

WAYS TO WARM UP A COLD MARRIAGE

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[00:00:00]

Ryan: What are you to do when you're a husband or a wife and your marriage has grown cold? How do you begin to rekindle the warmth? Is it something that you can do here now? Is there conversation you need to have? In some cases, do you need to get away?

Selena: Yeah. Well, and what do you mean by growing cold? I mean, you're not talking about a breach of trust. We're talking about kind of like your day-to-day life has kind of caused you to drift apart. Parenting young children, whatever it is, it's just kind of crept up and you've drifted apart.

Ryan: Right.

Selena: We have somebody who wrote in it sounds like one of them really wants to connect, wants to feel desired, is trying his best to do what he thinks is the right, you know, the path forward. But it's not being reciprocated, it doesn't sound like it's really even being accepted, and there's just kind of a clash of expectations. So how do you-

Ryan: Well, wife is saying what we really need to do is go on a vacation, and he's saying, well, that's not in the cards right now because financially they can't swing it. So what is this couple to do? What are we to do?

Selena: Are you at a dead end if you can't go on a vacation and reconnect?

Ryan: And maybe what are some of the things that are under the surface there?

Selena: Right. Well, we're gonna explore that on the other side.

[00:01:07] <music>

Ryan: Speaking of vacations, Selena, I think we might be due for one. We are recording this. So you're gonna watch this on Tuesday. Let me tell you. When you're watching it on Tuesday or listening, we recorded it last night. [both laughs]

Selena: It's been a few weeks, okay? Because we've had-

Ryan: My word.

Selena: ...just craziness happening. All good stuff. It just feels like spring has sprung and so has everything in our schedules and life. And here we are.

Ryan: And a childcare plan (a) with my parents, they went on a vacation.

Selena: Well, and then they got sick.

Ryan: That too. I'm being, I'm being obnoxious.

Selena: Just kidding.

Ryan: Yeah. So that's changed things and then... Life is so full and good. Yours is probably full too. So that's why we're thankful that you give us your time, you lend us your ears to hear. What we pray would be godly wisdom that would help encourage you and help you grow in your marriage.

So, if you don't know who you are, I'm Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the Fredericks. We do Fierce Marriage on Tuesdays and ideally Fierce Parenting somewhere on Thursdays or thereafter. Thereabouts in the week. All for the glory of God, by His grace, so that it might help and edify you building fierce families for the glory of Christ.

All right, so we are gonna dive into this question because... it's a long question. He actually said he doesn't expect us to read it verbatim, but I'm going to because I want to-

Selena: There's a lot of things said.

Ryan: I think he's uncovering a lot in this question.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So we got a lot of jump-off points in there.

Selena: Well, a lot of couples, I think, can identify or kind of grab onto what's happening.

Ryan: Okay, here we go. It says, "Hello. I have listened to probably one-half of your podcasts and we have a box set of your books. I really like the content and have enjoyed reading and working through it." Thank you. "I feel like so much of it is speaking directly to me. We have been married for 13 years and we have two children. I own a business and work full-time. She works two to three days a week, part-time. Like most other families, we are busy." What did we just say? [laughs] Amen, brother. "However, I'm having a hard time getting my

wife to engage in prioritizing our marriage with me. I really love her and desire her, but I feel alone in that. I feel like to her, I am a source of income and errand runner, co-parent, a personal chef, landscaper, garbage man, etc. I do not feel like I'm desired outside of making ends meet, helping her raise children, and keeping up the house.

I'm hesitant and reluctant about bringing up my feelings on it because it usually results in a fight with her, pointing out all of my flaws and how I need to fix them. According to her, it is my job/role to correct the issues in our marriage and that will lead to increased emotional intimacy between us, which will then lead to her willingness to meet my needs. While I do agree I should work on myself, I feel like my needs are being held over my head based on my ability to provide her what she wants. Needless to say, physical intimacy is nearly non-existent, and when it does happen, it's duty sex or feels like a burden on her.

Our past issues are largely communication-based and work related, which I have gotten better with and continue to work on. We both need time away from our kids and busy schedules to connect, and we know this. However, getting a babysitter and going to dinner or a night away isn't good enough. It's expectations of me booking elaborate vacations that we just can't financially afford. How do I get quality time with her to relax without spending five to \$10,000 on a trip? We wanna go on a vacation with our kids this summer too, which again will cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 based on ideas she has sent me.

