

4 MASSIVE LESSONS LEARNED ON COMMUNICATION

<https://fiercemarriage.com/4-massive-lessons-learned-on-communication>

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Selena: Our intro has changed a little bit. You said we used to say, We don't know everything, but we do know we'll share with you something, something, something. I don't know. I wasn't really paying attention. No, I'm kidding. But-

Ryan: Yeah, on the audio. Before we got the YouTube thing.

Selena: Before we got the YouTube thing.

Ryan: It used to say, Yeah, what you just said, yada, yada, yada. I forget. It's been like three years.

Selena: I know. But we want to share it openly and honestly. And that's always been kind of the foundation of this podcast is that we're going to share what we've learned for good or for worse, all of it, in the hopes that it will point you to Christ, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: In our brokenness, the only way we win or have moments of strength. It's not even a win. Is it a win? I don't know.

Ryan: Of course there's some win.

Selena: It's a win. But it's because of Christ. All I do is win. Anyways, we just celebrated our 21-year anniversary. And so we thought... well, our good friend suggested that we talk about 21,000 things we've learned. [both laughs] I gotcha.

Ryan: You caught me off guard.

Selena: I gotcha.

Ryan: No, there's lessons learned and personal lessons learned. Obviously, you hear from us every week, kind of these principles of Christian marriage, but really getting into the personal, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So it'll be a good time. We're just for the next few episodes going through big areas of marriage and lessons learned regarding those big areas. And today

we're talking about lessons learned in terms of our communication. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:33] <music>

Ryan: Greetings and welcome. If you don't know who we are, welcome to the channel. Welcome to the podcast thing. My name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife, Selena. 21 years, we have been the Fredericks. What a joy it's been to be your husband. What a life we've gotten to live together.

Selena: God had been so good.

Ryan: I wouldn't trade it for the world. We're glad to be here with you. The Lord has asked us as far as we can discern to just show up and talk about marriage and point people to Christ. So we are here in obedience to that, that call that we feel the Lord has given us. Again, thank you for joining us.

If you want to be a part of that mission, we have a way to do that. It's called the Fierce Fellowship. It's basically just a Patreon community. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. Did I miss anything?

Selena: I don't think so. I don't think so. But in the name of, I don't know, transparency, we just want to share a few things that we've learned. And yes, we learn when we write these rundowns, we learn all we use, you know, our weekly fodder of what has happened in our marriage to share. But we wanted to kind of distill it down into these five areas of communication, conflict, setting priorities, intimacy, and finances. Those will be the topics over the next few weeks of what the Fredericks have learned personally in their own marriage. So we'll be sharing some of the tips and trades and tricks. I'm kidding. It's not that.

Ryan: It's not gonna be strictly anecdotal. Meaning that we're not gonna somehow use ourselves as the example.

Selena: Yes, it's not a memoir.

Ryan: ...but rather use those examples to point to Christ and to encourage you in some way. We also are gonna have governing principles. So the governing principle in terms of our, I'll say our marriage at this moment, a round of these topics is what we're gonna present and then the lessons learned that maybe got us to that place.

So for communication, here's the governing principle. Communication is the lifeblood of your marriage. By communication, marriages flourish, and also by

communication or lack thereof, marriages crumble. That's the governing principle here. And if you can't communicate well, you're in for a hard time.

Selena: Yeah, you're gonna have unresolved conflict. You're gonna be unable to work through whatever it is that you need to work through or reconnect. If you're feeling disconnected, you can't... if you're not communicating, there's nothing happening.

Ryan: If you think of your marriage like a body, you've got various parts of the body. Okay, I could go into what the various parts. I won't. The point is, is that if you cut off the blood supply to any part of your body, it's gonna die. And of course, the body itself is gonna die. Communication is the blood supply.

Selena: It takes the messages like blood takes all the-

Ryan: Yes. And so that's the governing principle.

Selena: Good job.

Ryan: So what are the things that we've learned over 21 years? Because believe it or not, we were pretty bad at communicating for a long time. And didn't even realize it.

