

## BOUNDARIES: DEALING WITH TOXIC IN-LAWS

<https://fiercemarriage.com/boundaries-dealing-with-toxic-in-laws>

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**Selena:** Our goal for setting a boundary, maybe for unhealthy behavior, is not to isolate, but it ideally would be to reconcile at some level.

**Ryan:** And then somewhere out, if you radiate outward, so we have the marriage boundary, we have the family boundary, and now there's what I'll say outer community boundary. It doesn't mean that we don't have reliance on our community, it doesn't mean we don't value our community, it just means that there's an order there. Or you can't monopolize my wife's time, and they can't monopolize my time. Our time needs to be reserved for each other, so there's a time boundary.

**Selena:** How do I set your emotional boundaries?

**Ryan:** You can't control whether or not they choose to respect these boundaries, but you can control how you let it affect you.

**Selena:** The self-control piece can really only flow out of a heart that's been changed by the Lord, and that is being sanctified, and that is secure in our relationship, secure in who He is in Christ.

**Ryan:** Sit down and write out what are those boundaries in each one of those areas, or specifically for the in-law relationship.

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**Selena:** We've done a number of these episodes on in-laws and boundaries, and I feel like we constantly are coming up against, not necessarily new problems, but old problems in new ways, and then coming up with how the Lord would like us to deal with those problems and those... like, how do you instill a boundary with your in-laws? Or should you instill a boundary? What kind of boundary? How long should there be a boundary?

You know, these are all questions of... you know, we don't want to set a boundary up and just run away in isolation, right? We don't get permission in Scripture to do that, but how do we deal with our in-laws when they're being difficult, or when they're maybe berating our spouse, and maybe it's been like

that from the start? What should be our godly response to that, Ryan Frederick?

**Ryan:** And what role, in this case, does a husband play in tending and keeping or providing and protecting, namely the protecting part, with those boundaries in mind? So it takes a lot of clarity, it takes some courage, and it takes conviction. So we're going to talk about that on the other side.

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**Ryan:** So for this week, we're actually going to respond to a question that we received from one of our dear listeners. These are always challenging because we only ever get one version of one side of it. And so that's the big caveat with always with these questions. But I thought it was compelling enough to bring to the podcast to talk about it, because it speaks to all manner of in-law difficulty and dysfunction.

**Selena:** Yeah. Any relationship really. But yes, especially when you're dealing with family, and the Bible gives you specific ways to deal with the family. How do you adhere to those in a way that honors the Lord, and that ideally wants reconciliation, right?

**Ryan:** Yeah. Anyway, if you don't know who we are, my name is Ryan, this is Selena. We are the Fredericks. We're the faces, voices, founders of Fierce Marriage. Thank you for joining us. This would not be possible if it weren't for our complicit patrons, the Patreon community. If you want to join that community, we would be very grateful. They should pray about it. If God leads you to join it, you can do this: go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner). We are just so blessed to know that there are others who are out there who are partnering with us on a weekly or a monthly basis to make this possible.

I also want to mention before I forget, we're answering a question today. If you have a question, you can write in that question. We have a little form, you can actually text, you can leave a voicemail, or you can write in on an internet form. Go to [fiercemarriage.com/ask](https://fiercemarriage.com/ask). That's A-S-K. [Fiercemarriage.com/ask](https://fiercemarriage.com/ask).

This one came in from my good friend, Anon.

**Selena:** Sometimes it's my good friend, Anon, who's female.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Writing specifically about the in-law question. So here's what he said. He says, "My father-in-law went behind my back, stating that I do not have any knowledge of anything and that I am wrong in nearly everything I say. Texting all of this to my wife. He doubled down when she tried to defend me.

He also misunderstood something that happened the last time I was at his house and inflated it to a blatant lie, sharing with everyone else in the house instead of bringing it to me for clarification first. I called him on it and he called me a liar anyway. I'm embarrassed, enraged, hurt, and frustrated all at the same time. For personal reasons, I never want to go back to that house again. And I've believed for both emotional and physical safety reasons that we should be interacting with my wife's family at a distance exclusively. But I do not know where to draw the line. How do you go about dealing with this?"

