

7 WAYS TO HAVE BETTER CONFLICT IN YOUR MARRIAGE

<https://fiercemarriage.com/7-ways-to-have-better-conflict-in-your-marriage>

[00:00:00]

- Selena:** So you used to do kick fighting. [both laughs]
- Ryan:** Yes. Don't mess with me. I'm a black belt in kick fighting. Yes. Actually-
- Selena:** Fight boxing.
- Ryan:** Fight boxing. Getting there. Keep going.
- Selena:** Karate. [both laughs]
- Ryan:** Clearly you do not know the martial arts. Kickboxing.
- Selena:** Close-
- Ryan:** Don't got there.
- Selena:** Inside joke. Haha.
- Ryan:** Inside joke. Laughing is communication. Yeah, I used to do kickboxing. What about it?
- Selena:** You fought well in it, right? You used to be a good fighter.
- Ryan:** I did when I wasn't kicking the metal posts. That's something you don't forget. She thinks-
- Selena:** If you're married, then you're going to have conflict, right? Conflict is unavoidable because even if you think you can't avoid it, you're actually not avoiding it because you're creating a problem and a conflict by thinking that you're not in conflict. Anyways.
- Ryan:** I don't know that it's avoidable.
- Selena:** It's not avoidable.
- Ryan:** Now there certainly are couples, and we've heard of them, who say, we've never raised our voice in our 75 years of marriage.
- Selena:** Yeah. But then they haven't talked for five of those 75 years. No, I'm kidding.

Ryan: No. In those cases, I think those couples probably just know how to deal with conflicts. It doesn't mean that they don't have any. It just means that they've dealt with it in a way that doesn't precipitate.

Selena: So you're saying there's lots of ways to deal with conflict, have conflict?

Ryan: I am saying that. And I'm saying that we'd perhaps learn some ways in our 21 years of marriage. And that's the series that we're in is we're just sharing stuff we've learned.

Selena: Lessons we've learned. Stuff. Mr. Seminary Theology.

Ryan: Use the simple word. Anyway, it's a pet peeve of mine. What I just said is the pet peeve, not what you said.

So yeah, we're just going to share candidly just kind of experientially the things that we've learned in these big areas of marriage. Last week, if you haven't checked out that episode, we talked about communication, the big lessons and little lessons we've learned around communication. Some of them. And today we're gonna talk about conflict. So let's do that on the other side.

[00:02:07] <music>

Selena: Here we go. Don't be like that. Don't be like that. Speaking of conflict, about to have one right now.

Ryan: Greetings and hello. Welcome to the Fierce Marriage Podcast. My name is Ryan. This is my malfeasant wife, Selena. Listen, I got Selena's cold brew right here.

Selena: It's not healthy.

Ryan: It's a little sweet and extra bitter. [both laughs] And brown...

Selena: He just can't handle-

Ryan: And light brown. I can say that, right? You're my wife.

Selena: It's your podcast.

Ryan: Yes, you know. It's my podcast.

Selena: And I'm your wife. It doesn't bother me. I am light brown. You're light red.

- Ryan:** You have varying degrees of brown. In the summer, you're a little more-
- Selena:** I'm less creamy, more coffee.
- Ryan:** Yeah, exactly. More bitter. Anyway.
- Selena:** You're rude. Not in the summer.
- Ryan:** Hey, we're having some fun here. All right. So welcome to the podcast. Thank you for joining us. If you want to partner with us, we're honored that you would even think about such a thing. If you want to take that thought to the next step, that's fiercemarriage.com/partner. You can join the Fierce Fellowship and one day maybe we'll have a fellowship meeting in here. The Forge.
- Selena:** Why are you making promises like that?
- Ryan:** I said maybe. All right. It's an empty promise. I didn't promise anything. I said "maybe". All right. I don't know what the future holds. I'm talking about conflict today.
- Selena:** I'm about to go on strike. [laughs]
- Ryan:** All right. You go on strike. You're fired. Anyway. Anyway. Okay.
- Selena:** Are we on the other side? I can't even remember.
- Ryan:** We are. We are on the other side.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Today we're talking about conflict as a recap over the next few episodes. And also last week we're going through... a good friend of ours said, "Hey, it'd be good if you guys just shared things you've learned."
- Selena:** In 21 years.
- Ryan:** Lessons you've learned in 21 years.
- Selena:** So yeah, there's a personal kind of flair here, but we were always sharing what we've learned, but it's kind of like, okay, in the last 21 years, how's that worked itself out in your own life and your own marriage?