Selena: Yeah, I think my pride blinded me. We were young when we met, 16, 17. What do you have to communicate at that point in your life, right? You're like, "Hey, I'm going to basketball practice." It wasn't these... I know. I'm not saying that. We had some pretty heavy conversations as young people because you were like, "I'm not gonna date anyone I wouldn't consider marrying." And I was like, "Yes, I dig that." We wrote each other letters. There was a clear unity around Christ, around Christianity, around living our lives, sold out, wrung out. And then we got married.

I feel like our communication was still pretty good. Again, life was pretty simple. But as you start living together, we realized how much we didn't know about how we spoke to each other and then how terrible we were at it and how we needed to improve. But a lot of that kind of fell under our lack of understanding of some bigger biblical principles, such as headship and submission.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: I would say.

- Ryan:** So I would characterize communication. So we've written books on this. If you're unaware, it's called... We've had two books. It's *How They Speak* is the name of the bundle. *It's How a Husband Speaks, How a Wife Speaks*.
- Selena:** Which for the record, it was the hardest books we've ever written.
- Ryan:** But most clarifying, frankly. I characterize communication in the husband's book as signals and noise. So when we were younger, there was not a lot of noise. If you think about a radio, like you're dialing in the radio, you kind of get precise with the dial. And the more precise you get, the more signal you receive and the less noise you hear. But that's a function of many things. It's a function of the receiver. It's a function of the strength of the signal being sent. It's a function of the radio itself, how well it's running.
- Selena:** And what's around the radio.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** Like children.
- Ryan:** I would say when we were younger and married, we didn't have a lot of noise. Over time, the noise got louder and the signal got quieter. And we didn't understand the circuitry.
- Selena:** Right. And that seems like a natural progression for a lot of young marriages.
- Ryan:** Right. Because the honeymoon period comes and goes. If you have one. Not every marriage has one. Coming to find out. The honeymoon period comes and goes. You grow familiar with one another. The rhythms of life pile on the responsibilities of life. If you have kids entering, that's a new responsibility, a new dynamic. A job situations, a family situations, in-law situations, friend, church, the economies of the home, chores, all that stuff piles in. And all that can become noise and clutter to where you can't hear the signal.
- Selena:** Well, and especially if you don't understand, like I said, some of these biblical principles of headship and submission, because... I mean, we'll get into this, but it was-
- Ryan:** Sorry, I want to take this to the nth degree here. Because there's external factors. That's what we just talked about. There's also internal factors that will mess up the circuitry and make it so you can't receive or send a signal properly.
- Here's what I mean. If I have something going on in my heart and I don't realize what that thing is because I've not taken the time to pray through it, to think

about it, to see what scripture has to say, to actually let the Lord stir it out of me, then I will have zero chance of actually getting that over to you and communicating that to you. So that will cloud not only what I communicate to you, but it will also cloud how I receive what you are communicating to me, whether that's a clear or not as another.

And so there's external factors, there's internal factors. Things like sin. So if I am beholden to some sin that I've not made known, I've not confessed, that is gonna be a cluttering factor as well. That will then be a... it'll be an obstacle to interpreting my own signal and also interpreting yours. That's the governing principle here.

Communication is the lifeblood, liken it to blood or the signals and noise analogy that we've used. When you're a young couple versus, you're working through the years and trials of marriage, you have to be cognizant of this reality that the signals and noise are always at play.

In light of that, here's our first thing. You've already mentioned a few times this idea of headship being a factor even in communication. What does that mean?

Selena:

I mean, you said it earlier, you know... well, I think we talked about this before this. But you're really good at arguing, you're really good at winning arguments with like facts and my personality tends to be more of an acquiesce. Like I don't want to deal with conflict, so let's just please the people, give them what they want, make sure things are good, because I didn't know how to deal with conflict.

And you had said like you can win while also losing at the same time when you're communicating with your spouse or walking through some conflict. Again, it's all kind of underneath these big pillars of headship and submission. Like we went into marriage saying, okay, well, we think that means that like it's 50-50, but when it comes down to it, he's 51%, right? Which we're like, well, I guess, yeah, that kind of works out for like a season or something.