This also, this is also stressful because, of course, I want to go on an awesome trip, but it isn't wise financially. I don't feel like I can be loved, respected, and desired unless I'm spending tons of money. I feel an immense amount of pressure providing a lifestyle to her that isn't realistic for her income level. But I also feel if I don't provide it, my needs will never be met. When I try to communicate this, she shuts down and I end up being the one apologizing for my faults. I just don't know what to do and can't do it for the rest of my life financially or mentally."

Selena: There's a lot there. There's a lot there. And I think a lot of couples can identify, at least with certain points of this. I think all of us have maybe felt like him or we've been her at one point, right? Like we've acted in such a way that has not, you know, been honorable to one another that has, you know, held each other's faults over one another. You know, the bible speaks clearly about these things but...

It definitely feels like there's, she's consuming something and that is creating some... I don't know-

Ryan: Discontentment.

Selena: Discontentment on desires.

Ryan: It's really, really hard to say. And this is the big caveat with all these questions, is that we don't hear even both sides. I mean, it'd be one thing to sit in a room with these folks, a husband and wife, and see the body language toward each other, to hear their words with the tones and inflections, to hear her side of the story.

And so what I think we can do here is hopefully help this couple, which by the way, we didn't get their name, but thank you for writing in. We are hoping to help you if this is you. But also just be kind of generally to... yeah, like you're saying, this trend that is not uncommon.

Selena: No.

Ryan: So maybe take some comfort from that, that here we are, Ryan and Selena, we have had seasons in our marriage where we have grown cold. Now, I'm happy to say that those are fewer and further and further and further in between. I can't remember the last time we had a... well, maybe it wasn't that too long ago.

Selena: It wasn't cold. I just think we missed each other. Like we weren't having enough time. So it was like, "I still love you, but I feel like we're far away from each other."

Ryan: Right. And we've gotten better at communicating proactively when we start to feel that coldness setting in, like, Hey, I feel like this is getting this way. I don't like this.

Selena: Feeling the drift, feeling disconnection.

Ryan: So I think that comes with time. It comes with maturity. Frankly, I think it comes with age. I feel like age has helped a lot with me. Like, I don't know-

Selena: I know. Finally.

Ryan: Just grow a few wisdom hairs and apparently it works. So just take that general comfort. So the only thing we can do is really speak as if we were in your shoes. Like if I were in this husband's shoes, this is how I would approach this. I would start with this understanding. And this is just the observation we can make is clearly they're missing one another, both missing in terms of they've lost their connection, but they're speaking past one another.

Selena: Right. Right. It doesn't really feel like they're hitting... They're not really addressing the problem.

Ryan: Well, it sounds like he's trying to, but-

Selena: Well, he's trying to, but she's not-

Ryan: The solutions she's offering-

Selena: They're not the right solutions for the problem, I don't think.

Ryan: Sure. Sure. And so the wife, for whatever reason does not feel attached. She feels disconnected and her needs aren't being met, which we have to just assume that, because that, in my experience, talking to obviously being married to you, not just talking to you, but being married to you, [laughs] and working alongside other couples is in general, wives don't grow cold for no reason. And if it's not an outside influence, like you're mentioning that you were alluding to earlier, it's something in the marriage has begun to grow cold.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Also, the husband feels disconnected. Clearly, he's articulated this right. And his needs aren't being met. And he's expressed that to her. They do want to get time together, but the kind and the quantity of that time-

Selena: The type of, yeah.

Ryan: ...isn't available to them. That would actually, in their view, help them. So I think that's an accurate characterization of the problem. In this case, it doesn't seem that there's any affairs or anything like that or infidelity that needs to be addressed. He said it's basically around time and time management and his job. Which again reinforces what I just said, that they've grown cold for reasons.

So here's the big thing that I really want to say, and then we're gonna get to the heart of it. The big thing is this, is if you can't connect at home, you can't find a way to connect at home, vacationing is a false hope. It's a false hope. You're gonna go, you're gonna have a good experience, you're gonna have what Selena calls maybe a mountaintop experience or a camp high-

Selena: Summer camp high

Ryan: ...and you will cruise. But if you don't figure out a way to fix the home rhythms, the priorities, whatever issues got you to this place, the vacation is a false hope. I think a getting away, but-

Selena: Well, what are you doing in that time? I mean, there's a whole argument of being a mom and getting the "me" time. Well, me getting my nails done in a facial or whatever is not gonna fill my soul as 30 minutes in the word undistracted would.

