

THE UNSTOPPABLE POWER OF A GRACE FILLED MARRIAGE-TFMP

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Ryan: We might be facing off, in a sense, in that we're having a conflict. But the thing that really diffuses it is, if you're watching, you can see my hands. But instead of facing each other, you're now saying, no, we want the same thing. We want a healthy marriage. We want to honor Christ. We want the same connection to each other. We want our kids to grow in a household that's marked by grace.

Selena: I don't know that we can realize this side of heaven how much we've been forgiven. But shouldn't that prompt us to be even more grateful, even more willing to stay in the ring with each other, you know, when you're fighting with each other, extend grace to one another.

Ryan: When you experience the grace of God in Christ, that you are responsible for your own sin, as an affront to the very holy, almighty Creator God, in your responsibility, has taken it from you and said, I'm going to bear that responsibility for you.

Selena: Wives, we have emotions, we have feelings, we want to voice to our husband. He's like, "Yeah, whatever. I don't care. Just deal with it." For whatever reason, he just cuts it off and says, "Here's how you fix it. Just do it this way."

Ryan: Jesus is making a point. You have been forgiven a debt that you could never ever pay. So how can you possibly hold a debt of, if you reduce it down, what was it? \$600,000 versus \$1.

[00:01:06] <music>

Ryan: Selena, I don't know what circumstances precipitated this, but I was... you know what I was doing? I was actually mowing the lawn.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: That's what I was doing. I was mowing the lawn. Basically, like three hours. This time it took me three hours. The grass was a little long.

Selena: It was a little long.

Ryan: And there's a good bit of it. And I was thinking, I was like, Man, I'm just so thankful for you. And I'm thinking, "What has made our marriage work? I don't know why I was thinking about this. Because like our whole lives is thinking about marriage. I feel like I can think about anything else. I was like, "What has made it work?" And I realized you are just such a grace-filled woman.

I mean, it's not like we've had all kinds of things that have needed extraordinary amounts of grace. I would call it ordinary grace. And that's not to downplay the nature of grace by any means, but just the saturation of grace that you've shown me as a wife. It was a light bulb moment. And we've been married 22 years, so maybe I've had a few of these light bulb moments. Just the necessity of grace in marriage.

Selena: Yeah. And I think that, you know, sometimes we go through seasons of needing those vast amounts of the Lord's grace to kind of pour over us. Not that we are not awash in His grace. That is one of the things that just flows through my head and heart all the time. But the daily measures of grace that we get within our marriage I think are a gift from God.

And when we are not living in sin, when we're not focused on, you know, kind of ourselves, I think that we can see more clearly how much grace really abounds in our hearts that the Lord has given to us. And when we recognize first the grace that has been extended to us individually, I mean, you hear us say this all the time, but I have to forgive my husband when he sins against me because I have been forgiven of so much.

So if so much grace our savior Jesus Christ has given, He's extended so much grace to me, how can I withhold any grace from my husband? And that can be a hard truth to hear, right? That can be a heavy weight around some people because there's like, well, what about, you know, if he continues to sin against me, do I still offer grace? Because then it just feels like I'm enabling the sin.

Ryan: There's some things to be teased out for sure. Because we're not talking about enabling sin or sweeping it under the rug. That's not what we're talking about.

Selena: It's not what grace is.

Ryan: And this isn't just about husbands needing grace from their wives. This is about husbands and wives exchanging grace.

Selena: Yes, on a daily basis.

Ryan: On a daily basis between each other. We all need grace. So we're going to explore exactly what this means. And as we hope to communicate, it is one of

the most important aspects of any marriage. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:03:31] <music>

Ryan: Selena, summer is upon us. It is upon us.

Selena: Tis upon us. But it's not in the heat of summer. Thank goodness.

Ryan: Methinks tis upon us.

Selena: Oh my goodness.

Ryan: I feel like my face is getting to that place where it just is going to be red for the next three months.

Selena: The Forge is at a nice temperature. It's not the forge of heat yet. It's coming where we're like, okay, we got to record early in the morning. This is the sweet time of year. It's at a great temperature.

Ryan: We shop where we record. There's no heat. There's no AC. We're in the Goldilocks period right now.

Selena: The Goldilocks.

Ryan: Not too hot, bot too cold. Just right.

Selena: Oh, I get it.

Ryan: Come on.

Selena: Come on.

Ryan: Anyway, if you're new here, welcome. This is the Fierce Marriage Podcast. My name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife, Selina. We are the Fredericks. We do this weekly just to remind couples, just like you, that marriage is important and you need Jesus. That's basically why we do what we do because we realize that in our lives and going on 22 years, the same is true.