It just felt always unclear. It was kind of clunky in how it worked itself out in our marriage. We weren't sure how it was supposed to look. We just know what headship really looked like. It was a daily struggle, the organs are flesh. But the more clarity we got and the more understanding that we received, I mean, I would say in the last five to eight years has been so freeing and given us so much joy because we have grown in this area by God's grace. He's given us the wisdom and not, yes, in the Bible, but also through our community of relationships and the body of Christ, through supplemental books, which I would love to bring one up. But what are your thoughts on this?

Ryan: Yeah, the 50-51 thing. We may have even written an article real early on advocating for that view.

Selena: We may need to take that down.

Ryan: And it's completely against where we are today in that it's a little nonsensical because you can't do 50-51. It doesn't exist, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You can't have 101% of something. I now liken it to 100% and 100%. And it's 100% of you being the wife and 100% of me being the husband. So here's the big number one — the headline that I'm gonna put on the video. The husband is charged with leading the communication culture in the home.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: He's not solely in charge of creating the communication culture, he's in charge of leading the communication culture.

Selena: That's good, that's good.

Ryan: So it takes two, right?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: If you have to be able to communicate with me, I have to be willing to communicate with you. But at the end of the day, and this is where the headship part comes in, it's my responsibility. I'm gonna stand before God and give an account. It may not be my fault, but it's my responsibility. And that I will say, okay, theoretically, you're a horrible communicator. You fly off the handle all the time. You are quick to cut me off at the knees, quick to interrupt, manipulation.

As a husband, you should be able to recognize these things in yourself, but also in your wife. And then you can say, "Okay, I'm working on the things that are my fault, and you need to work on the things that are your fault, but I will take responsibility for this communication culture." And if I can't get it ironed out on my own, then I'm gonna escalate it to church leadership, friends and so on and so forth. So that's the big one, is that the husband is charged with leading, creating healthy communication culture in the home.

Selena: Yeah. This book just came out and we are not... I mean, I just got it and read it, *Leadership and Emotional Sabotage* by Joe Rigney. You actually smoked a pipe with him a couple of weeks back. Is that okay to say here?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Anyways.

Ryan: I'm happy to say so. He was not partaking. We were on a deck and-

Selena: There you go.

Ryan: We were talking and I had a... and it actually was a handmade cigar that one of these guys had made, so.

Selena: Okay, Joe, sorry.

Ryan: But I'm a pipe guy, personally.

Selena: I'm gonna throw you under the bus there. Okay. Anyways, there's a lot to this book. I'm just gonna read a part of it because he's talking about courage in the home and he's talking about headship. Like I said, we've grown in this. These types of resources have added clarity to the biblical principles that we've already submitted to.

So the headship of the husband is a fact, not a command. He's referencing Ephesians 5. The Bible does not teach that a husband ought to be the head of his wife and his household. It teaches that he is the head of his household, whether he wants to be or not. Male headship is a given. It may be a domineering headship. It may be an absentee headship. It may be a strong sacrificial headship, but one way or another, the husband is the head. Period.

The only question is whether he will be an unfaithful head like Adam or a faithful head like Christ. What does a faithful headship look like? First, faithful headship means that you are responsible for the whole body, all of it. It means that you must know God's purpose for your household and you must take initiative to put your house in order for the sake of God's purposes. Mature husband wakes up in the morning knowing who he is and what he's about. More than that, he knows what his household is for and seeks to set his family up for fruitfulness and success.

Ryan: It kind of might sound like you're just picking on men and I'm picking on men. I want to say, how does this affect you as a wife? So when we were writing these communication books, this switch flipped in my head, and this was two

years ago. I said, "Oh no, this is on me. Like all of this is on me." Responsibility-wise. And I came to you and said, "Just so you know, this switch has flipped in my head and so you're gonna see me leading more in this." How does that affect you as a wife?

