

FAITHFUL, FRUITFUL, AND FIERCE (SESSION 1 OF THE FIERCE FAMILIES CONFERENCE)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/faithful-fruitful-and-fierce-session-1-of-the-fierce-families-conference>

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Ryan: Hello, Fierce friends and Fierce Fellowship members! This week for the Fierce Marriage Podcast, we'd like for you to listen to a session from the Fierce Families Conference. All of these sessions are available if you just go to fiercefamilies.com. They're available as a YouTube playlist. They're also available in your podcasting app of choice. Just search for Fierce Families. You can go through and just binge-listen to every single one of the sessions. I can tell you there are plenty of good talks that will bless you.

So I pray that this talk that I gave, called Faithful, Fruitful, and Fierce, will help you recalibrate your heart and your mind on the beautiful design that God gave to marriage and to family and to parenting, and then equip you to go forth in that knowledge under the glory of God and to the good of your family. Be blessed.

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Ryan: This is really a joy. It's finally happening. My wife and I, Selena, you all know and love her, she is the star of the show. I don't know where she is. Salty and sweet, oh but a treat. So this is truly a longing fulfilled. So thank you for being here. We pray that it blesses you.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, You are forever holy, good, loving, and true. In Your gracious generosity and providence, You have given us the institution of family. We are here to contend and strive for what You've made in a time and culture when, as a society, we've rejected what You call good and we've rebelled against what You call holy. So I pray that You would strengthen us and enliven us and enlist us to fight for our marriages and our families, but also for family as the good institution you have made. May this time bring honor and glory to You. In the name of Your son, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen. Amen.

We are a society in free fall. And the disintegration of the family is both a symptom and a cause. But, and this is the reason we're all here, as Christians, we are never without hope. C.R. Wiley said this, he was here not a month ago, "We have the fulcrum of the world in our possession, and that gives us

leverage." I'm talking about our households. But the principalities know this, and that is why they are obsessively working to break them down.

So, friends, the situation is dire, but we're not without a weapon with which to fight. We have the fulcrum of the world in our possession, and it gives us leverage. It reminds me of the time we took, Della, our oldest, at four years old to The Science Center, and she lifted a car by herself. How? Leverage. Fulcrum. So we're not without hope.

We're also, friends, not without work, and most importantly, we're not without a clear desperation for God to move. We need nothing short of a miraculous move of our sovereign God if we're to give our children, our grandchildren, and beyond a world that's actually better than our own and not worse.

But here's the thing about so many of God's mighty works of reformation. They happen slowly and invisibly through Holy Spirit-fueled faithfulness and God-blessed fruitfulness of His people. So friends, if we are to reclaim, if we are to rebuild, if we are to reform and renew, or whatever the term, if we're going to re-establish the foundation of our society for our children, we must, we must go back to the beginning, to the basics, and we must reinvigorate our vision of what societal foundations are actually made of. Family. Family.

Family is the fundamental building block of society. And as a society, we disintegrate it to our own detriment. Family, as an institution, it precedes the state. Its authority transcends that of the state, and its power exceeds that of the state, and the family will always outlast and out-endure the state. It's done it before, and it will do it again.

But for reasons which I'll discuss, the idea of family, this triangle consisting of a father and a mother and their children, has become a scourge to modern society. For what reason? Why? In 1930, so for reference, okay, that's almost 100 years ago, 1930, G.K. Chesterton wrote this: "Hardly anyone dares to defend the family. The world around us has accepted a social system which denies the family. It will sometimes help the child in spite of the family, the mother in spite of the family, the grandfather in spite of the family, but never will it help the family."

And on this quote, Dale Ahlquist, who's the founder of the Chesterton Society, he commented this, he says, "We are arguing about the frayed edges of an essential garment, and we have forgotten the purpose of that garment." We have forgotten the basic function of the family.

So the question I want to ask now, as we launch tonight and tomorrow, is why? Where did this start? Why have we, as a society, so haphazardly abandoned the family? Paul wrote this in Ephesians 2, he said, "You once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh."