Ryan: Sure.

Selena: What exactly are you doing with that time? I think, you know, the weekend to remember with family life, they do those things and couples' getaway for the weekend, but there's intentional activities and things that they're doing. So like going on vacation and just spending money and doing activities, is that really the legitimate path forward?

Ryan: Right. And what you're getting at is that something needs to happen to the bedrock of a marriage for it to be able to take on water again and allow growth. So what the vacation is proposing is that you're going to the store, you're buying a really nice potted plant, you're putting that plant on the bedrock, you're taking it outta the pot, putting it down and giving it some water and you're expecting that thing to take root.

Now it's gonna look great, it might even smell good, it might even give you some fruit, but it's a matter of time until that thing dies. What you need to do is change the bedrock or that soil... You need to cultivate that soil. You need to begin working the soil so that it will begin to sustain life as opposed to just importing life and hoping that life sticks.

Selena: Well, yeah, because you can't live in vacation mode clearly.

Ryan: No.

Selena: That's just not-

Ryan: No.

Selena: Where would you want to? I mean, I don't know.

Ryan: There's so much beauty to be had. And so the encouragement here is, okay, we see you, we've been you in many ways. Now think about this in terms of cultivating your soil.

- Selena:** So what are the things that you need to cultivate?
- Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah. I'll talk to the husband here. This will take some leadership on your part because it sounds like that she's grown cold. You're gonna need to persevere even in the middle of the coldness. You're gonna need to grow some thicker skin, I would say for a season. And that's okay. It doesn't mean you are blocking her out, but don't let her words carry the same weight.
- Selena:** Yeah. Just be resilient and know that it's only a matter of time, I think until, you know, she starts warming up. I'll talk to the wives in a minute.
- Ryan:** So as a husband, put your headship hat on and never take it off [both laughs] and lead and love your wife by pressing through to this: what we're about to say here. The first step is to acknowledge your mutual goals. You want the same things. You want connection, you want memories, you want-
- Selena:** You want vibrant, life-filled marriage and you want oneness and unity.
- Ryan:** And I would even venture to say that you both want financial wisdom as well.
- Selena:** I mean, I guess.
- Ryan:** I'm hoping that your wife is irrational in this regard in that you'll be able to lay it out and you'll want the same things in terms of your finances too. So you need to acknowledge that you have mutual goals. Lead her in that conversation. And then make a conscious choice to together to say, yes, this soil has grown barren. It's like the desert. You know, when the desert dries out the salt flats and it's all cracked. Right? That's what I'm picturing in my head. It's grown barren. It's not been watered. We need to start watering this thing. And you need to get on the same page and say, yes, this is the case and this is how we're gonna fix it. We're gonna begin cultivating.
- Selena:** What do you mean by cultivating? I'm thinking of examples. So you're saying that the man needs to lead this, you need to have these goals and all those things. I mean, it sounds nice, but honestly, the wife needs to cultivate some... I don't care. I'm just saying it straight. But there's gotta be some contentment. There's gotta be some gratefulness. There's gotta be some, Hey, Honey, I recognize that like, this may not be in the, in the works to go on this huge vacation, but it's a desire of mine to do this with you. Like, could we save up-
- Ryan:** I just think you're talking as if they are 10 steps down the line.
- Selena:** Sure. And I think she's-

- Ryan:** But she's not even having those conversations.
- Selena:** So cultivating your soil for the wife, I think means developing some gratefulness and contentment.
- Ryan:** Yes. Yeah.
- Selena:** And gratefulness for her husband and contentment in her situation and some faith and trust that maybe God is allowing this time so that they can grow together.
- Ryan:** But it's like asking, you know, if she's not even seeing, you know, him as a necessarily even a-
- Selena:** Again, there's, there's things that are being consumed there.
- Ryan:** The husband, she's seeing him as something else because she's not to the affections that-
- Selena:** Yeah, there's no connection there. So it's just a roommate kind of status and like-
- Ryan:** So I think you're assuming that they are further along. That doesn't have to take forever to get to that point. But they need to have some conversations first. And that's where I think I'm gonna-
- Selena:** And what's the end goal? Like, you know-
- Ryan:** Well, the end goal is you want to have a close marriage. You want to have a thriving marriage. You want-
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** You asked about cultivation. Here's what I'm gonna recommend is that you communicate your desires to each other, but you do it in a slightly different way. We've written books on communication. We talk about this. If you can just talk through things, I mean this, it's like a silver bullet. Because you can actually keep talking, keep expressing, sharing meaning through the noise, get to the signal.

