

## WHAT IF WE'RE UNEQUALLY YOKED?

<https://fiercemarriage.com/what-if-were-unequally-yoked>

[00:00:00]

**Selena:** You're pretty yoked, Ryan Frederick [Ryan laughs]. But are you equally yoked? [laughs]

**Ryan:** My right arm is much stronger than my left arm. I'll say that.

**Selena:** No, I'm saying, are you equally yoked with me?

**Ryan:** Yes, of course. I like to think so. Yes.

**Selena:** Strength-wise though, I definitely be too-

**Ryan:** You caught me off guard with that because man, when your wife says you're strong, it makes you feel good.

**Selena:** Yeah. You just can't think of anything else past that. [laughs]

**Ryan:** I can't think of anything else. Yeah. Anyway, we're talking about the idea of being yoked-

**Selena:** Not in the sense of being strong physically.

**Ryan:** Feel like an ox. So Yeah. [laughs] The Bible we hear, we read in, in 2 Corinthians. Paul says, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. And oftentimes that is applied to marriage. So today we want to talk about that. What does it mean to be unequally yoked? What if you're currently unequally yoked and you're married so that that ship has sailed and that you are already in a covenantal relationship together? What if you were headed into marriage and you get the feeling that you might not be equally yoked?

**Selena:** Get the feeling.

**Ryan:** What should you do? Or if you have a friend in your life or a family member who is obviously unequally yoked, how do you counsel them? What do you-

**Selena:** Or if you're playing around with fire and you're dating somebody or looking to date somebody who is an unbeliever, just stop right there, friend. Listen to the episode.

**Ryan:** Let's listen to the episode. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:23] <music>

**Ryan:** All right, first things first. This episode is sponsored by Boaz Coffee. It's not actually sponsored by them.

**Selena:** I was like, this is new news to me.

**Ryan:** No. They didn't ask for that. I'm wearing the hat. If you're watching, Boaz is a company that... they're part of our events. Like I said, Ben did not ask me to do this. It occurred to me this morning as I sipped a delicious cup of their Guatemalan roast-

**Selena:** Boaz coffee.

**Ryan:** Anyway, it's a Christian organization. Ben's awesome. The name's awesome. I just wanted to put a plug in. We don't do that ever. We're not getting paid for this. So if you're looking for good coffee, check out boazcoffee.com. That was the first thing apparently. I don't know if I'll ever do that again. [Selena laughs] I just wanted to bless Ben. Anyway.

So we're Ryan and Selena Frederick. We do the Fierce Marriage Podcast. Thank you for joining us. If you're new here, we never do advertising. [laughs]

**Selena:** We don't do ever ad. Never do ads.

**Ryan:** We don't never, ever do advertising. Actually, what we'd rather do is... And actually one listener wrote in... had an energy drink not too long ago. Is that-

**Selena:** Can you tell?

**Ryan:** One listener wrote in and said, When you say that you do the biblical model, which is Patreon, which is we ask the beneficiaries of the Fierce Marriage Podcast to participate in it. What I mean to say is that's what we see laid out in scripture. That doesn't mean that you can't advertise and you're somehow sinning if you're doing an advertisement. Somebody asked me about that.

To that end, if you want to partner with us, that is a big part of how we keep the podcast going. Go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). You can join the Fierce Fellowship. It is a growing community. We need to get in there it and do like a Zoom call, I think.

