

HOW TO PRAY TOGETHER IN MARRIAGE (EVEN WHEN IT'S AWKWARD)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/how-to-pray-together-in-marriage-even-when-its-awkward>

[00:00:00]

Selena: Ryan, were we always good at praying together?

Ryan: Yeah. Are children good at praying? I don't know. It's like you pray and you pray in faith, and I think you get more practiced.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: But are your prayers better? You know, it depends on a lot of things. You asked a question, so here I am.

Selena: Well, I think we struggled with it.

Ryan: As a couple.

Selena: As a couple. Like knowing what it was, the purpose of it, getting over maybe some of the awkwardness of it. Because I think it's easy to pray by yourself. So why should we pray as a couple? What's the importance of it? Articulating that, I think, is helpful in driving our motivation for why we should pray. I mean, God commands us to pray. That should be enough, right?

Ryan: Right. Should.

Selena: But we always come with caveats. We have excuses. And so we're hopefully here today to say, no more excuses. Here's the reasons why. Here's the purposes. God himself, Christ, gave us a model of prayer. And so how can we engage that in our marriage?

Ryan: All right. So we're going to talk about that on the other side.

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Ryan: Selena Amanda, it feels good to be back in the saddle.

Selena: Does it, Ryan Glenn?

Ryan: Yeah. It's been a hot second since we've recorded with the new year, the holidays.

Selena: All the things.

Ryan: Christmas. We had a great Christmas tide. We celebrated it long. You know, we did a different thing this year where we kept Christmas going after the day.

Selena: Yeah, 12 days Christmas.

Ryan: Yeah, that was awesome.

Selena: We didn't do gifts for 12 days because I was not that prepared, but we tried to do some activities and just acknowledge it with our kids. Because Christmas deserves its own season, right?

Ryan: Amen.

Selena: It should be a whole month.

Ryan: Amen. And that was great. It was restful. And yeah, here we are back in the Fierce Marriage podcast saddle.

Selena: We're in The Forge. It's not very forgy. It's very coldy.

Ryan: It is chilly. Although you can't see it. It's always off-camera, but stuff's happening.

Selena: Stuff's happening around it. Just gotta believe us.

Ryan: This wall over here is changing and things are getting great.

Selena: Yeah. We launched this year with a Gospel-Centered Marriage...

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: It's a cohort, but everybody's kind of do it on their own. We did a kickoff call this last week. So you can still do the Gospel-Centered Marriage anytime you want.

Ryan: It's not too late.

Selena: It's not too late

Ryan: Go to gospelcenteredmarriage.com.

Selena: They're in the first week.

Ryan: Actually, I think, is it next week or the week following we're talking about the gospel-centered gorilla in the room? Like truly gospel-centeredness.

Selena: Yeah. What does it mean?

Ryan: Because it's one of these buzzwords.

Selena: Don't get too far into it. We'll talk about it. We'll talk about it.

Ryan: Anyway

Selena: Don't you worry.

Ryan: That was great. We had a lot of couples show up to Zoom... two Zoom calls for that.

Selena: It was 200. We had to do two Zoom calls.

Ryan: There were over 200-plus couples registered. We had about 180 people on two Zoom calls. It was awesome. So thank you. If that's you, man, we're looking forward to growing alongside you and seeing what God does. So that's made possible, the Forge is made possible, writing books, doing cohorts, doing this podcast, largely possible because of our Fierce Fellowship, which is comprised of none other than our fierce fellows, which I think that's a gender-inspecific term. You can be a fellow-

Selena: You can be a fellow, right?

Ryan: You can be a lady fellow.

Selena: A lady fellow.

Ryan: So if you want to be a part of the Fierce Fellowship, that just means you're partnering with us on a monthly basis. We started doing a lot more updates in there. It's been a lot of fun. We do have some...

Selena: I started doing a lot more updates.

Ryan: Liar. [Selena laughs]

Selena: You did the last one.

