

WHY HUSBANDS SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY INITIATORS OF S— (PART 1)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/why-husbands-should-be-the-primary-initiators-of-s-part-1>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Fierce friends, we are going to do you a massive favor today. [laughs]

Selena: Take that initiative. Way to go, babe. Way to go.

Ryan: You know what, this is one of the things I feel like a lot of couples just need someone to just say it how it is and help them out. Because a lot of the weirdness around sex is because a lot of couples, they don't know how to... like, it's unspoken. Like who's supposed to initiate? How often should we be doing it? What's it supposed to be like? Like what... right? That can be weird, especially if you're a young couple and you've gotten out of the honeymoon stage where you're just...

Selena: How do we live this out?

Ryan: You kind of hit the cruising altitude and you realize it gets weird and pretty soon. If you're not careful, you can start to drift apart. So it is our conviction... I say our, I mean in both of us. And this is a fairly recent conviction that we've arrived at by the grace of God, is that it is right, good, and true for the husband to be the primary initiator of sex in marriage. It's right, good, and true for the husband to be the primary initiator in sex. I didn't say only but I'd say primary. So we're going to unpack that in today's episode on the other side.

[00:01:14] <music>

Ryan: So, Selena, when you hear that, when you hear that the husband should be the primary initiator, what goes through your mind as a wife? What does that make you think?

Selena: You better ask nicely. No, I'm kidding. [laughs]

Ryan: That's actually funny because I didn't say ask.

Selena: Initiate.

Ryan: "Ask" is not the word. "Initiate" is the word, but we'll talk about that in a sec.

Selena: I'm just trying to set it up for you.

Ryan: How does that make you feel though?

Selena: I told you. "Initiate" it's little off-putting if you're not ready to have your marriage be like that. "Initiate" feels like a strong word, but that's what it is, it's supposed to be.

Ryan: Okay. But how does that make you feel as a wife?

Selena: Well, in our covenant, it makes me feel relieved.

Ryan: Okay, that's what I was getting at.

Selena: Okay. I'm like, I don't know. For other people, it's probably, that's not the word that probably comes to mind, right, right off the bat.

Ryan: Well, this could either be something that you're like, "Screw those guys. I'm not listening to Ryan and Selena anymore," or you can be like, "Thank you." Because it's a bit of a paradigm shift for a lot of couples because-

Selena: Well, I think too many times we're asking the wrong question. How often and why and all that. Well, let's get to the deeper question here.

Ryan: Here's what I really dislike is the idea that... and I will say this. Selena or the wife is the keeper of the cookies. And anytime a husband wants a cookie, she has to go ask, he has to go ask, Wife, can I please have another cookie? And if he's lucky, if he's been a good boy, she'll give him a cookie. I cannot stand that because that to me is unhealthy, it undermines the purpose of it.

Selena: The roles are all messed up. There's no-

Ryan: Yes. It belittles it. It makes the whole thing yuck to me. A husband should not be groveling. Asking is not the right word, I don't think. Now, we can have a conversation. I can initiate that conversation with you.

But to me, the whole happy wife, happy life. You know, you talk to these guys, like old guys who are trying to be funny, but had told the same joke for 30 years, you talk to them, they're like, "Oh, how long have you been married?" "I'm married, you know, X number of years." He's like, "Oh, I've been married 40 years. Let me tell you the key to a healthy marriage. Ready son? Keep your wife happy. Am I right? As long as she's happy, I'm happy. Happy wife, happy life." Like bro-

Selena: I mean, there is some truth to that, but it doesn't mean you have to get-

Ryan: But our happiness is not dependent on me just placating you.

Selena: Yes. That's very patronizing.

Ryan: That's very patronizing. It's like-

Selena: Minimizing. We're not in a covenant. We are in a parent-child relationship is what it is.

Ryan: Well, the idea that-

Selena: And that's not what a covenant is.

