

THE MANNER AND METHOD OF SPEAKING TRUTH WITH LOVE

<https://fiercemarriage.com/the-manner-and-method-of-speaking-truth-with-love>

Ryan: All right, Selena, I got to say, one of the more annoying clichés that I hear in the marriage space, and in my own marriage particularly, it's this idea that it's not what you say, it's how you say it.

Selena: I think you started that trend,-

Ryan: What?

Selena: ...Head and leader of our household. [laughs]

Ryan: How did I start such a thing?

Selena: Tone is a big thing with you. Also how you say something because...

Ryan: Well, because your tones are malfeasant. [laughs] And your tone-

Selena: You're too black and white sometimes.

Ryan: There it is.

Selena: There's the smudginess. No, but it does matter, clearly.

Ryan: Yes, it does. I wrote a whole chapter on it, which we're going to go through today.

Selena: Just one chapter, wow.

Ryan: Well, actually, yeah. We're going to go through this today.

Selena: That's all?

Ryan: It's called The Manner and The Method.

Selena: It's in what book?

Ryan: Well, I was going to... Yeah, there you go. Stole my thunder, just like you would.

Selena: That's what I try to do. [laughs]

Ryan: Anyway, we're going to talk about tone. We're going to talk about things...

Selena: We're going to talk about tone, how to say things, and why it matters how you say what you say, right?

Ryan: Okay. Yeah, on the other side.

[00:00:59] <music>

Ryan: Selena, it's hard to understand what you're saying when you put the wrong emphasis on the wrong syllables.

Selena: That's true.

Ryan: How you say something matters.

Selena: How you say something-

Ryan: What was it we said the other day? Oh, we were reading through Charles Dickens... What's it called?

Selena: *Christmas Carol*, right?

Ryan: *Christmas Carol*, yeah. Oh yeah. I just totally blanked on that. And it's written in old English-ish and they're talking about Scrooge's various business, you know-

Selena: Endeavors?

Ryan: Well, the people that he works with.

Selena: Oh yeah.

Ryan: And there was somebody called the executor. But I was reading it out loud and I pronounced it as the executor. [both laughs] See, you know, how you say something changes, how it comes across.

Selena: And then we realized it was executioner is the word you thought you were using-

Ryan: But you could still say executor and then you get it wrong.

Selena: You could say executor. The effect of the executioner, but we were talking about executor.

- Ryan:** Yes. Yes.
- Selena:** Of the estate.
- Ryan:** Of the estate. So we're gonna talk about all of that. But first, if you don't know who we are, my name's Ryan. This is my lovely, beautiful, long-suffering wife Selena. You're awesome. Thank you for joining me, Selena.
- Selena:** Trying to butter me up because you started the episode that way, huh?
- Ryan:** No. Well, I just like to butter you up just for fun. Lots of butter. [both laughs].
- Selena:** You do like butter.
- Ryan:** Yeah. So we do the Fierce Marriage Podcast on Thur... No, Tuesdays. The Fierce Parenting happens on Thursdays. Most Thursdays I'll say. It's a little hit-and-miss these days.
- Selena:** Well, no, it's not.
- Ryan:** We give you our best whenever we can. [both laughs] Anyway, if you're new to the show, thank you for being here. We pray that it blesses you. As you can tell-
- Selena:** I show up. I don't know about you. We try to-
- Ryan:** Excuse me, you were yawning before we even came on the other side here.
- Selena:** Okay, this is number two episode today. Okay?
- Ryan:** I don't wanna hear it.
- Selena:** When it's quiet in the house and no one's around, I suddenly get very relaxed and tired.
- Ryan:** Anyway, so thank you for joining us. We like to have fun. It's gonna be a good talk today. So this comes out of our book. We have two books. We only have one here today.
- Selena:** It's gonna be a great talk because it's out of your book. [laughs].
- Ryan:** It's out of *How a Husband Speaks*, sponsored by Lion Press, which is our publishing-

- Selena:** Raa.
- Ryan:** Raa. [both laughs] Please don't do that. Please don't do that. [both laughs] That's yours is Cougar Press [both laughs].
- Selena:** You're terrible.
- Ryan:** Lioness. So we have two of these books. There's *How a Husband Speaks*, there's *How a Wife Speaks*. If you wanna know more, go to speak.fiercemarriage.com. These are for sale for bundle prices. Anyway, we're gonna take some notes from chapter 15 and just talk through those. So the verse for this or the premise is why and how love and truth must coexist.
- So often we, as husbands, okay, I'll just speak for husbands, we can say, "I said the true thing. Why do you have a problem with the truth thing I said?"
- Selena:** You say that.
- Ryan:** When in reality you did say a true thing, but you didn't say it in a true way. And here's what I mean by that.
- Selena:** Or the way that you want it to be said. [laughs]
- Ryan:** You didn't say it in love. Truth needs to be said with love. So if truth is said without love... Now, it doesn't mean you get to be hypersensitive on the receiving end. That anything I say Selena takes it hyper sensitively. I do not like your looks you're giving me right now.
- Selena:** I was thinking of yesterday's driving the car when I was trying to talk to you, and you were like... Because you were frustrated and I know you were like, yeah, because they're frustrating things. And I was just like, "I love you and I'm on your side." I was trying to speak the truth in love, and you were just like, "No, not gonna hear it." [laughs]
- Ryan:** No, that's not what you were doing.
- Selena:** That's what I was doing.
- Ryan:** You were doing it wrong.
- Selena:** I was.
- Ryan:** Selena was trying to invalidate my feelings.