**Selena:** Do a Zoom call, do an update, do the small things, all things.

- Ryan:** Yes, maybe we should get that. You can get that scheduled. Go ahead and get that. Just the plan. Make the party.
- Selena:** I'm just party-
- Ryan:** Just make it.
- Selena:** ...party planning committee over here to you, huh?
- Ryan:** Yeah. It'd be good to reconnect with our Fierce Fellows. So Selena-
- Selena:** Ryan.
- Ryan:** Do you believe that we've we've always been equally yoked? Like I feel like we are.
- Selena:** Yes. I mean, we are in the sense, and I think you would agree, right, that we were both believers when we got married. We were both living underneath the Lordship of Christ, and we wanted Him to reign in our lives individually. Although I wasn't sure, I think where you stood, but then I heard you speak up in English class and you started spotting off all these philosophical, smart things as you still do in your old age. Just kidding. [laughs]
- Ryan:** In my old. Thank you for that.
- Selena:** No, but I... once, I was like, for sure, you know, you're a believer and I could tell, and I could see the fruit of it, I was like, I'm gonna get that.
- Ryan:** That's when the hunt began. [Selena laughs] The cougar was let loose.
- Selena:** Whatever. Six months. Ryan, do you think we've always been equally yoked?
- Ryan:** Yes. Yes. Same thing. To be honest, I had to yoke up a little bit. [laughs]
- Selena:** That's what I'm saying. Guys, that's all I'm saying.
- Ryan:** I saw this beautiful, amazing young lady, and I thought, She's too amazing for me, but not for long. So I went and got saved and came back. [both laughs]
- Selena:** This is just defeating all of our... You did not.
- Ryan:** And then we started dating.

- Selena:** You got saved before even knowing me. I mean, you knew me. Did you know me before that camp experience?
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Oh, okay. Well, it's not like... yeah. God got a hold of your heart not because of me.
- Ryan:** Yeah. God was sovereign.
- Selena:** It was on His own accord, which is how it should be.
- Ryan:** Well, it's amazing. Yeah, it's amazing when you're surrounded by peers that prioritize the things of God, and you see a young lady that you think is pretty awesome and she's prioritizing the things of God, you start actually thinking, wow, there's something to this. I should probably not live as if God is not who He says He is.
- Selena:** Amen. Amen to that.
- Ryan:** And God saw fit to use that to save my soul.
- Selena:** Thank you, Lord.
- Ryan:** That and a disciplinary action by camp.
- Selena:** After being defiant little man.
- Ryan:** Well, yeah. We had our fun.
- Selena:** We had our fun.
- Ryan:** We have more fun now.
- Selena:** Yes, Patrons give to us so you can-
- Ryan:** Oh my goodness.
- Selena:** Oh my goodness.
- Ryan:** Anyway, anyway. So we had a question from a... I believe it's a woman.
- Selena:** Do you want me to read it?

- Ryan:** Yeah, go ahead and read this.
- Selena:** "Hello, I'm married to a wonderful, godly man, and we are equally yoked, but I have a loved one who has a potential boyfriend that may be quote-unquote "unequal". This is causing much strife in our family. My question is, how quote-unquote equal should equally yoked be? Is a new believer and a longtime believer unequal? If someone is showing great potential and interest in the faith but hasn't fully committed themselves to Christ yet, could that be or become equal? Should you wait around for this person to get saved, quote-unquote, before dating them? When dating should you be looking for a man that is stronger in the faith so that you know they will lead you and your future family or is that considered unequal? Please dive into the nitty and gritty of being unequally yoked. Thank you"
- Ryan:** This question strikes me as funny. And not because it's a bad question, but just the way she worded... my question is how, quote "equal" should equally yoked be?" I'm like, well, how equal is one-to-one for it to be equal? It has to be one.
- Selena:** Right, it has to be one.
- Ryan:** It's like that quote from *Animal Farm*. "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." [laughs]
- Selena:** Yes. Yes. Well, is she trying to establish a different standard or like find the gray? It's trying to be a justification for a desire and for, I think, peace for her family. Right? They may really like this person. It sounds like, you know, they like the potential boyfriend.
- Ryan:** Well, it's causing problems though. It says it, it's causing much strife.
- Selena:** Right. And they're not even officially dating. It's a potential boyfriend. So that's got some red, red flags going on. This is the time that's supposed to be blissful and amazing. Problem, care-free.
- Ryan:** Well, it might be bliss between the love birds, not the in-laws. Let's read 2 Corinthians. That's where this passage comes from. This is 2 Corinthians 6:14. It says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord,

and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

**Selena:** I asked you this when we were first reading this. I was asking, this is not addressing marriage specifically.

