena: They're a blessing on so many levels, emotionally, spiritually, physically. Like, yes, they take a lot from you, but you got to die to yourself in order to just come alive in Christ. Those are the types of we need children in our lives to teach us those things, to bang out the sanctification and sanctify us, right? The sin and the darkness that's in us.

So God gives us children as a blessing. They are not a lifestyle choice. And maybe they started out that way, but I'll be here to tell you that once you have them and you can't go back, it is such a blessing and it is such a beautiful thing. You will move from that lifestyle choice. At least I pray that.

Ryan: And wise couples would understand that before they have kids. We were not that wise. We needed to have kids to understand what that meant. Okay. This next one. "If Satan took up marriage counseling, he would want husbands to be passive in their leadership and wives to be so disappointed in that lack of leadership that they feel justified in failing to respect their husbands. He would want wives to determine that submission is a mark of weakness and that if it is given at all, it should be given only when it is earned. He would want husbands to treat their wives harshly instead of gently and to express constant disappointment rather than delight."

Selena: It's interesting that he hits some of the tendencies that I think we can all reflect on in our own marriage and in the roles that God's given us. I did a talk at our Fierce Families Conference about strength and submission and how there is some discomfort and pain sometimes it feels like in submission, but it's not the submission that is causing that, it's our sin waging war against obedience of what God has called us to do as a wife. And that means submitting.

Like you are coming under the mission of your husband. You are submitting, coming under that mission. And even, you know, we talk about that. So if you flip the script, we've been doing this a lot and talking. So if I'm wanting to be loved, right, but if I'm, you know, nailing it, I'm on a streak. I'm doing really good today. I haven't sinned much. I'm really lovable. Really lovable. Like you should love me a lot. You should love me more than you usually love me on most days. Right? Isn't that how it works? Right?

Ryan: Sure.

Selena: So insert submission, right? So if you're acting in a way that is not worthy of my submission, like, do I still submit? Because you're not deserving of it really.

Ryan: I'll say this another way, because I think this is the point you're making. If men loved their wives when their wives only deserved it, how heinous would that be? Because what's the call in Ephesians 5? Men love your wives as Christ loved the church and give Himself as a sacrifice for her.

Selena: Wives submit to your husbands.

Ryan: Wives submit to your husbands as under the Lord. Well, does the Lord deserve your submission always?

Selena: He does.

Ryan: That's how you submit as under the Lord.

Selena: Always. Always.

Ryan: So you submit to your husband in the same way. Now that doesn't... all the caveats. Okay. It doesn't mean that your husband can be just a complete flight. He needs to do the first part. Love your wife as Christ has loved.

Selena: He's submitting to Christ first as well as required.

Ryan: Yeah. How heinous would it be if I just said, "I'm not going to love you today because...dumb.

Selena: But I'm doing so good. I'm so lovable.

Ryan: Well, if you're lovable, I'll love you. But as soon as you stop being lovable, then forget about it. That's not any way to live a marriage. Satan would love for you to believe that it is.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Okay. Let's do this last one. "If Satan took up marriage counseling, he would want even Christians to focus more on the struggles and difficulties of marriage than on its joys. He would want even Christians to talk often about how hard it is and seldom about how good it is. And he would most certainly want Christians to forget all about the reality that the deepest meaning of marriage is not first about a husband and wife but about Christ and his church."

Selena: Amen. Amen.

Ryan: So he would want you to get your eye off the ball.

Selena: Well, and I think that we have a tendency to do that. Even in just normal conversations, not even about marriage, right? We're so prone to complaining and grumbling and, oh, I wish, you know, it was easier, whatever, instead of leaning into what the Lord might be trying to do in your heart, in your marriage. Right? So yes, we have struggles, but hey, you know what? We had a really great time doing this, or we really connected over this conversation that usually is really hard.

And this is where I think brothers and sisters in Christ really come into play. I mean, just recently I was able to just text to my sisters in Christ and say, "Hey, I'm struggling with the situation." And it wasn't with you. It was just other things that were happening. "I could use prayer. Here's where my heart is."