Selena: Still need it.

Ryan: Still important. Still need Jesus. So I'm excited to get into this topic. I would contend that the marker, the most important marker of every marriage is grace. In particular, this is why Christians, I think, are specifically equipped to

deal with the ardor, the, I don't know what you'd call it, the difficulties of marriage. Because without a strong, Christ-based, God-centered view of grace, I can't imagine being married. You're living in too close a proximity with a person who is too imperfect. And if you don't understand how to forgive, I don't see how you deal with those things. You can get over things and you can overcome things, but are they ever truly dealt with?

Selena: I mean, that's the difference between, I think, not the difference, but one of the main differences between a covenantal marriage and a contractual marriage. You know, we say a covenantal is based on promise. It's this breathing relationship that we seek to honor one another. We're committed to one another. There's no one else, just us.

But as our sin nature goes, we tend to begin operating this contractual relationship of, well, you get your time, so I get my time. And you get to do this, so I get to do this. Hey, you did this, now, how come you did this against me?

Ryan: Or I get to hold that against you now.

Selena: Yeah, I get to hold it against you.

Ryan: Use it as leverage somehow.

Selena: Right. And so grace is this huge piece of a covenantal marriage that says, hey, remember who you are as a sinner, and then remember who your spouse is, also a sinner. And we can't operate in self-righteousness.

Ryan: That's the key, right, is grace compels us, like you just said, to remember who we are in two ways. We're sinners. Full stop. And if it weren't for the end of the sentence, which is saved by grace, we wouldn't have a mechanism to deal with the fact that we're sinners. We would be stuck in it. We would be dead in our sin.

So it's very important, as we hope to communicate today... In fact, the verse that comes to mind for this, Ephesians 2, starting in verse 8, it says, "It is for by grace you've been saved through faith, and it is not of your own doing, but it is a gift from God." I mean, there's tons of verses like this in Scripture. But the whole point is, it's not of your own doing. It's not by your own merit. It's not because you've somehow unlocked it.

In fact, we have been given the gift of grace. This is part and parcel with the Christian life. So, what is a grace-filled marriage? I would say this. A grace-filled marriage means that you are fighting the same enemy. You're not fighting

against each other. You're fighting back the darkness shoulder to shoulder. And a grace-filled marriage means you have the same Savior. So you're fighting the same enemy. You want the same thing. And you are doing so by the fueling, or the infusing of the Spirit of God through the Savior of Christ. And we share all those things together.

And this idea that you have the same Savior actually means that you are fully... what is it? You're fully aware of the fact that you are loved and saved by the same blood. Now, if you're a Christian, that shouldn't sound unfamiliar to you. But what might sound familiar is how that actually bears its weight in the daily nitty-gritty of being married.

In fact, when we say to couples... I've had people ask me, what's the one thing you would tell couples? I've been on various, I don't know, spots where I've had to think on my feet. And thankfully, I've already thought through this. What are the foundations of marriage? What's one thing you could tell couples?

And I would say, you need three things. You need the gospel. What is the gospel? Again, it's this idea that we're sinners saved by grace. It's not of our own doing, but it is a gift from God. That is the absolute baseline foundation.

And then from there, you need two really strong pillars. Those two strong pillars are love. You need to know that love is not something that you muster. It's not something that we even created. Love is part of the character of God Himself. And we love according to God's character, not according to our character, not according to societal norms or societal pressures. We need to understand love. So you need the gospel. You need to understand love. You need to understand covenant.

We have a God who has loved us. How? Covenantally. And He has said, now you love each other in this covenant of marriage based on the bedrock of the gospel. And so grace conversation belongs to the very bedrock part of that. Does that make sense?

Selena: So good. Yeah. And when you talked about how we're fighting the same enemy, grace orients us to not fight each other. So if we're, you know... and we'll get into this, but I just want to frame the conversation. If we're fighting because you've hurt my pride or you did something that I didn't think you should have done and now I'm just upset, I'm not making room for grace in that. I mean, I have the opportunity at that point to make room for grace or I can say you're wrong. I'm going to hold this against you and I'm frustrated and I don't want to... like, I'm going to give you the cold shoulder. We're not going

to communicate, you know, whatever. We're going to pout about it, stew about it.

And that is not creating a culture of grace in your marriage. A culture of grace would say, "You know what? Yeah, this sucks. Hey, let's reconcile because I don't think that this... you know, you not taking out the garbage or something, are you not doing this, I don't think that's actually the thing that's bothering me. I think there's a little bit more here. Can we explore this together?"

