

INFERTILITY AND CHILDLESSNESS (SHERIDAN VOYSEY)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/infertility-and-childlessness-sheridan-voysey>

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Selena: I know we always say we're excited about these interviews, but truly I am so...let's just...Gosh. God is so good in how He brings people together from across the world to talk about hard things and to talk about it in light of the gospel and the hope that Jesus gives. We got the privilege to talk with Sheridan Voysey. He is from Australia, but he lives in the UK right now. Him and his wife live in Oxford. They're talking about a subject that Ryan and I are less familiar with in terms of experience.

Ryan: But it's very familiar to a lot of our listeners.

Selena: Yes, yes. It's infertility and childlessness.

Ryan: It's a hard topic.

Selena: It is very difficult. It's very easy to hurt feelings. It's very easy to gloss over. It's easy to just try to walk through and talk about whatever, you know, the story. But Sheridan has a beautiful way of talking and sharing his story, the heartache, how those around him helped them, how those around him didn't help them. It's beautiful and hopeful. Just shares all of the pain and trials that they went through for 10 years.

Ryan: If that's something that you've struggled with, whether you've gone through infertility or childlessness, or you're going through it, or you know someone who's going through that right now, this interview is for you. And like Selena said, Sheridan does an amazing job of articulating the heartache and the hopelessness. But he doesn't leave us there. We terminate on the hope of Jesus. We end on the hope of Jesus and understanding how great it truly is. We are confident that this episode is going to bless you. So if you can, take notes. But if not, you're still going to love it. We'll see you on the other side.

All right, fierce listeners. We have an amazing guest today. Sheridan Voysey Shared is a new friend from across the pond. Sheridan, are you with us? How are you?

Sheridan: Hey, I'm really good, Ryan and Selena. It's so good to be with you. Thanks for this time.

Ryan: Yeah, man, I am thrilled we got to talk in a little bit beforehand. Listeners, before you have to wonder too much, Sheridan, you are a mixture of cultures.

People can obviously hear your accent, which as Americans, we're constantly romanticized in our minds. Give us a little bit of your backstory. Where do you come from? Why are you here today? Just lay some groundwork for us.

Sheridan: Look, I laughed a little bit of what you just said *[Ryan, Selena chuckles]* because I was just speaking at a church just a few weeks ago in Grand Rapids. It's run by a pastor friend of mine who is from West Virginia. He said, "When people hear your accent, Sheridan, they immediately add like 30 IQ points to you. When people hear my accent, they immediately take away 30 IQ points."

Ryan: You're fortunate.

Sheridan: [inaudible] the PhD. I don't have a PhD. So [inaudible] between the two of us. It's a strange accent. I was born in Australia to English parents, so I never had a really Australian broad kind of accent.

Ryan: [inaudible] Dundee.

Sheridan: That kind of thing. Exactly. All of that we celebrate in the movies. But we've been based here in the UK for the last eight, nine years. So, yes, it's definitely a kind of a mixture of the two accents.

Ryan: I love it. I love it. Okay. So you grew up in Australia with British parents, moved to the UK. Obviously, there's a lot happening in there. Right? You got married. You're talking about specifically, your journey through infertility, childlessness, how God led you and your wife through...what's your wife's name, by the way?

Sheridan: Merryn.

Ryan: Merryn. I love the name.

Sheridan: Imagine Merry Christmas, but with n on it. Merryn.

Ryan: Merryn. Love that name. So you guys have a very, I mean, hard story that you walked through. But the beauty of it is, is you've been able to see God's goodness, even through that. Give us some of that backstory. Where did that struggle begin? At what point did...? I mean, you have some books out? I know we're kind of going all over the place here, but I just want to hear your heart for I guess there's a lot of couples that are struggling with infertility, have struggled with it for years. We have good friends. And we don't know what to say because it's just hard. So what say you?

Sheridan: Oh, my goodness. Okay. Let me take you back to the kitchen of our little rented flat where we were in the year 2000. Merryn walks into the kitchen and she says to me, "Honey, I think it's time." And I said, "Time for what? *[all laughs]*

Ryan: For breakfast, of course.