Ryan: If I can just keep my wife happy, she can throw me a cookie this week. I've talked to too many guys that are like, My wife is upset with me, so now, you know, there's no way that we're going to-

Selena: I'm not going to get any tonight. That's for sure. [laughs]

Ryan: Right. "I just ruined it now. For three days I don't have a chance. It's already been a week and a half." Like bro-

Selena: I don't mean to laugh. That's not the culture that you have to live in.

Ryan: Or that guys are like tiptoeing around this stuff because, Oh, if I don't ask right, then she's going to have a headache or she's going to be tired or she's going to, you know... It's a lose-lose situation.

Selena: Yeah. You can't wait for the perfect.

Ryan: If you can initiate for the right reasons in the right way, I think it's going to be liberating for you, for your wife, for your marriage. It's going to enliven your sex life. We'll talk about that here. So long intro. I'm Ryan. This is Selena. We're the Fredericks. We do the Fierce Marriage Podcast. Thank you for joining us. We pray that it's helpful and edifying to you. If you want to join arms with us, walk arms with us, become one of the Fierce-

Selena: I lock arms with you.

Ryan: You're the original Fierce Fellowship member. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. We would really enjoy that. We would love that. We'd love to meet you there.

So here's the thesis. I already said it, but I'm gonna say it again. It is right and good for husbands to be the primary initiators of sex in marriage. It's right and

good for husbands to be the primary initiators of sex in marriage. So I'll talk about why that's good, but first let's maybe get some of these elephants in the room-

Selena: Yeah, people are hearing a lot of other things right now in their heads.

Ryan: Yeah. What do we mean by this? Well, first let's talk about why husbands maybe don't feel like they can initiate. Here's the first one is they don't know how. They don't know how. They don't know how to ask or initiate. They don't know how to bring it up because they don't know how to communicate their own needs, their desires to their wives in a mature and godly way.

Selena: Second, they feel a lot of shame, like they're asking for something that is wrong or bad. That's both husband and wife, I think, to blame for that kind of culture if you've conditioned that in your marriage.

Ryan: Sure. They feel like it's wrong or bad because they have a history. They can feel like it's wrong or bad because, yeah, they've created this culture, like, "Oh, you're asking me to do the deed and the deed is a big pain in the neck all the time. Therefore you're asking a lot from me."

Which leads into the next one, which is number three is husbands can feel like they're being selfish because I want it and she doesn't. Or maybe I want it and she doesn't want it right now in the exact same way in this exact moment, therefore I'm selfish to bring it up.

The fourth one is they feel like they're asking too much of their wives. Now, we'll talk about this. There's caveats here, so please don't... Stick with the episode. If you've listened this far, just listen to the res, okay? There are times when it would be asking too much of your wife. And husband, you need to open your eyes and discern when those times are before you.

Selena: That's nicely put. [Ryan laughs]

Ryan: You need to be discerning.

Selena: I'm gonna let you say those things. [both laughs]

Ryan: Be discerning because you need to be able to read the room.

Selena: God's given you such a great brain to just use it. Come on.

Ryan: Well, listen, if you've just got home from a trip, you've got kids and everybody's tired and bedraggled and everything's a mess and life is chaotic.

Selena: Don't give your wife the look of like, "Hey, let's head upstairs. [laughs] Let's head to the bedroom."

Ryan: There's a thousand reasons why you can look at your wife and say, "You know what? The best way I can love my wife is by not initiating right now because it..."

Selena: And wife take note. Okay? Just take note. Because there's sometimes where you've... Yeah.

Ryan: But one of the reasons men don't ever ask or ever initiate is because they feel like they're asking too much.

Selena: That's always. Yeah.

Ryan: Always. Because for whatever reason they feel that way. Another reason they don't wanna initiate is the past experience or relational trauma has tainted their approach and distorted their view of intimacy. So it goes back to the second one, you feel like you're asking for something wrong, or the fact that you want it is inherently bad and not... This is not spontaneous.

Selena: And that's not true.

Ryan: That's another reason they don't ask because they feel like they have to be spontaneous. Like, if I don't just like glance at you and all of a sudden you're tackling me, then I've somehow snuffed the flame. I've somehow killed the passion.

Selena: Not true.