- Selena:** It's always what he thinks I'm doing.
- Ryan:** No. Because I'll be like, this frustrating thing frustrates me and she'll be like, "You're frustrated because you haven't had enough food today." I'm like, no, the thing is frustrating.
- Selena:** Even though it's truthful, it is a part of the truth, you don't wanna admit it.
- Ryan:** No.
- Selena:** Anyways.
- Ryan:** You are full of lies. [both laughs]
- Selena:** Just the fact of how much he denies it and how he denies it.
- Ryan:** Ugh.
- Selena:** You feel a little gaslit there?
- Ryan:** Yes, I do. Anyway.
- Selena:** I love you.
- Ryan:** So let's read this passage from Ephesians that undergirds this whole conversation. It's this. Ephesians 4:15, it says, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ..." So let's talk about that, speaking truth in love.
- Now, the way I open this chapter... I'll just read it. It says, The Pauly notion of speaking truth in love was an ancient absurdity. It must have been, because it still seems that way today, at least in fleshly terms. In our culture, it feels impossible to speak truth with love because you're forced to choose between the two." Now, what-
- Selena:** I mean, if you're not, not sharing the same meaning and definition of love, that's a whole nother can of worms. Because I could be saying something to someone who is not a believer and say I'm saying these things in love, and it will hit a whole different note. Right? But when we're talking to our spouse, we have to share that definition of love. Like love is not just me getting what I want all the time and feeling good, right? Love is what the Bible defines it as. God is love. Love is-
- Ryan:** And I would say love is the true way. Does that make sense?

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: So there's a way to speak truth in a true way. And what I mean by "true way", I mean in a way that resonates way with Christ Himself.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: It resonates with Christ. Meaning that, you know, when you hear someone sing, or you've watched a YouTube video, and they're singing, and the note that they're singing is resonating with a crystal champagne glass to the point where that glass will shatter, that's what resonance does. Because you're in such close... what's... you're in the same frequency as that, that thing would resonate with. So we speak in a true way. We speak in a way that resonates with Christ Himself.

To that end, I wanna read this next paragraph because it kind of gets some of those big elephants out of the room. It says, "Some use love as a muzzle. Some use love as a muzzle for anyone confronting sin since doing so is offensive. And as the reasoning goes, it's therefore unloving." That's I think our culture today.

Selena: Yeah. Yeah.

Ryan: "Others brandish truth as a bludgeon foregoing tact, nuance, and conversational breadth in the name of keeping to the facts. Indeed conjoining truth and love is akin to tiptoeing a tattered tightrope over Piranha-infested waters. You succeed. And those who do are rare and bloody."

Selena: Nice.

Ryan: So the point being is that it's not an easy thing to do.

Selena: It's not. It really is not. And I think you have to grow into it. It's not something you're just automatically good at, which I think why communication in marriage is such a hard thing is because it is a journey. You're both learning how to speak the truth in love and learning how to resonate in love. And it's hard to communicate and speak lovingly to someone when you're angry at someone or you're frustrated with the situation that you find yourselves in.

Ryan: So the quest... yeah.

Selena: So when you talked about we opened this whole thing, maybe I'm jumping to the punchline here, but the emphasis, right, on how we say things.

Ryan: Right. The executor agrees. So I have this example in these books where it's a six word sentence, right? The sentence is this: I didn't buy my wife flowers. Well, depending on which word you emphasize, the meaning completely shifts.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And think about this in terms of language in general. And now if you've studied any sort of other language besides your native tongue, you'll realize that intonation means it... it means so much, especially I think I'm not learned Chinese, but from what I've heard, like Mandarin Chinese, maybe even Cantonese, how you say it tonally changes the meaning of the word itself.

Selena: Interesting. Yeah.

Ryan: It's not just a matter of, Oh, I'm emphasizing something else. No, you've changed the meaning from dog to ironing board, right? Depending. There's some pretty funny stuff on the internet to that effect. But maybe I should share a video. I don't know.

