

TRUE FRIENDS WILL ADVOCATE FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AND NOT JUST FOR YOU

<https://fiercemarriage.com/true-friends-will-advocate-for-your-marriage-and-not-just-for-you>

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Ryan: Knowing the difference at least between marriage advocates and marriage adversaries.

Selena: Adversaries to our marriage depending on what they are encouraging us in, what they're telling us, and that you need to recognize that that's not somebody who is advocating for your marriage. That's somebody who's an actual adversary to your marriage because they are only advocating for you and not your covenant.

Ryan: But what is love? Is love just making sure everyone's happy all the time? No, love has a definition and it's rooted in God's very nature. And so if you have a friend who doesn't understand that, they will sometimes think they are loving you by taking your side.

Selena: Well, I've been in conversations, though, where it's like, I don't like the husband or I don't like what he's done or what he said or how he's acted, very dishonorable, disrespectful, and yet I still need to stand in the gap as a Christian and say, Yeah, that's hard.

Ryan: But sometimes, as a friend, you can help somebody see things clearly, not just based on your opinion, but based on God's word. So that begs the question, what is a Godly friend? I think maybe the larger, later question that this is raising is, do you have Godly friends?

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Ryan: Selena, one of the concepts we bring up it's kind of just in the DNA, if you will.

Selena: Of the Fierce Marriage?

Ryan: Of the Fierce Marriage ecosystem.

Selena: Ecosystem.

Ryan: High five. Come on. Yes. Never avoid the opportunity for a high five.

Selena: With your spouse. Just kidding, everyone.

Ryan: What? With your spouse specifically. I don't care about anybody else. I care about your high fives. That's all. Anybody else gives me a high five, cold shoulder. Immediately turn away. Anyway, get on with it, Freddie. All right.

So one of the things we talk about a lot on the Fierce Marriage podcast is finding marriage advocates or knowing the difference, at least, between marriage advocates and marriage adversaries.

Selena: I think we have a lot of well-meaning and well-intentioned friends that can actually be adversaries to our marriage depending on what they're encouraging us in, what they're telling us, maybe the counsel they might be giving us. And so it's important for us to have our heads on a swivel, to have discernment in our friendships, in the community of even church, Christian men and women around us that might be speaking into our marriage. We have got to be discerning.

And so what does that mean? What does that look like? We've broken this out. And we use these terms a lot throughout the podcast and the videos. So we thought it might be another good opportunity to highlight the importance of these people.

Ryan: So we'll do that on the other side.

[00:02:38] <music>

Selena: No one's perfect, Ryan, okay?

Ryan: Just didn't realize that you didn't care.

Selena: If you didn't care, I wouldn't have read through it.

Ryan: Okay. So here's the thing.

Selena: I read through most of it.

Ryan: Selena! Our mission here is to, again, not always be rehashing, reinventing things with marriage, right? We're on episode 405 or something right now. All right? So give us some slack. Marriage, when you talk about it 30, 40, 50 minutes at a time, you can cover a lot of ground, okay? But for that reason, podcasts are an ongoing weekly thing. And so we recognize the fact that there's not a whole lot of new... there's nothing new under the sun.

Selena: No.

Ryan: We've talked about things in the past that are always, I think, maybe needing to be brought to the forefront again. This is one of those things. As Selena was telling me that, as she's preparing this rundown, she in fact prepared nothing.

Selena: I did not say that. I made an edit. No.

Ryan: Of course, as we live and grow-

Selena: We have grown. We do not need scripted rundowns.

Ryan: I think we're fine in our thinking and we're precise in things like theology and family life. So it'll be different.

Selena: For me, this was an enlightening way to think about the people in my life and how much ground I give them in terms of how much weight do I put in the words they tell me about my marriage. There are a few people that I go to or can go to or would go to when we're kind of in a funk, right?

I don't really go to anybody. I go to the Lord and I usually bring it there. And if it's really kind of just like this weird kind of fog between us for a couple of days, I might go to one of our good friends and be like, "Do you guys experience this?"