Ryan: I can say, okay, we've been married 20 years, the spontaneous side of it with the kids, it's not very often. That never hardly ever happens.

Selena: Sometimes I feel like it is spontaneous because you're like, "Everybody's in a good place. Let's go." [both laughs]. It's not a necessity. Not necessarily like passion.

Ryan: It's not like we, you know... I don't know. What are you envisioning when you're supposed to be spontaneous? Like, oh, we're on the couch watching a movie and all of a sudden just like start... like just touching you just right, giving you, you know... we're in the right cologne, whatever. I dunno what. And all of a sudden, we're in the throes of intimacy.

- Selena:** Not when you got kids upstairs about to wake up.
- Ryan:** So husbands won't initiate because they feel like it has to be some Hollywood version of Hollywood Garden.
- Selena:** Sure the distorted view.
- Ryan:** So just get rid of all that. Then I wanna ask the question is, do wives contribute maybe to this? Now, this isn't to throw wives under the bus.
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** But you know, wives are part of this situation, obviously.
- Selena:** Well, sometimes unknowingly too. Right? As wives, we too have our insecurities, our past traumas or you know, the shame and things that we're dealing with, desires and whatnot. So yeah, I think we all contribute to this lack or the inability to initiate.
- Ryan:** If you've created a culture in your marriage, the two of you, husband and wife, where the wife is the keeper of the treasure, and if the treasure keeper is not satisfied, if you've not satisfied the gods [Selena laughs], don't expect them to rain down on your plants.
- Selena:** You need to rephrase that.
- Ryan:** No. But that's the attitude. It's like you keep the treasure. I always want the treasure. So if I want some of the treasure, I gotta keep you happy.
- Selena:** You gotta be nice. Yeah.
- Ryan:** Is that a healthy way to approach it?
- Selena:** Is that initiation?
- Ryan:** Hmm. No. Or you've created the culture where it's common or it's become commonplace that the wife has enough times, has blown off the desires or the needs of the husband has expressed because ah, you're just, no. Yeah.
- Selena:** Dismissed it.
- Ryan:** You know, he's dropping hints and she's not picking it up or she's ignoring.
- Selena:** Or she's intentionally not picking up.

Ryan: Or she, quote, has a headache.

Selena: Every day.

Ryan: Every day. Who's the-

Selena: It's the Dude Dad, isn't it?

Ryan: It's the dude dad, yeah. They have a thing where he... it's kind of he dresses [both laughs]... It's comedy. All right. So he dresses up as his wife and talks like his wife.

Selena: Yeah. Mimics her.

Ryan: And he mimics or she mimics him.

Selena: It's just very gratuitous and funny.

Ryan: And her whole thing is like, "I have a headache."

Selena: He's like, "So you wanna..." and she's like, "I have a headache." [Laughs].

Ryan: Clearly they have a really healthy marriage and they laugh together. And that's funny because they put it on Instagram for everyone to see, which is... I couldn't do it.

Selena: No.

Ryan: We do it this way. Anyway. Or maybe she devalues intimacy or invalidates his need, or she expresses that it's a huge pain or inconvenience, whatever. If you create this culture, it'll lead to this... Like sex is kind of always taboo. It's always the elephant in the room. No one's really talking about it.

Selena: Yeah. Or you know, how you're trying maybe-

Ryan: There's not clarity around it. There's not clear expectations and boundaries. There's not clear understanding of what it is meant to accomplish, which is what the next part is all about is we need to set the record straight. And we encourage you married couples to take this in. Because what is the reality of sex? Because if you have a misconstrued reality of what sex is, what it accomplishes in a marriage, that will affect how you approach it, that will affect even how you receive this podcast where I say the husband should initiate.

Because if you're right now thinking that sex is all about physical satisfaction and at sometimes it's about having a baby, then you're missing it. You're missing it. And I hope you've made it this far without just turning it off. Because sex is not about the physical. It's not even primarily physical. Sex is covenant renewal. And what I mean by that is when you get married, you have the sign of your covenant, which is your ring, your wedding ring. I took mine off. [Selena gasps] I was gonna show it off.