Ryan: So think of it as a highlight reel for these various topics. Here's the governing principle. So in addition to the things we've learned, we're giving you a governing principle that will drive the conversation moving forward.

Selena: Last week.

Ryan: Last week governing principle was on communication, was that communication is the lifeblood of marriage. By it, marriages flourish or by it marriages crumble. Today's governing principle for conflict is this. Do you want to read it?

Selena: Sure. One marker of unified or godly marriage is not the absence of conflict, but rather the ability of the couple to deal with conflict well.

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Deal well with conflict.

Ryan: People will think, Oh man, we're having a hard time. Okay, welcome to the club. Right?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: The question is, how are you going to handle it? The question is what are you going to do next? And I talked to the men that the Lord brings my way: What are you going to do to lead lovingly through this? Are you going to do the tendency to blame? Are you going to do the tendency to slough off your responsibility? What are you going to do?

Selena: You can slough it off, but still your responsibility. You're still the head.

Ryan: That's the governing principle is that it's not that conflict is bad. It's that bad conflict is bad.

Selena: Nice. I see what you did there. So number one, you don't have to be afraid of conflict. You don't have to be afraid of it. I think when we were married early on, I would always try to avoid it. I wanted to keep the peace at whatever cost. I didn't want to upset you. I just wanted us to have a good time and live a good life and be happy all the time. Right? Because that's what I thought marriage was. And definitely not. I'm kidding. It is joyful. It is joyful.

But we've built a culture over time to be able to wisely bring up hard topics, sins or potential sins that we see coming with one another, or frustrations, you know, examples of things like, Hey, I feel like you're on your phone too

much. That seems to be a pretty hot topic I think amongst many couples because we get really defensive about these things.

I would never have brought stuff like that up, I think, early on in our marriage, but now... No. No, there's discernment and wisdom that comes with years of experience and not doing it well.

Ryan: You would have this attitude of, "Okay, I can't bring it up because it's going to rock the boat. Don't rock the boat."

Selena: But then I'd stew also.

Ryan: You want to keep the peace, that sort of thing. Yeah, you're right.

Selena: It just led to stewing.

Ryan: You had a [inaudible 00:06:50] stewing and then it would just come out some other unhealthy way.

Selena: right. Because it was like plugging one hole only to just like... something else blows out the other end. Right?

Ryan: Like there's a hole in the boat and you're saying, Don't rock it.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And the hole's leaking. And pretty soon you run out of fingers and then pretty soon the boat's sinking anyway. So what I hear you saying is that there's a difference, very clear difference, biblically between being a peacekeeper and being a peacemaker.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: We are called to be peacemakers and peacemaking is a proactive activity. Peacekeeping is a passive activity in this sense. You can peacekeep in the sense that you're actually removing things that are disrupting the peace. That's active. But peacemaking is, okay, we are not at peace. I'm going to go and make the peace.

Selena: Right. So I'm going to absorb what-

Ryan: To make the peace. And so that was something you learned. I would say I didn't really avoid conflict as much but I was definitely-