So there we have it. There's three enemies. Luther said the same thing that revolt against the things of God. We have the world, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, that's the devil, the enemy, and we have the flesh, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

It seems plain that there is a coordinated effort between these three enemies to deride the family, to dismiss it, to derail it, particularly in the world. I'm not on TikTok, okay? I think TikTok is the worst. I'm right in that. But I found a video, as they sometimes make their way into other social media networks, and it's this woman in China, and she's sitting there, actually she's not in China, she looks like she's somewhere else at first glance.

You're watching it from the perspective of a man who is proposing to her. And as he's proposing, he holds out a ring, and she looks at him, she smiles, she smiles in disbelief, and she slides her finger into the ring, not this one, this one, and immediately the screen flashes, right? It's to a daydream of her, and she's feverishly doing chores, she's in shabby attire, and so she quickly pulls her finger out and away.

Of course, the video goes on. She's confused and curious, and so she tries again, and this time it flashes back to the dream there again, and she's feverishly doing chores, the dishes, the laundry, scrubbing windows. Then suddenly she's pregnant, and she's writhing with back pain and doing chores all the while, until finally she has the baby, who the baby clearly cannot appease, and basically her entire life loses meaning in that moment.

She descends into the living hell that is marriage and motherhood. So finally she pulls the finger out from the ring and resolutely wags her finger at the man and says, No, no thanks, not for me. I'm not falling for that trap." Isn't that an old, tired trope, friends, that marriage is a drag, parenting is a prison, and apparently somehow not getting married means that you don't have to do chores, right? You don't have to do those mundane tasks that are beneath you like cleaning and laundry, dealing with the reality of human life, right? Marriage brings all that in, right, yeah.

The thing that struck me the most about this video, and we're talking about who's warring against marriage, is that, though the woman was clearly White, she was Caucasian, her surroundings were not Western. Hear me out. I looked closer, I'm watching this thing, I paused it, I zoomed in. As I'm looking at the frames, I freeze the frame, as I'm looking at them, the items in the videos, all of them had Chinese writing on them. Caucasian woman doing this Western thing, Chinese writing, the cleaning products in the background, the lotion in the bathroom, the tea tin in the kitchen, all of them were clad with Chinese branding, yet this woman and her video were construed as distinctly Western.

I even just read yesterday, literally yesterday, that the original video featured a Chinese model, but they used AI, which, great, right, AI, AI was used to change her so it might appeal to a more Western audience. And of course, it has, right? The video has since racked up millions of views, but it's now erased. And guess who's viewing it? Who's viewing it? They're our kids, our friends' kids, the kids in the schools that our kids are supposed to go to.

The point I'm trying to make is somebody made this video, friends, and I can't say for sure, but for some reason, it went viral on TikTok, it's the most popular app of our day, among our most impressionable demographic, given the country of ownership, and what might be gained by destroying the West, who knows, I'll let you connect the dots.

But here's the thing, this is just one example, this is just one example. Our own nation hates the idea of family just as much. Our own nation hates the idea of family. It's a long play that began in the 60s. Just a brief overview. The sexual revolution, right, summer of love, decoupled sex from marriage and eventually extricated children from the sexual act itself through the birth control pill.

Paul Ehrlich's book, *The Population Bomb*, was written in 1968, posited that humanity is a scourge on the planet and that we, Mother Earth's parasitic residents, would soon be the end of her. Ehrlich's ideas spread like a mind virus that's still embedded in popular thought today. Despite the fact that his predictions clearly failed, and his thesis is demonstrably false, then they continued by telling men and women they could be free of the intrinsic responsibilities of manhood and womanhood and perpetuated the notion that marrying, parenting, and homemaking were akin to slavery. And a woman's emancipation from such evils was the grand promise of feminism. How's that going for us?

Furthermore, men are toxic, and for them to exert masculine power, forming, building, protecting, defending, leading, problem solving, all of these things are oppressive evils of the highest degree. And for women to display feminine

traits like tenderness and beauty, to nurture and to bear children and to rear them in the home, and then submitting to her husband, these things are now marked traits of feminine failure, not success. At worst, they're a woman's condemnation and at best, her consolation prize.

When not interrupting career or self-actualization, babies are seen as a commodity. That parenting is a lifestyle to be planned and chosen, like picking a car from a lot or shopping for TVs on Amazon. So, now, the foundations of manhood and womanhood decoupled from faithfulness, decoupled from their fruitfulness, intrinsic to married life, our enemies, the world, the devil, and flesh can turn their eyes to the atomized individual.