But here's the sense. So I didn't buy my wife flowers, so let's change the emphasis here and see how it changes. "I" didn't buy my wife flowers.

Selena: Then who did? [laughs]

Ryan: Then who did? Or I "didn't" buy my wife flowers.

Selena: I bought nothing.

Ryan: I bought nothing. I didn't "buy" my wife flowers.

Selena: So you stole your wife flowers. [both laughs] Stole flowers for your wife.

Ryan: Well, I didn't buy "my" wife flowers.

Selena: Ah, whose wife then did you buy flowers for?

Ryan: I didn't buy my "wife" flowers.

Selena: And who are they for then?

Ryan: Who did you buy them for?

Selena: Who did you buy flowers for?

Ryan: I didn't buy my wife "flowers".

Selena: What'd you buy her?

Ryan: Exactly.

Selena: Got her something else.

Ryan: So you see what I'm saying?

Selena: Yeah. Same six words.

Ryan: Same six words said six different ways and given six different meanings. Now, husbands would be wise to learn this lesson.

Selena: As would wives.

Ryan: Now, this is a very overt example, but like the difference between... you know, the difference between tone and timing is the difference between a loving idea and a loving thought and loving exhortation and maybe a condescending one.

Selena: Yes. And you've taught me this. I mean, you-

Ryan: Well, I mean, think about this. What were you talking about recently? Say you're encouraging me in something and you say, You know what? I think you can probably do better, right? Whether that's, I don't know, whatever I'm working on. Or you say, you can do better.

Selena: I think you can do better. [both laughs].

Ryan: Anyway, there's lots of examples like that where-

Selena: I think "you" can do better. I "think" you can do better. It's just gonna change.

Ryan: Well, and it can go from being a really encouraging thing to a condescending thing or discouraging thing.

Selena: Right. I mean, if you're not thinking about the end game of what you're actually trying to communicate, it will go awry very easily and quickly. I feel like it's just speed wobbles and an inevitable fall. Inevitable fall. So how are we supposed to talk to one another?

Ryan: Okay, well, we're gonna go off of other passages for this.

Selena: Let's do it.

Ryan: So to speak the truth in love. In other words, to speak the truth truly is what we're going for. Now, what does it mean to speak in love? Well, let's look at the common ever-so-used 1 Corinthians 13. And every wedding you've ever been to, it was that verse, that passage. But I'm gonna use that as kind of our rubric through which we run the ways and means by which we speak to each other.

So let's read this paragraph here real fast. Now, given what we know about love from other passages, the methods by which we speak truth become even more clear. We are to speak in ways that are patient, in ways that are kind, in ways that are not envious, not boastful, they're humble, they're not rude, they're not self-seeking, ways that are not irritable, ways that are not resentful. Just to name all the ones in 1 Corinthians 13. There are other passages about love but...

I mean, think about that. I mean, how many times have we spoken to each other in ways that are self-seeking?

Selena: Oh, all the time. Marriage is competition, right? [both laughs] That's what it is.

Ryan: Ours is.

Selena: Competition.

Ryan: And I'm winning. [both laughs]

Selena: Out of the abundance of the heart.

Ryan: I win. [both laughs]

Selena: You never cease to amaze me.

Ryan: I say those things because it makes her laugh. That's why I say it. So how many times have we spoken to each other in ways that are just flat-out rude? I think we've gotten more sensitive to this in our own marriage.

Selena: I mean, how many of these are just.... they're really emotionally charged and they're emotionally driven, right? If we are patient and kind, you have to have some self-control that you're wielding, right? Because if left to myself and my own default, I'm not patient. I don't want to be kind. Maybe I'm envious of, I

don't know what, your big muscles. These are not the default. These require self-control. They require a willingness to love and to die to self and to live sacrificially.

Ryan: Gosh, that's interesting, that they're not the default. Like to walk in the flesh is to walk in falseness and to walk in a way that does not resonate with truth?

Selena: And the Holy Spirit God is so good to sanctify us. And I think that they become more of our defaults-

Ryan: Absolutely.

Selena: ...as we grow into, you know, our spiritual maturity. But more often than not, you know, our knee-jerk reactions are not these. Our knee-jerk reaction of how we want to speak or how I want to speak to you is just, you know, you feel safe, you feel comfortable. So I'm just going to say how it is and I just don't feel like using any effort to be patient with you because you know what I mean, right? Like I don't need to sit here and explain this.

Ryan: A few weeks back we had an episode that was about high regard.

Selena: High regard, yes.

Ryan: The difference between being too familiar with your spouse versus having high regard for them. And I think that's what it comes down to. Am I giving you the benefit of the doubt? Am I speaking to you with high regard or am I being so familiar that I've thrown all decorum out the window, my tones are sharp, my word choice is terse and it's minimal?