- Selena:** You just want to win the conflict.
- Ryan:** I was reactive.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** And that's maybe number two. So we'll just go right into number two. Number two lesson we've learned about conflict in marriage is that it's possible to win and lose the argument at the same time. Here's what I mean by that. A lot of husbands, young husbands deal with this. Broadly speaking, men are logical reasoners and so they can logic themselves out of being wrong-
- Selena:** Yeah, they can win.
- Ryan:** ...even if they are. It's possible. You can twist and bend. You can manipulate.
- Selena:** Example right there. No, I'm kidding.
- Ryan:** You can contort the arguments in the wording and you can manipulate in this. We've talked about manipulation at length in the past. So check out manipulation. Search that on our website. There's all sorts of manipulation tactics we didn't realize that we were using that we were using.
- Selena:** You were using, yeah.
- Ryan:** That's gaslighting. I'm being gaslit. [both laughs]
- Selena:** That's a reality for some people. So I shouldn't laugh.
- Ryan:** It is. But I read something, it is a book or something about manipulation and I was like, Holy cow. We do this. What I'm talking about here, the ability to win and lose an argument simultaneously, has to do with that is that you can... And one of my greatest regrets, and I just said this to you the other day... we were driving home and I was like, "I'm so sorry for any time that I've spoken to you in a way that is not befitting a husband speaking to his wife." I don't know how I worded it. Because you can get so into the argument, you don't realize what you're doing is crushing your wife. You're belittling your wife just to win.
- Selena:** Well, and a wife can do the same of like... women know how to use their words, let me tell you, you know, to disrespect, to emasculate, to cut down, you know? Women are very good at keeping score and when they need to bring that scorebook out, like better believe they're going to bring it out because, you know, she's got to get hers and be right and all of that.

Ryan: Jordan Peterson, I saw a clip, he said, yeah, a man can defeat his wife in an argument. But if you defeat your wife in an argument, what do you have for a wife? You have a defeated person for your wife and you've lost at that point. You've lost if you've defeated your wife in that way.

Selena: And one of the biggest pieces that you mentioned that you've learned is how much you've underestimated the powerful tool that gentleness is. That having a gentle answer like in Proverbs really can deflect anger. The harsh words just make everyone flare up. Right?

Ryan: Yeah. I mean, it says, love covers a multitude of sins. What does that mean? Does that mean you're enabling sin? No. It means that you are expressing and giving grace.

Selena: Well, and part of me thinks, and maybe correct me if I'm wrong, but when you're going through conflict, you're both trying to grow, you're maybe trying to exercise some new tools or discernment or wisdom or something, but you're not always great at it. I feel like love says, you know, I see that you're trying and I know that you're not really that great at it, but I know that you're going to get there. And I appreciate that you're trying. It's like a kid learning to ride the bike. Like I'm not going to love him any less if he just falls over the first time he tries it. I love him that he's trying and I love that this is happening.

Ryan: You're talking about love hopes all things.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: You are seen as searching for the best in the communication. An insecure man will use that to turn the screws and to belittle his wife.

Selena: And a wife will use that on the same front to emasculate.

Ryan: So we've learned that, okay, it's possible to win an argument, but lose.

Selena: Lose the heart and the unity of each other.

Ryan: That doesn't mean that the husband now becomes a doormat. It means that now my tactics change and that no, don't lie. Like if you haven't sinned against your wife, don't repent. Because sometimes husbands and wives will manipulate each other into thinking that they've sinned. Like we need to learn to see clearly. And then not use that as a battering ram or cannon fodder. But instead just to in love communicate, Okay, I think you're not seeing this clear.

Whatever the communication. Using the tactics gently in love and trying to hear the hearts with generosity.

Selena: But I can only do that, taking a step back, if I am consistently in the word daily, if the scriptures are examining me, that I am submitting under its authority. So my MO should not be one of emasculating of sin of anything else. My MO should be, I am trying to live out as best I can, what I know to be true in scripture. I know that God loves me. I know that I have grace, like I'm operating in this freedom, but I want to please my savior in how I treat my husband. Therefore I'm going to work hard at this. And then, you know, you blow it and fly off the handle and I've just disrespected you.

Well, number three, be quick to apologize and fast to forgive. Repenting and forgiving daily. I mean, that's just marriage one-on-one right there.

Ryan: So underlying these first three themes is humility and humility before God. You said this, getting in God's word, letting it examine you. So often we put ourselves over God's word as the ones who are examining it. Like we are kind of taking out of it what we think we should take and how we want to interpret it. That's the wrong way to read the Bible.

Selena: The Bible is instructing.

Ryan: It is instructive. It has authority over us. We don't have authority over it. That's a humble way to read scripture, because you realize it's God's word and it can only speak the way that it can only speak.