Ryan: I also am doing updates.

Selena: I specifically remember you asking.

Ryan: You sit on a throne of lies. No. We do have some more things coming to that community specifically. There's been a lot of really cool features added to the platform. So hopefully we're going to use those more. But man, it's really cool to build some online friendships with you all. So go to fiercemarriage.com/partner to be a part of that.

Selena: All right. Today's about prayer and we all need it, right? We need it in our marriages. We need it in our lives. And bigger than that, God commands us to pray. And He even shows us how to pray and the importance of prayer.

There's three points that we're going to hang our hat on today. We're going to define what is prayer and then consequently what prayer is not. So what it is and by virtue of what being what it is, then what it is not. Why do we struggle with it? We're going to talk about that a little bit. Why do we struggle with it as a couple? And then how should we pray? Scripture has given us instructions. God's given us commands. What does that look like in terms of our daily life? So what is prayer, Ryan? What is prayer? Tell me what is prayer?

Ryan: Yeah. Okay. [both laughs] I just love how you put me right there. If I had to say it in a sentence, I would say prayer is our response to God. God has revealed Himself through His Word. He has revealed Himself through His Son. As Hebrews 1 tells us in the former days, He revealed Himself through the laws and the prophets. In these latter days, He has given Himself to us by His Son, His Word to us by His Son.

And so I think prayer, of course, preceded the New Testament. But we live in a unique, in that after Christ, we have a unique call to prayer. That is, the throne room of grace is made accessible to us as individuals. We don't go through a mediator. Our mediator is Christ Himself, who is God Himself. So prayer is a response to God directly to God. In this New Testament period that we are in, that's an individual's response to God as opposed to the covenantal representative.

Selena: Right. And there's a part of it as a believer that is just kind of a natural, like overflowing response of what the Lord has been doing in our own heart. There's a piece of it that is our response of being loved, being given grace, growing in our own faith, right? There's all these pieces that kind of come together.

So it's kind of an indicator of our heart orientation. If we are a believer, but we are not praying, like how much a believer are you, right? There's many smarter men that have come before me that have questioned, if you're not a joyful Christian, then are you even a Christian? And if you're not a praying believer, are you even a believer? To show that it's such a big piece of our lives and it should be.

Ryan: It's a-

Selena: It's a gift.

Ryan: Well, it's a sign of your dependence on God. It truly is. And I think when we don't pray, and I'm convicted of this, I'm just like everyone else. When I don't pray, it's not like, oh, I've missed the task. It's, God, why am I not more dependent on you?

Selena: Forgive me for depending on myself.

Ryan: Yes. Why am I not more reliant on going to you as my good Father? I think it was Martin Luther, the reformer, he said, I have so much to get done today, I'd better spend three hours in prayer. Something to that effect. Was that our approach? Or are we "I got to get up. I got to get the workout in. I got to read my Bible"? And so I can't have time to pray because I've got to get the Bible reading in. How ironic is that?

And you get in your car and then you're like, okay, now I've got some time. I can actually give God some token seconds while I'm getting something else done and driving on my way to work. So it does oftentimes get put on the back burner because if we're just honest, it's because we aren't truly dependent on God. We aren't truly trusting that any good that's going to come is going to come from Him. Any peace that's going to come is going to come from him. Instead of trying to figure out our lives, we need to go to Him. Be wise, do the actions of faith, but don't do them faithlessly aside from prayer.

Selena: Tells us to pray without ceasing.

Ryan: And that's like an attitude of prayer, right?

Selena: That's heart orientation of like, again, acknowledging your reliance on God and therefore living out of that daily in how you speak and act towards your heavenly Father, but also towards your spouse.

So by virtue of saying what prayer is, right? What is it not? Because in Christian circles, I won't name any names or anything, but some people think that

they're incantations or recitations, or if you pray hard enough or you pray the right things, then you're going to A plus B equals C, right? So how come I'm not getting this, right? Especially if you're dealing with a hard thing in marriage, like if you're going through a struggle, what are our prayers supposed to reflect? What are they supposed to be?