So we're big proponents of talking. Now, how you go about communicating, I think can get a little bit tricky when you have a situation where the coldness is here. So what I'm gonna encourage this couple to do, and you other couples

who are maybe in this situation, or if you find yourself in this situation, is to go about this by asking questions and not adding.

Selena: Not proposing answers. Like, I am. [laughs]

Ryan: Solely by asking questions. So in other words, you're communicating what you need and want, but only in response to being asked. But that takes some ground rules.

Selena: So an example.

Ryan: If I say to Selena, we need to talk through this stuff now, here's what we're gonna do. I'm gonna ask you questions about you. But then you then have to play ball and ask questions about me. So we're gonna sit down and here's the ground rules. We're not gonna respond or react. We're just gonna ask questions. So I'm gonna say, how have I loved you well? You say, you know what? You've been a horrible husband. I'm not gonna respond to that. I'm not gonna get defensive. I'm not gonna start-

Selena: You may feel some things, but you're not gonna respond. You're gonna listen, right?

Ryan: I'm just gonna listen.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: And so ground rule is don't respond or react.

Selena: But you can have some internal responses. [laughs]

Ryan: Of course, you're gonna have some internal response, but that's not for now to express. We'll get to express that another time. The second ground rule is be honest. Do your best to answer the questions clearly without getting them derailed or muddled. So take time to articulate your answers.

Another ground rule is, both, you have to acknowledge the intent is to hear and to be heard. But you can only be heard by being asked. So you're acknowledging the intent. I need to understand you better. I'm not trying to express my frustration. I'm not trying to express all the ways that you failed me. I'm trying to hear what you... You see how the orientation's completely different?

Selena: Yeah.

- Ryan:** I'm no longer oriented on Ryan. I'm oriented on Selena. The final ground rule, if you will, it's more of a statement where you look at each other and say, I want what's best for you and what's best for us. That's why I'm here. I want what's best. It's amazing to me how many couples don't even get that far. They don't acknowledge that we actually want the same thing. We want a marriage that's healthy and strong.
- Selena:** Right. And somehow we're fighting about which way to get there.
- Ryan:** Right, and completely disconnected in the process. So here are the questions. And you're both gonna ask these of each other. And by the way, this is based on an episode we did a few weeks back. It's called I think something to the effect of why check-ins are so powerful.
- Selena:** Oh yeah.
- Ryan:** But here's the questions you're gonna ask. How can I love you well? What makes you feel most loved? What is one way I've loved you well in the past week? What is one way I've not loved you well in the past week? What is one thing you'd like me to do daily with the sole intention of loving you? And what is one thing I can do weekly with the sole intention of loving you-
- Selena:** Well, and I think it's important, like you said, when you're talking to each other, you're not throwing this in each other's faces. Like tone matters. Humility matters. I had some other thoughts, but I can't think of them right now. So you want me to ask you?
- Ryan:** Well, I mean, if you think that would be helpful. I don't assume that it would be helpful.
- Selena:** Well, I'm just thinking of this couple, right? And what if she says, well, what makes me feel most loved is when we go on these on a big vacation?
- Ryan:** So be it. Let's say she says that, but you move into the next phase.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** So you're asking questions and now you have to reiterate back.
- Selena:** So what I hear you saying is-
- Ryan:** So what I hear you saying is that I can love you well by X. So over the next few weeks, I will y to that end. And then we'll get into the vacation piece here in a

minute. But I would feel loved by you in the next week is if you booked tickets to Hawaii. [laughs]

Selena: It feels manipulative, I'm sorry. It doesn't feel like you're loving each other well.