But also humility toward each other. So the humility toward God will show you your sin. The humility toward each other will show you your own sin, but also show you where you need to forgive if you've been sinned against. So we are both equal in this. We're sinners worthy of God's wrath who have been saved by grace and called His own. That's the great equalizer in our marriage. So how can I hold your sin against you or turn... you know, I don't kick you while you're down, throw something in your face or we...

And here's the other thing in terms of quickness. So the number three is be quick to apologize and fast to forgive. Don't let it stew. Be quick to feel the conviction and then quicker to act on it. And then if you're being repented to, be quick to forgive.

Selena: Right. It's almost out of duty rather than feeling most times, because sometimes the feelings of you wronged me have not faded. But the fact that you're repenting and you're owning that, I mean, my feelings, definitely the anger and the frustration dissipate. And I may come back to you and say, "Hey,

here's some things that really frustrated me about this and not to throw it in your face, but I think for future, whenever we hit this topic or come to this pass in our marriage again, just understand that this is where I was coming from. Here's some of the things that I didn't mean to entertain or I entertain and these thoughts and I don't know what to do with them all the time, but I'm just..." Just be transparent with where you're at because a feeling... Somebody told me children are like feelings. They're good indicators sometimes, but they're not good leaders. They should not be in charge. They're terrible leaders.

I don't want to upplay feelings... not upplay. I don't want to exalt them to a place they're not supposed to be. I don't want to shove them under. But God gave us feelings for a reason. I think one of the uses of them is to be indicators.

Ryan: And forgiving doesn't mean that the pain or the hurt goes away. It means that I'm not going to morally hold that over your head.

Selena: Yes. That's good.

Ryan: Please don't hear what we're saying is like, just forget about it.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: We had an instance just recently, and this is minor where I was processing through some ideas. We'd been talking about it earlier that morning during our Bible time together and I had continued to process. You had gone about the day of feeding the kids, educating the kids, getting the ball rolling. And I just had this epiphany moment. I think I was in the shower or something tonight, because I... we do Bible time and then I go take a shower. And then I came down, I'm like, "Hey, I just want to continue processing." And you just stopped me and you were like, "Yep." And you were kind of-

Selena: I was just like, "Babe, I love you. I don't want to hear this. We just are getting the day going and I finally got these girls under control. And we're kind of getting on a roll here. Can I hear it like... Can you do it later?"

Ryan: Well, you said it in a way that was-

Selena: Yeah, because I was in the midst of... I could have totally done it better. Absolutely done it better.

Ryan: It was legitimately offensive. And I took offense.

Selena: I was trying not to offend you.

- Ryan:** Because I was excited and you took my excitement and squished it.
- Selena:** I don't do it often but sometimes I was like-
- Ryan:** So I went silent.
- Selena:** Yeah. And I knew it.
- Ryan:** [inaudible 00:17:08] Fine.
- Selena:** No, you didn't do it like that. It was a little bit of like that, but not a lot. I had a tinge of conviction of, mm, that was a little disrespectful. And I wasn't meaning to, I just was trying to explain we're finally to this place that we've been trying to get to.
- Ryan:** And the kids weren't even there. They were gone. Because you made them really... because they had to get some energy out. So they were running to the... to the shop on our property and back.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** I was like kind of irritating. Because I was like, "I could have just said it in like 10 seconds and it wasn't done."
- Selena:** And I thought it was like, you know, this 10-minute-
- Ryan:** Thing. Yeah. We've had some long conversations for sure. I went back to the office and I was kind of still irritated and I was like, this is how it's going to be, isn't it? It's going to be one of these days, isn't it? And I wasn't really stewing, but I wasn't going to go like initiate. I was going to-
- Selena:** Let it blow over.
- Ryan:** Yeah. But you came in and you apologized. And I was like, Okay, yeah, no worries. We're done.
- Selena:** Not a big deal. But that is not something that we would have done early on in our marriage. There would have definitely been some lack of words, some stewing on both our parts probably about why I was right, why you shouldn't have interrupted, why this, this, this-
- Ryan:** And we just-