So he said it, right, what they need is to know where to draw the line.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** And what is the line? It's a boundary.

**Selena:** Yeah. One question I think I have is just, I'm curious what his wife, what her take is on all of this. Clearly, he says that she's defending him. But, you know, again, is her dad a really strong personality and just coming on, you know, really, really strong? Because some of the language he uses here, not the dad, but the husband, it feels like, you know, everything, all the things, everything I say, you know. And I get that he's hurt, you know? He's hurt. And when you're hurt and you're frustrated, you're misunderstood, it's a really hard place to move forward from. But he is saying, where do I go from here? How do I draw the lines? How do I use wisdom in this time to not divide our family?

**Ryan:** Yeah. So we're just going to respond how we would if we were sitting down with this couple and the advice that we would give. And I think it applies to this situation, but any sort of in-law thing where you're just wondering, okay, are we just caught up in this? Like, are we seeing this clearly? Am I just frustrated because of the weirdness of the family stuff and the-

**Selena:** Are we too close to it to see it clearly?

**Ryan:** Are we too close to see it clearly? So the first thing, and this is exactly where the first point we would discuss goes, is that you need input. Namely, you need pastoral elder care. Here we are, okay, Ryan and Selena, we're doing a podcast, we've never met you, Anon, sadly, tragically, and it's really hard for us to tell what exactly is happening because we can't hear the tone in your voice. We don't know exactly the situation that happened.

**Selena:** Can't talk to your wife, can't talk to your in-laws.

**Ryan:** Right. We don't have any sort of relational context to go off of. And so what we don't want to do is to, one, unwittingly coach a couple or encourage a

couple to isolate because boundaries are not for isolation. We'll talk about that in just a minute. But boundaries are to keep good things in and bad things out. It's to delineate where the good and the bad, you know, begin. Not that your in-laws are inherently bad and they're always outside the boundary, but certain behavior, certain words, certain things do not belong within the boundary. They're those little foxes that we read about. They can come in, they'll ravage your garden one way or another. That's why we hedge off the garden, we fence off the garden.

And so it's very hard for us to tell. So that's why it's so crucial that you aren't doing this in isolation. By that, I mean, just the two of you. You need somebody who cares about you and has stake in your ever living soul. The best place for you to get this is from a pastor and to get a biblical pastoral care. And here's maybe your sign. If you don't have that, that's a big problem.

**Selena:** That's really like one of the first steps I feel like is getting pastors, people who know, who are invested in your soul and care about you and that know you and can start asking some of the harder questions about the situation. Helping to shine light on truth, ideally.

**Ryan:** And it's important you get somebody in your corner that's not exclusively going to just nod and say, "Yeah, you're right. You're totally right there. He's out of line." You need somebody who is going to help you see it objectively. That's the whole point of it. You don't want to just get an echo chamber around yourself but somebody who is going to help you see it objectively.

And what is the objective standard that we are using? Well, it's the truth of the word of God. It's not the truth of your pastor. He's on borrowed authority. He's using the authority of God's word to minister to you. That's what it's useful for. For instruction, for telling us how to respond in situations like this, to help you weed through all the noise and get down to the actual root of whatever the cause is in your heart. And, you know, maybe he has some insight into your in-laws' hearts as well, depending on the relational dynamic, if you go to the same church, perhaps, I don't know. It's maybe or maybe not. So that's the first thing is you need elder input, pastoral input. And that is absolutely crucial.

From there, you need to clarify the boundaries and what was transgressed. What do we mean by that?

**Selena:** Well, the dad may not have known. Maybe he just has that big personality and he calls it how it is. He doesn't know maybe the depth. He's trying to jab at him. I mean, there's obviously-

**Ryan:** Trying to damage the relationship.

**Selena:** Right. That to me is like if you don't know that that's bad, then that needs to be articulated to him. What I mean by clarify the boundaries is you need to understand what the boundaries actually are as a married couple. At what point are they drawn and for who and for what behavior?