Sheridan: Yeah, for breakfast. She says, "It's time we started a family." And I said, "What? Right now? Fantastic. Let's go." *[all chuckles]* And you know, it was time for us to start a family. We'd been married by then about five years. We just assumed that, "Okay, there will be one month of expectation." Every couple, once they make that decision, the next four weeks, the next 28 days, there is expectation." And it's very common at the end of that 28 days that expectation to be met with disappointment. Very common. And then another 28 days, expectation. Very common for that also to be met with disappointment.

Then, often, expectation the third month is met with excitement. Well, for us, we had nine months of expectation, followed by disappointment. We went and got some tests done and those tests revealed there was a significant problem on my side, and that without either a divine miracle or some sort of technological assistance, we would be struggling to start our family.

Ryan, really that was the beginning of what turned out to be a decade in what we call the wilderness of infertility. During those 10 years, we tried everything that we felt comfortable trying. We looked into the ethics of IVF. That took me a couple of years to try and work out whether this was a tool that we should use. It's one thing for us to have a tool available to us, but for us Christians, we are called to do a little bit of extra work and say, "Well, does this take away life? Does this facilitate life? What does it do?"

I have Christian friends who came down against IVF. They felt that it wasn't for them because of some of the ethical questions still up in the air about it. I have others for whom they had no problem and they went straight into it. For us, we did a kind of a limited form if you like. We decided we would only fertilize as many eggs as we felt that we could then implant as embryos, and therefore have a family. We didn't want to discard any embryos at the end of the process, which many couples find themselves in the position they needed to do. So we tried that in 2006. We tried special diets. We tried special supplements. We tried Chiropractic. And to this day, I do not know why we tried Chiropractic. *[all laughs]* But none of that worked.

In 2008, we then were accepted after an eight-month assessment process to be accepted into the adoption program in New South Wales in Australia, where we were living at the time. We were hoping every week that the phone call would come, that our little girl, our little boy was ready for us to collect.

One month, two months, three months passed, and no phone call. Finally, 8, 9, 10 months passed, and no phone call. In the end, nearly two years passed, and no phone call.

Merryn, by the stage, was in a mess. Her relationship with God was severely tested. She said, "Look, I can't live in this limbo. Can we go and do IVF again?" So by this stage, it was 2010. We decided to do as many rounds of IVF as it would take for us to get a child.

We got to the end of 2010, this is now 10 years after that original conversation in the kitchen. We had one embryo left to transfer and we had decided by the stage, "Okay, we've given this 10 years, we've tried everything we feel comfortable trying, if this embryo doesn't result in a pregnancy, then we're going to move on with our lives as a childless couple." The embryo was transferred. We didn't have much hope left by this stage. We've been praying for 10 years for this, and we didn't have a lot of hope left. Thankfully our friends were praying for us.

And would you believe that as we were heading up to celebrate Christmas with our family, we got a phone call, saying, "It's looking good." Merryn said, "Define the word good. It's looking good or are we talking it's looking good?" The lady from the IVF clinic, she said, "Merryn, all your hormone levels are exactly where we'd expect them to be for a pregnancy." And with that, we had celebration amongst our family and friends with journeyed with us for a decade.

And then would you believe we had another phone call on Christmas Eve, the same lady from the clinic and she said, "I am so, so sorry. It turned out that the IVF drugs had created a gestational sack, but there was no body in the sack, and the doctors had been fooled." With that, Merryn put the phone down, walked into our bedroom curled up in a fetal position. And that's where our 10-year journey through the wilderness of infertility ended.

Ryan: Goodness, I'm feeling really emotional. I can't imagine.

Selena: That's a long time. That's a long time.

Ryan: Yeah. And quite a few ups and downs. I mean, as up and as down as you can get, I feel like in terms of your hopes, and especially when you value family, and you guys have gone to such great lengths. So here you are kind of on the other side of that journey. But there's a lot that obviously you had to gloss over talking through 10 years. How did that affect your marriage? What effect did it have on your conflict or your sense of being a man and Merryn's sense of being a woman who feels like it's her...? I use this word, but I don't mean

all it means. It almost feels like maybe it's her duty to bear this child. Obviously, desire, but then there's a duty side to it as well that sometimes we can feel. How did that affect your relationship?