I think we are acknowledging our desires, right? Like if we're going through a difficult time, Lord, help me to see your wisdom and your goodness right now, even though I may not feel it or see it right in front of me. Like help me to cling to who you are and not to myself. What prayer is not is just kind of naming and claiming things in the middle, good things, blessings in the middle of a storm.

Ryan: It's not a to-do list for God where we are dispatching God to do our bidding.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Right. I've been in enough prayer groups, I've been to enough prayer meetings or worship settings where the praying intensifies, where it seems that folks think that unless you pray hard enough, the prayer doesn't count. Like God didn't hear you the first, second, third, or fourth time you said the prayer, but you need to say it more earnestly.

Selena: We grew up in circles like that.

Ryan: We grew up in circles like that. I think there's a heart to that that I think is genuine. You want to be a faith-filled person and sometimes we can try to talk ourselves into it, when in reality, faith is being sure of what you hope for and that which you do not see.

In other words, you can say the prayer, the prayer can still be the prayer without eliciting the feelings that the prayer did what it should have done or that it landed where it should have landed, or God hears our prayers.

When you see Jesus pray, when He didn't pray in a way that was repetitious or... you know, it was very matter-of-fact. One more thing. I think prayer is, believe it or not, we're asking things of God. We're going to God. We're bringing worship to God in our prayer. We see that modeled in the prayer of our Lord.

But we're not just going to get answers and to get the things that we want and desire. It is a conversation. It's a response to the indicatives of the gospel, which is it's finished, you are saved by faith alone through grace alone in Christ

or grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The prayer's response to that.

It's also a response to the imperatives of the gospel, things that have been commanded of us. Lord help me obey you. Or you have said this, Lord, I'm trying to do this. You have told me to live in this way. I want to please you. I want to love you. And so I think prayer is a response to that as well.

Selena: Right. I think when we're wrestling with those things, that's where sometimes our struggle with even praying or desiring to pray comes from, is we often might think too highly of ourselves, too little of God. We feel like we don't need to pray or I'm going to work on myself and then I'll bring it to God. Like I'll try to fix it. Whatever our struggle is in marriage, you know, let's just work on us and then we can pray about it or... I don't know. I think that we disqualify prayer and its role in our marriage.

Ryan: So you're exploring the reasons we struggle with prayer. So we've talked about what prayer is, what prayer isn't. And you're saying one of the main reasons, I think this is profound, one of the main reasons we struggle with prayer is at its root we think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Whether that's we think we don't need God or whether that's we think our prayers are unworthy of God. What is that other than thinking what God said isn't actually true? I know better than God, even though He said to come and pray, I don't deserve to pray.

Well, if you don't feel that you deserve to pray, then you might need to repent of something. In that case, your prayer is Lord, forgive me. Help me turn from this sin as opposed to I'm too lowly, too whatever. You're calling Jesus a liar. He said, come. All who are thirsty, come to the living waters and drink. And you're saying, well, not me though. I'm thirsty, but that doesn't apply to me.

So when we don't pray for those reasons, we're thinking too highly of ourselves. But I think more often than not, it's we don't pray because we don't think we need to. We seem to be breathing just fine. I seem to be getting the same paycheck that I've expected. I'm healthy.

Selena: There's three reasons I think why we don't pray. We don't think we need to pray, we don't want to pray, and or we don't know how to pray. And those all produce a lack of discipline.

Ryan: And specifically in marriage, I'll say, because it's a marriage podcast, people don't pray in their marriage because they feel weird.

Selena: Yeah, it's true.

Ryan: It's amazing how many couples you say, Hey, let's pray together. And they're like, okay, how do we do that?