We've lost this institution. Now we have individuals. We're all atoms. We're individuals and we're taught by humanism that the prevailing worldview of our day, that individuals are autonomous beings, not needing committed connections to others in any significant way. I don't actually need other people, I'm good. But instead, self-expression, self-expression is the highway to self-actualization and happiness.

So as it goes, sexual differences have been gutted, gender has been dissected away from biology to this very end that you might self-actualize. Multi-generational interconnectedness and interdependence is dissolved as kids, our kids are being sent away to, quote, follow their passions, to sow their wild oats, or to leave the nest in search of a real chance at a better life for themselves. Of course, "better" meaning anything other than what they know and grew up with.

The issues aren't always clearly delineated along conservative and liberal lines. Recently, I've seen a bizarre shift, in fact, of tactic on the part of the enemy through none other than the red pill rights. Some of you know what I'm talking about. But the right side of things.

They continue the same trope, showing that marriage is a losing game. 50% of marriages fail. Of course, this is a false mischaracterization, but still, it's a prevailing theme. They'll say not only that marriage is bad because divorce rates are high, but also that men should avoid marriage because the family courts are corrupt. And of course, I happen to agree, the family court system does not help the case for marriage.

But as it goes, men shouldn't get married because the risk is too high. Given no-fault divorce, women will eventually, of course, cut bait and run, taking the man's children and half his wealth with her, then it'll get good. I promise this is all the bad news. All the while, across the board, pornography, which grows

more accessible and depraved by the day, is tolerated in the name of free speech despite its ravaging our hearts, our minds, and our homes like wildfire.

The left would prefer their women perpetually sexualized, but forever unmarried, empowered but infertile, while some from both sides of the aisle would geld our men and urge them to slough off true responsibility and avoid marriage in the name of, quote, risk management. We have infertile women and gelded men. How's that working for us?

So in the West, we've gotten it wrong. And all within the span of about 70 years, or really the historical equivalent of a hiccup, we've messed it up. I'm banking on the fact that you're here because you agree and you want to do something about it.

To quote C.R. Wiley again on Culture in the Home, he said, quote, "What started as a crack in the levy of social standards has become a wide breach, and a torrent of chaos has poured through." And these words, the harrowing words that I read him say years ago have never left me. He says, our civilization is washing away. It's washing away like a sandcastle on the beach.

So, friends, we must resist. But we cannot resist if we fail to see that we're in a struggle. But we cannot resist if we fail to see that we're in a struggle. So if you're here... and hear me in this. I don't just mean in this room. What I mean is that if you are here in this moment in history, considering the situation we're in alongside the commands and the promises of God, this is the moment where God placed you to obey Him, to obey His commands, to advance His kingdom, to push back the darkness for the glory of God.

If you're here and you're in Christ, you are part of plan A. You are part of plan A for this moment. His sovereignty insists on it. So you must resist. You must teach your children to do the same. So the big question is how? I'm glad you asked.

Three words, of course, that are right behind me. The whole conference is built around these three words. We must be men and women who are faithful, fruitful, and fierce. Let's talk about each one real quick.

Faithfulness. Faithfulness starts with cosmic context. Cosmic context. And by this I mean we must understand that we, you and I, marriage itself, babies, grandbabies, households, all of it exists squarely within God's eternal cosmic context. He is the starting point. He made it. Therefore, it is good. Without this reality, none of it matters. I think we are quick to forget that. But with this reality, this will change everything if you grasp this. With that reality, you understand God made it all for His glory and His context, not a single iota of

your manhood, your womanhood, your marriage, your parenting, none of it is without meaning or glory.

Genesis 1 and 2, right, we're all very familiar with Genesis 1 and 2, God created. That promise, that premise, rather, should not be overlooked. Should not be overlooked. God and God alone created from nothing. He is the designer, He is the maker, He is the creative mind, the strategic mind even, and the sovereign mind behind it all.

But then what did He do? So the very first thing God created after creating man and woman is that He instituted marriage. Right? He said, now, you're married. But then, hear this, He didn't actually create the family. Instead, what did He do? He delegated it. He made the man and woman, he made the two one flesh. Then he said to them, "You go. You be fruitful. You multiply."