Sheridan: Oh, my goodness. I'm glad you've asked it because it's such an important one to explore with couples who are wrestling with fertility, is that this journey of all things can put so much pressure on a relationship. Let me tell you a story. When we were starting to explore the whole idea of doing IVF, we met with an IVF counselor. The counselor said, "Well, you know that infertility and particularly IVF can put a lot of strain on a marriage."

We thought she was talking about the strain that comes from the drugs because it's quite well-known when you're doing IVF that the woman takes drugs that on the one hand, sent her almost into hyperactive fertility. So there are these drugs that are there to stimulate the release of the eggs. Then after that comes a drug that almost kind of put you into like a menopause. It doesn't put you into menopause but it's almost like that kind of effect. So you can imagine the effect that that has on your emotions when you're going through these drugs.

Selena: Goodness. Yes.

Sheridan: And the counselor said, "Well, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the decision making. I'm talking about when you're not on the same page, and maybe one of you wants to do another round, and another round and another round of IVF, and the other one wants to stop. Those kinds of things." And Merryn said to the counselor, "We've already talked about that, and we've already decided that our marriage is more important than having a child. If ever, the journey gets to affecting our marriage, we will bring it to an end."

And you know what, Selena and Ryan, what this counselor did next, she actually slumped in her chair, and she said, "I am so glad to hear you say that because just yesterday, a couple sat in the very same chairs that you're sitting in now, and the woman said in front of the man to me, she said, 'If this doesn't work, if IVF doesn't give us a child, our marriage is over.'"

That is symbolic, I think of the great pressure that can happen with this. We made that commitment right from the beginning that our marriage was more important than the success of the journey. That really held us in good state in the end. I can't count the amount of hours that we had sitting on our couch, trying to work out what to do next. We would pray about it, and a very strange thing would happen after we had prayed about something—we often were not on the same page. And that was kind of rare for us.

Generally, if we wanted to pray about something, we talk it through, we then pray about it, and then afterwards, "How are you feeling about that one?" "Well, I'm thinking maybe we go this way." "Well, I'm feeling the same way." So often when it came to this journey we weren't.

We were considering overseas adoption on stage, and whether we should go for overseas versus local adoption. And we came out on different sides of that. When it came to thinking further about overseas, we're thinking about whether we should go to the Philippines or for another program, I think it was Taiwan, we came out on different sides of that. I would have been more than happy to have brought the whole journey to an end easily five years earlier than there.

All this goes to say is that sometimes you can be in very different places. We had to just simply sit in that couch, and times we wanted to leave, we didn't want to talk about it anymore. I didn't want to talk about it anymore. But we had to work through the issues and compromise. Sometimes Merryn compromised, other times I did to arrive at something where we say, "Okay, let's pursue this. Let's explore this." That's really how we got through those 10 years.

Selena: Wow. That's just walking through fire together. It feels like one person walks out but the other person is still there. So you got to go back and be with each other in those in those really just tough places. Especially when you're so used to being on the same page, I think. That's kind of where Ryan and I fall when you said we would pray about things and get different answers. *[laughs]* I was like, "Oh, man, you come back feeling just filled up, and "Oh, yeah, I bet God's told him the same thing." And then you're like, "What? This is not at all. I don't think you're hearing the Lord right." *[all laughs]*

Sheridan: "You're not hearing the Lord right."

Ryan: "You're not hearing the Lord right."

Selena: "You're not hearing the Lord right." But I've often sat kind of in the seat next to friends who have walked this journey or who have had number of miscarriages. Obviously, I don't always have the words. I've gone to friends and said, "How can I serve you? Who are those people I guess in your and Merryn's life that...how did they respond the best? Like who are those people that really came alongside you? What were some characteristics or things that they did that really, I guess, touched you guys during this trial or during your walk? Maybe instructing some of us that haven't experienced some things in those areas, how we can love well, and love as Christ."

Sheridan: Great question. The people that didn't help us were the people who either dismissed the problem. I'm thinking particularly when I was really trying to work out the ethics of IVF, and I was getting too quite common responses from Christians. One was "just accept God's will. If you're not having children, it's because God wants you to not have children and therefore just accept God's will." Actually, funnily enough, that's more fate than faith.