**Selena:** And why?

**Ryan:** And why? And so just to reiterate, boundaries are not for isolation. Okay, devil's advocate. Say that the father-in-law is right and the wife is loving, but maybe the wife is enabling. So this is, again, a devil's advocate. And we're saying here, draw boundaries. What we could be doing is coaching you to go into isolation in your foolishness, in your enabling of sin, in your blindness. So we do not want that. That's why you absolutely need the people on the outside looking in who have the access to tell you and the courage to tell you if you're off.

**Selena:** Right. And people that you trust. And you need to remain like soft in your heart and be accountable to these people, knowing that it's not just somebody trying to win a fight, it's not somebody trying to be right, trying to be better, trying to one-up you. Really, they're trying to see the situation clearly so that they can help you grow.

I mean, Scripture outlines how we're supposed to interact with others and how we're supposed to interact... I don't think it changes much when it comes to family, either. I would say it's probably more enhanced. You know, we still are called to repent. We're still called to one another if we've sinned against each other. We were called to use wisdom, apply wisdom to our relationships.

I mean, if you're still in the devil's advocate... I mean, not the devil's advocate. It's like you said, we have to know the boundaries, what they are, why they're in place, and what's the purpose of them, because we... I don't know that the Bible says anywhere that we're supposed to just run and be alone and isolate. In fact, Genesis, God created woman for man because he said it is not good for man to be alone.

So if we take those commands and those directives, our goal for setting a boundary, maybe for an unhealthy behavior is not to isolate, but it ideally would be to reconcile at some level. And it may not be the same level that you were at, because if there's been some damage to that relationship, then that's going to be different.

**Ryan:** And I would say boundaries are specifically to maintain right order between relationships. So when Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24, this is why a man leaves his father and his mother and is united with his wife, and they become one flesh, He was reiterating a healthy ordering of relationship with that. Think about that, okay? We gloss over this sometimes. But the man leaves his parents. There's a cleaving... leaving, sorry. Leaving, and then a cleaving now to a new family unit is being formed. A boundary has been established at that point. And that boundary is they are not in-

**Selena:** Yeah, parents no longer get to give instruction, I think on-

**Ryan:** But at the same time, children are told to honor their father and their mother, and that's not bound to just when you're in their household or when you're under their roof. The honoring of our father and mother extends through life.

**Selena:** So then the next question, is there a way that this husband and wife can honor her parents and still put a boundary in place?

**Ryan:** 100%. Now, that means that we need to define what honor means.

**Selena:** Yeah, and define the boundary.

**Ryan:** So let's just go through these various spheres. So, if we are one flesh, which we are, a married couple is one flesh, we have there a marriage boundary, right? You are man and wife, a unit.

**Selena:** There's exclusivity there.

**Ryan:** There's exclusivity in there. There's nobody else other than the Lord within that boundary. And that things that are exclusive to marriage stay there exclusively. Intimacy, certain conversational topics. Of course, my affections are solely for you in that area. And that's healthy and good and right. Now, if ever that boundary is breached and I'm starting to get affection from someone else or giving to someone outside of that circle in a way that should only go toward my wife, boundary's broken. Okay?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** Dysfunction ensues, pain, suffering, bad things happen. So that's the marriage boundary. And the in-laws explicitly are not within that boundary. What's the next boundary? If we go outward, what would be the next one?

**Selena:** Then family. So your children. The natural, like your fruit, the fruitfulness of your marriage would be that next boundary. And so that's your domain of

headship, you know, authority in the home and leading and me nurturing. You're nurturing in your own way. But nurturing and growing and feeding the souls of our children. That's our next boundary/I'd say responsibility, right? Because you're putting a boundary there. Whatever is inside you are now responsible for. Whether it thrives or dies, the Lord's given it to you.

**Ryan:** That's the tending and keeping part. It goes all the way back to the garden. And you said my domain, the domain of headship. I'd say our domain as cultural mandate fulfillers to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, that was in the context of a married couple. And so that's a boundary.

And now as the husband, as the father, I see that as these are my people, capital P, people, if you will. They're the ones that I am responsible before the living God for, the souls of these people. I'm responsible for how I love and nurture my wife and I wash her with the word and we are ministering, loving her as Christ of the church. I'm responsible for raising my children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That's a command given specifically to fathers.