And usually it's so wonderful because she's like, "Yes. You know, sometimes it just passes. Here's some things we did that kind of worked. Maybe it's this." There's asking questions. There's just this healthy kind of back and forth. But I go to her because I know that she's advocating for my marriage. I know that she's not like, "Well, yeah, when my husband treated me that way, boy, I just went out and blew a credit card. I did whatever I wanted to do and I just purchased whatever I wanted. I just had a me day because I needed a me day," you know?

Ryan: But that's not all that uncommon, I think, to have that sort of advice.

Selena: Right. That's what I'm saying. And that you need to recognize that that's not somebody who is advocating for your marriage. That's somebody who's an actual adversary to your marriage because they are only advocating for you and not your covenant.

Ryan: That's good. If you don't know who we are, I'm Ryan. This is Selena. We are the Fredericks. I like to do this each episode because sometimes you get new listeners. So welcome. If that's you, welcome to the Fierce Marriage Podcast.

Selena: Welcome.

Ryan: Warmest welcome to you. Our whole mission, like I said, is to point you to Christ or to help you help your marriage with the ultimate effect that it would point you to Christ, that you would grow deeper in your relationship with Him, and as a result, your marriage grows stronger, more beautiful, more musical.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Oh no. So yeah, Selena was saying, it is nice to have friends around you that will watch out for you. And I think that's kind of a definition of a friend.

Selena: Yeah. You can be transparent with them.

Ryan: But the thing is, and this is what this whole episode is about, is that person who... so I'll back up just a minute. For part of our homeschool co-op, we're talking about fruits of the Spirit. I'm teaching the kids. It's so interesting because I have to distill these doctrines down to where a 5-year-old can understand it, but also like a 10, 12-year-old can understand it.

Selena: They understand it at different levels.

Ryan: They do. And right now we're in pneumatology, which is a study of the Holy Spirit. And so we're talking about fruits of the Spirit, what the Holy Spirit does, and how he produces fruit in us. And so we talked about love. What is love? Is love just making sure everybody's happy all the time? No. Love has a definition, and it's rooted in God's very nature.

But love, I believe the best definition of it is wanting the very best for somebody. Now, how do you go about defining the very best for somebody? Well, it happens to be what God wants for that person. And so if you have a friend who doesn't understand that, they will sometimes think they're loving you by taking your side when really what they need to do is love you by wanting the very best for you.

I'll say this. In almost every case, it is the very best for you to advocate for your marriage, in the vast majority of cases. So yeah, that's what this love episode is about is identifying those marriage adversaries who would just maybe advocate for you versus the marriage advocates who are advocating for you by advocating for your marriage.

Selena: Right. And maybe you're a listener that is like, "Oh gosh, I've got a friend who's struggling in their marriage. Oh man, have I been the one that's saying, 'Oh,

you should just get yours,' or 'you should just take a break,' or 'you need some time away,'" or am I the one that's earnestly praying for them, earnestly checking in with them, asking them questions, not being nosy, but being, you know, helpful as the Lord leads.

I think that was one of the things when I've been going through this or, you know, it comes out of your own heart and your own life, right, of, oh man, have I been doing this? Am I fighting for other people's marriages, or am I pushing my friend towards, you know, wow, he's really not acting like a great husband, so yeah, I do whatever you want?

Ryan: I can imagine you.

Selena: Well, I've been in conversations though, where it's like, I don't like the husband or I don't like what he's done or what he said or how he's acted very dishonorable, disrespectful, and yet I still need to stand in the gap as a Christian and say, "Yeah, that's hard. That stinks really bad. I'm sorry. I am sorry. What can I do to help you? Has da, da, da, da? Have you asked that...?" You know, just trying to ask questions and understand. So it's not an easy place to be. But again, if I'm loving this person well, I'm not going to enable sin, and I'm not going to be an adversary towards their marriage.

Ryan: So that begs the question, what is a godly friend, and how can you identify a godly friend? And you're really wrestling with how can you be one? Right? Which we talked about wives, women, wives and friendships a couple weeks ago. I think it was three weeks ago by the time this comes out.