So there are times, of course, when we don't have what we desire, or maybe even what God wants to give us, but actually, He wants us to reach out and He wants us to do something towards that. Otherwise, we would say to everybody who is poor in the world, "Just accept your lot. This is God's will for you." Of course, that's incorrect. The same thing when you're just simply writing off somebody's infertility and saying, "Well, it's God's will. Just accept your state."

On the other side, though, we're the people who went the other way, and they said, "Don't worry about the ethics." It's like they were so overwhelmed with the joy of being parents themselves. They didn't want anything to get in the way of us experiencing the same joy. I remember one person said, "God, won't worry about the ethics. You just go and do IVF. You just go and do whatever it takes to go and get the child." I don't think that's also a Christian response. So those two things weren't particularly helpful.

There's the classic things of people over spiritualizing. So starting to look for a demon under every bush, *[all chuckles]* or some sort of unconfessed sin, generational curses come down a lot for people who are experiencing infertility. If you're in a particular circle of church life, then we know...Yeah, right. Okay, sounds like we're talking your language here. That comes out quite a bit. So you get that all the time.

The other related to that will often be people prophesying for you—prophesying children. So we wrote our story into a book called "Resurrection Year." That was all about our year starting again when we came here to the UK to start our lives again after not being able to have the children. As a result of that, we've heard from literally hundreds and hundreds of people, all telling their stories to us in quite significant detail.

I'll never forget this one woman who talked about a quote, "prophet" who came to her church and prophesied over her that she would have three children. He gave the dates that they were going to be born. He even gave the names of the children. Then, of course, the first date came around, and there was no child. The second date came around; she still hadn't conceived. The third date came around; they still were childless. She went into an emotional breakdown as a result.

When the church brought that prophet back, the pastor arranged a meeting between the two of them. Do you know what the prophet said? He said, "If you don't have the faith to believe what the Lord has promised that's okay."
[Selena, Ryan sighs]

Ryan: That's the most toxic thing.

Sheridan: That's right. It is toxic. And unfortunately, I hear a number of stories along those lines.

Now, what helps? We had a Friday night small group that we're a part of. I can't fault them. Because when you're going through this journey, there are times where it just gets really difficult spiritually. How do you tell somebody that you don't want them to pray for you anymore? Because every time you're prayed for, what is the appropriate response to being prayed for? The appropriate response is expectation, isn't it? Maybe God will do something.

Now, just imagine that every month for 10 years, you have had an expectation followed by a crushing—and it gets more crushing, the longer it goes on—a crushing disappointment. Towards the end of self-protection, you kind of don't want anybody to pray for you anymore. Now that's a hard thing to tell Christians because they start to hear it as a lack of faith. But actually what it is just an incredibly wounded soul and those kinds of stuff.

Selena: Right.

Sheridan: These friends of ours, they said, "You know what, okay, we don't have to pray for you and lay hands on you. But we will pray for you by ourselves. We will be your prayer for you." Now, that I think is just what those wonderful friends of that paralytic in Mark 2 we're doing. Remember, they had this friend who was paralyzed, they couldn't get into the house to see Jesus because it's so crammed full of people listening to him. So they jump up onto the roof, they dig a hole, they lower their friend down through the roof.

That whole story you never hear the paralyzed guy ever praying or asking for anything. Jesus looks at the faith of the friends and as a result of their faith, He actually then heals the guy from his paralysis. That's the kind of friendship that those people offered us. I'm so grateful for that. So there were times where we needed to talk and they are available. There was a time when we just could not talk about it at all, and they were sensitive.

I think that's the thing, is that just being sensitive, and just checking in and saying, "Is this a day to talk about it? Or is this a day to go and have a coffee or to go and see a movie or just have some fun talk about something else?"

Selena: So good. So good.

Ryan: *[sighs]* There's just so much...I don't know. We have some friends that I think are really good at this is just kind of sitting with us when we're going through something hard. It's there in our community group, at church. And we've watched them just sit alongside, and instead of trying to offer solutions, they don't offer anything, but just sit and exist and abide in Christ together alongside them.

As you're talking, I looked up Psalm 131. I think it's just such a beautiful picture of calmness in light of an internal turmoil or hopelessness. It's so short. I just want to read it real fast. Psalm 131. It says, "O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore."