Selena: I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

Ryan: Just chill.

Selena: Just relax. Okay, buddy?

Ryan: That's the sign of your covenant. But then there's the seal of the covenant, the sign of the seal. What's the seal? Well, it's the consummation of the covenant, which is the two becoming one flesh through the act of sex. Namely sexual intercourse. Like, you don't just have it once. We have the sign and we've sealed it, now we're married. Like, no, there's covenant renewal. So every time you are entering into sex together, that's the weirdest way I could have possibly put that-

Selena: Anytime you're having sex-

Ryan: ...you decide to engage in sex together, you're not just physical beings doing physical things. You are physical and spiritual beings doing physical and spiritual things.

Selena: That involve your emotions as well.

Ryan: Yeah. Namely covenantal renewal. And what this does is you have this understanding of it is it contextualizes sex and it dispels the lie that sex, namely in this context is just a guy trying to get his jollies from his wife.

Selena: Right. Yeah. If a wife views sex in that same term in that context, then, of course, she's not gonna be ready to jump in bed with him when it's just a one-sided, feels like a one-sided activity here, even though she is kind of the end... The wife is the end-all for this activity. Like, you can't go somewhere else-

Ryan: Well, the husband is the end all for the wife.

Selena: Right. You don't go somewhere else. Are you gonna do the sandwich theory?
[Ryan laughs]

- Ryan:** I can talk about it in a minute. I wanna get through these other ones and I'm gonna talk about what... Like no one wants to be objectified. Now, this is gonna ruffle some feathers here. No one wants to be objectified, but in marriage, the wife is the object of the husband's affection, and the husband is the object of the wife's affection. It can be no other way.
- Selena:** That's how God designed it.
- Ryan:** Now, it's possible to do that and to say that without objectifying one another. I'll define what that means in a minute. So reality about sex one, it's not just about the physical. It's covenant renewal. Two, sex is good and beautiful for married people to have. And it's good and beautiful for married people to have good sex. Amen.
- Selena:** Amen.
- Ryan:** Amen.
- Selena:** Married sex is good sex.
- Ryan:** Underlying that is that God made it and He called it good. God made it specifically exclusively for marriage.
- Selena:** You say underline that. I'm just saying this is the piece. This is the foundation. This is why sex is good. It's because God called it good. It's because God made it for marriage.
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** Amen.
- Ryan:** And God made sex desirable. It's not like we're touching elbows and we're having babies by touching elbows. [both laughs] It's so much more.
- Selena:** He made it so much better. Yes.
- Ryan:** Right?
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** God made it desirable and enjoyable. Okay. So sex is not just physical. It's good. And then finally, the reality about sex is that it's not wrong to want sex and it's not wrong to go to one's wife or husband for it. Now, these are like

sitting in a Bible classroom or sitting in a marriage conference, no one would say, wait, yes, it is wrong. No one would say that. But the problem is our behavior ends up acting as if you've asked for something that I shouldn't give to you.

Selena: Yeah, those unspoken sort of beliefs. I mean, these are things that we've had to work through. I mean, call it a blame on purity culture or whatever you want but it's still... There are themes that we have to understand. Yes, purity is abstaining from sex for marriage, but the abstaining, not having sex is not more holy than having sex in your marriage. Right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Both are equally good, equally pure, equally created by God for a purpose, for His purpose, for His glory, for multiplication and fruitfulness. So in our minds, sometimes we elevate things that we're not meant to be elevated. We disorder things. We're really good at that in our sinful brokenness.

Ryan: Purity culture gets a bad rap because of the how far people went off that end. But to me it's akin to like telling people who don't have driver's licenses to not drive. Like don't drive until you have a driver's license. Doesn't mean never drive once you have one. It just means like once you have one, drive to your heart's content.

Selena: You'll understand the purpose and the weight of it.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: It's good to want to drive.

Ryan: Yes. And driving is good. It's awesome.