So a godly friend will, and we've said this, but they'll help you fight for your marriage. I'll use an illustration. I had a guy that I'm walking alongside kind of in a discipleship context, and he was talking about, um, some of the past struggles they've had and how he's done the work to kind of overcome the struggle, but he's still living in the fallout of it.

My goal with that... because sometimes you just listen, you don't always need to have the fix, right? But sometimes as a friend, you can help somebody see things clearly, not just based on your opinion, but based on God's word. And so I'm always trying to get myself to think in terms of what does God's word say about this? What does Jesus say? What did Paul say? What does the Old Testament say about this? And then how can I then faithfully, not just arbitrarily, but faithfully apply that and maybe use that as something to elucidate action on his part?

And so, in this case, I talked about forgiveness, right? Because forgiveness is a command. You don't get the option to not forgive. In Matthew 18, we are

obligated to forgive as Christians. It doesn't mean we trust immediately. Anyway, that's another conversation which we've had in the past. But I just basically said to him, like, "Sounds like your wife's struggling with forgiveness." You know, because forgiveness has fruit. Anyway.

So the point there that I'm trying to make is that sometimes being a friend is helping your friend see it clearly, knowing that by seeing it clearly, it will bring their marriage to greater health. But we don't see clearly outside of the truth of God's word. We need to have God's word ready at hand.

What else is a good friend? You talked about godly wisdom. Processing through what you're feeling, I think, a friend will be there.

Selena: And I think, you know, processing, you gotta be careful with that too, right? Because it can turn into a gossip session, a slandering session against your spouse. And that's not what that is for. I think to the coffee dates or play dates I've had with moms or wives that are struggling and, you know, they're just like, "Man, I'm just kind of in this rut," but it's not them bashing their husband. It's more of a recalling of what has happened. There's also this element of hopefulness for what will happen. And like, "I know we'll get through it. It just kind of feels hard right now," or "it feels frustrating."

Again, we talked about this a couple of episodes back as well of having high regard for your spouse. When they're not around, are you talking about them and speaking about them with high regard towards them or complaining about them?

Ryan: Because you can certainly lead the conversation by coming at, you know, basically having low regard for your spouse and bringing that to your friend.

Another thing a godly friend will do is, again, seeing clearly, but not just seeing the situation clearly or your spouse clearly, but seeing you clearly. I rely on brothers in my life to tell me when I'm off the rails because they're blind spots for a reason. You don't know you have a blind spot until someone shows you what you're missing, what aspect of your vision is unclear. And so they will point out where you can be sharpened or where you can learn to be more like Christ, or where blatantly you might be in sin.

So a good friend who's advocating for your marriage won't enable sin. They will have clear eyes to see it and then they'll have the courage to call you on it.

Selena: Well, and men are different like that. You appreciate when guys call you out on that. Women get offended. Not always. Not always. Because I think there

is like a tenderness between sisters in Christ. There can be and should be. But I think that at least my fear as a friend, I don't want to offend. I don't want the walls to go up. I don't want their ears to shut down, their heart to harden. Those are my biggest fears when speaking the truth that I know it's going to bristle against them.

But also, this is me stepping out in faith and presenting the truth. You say you got to see the problems through the biblical lens. You have to have God's truth in your heart to be able to share it clearly and accurately, at the right time, for the right moment. But I think it depending on where the person's at, it can be harder to speak that truth to them. Speak the truth to them, not that truth.

Ryan: You gotta be careful these days.

Selena: I so appreciate the advocates that we've experienced in our marriage.

Ryan: I think maybe the larger, later question that this is raising is, do you have godly friends? Truly? What are the distinctives of Christian friends? Again, two, three episodes back talked about women and wives and friendship. So there's some of that there in our.

In our book, See Through Marriage-

Selena: We talk about Christian community and kind of the distinctives. There's a gospel centrality. There's-

Ryan: ...discipleships happening. You have commitment to one another. There's five different distinctives that we identified there. That's See Through Marriage. Check that out. It's a book we wrote a couple of years back.

