

MARRIAGE ADVERSARIES VS. MARRIAGE ADVOCATES

<https://fiercemarriage.com/marriage-adversaries-vs-marriage-advocates>

[00:00:01] **Ryan:** [*The Final Countdown song plays*] Ladies and gentlemen! Season three [*Pauses speaking*] of the Fierce Marriage Podcast. Brought to you by Ryan and Selena Frederick in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. We've made it to Season threeeeeee! Woo! Yeah. [*The Final Countdown song ends suddenly*]

Yeah. What do you think of that one?

Selena: That was a good one.

Ryan: Kay. We had to do a few different takes there.

Selena: [*Selena chuckles*] That was a good one. [*Both laugh*]

Ryan: [*Ryan laughs*] That was a good one! Yeah. Season three. So, this is the two-year anniversary. You know what? I honestly don't know when seasons are supposed to start and stop [*Selena laughs*], so, we're just doing it—

Selena: We're just doing it annually. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: Annually.

Selena: I think some people do it at, like, 20 episodes or something. [*Chuckles*] We're doing it like a hundred and something. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: [*Chuckling*] Yeah. So, yeah. We've not—

Selena: So, they're really big deal. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: This is the 121st episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast. We haven't missed a week in *two* years. Can you believe that?

Selena: Wow.

Ryan: Yeah. I can't believe that.

Selena: I can't...

Ryan: We've managed to get [*Selena clears her throat*] it through—But we have a baby due. *You* have a baby due. [*Selena laughs and Ryan chuckles*] I'm not part of this.

Selena: [*Laughing*] Not a part of this.

Ryan: I'm kidding.

Selena: *[Chuckling]* I heard you took care of my side—

Ryan: *[Laughs]* Yeah. I'm done!

Selena: Of the equation. *[Laughing]*

Ryan: I phoned it in. I'm done. *[Chuckles]* Anyway. So, yeah. We have a baby due in about three weeks, but... And I still think we're not going to miss a week, because we've pre-recorded a few things.

Selena: Ha-ha!

Ryan: Anyway. Thank you so much, listeners, for tuning in for all this time, and if you're new to the Fierce Marriage podcast, welcome. This week, so although we're celebrating kind of, this is the beginning of our third season or third year—

Selena: It's the beginning of the end for you folks. *[Laughs]*

Ryan: Yeah. That song—

Selena: *[Chuckling]* Just kidding.

Ryan: Is called The Final Countdown, so *[Selena laughs]* ... *[Ryan chuckles]* That makes sense. Anyway. So, we're going to—

Selena: It's not.

Ryan: A marriage—

Selena: We're not ending.

Ryan: Yeah, we're not ending. Not at all. *[Selena chuckles]* So, we're going to talk about marriage advocates verses marriage adversaries.

Selena: Mm-hm.

Ryan: And what's the difference, and how can we really be mindful of how we're surrounding ourselves with friends, and the advice that we're listening to. I think it's a timely—It's always timely, because you always need people in your ear, and it just depends on what kind of people are you actually giving your ears to.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And giving a platform in your life. So...

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Thanks for joining us for this conversation and thank you for joining us for season three. And we will see you on the other side.

[00:02:06] <Intro Sequence>

[00:02:36] **Selena:** Well, I thought that was on the other side already. I thought we were already on the other side.

Ryan: No. No. This is the other side.

Selena: Wow. Okay, now we're [Chuckling] on the other side.

Ryan: Now we're on the other side.

Selena: Now we're on the other side.

Ryan: So, one of the things I love about Selena... So, we had a little bit of a debate about [Selena chuckles] what song to actually play. Selena wanted to play this song, which... Ladies and gentlemen, Selena is just the most amazing person. This song. [Selena laughs] [Another song intro plays] Yes!

Selena: It kind of gets you going. Ya know?

Ryan: Oh! It's so good.

Selena: It's really great.

Ryan: It's officially [Song stops] my new favorite band. I—It's... And they're not "new."

Selena: We've been bonding over it.

Ryan: We've been bonding over them, if you're curious.

Selena: Our kids are like, "Can you turn it down?!" [Selena laughs and Ryan chuckles] We're in the car driving.

Ryan: I just want to let—We rock so hard to that s—Selena rocks pretty hard to that song. [Selena laughs] The band is Blessed by a Broken Heart. They're awesome. So, check'em out if you like Hair Metal and those sorts of things. I think they're on a Christian label; I don't know that they're a Christian band. So, that's my disclaimer. [Selena laughs] That is my disclaimer.

Selena: Good thing you have disclaimers. [Chuckling]

Ryan: Yeah!

- Selena:** Awesome. [*Selena smacks lips*] Yeah, so, we have bonded over that uh... [*Ryan chuckles*] song and the band a little bit. [*Selena inhales*] And—
- Ryan:** There's many good songs on that album.
- Selena:** [*Chuckles*] There are many good...
- Ryan:** It's called *Pedal to the Metal!* [*Selena laughs and Ryan chuckles*] They're just so incredible!
- Selena:** Just following my husband's lead over here. [*Both laugh*] But, yeah. Today we're going to talk about having advocates verses adversaries in your marriage, and what that looks like, kind of comparing and contrasting the functions of those people and what their motivations are and how important they are for the health of our marriage. God didn't design us to do *anything* alone, really. He is a triune God, and so there's—
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** I feel like that is a *huge* indicator—
- Ryan:** It's relational. Yeah.
- Selena:** Very relational. There are just attributes of God that we are called to emulate. [*Clears throat*] Not being triune in nature but having people in our lives that are so closely aware of the things we're kind of walking through together. So, anyways. We're going to try it. We're going to talk about how to identify those people. I know that's been a lot of questions that we've got.
- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** How do we find people in our lives that can be marriage mentors and advocates for our marriage, and what about the people that aren't? How do we deal with them?
- Ryan:** Yeah. The toxic relationships.
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** Or the in-laws that are over-bearing, or the in-laws that aren't actually looking out for you as a married couple; they're looking out for you as an individual [*Chuckles*].
- Selena:** Right. And if we have time—
- Ryan:** We get a lot of those questions.

Selena: We'll try to hit a question from you guys, 'cause we've been getting lots of questions; so, that's been good.

So, housekeeping! You want to go through it?

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. Like you said—

Selena: Since I apparently do it slow [*Draws out the word*].

[00:05:01] **Ryan:** No, you do it *thoroughly*; that's the word! It's *tho-rough*. [*Chuckles*]

Selena: [*Chuckling and speaks slowly*] Tho-rough [*Resumes normal speed*].

Ryan: So, like we mentioned, we're headed into the third season, so we've been doing this for a full two years as of the first Tuesday in October, which is when this will come out. And we couldn't be more blessed. It's been an amazing time. For some reason, there's a ton more listeners this month [*Both chuckle*] than the last month. I think we have like 50 or 60% *more*—

Selena: Because of my rundowns.

Ryan: It's because of you! [*Selena laughs*] It's because of—It's not...

Selena: Can we just give credit?

Ryan: Yeah. Let's just take the credit, you know? [*Selena laughs*]

Selena: No! God is at work, for sure! For sure.

Ryan: Yeah. We were praying beforehand, and we're like, "God, we don't know why..."

Selena: We know it's *You*—

Ryan: "You're using us in what You're doing..."

Selena: But, yeah. We know it's God.

Ryan: Obviously, we're putting our hands to the plow, so to speak.

Selena: He's causing the growth.