I would say nine times out of 10, you'll find out that you guys actually have the same common enemy of, you know, something greater that's going on. There's maybe some discontentment happening. Maybe there's just a lack of gratefulness in your hearts toward one another. Those are the battles that you want to fight together. You want to be able to cultivate gratefulness and love for one another and joy with each other. But it takes grace to do these things.

Ryan: It's like we've said recently in our own marriage, but we said it many times since on the podcast. One of the things that really diffuses conflict, diffuses misunderstanding is coming to each other and saying, We want the same thing. And that's what you're saying is that we might be facing off in a sense and that we're having a conflict, but the thing that really diffuses it is... if you're watching, you can see my hands. But instead of facing each other, you're now saying, no, we want the same thing. We want a healthy marriage, one that honors Christ. We want the same connection to each other. We want our kids to grow in a household that's marked by grace.

That takes the focus off you and even off each other and puts it squarely on Christ. And it lets you go about the business of reconciling truly.

Selena: It orients you rightly.

Ryan: It orients you. We were brainstorming for this and thinking through the various ways to communicate it, one of the questions you raised was, so by way of opposite, so what would be the opposite of grace that we see couples? And the concept...

Selena: That was a really big question when I asked it.

Ryan: Well, we were just brainstorming. Precision really matters. I think we need to get these things right.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And the first thing that came to our minds, and you brought it up and I thought, "Okay, that needs to be teased out," is the word "judgment". So when you think in terms of God's grace given to us, what does He give us instead of his judgment? He gives us grace.

And then I got to thinking, I put on my theologian hat and I'm like, well, is God's judgment just negated in grace? Again, I'm speaking in salvificly in terms of salvation. So it may be a little bit different than how you would play itself out in marriage. But the reality of judgment is, people, oftentimes, we paint judgment in this... We paint God as judge in our minds as He's harsh, He is unrelenting.

I would say He's unrelenting in His holiness. I definitely would not say He's harsh. His grace is an example of why He's not harsh. But His judgment is not negated by grace, but rather His judgment has been borne by His own son on the cross.

In other words, when we stand before God, whether you were in Christ or not, of course, we want you to be in Christ, and that's why we always share the gospel at the end of these episodes. You will stand before God one day and you will be judged. The question is, on whose merit will you be judged?

The judgment is going to happen. The question is who will be judged in your stead if not you? And for Christians, the answer is I'm in Christ. So when the father sees you, He actually sees His perfect Son who has paid the price, who has been judged with the wrath of God on the cross and defeated death because He was judged and found righteous.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And so I just want to be... I don't know. I think that's helpful just to kind of...

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: So the antithesis of grace is not judgment. I would actually say the antithesis of grace in marriage would be criticism without forgiveness.

Selena: Okay. In the context of marriage, yes.

Ryan: In the context of marriage. So we could tease this out and then we might be able to find better ways to articulate this. But this is the way that we came up with. So it's criticism in marriage without forgiveness. In other words, it is the ugly outworking of being fully-known, but not fully loved. Remember in the gospel, we are fully known by God. There's nothing that's hidden to His eyes.

There's nothing that we can say, do, think, feel, any motive, any plan, anything that... He sees it all.

Selena: Like more than we see it.

Ryan: Truly. He knows the depths of our own hearts more than we do. And the beauty of the gospel is that we are fully known and still fully loved because of the salvation we have in Christ. Because we are given all of the benefits of our salvation, including the adoption, including the perfection, the sanctification, all the things. And I could go through all the terms, but in marriage, the lack of grace is the ugly outworking of being fully known and then not fully loved.

And as I said, this is the complete opposite. It's the antithesis to how we are receiving grace in Christ. And so the calibrating, I think, thing that you've said here and the driving force behind all of this is we have to understand how we are loved in Christ, that we're fully known and fully loved in Christ.

Selena: Right. Because without Christ, we could never pay the debt that we owe in terms of our sin, in terms of... we deserve the wrath of God outside of Christ, outside of Him saving us, we deserve His wrath. And God made a way, the only way through His son.

Let's take an example in the Bible in Matthew 18. I think it's 21. It starts the parable of the unforgiving servant. Do you want me to read it or do you want to?

Ryan: Yeah. And production note, if you could put the verse on the screen as an overlay, that would be helpful because this is a longer passage. It's just in the it's called the English Standard Version. You should be able to look it up online.

Selena: ESV.

Ryan: ESV, Matthew 18, starting in verse 21 through 35. So just do a quick intro.

Selena: So let's take a look of an example of this in the Bible, going to Matthew 18, beginning in verse 21, the parable of the unforgiving servant.

"Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.' Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him

to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Ryan: And if that doesn't hit you like a ton of bricks, that last verse, "so also my heavenly father will do to every one of you..." Remember he threw him in prison, the whole family, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. I mean, we've mentioned that before. And the reason is because that's just been so driving in our own lives.

One of the things with this passage and with any gospel passage, frankly, is we need to understand how the readers would have understood it, how the hearers of this would have understood it.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: I'm not going to go through the whole thing, but I think a talent is like a year's wage. And so 10,000 of these, 10,000 talents. And so in today's dollars, you can go and do the calculations. You might find different endpoints, but here's the calculations we came up with. 10,000 talents versus a hundred denarii is the modern equivalent of \$6 billion versus \$10,000.

Selena: So the servant was forgiven by his master, approximately \$6 billion. And then the servant goes to one of his servant buddies and says, "Hey, you owe me 10,000. Pay up."

Ryan: Right. And so the hearers of this would have said, well, that first person's debt was completely insurmountable.

Selena: Right. You would think that the response would be one of such gratefulness. I would have forgotten anybody who owed me anything because I've been forgiven so much, and my family is free still. I don't have to...

Ryan: And that's the point Jesus was making is that you have on one end of the spectrum, you have a completely insurmountable amount of debt that you couldn't spend. I don't know how many lifetimes it would take us to earn \$6 billion. It was more than the one we have. And so there's no way I can possibly pay that back. I have now a life ahead of me of indentured servitude to that King. I owe him everything.

And not only did he say, "Okay, I'm not going to throw you in prison. You can pay me back over time," he said, "Your debt is forgiven. It's completely forgiven." Versus on the other end of the spectrum, \$10,000. Like, I don't know, average wages, whatever, but we'll call it between one and two months of your income. And if you pay it out over a couple of years, it's pretty manageable. It's pretty manageable. So you have unmanageable debt on like...

Selena: Crushing.

Ryan: It's crushing debt. On the other end, you have debt that can be paid off. And so Jesus is making a point. You have been forgiven a debt that you could never, ever pay. So how can you possibly hold a debt of... And actually, if you reduce it down, what was it? It's like \$600,000 versus \$1. So imagine you own your house, if you're a solicitor. Take your house, I don't know what it's mortgaged for, but we'll say it's mortgaged for \$600,000, and that's what you owe on it. That's a nice house. So good job. Way to go. Got a nice house. Or maybe you have whatever. Take your mortgage, whatever it is. And the bank called you today, and they said, you know what? Your debt's forgiven. What?" "I told you I got 30 years to pay this thing off. I got a decent interest rate." Well, nowadays the interest is a bit iffy. But you say, "Wow, I don't even have..." How freeing would that be for you as somebody who is encumbered by this debt?

And then the second phone call you make, after the bank calls you and you pick it up, you call your buddy and say, "Give me back my dollar." One dollar. Is now what you're going to squabble over when you've been forgiven the entire mortgage on your house?

Selena: Well, and I think that's the point, obviously, that Jesus is making. He's pointing at the heart. I mean, he ends this passage with, "If you do not forgive your brother from the heart." So He's pointing at the heart saying, you've been forgiven. The servant clearly does not understand the forgiveness, the level of

forgiveness, or he doesn't understand the debt that he owed and how much he was given in terms of grace and forgiveness and freedom because that did not translate to how he interacted and spoke to his other buddy that owed him a little tiny bit of change.

And so it's very telling about the heart orientation of the servant who was forgiven his debt. You know, we don't realize, and I don't know that we can realize this side of heaven how much we've been forgiven. But shouldn't that prompt us to be even more grateful, even more willing to stay in the ring with each other, you know, when you're fighting with each other, extend grace to one another, work to have the clear communication and be committed to working through some of these fights, whatever the sin is, the hurt, you know, the addiction, the trust being broken. There's grace for this. There's grace for this in Christ.

Ryan: One of the more tragic ways to think about this is if you have a spouse that has experienced this is \$6 billion grace. I have stories of men that I've talked to, even some friends, done some pretty egregious things and even haven't done egregious things, are just kind of living their lives imperfectly. But they are fully, fully awash in God's grace. They're fully wanting to live for Christ.

Selena: They've turned from it.

Ryan: They've turned from it. They have asked for forgiveness. They have made steps to make that right, to correct it, whatever steps those might be, and then their spouse turns around and says, "Okay, God's going to give you that. But I'm just going to, you know, you made it to the one-yard line, but I'm going to hold back and I'm not going to give you that full measure of grace."