I guess, while I say that, don't assume that your friends are godly.

Selena: Right. Just because you go to church together.

Ryan: Clearly you probably do have godly friends. We hope that you do. But they're still not perfect. So I'd like to do is just look at, in light of that, if you have some godly friends, what does scripture say about how we are to be vulnerable to them? So we go to the book of Proverbs, we see some themes.

In Proverbs, the idea that a wise person has a soft heart. We listen when other wise people speak. We listen, especially when the Lord speaks. We listen to the call of wisdom. I feel like the first half of Proverbs is all about "I wisdom call out, open your ears, get wisdom, get understanding. Though it costs you everything, get it."

So in the spirit of that, knowing that the Lord uses Christian community to bring wisdom about in our hearts and our lives, how can we do that? Well, Proverbs 19:20 says this, "Listen to advice and accept discipline and at the end, you will be counted among the wise."

Proverbs 28:23 says, "Whoever rebukes a man will later on find more favor than someone who flatters with his words." This is what I mean when I say I'm thankful for the brother who has the courage to tell me when I'm off the rails, who has the courage to risk something with me. Because he's taking a risk thinking, "I hope Ryan's open to this. I hope that he's not going to get defensive. I hope he's not going to unfriend me IRL, real life."

Selena: IRL. See how old I am. We were reading about or talking about friendships amongst women and there was a Proverbs that I was talking to like young people about, and I wanted them to take heed of this wisdom. Because it says, I think it was probably Proverbs 13:20, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

So identifying the fools in your life, right? Identifying those who are not actually giving you wisdom, but who are just giving you the... what-

Ryan: What you want to hear.

Selena: What you want to hear.

Ryan: Whatever is coming out of their own brain, right?

Selena: Whatever they've been consuming.

Ryan: The question is, how do you identify a wise person versus a fool? Friends, it's not hard. Are they following the Lord or not? Frankly, that's it.

Selena: Or is there a fruit? Look at the fruit.

Ryan: Are they walking in step with the Lord or are they walking in step with themselves? Are they walking in righteousness or are they walking in unrighteousness? And sometimes we can't see our own friends clearly, but I'm just telling you, if you want to know, look at the fruit. And the fruit looks like righteous living, unrighteous living.

Because a wise person has a fear of the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? God, I trust you. I will follow you. I've been the need to you. You don't-

- Selena:** Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
- Ryan:** Proverbs 9:10.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Proverbs 27:9 says, "Ointments and perfume encourage the heart; in a similar way, a friend's advice is sweet to the soul."
- Selena:** Proverbs 24:6, "Through wise counsel you will wage your war and victory lies in an abundance of advisors." So, not being on your own, not having an echo chamber of friends that just tells you what you want to hear, agrees with everything you say. If that is where you find yourself, question, question those friends, question those relationships, and the validity and whether or not those friendships honor the Lord and are pushing you in that direction as well.
- Ryan:** Just a few more passages here because man, we can't get enough of this. Psalm 1:1, "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." This is all about who you're hanging with and where you find yourself. Enough said.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another, build each other up as you already are doing. These are marks of Christian community."
- Selena:** Matthew 19:6, "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man separate." That is not talking about friendship. That's talking about marriageship.
- Ryan:** It's true. But we're talking about advocating for marriage. You're one flesh. Don't let man separate you. Don't let anyone drive a wedge between you.
- Selena:** The adversary.
- Ryan:** The adversary will want to do that. He might even do that through adversarial friends, whereas the Lord will always have you remain joined and even to greater measure together. Let not man separate.
- Here's another question. How do we go about finding marriage advocates? What do we do? If you look around the landscape of your life and you realize, man, I really don't have what I need and maybe you're seeking to be an advocate for somebody, you're seeking that type of relationship where you can grow from one another, how do you find them?