Ryan: But God has blessed, and He's causing the growth, so... [*Selena sniffles*] Anyway. If you want to be part of all that, we would be honored as we head into this new season; it's kind of a new start. We'd be honored to partner with you, if you are passionate about seeing God's vision of marriage made loud and clear in culture today and having a resource that you can use to improve your own marriage, but also to point others to.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You can be complicit in this. And the way you do that is, we have a profile on Patreon.com, and it's [Patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage). And basically, it gives us a way to partner with our listeners directly. If that's something that could interest you, two things: first thing is pray about it.

Selena: Mm-hm.

Ryan: Pray with your spouse about it; think about it. We're not looking for anything hasty! We don't want a knee-jerk response or a knee-jerk decision here. We're looking for partners, strategic covenantal partners.

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: In this mission that we're on. The second thing is if you do pray about it and God is leading you to partner in this mission, that is to point couples to Christ and commission marriages for the Gospel, then we would just ask for you to take action on that conviction from the Holy Spirit. Go to [Patreon.com/fiercemarriage](https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage). We've had Patreons jump on at \$2 a month, and they're *just* as much of a blessing as the Patreons that are on there for \$100 a month, because it really is just about an army of people who are on board together. That's the long pitch for becoming a Fierce Marriage Patreon. [*Selena laughs*]

The second piece of our housekeeping is maybe that's not in the cards for you and you can't partner in that way. Another way you can support is just by commenting and rating on iTunes or whatever podcast platform you use. Also, share as the Lord leads, whatever parts of this resonate with you. Just leave a rating, leave a review in iTunes or whatever app you use.

The third one is if you have any questions, and we are answer questions this week, I think.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: We asked Instagram, and we got some good questions back. And also, questions through e-mail. But anyway! Go to [FierceMarriage.com/podcast](https://www.fiercemarriage.com/podcast).

Selena: Right.

Ryan: There's a button there you can click to ask a question online, or you can call or text this number. Ready? 971-333[*Ryan sniffs*]-1120. [*Selena clicks her tongue*] Okay?

Selena: And definitely tag us on IG, 'cause we are trying to add more stories to our stories and just share that way about how the responses to maybe different topics or different episodes that you liked. Yeah! It's not for us to be puffed up;

again, it's for the message of the Gospel to get out to more marriages and to hear from people like you, that are like, "I was looking for this; I found this, and this is what I love about it. And yada-yada-yada."

Ryan: Mm. Yeah, exactly. I love—

Selena: That just helps me connect, I think, when I'm looking for podcasts to listen to.

Ryan: I love seeing the Instagram stories come through, and I love it when whoever shares the story, they'll do a screenshot of the podcast in the iTunes app or whatever, or the podcast app, and then they will write a few comments about what they're learning or what they've gotten out of it. That really helps us! And I think that's helpful for others. So, yeah! Please do that! That'd be fun.

Selena: Do it...

Ryan: Do it! Tag it so I see it. [*Selena laughs*] Tag it so we see it. Yeah.

Okay, so, what are we talking about today?

Selena: We are talking about having marriage advocates verses marriage adversaries. I think we have people in our lives that can tend to fall into both camps, right? But how do we really mine those relationships and pursue them? And if we *don't* have them, how do we identify people in our lives that could be potential advocates and mentors and people we can be fully transparent with and say, "Hey, we're struggling in this area," and they're not just going to be like, "Well, ya know, that's kind of weird and you shouldn't be struggling there."

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: "So, maybe you guys should just take some time away from each other," ya know? Or something like that. But the people that actually know you; they know where you've come from and they kind of know your story and they're advocating for your covenant, and they understand and they value the things of God, and they have a Biblical foundation. [*Clears throat*] These are just a few of the qualifications. We'll jump into it more, I guess. [*Chuckles*]

Ryan: Well, I don't want to gloss over that, because that's a *huge*, huge differentiator here. And to me it's really the only one, is that they're advocating for your covenant, *not* because they're just blindly saying, "Oh, it's kind of the letter of the law; you signed on the dotted line so to speak, and you have to stick with it." That's not, I think, the heart motivation. There is that sense to it! I don't want to—

Selena: Right.

[00:09:59] **Ryan:** A covenant is more than just a convenient thing. It should have some weight to it.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: [*Inhales*] But the person who's advocating for your covenant is doing so because what? They trust God's word as authoritative and God's way as the way to flourish in, regardless of what our immediate circumstances look like.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And they're saying, "Hey! God's covenant is there *for* your flourishing. So, even though this may be a tough time, I'm going to advocate for *you* as a married person—"

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "As a married *couple*, not because I want you to go through hard times but because I want you to have the best, most sustainable, most God-centered joy.

Selena: Right! And one thing I want to take note of, it's kind of been a conversation in our small group that a friend has shared with me, is that one of her friends really—She was struggling a lot with a few certain things, and she just felt like it was just cyclical. She could not get out of it. And ultimately, she was seeking peace outside of God, but she said the thing that her friend really encouraged her in was the character of God, like there's often things that we believe about God based on our own perceptions verses who He really is and who His character is, and I think that having those advocates and people in our lives that are saying, "This is not the God we serve; He is not like this. *This* is the God we serve."

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: He's a shepherd; He leads them gently. He *loves* us; He is gracious to allow us to revisit hard things—

Ryan: Wow. That's really good...

Selena: In our marriage, and that we are going to face it with different perspectives and different strengths, and He doesn't just throw it all on us and say, "Deal with it," right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Okay. If we've had a breach of trust, we need to work on this. It's going to look different in different stages and different times in our marriage probably, but *this* is the grace of our God; this is who He is. And so, I think that was something that has helped me in community just learn that it's not always giving the answers or it's not always saying, "Hey, this is the person you need to talk to," but it's am I showing, am I talking to people about *who* God is? Do I know God enough?

- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** Not enough, but am I in the word understanding His character so that I'm able to better love my friends and show who He is?
- Ryan:** That is phenomenal! You're so smart. And what you're saying—
- Selena:** Oh, no. It's God doing work in my friends, and I'm just a bystander getting blown over by [*Chuckles*] the grace and faith of it all, so... [*Laughs*]
- Ryan:** Well, I'm thankful for you bringing it up here.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** And thankful for God in echoing His character, really. Okay, so... God gave us scripture [*Pauses*] and it's a historical document telling about His people. He didn't just drop a book and say, "This is my will."
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** "This is how you know Me. This is my revelation." He didn't do that! He gave us a time-bound unfolding of His revelation, and a growing base of truth in His revelation from Genesis to Revelation.
- Selena:** Mm.
- Ryan:** He didn't just drop it on her. And so, why I'm saying that is that echoes what you're saying, echoes God's character in that time for Him is important, to have things be time-bound and take time.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And so often we think that time is always the enemy, meaning that if it takes *more* time, it's bad.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Our culture is so thick in that faster is always better. And God has never said faster is better! [*Selena chuckles*] He's never said that!
- Selena:** Right. [*Clears throat*]
- Ryan:** He's never said solutions that are true should take less time.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And should be easier. He's never said—He's said the opposite.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It takes time for roots to happen, for roots to take root. [*Selena chuckles*] And for the change that we want to happen, and it's never instant. And so, what you're saying is, I think, echoing that character of God all throughout His revelation.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: I mean He designed the world, right? All of creation just echoes His—has His fingerprints all over it. And so, trees don't grow in two weeks, you know?

Ryan: Bamboo does! [*Ryan laughs and Selena chuckles*] But that's the only one! [*Both continue chuckling*]

Selena: This is my husband. [*Ryan chuckles*] It still takes time though, right?

Ryan: But I mean the cedar, right? A big, mighty cedar or redwood?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You go to a redwood forest over in California and it's these trees that are—

Selena: Hundreds of years old!

Ryan: Yeah! And—

Selena: And if even you look in the Bible, when God worked in Abraham, it was his *whole* lifetime. It wasn't this season of when he, in his twenties... Ya know? Or in his first 200 years or something. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: 'Cause he lived to be very old, didn't he?