- Selena:** It's just like not worth it.
- Ryan:** And this was a very kind of minor example but surely there have been ways where we have had much more reason to be offended and even more reason to not forgive. And we've failed in that and that we've held onto it and let it become an unhealthy conflict. And there's times when we've succeeded and we've talked through it.
- Selena:** One thing I've learned too is that apologies are not "I'm sorry I hurt you with what I said." No.
- Ryan:** "I'm sorry you were hurt."
- Selena:** "I'm sorry you were hurt." There it is. But-
- Ryan:** "I'm sorry you felt that way." I hate hearing that. I'm sorry that it felt that way to you. It's like-
- Selena:** That's not apology. It's not an apology.
- Ryan:** ...assault in the wound.
- Selena:** So husbands and wives, be quick to forgive, own your part, see your sin, ask the Lord, pray that the Holy Spirit would convict you, would bring clarity to your own heart to get the log out of your eyes so that you can help your husband or if you're a husband, helping your wife see more clearly.
- Ryan:** And apologize in the active voice. I'm sorry I [blanked] you. Upset you. I'm sorry that I shouted at you. I'm sorry that I said those things to you. I'm sorry I forgot our anniversary. I owe you a gift.
- Selena:** You got me a gift.
- Ryan:** You're wearing them. You got those for yourself and said that can be your anniversary gift.
- Selena:** I got you a little something.
- Ryan:** You got me an awesome thing. You got me this painting that I love and you wrote on it things that made my eyes-
- Selena:** Well up?
- Ryan:** Leak. They leaked. They were leaking.

Selena: Wow. You did.

Ryan: You can do that to me. Okay.

Selena: All right. Well, we said we were going to talk about it so we're going to talk about it. Okay? We have literally fought naked. You have. You have. I was not naked.

Ryan: This is number four now. Is that that what we're on?

Selena: Yeah. Number four.

Ryan: Number is fight naked. What does this even mean? We've done a whole episode on this, so we'll just briefly kind of recap it. It's funny because-

Selena: No, you go back and listen to the story. We'll just talk about what it means to fight naked because I think they should go find the story.

Ryan: There's an actual story fighting naked? [both laughs]

Selena: I can't believe you forgot about that. Oh my goodness. That's where it came from.

Ryan: That's why you asked about karate.

Selena: Oh, yeah.

Ryan: I got to tell the story again. You got to tell the story again?

Selena: Okay, fine.

Ryan: Well-

Selena: It just sounds a little like-

Ryan: Because I don't know-

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: I was in the shower. This is our very first house we owned together. The doors were-

Selena: Made of cardboard practically. I mean they were made of cement.

Ryan: They were made of that really cheap wood paneling. No nothing else. We had-

Selena: We were arguing about something. We don't even remember what it was.

Ryan: That's how important that was.

Selena: That's how important it was.

Ryan: And I was in the shower-

Selena: I was putting laundry away. You were going to take a shower.

Ryan: And the laundry and the bathroom were right side by side, one bathroom in the house. You had said something and we were fighting in the... I don't even remember. But I imagined it happening like this. I say something, you say something, I got so upset. And you slammed the door.

Selena: Oh yeah.

Ryan: On the bathroom. And you were like, "This is done." And you slam the door to signify it was done. And I got out of the shower, stark naked. Literally, I remember you were... I got into this like ninja pose and like, Yeah. And I punched through the door. Oh my word.

Selena: It's not violent. You were not being violent.

Ryan: No, no. You left.

Selena: I did. That's what broke the ice.

Ryan: And I knew that was like a one-off whatever. Anger is not something that we really struggle with in that way. But it was hilarious.

Selena: That's where the fighting naked came from. And I've heard we should get t-shirts made that say fight naked, but it feels inappropriate. I don't know.

Ryan: Well, it's ironic that you're wearing a t-shirt that says fight.

Selena: That is. So what's the lesson here? The lesson here is that we can't come into a conflict with all these weapons or clothes, right?

Ryan: When you're naked, you're uncovered, you're exposed. You can't hide weapons and weapons in the conflict.