**Ryan:** It's addressing-

**Selena:** Relationship.

**Ryan:** Marriage is not in there, but it's dealing with the same mechanics of any sort of covenantal relationship that you might have with something. So marriage is usually the main application of this. And for good reason, because he's talking about joining in any sort of partnership that will require something of you.

**Selena:** Yeah. It's a weighty relationship. The most weighted, I would argue in all of humanity.

**Ryan:** So context here is interesting because leading up to this point, Paul had been kind of making a case for his ministry. But you can go all the way back. I mean, this is such a beautiful book. I love 2 Corinthians. It's amazing. But he's basically making a case for why the ministry that they're doing is legitimate. And it goes right into do not be unequally yoked. So what a pivot.

You and I were talking about this and it's almost as if he's setting up a contrast. He wants them to buy into the ministry. And when we say biblical model, this is kinda what we're talking about. And he's saying that I'm coming to you as an honest minister of the gospel, partner with me. And by way of contrast, here's why you can do this, but don't be partnered with people who are unequally yoked.

Meaning that if you are offering your hand of partnership to somebody, don't, unless they are checking these boxes of being co-travelers in the gospel, so to speak. And by way of very clear language is showing how that contrast is... what partnership has righteousness with the lawlessness and what fellowship has light with dark. Think about that.

Like if you go into a light room, is there any darkness in there? No. No. I mean it what accord has Christ with Belial or what portion does a believer share with unbeliever? He's making it actually very, very black and white.

And so when we go back to this question, this is why I kind of chuckled a little bit, how equally yoked should they be? Or how much darkness should there be in a room full of light? And that's just a straight answer.

**Selena:** Right. Clearly, no. None. There should be no darkness.

**Ryan:** None. None darkness.

**Selena:** None darkness in the light. And then I guess the phrasing here is just if someone's showing great potential and interest in the faith, but hasn't fully committed themselves to Christ yet, could that be or become equal? There's a couple of different layers of questions in this question, and I think it's good to address it.

Some of my own inklings of showing potential and interest, that's great. But are you waiting for them to commit before you step into that relationship? I mean, to me that's like... if they're an unbeliever, they're in the friend zone forever and ever.

**Ryan:** Well, the problem is, is when you get emotionally involved with someone, you really want it to be what you want it to be.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Now, here's my encouragement for whoever's in this type of relationship. Put more stock, put more trust in what God says than in what you feel.

**Selena:** Absolutely. The emotion part should... and maybe this is too harsh, it really shouldn't be the driving factor. And if it is, it's sinful. You're not living in obedience to Christ. And it will lead you down a path that you will not have wanted to go. I mean, we've talked to many, many, many, many people who have-

**Ryan:** The stares of divorce courts are littered with the papers of these sorts of relationships being dashed upon them because of what this brings about.

**Selena:** Yes. Yes.

**Ryan:** And so it is very black and white, unlike other things. Actually there's a quote I got from... I forget. I think it was Got Questions. Actually, it was a commentary. It said this. "To be in a situation that binds you to the decisions and the actions of people who have values and purposes incompatible Jesus's values and purposes." That's what being yoked with someone means, or being unequally yoked with somebody.

**Selena:** What did you compare it to? Like the oxen and like a goat or something, right?

**Ryan:** Yeah. So, of course, the biblical analogy it... it's worth mentioning is... so if you're having to plow a field, you would yoke your oxen up. And you want two of the same girth.

**Selena:** Well, the same strength.

**Ryan:** You want to have the same girth units. [laughs]. And you want them to have the same strength, the same height. Because if you have one that's shorter or one that's weaker. I heard one author describe it like, it's as if you aren't able to do the task. Because what's gonna happen is not just that one ox is gonna have to carry all of it. It's that the short one, the weak one will cause the work to be... you'll go into circles. You can't go in a straight line.