Selena: When you have your license. [laughs]

Ryan: Drive fast. So it's not wrong for a husband to want sex from his wife. It's not wrong for a wife to want it from her husband. In fact, it's holy and it's good. This is what you're getting at before... it's not wrong. I'll use this analogy. A sandwich. I've said this before, but like, if I want a sandwich, I could ask you for a sandwich. I could go make myself a sandwich. Let's say I maybe-

Selena: Or you could go buy a sandwich. [laughs]

Ryan: Right. And all those things would be morally good. It's good to make good food. Well, I can't do that with this desire. If I have a desire for you, sex drive, sexual desire, I can't go and satisfy that desire-

Selena: Anywhere else.

Ryan: Anyone else or anywhere else. I mean, you can-

Selena: But it's sinful.

Ryan: But it's not morally good.

Selena: It's sinful.

Ryan: It's sinful. That's why I get around this object piece. Because if you think... and all the grammar nerds will have their day in the sun right now. But it will always be Ryan, I want Selena subject verb object. You are the only good object for me to place my-

Selena: The only right object.

Ryan: ...try to get on. Now, you could swap out the verb, right? So like, I desire you, I desire to be close to you, I want you in whatever way. But you're always gonna be at the end of that sentence. And I'm always gonna be at the end of your sentence. I'm always gonna be the only now where you get into the objectification categories when you no longer see as a person but now it's a thing, right?

So now if I see you as the object of my desire, and I don't really care for you as a person, which is categorically ontologically different. You have emotions, you have belief, you have consciousness, you have all these things that make you a person that are wonderful.

Selena: Soul.

Ryan: The soul, yes. [both Laughs] I'm doing a sidebar. I'm reading on biblical anthropology right now and it's like, what is the substance of a soul? What is the substance of a human? And it's really like heady stuff. So yes, you nailed it. [both laughs] You don't need a course.

Selena: You're taking all those pieces... It's good.

Ryan: But the point is, is like it will always be you.

Selena: If you treat me like an object, then what do you expect from that sort of treatment? A person will not respond well to being treated like an object. When a person is treated like a person, like a human being with a soul, with love and care and sacrificial love, then clearly the response will be different. My desire for you will be different.

Ryan: And the whole point I wanna make here is that that is-

Selena: Good.

Ryan: It is good for you to be at the end of each other's sentences. But oftentimes we treat that as bad. Like, I'm surprised. Like why would you want this for me?

Selena: Right. Right. Why would you come to me for this?

Ryan: Alright. So let's go a little bit further. I want to talk about some pitfalls. I mean, might need to break this into two episodes because we're getting up to 25-minute territory here. There's some pitfalls to avoid. So as we talk about these things and why men should initiate, maybe I'll punt that part to the next episode. But I wanna get these pitfalls out of the way and then we'll go to that part.

Number one pitfall. Initiating does not mean being demanding.

Selena: And I think that's what people can hear. When you hear initiate, it's like, whoa, whoa, let's not just, you know, initiate it. There's more to that word. I'm learning.

Ryan: Well, think of it like this. Any analogy you use, I feel like is gonna be... what's the word? It's gonna be crude in a sense and inadequate. But if I have this game that I really wanna play and I put it on the table and I say I'm initiating, what do you say we play this game together? That's all initiating is. It's like, "I think we should play this game together because it means we can have fun together and I wanna have fun with you and I love you. So I'm gonna put this out there.

And you can say, "Oh sweetheart, I really appreciate that you initiated that. Let's do it." Or, "I appreciated you initiated that, but I'm super tired. Can we maybe play the game tomorrow? Or can we play it after I sleep two hours tonight and just wake up in the middle of the night?" [both laughs] Again, the analogies fall short. But initiating doesn't mean that you're being demanding. Demanding is "We're gonna play this game right now or I'm gonna throw a fit. And you better play it with me or I'm gonna hold you emotionally hostage and I'm gonna be frustrated. I'm gonna pout and I'm gonna be angry.