Selena: And the interesting thing about it is the longer you're married, the harder it can be to fight off that sort of, you know, complacency in your marriage. But the beauty in it is that when you fight it off, you actually are planting seeds of closeness, unity, intimacy, joy, devotion to one another. Like all the things that make marriage great, that God made it great means... it comes to fruition when you are fighting those defaults off.

Ryan: Yeah. Amen. So I wanna read another passage. This comes from 1 John 4. It says this: "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. That's 1 John 4:8-11.

Then I write quickly after this, "So to speak, truth as love would speak, we look to the word and we witness the life of Christ. That is the essence of Paul's exhortation to speak the truth and love. So we're called to speak carefully and lovingly to each other." Now, obviously in marriage, that's what we're talking about here. Really this goes with to anyone whom you would love. You would want to speak to them in love.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But that's the key is truth in love. And so in marriage, you need both. You need to speak true things in a way that resonates with truth Himself. So I want to finish this with this paragraph and then we're gonna ask some questions and some comparisons really quickly. But here's how the chapter ends out. Like I said, check out these books. There's 18 of these types of chapters in each book that we have on the website.

It says this, "As befits your beloved, any average husband can bluntly tell his wife the truth, but in order to quote, 'speak the truth in such a way that the spirit of love is maintained,' there must be a real desire for the good of the other. This is how, quote, 'love hopes all things', as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13:7. Does your manner of communication reflect the reality that you want the very best of your wife? Is your truth telling done in love with the end game of your wife's sanctification and view? Let it be so, and you will be speaking truth to her in a manner that befits her as your beloved so that she will be better for it being molded by God's loving hand into the image of Christ."

So this book is all about really urging husbands to step into the role as the chief communication person in their marriage. So that's where that last exhortation is coming from. But in each book we have these mediocrity versus mastery tables.

Selena: Yeah. They're at the end of each chapter. So there's like a key takeaway, some application questions, and then this comparison table that's mediocrity versus mastery. I saw this in another book and I was like, this brilliant, really distills down kind of what we're trying to get at. So do you want to read through those or?

Ryan: I'll read the mediocrity one, you can read the mastery one. I'll let you have that column. So mediocrity in this area looks like speaking the truth, but being unloving in your manner of speaking.

Selena: The mastery would look like they speak the truth with high regard for both transmission and reception.

- Ryan:** Mediocrity avoids hard truths in the name of keeping the peace.
- Selena:** Mastery is willing to engage in difficult conversations to preserve truth.
- Ryan:** And finally-
- Selena:** And I would add to preserve the relationship.
- Ryan:** Sure. Maybe you should write a book.
- Selena:** I did, but you need to edit yours better. [laughs]
- Ryan:** Touché. Mediocrity finally is it blames the wife for being too sensitive when she reacts negatively to truth spoken unlovingly.
- Selena:** A mastery of this means the husband takes responsibility for speaking unlovingly if applicable and seeks to grow.
- Ryan:** So hopefully you got something in there that you can apply. If not, here's a question. Just ask yourself, husband, wife, you can ask yourself this question as well as this: do you struggle to speak truth with love? Why or why not? Do you tend to lean too heavily to either side? Explain. So think about that.

In the meantime, if you're listening to this and you don't know what it means to know Truth, we talked about Jesus being the way, the truth. We didn't say that explicitly, but here it is. He's the way, the truth, and the life. So if you don't know what that means to walk in the way, to know the truth, and to know the life that Christ is offering you, we want you to know that.

And the way you know that is you repent of your sin, believe in the gospel, put your trust in Christ. It's that easy, it's also that hard. You need help. And the Holy Spirit will help you along to that end. And we pray that he does.

In the name of Him helping you along to that end, we want to invite you to ask a friend to talk to you about who Jesus is. If you don't know, you want to talk to somebody. Go to a church that preaches out of the Bible, or we have a website. It's thenewsisgood.com.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for the gift it is to communicate. Thank You for this time we got to spend helping couples. I pray that it does that. And I pray that You'd help husbands and wives, both communicate true things in a way that resonates with truth Himself, Your Son, whom You sent to die, that we might know You and walk with You by the power of Your spirit. Father God,

we love You, we praise You, and we worship You. In the name of Your Son,
amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, thank you for joining us. This episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

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

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Ephesians 4:15
 - 1 Corinthians 13
 - 1 John 4:8-11

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

FIERCE MARRIAGE RESOURCES

Main Site: <https://fiercemarriage.com/>

Shop: <https://shop.fiercemarriage.com/>

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/fiercemarriage>

Podcast: <https://fiercemarriage.com/podcast>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/fiercemarriage>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fiercemarriage>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/fiercemarriage>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/fiercemarriage>

Pinterest: <https://pinterest.com/fiercemarriage>

Ask Us Anything: <https://fiercemarriage.com/ask>