Now they do have full... like use the analogy 'you're on the one-yard line', in God's economy, they're in the end zone, right? A spouse can't hold back God's grace from somebody else. But in terms of experiencing that victory, the spouse is the one that's saying, nope, I'm going to hold you back just an inch away, an inch away and rob you, in a sense, of that full freedom, that full reconciliation.

Now that's the brokenness of us in this life. And this is hopefully why this podcast might be timely for you, that it could help you extend the grace given to you in Christ. And to that end, we wanted to think of some really tangible examples of grace in marriage. Because I think there's a few places that our minds go.

And if you've been hurt, this is going to be harder for you. Like if you're dealing with distrust, you're dealing with broken trust, it's going to be harder. And

we're not saying that all of a sudden all of the past goes away. But what we are saying is that the moral high ground doesn't exist. It doesn't mean that you're not hurt. It just means the moral high ground is leveled.

So one clear example is if your spouse has had an affair. I don't like to use that term. If your spouse has had or committed adultery, whether it's emotional adultery, physical adultery, they have given themselves to somebody else, when they vowed to give themselves only to you, and they've gone outside the marriage bed, and they have become an adulteress or an adulterer. Grievous sin. That's kind of where our minds tend to go, right?

So are we going to extend grace in that instance? Well, do you want to reconcile with your spouse? If they're repentant of that, reconciliation is on the table. It's not an insurmountable obstacle. We've seen couples overcome it to great reward, to share a great testimony of God's grace. In fact, I saw a video, it's circulating right now, the reels. It was a woman who... she was crying, and she's sharing her story. She was probably in her late 40s, 50s, whatever. They'd been married a number of years.

She's sharing the story of how she had had an affair for three years with her husband's best friend. And she kind of throughout her sharing her testimony, she said, I fully expected him just to do what every other guy I've seen do — just leave. I deserved it. I had an affair, right? I was an adulteress for three years, and I just expected him to leave. And she's tearing up and she says, "Of course, he was dejected. He took it and he felt betrayed. He felt all those things. And he looked at her through teary eyes and just says, I don't know how to do anything else but love you."

And she started tearing up and she said, "That was the moment I experienced Christ's grace for the first time. I actually knew what it meant. I actually..." She was face to face. See how marriage becomes a force for the gospel to work itself out? This is why we're fully known, so that we can experience this idea of being fully loved.

And then what we're trying to say here is that there's no sense of fully loving somebody unless it's in light of this love that we've received from God in Christ.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: So that's the adultery version. That's the adultery example. Another one is porn addiction, which porn addiction is adultery of the heart. And so a wife can feel very betrayed by that. I'm talking to many men, like I said before, and porn is rampant and it hasn't spared the Christian community, sadly.

A lot of Christian men have wrestled with porn addiction and committing adultery of the heart. Some have experienced victory, praise God. And they get through that. And they, in some cases, are so hesitant to share it with their wives because they don't want to hurt their wives, but then they know they have to, because that's what it means to be transparent, to be fully known. And so they'll go share it with their wife. And there's times when the wife is reeling and she's feeling the full weight of it and she, over time, will extend the forgiveness.

Selena: And they work towards building trust.

Ryan: And they work toward it. And there are times when the wife just says, "I'm not ready." And it's like a long period of time. And that's where a conversation like this is, I think, very appropriate. Because again, you have a repentant man. And we're not just going to pick on the guys here. But the idea is you have somebody who's fully repentant of it, who are we to withhold the grace from them, the forgiveness of God that we've received? What are some other examples?

Selena: I think, you know, for wives, when we are either maybe grumbling, complaining, or gossiping about our husband, or sharing maybe private details about marriage, about our marriage, you know, with others without permission from our husbands, I think that can definitely get us into some pickles, to say the least.

Ryan: I would say we're not advocating that you isolate. You need to be in a Christian community. But there's a sense in which there's a trust that's being breached if you're not doing so together.

Selena: Well, what's the end game? Am I here to just wallow in whatever I'm feeling? Or am I here to seek the wisdom, advice, and prayers of my Christian sisters around me? So that changes the whole conversation. Those types of things are... it is a sin. The Bible calls grumbling, and complaining, and gossiping a sin.

Ryan: One that comes to mind for wives, I'm gonna jump in-

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: ...is when a wife is consistently disrespectful and undercutting to her husband, she refuses to acknowledge his headship.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Even if he's trying.

Selena: Oh, sure. Maybe he hasn't for years, and now he's trying, and there's still a...