The fruitfulness is in the faithfulness. And certainly fruitfulness in this way and multiplication in this context are very clear. In other words, God was saying, what? Make babies. Make lots of babies. Fill the earth. Multiply. But here's a question. Is that the only fruitfulness we see in Eden? Surely their fruitfulness extends even further into the garden itself. After all, they were placed among the flora and the fauna for more than just navel-gazing and sipping martinis by the swimming hole, right? They had some work to do.

In the garden, everything that bore fruit did so as it was crafted and commanded by their creator to do. There was nothing that bore fruit that was not designed to and commanded to do so. Like begets like. Orange trees bore orange trees only as orange trees can. Lions bore lions as only lions can. And fish and birds alike laid eggs to bear their own kind as only they can. In the same way, Adam and Eve were called to bear fruit as only a human couple can. This extends beyond just babies.

The first household was a couple bearing children, but it also involved these things. Cultivating the land. Building, forming, and filling the spaces of the garden. Exercising dominion and stewardship. Worshipping in perfect communion with God and bearing God's image, His imaged glory in them with perfect, untainted fidelity.

So in this first point, the faithfulness point, this is the key I want you to get is faithfulness in marriage and family and household, it must, must, must be firmly rooted in the cosmic context of the garden. God created it, not man. You, marriage itself, the potential for family, and fruitfulness were all created by Him for His eternal glory and praise. That's our context.

We have creation. We have marriage. We have the family. We have the household. And if you carry it out, we have family industry. We have cultivation. We have multiplication. It's a beautiful thing. And only God could create something so beautiful.

Not only does it all have cosmic context as part of God's creation, we now can have clarity. Clarity to pursue the various fruits found in the garden, but also the fruits of a life of mortified flesh enlivened to bear fruits of the spirit.

Let's go to the next one. Fruitfulness. Talked about faithfulness, now let's talk about fruitfulness. Next to fruitfulness, I have taxonomic clarity. So I know it's a bit on the nose to use a word like taxonomic next to clarity. So let me explain. Taxonomies have to do with classifying things, okay? They're descriptions of what makes something different from another thing. What makes a dog a dog? Why is a cat a cat and not a dog? What makes a fiddle a fiddle and not a violin? Now, I really want to know the answer to that one because I have no earthly idea.

Similarly, what makes marriage marriage? And what makes family family? We need clarity around what makes Christian marriage and family different from anything else. Without clarity that comes from our context or fruitfulness that's begat by faithfulness, we are doomed to repeat whatever worldly misstep is in style. If we lose our context, we're ships tossed to and fro by the wind. And the reason for this is because marriage is objectively something different from not marriage. It's because God said so. That's it. The same is true for family.

Further, and I want to address it here, the pressing question at hand is, what makes Christian marriages and families different? We know love because our God is love. We know covenant because our God is covenantal. We know joy and peace and patience and kindness and the rest because the Spirit is in us producing them by His power.

Don't take that for granted, Christian. Marriage is a Christian notion begat by the Christian God and includes one man and one woman and covenantal marriage for life. Full stop. Period. Anything else cannot be marriage but only a chintzy counterfeit. I know you all agree.

You must identify and normalize the Christian vision for marriage and family. Then you must refuse to apologize for what God says is normal. It was created by fiat. God said it was good. So why do we think we must maintain it by apologetic? It is what it is. It's as true as the sky is blue. Stop apologizing for what God called good.

Of course, there are pragmatic reasons why God's design is better. Statistics show time and time again, happiness rates among married people with kids are vastly higher than their alternatives. But still, despite the pragmatic reasons, I think some things are just worth dogmatizing, marriage being in that list.

So what is the taxonomy of a Christian household? Really quickly. Covenantal seriousness. That's fierce tenacity. Biblical love and character, visible fruit, children, joy, longevity, missional unity. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 told the married men this, this is going to sound really weird, but he said to them this: be as though you had not married. Why did he say that to them? Because he's showing them profound urgency of being missional, even though you're still in a marriage. Your mission doesn't stop because you got married. No, be as though you had not married. Be on mission. These are the things that make Christian marriage a Christian marriage.