Selena: For me, it was very liberating to say, "Okay, yes, you're the head, I am the helper. Head, tell me where to go and I will help, help, help, help. I'm right there. I'm so excited." Like, it was very like unlocking to some of the gears that I felt like we're just jamming together. And so there was a lot of, I think, freedom and joy, and yes, this makes sense.

However, I think sometimes there are moments when me and or a wife, and I've heard wifely friends tell me, "My husband tried to step up to do family worship and take ownership. And it was terrible. So I just was like, Ugh. You know, it's so easy to scoff at the first few efforts of someone trying.

And so you're trying to now lead this communication culture in our home to one that is God-honoring and having us fulfill the roles that God's given us and I'm here, ugh, now you own it, 15 years into marriage, seriously, or 18, whatever.

I mean, as a wife, you hold power. I mean, look at Eve and look who the serpent went to. Like there's an influence and a power that women have been given to either serve and submit and help their husbands.

Ryan: I think you bring to light a thing that a husband venturing into these waters needs to be aware of and he needs to maintain his frame. And that if you don't respond positively, it doesn't change that reality that I am still called to this. That's where you need to be a man. You need to gird up your loins and do the work of righteousness.

This is what Paul talks about. He says, "Stand firm, hold fast to the confession, act like a man."

Selena: Yes, literally.

Ryan: So even if you were the snide cutting me off at the knees, no, it's not like it was such a 180 that you had-

Selena: No.

Ryan: ...I went from being this like verbally abusive, passive, whatever.

Selena: No, yeah, it's like we were struggling and it was just kind of the last like, oh, okay, all the gears are in place now. Finally, like you would a bike trying to figure out the gears, just clunking along.

Ryan: You gotta be ready to... this is what we've learned. You gotta be ready to just maintain your frame and do what's right, loving, and good regardless of how it's received.

Selena: Absolutely. Right. And you said too, and I mentioned this earlier, that it's possible to win and lose an argument at the same time. Like you are really good at winning. I was really good at just being like, whatever. Acquiescing.

Somehow marriage was working by God's grace, but it got so much better when you understood and I understood... Sorry, we. I shouldn't say you. But when you just said like, "I can win. Yes, I can win an argument with facts. But if I've lost your heart in the middle of it, what good is that? What good is that? I'm just running you over."

Ryan: Yeah. And it doesn't mean you have to lie and enable dysfunction.

Selena: No, there's wisdom and discernment in how you can deal with each other.

Ryan: Yeah, because there's a lot more to communication than ideas and words. A lot more.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Okay, the number two thing that we've learned. So that was number one, that was the big one. These ones are a lot more practical, I'll say. Communication is a skill that can be learned. You've heard us talk about this if you've been part of the podcast for a while. I used to think that I'm just a quieter guy. So that's just, yeah, that's your lot in life. You married a quiet guy.

Selena: Yeah, when the window opens-

Ryan: You better be there-

Selena: You better be there.

Ryan: ...for that breeze to blow through.

Selena: I still feel that sometimes.

Ryan: No. No. So you can learn how to communicate. It's a skill. And you can learn how to untangle your own thoughts, untangle your own feelings, if I'm gonna use that word. The F word. Okay, God gave us emotions. He gave us a way to react to things. And if we don't know how to manage and untangle those, we need to learn.

Selena: Yeah. And I would argue you can learn how to not communicate out of just a flash response, like as a wife, no matter what, like whatever the feeling is or the notion or the philosophy, like you need to be anchored in the Lord. You need to be filtering through what you're gonna say, how you're gonna respond before you respond. That's building your skills, right? That's Holy Spirit fruit being produced in you, not just saying the first thing that comes to your mind, controlling your impulses, thinking about the words that come out or before they come out, before they either build up or tear down and how are they gonna take it? What's my actual motivation? Is it just for me to try to win or is it... and show you that like, I've seen this in you and I need you to work on this. Is it that or is it a real, like, I really love you and I feel like this is something that if we worked on it or you worked on it, like, ah, I feel like there's freedom here and there's good things to be had, right? So it requires consistency and effort and that's a hard thing sometimes for us. We don't want to admit that we're bad at something.