I mean, if your kid comes over to my house and has dinner with our family, I'm going to make sure that that child is well fed, that our kids are playing nice, but ultimately that child's soul is not my responsibility in the same way that my children's souls are my responsibility. That kid will be there for our family worship and we'll sing and if they don't know Jesus, we're going to show them a little bit of who He is, but that's not my domain of headship. So that boundary exists.

And then somewhere out, if you radiate outward, so we have the marriage boundary, we have the family boundary, and now there's this, what I'll say, outer community boundary. Now this is... It's right order. It doesn't mean that we don't have reliance on our community. It doesn't mean we don't value our community. It just means that there's an order there.

**Selena:** And that order comes to play, I think, at different times in relationships, because, you know, you look in the Bible and there's generations that live together, right? But did Abraham and Sarah go and talk to like Sarah's parents about certain things? I mean, probably. But if there was division and there was things that were going against God's word and how He's instructed marriages and families to live, then those should be addressed.

And if he's not a believer, you know, I'm saying now going back to this person that wrote in, if the dad, the father-in-law is not a believer, there's a whole other approach to that as well, that dynamic.

**Ryan:** Clearly the dynamic is important because of the emphasis on Christian community in the New Testament, all the one and others, they love one another. There's even emphasis on in-law relationships. I think of Naomi and Ruth. Naomi released Ruth and Ruth said, No, I am committed to you. And you can think about maybe why that was the case, but she said, "Your God will be my God and your people will be my people." Naomi saw that as an unnecessary, but welcome agreement and a desire that she had to be with her.

**Selena:** Right. She wanted to be with someone. And I think that this guy who's writing in saying, where do I draw the lines, if we're looking within ourselves, that's problematic. If we're looking within, you know, even just the relationship of us, that's problematic. Like we need outside perspective to come in. We need our godly community. Again, if you don't have that, go find it, do it. Engage those people.

**Ryan:** And your in-laws could be in that community. But like you said, if they're not believers, that's going to change the dynamic of what sphere they operate in. Because I'd say there's even a further out sphere of non-believers and people that don't get to share the same belief with you. And this is where we get into... okay, so here's what he's dealing with. These are my wife's parents. They're part of our life forever. She probably loves them and wants to keep talking to her parents, wants to keep going over to their house, wants to have the grandkids get to know their grandparents. Those are all very reasonable things.

And so the husband's looking at that saying, okay, how do I navigate that good desire that my wife has and probably desire he has to have a healthy in-law relationship with the reality that this boundary has been transgressed?

**Selena:** Right. He's berated me.

**Ryan:** Something is broken. And we're gonna talk about how boundaries are broken. So I just want to, I guess, acknowledge that that's the dynamic at play is that you want a good thing, but the good thing's not... you can't... it's like if you're trying to import something good, but with the something good comes toxic waste. Where do you draw the line? So you keep the toxic waste out and you have to forego the good for a time.

So that's number one is you need to get input from a pastor and elder. Number two, clarify the boundaries and what was transgressed. So we're still in number two, I guess. So we're understanding the boundaries. You have your marriage boundary, family boundary, and then Christian community boundary.



And then from there, understand the sanctity of nature of marriage. So go back to that smaller circle. So what actually are we preserving within this boundary? Order? We're preserving the authority of God in this, to honor the Lord first and foremost with our marriage?

**Selena:** And I would say just by doing these things, by honoring the Lord, honoring each other, honoring your parents, loving them, by doing these things, you are setting a boundary automatically in place because you're saying, if this is an honoring behavior, then I'm going to do it. If it is not honoring, then I'm not going to do it. Like there's boundaries being placed when you say, when you submit to God's word and say, I'm going to honor as the Lord has commanded me to honor, I'm going to love as the Lord has commanded me to love. Therefore, I will, in contrast, not love, or I will not hate, I will not treat them a certain way because I am submitted to my Lord and Savior and my King.

**Ryan:** Right. Because you are recognizing that inner... again, we're still trying to identify what exactly was transgressed. So that inner boundary was transgressed. A line was crossed because he's now trying to get you to dishonor the Lord in that he's trying to drive a wedge between you and your wife. And he needs to know that. And you need to recognize that.