Ryan: Yeah. Well, just to bring it back. You're saying that being able to wrestle through these things with friends is a gift of God. To be able to go back to it...

Selena: Yeah, and we don't have to be afraid of that.

Ryan: Yeah. We don't have to be afraid of—

Selena: And it's a good thing. Yeah. So...

Ryan: Can I start with this? I want to start with, quickly—

Selena: You may.

Ryan: [Ryan chuckles] Thank you. [Selena chuckles] I want to quickly compare what is a marriage advocate, what is a marriage adversary.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Okay. Let's compare and contrast those, and then after that, we're going to go through and look at some scripture. There's a lot of passages that talk about wise counsel, good friends, and listening to wise counsel *from* good friends. [Chuckles] We're going to talk through all that stuff. But first, I just want to have a very clear picture for the listeners. If you're hearing this, you might be thinking through toxic people, toxic friendships or siblings or in-laws, whether they're sibling-in-laws or parent-in-laws...

[00:15:06] **Selena:** Mm.

Ryan: Or maybe coworkers or even people that might be in your friend group, like in a small group.

Selena: Could be. Yeah. [Inaudible]

Ryan: Yeah, so. Just think through who those people are and maybe if there's somebody who consistently is advocating for your marriage or consistently adversarial toward your marriage, okay? [Pages turn]

So, here's just a few compare and contrast things. So, advocates are *for* your marriage. Okay, that's clear. Adversaries are *for you*. They're not necessarily for you as a married person or you as a couple, but they're for you because, I think the trojan horse here is that I'm your friend and I care about *you*, and I could care less about this guy who's causing pain, or this woman who's causing pain, in your life.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Who happens to be your spouse, kay?

Selena: [Laughs] Right.

Ryan: So, adversaries are for you; advocates are for your marriage. Advocates *reinforce* God's idea for covenant, right? And so, they value God's idea of covenant in marriage. An adversary is more concerned with *their* ideas of marriage and cultural norms and cultural ideas of marriage and love. [Inhales] Right?

Selena: Well, and I think that boils down to what we were talking about, about knowing God.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: And being able to communicate back to that friend or that person, like, this is not the God we serve, or this is not His design and purpose in this situation. *[Inhales]* We believe that our God is loving, and what does love mean according to His word? It is patient, kind, long-suffering, you know? So, I think there's a knowledge aspect of this that is required.

Ryan: Yeah. Well, and—

Selena: In an advocate...

Ryan: And as we'll see, there is an aspect of a friend. Is your friend somebody who's foolish or wise? Where does foolishness and wisdom come from? Wisdom comes from fearing the Lord and studying His word and seeking after it as for treasure, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, if your friend doesn't know these things, or your in-law doesn't know these things, they're acting as a fool because they are a fool, probably. They're not valuing the covenantal nature of God and His will for marriage. They're valuing their own will.

Selena: *[Inhales]* And a caveat here is that they may not be malicious in it, right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: They may just not understand.

Ryan: That's good.

Selena: And they may not know. And that's the *[Ryan smacks his lips]* thing, I think, that we're trying to pull out is that I've had friends that have been like, "Well, he should— *[Selena clicks her tongue]* Why can't you buy those things?" Or blah-blah-blah. "Why can't you just spend that money? You made it." And they're not trying to necessarily be divisive; they're just trying to, like...

Ryan: They just don't know anything better.

Selena: Right!

Ryan: Or anything else.

Selena: Yes! And that's where, as a believer, we have to filter through some of that.

Ryan: And you could even use that as an opportunity to be a light in that space for them—

Selena: Right!

Ryan: Where you can say, "Wait, wait, wait! What you're telling me is actually a counter to what's in God's words. So, let's talk about what's in God's word [*Inhales*] about all these things.

[*Inhales*] Okay. So, I'm going down this list. So, advocates see long-term.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And they see the long-term joy; they have that in view. Adversaries are very short-term oriented. This one goes along with it. Advocates are willing to sit with you and work through what you're dealing with and even cry with you and empathize with you.

Selena: And journey with you! Absolutely.

Ryan: And journey alongside you.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Adversaries are more apt to give quick answers and want quick fixes, quick solutions.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And want you to act quickly based on their quick answers. Okay? So, an advocate will have the opposite attitude. They're saying, "This is a long-term journey that we're on; I'm not just looking to give you a piece of candy to satiate your hunger..."

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: "Let's go for the actual healthy stuff." Okay. So, I've three more of these.

Selena: Well, good!

Ryan: So, advocates will see love as a choice!

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And a decision and an action-oriented verb, where adversaries see love as a feeling, and the emotion is the thing to be chased.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Right?

Selena: Which again comes back to beliefs, and we talk about that *a lot* in terms of your marriage covenant. But I think it definitely is [*Chuckles*— I don't have as many friendships. Excuse me. I don't have as many friendships in my life that are unbelievers or that don't know the Lord, and if I do, then obviously it's a different—

Ryan: Then they have a different—

Selena: They hold different weights, right?

Ryan: Right. [*Selena laughs*] And they can't speak into this, necessarily.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: They can just be a friend that you laugh with.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And talk to.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Okay. And this next one kind of feeds into that, is that an advocate will have a God-centered view and definition of love; and adversary has a self-centered love. I don't mean that pejoratively; I don't mean that to be—It's just selfish. I'm saying it's actually centered on the self, meaning that, "*I am defining what love is.*"

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "You should define what love is; you need to find your bliss."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "Find your happiness. You deserve happi—!" That's all very *self*-focused.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Self-centered. An advocate doesn't have that; they say, "Listen. Love is a choice. God has defined it in this way and designed it in this way."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "Yes, we want the emotions and the feelings that come along with love, but..."

Selena: "But that's not what we're pursuing here."

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: “We are pursuing God’s—”

Ryan: And we’re not centered on that. We’re centered on God.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And His word, and Jesus—

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And not on ourselves.

Selena: And we’re submitted to those things, I think, too.

Ryan: Yeah. [*Inhales*] And then finally, and this all kind of—This all goes hand-in-hand, but an advocate is looking for the greater *joy* and the adversary’s looking for *quicker* happiness. [*Inhales*]

[00:20:00] **Selena:** Mm.

Ryan: Joy is a deep, unshakeable Spirit-given gift.

Selena: Long lasting, yeah.

Ryan: It’s a lasting gift.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Happiness is fleeting. Happiness kind of goes with the wind; it goes wherever. It can be up and down every day! Joy is steadfast.

Selena: Right. Right!

Ryan: And so, if you want greater joy—

Selena: They come from deeper sources, right? [*Laughs*]

Ryan: Yep! It’s a deeper well.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And it never runs dry.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And happiness is just like, “Here’s a can of Coke.” [*Both laugh*]

Selena: I like Coke...

- Ryan:** I do too. It's okay. *[Laughing]*
- Selena:** Get out of here! *[Laughing]*
- Ryan:** But it's not healthy; you can't drink nothing but Coke all day every day.
- Selena:** It's not healthy. Nope. You cannot. It's not good for ya!
- Ryan:** Oh, Coca-Cola! Zero. *[Selena snickers]* Anyway. *[Ryan chuckles]* TM. *[Both laugh]* Okay! So, with that foundation or that understanding, mutual understanding, I think, listener, you can kind of get a sense of what it means to have an advocate in your life verses an adversary in your life, somebody who's pulling for your marriage or pulling just for you or pulling for an immediate fix.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So, how do we go about finding these types of people, or how does the Bible actually define a good friend, and how are we to respond to a good friend?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** So...
- Selena:** Right. Yeah. Let's read through some passages understanding the value of good counsel and then how we can tangibly identify and *pursue* some of these people in our lives. *[Inhales]* So, there's a lot in Proverbs, obviously, and Psalms. We also have a verse from Thessalonians and Matthew. So, we'll just kind of read through a few of these.
- This is Matthew 19:20: "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise."
- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** Proverbs 28:23: "Whoever rebukes a man will later on find more favor than someone who flatters with his words."
- Ryan:** Mm! That's interesting.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Okay! So, why is that? Because it's exactly what we're talking about, is that there is a rebuke that is loving.
- Selena:** Mm.