So you can't plow a field like that. You just can't do it. And you can try to, you can pretend to, but it's only a matter of time until you lose strength, lose heart of both. That's where the analogy is. So when you are getting ready to marry somebody and you're married to... you yourself are a believer and you're hopeful that they will be a believer, well, when you're dating, that's the time when, if there's ever going to be a best version of somebody, that's it.

**Selena:** Right. I mean, just to comment on the word dating, we would not even define it as dating. We are talking to our daughters about courtship. Finding someone to marry is not like trying on a bunch of shoes. There's already gonna be-

**Ryan:** Brings up a good point.

**Selena:** There's gonna already be, you know, yes, we either know this young man, he loves the Lord more than he loves you, there's fruit in his life, there's clear fruit in his life, we know his parents or... you know, there's obviously gotta be some substance there before we say yes. And your courtship is not dating. The end game... And I think the difference between courtship and dating is that dating seems like it's a fun activity to just do with someone. Courtship is we have marriage as our objective. We're not just kind of fooling around and having fun doing whatever.

**Ryan:** I'll add to this. As somebody looking for a courtship relationship versus somebody looking for a dating relationship, it's completely-

**Selena:** A Christian.



**Ryan:** It's a completely different pair of eyes. Because you're either looking for somebody to try out. And so where do you go for that sort of thing? And what do you look at? You look at, are they the right height, weight, do they have...?

**Selena:** Right. The standards are already the wrong ones.

**Ryan:** As opposed to I'm looking for a man that I can or a woman that is marriage material.

**Selena:** As a man you are looking for a woman. As a woman, I'm looking for a man.

**Ryan:** Yes, thank you for that. You have to clarify these days. [laughs] That being the goal, I am no longer just... so I have a very specific criteria that... now, you can be generous in the criteria with that one exception. They need to believe in Christ. They need to be pursuing Christ wholeheartedly-

**Selena:** Living under His lordship.

**Ryan:** That's tricky. Because you can ask someone... I would encourage you not to ask this question, actually. But you can ask someone, are you Christian? And almost everyone's gonna be like, Yeah, I believe in God. But the better question I... I'll say litmus test is, do you attend a church?

**Selena:** Regularly. Do you attend a church? Because it seems like you shouldn't have to have all these precursors, but here we are. [laughs].

**Ryan:** Then this goes maybe back to another point is... that's why I think the church is the place to go and try to find a courtship relationship. So if you're in a church, that's your fishing pool, your fishing pond, so to speak. And hopefully you have some eligible bachelors and bachelorettes in that pool of people.

**Selena:** You also brought up something that, you know, being in the... if you're dating or in courtship, well, we'll just call it courtship from here on out. But if you're courting someone, you're kind of giving them the best of yourself right then and there. That's the prime time. Like, you're not showing off maybe all your weaknesses, or maybe you are and you just don't know it.

But this person asking about, you know, Hey, is it... they're showing potential, so should I wait around for them? And it's like, well... I mean, you said this. They probably... if they're trying to like, get your approval, it's possible they might be like, yeah, this Christian thing sounds pretty awesome. Yeah, I'd love to check it out. And it's not a genuine inquiry. I mean, it is to the extent that like, hey, this girl, or for a guy saying, Hey, this girl I like is into Christianity. I

should go check that out. It's like mountain biking together or something. You know, it's not held with the same gravitas, I think. It should be held with more.

**Ryan:** Which to go back around to what I just said is if you're starting this courtship conversation with... So when you ask someone, where do you attend church? You're really asking them, tell me about your faith. Is it alive or is it dead? Because if you don't attend a church that... by the way, it's not optional for Christians to be a part of the body of believers. That's not like-

**Selena:** When I feel like it.

**Ryan:** Nature is my church. No, no. That's not actually a thing.

**Selena:** No.

**Ryan:** The body of Christ is a group of people and it's... and yeah, we have organizations that are like nonprofit entities that have organized around a certain tax status. But that's not the point either. The point is it's an organized body of believers, and you're being shepherded under the authority of a pastor, under the preaching and teaching of the word, under church discipline if you need it.