**Selena:** And you need to communicate that, yeah.

**Ryan:** And he also needs to recognize that you are the head of your household, that your call as husband is to love your bride as Christ loved the church, again, washing her in the word, to protect and provide for her. And sometimes protecting means protecting from the Father. I guarantee you no son-in-law relishes having to do that. But based on what we have to go off of, that seems like it's probably necessary. And if this is happening the way it's happened, it's probably not the first time.

**Selena:** Right, right. Again, we're putting boundaries in place like this, so that ideally there would be some sort of reconciliation down the road, not to isolate, not to sever ties forever and ever, but to... it's almost like putting a toddler in timeout and saying, we've talked about this. And maybe that's part of the conversation. Have you had that conversation too of like, Hey, dad-in-law, we've talked about this before. We've gone over this boundary. We're talking about establishing these boundaries so that you can have these conversations. But then you have a track record of saying, Hey, we've been here before.

**Ryan:** Let's get into that. So how are boundaries typically transgressed? Think of two countries next to each other. Okay? We have the Frederick country, and then we have maybe in-law country. You want to have amicable economic relations

between you and that other country, right? They have all the wheat. You have all the, I don't know, rice.

**Selena:** Cheese.

**Ryan:** All the cheese. I don't know. They have all the beer, you have all the cheese. Some friends of ours went to Bavaria recently and they talked about beer and cheese. So you want the goods to travel back and forth. Because they can only be grandparents, and they can only play the in-law role. But we can only play the having grandkids role, and we can only play the children role.

The problem is you don't have free... like there's no free exchange of goods. There has to be border patrol, border control, because if you have, you know... tragically we live in... you know, in the U.S. Fentanyl has been flowing like water through our borders until recently. That is poison and it's killing people and it's causing all sorts of problems. So you have to figure out exactly how are these things getting through.

So various ways the boundaries are breached. I've got five of them here. Four of them are external. One is internal. So time. So time is a boundary. You don't get to just call whenever. You don't get to show up.

**Selena:** So talking to in-laws as a married couple. You can't just show up on our doorstep whenever without a text or call beforehand.

**Ryan:** Or you can't monopolize my wife's time and they can't monopolize my time. Our time needs to be served for each other. So there's a time boundary. There's also a language boundary. Not all things are fair. Like free speech does not exist in this. Now, we can talk and reason, but like you can't say whatever you want, however you want to say it.

**Selena:** Yeah. And whenever you want to say it.

**Ryan:** And whenever you want to say it. So language, the words you say, how you say them.

The third one is behavior. I would put this exchange in the category of behavior. It's the things that are said, but really it's more what's being done and it seems like the division is the goal and to pit the wife against the husband is the goal. To prove to the wife that the husband is, you know, all the things that he's saying that he is. That sort of behavior... we say it all the time, your marriage needs advocates, not adversaries. And so if you've got adversaries... now, there are advocates for your marriage that will sometimes play an adversarial role because they're saying things you don't want to hear. And

you'll be able to discern who those people are. But adversaries have no business speaking into our lives.

**Selena:** Yeah. Adversaries, their objective is division. Advocates, it's unity.

**Ryan:** Well said. That's well said. What's the next one? So time, language, behavior.

**Selena:** And then location. So we talked about where the relationship happens, like in your home or in our home. At this point, you know, talking to this husband, it sounds like it's not a good place for them to be at the in-laws' home. And so maybe the interactions that are going to happen are now going to be on the married couple's turf, right? At their home. You know, when they say, when they have the boundaries and they're kind of controlling the situation a little bit more because the boundary's been breached. So there needs to be some proving ground happening, which is why location can be a big thing.

I've had friends in the past where we always went to their house, never came to our house. We always went to their house. After a while, you just kind of get beat down by it all because it's not that it's a bad place to go, but you're like, why is my place so bad, you know? You start kind of questioning your own self. And so location plays a dynamic.