Selena: Well, I'd begin with prayer. Pray together. Ask God to help you either find a couple like that or to be more bold in some of the relationships that you have. I think you can recognize whether you should be an advocate for a friend's marriage. And taking that step in faith. And then pursue. Pursue them. Ideally start with having them over for dinner. I feel like that opens up a lot of doors.

Ryan: And what you'll find is that if you're the type of person that's pursuing a, typically the type of person that's also pursuing, you'll find each other. I've had it to where I feel like there's a brother and we were seeing the same horizon where we're both wanting Christ and I pursue a friendship and it just doesn't work because our lives are... we were too busy or there's not enough of a... that's why I'm a big fan of having friends in your life that you run in the same rhythms. You have reasons to cross paths that are outside of you calling and setting something up.

So church, discipleship rhythms, you name it, different... whatever the thing is, it's something that's automated. Like you don't have to call and organize it. You said school. I was wondering what you meant. You meant home education.

Selena: Our co-op. Our home education co-op.

Ryan: Okay. Very good. So yeah, pray for them and that will kind of tune your eyes to see when the right person is there. Pursue conversation, dinner, coffee. Take the initiative. If they are on the same page, on the same wavelength, they will likely reciprocate.

Selena: And I think we maybe should have led with this. If you don't have anyone, go to a pastor, start there.

Ryan: Sure.

Selena: Go to your shepherd.

Ryan: They're going to advocate for your marriage.

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: Anything else? So we have this, what do marriage advocates do? What do they do? We already talked about this.

Selena: Kind of articulated a little bit, but-

Ryan: We'll say it again. They protect your marriage from division. This is why you need them. But also from divisive people. And they will help you, um, find the healthiest paths toward reconciliation. So when you're going through a hard time, you need someone to help you reconcile. If you're doing great, you may not need a mediator or an advocate.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: But it's when things get tough, the advocate will be there as a backstop, somebody to make sure that you don't go too far off the rails, and they'll get you back into community with one another once again.

Selena: And it's so obvious when people value the same things, there's just this common ground. There's this work that you're about when you're Christian brothers and sisters living faithfully and hopefully into the call and the roles that he's giving you. You value your marriage. You value the authority that is God in your life and scripture and prayer and gathering together. Just those things alone I think are the pillars and where you can find these marriage advocates and you can even become those marriage advocates.

It's one of those things that it's blessing begets blessing begets blessing, you know? If you don't have any of those people, pray, ask the Lord. Ask the Lord. He is good and faithful to give us all that we need for life and godliness.

Ryan: Again, as with every episode, we hope this has given you something to think about, maybe tuned your antenna a little bit to recognize who are the marriage advocates, who are the adversaries in my life, and how can we nurture those advocate relationships and how can you yourself be an advocate for the marriages in your immediate friend sphere and your family?

Selena: What would you say to... if you have adversaries in your marriage, how would you shut that down?

Ryan: Oh yeah. Okay. We buried the lead on this one. There's a boundary that's being transgressed. And so if I'm talking to a guy, and... for one, I can't imagine a situation where I'd be talking to a guy who would speak to me against my wife. That to me is like, what? Who are you? And I don't know if that's just, you know-

Selena: I think it comes with conversations out on soccer fields, you know, or with other people that are like, how can you still be salt and light in that, in that moment?

Ryan: It's a bold move to speak against someone's spouse. So you have to take some level of friendship. So usually these relationships are usually going to be familial. They're going to be longstanding relationships where people kind of change and you change and maybe you don't change in the same ways. And so hopefully there's a high level of relational capital there.

So what I would say in those situations is you're going to draw a boundary and you're going to say, "Hey,"... like Selena said in the past, you can blame us. Say, "Hey, I listened to this podcast that talked about marriage advocates and I'm really hoping that I can build more marriage advocates, which means I'm not really going to tolerate, you know, if you're telling me to do something that's going to damage my marriage or it's going to go against my covenant or go against my husband or my wife, that's not something I want to be about.

Here's the second key. You draw the line and then you invite them to help you keep that boundary in place. They may not know that they're adversaries at this point.