Ryan: Or, no, yes, again, I don't wanna dog on the men. So you have a guy that is... he's not asleep at the wheel but he's just got a belligerently rebellious wife who refuses to let him lead. All right? They exist. And you have reasonable men and unreasonable wives. This is a dynamic in some marriages. And so over time, she's not honored him, she's not respected him, she's habitually undermined him, gone behind him, and that's created a bitterness in him.

Then you have a wife who maybe is recognizing that, the Lord works in wives too, and she is being sanctified, and she's realizing this is damaging, it's not honoring the Lord, and she now says, "Okay, I'm gonna respond to this dynamic, this headship dynamic.

Selena: Submit. The word is submit.

Ryan: It is. And that husband could be tempted to say, okay, whatever.

Selena: Initially, you probably wouldn't put a lot of weight in it.

Ryan: ... because you've just given me no reason to trust that you actually respect me now.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Because I've seen you do it a thousand times, and what's going to keep you from doing it one more time?

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: And that husband, the call to that husband is, stay in the game, as my friend John Michael says, maintain your frame, and continue to lead. Forgive, and lead by your forgiveness, and she'll experience God's grace in it. You mentioned grumbling and complaining. This one is huge. What's the next ones?

Selena: Not following through on small promises or commitments.

Ryan: Yeah. "I'll be home at six. Oh, yeah. I promise, I'll be home at six for dinner." And you're rolling at seven o'clock, six thirty, "Yeah, I got caught up. I was, you know, doing whatever. I was on a meeting," where things like work continually is consistently prioritized, hobbies are prioritized. You're prioritizing your

friends over quality time. You're prioritizing friends over your parenting duties. These can erode trust.

Again, we're always talking about in light of a change of heart. That damaged trust-

Selena: Is there.

Ryan: That habit is there. You gotta deal with it. Right? But there's a point at which-

Selena: You should deal with it.

Ryan: If you do deal with it, then it's like the only way to get to the full end of it is to extend grace and not, you know, hold their feet to the fire.

Selena: Dismissing or minimizing a spouse's concerns or feelings, I think that can be really hard for marriages because, you know, wives, we have emotions, we have feelings, we have things and concerns we wanna voice to our husband. He's like, "Yeah. Whatever. I don't care. Just deal with it. I don't care." Like, for whatever reason, he just cuts it off and says, "Here's how you fix it. Just do it this way. I don't wanna deal with it. Just throw money at it. Whatever."

And so there's this lack of buy-in on anything from the husband, lack of engagement. Wives are the same way. Wives get super distracted on phones if they're doing business stuff or they're online or whatever. You know? They can equally be just as distracted and flippant about their husband's feelings, emotions, concerns.

Ryan: I saw another video. Sorry. I'm spending too much time on reels.

Selena: It's okay. You can talk. Seems like you know this really well.

Ryan: No. It was a... I don't know what it was. It was some sort of counseling session. And the guy was explaining. He's like, yeah, I came home, and I told her, "Hey. I'd like to take you out to dinner tomorrow night, and I'd like to spend some time together." And she goes, "What for?" And then his response was, "At that point I kinda disengaged." I said, "Forget it. I don't even wanna do it anymore."

The whole big point of the video was like, why did she say that? Because inside she was happy, but for some reason, she felt like she couldn't show that.

Selena: Right. Because there's all those things that star becoming a default. It becomes a norm for you to not be together, for you to not do these extensions of, you

know, love and show affection. I think the dismissing and minimizing is just a flippant response, and it's connected to something deeper going on.

Ryan: I think this one is huge. It's sometimes when couples will keep secrets about minor interactions or communication with others because they know that there's something, there's a shade to it that's not quite right. You know when you're getting a little friendly with Todd. He's the guy that we always pick on. I think it's Todd.

Selena: Oh, okay.

Ryan: Todd, you know, the cubicle next door or the receptionist.

Selena: Sandy?

Ryan: Todd and Sandy. The worst. Sorry if that's your names, by the way.

Selena: It's nothing.

Ryan: It's not based on anybody in your life. You know, Sandy's the receptionist at the gym, and, you know, you were a little bit extra friendly, and it was flirtatious. And you know it but you're concealing it because you kinda liked it and it kinda made you feel like you still had it. And now Sandy's got this wedge between the two of you. She doesn't even know it.

Selena: And interestingly enough, whenever something similar like, something like this has happened, we feel like it's small. Right? And we wanna ignore it. I feel like the second that I've ever confessed anything like that or something that I've been like, I don't know if I need to share or if I should share, I'm always grateful for the amount of grace that you just pour over it. And we usually end up laughing about that. Not this... you know?

Ryan: Todd's not real.