Selena: Yeah. Yeah. Because you think that it's like... you kind of naturally, I think, at least I do, you like sever off, like I'll be down praying in the morning before maybe you get up if I got up a little earlier and I'm like, you know... and then you come in and I'm just like, oh, oh, amen. Like he's my husband, you should see him pray and be a part of it.

Ryan: Wait a second. Did I just catch you pray? Excuse me.

Selena: Like you should join in.

Ryan: You should be ashamed of yourself.

Selena: Well, you should be ashamed that you were not praying with me. No. Anyways.

Ryan: Praying continually.

Selena: Yeah. Praying continually. So we kind of that first struggle already of like we don't think we need to pray because we just have a wrong view of ourselves, where the humility is not there or we're just being passive about it. When you need something, you're going to do it. Like you're going to go do whatever it takes to get it. So when you need to be reminded that you are human, prayer will do that.

Ryan: Yeah. In terms of how to pray... I mean, if you're listening this far in, you're probably sold on it. You know that you need to pray. You're looking for ways to pray more intentionally-

Selena: Which will help you with the desire to pray because getting over the awkwardness.

Ryan: And you're looking for ways to maybe pray more intentionally for your marriage, for your spouse, with your spouse. As a general framework... by the way, we discussed these in our books. We don't have them here, but we have books called 40 Prayers for My Wife, 40 Prayers for My Husband that you wrote. It's the 40-day prayer journey is what it's packaged as, the two books together.

Those books are all about this. How do we pray for each other and how do we grow deeper in our faith by prayer? The whole premise of those books is

that prayer is a gift. It's something that God has called us to do. We are allowed to speak to God, but then He wants us to talk to Him, especially on behalf of one another.

The other premise is that we don't pray in a vacuum. We pray in response to scripture. So that book is laced with scripture saying God's words back to Him in response to those words. So all around that, we created this framework. We didn't create it, but we're using it. And it's this ACTS framework. It's based on the Lord's prayer loosely. ACTS, A-C-T-S, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

We're going to read it in a second. In Matthew 6, when Jesus teaches us to pray, He says, "When you pray, pray like this." It follows that progression: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication, which supplication is the asking things of God part.

So I'm going to read this from Matthew 6, starting in verse 5, we'll talk through it briefly, then we'll give you some encouragements around why prayer in your marriage specifically brings you closer as a married couple. We don't pray to that end, but it is one of the fallout pieces to it.

All right, so Matthew chapter 6, starting in verse 5 says this: "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

So that's how Jesus taught us how to pray. You see the structure in there. And He's given us warnings. We don't pray like the Pharisees who pray as a show of spiritual pomp. Where we are puffing up our chests and raising our eyebrows and looking extra pious and trying to impress everyone but God. That's not how we're called to pray.

Nor are we called to pray like the Gentiles do, who think that by heaping up the right words, the right quantities of words, the right tones of words, the

right types of phrases, that by heaping those things up, then you are somehow gonna win over God to give you what you want, so to speak. They think they will be heard for their many words. I think that's what we were talking about earlier. Instead, he gave us a very clear instruction: pray like this.

Now, you can pray outside of the Lord's prayer, but I think it's a very strong outline for what our prayer life could look like in marriage as individuals.

So, adoration. I'm just gonna talk for a little bit longer, but when I pray and I'm just by myself or I'm praying for like one of our co-op meetings or a church meeting or something, in my mind, this is where I go. I think, okay, first thing I'm gonna do is I'm gonna give God adoration. Just like Christ said. He said, when you pray, pray like this, our Father in heaven, holy is your name.

Selena: Your kingdom come.

Ryan: So He's a Father, but he's in heaven. He's reigning above. He is a creator of all. He is holy. His name is holy. You could go on on how magnificent our God is, how loving He is as a father, you know, how wonderful He is, that He reigns the way He does. So you're adoring Him.

And then you get into "your kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". It's all about His kingdom. It's all about His will. It's all about Him coming to earth through the work of His disciples, through the work of His Son.