Selena: It's true.

Ryan: They might know too. But you could say to them, "And so because of that, this is just something I'm working through. Can you help me? Can you help me make sure that I'm advocating for my marriage? If you ever catch me speaking with low regard or disrespect toward my husband," a wife would say, "remind me and help me."

What's that going to do? It's going to draw a line. It's going to tell your friend something about you. And you're also going to minister to them.

Selena: Salt and light.

Ryan: Salt and light.

Selena: Salt and light.

Ryan: That'll be my first step. And then if someone continues to transgress that boundary, then you say, "Hey, remember, we talked about this. I noticed that you weren't honoring that boundary. And I'm not cool with that. If you could like, don't do that again." And of course, if they do it again, at some point you got to cut it off and just let the relationship maybe fizzle out.

Ryan: Fizzle out naturally, distance.

Ryan: Dormancy for a while. Hopefully it doesn't get too... and confrontation is fine by the way. I think confrontation is okay as long as it's done in kindness. You need to have strong words without being sharp with your words.

Selena: It's good. Amen. Good job, babe.

Ryan: Amen. Amen. Okay. Speaking of advocates, we have an advocate. His name is Jesus Christ and He is our advocate before the Father. Why do we even need an advocate? All right, people we're talking about, we're talking about conflict in marriage. We have conflict in marriage because we have sin in the world. We have sin in the world because we are sinners. We don't have sin because... how do I say this? Our very nature is we are sinners. We sin because we're sinners. It's not the other way around. I'm getting technical. It doesn't matter.

The point is, is we need an advocate before the Father because we cannot be good enough. He's eternally good. We have shaken our fist at Him. We have rebelled against Him and we need someone to make that right. It happens to be God Himself who makes it right. How does He do that? Through the son. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the flesh. He came on earth to be the light of salvation into the world, to live a perfect life. He died the sinner's death. He did so, so that when he rose to new life, if we place our faith with Him, we can raise to new life with Him. He puts our sin to death. He gives us His righteousness.

We want that for you. We want Christ to be your advocate. You will have an advocate on that day when you meet the Lord. The question is who? Will you be your own advocate, and will you be found wanting, or will you say, "I don't deserve to be here, but I'm looking to Him? He's my advocate. I'm looking to Christ"?

On that day, if you have your advocacy in Christ, if He's the one standing there for you, you will be found righteous and you will enter into heaven, eternal rest with the Lord. So we want that for you. If you don't have a friend who's a Christian, that's the first step. We say, find a friend who's a Christian. If you already have one, talk to them.

If you don't have one, go to this website, thenewsisgood.com. There's a church finder there that will hopefully lead you to a good church. Talk to a pastor, start learning. We pray that that is fruitful for you.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for your grace as we sift through these questions of marriage and friendship and how do you better build unity in our marriages. I pray for the couples who are struggling. I pray that you would bring advocates into their lives and in their orbits so that they might grow, not

just arbitrarily, but grow according to your word, grow toward righteousness, grow toward wisdom, grow toward flourishing in their marriage, and they might have sustainable growth that they can build on. Lord, I pray that you'd give them hope and joy in whatever season they're facing. In Jesus' name, amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Amen, amen. All right. Not so bad, Selena.

Selena: I told you. I do these faith-filled, okay? I don't know how you write run downs, but...

Ryan: We're in a dispensation of getting ahead of the episodes, which is really helpful for editing, because it's a very involved process. Speaking of which, editing is not cheap, friends. So if you're part of the Fierce Marriage Fellowship, thank you, because we have recently onboarded an editor. He's doing an incredible job and we're enjoying that. It's freeing us up to do more work, writing, and different things that we're working on. So thank you so much. Go to the [Fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner) if you feel called to that. This episode of the Fierce Marriage podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: And we'll see you again in seven days, Lord willing. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Proverbs 19:20
 - Proverbs 28:23
 - Proverbs 13:20
 - Proverbs 27:9
 - Psalm 1:1
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

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