There's so much that goes into what that community is. So when someone says, yeah, I believe in God, but I don't believe in church or I don't go to church, that's a huge litmus test.

**Selena:** It's another red flag.

**Ryan:** And maybe there's other litmus tests, but maybe that's a good one that I heard about this week.

**Selena:** It's a good place to start.

**Ryan:** So yeah, to go back to this question, should you wait around for this person to quote, get saved for dating them, the answer is no. They're ineligible for courtship if what you're shooting for is biblical marriage.

**Selena:** Right. And then there was the last part of this question. When dating, should you look for a man that is stronger in the faith so that you know they will lead you and your future family or is that considered unequal? I mean, stronger by what standard? What do you mean? Like, do you know more of the Bible than I do? Like, do you memorize more scripture or are you... you know what I mean?

I think that if you're both seeking-

**Ryan:** I think that's what she probably means.

**Selena:** ...the Lord wholeheartedly, then... you don't wanna be the weak link either. I don't know. It's like, do you look for a man that's stronger in the faith? I mean-

**Ryan:** I think ideally, yeah, of course, you would want someone who's got strong, thriving faith.

**Selena:** That's not a bad thing.

**Ryan:** The thing is, is when it comes to this bar that Paul is setting, it's not that. The bar is-

**Selena:** Right, it's different.

**Ryan:** ...are they submitted under the Lordship of Christ? Are they a brother or sister in Christ? And for that, you can have childlike faith. You don't have to have all the answers to be a believer. But you do need to have your-

**Selena:** Be submitted.

**Ryan:** You do need to bend the knee to the King. I think that's what Paul is getting at. And so in that regard,-

**Selena:** And I agree. I just wanted to answer it in full.

**Ryan:** Because think about all the factors. Like if you grew up in a church tradition that has very rich theological underpinnings and... I like to think that our daughters are growing up in that. That's the goal anyway.

So if they grow up and they meet somebody who didn't grow up in that, but he loves the Lord and he doesn't know all the history, he doesn't know all the doctrine, he doesn't know all the stuff that we're hoping to give them, I'm not gonna tell them to wait until he learns everything.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** I'm gonna look at this young man in the eyes and say, do you love the Lord more than you love my daughter? Are you a committed, true follower of Christ? Okay. Let's start discipleship now. You're dating my daughter, I'm gonna disciple you.

**Selena:** Courting?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Semantics.

**Ryan:** You're courting my daughter. [Selena laughs]. You failed the first test. [both laughs] You're out.

**Selena:** You're done. Nice try, buddy.

**Ryan:** Anyway. So I hope that answers the question. It's actually not very gray.

**Selena:** It's not. There's not nitty gritty.

**Ryan:** So here's where it gets gray. It gets gray when you want it to work and you know in your heart of hearts that it's not what it needs to be for it to work but you compromise because there's real people here and there's hard conversations to be had.

**Selena:** It's a lack of faith for you too.

**Ryan:** You like their personality. And that's the faith part. Do you believe that God's way is best? And if you do believe that, then it's time to back out a little bit-

**Selena:** Are you willing to let go?

**Ryan:** ...and have a hard conversation?

**Selena:** Yeah, for sure.

**Ryan:** So I think we answered that.

**Selena:** I agree. I agree.

**Ryan:** One more question here is, what if you are currently unequally yoked? So you're married and you find yourself... maybe your husband's or your wife's faith isn't what you thought it was or you made this mistake.

**Selena:** I think we've addressed this I think on the parenting side, because we've had wives write in and say, Hey, my husband's not leaving the family spiritually. He's not reading the Bible with us or going to church. Am I living in sin? If I sort of step into that role of spiritual kind of leader of the home. To which we would say no, like, lead your children to Christ as much as possible. Pray for

your husband as a wife, pray for your spouse who does not know the Lord, that the Lord would soften their hearts, that God would get ahold of their hearts. And I think this is kind of answering the question. What would you say? If you're in an unequally yoked marriage-

**Ryan:** We have a woman at our church. She is in her 60s and she is married to a nonbeliever. They've been married 40 some years or 30.