**Ryan:** It does play a dynamic, yeah.

**Selena:** And then you-

**Ryan:** The home team advantage is real.

**Selena:** It is, yeah.

**Ryan:** If you realize whenever we go over there, it's not ending well. Location boundaries need to be recognized.

**Selena:** And you brought this one up, I'll let you talk on it, but emotional boundaries. How do I set your emotional boundaries? I'm just kidding.

**Ryan:** This is how. You can control their actions, you can't control their words. You can't control whether or not they choose to respect these boundaries, but you can control how you let it affect you. You can control your response. You can control whether or not you let it fester. And that, frankly, takes a very secure person who knows who they are in Christ, who knows God's word, who knows the promises, who knows exactly what it is you're-

**Selena:** Fighting for and protecting. I was going to say I think the self-control piece can really only flow out of a heart that's been changed by the Lord and that is being sanctified and that is secure in our relationship, secure in who he is in Christ. Only then can you really start saying, okay, I can be resilient, I can kind of put up this emotional shield. I know that dad-in-law is going to throw these darts, I know he's going to be doing some of this stuff, but like, I'm not going to let it affect me in the way that it used to, because it doesn't affect my eternity. Christ has done his work in me and he's continuing to work in me.

At some point you have to let go of trying to fight the bear on its turf. You just have to like, say, I'm going to climb a tree. Maybe that's not a good idea.

**Ryan:** Selena knows how to get away from bears. She studied this.

**Selena:** It's not good.

**Ryan:** So far we've looked at how to tackle this difficult in-law situation. You have to get outside help for clarity. Then you need to understand and establish your boundaries. And then understand how the boundaries have actually been transgressed.

And the five things we gave you to do this are the categories to look at your time, look at the language boundary, look at behavior, look at the location boundary, and look at your own internal emotional boundaries or maybe mental boundaries you're putting into place. And so we would encourage you as a couple, sit down and write out what are those boundaries in each one of those areas for specifically for the in-law relationship?

**Selena:** Yeah, we have this... I think it's much more loosey-goosey with our in-laws because we've established some... you know, just boundaries and rhythms that work for everyone and work for our hearts and souls. But even with certain friends... I don't spend a lot of time at certain friends' house because of the effects that it has on us and our relationship. Or you don't do certain things with guys for long periods of time because you just would rather probably be at home. But what I'm trying to say is we make decisions based on what we value. And so...

**Ryan:** And the question is, are you on the same page about that?

**Selena:** Exactly.

**Ryan:** And then here's the last thing, okay? You can't do this unless you've done the first two. And that is invite your in-laws into helping you keep those boundaries close. The boundaries-

**Selena:** In place. And they may not want to. Expect that they won't, especially if it's a heated situation. But keep the conversation open, I think.

**Ryan:** Yeah. To that end, you pray for wisdom and discernment. How can we approach this kind of, you know...

**Selena:** Pray for them also.

**Ryan:** ...this fiery situation? How can we approach it and not just create more drama? But really say, hey, listen, we want the same thing. Father-in-law, you said some things that were not helpful, were not healthy. As well as I understand it, we want the same things. Here's what we want. We want to have a healthy relationship. We want to have great border relations with you.

**Selena:** Yeah. We both love your daughter.

**Ryan:** And we don't want to isolate from you. We want a healthy family. We want joy, not sorrow.

**Selena:** And maybe...

**Ryan:** So to that end, these are some boundaries that we believe need to be in place to ensure that sort of thing. To go back to the time boundary, this is a clear example. If you know that every night when you're at your in-laws house, when they get tired, they get really grumpy and say things that hurts everyone's feelings, maybe your time boundary is we're out by 5:00 p.m. Or like, we don't do dinners. We only do lunches.

You can get really specific. Talk about examples and ways that you can, you know, I guess, mutually enforce things like time.

**Selena:** We talked about this too before. Boundaries aren't just things that you can't do, but boundaries are things that you can do as well. So, hey, we can do dinner every Thursday night. Let's try to make that a family dinner. We've got to be home by 7:30, you know? Set that up. Set that stage. And then you have to actually enforce that when you do that. Because if you are loosey-goosey on any of those other things, you like my new term loosey-goosey, then it's just gonna... you can't be surprised when it transcends into what it was before. Right?