Selena: Don't try to cover things up.

Ryan: It'd be things like throwing someone's offense, like old kind of offenses thrown in their face. That's like a card up your sleeve, so to speak. Or like, "Oh, you're just like your mother." Or.. whatever that cutting thing is, that big red button, you can't hide anything if you're coming to naked, so to speak. Now there's a very literal application to this. We shared a funny story from our early years of marriage. But if you're having a little tiff and it's appropriate, just kind of like this robing in the middle of a fight-

Selena: People have written into to us and said, "You know, we tried that. It really worked."

Ryan: It's hilarious.

Selena: It is.

Ryan: And it maybe leads to great places, you know, because there's no sex like makeup sex.

Selena: There you go. There you go. So in the spirit of that, conflict can be a blessing.

Ryan: If we're fighting, I'm gonna start getting naked and say, what are you doing?

Selena: And you're like, "You know what? Put that away. It's not even gonna work. It's not even gonna work. Own your sin." [both laughs] But conflict is a means to blessing. As Christians, we can see it as sanctification. We can count it all joy when we face trials, as it says in James 1, because the testing of our faith produces steadfastness. And let me tell you, you test my... no, I'm kidding. Yes. So God is refining us to make us more like Him.

I would say that was number five. So conflict can be a blessing. It can be a means of sanctification. So fight naked, come into the battle knowing that there is blessing on the other side. But you can't do that unless you're really aiming for reconciliation. Like you're really trying to find one another, not just duke it out.

Ryan: It's true.

Selena: Like I get it. There's times when you are fighting and it's like... you kind of sometimes you have to go through that phase of like, "You know what? We're going to just battle this out right now. And then after that, it's like, yeah, I want to reconcile. I hear you. I hear what you're saying. Here's what I'm saying. The

feelings are all flaring up. But I also need to push past this and be disciplined and say, okay, no, we need to reconcile. We need to make this right. So that's number five. Number six.

Ryan: I'm going to insert a number six before the real number six. And this is, it's okay to pause the pause.

Selena: Pause.

Ryan: It's okay-

Selena: The pause clause.

Ryan: Meaning that you can have a working understanding that, Hey, if we get into an argument, there may be an instance where, you know, your emotions are running high, you need to take a break. Taking a break doesn't mean you're giving up. It doesn't mean you're not going to resolve. It doesn't mean that you're leaving your spouse-

Selena: No.

Ryan: It means that you're taking a break.

Selena: And you're going to revisit. Yeah.

Ryan: So you're gonna cool down. Cooler heads really do prevail. And sometimes that's wise to take an hour or two, go for a walk.

Selena: Well, I think part of-

Ryan: Pray about it.

Selena: Part of a husband leading that culture is saying, Hey, I don't think we're getting anywhere on this. I think we both need to just hit pause. Let's talk about it later tonight after the kids are down or tomorrow. I love you, I'm not going anywhere, but like, we just need to pause this because we're on the brink of just breaking each other.

Ryan: The death spiral is real. The reason why that's wise is because you let the death spiral continue, you're going to run into something, and that's something is you're going to say something you're going to regret. You can't take it back. You're going to hurt one another in some way.

Selena: That was maybe unintentional.

Ryan: So pause. Number seven is don't fight alone. The enemy loves-

Selena: To isolate.

Ryan: Yes. He loves to get you alone. He wants to pick you off like a wounded gazelle. And so he would love for you to get away from the herd. What is the herd? The herd is the body of Christ. Friends, get to a church. If you're not part of a church, that is a problem.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I'm in a men's group. I encouraged one of the guys recently. And I'll encourage any guy that I know that is outside of the body of Christ who says he's a Christian. I say to him this, I say, you can't say you love Jesus while also neglecting His bride. You can't do it. He loves His bride. It is His bride. It's his gift from a loving Father to His Son as an overflow of the love of God. That's a reality that if we reject that, we're not only rejecting Christ's bride, and therefore it's an affront to Christ Himself. But we are... what's the term? We are lopping ourselves off, severing ourselves from the lifeblood of the church. That's the preaching of the word. That's the communion of the saints. That's the Lord's supper. That's, you know, everything that comes along with the fellowship of the believers. We can expect to thrive-

Selena: We can't?