So just that that visual of just quieting your soul. I know we're talking about children here. So there's a bit of an irony, right? But like a weaned child going to our father. I don't know, there's so much power in that. I hear you saying that of all your friends and all the things that they could have done or did that was just sitting with you and contending for you, like you said, that story in Luke. So, man.

Sheridan: Yeah.

Selena: I can't imagine how calloused your hearts must have felt at some times and some moments. It's just wisdom for me. I am so grateful to hear how we can serve and love each other well. Community is such a big part of marriage and family and life and culture around that. So bring us to today in your journey I guess, out of that wilderness? Where you guys are at? Was that Rupert that we heard?

Sheridan: Yes. You could hear him? I was just hoping...

Selena: It's just me. Maybe not listeners, which is fine. We have two dogs who we love. Dogs, kids, life, anything, we're just beaming over here.

Sheridan: I know that you guys are dog people, which is obviously one reason why I really like you straight away. So, yeah, that is indeed my Rupert. For those who

would like to know the breed, he is...I think in America you call them spoodles. That's a poodle mixed with a cocker spaniel.

Ryan: Oh, nice. *[Selena chuckles]* I've never heard that particular one before.

Sheridan: In the UK they're called cockapoos. There's something about that phrase. *[all laughs]*

Ryan: It could be offensive.

Sheridan: Because there's gorgeous things. So anyway, the next time I'm in the Pacific Northwest, we might be able to get the two dogs together. So we'll see. *[all laughs]* I mean, in terms of then taking the story on...and thank you for reading that Psalm, Ryan because that is beautiful. There's a time that we put all the hard stuff away and we just focus on Him. And we are still. And having people around to help is just so important. So folks listening, write that Psalm down. So important.

Well, gosh, it's been eight years since that time. Well, actually nine years now since that time. We have been able to move on. I think this is kind of key is that "Resurrection Year" the subtitle is "Turning Broken Dreams Into New Beginnings". There is a time in which you can come and you can offer your broken dream to God and see what He might do with it. Now, this, I think, brings the genius of our God into play.

So, I cannot tell you now why God didn't give us a child. I hear stories every week on the news of parents who neglected their child or some children that have been shunted around from foster care to foster care or to foster care or they ended up in the criminal system. We would have been so much better than that. I don't know why. And that's I think it's another important thing too, is sometimes it's kind of worthwhile just letting the why question drop a little bit so that...We can be tormented with the why question.

I remember talking to Philip Yancey once and he said, "You know what, the Bible doesn't really talk a lot about the why of these bad things happening. What it tends to focus on is what do I do next? How do I follow God in the midst of this?" So the only other thing that Merryn had wanted to do with her life was to live and work overseas. Long story short, I mean, that's what resurrection was for. The whole story isn't there. But when she was offered a job at Oxford University, which you have to, you know, it's a pretty good kick to get off of.

Ryan: Not bad. Not bad.

- Selena:** Yes.
- Sheridan:** Not bad. Not bad. *[all laughs]* So that was kind of an opportunity for lack of a better phrase, a consolation prize. So we packed up and we left Sydney and we came to Oxford. I can tell you now that it's only really a couple of miles from here that J. R. R. Tolkien wrote "The Lord of the Rings" in a little house not far from me. It's only five miles in the opposite direction. We could walk up to CS Lewis' house, The Kilns, where he wrote "Chronicles of Narnia" and all these other great books. It's an amazing, amazing town.
- Ryan:** Sorry, I'm going to interject. But you go to Eagle and Child? *[laughs]*
- Sheridan:** Of course. The funny thing is whenever I go, it's filled with you Americans.
- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Of course.
- Sheridan:** It is so magnet for every American Christian in the faith of the earth. *[all laughs]* *[inaudible]* most days.
- Ryan:** Yeah. You got to go on the downtime. But you can't be drinking like early in the morning. *[all laughs]*
- Sheridan:** Well, you haven't met some Brits. *[all laughs]*
- Selena:** That's true.
- Ryan:** Apparently, you can. Yeah. Sorry to interrupt. Go ahead
- Selena:** The Eagle and Child is a great pub. It's actually one of the really nice pubs. For some people that are listening, saying, "Whoa, what are you talking about pub?" The English pub is really a place for families to get together and for friends to get together. It doesn't have the connotations of some American pubs or Australian pubs where they're really places to go and get drunk. So it's a wonderful little place.