Selena: Todd's not real. But things where you feel like you've indulged in a guilty pleasure or something in some way. That has not just come automatically. I think that takes some security and maturity. It takes a realization, of course, the foundation of I've been extended so much grace. I've gotta extend some grace.

If it's a constant struggle, that's gonna be a different conversation. If I am constantly struggling with, like, gosh, Todd is just, you know, so handsome. He's so handsome or something. Right? It's like I have to go to my husband all

the time, then he's gonna be like, okay, there's clearly something deeper going on.

Ryan: I have a dartboard in my office with Todd's face on it.

Selena: Todd does not exist.

Ryan: With the wonders of AI, I can create Todd. I'm gonna upload this episode and say, Show me Todd.

Selena: Show me Todd.

Ryan: He's gonna look like an idiot.

Selena: Oh my goodness.

Ryan: It's Toby.

Selena: All I'm saying is that I think that we need to be transparent with our spouse about everything and try to expect... I mean, be humble about it all, but don't be surprised when... you know, if you've taken the time to cultivate grace in all the other areas, why wouldn't it flow into this as well? And that's hard to see when you're the one guilty, so to speak.

Ryan: Well, grace is sometimes hard to see. That's why it takes faith.

Selena: It is.

Ryan: Another one, criticizing or correcting your spouse in public. That might sound, I don't know... This could be extra sour to a couple who has already had a contentious relationship.

Selena: Well, I think it's like a consistent thing. Like, if that's all your vocabulary, it's like, ugh, no, you don't know anything about this. Like, if it's a constant, there's a tone to it, there's like a... you know what I'm talking about? Because you correct me a lot because sometimes I'll be like, oh, I think it's over there. And you're like, no, babe, trully it's over there.

And that's a different orientation versus like I always tell you where to go, and you never know how to do it. It's the "never" and "always" kind of statements, I think, that they're talking about. That would be my-

Ryan: Okay. Good.

- Selena:** You're always this. You're never this. But somehow you're always and never.
- Ryan:** So the trick the tricky part of this is it sometimes works its way into your marriage vernacular without you even realizing it. And that's why it's so important to have community because you can have people that are new to knowing you and they're saying, like, do you always talk to each other like this? Because this sounds like-
- Selena:** Versus somebody coming over and be like, hey, are you alright? Like, what's going on? You got some hard things going on at work? Or, how's the wife?
- Ryan:** "I saw you being kind of a jerk there. Kinda acting like a jerk, buddy."
- Selena:** "Kinda weren't very nice to her. Are you always like this?"
- Ryan:** Yeah. In fact, that was one of the things that really helped us was a couple that pulled us aside and said, "Hey, we're noticing that you guys are..."
- Selena:** "I'm noticing that Ryan is just really... he's kind of annoying and-
- Ryan:** Noticing that Ryan is really having to endure it. He's a little ball and chain. He's a lot more ball than chain, if you know what I mean. Anyway, that's really, very helpful. There's a few more here. Sarcasm. So you can use sarcasm as a way to undermine your spouse's confidence, and you can do that over time.
- So imagine that's you, you're the recipient of the start sarcasm. I think grace would compel you to muster the words, to pray through exactly the approach, and then to bring that to your spouse. And that's part of grace too. It's not just a reactive grace. I think there's a proactive version of grace here where if you're-
- Selena:** Conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- Ryan:** Sure. Proactive grace, AKA conviction. Sure. So if that situation plays itself out, then... there's many opportunities, I'll say, for extending grace in both how you present problems, but also how you deal with problems as they're presented to you.
- Selena:** I think this last one, at least I think it should probably maybe be last. You can dictate how you feel.
- Ryan:** We have more than one.

Selena: Yeah. Well, maybe there's two. Okay. Well, the last one on this list is taking a spouse's contributions or presence for granted. And I think that's kind of where the gossip, the complaining, the grumbling, the harsh corrections, all of that to me flows from a heart that is just taken for granted the very being of their spouse. Taking for granted that you are here healthy, that you are here loving me, that you're attentive to me, that you're not on your phone all the time.

Ryan: Amen.

Selena: That you are present, you know, with our kids. And those all take effort. And if I just expect that to always be, like, this is how it should be. This is what my Instagram says that a happy family is like. I'm being, you know, gratuitous.

Ryan: Comparing the spouse unfavorably to others. It's like you discover it too.

Selena: It all flows from a place of discontentment, of not realizing what I've been given as a gift from the Lord in my spouse and in our marriage, and what he contributes and brings. I know that there are wives that are not seeing clearly the gift and blessing that their husbands are to them and their family. And Christian wives. You know, some that would say, yeah. I love my husband. Yeah, we have a good marriage. But if you were a fly on the wall and you heard their conversations or lack thereof, you'd be like, "What? This does not make any sense." They're just always complaining about Todd, and they're always complaining about how he's never there and how he... because he's flirting at work.