- Ryan:** It's more—I forget. We don't have it down here, but there's a passage that says, "Better are the rebukes of a brother than the kisses of an enemy," type of thing.
- Selena:** Right. Right.
- Ryan:** Or something to that effect, is that there is a rebuke that is loving.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And in fact, that is the most loving thing we can do if someone is in sin.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Is we can—And a rebuke is not a judgment; it's a statement of, "You are acting in a way that is contrary to God's word, to God's truth. Let me, as your friend, help you realize that, first, *and* let me help you turn from that."
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** I think a judgment is more, "I'm just making you realize it, and I don't care about *you*. I have no stake in you as an actual friend."
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** "I don't actually want to see you change; I just want to point it out because that makes me feel better about myself."
- Selena:** It's kind of a placement thing, right? As somebody who's going to judge you is going to feel like they're above you, whereas someone who is looking to help you and rebuke you lovingly, like, journey with you, is going to be right next to you kind of thing.
- Ryan:** Mm. Yeah.
- Selena:** [*Inhales*] And so I think that's just kind of the perspective that I see that people—If somebody's going to judge me, I don't feel like they're in it with me. Right? They're just calling me out; they're not actually loving me and saying, "How can I help?" or "Let me help you walk through this." But someone who really cares about me says, "You *are* going the wrong way; this is not how we're supposed to love our spouses," or, "I know this is really hard, but let's continue to just walk through this together. Let me help you." You know? It's really that partnering that comes, I think, with the advocate.
- Ryan:** Right. And see, I think this Proverb is talking to *you*, listener, or Selena, or whoever is hearing this. It's talking to us as the friend who needs to rebuke, right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, I just want to say it again, whoever rebukes a man will later on find more favor than someone who flatters with his words. [*Inhales*]

We have a good friend; it's my good friend, Jake and Jess. They're good friends of ours, but I'm thinking of Jake right now, as he is always saying, "I love it when I feel rebuked!" [*Chuckles*] "Because my friends are loving me."

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: He sees it as loving. And I've had those hard conversations with him, and he's had hard conversations with me where we see kind of blind spots in each other, and it's always so sweet at the end of the day.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I think it comes down to Proverbs 27:9; it's our next verse, "Ointments and perfume encourage the heart; in a similar way, a friend's advice is sweet to the soul."

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: So, when you see a friend, you know that they're a friend.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: The friendship is rooted not in just whatever surface thing, but it's rooted deeply in the Gospel, deeply in God's word. Then their advice is going to be sweet to the soul, and it doesn't always have to be advice that I want to hear.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: It can still be sweet.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And it's not sweet to the tongue; it's sweet to the soul! [*Laughs*]

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: Okay? There's a difference there.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You can eat lots of—

Selena: It's that depth, right? [*Laughs*]

Ryan: You can eat lots of sugar, and just to keep that analogy going [*Selena chuckles*], you can eat lots of sugar and what happens is it makes your stomach hurt.

Selena: So, sugar in syrup?

Ryan: [*Ryan laughs*] Is there sugar? Then yes! [*Selena laughs*] You like sugar, don't'cha? [*Selena laughs and then inhales*] But you can eat something really healthy that maybe doesn't taste as good, but it's going to be sweet to your soul; it's going to be sweet to your body.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And it's going to be nourishing to your body. Okay?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: We just have to tease that out a little bit. I think the next one—Let's go to the next one.

Proverbs 24:6, "For through wise counsel you will wage war and victory. So, victory lies in an abundance of advisors."

Selena: Mm.

[00:25:00] **Ryan:** That's just teaching us to have a multitude of these types of people in our lives. And so, here's another caveat [*Chuckles*]...

Selena: It goes beyond just not living alone. [*Laughs*] I think this is very active.

Ryan: Mm-hm. Living as an island, you mean.

Selena: Right. Right. This is way more than that.

Ryan: With an abundance of advisors, it's not just have a bunch of people giving you advice. Okay? The way this is worded is, "I'm actually giving you a say"; you're not just saying it, but I'm giving you a say.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: In that I'm letting your words influence my actions.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I'm not just hearing it and doing whatever I feel like doing anyway!

Selena: Right.

Ryan: You're an actual advisory to me.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You're not just somebody giving advice, but you're an *advisor*—

Selena: Right.

Ryan: To my heart.

Selena: Well, and if you think about back in the Bible times, right? Advisors were *valued*.

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: They were with kings; he would always have his advisors there when other people were meeting with him, right?

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: Because he wanted them to hear what was happening, and he wanted their advice! He wanted to be able to have different perspectives that were not just—I mean, the wise. They say the wise leaders were like that, but...

Ryan: That's interesting because, I think, at the root of this you realize that you have a limited perspective.

Selena: [*Chuckles*] Yes.

Ryan: And you only see one side of it, and you have blind spots and you're trusting otherwise Spirit-led people to point those out. And you're *giving them* permission to do that in your life.

Selena: Right. We need to embrace that, for sure.

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: Um, of...

Ryan: Psalm 1:1.

Selena: Psalm 1:1. Sorry. I was just looking, and we have so many verses today!

Ryan: Two— Three more.

Selena: “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!”

Ryan: Hm.

Selena: We've heard that one many, many times!

Ryan: So, that's the longest book in the Bible, and it starts with that verse.

Selena: [Chuckling] Psalm 1?

Ryan: Yeah. So...

Selena: It's longer than 119?

Ryan: Psalms. A book of Psalms.

Selena: Oh, a book of Psalms.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Not chapters.

Ryan: Yeah. Not chapters.

Selena: Got'cha.

Ryan: So, I mean, not that that's necessarily what the author had in mind; I don't want to go there, but let's just let that, of all the things this could have started out with, it started with *how blessed* is the man who does *not* walk in the counsel of the wicked, because I'm not walking in a place where I am letting the wicked give me advice in a way that's meaningful.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Right?

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's the same thing you were saying about having friends that aren't necessarily believers.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Okay? [Laughs]

Selena: It's wisdom to know what to listen to, what to put weight in. Right?

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: And understand the relationship in the fact that these people are probably not the ones that you're going to go to for marital advice. [Chuckles] I mean, if you're completely honest, right?