**Selena:** And she's very like, vocal about it, like, Hey, he's coming. Could you pray for him? Or, you know, people know and they pray. And he knows, I think, that people know.

**Ryan:** And she will tell you she will never divorce her husband but she says that she, in making the decision to marry him, she disobeyed wise counsel and she disobeyed God. And she says, "Our marriage has been incredibly hard because of that. So she's lived unequally yoked. She's plowed the field in a circle.

**Selena:** And she would say, don't do it.

**Ryan:** And she would say, it was the biggest mistake of my life. In the same breath, she would say, but God has been so faithful to sustain me, to bring me closer to Him, to help me love my husband. Well. God has been faithful in that but it's not the ideal.

So if you're in the non-ideal, what Selena said, which was, you know, just do the duties of a Christian person while also loving as a Christian spouse should love and respecting as a Christian spouse.

**Selena:** And praying for your spouse to know the Lord.

**Ryan:** And don't hide your faith. Of course, if it's a point of contention where it starts a fight every time you bring it up, well, just don't bring it up. Like be gracious in that and live your life as a Christian should. And pray and trust and hope that the Lord will soften their hearts and will give you opportunities to experience, you know, things together that will bring him or her closer to God. So there's no silver bullet. It's just live according to God's word and do so with faith and pray for a miracle. Because anytime someone gets saved, that's a miracle.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** It's not a small thing.

**Selena:** And speaking of that, we want you to be saved. If you're listening to this and you're trying to get some marriage advice, well, we like to end these episodes with a presentation of what it means to be a Christian. And simply here's what it is. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, the life. He lived the perfect life, He died a sinner's death on our behalf, bearing our sins on His shoulders, bearing the wrath of God in that punishment, that unjust punishment.

And because of His perfection, He did not stay dead. He was resurrected from the dead. And anyone who places their faith in Him has that same promise of resurrection from the spiritual dead, meaning here and now. That's the miracle piece. I was dead, now I am alive, I was blind, now I see because a miracle has been worked in my heart. And I'm walking out that salvation until I die, a physical death in which the promises that I will then be... I'll be raised again at some point when Christ comes and reigns in the last days.

So there's a lot there. And some of that sounds like maybe loaded language, but the hope that we have in Christ, placing our faith in Him, that's what it means to be a Christian. That we are saved by Him, not by our own works, but by His perfect work and His death and His life.

So if you're not a Christian, you recommend you find a friend who is a Christian, you talk to them about what does it mean? Help me read the Bible with them. Find a church that preaches outta the Bible. If you don't have a friend nearby or a church that you know of, we have a website for you. It's [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com). You can go find a church there. You can learn a little bit more about the Christian faith there.

Let's pray. Father God, we love You. Thank You for another day. Thank You for the couples that are listening to this. I pray that You would bless their marriage, that they would have a flourishing marriage that would just radiate outward with the goodness that You give to them. That Your goodness would radiate outward and that would be a ministry into their community, into their children's lives, into their friends' lives, into their family members' lives. Lord, it's all by Your grace. We love You.

I pray for couples who are unequally yoked to. Help the Christian spouse to have strength and to have wisdom and to have faith that you would work. And I pray they would be encouraged by this. You are so good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, thank You for joining us. As a quick mention one last time, if you wanna join the Fierce Fellowship, go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). We'd love that. I think that's it. Is that everything? I didn't talk about our geese. I wanted to talk about our geese. I'll talk about our geese next week because it's a highlight of my life. [Selena chuckles]

**Selena:** So that's it for the Fierce Marriage-

**Ryan:** Alright. Okay, fine. This episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can.

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

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**PODCAST NOTES**

- **Referenced scripture**
  - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
  
- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://thenewsisgood.com)

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