Ryan: So Todd's married now. Todd needs some grace, people. He's the worst. All right? But, you know, God's grace is big enough even for Todd and Sandy. You know what? You hit the nail on the head because, as I was processing through the grace kind of epiphany, it's not new, but it was made new in my part of mind, is I feel like there's two... grace always begets gratefulness is what you're articulating.

Because when you experience the grace of God in Christ, you realize that you are responsible for your own sin as an affront to the very holy, almighty, creator God. And yet in your responsibility, he's taken it from you and said, I'm gonna bear that responsibility for you. The inevitable outcome of that is grace, is gratefulness and the two together.

And so grace, gratefulness, these are foundational aspects of a Christian marriage... of any marriage. And I would argue that outside of Christ, I don't think you can really know grace. I'll say this. Outside of Christ, you can't know grace. So how can you extend something you don't know?

And so as we always do, we end this with the call to grace. Christ uses means like these. They call them common graces, things where... his means of grace communicating through God's word. We've shared from Matthew 18. This is God's word. These aren't Ryan and Selena's words. That grace is this magnificent \$6 billion forgiven to you. How could we hold a \$10,000 debt against anyone? That's the grace of God in Christ, and it's been extended to you if you are in Him.

If you are not in Christ, we want you to be in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? It's simply this: to place your faith in Him, to place your faith trusting that He is not just a man, He was not just a teacher, He was not just a prophet, He was not a magician. He was not a skilled orator. Christ was God who became flesh. He is God. He walked on the earth among us. That in itself is a testimony of God's magnificent grace.

Then He performed miracles to prove His divinity. We have record of that. We have historical record of that. We have so many things to point us to the reality that this happened. He died an unjust death before Pontius Pilate. He didn't stay dead. He conquered death. He conquered sin, paid the price for our sin, walked among His disciples again.

Selena: He rose from the grave. Yeah.

Ryan: He rose from the grave and ascended into heaven, and now He reigns at the right hand of the Father still in grace. And so to be in Christ means that you say, yes, I believe in that God man. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I will pin my whole eternity on Him. That's what it means to be in Christ. We want that for you.

We have a website set up. If you wanna learn more about this, go to thenewsisgood.com. You'll see kind of a brief outline of what the gospel is with proof texts and scriptures and things. And then you'll have a church finder. If you don't have a church, we want you to get into a church. You need to be a part of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. He's called you out. Now he wants you to be in gathered into the church. And so find a church. Like I said, there's a church finder there. Or just talk to a Christian friend and say, "Hey, can we read the Bible together? I'd like to go to church. Where do I start?"

Selena: Go to church with them.

Ryan: Go to church with them.

Selena: They should be going to church.

Ryan: They should be. Yes. Tell them they need to go to church. It's probably Todd.

Selena: It's probably Todd.

Ryan: Anyway, let's pray. Father in heaven, thank You for the gift of Your grace through Your Son. Lord, it's something that, as Christians, I think we can take it so for granted. And, Lord, correct us. May this be a rebuke to us, but not just a rebuke and ending it there, but a rebuke and a call into a truer life that is more reliant on Your grace, that is more aware of the magnitude of this debt that You've paid on our behalf.

I pray that You would help couples who are struggling to understand Your grace, and it's evident because they've forgotten how to extend grace to each other. Lord, I pray that they would have a strong, unmistakable realization of Your grace. And, Lord, I pray that you would help them work through what that means to extend grace to one another. Lord, I pray that their marriage would flourish, their children would flourish as a result. In your Son's name, we pray. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Amen. We didn't mention it, but the Fierce Marriage podcast is made possible largely because of our awesome fellows through the Fierce Fellowship. Thank you if that's you. We've had a few new fellows hop on board. Selena did an update this past week.

Selena: A late update. I'm trying to do it at the end of the month, so we have things to update on, but it was... May just happened, people. Here we are. And now into June.

Ryan: And you know what? My favorite thing is getting to know some of the people in there. There's a few guys that I've gotten to know and gotten to know through the Fierce Fellowship, and can confidently say, like, they are brothers. We've never met in person, but when we do, it's gonna be a big hug and a big brotherly kiss.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Hey. So that's what Paul says. Right? Greet each other with a brotherly kiss. Not on the lips. Don't try it. Anyway, that good?

Selena: Yeah. Sounds good.

Ryan: Sounds good to Selena. Sounds good for me. All right. 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 18:21-35

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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