Ryan: That's a bit of caricature. But say that's where it goes. Here's what I would do as a husband to respond, is I would say, I hear what you're saying and I wanna love you well. And what I hear you telling me is that in order for you to feel that I need to buy tickets. So what I'm gonna do over the next week is I'm gonna try to show you why that's not a good idea for us, so that you can understand that I still love you, even though I can't go and buy tickets for you.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Or, and we will get into this in a minute, okay, over the next week, I'm gonna be looking for ways to cut our budget. Because if that's what it takes, Sweetheart, I'll forego groceries. [both laughs] For me. We can all agree if that's the thing, then this wife has some things to work on.

Selena: There's just indicators of deeper issues.

Ryan: But the point is not to fix and it's not to enable... I don't wanna say like, you have to just bend the knee to whatever the person says this. Again, you have the goal that you want what's best for each other. You want what's best for your marriage. And so if it takes something like this to break the ice... But here's the thing is that I got to answer the questions too. And if I said I would feel loved if we could have a conversation every night, or I would feel loved if you would acknowledge that I've provided for you, I would feel loved if you expressed a few things that you're thankful for.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You see what I'm saying?

Selena: Yeah. Again, it just still feels like I can't shake the manipulation here of I would feel loved if, or, you know, this is one way that... and so I'm just... I get it. I get it.

Ryan: Here's the thing. If a couple's gonna... if they're bent on manipulating one another, what questions are gonna fix this?

Selena: Sure. I guess it's all about the approach and what are you trying to accomplish, like you said.

- Ryan:** What are the ground rules? The first ground rule is that you... well, the fourth one is that you are saying you want what's best for you and best for us.
- Selena:** Well, and what qualifies as best. And so-
- Ryan:** Oh, listen to some of other podcasts. [laughs] We talk a lot about Christ being best. Christ is best.
- Selena:** Christ is best. Christ is Lord.
- Ryan:** Okay. So you're setting the ground rules. You're asking these questions, you're then reiterating, you're responding. I wanna make this clear. It's not that you're gonna now do every... you're not gonna meet their list of demands. It's that you're responding in a way. So what I hear you saying is X. The best way I can respond to that is by Y.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And if that means yes, I'm gonna write you a love note. I'm gonna do the things that you're asking me to feel loved. But if you're asking for things I can't do, then you need to work out why you can't do it and then commit to finding out a way forward through that. It's not just, well, can't do it anymore, so I guess we're done.
- Selena:** The covenant does not allow you to just- [laughs]
- Ryan:** And husband, wife-
- Selena:** Shake your hands off.
- Ryan:** ...whoever's not getting their thing, you don't get to dictate the terms of this covenant. You have to work it out together. It's not covenantal to dictate.
- Selena:** There are no dictators in covenants [laughs].
- Ryan:** No.
- Selena:** There are heads and helpers, but there's no-
- Ryan:** There's no out for this. You know what, if you wanna live in a happy marriage, you should better come to the table and work this out together, both of you. Then after that, here's the challenge. Hopefully it's been a good conversation.

You're gonna hug, you're gonna kiss and you're gonna end this thing in prayer.
[both laughs]

Selena: Just that resistant hug.

Ryan: The Oscar. [both laughs]

Selena: No, it's terrible.

Ryan: It's the resistance. You're gonna hug, you're gonna kiss, you're gonna end it in prayer. And what are you praying for? Dear Lord, I just pray that you'd fix my wife. [both laughs] Not that. You're praying for the Lord to keep your heart soft and to show you ways to honor Him by loving each other.

Selena: Yeah, that's it.

Ryan: And you're gonna humble yourself before God and say, we cannot do this unless your grace helps us. And then the prescription going out the door is do it again next week and the week after, and the week after. And keep going until that thing warms up and you start communicating and you start connecting, you start loving each other again.

Now I want to address the latter half of this, the vacation piece. It appears that you're in a very tough spot because you've got kids. I dunno how old the kids are. I tend to think they're may be, you know, not young, but not outta the house obviously. 13 years married is not young, but you're not through the weeds.

I think a lot of couples, if they're gonna struggle, it's gonna be years like seven to 15, that's gonna be the real tough time because you've got young kids at home. You're off the launch pad, so to speak, but you're not yet into orbit. So it's the heavy burn. If that thing's gonna crash and come down in flames, it's right then. [laughs] So you need to recognize that.

And so what I would say to this husband is invite her into that adventure and say, "Sweetheart, we started this thing 13 years ago. We have two kids together. We're building a life together. We are in the middle of it right now. I want you to know that I see you in that, I see us, I see what God is doing and I'm excited for where we're headed.