And they just wrote back and said, "Yes, we understand that's challenging. Maybe the Lord is trying to grow you in this area. What is he trying to do? How can you love in this situation?" And then when it does happen, I can go back to them and say, Praise God. Like He did answer my prayers. He answered your prayers. I was able to not just fall into a spiral of how difficult and terrible things are. God is good. And He showed me the joys that are set before me.

That can be our prayer I think as Christians in marriage that yes, we're here, Fierce Marriage, we're talking about the struggles, but more so we want to be pointing you to Christ, talking about the goodness and blessings that God has given us through marriage, through family, through children.

There are blessings and joys that are deeper than we can even begin to discuss on this podcast. And we're constantly... I don't know. I feel convicted to be like, yeah, we just need to do a whole month on why marriage is the best and talk about all the good aspects of marriage. Or have people write in, like, what's your favorite part about marriage?

Ryan: Fiercemarriage.com/ask. You can write in without asking. You can actually tell us. I'm convinced, I'm truly convinced that the cheat code to marriage, the cheat code to life is gratitude and contentment born from having a right view of God's goodness in whatever it is He's put you in.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: It's the cheat code for everything. For suffering, for marriage, for parenting, for vocation, for manhood, womanhood, for everything. By beholding God and how He's designed the thing or purposed the thing that He's put you in. And then as a response of beholding God, say, thank you, Lord, and I'm content. Why am I content? Not because of the circumstance, not because my wife is perfect and she's doing all the things I think she should do, but because He is God and He has done what God does and He is trustworthy and faithful and good.

The enemy would love for you to forget about God's goodness. He would love for you to forget that marriage is good. And he would love for you to think that your opinions of marriage matter more than God's opinions of marriage or God's design for it. Does God have opinions? I don't think He has opinions. He just has decrees.

Selena: I was like, I don't think opinions is just good with the accurate word.

Ryan: It feels a little squishy, I'll say that.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: But anyway, if you don't know who that God that I've just described-

Selena: Squishy.

Ryan: If you've never considered who you are before God and that He is perfect and you are not, we're here to maybe put that mirror in front of you and say, look at this holy good God, the creator God, the perfect originator of everything. And you stand before Him as somebody who has lied, who has maybe stolen, who has maybe had hateful thoughts or the lustful thoughts, if not committed acts of lust. You are a sinner before a perfect God. What are you going to do? What do you do?

Well, you ask Him to have mercy. If He decides to, He will. But here's the thing. He already has given mercy and He's done it through His son, Jesus Christ on the cross. That whole story is for you to unpack. If you don't know who Christ is, you need to know Christ. To do that, we recommend you find a friend who is a Christian. If you have one, say, Show me Jesus.

Selena: "Tell me about Jesus."

Ryan: Can you tell me about Jesus? Can we read the Bible together? Number two, find a church that preaches out of the Bible and will teach you who Christ is from the pulpit. And if you don't have easy access to either of those things, we have a website that will also help you to this. It's thenewsisgood.com. We encourage you to check that out.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for the gift of marriage. Thank You that You have given us truth to dispel all manner of lies that the enemy would have us believe. I pray that You would give us eyes to see the lies that we've believed. Help us to reject those. Help us to repent of our belief in those lies and instead turn our belief to You and to give You our full belief and our trust. And may we act on it as we place it on You.

Lord, I pray for the couples who are struggling, You would strengthen them, give them a path forward, put people in their lives that will lead and guide them back to a living water, back to Your word. And I pray that as a result, they would find joy that they've never had before, they would find peace they've never had before. I pray that they would find closeness to one another, closeness to you, that they would flourish for the rest of their lives. It is by Your grace and by the blood of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. Thank you for joining us once again for the podcast. If you'd like to support us, we would be honored. Again, we're so blessed. And I just am completely blown away whenever someone joins the Fierce Fellowship. Is that what you call it?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. We'd be honored to have you there. That said, 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.

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