- Ryan:** Mm-hm.
- Selena:** And maybe you want to share something with them to—Maybe they're going through a hard time, and so you share something with them, but most of the time you're on the offense in terms when it comes to faith and talking about marriage and definitions of love and correction and wisdom and those kinds of topics.
- Ryan:** So, can I be offensive?
- Selena:** [*Smacks lips*] Uhm...
- Ryan:** Can I be offensive for a moment?
- Selena:** [*Inhales*] Sure; we can always cut it out.
- Ryan:** So, what... [*Both laugh*] So, how blessed is a man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked? I think a lot of times when we hear that word, "wicked," we think, "These are just evil people in dark alleys doing crime!" [*Both laugh*] They're saying to each other, "Let's go do crime later!" [*Selena laughing*] "Yeah, you want to do crime together?"
- Selena:** I can think of like a comic book [*Ryan laughs*] with like a dark shadow and like... two eyes! [*Selena laughs*]
- Ryan:** Yeah! Or we think of somebody who's just completely off the rails, and they're like a demon, right? Or they've got just this very [*Selena sniffles*] overt wickedness. That's not the Bible's definition of wickedness! And this is, I think it's David writing this, or Solomon, one of the two; I haven't looked it up, but [*Ryan inhales*] walking in the counsel of the wicked. Who are the wicked in contrast to the people of God? They were the non-God-fearing people.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** They were people that weren't regenerate; they weren't in the family of God; they weren't part of the covenantal people of God. [*Ryan inhales and swallows*] And so, nowadays we think about the wick—Really, and especially if we're good, reformed theologians [*Both laugh*], which we're reformed. We...
- Selena:** Subscribe to...
- Ryan:** We subscribe to valuable stuff and it's, I think, it's true. So... The total depravity of man, that whole piece of it. Like, if you're not regenerate in Christ... You don't have the spirit of truth operating in you, and this is the offensive part, you don't necessarily have the same spirit of truth and the same source of truth, the Holy Spirit, that I have.
- Selena:** Yeah.

Ryan: And in that sense, and because you've not been made right with God, reconciled to God in Christ, *you are wicked*.

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: That's the offensive part! That's the offensive side of the Gospel, is that outside of Christ you are as wicked as wicked is, as wicked can be! You are the person in the dark shadows doing crime, like we joked about, right? We are that without Christ.

Selena: Without Christ. Aside from Christ. Yeah.

Ryan: And so, [*Exhales*] again, this is the offensive part, but as people thinking through this, "Okay. I'm a married person; I know God's plan for my marriage. I want not to walk in the counsel of the wicked. Who is giving me advice?"

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: "On my marriage?" When I'm struggling as a husband, or when you're struggling as a wife, who is that friend that is saying, "Here's God's counsel for you"?

[00:30:04] **Selena:** Right.

Ryan: "Here's what the Holy Spirit has revealed in God's word."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "Here's how your behavior should reflect trusting that." I think that's an offensive thing, but it's also a really good thing.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And I just—

Selena: I think it's wise...

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: I think it's wisdom, and it is hard to draw—It's hard in any, I think, culture in society, but especially the one we're in today, to draw lines and to not... Like, how can I not be offensive when I'm drawing a line? And I can't help it, but the lines are drawn. Like, this is where we fall.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So [*Clears throat*], excuse me. God is still sovereign; He's still at work.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: We don't have to write people off, you know?

Ryan: Oh yeah.

Selena: He is good in how He can use relationships to refine our beliefs and to clarify and to sharpen us. He's good in that way. [*Smacks lips*]

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: The next—There's two more verses we have. 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing." And Paul wrote Thessalonians, didn't he?

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: So, he's encouraging... I think this is an encouragement also obviously to the church, but just I think it was generally in his letters to the church, the *two* Thessalonians [*Chuckles*]...

Ryan: And this is right before, I think, the part of pray continually, all those sorts of things.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, he's kind of closing out his letter and giving them this last bit of exhortation.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And so, encourage one another, build each other up as you're already doing; this is a church, these are believers, these are brothers and sisters in Christ. And so, I think that just shows the character of Godly friendship we should really be shooting for.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: And then [*Selena chuckles*], finally. Finally, Matthew 19:6, "So they're no longer two, but one flesh, and what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." This is at the core of everything we've said.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Is that we view this covenant, and Jesus was talking about marriage there.

Selena: Mm-hm.

Ryan: So, we view this covenant as something that *God* has brought together. It's not just a decision you made.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's something God has brought together.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, let not man separate that.

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: Let not somebody be an adversary against that. Let us be advocates for that. Because why? God brought it together, not you!

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And so, by advocating for your marriage, I'm actually advocating for God's...

Selena: Purpose.

Ryan: Purpose in what He's done.

Selena: For God's design. Yep!

Ryan: And, so...

Selena: Let's succeed in our marriage.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: And God has so much more purpose that we won't be able to even vocalize here, right? Like, there's so much purpose in walking through hard times together, through there's sanctification that happens in our hearts and in our souls.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: That wouldn't happen outside of our marriage. Right?

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: So, moving on to this next section of how do we *find* marriage advocates?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: Because I think that we probably, after you've been listening and we've been talking through some of this, you're able to identify maybe some people in your life, some mentors from when you were first married, or people that *know* you, just generally speaking. I think that you're probably getting a few people in your mind and what you should do with that, that we would say the first thing is just pray! Pray together. Talk to your spouse and say, "Hey, what do you think about getting some people in our lives that can speak into us, that we can try to meet with on a regular basis and have conversations and ask them to ask us certain questions, and to help us just see God more in our marriage? 'Cause I feel like there are areas we're struggling in." Maybe you're not struggling! Maybe you're just like, "We just need more people in our marriage to help us see some of the blind spots that maybe we're not seeing."

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: And maybe things are okay and generally things are working out. You feel unified in a lot of ways, and it's kind of a sweet—

Ryan: That's the abundant...

Selena: A sweet season in your marriage. But I still think we can identify people in our lives of who can see things that we're not seeing.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: Who can make us more aware of each other?

Ryan: Well, and it's you're shoring up knowing that you're human people.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And you're going to have hard things happen in your marriage, and you're going to *need* those advisors, so... [*Selena sniffles*] You have to be a little bit of an adult and a little bit proactive about this.

Selena: Absolutely!

Ryan: You have to make a decision in your life to say, "This is wise, so let's get counselors around us."

Selena: Yeah!

Ryan: "Before the storm hits!" [*Selena chuckles*] Like, "Let's chop firewood before the snow comes." [*Ryan chuckles*]

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: "Because we're going to need it!"

Selena: It's come—It will inevitably come, obviously. So...

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: The whole prayer and pursuit thing is working out for us here, too, because the second piece would be to pursue.

Ryan: Yeah. I [*Sighs*] want to say a quick note about prayer.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: And the reason we start with prayer; it's not just 'cause it's a pat answer from a Christian podcast, okay? [*Selena snickers*] We pray because we expressly believe, and we, in our hearts, we know we cannot do anything worthwhile outside of God's leading and we need His help."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: So, prayer is an act of communion with God. It's also an act of trust.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: We go to God because God is in control, and we are not.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And I think is we skip prayer, and I do it all the time [*Laughs*]—

Selena: Right. [*Chuckles*]

Ryan: I'm preaching to myself right now.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: We skip prayer because we don't think we *need* it!

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: We skip prayer because we don't think we need prayer. We skip asking God for help because we don't think we need God's help.

[00:35:02] **Selena:** Right.

Ryan: And so, this is one of those areas that you can sit down as a couple and say, "Alright. For the next two weeks, we're going to commit to, every night before we eat, we're going to pray specifically for everything that's happening in our life, but specifically for mentors, advisors, advocates."

Selena: That's good.

Ryan: "We're going to ask God to bring those people into our life." And I *dare* you to do that! If you're a listener [*Selena chuckles*], I dare you to do that because it's amazing to see how God works when you hand this over to Him, and you request these things from Him.

Selena: Right. And just to clarify around prayer... I was scrolling through Instagram. Yes. Jackie Hill Perry posted something recently about how prayer's something we do by faith. She said, "Even though we can't see God, with no physical evidence before us, we believe He exists & therefore we pray through Christ as such. By faith, we believe He's listening. By faith, we believe He cares." And, "By faith, we believe He'll answer."

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: And so, I think trying to not be so ambiguous about prayer, but to understand the attributes and the purpose and the design...

Ryan: Yep.

Selena: Behind prayer is *so* powerful, because, I think, we misuse it otherwise. [*Inhales*]

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So, anyways.