Ryan: No, we can't expect to thrive in a moment of weakness in a conflict in our marriage if we're severed from the body of Christ. So don't fight alone. What's this look like? A while back... we always use this example. It was probably 10 years ago, maybe less. We were in a rough patch weeks long where we were misfiring. We could not hit each other. It's like we would kind of get close to reconciling and something would happen, we'd re-isolate. Some good friends of ours at the time, they looked, they noticed this and they said, "Hey, can you guys come over to our house for lunch after church?" And we thought, "Okay, that's great." You know, it wasn't a sabotage. It wasn't anything like that. It was like, Hey-

Selena: We care about you guys.

Ryan: "You guys, we want to hang out with you because you're our friends, and our kids like being friends. So let's do that. But also we noticed that maybe you guys aren't doing all right. What's going on?" Because you fight differently, you speak differently when third parties are involved, we have this-

Selena: It's very clarifying.

Ryan: It is when you feel like, well, I sound like a complete selfish jerk right now.

Selena: I'm a very ungrateful wife. Yeah, exactly.

Ryan: Another thing, another kind of rule of thumb is, would you speak to your wife or would you speak to your husband this way if your pastor was right there, right?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Because man, we can be really short with our terms and our words. We can be so uncivil with each other. And some of the things that some of y'all have written in about how your husbands or your wives are speaking to you, it's very uncivil. It's very unbecoming of the people of God, the children of God. And so that sort of behavior festers in isolation. It thrives in isolation.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: So don't fight alone. That's all we have time for today. We've covered seven really tangible things we've learned in terms of conflict over our 21 years of marriage. None of this would be possible. We always say this and it's still true today. We would not be married if it weren't for the grace and kindness of God in Christ.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: In other words, if we didn't have Jesus as the foundation of our marriage, we would have been divorced 10 times over because why would I forgive you when I don't know what it means to be forgiven? Why would I love you well when I have not been loved myself perfectly in Christ? What do I have to gain as soon as you stop being a benefit to me? These are all realities of a marriage that's unmoored from the gospel.

And the gospel is simply this. Jesus Christ, the perfect son of God came and died for sinners that we might have eternal life in Him. We want you to believe in Christ. We want you to repent and believe in the gospel because there is life, there is joy, there is hope, there is a cornucopia, if you will, of enjoyment, of blessing in Christ Himself.

So if you don't know Jesus and you want to know Him, we say this: talk to a friend who's a Christian, say, show me who Jesus is. Can we read the Bible together? Number two, find a church that preaches out of the Bible. Number

three, if you don't have number one or number two, go to this website, thenewsisgood.com. It should help you find a good church, which that'll be a place where you can find somebody who will disciple you, Lord willing.

Let's pray. Lord God, we love you. Thank you for the gift of communication through conflict, Lord, that you have shown us what it means to forgive because you've forgiven us in limitless ways. So Lord help us to apply that truth of your word into our own marriages and our own lives. Help husbands to lead through conflict resolution, through the conflicts that they face in marriage, that they would conflict well and not poorly, that they would conflict in ways that are healthy and not toxic.

I pray for the wives that they would learn to conflict well in ways that are healthy, that would lead to life. They would avoid the tendencies to maybe undermine their husbands or to use words in a cutting way or cutting tones. Help us, Lord, to be good at conflict that we might honor you, we might glorify you, we might love one another well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Amen. Awesome. Well, this has been fun. Next week we are talking about setting priorities. I had a good friend last night at Bible study. He said, what do you think of family vision statement, having a family vision? I said, well boy, let me tell you something about family vision state. It's a big passion of ours, I'll say. How do we set priorities? How do we know what's important? How do we say yes to the right things when there's a plethora of really good things? How do we choose the right things? And how do we organize our lives around the things of God so that our marriage flourishes? What did we learn in 21 years? We're going to share that next week. We hope you'll join us.

So that's it for now. This episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - James 1

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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