And then he says, Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses or our debts as we have also forgiven those who have trespassed or debted against us. That's the confession part, right? Forgive me, Lord. And this is a challenge that I would give to you if you're praying. Let's not pray for general, generally, when we confess. Let us confess our particular sins because we sin particularly. I don't sin generally. Like, when I'm angry and I'm sinning in my anger, I am not just angry in general. I'm angry toward my wife, or I'm angry toward my kids, or I'm angry toward God, or I'm angry toward some other person.

Selena: It's a specific.

Ryan: It's a specific. Lord, forgive me for being angry with my wife in this way. Forgive me for the words I said, right?

Selena: Yeah. I mean, when our kids come to us and they're arguing over something, I'm trying to get into the habit of, somebody else taught me this, of having

them own what they've done wrong in the situation and not just blaming someone else. So how can we practice this in our prayer life right here, right?

God, forgive me for being angry towards so-and-so. Forgive me for the words that I spoke this morning to my child. You know, praying specifics is very important because I think you own and identify your sin and you're able to, I think, mortify it in terms of your prayer and repenting of it and acknowledging God's grace in it.

Ryan: Yeah. So there you have adoration and confession, and then Thanksgiving just follows from this. Thank you for your blessings. Thank you for your grace. Go on down the list. Thank you for my wife. Thank you for my children. And of course, you don't have to thank God for everything and every prayer. The point is, this is a habit you're developing.

Selena: Thanksgiving often... being grateful can grow you in your contentment. It can grow you in your ability to see the blessings in your life, which I guess would be a part of contentment, but can enliven your joy for the blessings He's given you, like you said, your spouse or your children, your family, your health. There's people that would kill for what you have on certain things, right?

Ryan: We're blessed far more than we realize, especially if you have the luxury of listening to this on some sort of device, some sort of car while you're living your life.

Selena: Right. So we have so much to be thankful for.

Ryan: Right. And then the final one is supplication, which that is where we see that in the Lord's prayer says, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil. That's just bringing your request to God. You have a loving Father. He's not stingy. He's not cheap. He's not lacking. He's not somehow wincing when you start asking for things because it's going to run up a bill. You can go to your Father. And you know what? He'll always answer. He might say no. Loving fathers say no a lot.

Selena: Right. So we trust that He's good in that.

Ryan: Right. Or He might say yes, or He might say not now. Right? The point is, is that we bring those requests to Him because we realize that He's the Father of lights. Every good and precious gift comes from Him, comes from above.

So praying together, this is the part that it's ...kind of the whole podcast episode has been leading to this. As a couple, how can you pray together? We have some very practical things that have worked for us, that have helped us

really cultivate a prayer life that I think, if I can be so candid, I think it's very sweet. I think it's very... I love praying with you. I love hearing your prayers. I love praying for you. I love covering you in prayer. I love that.

Selena: You love telling me to pray at the dinner table when I don't want to pray and you know that I don't want to pray.

Ryan: Especially when she's grumpy.

Selena: And I'm not in the mood to pray. And then I have to submit in front of all the daughters.

Ryan: That's a pro tip. So what are some tips here? So as a couple, here's what we recommend. Have a posture of prayer. Typically we'll be sitting down, it'll be at our morning coffee time when we're doing devotions, we're talking, getting ready for the day, I'll say, Let's pray. And we'll hold hands. Most often. Obviously closing our eyes. And we'll take turns. Most oftentimes I'm leading in prayer. You're closing in prayer. That doesn't have to be a rigid thing.

Sometimes I'll ask you to pray for me if I'm just having a staring up a steep hill in a mountain to work or I'm discouraged. And you've done the same to me. I'll say, "I just really need you to pray for me right now. Do you mind?"

And then in terms of what we pray for, this is where it gets a little sticky because, you know, well, how do I-

Selena: Pray that my husband would hear all my needs and you would just stop being annoying.