Ryan: That's good.

Selena: Just a little—

Ryan: If you want more on prayer, by the way, look a few weeks back; we had an episode, I think, called "Prayer and Pursuit, & Why Your Marriage Needs Both."

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And so, we talk about prayer more from a, I think, we talk about it more in depth, I'll say.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And the next one!

Selena: Prayer's— Yeah. And then purs—

Ryan: Are we going into this?

Selena: Pursue. So, prayer. Pray together is the first part. Ask God to help you to find a couple of people that you can talk to and be transparent with, and then pursue them. Ask them to dinner! Ask them to coffee. Take the initiative; reach out to them. Nine times out of ten, people are going to be like, “Absolutely! Let’s make this happen!” If for some reason they are crazy busy, they might be able to recommend somebody. And even just ride that out. I guess my charge here would be to give it time...

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: Because I think so many times we quit before we even get started.

Ryan: Wow.

Selena: And so, stick with it! Give it six months at *least*!

Ryan: Hm!

Selena: To meet with them on a consistent basis, at *least* once a month if not more. And have that time set aside; have it and don’t just—I think it’s a disservice to just show up and not have some sort of plan, because I think that when you plan for something, you can look forward to it, your heart is in it, your mind is in it, you’re thinking about it, you’re anticipating some things. And so, to be on the same page with them, it feels more productive in a lot of ways than just kind of showing up and, you know, “Hey, so, how’s your marriage? What’s going on?” And maybe that’s the first couple of meetings, right? Like, “Hey, how’s your marriage? How are you guys doing? What are some areas we can check in with you about? How can we be praying for you?” You know? Have somewhat of a framework for your conversation, because I think that will allow for the Holy Spirit to work, and it will just create some space for God to open up your hearts, both sets of hearts souls...

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: And awareness.

Ryan: Well, and then watch how God works in their relationship, too, [*Selena snuffles*] through mentoring you.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Or through advocating for you and how you can become advocates for *their* marriage.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Which is really cool. So...

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And there's a bit of a blurry line here between finding mentors that are going to advocate for you and teach you and disciple you, and people who are just advocating for you as friends.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Right? So, I think we're going to talk about what a Christian community might look like in this regard...

Selena: In terms of being an advocate. Yeah.

Ryan: We're just going to talk about our own small group experience. We call them "Gospel Communities" at our church, and they've become our closest friends in many ways.

Selena: They're our people!

Ryan: But real quick, I just want to mention this: your advocate might immediately be a counselor or a pastor, or somebody who's paid [*Chuckles*] to advocate for you.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And that's—

Selena: That's okay.

Ryan: First thing: that's okay. Second thing: it's worth the investment.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Third thing: it doesn't have to be forever. Right? If you're in a traumatic spot, right, where you're reeling from maybe a loss of trust [*Inhales*] or some sort of diagnosis or some sort of debt burden that is insurmountable, that you lost a job or there's something happening in life that feels like your marriage is suffering because of it...

Selena: Right...

Ryan: Don't be afraid to just run to your pastor or to find the closest Christian counselor who's going to give you Bible-based, also science-founded, counsel. Psychotherapy. [*Both laugh*] That's kind of an intimidating term.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: But they're going to care for you! They're going to ask you questions that get you thinking.

Selena: And I think they'll give you tools that will help you walk through those situations. And a lot of times you hear it's just small little tweaks on some things.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: And they make the biggest changes so. So, we're always encouraging couples to go to counselors, go to pastors, just if you are just bleeding and *gushing* [*Chuckles*], your marriage is just dying, really, in a lot of ways; there's a lot of things happening. Get some *serious* outside help and be okay with that.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

[00:39:59] **Selena:** And understand that it may not look like this forever, but there are seasons that we go through where we need that extra help outside of that. And then having Christian community alongside that, asking you, "How is counseling going?"

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: "How is meeting with this pastor going?" "Do you feel like you guys are making progress?" "How can we pray for you in this?"

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: "How can we support you in this?"

Ryan: Yeah. That's really good. And as you're going through that painful time, just know this: know that the best way forward is always *through* it and in the Covenant. Alright?

Selena: Mm.

Ryan: Okay, we're not going to get into this, but I'll just say a blanket statement. It's always God's best for you *both* to reconcile your marriage and fight for that marriage, and fight toward emotional health and every avenue of relational health.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: That doesn't mean you just stick around and be—We're getting off topic here [*Selena chuckles*], but there might be some triage...

Selena: *You are getting off topic...*

- Ryan:** Yeah. Maybe some triage. Anyway. We're not going to go any further than that. Just know that it's good to fight for your marriage!
- Selena:** Absolutely!
- Ryan:** Okay. So...
- Selena:** Have—
- Ryan:** Go ahead.
- Selena:** Oh. I was just going to say what is the function of community, right? And in terms of being an advocate?
- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** So, these are people that are really, again, they're all for your marriage. You guys are brought together by the blood of Christ, right? This is kind of the unifying aspect. It may not be that you are all in the same season of life, or you all have the same careers or anything. We actually have very [*Chuckling*] similar careers in our community group. And we do have, *finally*, a more seasoned couple in our young—
- Ryan:** What do you mean we have similar careers?
- Selena:** Well, the guys... They're all like... Businessowners. [*Laughing*]
- Ryan:** We're all self-employed. Yeah. [*Laughs*]
- Selena:** Self-employed. [*Laughing*] Which is ironic. It was...
- Ryan:** We can commiserate, 'cause it—it's hard. [*Chuckles*]
- Selena:** We get together by geographic location; that's how our church does it. And so, God obviously, again, brought us together. But having people in the church, again, that they're willing to help fight for your marriage, they want to protect your marriage from division and divisive people.
- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** That want to have these healthy paths to reconciliation, and they want to help you work through hard things.
- Ryan:** Mm.
- Selena:** For a long time, right? We're really not going anywhere unless God takes us somewhere! [*Laughs*]

Ryan: So, let's take a moment, 'cause I'd love to just kind of paint that picture of what our community looks like. And we found it to be incredibly, honestly, revolutionary for us!

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: We feel like it's very rare, although I know that it's not among Bible-believing, Gospel-centered churches. [*Selena snickers*] This type of community is *not* rare.

Selena: It's been rare for our marriage, I think.

Ryan: It's been rare for our marriage, and honestly those types of churches are more and more rare as we get more westernized.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And the church is... There's a whole commentary to be had around the Western Church, blah-blah-blah.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But, so, this type of community I think is Biblical.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: And I think that's why it feels so revolutionary.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Because there's not a lot of Biblical communities, even within the church, truly Biblical. So, what does that look like? It looks like *commitment* to each other.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: A lot of times, we just fly in and out of these communities.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "That one didn't work because so-and-so offended me," or "It's too far to drive," or "They meet too late," or "The kids are too crazy," or there's a thousand reasons why "I'm not getting what I want out of it."

Selena: Sometimes you just got to do hard things, people.

Ryan: Well, that's— [*Selena laughs as Ryan stutters*] In— In the Bible, there was commitment.

Selena: I think you can talk about it.

Ryan: To each other.

Selena: Right. Well, commitment requires doing hard things.

Ryan: Yes!

Selena: Commitment if not something that's easy, and it's not something that always feels good. You know, I'll just get off this soap box in a second [*Both chuckle*]. But commitment—

Ryan: Preach it!

Selena: Commitment is something that requires grit!

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: It requires doing things that are not always comfortable. Yeah! Do my kids always get along with the kids there? No! [*Ryan snickers*] But where else should we be teaching our children how to get along with other people than maybe in our community, right?

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: And I'm not the one that's preaching this; this is people in our community group that are like, "I *want* you to instruct my kid if I'm not there on how to apologize—"

Ryan: Oooh baby!