- Selena:** Manipulative.
- Ryan:** And you're now having to respond to my whims and fa... and I'm holding you hostage.
- Selena:** Tantrums. Yes.
- Ryan:** Tantrums. That is not covenantal marriage and that is not what love looks like. So here's what I said here. Every emotion to initiate is emotion to have dialogue. It means that I'm now putting this on the table for us. So a husband who is being loving will always have his wife's needs in view. I mean, if you're literally asleep... I'll keep the analogy going.
- Selena:** Go.
- Ryan:** I'm not talking about in bed. I'm talking about if you're clearly tired, the kids are cranky and you're making dinner, I'm not gonna be like, "Hey," and you're like stirring something on the stove. I'm like, "Hey, I got this game." [laughs] That husband needs to read the room. Now is not the time.
- Selena:** Learn to read the room.
- Ryan:** ...to play the game or to propose playing the game.
- Selena:** And don't feel rejected if your wife hints at you to say, "Hey, hun, let's read the room a little bit."
- Ryan:** So often is you get a young husband who doesn't have that discernment yet-
- Selena:** Stumbling into it, yeah, a little bit.
- Ryan:** And he'll say, "Hey, I know we just played this game a few hours ago, but I wanna play the game again. And his wife kind of, you know, thinks, you must be kidding. Like, I just played the game. I don't wanna play that game right now. I have to do this other stuff. Well, that can sometimes turn into the types of behavior we outlined up above. Or back when we started the episode, is that maybe you start creating a culture of not feeling free to initiate and the wife being used to rejecting in some way. So this is why you have to keep the growing going as they say.
- Selena:** And the resiliency I think too, right?
- Ryan:** So keep the wife's-

Selena: Needs?

Ryan: ...needs in view. Any other approach is on loving. Ideally the husband can read the situation before initiating and instead initiate another type of intimacy building. So I keep using the example if you're tired or whatever. Well, I can still initiate connection with you. And a loving husband will initiate a connection that is gonna be mutually edifying. So I'm gonna go down that path instead of just looking for the one-

Selena: Mutually good. That's mutually edifying, not manipulating.

Ryan: The final pitfall here. And there are more, but the last one I wanna touch on here, is initiating doesn't mean that anything goes. So it doesn't give the husband carte blanche to do whatever he wants. That's not what we're saying. I hope that you didn't get that from this.

Only that the husband is the captain of this ship, so to speak. You're gonna steer it toward a harbor where we can go play the game. [laughs] But you're not gonna go steer it into the harbor and run at a ground. There are things within bounds, meaning that everything that within the marriage bed needs to be done in purity, in a spirit of love and a spirit of edification and caring for one another.

Selena: I trust you not to run this into the ground. I trust you not to break our ship. I trust you not to ruin the game.

Ryan: Okay, so we've gone over time here. So what I'm gonna do is we're gonna punt to next week, I'm sorry, but we're gonna have to do this. We're gonna talk about why men are built to be leaders in the home and why that should also apply to your sex life, your intimate life. So if we've kept you this far, I'm happy, I'm thrilled. Join us for next week and we'll cover the rest.

If you don't know who Jesus is, we want you to know Him. To find out who He is, we recommend two things. Talk to a friend who you know to be a Christian. If you have one and they're a Christian, you ideally would know that they're a Christian, you go talk to them. Say, "Hey, I wanna read the Bible with you. Who's Jesus? What does he mean? What does His life mean for my life?" Hopefully, they'll do that with you.

Secondly, find a church where you can hear from God's word. By God's word I mean the Bible. We believe it is inert and given by God so that we might know Him, so that it's His revelation telling us how to be saved. You need to be

taught that stuff. So go to a church where they teach that stuff. If you can't find either of those things, go to this website: thenewsisgood.com.

Let's pray. Father God, I thank You for the gift of intimacy in marriage. I thank You that You have made it exactly what You meant to make it. I pray You'd help us step into that as couples sitting under Your lordship, sitting under Your design for marriage and covenant. I pray that You would help us open our eyes to the beauty and the wonder of what it is that's before us, for our enjoyment, for Your glory, and for our good. We love You in the name of Your son Jesus. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Thank you for joining us. We'd love it if you would partner with us through the Fierce Fellowship. Just go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. That said, we'll see you next week for the conclusion of this episode.

So this episode of Fierce Marriage 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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