Ryan: Pray that my wife would just stop acting so messed up toward me. No. We say, start from head to toe. Okay? So our prayer books go through this as well, but you know, I'm praying for your mind. I'm praying for your eyes, that your eyes would be drawn to things that are good and Holy and virtuous and true, that you would say things from your mouth that are uplifting, that they would bring life, not death, that in your ears that you would not believe lies.

Selena: And for you, like your hands would be put to work in a way that would honor the Lord, that you would steward the work that He's given you. That your shoulders would be strong for the heavy loads that you often bear for our family as the head, as the man of the home. And your feet, may they take you to the places that the Lord has ordained and called you to, and may they be girded with peace. And praying the armor of the Lord on your spouse as well and asking that wherever he goes, whatever he does or puts his hand to, that it's glorifying to the Lord and edifying to our family.

Ryan: Yeah. So you can start to see how that just gets you going. Also, the cares that you would have. I'm thinking in my mind, what are the cares that are weighing you down?

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: Whether it's family, friends, different situations, just having an awareness of that. Contending. The biblical word is the intercessor, right? You're praying on behalf of somebody else. You're going to God on behalf of someone else.

Selena: Yeah. You did that for me recently in a prayer that was just kind of realigning. I think some priorities were out of whack in terms of my head and heart and you prayed, "Lord, I pray that she would have this thing as the first thing, and these is the second and help her to walk in that and to be steadfast in it." And it was such a blessing to my heart.

Ryan: Yeah. So there's some ideas on how we approach prayer in our marriage, in our personal lives. They're not unique to us, right? We didn't think this stuff up, but hopefully it got you thinking of it and it encouraged you to realize, Hey, it's not something that's out there and it's not about the right words. It's about approaching your good and loving father.

There's a few books out there that really do help. If you're looking to expand your prayer kind of repertoire, if you will, Valley of Vision is an incredible book. Prayer is written extremely... they're Puritan prayers. They're poetic. And they're beautiful in that way.

You can pray those and you can mean those prayers without being the one who wrote those prayers, but you'll find that as you do that sort of thing, that your repertoire and your vision for what prayer can be will expand and get more beautiful.

Selena: You can also pray through scripture, of course. Donald Whitney has a short book about praying through scripture. I think that's what it's called.

Ryan: It's very good.

Selena: Praying the Scripture.

Ryan: It's a very good book. I think it changed my prayer life, to be honest. And go to the Psalms, pray the Psalms. That's what they're there for. That's why they're there. Anyway, speaking of that, should we pray? Let's pray.

Selena: Always. Did you stop praying? It says pray without ceasing.

Ryan: Okay.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: I mean, I was talking to you. Does that count?

Selena: That's true.

Ryan: Father, thank you for the gift of prayer. Thank you that you've opened up the lines of communication, that you are known to us, or you've made yourself known to us through your word. You're not often somewhere else in the universe, ignoring us, but instead, you have communicated with us and asked us and commanded us indeed to communicate with you through prayer.

I pray that we would wield this gift carefully, mindfully, and faithfully. We pray for one another. I pray for couples who are struggling that you would enliven their hearts to pray for their spouse, whether they're angry, or have grown bitter, or their marriage feels lost. I pray, Lord, that you would fill them with faith to pray, to come to you, to bring the requests to you, to bring their spouse to you. Lord, we also pray that you would embolden them to pray with one another, they might grow closer to you and closer to one another. So it's in your son's name, we pray all these things. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Once again, as a reminder, if you want to partner with us, you can go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. That's a huge part of this ministry. Thank you if you are a patron, if you are a fellow. This is all possible in large part because of you. So you can take joy knowing that this ministry is partly because of you. So thank you. And that's it.

With that said, this episode of The Fierce Marriage podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Matthew 6:5-13
- **Recommended resource**
 - [40 Prayers for My Wife](#), Ryan Frederick
 - [40 Prayers for My Husband](#), Selena Frederick
 - [Valley of Vision](#), Arthur G. Bennett

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