Selena: "And reconcile."

Ryan: That's—

Selena: That's *huge*!

Ryan: That's revolutionary.

Selena: That's scary.

Ryan: 'Cause otherwise it's our natural tendency—

Selena: I'm a little controlling.

Ryan: Is like, [*Starts with an irritated accent*] "Don't you dare tell my kid what to do!"

Selena: Right. And at least that's mine!

Ryan: [*Resumes normal voice and chuckles*] Yeah.

Selena: But when I have people that I trust and I know their beliefs and I understand where they're coming from, they're going to try to instruct them in the ways and the things of God if I'm not there. You know?

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: And yeah, you know what? We have to drive 20, 25 minutes to go to our small group.

Ryan: Mm. That's in during rush hour traffic, no less. [*Selena laughs*] [*Ryan inhales*] So, it is a little inconvenient at times, but...

Selena: They're so—No! But God is so good to redeem that!

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: Right?

Ryan: He is.

Selena: It's a time where you and I get to chat a little bit; the girls are looking forward to seeing friends. It's become a good source of joy and connection and—You want to say something?

Ryan: No. No. You're right. [*Selena chuckles*]

Selena: [*Laughing*] Just go!

Ryan: I mean it's— So, the point that we're making is that it takes commitment because that's really what friendship is. If you want any real friendship, you have to be committed to each other; you have to say, like...

Selena: And give it some time...

Ryan: "I'm going to love you and I'm going to look out for you and I'm going to advocate for your best."

Selena: Right.

Ryan: "For a period of time."

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: "I'm not just going to do it because we're in the same room together, but I'm actually going to think outside of myself and love you as a friend, brother or sister in Christ, sacrificially..."

Selena: Right.

[00:45:00] **Ryan:** [*Inhales*] A lot of communities don't have that!

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And so...

Selena: And I think you have to—

Ryan: I think that's a good—

Selena: You have to stick it out, honestly. I feel like [*Inhales*] if there's anything that I've learned with anything that's hard and that I've been like, "I don't know if this is the right thing," like, I'm not a quitter, and maybe that's the loyalist in me. I can be loyal to a fault. But I'm just like, "Gosh," [*Sound of papers moving*], "I think I need to give this a little more time, or I need to give this another year."

Ryan: [*Ryan laughs*] That's amazing because a lot of people would be like, "I need to give this another week." [*Selena chuckles*] "If it doesn't work in a week, we're OUT!"

Selena: [*Laughing*] I know, but I'm—

Ryan: And that's not it.

Selena: That's what I'm saying. Some of the biggest, the best friendships, the deepest, most joyful experiences and relationships that have been built have come out of walking through some of the uncomfortableness of new relationships or different locations, or—

Ryan: Well, and pressing into it and saying, "Listen. I feel uncomfortable right now, but I'm going to say this because I feel like it's worthwhile."

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: "And that thing that I want to say is going to make you feel uncomfortable, but let's talk through it."

Selena: Yes!

Ryan: "Let's not leave and storm out; let's not quit."

Selena: Right!

Ryan: "Let's walk through it." Yeah. That's really good!

Selena: "Let's figure this out together." And I think that I wouldn't say our small group started out on a high, right? 'Cause we had people that needed help! They

needed help in their marriage, and for them to lead may not have been the greatest thing at that point.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: But God has used that and redeemed that, and God has grown us. And do we have people that come in and out at different seasons, that they need triage, they need people around them? Absolutely.

Ryan: It happens, yeah.

Selena: [*Inhales*] But I think the core of our group is really to always be honest and transparent when we are sharing. There's no drama in our group, which we were talking about last night.

Ryan: I think that everything you're saying leads to the second.

Selena: Yeah!

Ryan: I just want to be clear about these different aspects.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So, the first aspect of Gospel-community, I think, is [*Ryan inhales*] *commitment* around the Gospel, right? It's not just commitment for its own sake, but it's around [*Selena sniffles*] and trusting God's vision of things.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: In His word.

Selena: And it takes time for those things to happen, and—

Ryan: Commitment, time... I think those go hand-in-hand.

Selena: Yes!

Ryan: But you were getting, and you were starting to talk about, *honesty*. And you said and "there's no drama," and I think that comes from a [*Selena chuckles*] place of honesty, meaning that you're honest with each other, and... Why don't you go ahead and talk about that a little bit?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: You had a—But the ladies gathered last night.

Selena: Yeah, and we were closing in prayer and I was like, "God, thank you for these *women*, that we can come together and basically bare our souls, and there's no

drama around it.” Like, I’m never like, “[*Distraught sigh*] I wonder what so-and-so going to say about what I have to deal with,” and it’s never like, “Oh my gosh! I can’t *believe* that!” I mean [*Ryan chuckles*], there might be a few like, “Woah!” [*Selena chuckles*] You know?

Ryan: Well, you’re human. Yeah.

Selena: Yeah. Like, if somebody’s dealing with something big, we’re like, “Wow. That’s a lot.” And, you know, trying to empathize. But it’s never this gossip fest, it’s never this drama blow up thing; it’s always [*Inhales*]... We have really good listeners, and we have really good responders.

Ryan: Mm.

Selena: And I’m so grateful for that, because there’s just wisdom that is obviously there, and we’re all learning.

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: And we’re all being humbled by this process. And we’re all there to—Just the way that, I guess, we lock arms is different than people outside of... I guess that aren’t believers, maybe?

Ryan: So, where does that—That comes from... the Gospel centeredness of it.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And... Gospel-centered is one of those terms that I think is probably over-used now-a-days. I’m still going to use it because it is important.

Selena: It means what it means. Yeah.

Ryan: It means that, the whole thing, it hinges on the fact that I need a savior, and I have one.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: That’s the Gospel.

Selena: Yep.

Ryan: And you need a savior, and you have one. You’re not perfect, but He is.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: I’m not perfect, but He is.

Selena: Right.

- Ryan:** So, there's no drama because I'm not trying to prove to you anything other than I'm not perfect and Christ is!
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** That's Gospel-centeredness.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** And I feel like that has to be at the center of anything we're talking about here, particularly in finding advocates.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** That's got to be the center to it, and it has to be Jesus, 'cause otherwise, [Chuckling] where's your center going to be? What is going to be the—
- Selena:** Well, everybody would have different centers, and we would all be dispersed. [Laughs]
- Ryan:** Right, well, their center is *them*, 'cause they just, you know, they're self-centered; I'm self-centered, or I'm word-centered—
- Selena:** It's not working! [Laughs]
- Ryan:** Or I'm *spouse* centered.
- Selena:** Absolutely.
- Ryan:** No, it has to be *Christ*-centered.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** And it can't be child-centered or achievement-centered or anything like that. So...
- Selena:** Right. Right!
- Ryan:** So, again, to re-cap, we have commitment, time, honesty, and I think frequency is an important one. We didn't write these down, but I do think frequency has to be a priority.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** In that you can't just meet once a year and say you're in a Gospel community [Selena chuckles] 'cause you're honest once a year; I think you have to be living your lives alongside each other in a way that actually means living your life alongside each other.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: And bearing each other's burdens; you'd mentioned this, but actually *bearing* with one another, and that it's part of the commitment. And we'll end after this, but [*Inhales*] part of actually reaching out and saying, "Hey! I noticed you were a little off last night. What's going on with you, man? Are you okay?" And this is—I'm talking reaching out to a friend.

Selena: You guys don't—Girls don't...

Ryan: You can tell in other ways.

Selena: I did— Yeah! I think it's in less, like, "What's going on?" It's more like, "Hey, I noticed, you know, you were kind of quiet. Are things okay?" Like, asking good questions that aren't too pointed. You know?