Ryan: I don't remember who told us this, but it's amazing advice. And they said three seconds is the difference between a reaction and a response. And that stuck with us. I think both of us. And just taking three seconds to respond.

Selena: So good.

Ryan: And that's a good way to show high regard to your spouse.

Selena: It is.

Ryan: We've talked about that. High regard is one of the strongest indicators for a healthy lifelong marriage that will last. So communication is a skill that can be learned.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: What's number three?

Selena: Number three. Laughter is communication. If you know anything about our relationship, you know that we like to laugh a lot. I think the last few episodes when it's been really hot in the Forge, ironically, we're a little like, bgrr. But we do like to laugh. I'd say that's probably one of the biggest pieces and has

always been one of the biggest pieces of our relationship. Even when we were 16 years old, you know, he got me this birthday card and I was like, Oh, he's going to write something so sweet and special. And it was like this birthday card about how a boy like got knocked out because of a frozen pee water balloon or something like that.

Ryan: No, it wasn't pee.

Selena: No, it was just a frozen water balloon.

Ryan: It was then that Joey realized that freezing the water balloons was not a good idea. And this kid like knocked out in the yard.

Selena: And I think he just said like, happy birthday. And it was something sweet. But I was expecting some poetic, long feelings all over the place. And it was just so much better. Like the laughter was just such a glue. It's such a glue for us.

Ryan: There's cheap laughter. And then there's, I'll say, valuable laughter.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: So cheap laughter to me is-

Selena: Sarcasm.

Ryan: Sarcasm or even just watching the crude thing and then kind of going to the basest sort of levels of entertainment or humor. But then there's laughter that truly-

Selena: Sometimes that's funny. [laughs]

Ryan: Sometimes it can be funny.

Selena: Sorry, you can edit that out.

Ryan: No, sometimes it can be funny. But then there's laughter that I think is heartening laughter. Joviality is underrated. That we can together as husband and wife, that we can be jovial warriors in our marriage, in the kingdom of God, in our parenting, that we can look at the days ahead and laugh.

Selena: And look at each other and laugh.

Ryan: And smile in the middle of the storm and be that reminder to one another, "Hey, lighten up. We know how the book ends. We know what happens. We

know the king who wrote the book and called us His own. Let's enjoy this journey that we're on, you know? I mean, that's a level of communication that... You know, thankfully, by God's grace, we've always been laughers.

Selena: 25 years. We got 25 years of inside jokes.

Ryan: Including dating, yeah.

Selena: Including dating.

Ryan: But that's been a recent shift, is laughing in the face of the storm, in the face of the beast, so to speak.

Selena: I'm learning to laugh. Because I'm usually the one that's like calling out the orders when everything's going crazy and losing my mind. And he's like, Just laugh. And I'm like, ah, I can't laugh. This is not a time to laugh. And you're like, This is exactly the time to laugh.

Ryan: You're like the potato bugs in Bugs Life. And then, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Selena: Yes. Just this nervous laughter.

Ryan: Like forced laughter. No, I mean, I'm thinking of the dishes that are piled up in the sink and you're just like, Oh, I'm just doing dishes again for the fourth time today because the kids, whatever. And I'm just like, Yeah, you know, it is rough, but come on, you can smile. Like it's good. This is a good thing to be doing.

Selena: Yeah. I like when you tell me funny things and jokes that helps me do the dishes better and faster.

Ryan: Right. It's better not to just prescribe the laughter, but just to do it.

Selena: I would say laughter has brought more unity in our marriage than the typical, you know, top three things to do to improve your marriage. I mean, for me, like, yes, of course, sex intimacy, awesome. But laughter for my heart is just... there's nothing like it. Nothing draws me closer to you-

Ryan: Than laughing during sex. [both laughs]

Selena: Than laughing during sex. It breaks down all my walls. It gets rid of any of the stink that might be floating around when you're not connecting well. We talked about that.

Ryan: It clears the air.

Selena: It clears the air. It's been more solidifying, more unifying. It's diffused intense conversations, you know, and in the midst of conflicts, you fight naked, which we'll talk about next week. But you'll just have to wait for that one.