So finally, we must be fierce. Faithful, fruitful, fierce. In other words, we must be fierce and unwavering. And believe it or not, I didn't have to shoehorn that word into the event because we actually use that word now more than we did then. We mean it more now than we mean it then.

As we started, Selena and I, coined this phrase that's kind of driven us throughout the last decade of our ministry, is that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and never gives in. You might have heard us say it in the past. Well, the same goes for parenting and multi-generational thinking.

Friends, it's not for the faint of heart. It's not for the soft of hand. It takes grit and work and love and care like nothing else. And that's the fierce tenacity part. But what about the never gives in part? What about that? Holding our ground as spouses and parents and families and churches and cities takes a new sort of fierceness to refuse to let the postmodernist epistemological and ideological rot encroach where God hath spake.

In other words, have we let the culture tell us too much about what God said was good? Are we given ground without realizing it? And is the fruit of that rot in our marriage? It ought not be. You are the ones who must hold the line in these matters. It's you. There's no one else.

Men, we had an awesome time this morning. Some of you, we looked at various aspects of biblical manhood. Here's my exhortation to you. Live it. Don't leave it here. Live it. Ladies, you heard from other ladies about the glories of biblical womanhood. Stand in those glories without reservation or apology. They're your glories because God has given them to you for His glory. Stand in them.

Couples, I get that marriage is difficult and it requires work. It requires patience to make it good. I get that there are seasons of dryness that feel like they're never going to end. I've been there. I get it. But fight all of that with the fierce tenacity that comes from knowing the One who made you, who crafted marriage itself as the magnificent cathedral of His glory that it is. This same one who fits you together, one for another, and called you once two, now one.

So fight fiercely, not just to hold it together, but because the glory of your blood-bought marital health is the type of glory that honors God. But it also graciously spills over onto you and your kids through every blessing befitting a godly home. It's just better. It's just better. But the fight doesn't stop there.

I'll wrap up. Given everything I said at the beginning of this talk, there's no doubt that we are fighting a 100-year war. Tomorrow I'm going to talk about discipling dissidents, and that's this 100-year war in mind. But our hope of cultural shift rests in this, the quiet, thankless, faithful moments of daily marriage and parenting. But this moment mandates the one you now occupy, that we jettison the myth of neutrality and see the onslaught of the household for what it is. And then we must take up arms and we fight, we resist.

It all sounds very grandiose, but that's where things get less grandiose immediately, is we don't fight through picketing, we don't fight through protest, we don't fight through legislation. Those things are good. Go for that. But in general, we fight in this way, by being faithful and fruitful in God's good design. That's it.

Men acting like men, women acting like women, working out love together in marriage, raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Not the worldly admonition, but God's admonition. That's where it starts. That's the big secret to changing our society. So, beloved, you are here because you care about your marriage and you presumably want to grow in your parenting. You care about good things. And we're just getting started. There's more to come.

My prayer for you is that over the remainder of this evening, that you'll grow in knowledge and skill. That you'll grow in knowledge of skill. But I also pray that you will have clear eyes to see the immense opportunity that you have in your household to be faithful, to be fruitful, and to be fierce for the sake of Christ in our culture that wants nothing to do with Him. That they would see Him in your marriage because they see the faithfulness and the fruitfulness.

My prayer is that we be overtly Christian as we go about the business of marriage and parenting. And as we live out the full implications of Christ in this moment where He has placed us, that we'll be avenues for His glory to shine in the darkness and to bring hope to the hopeless as only He can. May tonight and tomorrow be fruitful to that end.

Let's pray. God, You are a master craftsman and what You have made in the institution of marriage and family is truly, truly a masterpiece. Help us behold Your glory in it. Enable us to obey Your commands for it. And may You mercifully grant us every ounce of fruit befitting faithfulness. It is only by You we are sustained in this endeavor and on to the next. So for that and a thousand more reasons, we praise and we love and we pray in Your son's holy name. Amen.

Thank you for checking out this talk from the Fierce Families Conference that took place back in October of 2023. Our mission for this conference was to put God's design for marriage and family on full display and then to equip marriages and families to live out God's beautiful design in the context in which He's placed them. So if you'd like to learn more about the Fierce Families Conference, perhaps to attend a conference in the future, or to bring the Fierce Families Conference to your own area, just go to fiercefamilies.com.

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