So boundaries are good. Boundaries are things that God has put in place. We are bound by time. We are not infinite beings like Him. He is infinite. We are finite. He knows all, we don't know all. And there's a good reason for that.

So accepting that there are things that you are gonna have to forego. That you are gonna probably have to run up against some boulders, and there's gonna be some pain in some of these conversations. But remembering that your goal is so that, ideally, you can thrive in this relationship. You can have another, hopefully, you know, godly brother in father-in-law, you know, and there can be a sharing of life together that is God-honoring and that is joyful.

**Ryan:** That's the ideal. In the fallen world we live in, the ideal is not always possible. Meaning, if you set a boundary, it says, "We will not let our in-laws seek to divide us or berate each other or somehow go after one another behind our backs to try and put a wedge between us. That's a boundary.

Well, if they refuse to do that, they say, "Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, we heard your boundaries, whatever." And then the next morning, you get the text, and the next day, you get the call, and it's the same thing, then you now have a conversation. You say, "We talked about this, and it doesn't seem like you're willing to help with this boundary. So, for a time, we're not gonna be able to talk. I'm sorry. I'm not gonna be able to respond to your text."

Nobody wants to do that. But the reality is you have to be willing to do this, but you can only be willing if you have the clarity. Because if you don't have the clarity, you can't have the courage to actually see it through.

**Selena:** Christ gives us the clarity, I think, in His-

**Ryan:** He does.

**Selena:** ...how He loves us.

**Ryan:** See number one. Because one of the ways He loves us is through pastoral care, pastoral shepherding, and the like. Anyway, hope this is helpful to you. In-laws is a tricky situation. It's a tricky topic. Every situation is slightly different. And that's why we say we don't know your situation, but get somebody in your sphere who does, who can see it clearly and help you to that end.

We mentioned pastoral care. We have pastors of our own. Of course, we have a church that we're a part of, but we have an over shepherd who is greater than any pastor. His name is Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God made flesh so that we might know God. I mean, we might be reconciled with God.

And how did He reconcile us with God, and why do we even need reconciling? Well, friends, we are more sinful than we ever imagined, truly, against God's unmatched holiness and glory. We have sinned infinitely against an infinite

God. We cannot save ourselves, so we needed God Himself to make good on the terms of the covenant. And He did that by living a perfect life as the incarnate son of God, Jesus Christ, went to the cross, died an unjust crucifixion, a sinner's death, horrific pain, separation, and then was in the grave for three days, rose on the third day, and then is now ascended to the right hand of the Father. And He says, repent and believe in me, and you can have eternal life. You can be raised to do life. Be buried with me. Die to your flesh. Be raised in the spirit.

This all sounds kind of out there, but it just means believing that Christ is enough. That's what the gospel is. Christ died for your sin. Just repent and believe. We want that for you.

If you wanna know more about the gospel, we have a website. It's [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com). There's actually a church finder there. We would say, if you're not a believer or you're a new believer, find a friend, get into a church, hear from the word of God every week, get in the Bible daily, and do so in Christian community. So go to [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com) to take first steps down that path.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for your word. Thank you, that you are a perfect Father, that we have a heavenly Father who is always for us. Lord, and I have a heavenly father-in-law, and that is you. You're the same. That you're my wife's Father as well. Lord, thank you that you've given us a perfect model of being a loving Father.

Lord, I pray that you'd help these couples, couple like the one who wrote in. I pray you'd help them, help other couples dealing with difficult in-law challenges. Give them wisdom beyond their knowledge of their years, Lord, and that may be empowered by your Spirit, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** Amen. All right. Very good. Again, as a reminder, if you want to partner with us, we would love that. You can become a fellow. Go to [fiercemarriage.com/partner](http://fiercemarriage.com/partner). Join the fellowship. We would love that if you'd consider that. But either way, we will be here week in and week out, showing up to help you, to help your marriage to, make the gospel great in marriages far and wide.

So this episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can.

**Ryan:** See you again, Lord willing, in about seven days. Until next time—

**Selena:** Stay fierce.



**PODCAST NOTES**

- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://thenewsisgood.com)

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