I mean, Proverbs 17, a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. And I think marriage is such a place where spirits can be crushed and dried up.

Ryan: Yeah. One thing that's important to, I guess, maybe back up, our laughter has worked because we share our beliefs. And so I don't want to take that for granted in every instance. If you know us, you've been watching, listening, you know that this is the case. And we urge you to get on the same page, right? If your marriage is in a horrible place, now laughing is not going to get you completely out of there. So there are some big assumptions we're making that I always want to point those out. That we share the same beliefs. We serve and love and want to serve the same God. He is our God, we are His people. And that is the unifying factor in our marriage.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So everything else is in light of that, including our laughter. The final one I just want to mention quickly is that we've learned in terms of communication in our 21 years being married, is that communication and conflict go hand in hand. Meaning that this might go without saying, but we've really embraced that reality, that the quickest way through conflict is by communicating.

Selena: Good communication.

Ryan: Good communication. So when you least feel like communicating, that's the time you'd probably need to most press into it.

Selena: Right. And we've talked about kind of peacetime and wartime strategies, right? In communication books, I think we talk about that. I think the biggest thing for me has been when the water seemed calm and everything is somewhat peaceful and it's just day-to-day life, where am I practicing my skills with these tools? Like what are the tools? Like laughter is good, but like how am I learning about the ways that I communicate badly and how I can communicate better? Like how can I-

Ryan: In conflict.

Selena: Right, during conflict. So like, how do I gain the wisdom there?

Ryan: We'll talk about this next week more at length, but yes, the peacetime is when you're building up the stores, so to speak. That's the wisdom, the self-awareness, the plan, or okay, we're in peacetime. How do we stay here, for one, by healthy communication? If and when that breaks down, how do we get back here quickly and effectively?

Selena: Not if, when it breaks down. I feel like you can't... it's unavoidable.

Ryan: I mean, there's varying degrees of wartime too, right?

Selena: True.

Ryan: There's skirmishes and then there's like nuclear war. So like, how do we never get to nuclear war? And how do we make the skirmishes short?

Selena: Right, there's the degrees of difference.

Ryan: And that's when you're depleting the stores of, you know, as you need to go back. So we'll talk about that more in the next episode next week.

We like to end these with a call to the gospel. We mentioned that the underlying assumption between us is that we share the same capital T Truth. Jesus Christ says, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. He is the definite article truth. I mean, He's not a truth. He's not just one way. He made a claim and we believe Him. We take Him up on this claim. He is the only way to truth. We share that. He is the only way also to life. And so we are called as believers to tell you about that life, about that truth. And the truth is this, that Jesus Christ, the son of God died for sinners to save you.

If you have heard that, wonderful. We want you to believe it. If you've only now just really wrapped your head around it, we want to show you a path forward. The easiest path forward that we can think of is talk to a friend, ask them to open the Bible with you, find a good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church that will shepherd your soul, your eternal soul.

If you don't have either of those things readily available, we have a website, it's thenewsisgood.com. There's actually a church finder link on there that will help you find what we believe to be a good church. It's actually clicks over to Ligonier, which is a solid ministry. They've been doing it for decades. So anyway, that's the gospel, repent and believe.

All right, let's pray. Father God, thank You so much for the gift of communication, not only between each other, but You have communicated

to us. We know You because You have made yourself known. You have bent Your knee. You have given us Your revelation through creation. You've shown us Your might, Your creative power, Your sovereignty, but also through Your revealed word, that is Your son, first and foremost, but also the scriptures that teach us what it means to know You and follow You. So we thank You that you've communicated to us.

I pray that you'd help us as humans communicate more like you, with clarity, with truth, with love. And I pray for the couples who are struggling with their communication, You would show them just one way they can move forward, one step they can take down that path today, and then Lord, the next step, the next, and the next, until they get to a place of health. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Thank you so much for joining us. This episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the Can.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days, Lord willing. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Exodus 20:17

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com
 - [How a Husband Speaks](#)
 - [How a Wife Speaks](#)

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