Selena: That's a great assurance, I think. I don't know, as a wife, I think I would feel seen, I would feel heard. Like, okay, you see where I'm at. Like, I don't need to fight for this all the time. I think there's a big... you're very disarming in just the acknowledgment.

Ryan: Yeah. So that's the prayer is that it would be disarming to that. And then you can start addressing the vacation thing. You see how that is all the way at the end of this. And here's what I had to say, brother to brother, whatever, couple to couple the vacation you go on next year is the vacation you saved for today.

So going on vacation by financing it with credit cards, with debt, with deferred home maintenance, things like that. It's not wise. We're treating a luxury, which by the way, it is a luxury, a massive luxury at that to take time off to go to a foreign place or to go to a nice whatever, nice hotel, whatever, massive luxury to forego that and treat it, or excuse me, to treat that as if it's a necessity-

Selena: And you're entitled to.

Ryan: ...it's unwise it. It's unwise. Especially if you can't afford it. So come up with a plan to get there by next summer. Again, the vacation you go for, you go on next year is the one you save for today. So I would say, well, from what it sounds like is the pie in the sky kind of dream vacation is \$10,000. I think for anybody that's gonna be an expensive vacation.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So you gotta see that for what it is. So what I would encourage you to do to help her see that is to come up with a plan to help get there by next summer. So this summer coming up with 10k is gonna be tough unless you've got a bunch of money socked away. But then it's usually saved up for like an emergency fund or long-term investment type stuff. So it's not necessarily good to take it outta there unless you really can.

But you say, okay, we're gonna start saving for it today. And so 75 weeks from now, that's a year and a half because we're recording this in April, so summer vacation would be about a YA year and a half from now, we're gonna try to have 10k in the bank for vacation.

This means, wife, because you have expressed this desire and we cannot do it today, we're gonna now commit to saving that. Now where I need your help with is we have to save \$133 a week for the next 75 weeks to get where you wanna be.

Now if she wants to participate in that, then she's gonna need to see like that's \$500 a month that now you're gonna have to come up with outside of your normal budget. And so you can say, Okay, how can we do this together? This helps you plan, but also shows her what she's asking you to provide and giving

her very clear daily indication of what that cost is. Because what is it? That's roughly about 20 bucks a day.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: So it's an extra hour a day if you make 20 bucks an hour, working an hour a day solely so you can go on vacation in a year and a half. And then if you can't save the money, the vacation is not wise. Like, if you look at it and say, There's no way we can part with 500 bucks. You don't have that kind of disposable income, well then you have your answer. Either find a cheaper vacation or save less over a longer period time.

Selena: I don't think it's fair to say this is the only way that we can connect. I just don't think it's fair. I'm sorry. It's just manipulative to say-

Ryan: I agree. I agree.

Selena: ...I need to have a vacation with you to be able to reconnect. It's just-

Ryan: Right.

Selena: So what would be the godly response? What does scripture say about any of this? I mean, Proverbs chocked full of just like, you know, what foolish fools do with money versus what wisdom calls us to do with our finances. We just did a couple episodes back talking about finances and how we can steward them and honor the Lord in what He's given us. I do think that there's just this culture that's been cultivated around getting away like from your life and to have some mountaintop experience. And I don't know, I'm just... God's been really-

Ryan: And that's where you finally like reach your happy-

Selena: I guess I just wanna encourage you, like, pray, and ask God that He would help you cultivate gratefulness and contentment in your own heart and in your own life. Because if you're always chasing something out there, you're always gonna miss what's happening right here. There's beauty, there's goodness, there's joy. All the things that you could ever hope for are literally, you can find them in Christ. You can find them in the Lord. So you're husbands and wives... like, I don't buy it. I don't buy the fact that, well, we need to go on a vacation to be able to connect.

Ryan: Yes. I 100% agree with you, which is why I started with the notion that I did, which is if you can't connect at home, a vacation is a false hope.

- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Because if you can't connect at home, you're not finding contentment in Christ, you're not learning to love one another through the daily grind.
- Selena:** And we've all been there, which I guess is a clear pathway to me as to why we would ask these each other these questions. Like, Hey, we're obviously dealing with some discontent, we are not connecting, we are not intimate. There's a lot of things that are just not... you feel like I am just basically using you for money, for experience to fix the house, do whatever, and-
- Ryan:** Personal chef, apparently. [laughs]
- Selena:** You know, as a wife, like, if you felt like that, I would wanna hear that. That would be hard to hear. And I'd be like, wow, okay. How can I, first of all, make you not feel like that? How can we connect and go on a vacation? I mean, come on. Let's put the spotlight where some of the problems are. So maybe I'm cranky tonight. I don't know [laughs], but I just... I can't get off of this feeling like...
- Ryan:** No, I-
- Selena:** I don't wanna explain away the ungratefulness. You have a lot to be grateful for. You have a home, you have a husband, you have two children that I'm assuming are healthy. Start there with the gratefulness list.
- Ryan:** Amen.
- Selena:** Anyways, I don't think I'm gonna say anything that's productive, but I would just encourage someone to... Don't say the answer can only be A, B, or C. Be open to where the Lord is leading you in terms of unity and oneness and how you can get there. It may look different, but trust that God is taking you on the path that He knows is best for your heart.
- Ryan:** There it is.
- Selena:** He's always good. He's a good God.
- Ryan:** I think so often we get in the weeds with these things. I mean a lot of these conversations we have are us working things out in real time. And that's, to me, the very center of this is realizing that even in this God is sovereign and even in this, He's drawing you unto Him. And even in this, if you will accept His rebuke husband, wife, both people in this side, it will be a means by which He sharpens you, He grows you, He brings you closer to Him.

Selena: And closer to each other.

Ryan: And if you do that together, it's inevitable that you will reconnect. If one of you is bearing the burden and the other is not showing up, they're not praying, they're not prayerful, they're not humble before God, they're not humble before their spouse then you will bear that burden alone and it will make you better. And Christ will still be Christ in that, and He will use it for your good and His glory. That's the promise. And all of it, this other stuff is just peripheral stuff. But I think you're spot on that you don't wanna just explain it away. I think you need to cultivate your soil. Don't expect a potted plant to grow on top of parched soil.

Selena: Right. Be willing to ask the questions, be willing to show up humbly. And listen.

Ryan: Do the work. Do the work.

Selena: Exercise self-control and not just respond.

Ryan: The bottom line is they're feeling disconnected and there needs to be something to-

Selena: We've all been there, yes.

Ryan: ...begin building that connection again. Listen, everything we've said, we haven't actually brought scripture into this passage. We've mentioned it a few times, themes in scripture. We haven't brought it in directly, but everything that we're saying is based on the personal work of Jesus Christ and who He is as revealed to us in the Word of God. Namely the Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament.

So if you don't have a saving knowledge of Jesus, who He is, what He's done for you, start there. Don't go and try to fix your marriage without Christ in the picture. Not only that, don't go and try to fix your marriage without Christ governing everything. He's not a spare tire in your trunk. He is the one-

Selena: He's the engine.

Ryan: He's the very engine. He's the vehicle. He's the fuel,. He's everything. And so to that end, we recommend that you learn who Jesus is by talking to a friend who's a Christian, if you have one, say, let's read the Bible together. I recommend starting in the Book of John. Go to a church.

Maybe that friend has a church they go to that preaches outta the Bible. Go with them. He sent another preaching of a good shepherd, a pastor who preaches out of God's word. So you can learn it and have it fed to you. If you have a hard time finding either of those things. We have a website that has a church finder. It's thenewsisgood.com. We encourage you to check that out. It'll help you to that end.

Let's pray. Father God, we love You. I pray for this couple. I pray that they would find clarity, they would find contentment in You, and they would find agreement and connection and their marriage would begin to take steps. They would begin to take steps in their marriage toward flourishing. And that may those steps be based on wisdom, may those steps be spirit-led, and may they be rooted in obedience to you in the honoring of their covenant that You've given them.

I pray that they would find their way through this, that this husband who is clearly discouraged, would find courage, he would find boldness, he would find the ability to lead, give him some resilient, thick skin as he leads through maybe a rough patch to get to the other side. Lord, I pray that you would be with him every step of the way and that you would bless their marriage. In Jesus name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: If you're not aware, this podcast, our ministry is supported largely by our patrons known as The Fierce Fellowship. If you wanna find out what that is, go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. We would love to meet you in there. With that said, this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is in—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

Ryan: My announcer voice.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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