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: It's just loving!

Ryan: We just get down to the point with guys, like—

Selena: I know.

Ryan: "You were way off last night! What's going on?" [*Both laugh*]

[00:49:59] **Selena:** Well girls, I don't want to just assume they're off; maybe they're just having a quieter, low-key day. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: Well, but Jake has asked me that.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: We were supposed to be "co-leading," but Jake and Jess definitely lead it, which is amazing for us!

Selena: For sure! We get to support them.

Ryan: But he'll text me and he's like, "Hey man. Everything good? Last night you seemed a little bit quiet or whatever," and usually, I'll be like, "Nah, I'm fine." And then a day later I'm like, "Yeah; I was really frustrated." [*Both laugh*] 'Cause I'm a bad communicator, but I have to come around to that and I think the point is that eventually, hopefully, you do.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: If you're listening and responding to the Gospel the right way. So, okay, so, couple's conversation *challenge* here. [*Selena laughs*] So, if you listen to this

whole podcast, you have hopefully a vision in your mind of what an adversary is verses and advocate.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And hopefully you've made the case for advocates.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Hopefully, as a married person, husband or wife listening to this, you know, okay, we either have or we need advocates in our lives that will help us fight for our marriage, both now and in the future. And hopefully we've given you a vision of what an advocate looks like and maybe how to go about *finding*, praying for and pursuing, and cultivating advocating relationships.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And so, that's kind of the re-cap. We've given you a vision of what maybe community could look like and at least what it looks like in our lives.

Selena: And contrasted what adversaries are, to be able to better clarify *who* those advocates are. So... [*Inhales*]

Ryan: So, what is the challenge?

Selena: I think the challenge here would just be to pray together about who those people would be, talk about that, and pursue them. I think that would just be the first steps to that.

Ryan: Yeah. And maybe establish a list of the advocates.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: The people that are kind of *within* this influence, the people that are the advisors who you've explicitly given a voice to each other. You're saying, "We're going to let this couple speak into our marriage in a way that is transformational; we're not going to just give them a fake kind of license, but we're actually going to say, 'If they say that we should go to counseling, that probably means we should go to counseling.'"

Selena: That's good.

Ryan: That's a different level. So, maybe put down two or three different couples on that list that you would put in your advocate circle, and then I would add to this; put down a few adversaries, people that you've recognized in your life that are consistently coming against you [*Selena sniffles*] in your marriage.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And it doesn't mean you have to *exile* them from your life. [Selena laughs] It might mean that you go to them and you say, "Hey, listen. I need you to advocate and not be an adversary." "Hey, listen. I need you—"

Selena: If you have that kind of relationship; my personality is *not* that. So, what I would probably [Chuckles] do is just create a little bit more space, which may not always be [Laughing] the best thing, but, and if it needs to be said, just be like, "Hey, my husband and I are working on some things right now, and we just kind of need some space [Inhales] to be able to process, and that's what this kind of looks like, and God's doing some stuff in us and I'd love to share that with you." You know?

Ryan: Mm-hm.

Selena: But I think the consistency there is what would need to be broken for me, if I'm going to that person consistently and they are in my life *a lot*, you know?

Ryan: Yeah. Yeah. Good stuff! Alright, so, with that said, if you're looking for—

Selena: I don't—Yeah, I don't think we're going to get to questions from you today; we are overdue, though, for a Q&A, so...

Ryan: Well, and we're having a baby in two weeks. So, that's probably not going to happen [Selena chuckles] ... in the next, like, six weeks at least.

Selena: [Imitates baby crying] Weah....

Ryan: So, maybe we'll do the Instagram thing, 'cause we do have—

Selena: Yeah. That's a good one.

Ryan: We have all those questions on there; just means I have to shave my beard, so I don't look like a homeless person.

Selena: [Chuckles] Stop.

Ryan: 'Cause I haven't shaved in a month. [Both laugh] We're in the thralls of writing, editing our book, and I also am [Selena chuckles] in seminary.

Selena: I feel we're just zombies or something coming out in the sun, and just like—

Ryan: Oh, my word.

Selena: [Imitates zombie wail] "Wa-ah-ahhh!" [Laughing]

Ryan: No, there was a day... I didn't go outside from Sunday afternoon 'til Tuesday morning this week. I'm not proud of that.

Selena: That... sounds like a personal problem. [*Laughs*]

Ryan: I'm not proud of that, but I went outside—

Selena: I love you, but...

Ryan: Tuesday morning and I was like, “[*States like someone seeing light for the first time in a while*] Ugh, what is this... bright light?” [*Selena laughing*]

Selena: That was funny.

Ryan: It's 'cause I was working on a mid-term. So [*Inhales*]...

Selena: That's awesome.

Ryan: Alright guys! Let me pray for us.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Lord, I thank You for Your wisdom. And in Your word, You've revealed Yourself in Your word, You've given us Your character, and You've made it so clear and so explicit; You've *shown* us the way of wisdom [*Selena sniffles*], God. You didn't have to do that, but You did because You love us and You want to see us live as we've been created, and that's in a way that obeys and glorifies You.

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So, I pray that you would help us, keep our hearts soft. Help us to be wise in the types of relationships that we're cultivating around our marriage.

I pray that you'd help us to identify advocates and to cultivate those relationships, and to identify adversaries and to move away from the unhealthy parts of those relationships. And help us [*Sniffs in*] really live wisely in both sides of that equation.

Lord, I pray for the husband and the wife listening to this; if they're feeling hopeless, I pray that you would be their source of hope. Jesus, I pray that you would intervene in their life and give them peace that is otherworldly, give them hope that is from you, joy that is everlasting. And I pray *from* that place of identity in You, that You would give them *wisdom* in how to move forward in a healthy, productive way and getting back to a place of health in their marriage, Lord.

So, again, thank you so much, Lord. You are exceedingly good and so gracious to us.

In Your precious name,
Amen.

[00:55:02] **Selena:** Amen.

Ryan: And once again, yeah. This is the *first* episode of the—

Selena: [*Speaks loudly*] Season three!

Ryan: [*Mimics Selena's voice*] Season three! [*Resumes normal voice*] So [*Selena laughs*], thank you so much, listeners, for tuning in and, as usual, we will see— Yup! This first season of season three is [*Chuckling*]...!

Selena: [*Laughing*] In the can! Man!

Ryan: [*Ryan exhales*] As usual [*Selena laughs*], we will see you in about seven days [*Ryan chuckles*], and until next time...!

Selena: Stay fierce!

[00:55:28] <Ending Sequence>

[00:55:47] *Podcast ends.*

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:00:01]**
 - The Final Countdown Official Music Video:
 - <https://youtu.be/9jK-NcRmVcw>
 - Band: Europe.
 - Song: The Final Countdown
- **[00:20:00]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Matthew 19:20, *wrong Bible reference*
 - Correct Bible reference: Proverbs 19:20, *NIV*
 - Proverbs 28:23, *ISV*
 - Proverbs 27:9, *ISV*
 - Proverbs 24:6, *paraphrase, ISV*
- **[00:25:00]**
 - Scripture reference:
 - Psalm 1:1, *NASB*
- **[00:30:04]**
 - Scripture references:
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11, *CSB*
 - Matthew 19:6, *paraphrase, NASB*
- **[00:35:02]**
 - Jackie Hill Perry quote reference:
 - <https://mobile.twitter.com/JackieHillPerry/status/1173703175603392521>
 - Fierce Marriage podcast reference:
 - Prayer + Pursuit, and Why Your Marriage Needs Both: <https://fiercemarriage.com/prayer-pursuit-and-why-your-marriage-needs-both>

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