Since we're talking about scripture, Proverbs 13:12 really came alive for us. Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Now we experienced that. Merryn's heart was sick after 10 years of infertility. The second part of that proverb, though, is a dream fulfilled is a tree of life. And coming to Oxford, and Merryn having this new job and this new opportunity, she's in medical research, she really came to the best place in the world quite literally to do the kind of research she does. And she has just not looked back.

It really has been a dream fulfilled that has been a tree of life for her. It's like leaving the wilderness and entering the promised land. Of course, it's no replacement for a child, but it was the thing she needed.

It was a little bit difficult for me, though. Everything for me, career-wise, ministry wise in Sydney was going very, very well. I had a national radio show. I had booked contracts. I had wonderful speaking opportunities. And when we came to the UK, all that closed down. Because as you guys will know, these days, so much is wrapped around this word "platform". It's about people knowing you, it's about people following you. And if you basically up countries move to a different place, very soon, I had publishers saying, "Well, who is Sheridan Voysey. You might have readers in Australia, but we don't know who you are. Who's going to buy your book?" So the publishing opportunities closed down, at least for a period of time.

BBC Radio wasn't returning my phone calls back then. Churches weren't asking me to speak in conferences, weren't giving me this. So not only was I not going to become a father, but maybe the writer, speaker, broadcaster that I built my life on for 15 years beforehand, maybe that was all gone too.

So this is the second part of the story is that then I went on a journey, much more personal for me than it was for Merryn of discovering, well, who can I become now? What really is my identity and what really is my purpose? And that's led to this latest book, which is a follow on to "Resurrection Year". It's called "The Making of Us." That's all about who can we become when life doesn't go as planned. And what I discovered from all the letters that came in from "Resurrection Year" readers is that I wasn't alone, is that when you go through a broken dream, when you can't have something that you want, well, with that comes a broken identity too.

Because if you dream of becoming a parent, well, then you may not be able to become a mum or dad. And that's an identity statement. The same thing with a career. Or maybe you've lost your health and that's held you back from the things that you've dreamed of becoming. Every breaking dream carries with it a broken identity. So who can you become then?

That has been the great redemptive aspect of everything we've kind of had is just discover that that's actually when you can become who God really wants you to be and take you really deep into that wonderful identity that He gives us of being children of God. Man, I can speak for another hour or two on that topic alone.

Ryan:

Oh, my word. Well...Yeah.

- Selena:** We would sit here happily and listen. *[all laughs]*
- Ryan:** I mean, not to tell...I don't want to tell our story because people on our podcast have heard it. But just so you're aware, we actually had a similar thing. It was the second year of our marriage. We got married young. So during college. We finished college in our hometown and then Selena had this harebrained idea to move...
- Selena:** A dream *[Ryan laughs]* just to use the right terms here. *[all laughs]* A dream to go overseas and ride horses because that's what you do.
- Ryan:** Well, that's what you do. That's what you wanted to do.
- Selena:** That's what I wanted to do. *[all laughs]*
- Sheridan:** That's an amazing thing.
- Selena:** Young Selena.
- Ryan:** So we actually found these jobs at a Swiss farm just outside of Zurich. So not having any real prospects, I said, "Hey, let's do it." And nothing much to your shock, Selena. But we ended up shipping over to Switzerland. I had a congenital heart defect. I actually was very sick, didn't realize it had to have open-heart surgery in Switzerland. And they're saying he might not live through this because the infection in my heart was so bad. Anyway, we ended up kind of coming back six weeks later after being in the hospital for four or five of those weeks. Coming back with our tail between our legs, thinking like...
- Selena:** No money, no jobs.
- Ryan:** And our *[inaudible]* were shattered.
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah.
- Ryan:** And on top of that, so much of what you said earlier, it echoes true for us because some of our friends, I think not knowing better basically said like, "Well, that's what happens when you fall outside of God's will" type of thing.
- Sheridan:** Ohhh.
- Ryan:** Because they didn't think our move was right.
- Selena:** Right.

- Ryan:** And so it was just...
- Sheridan:** Oh, no.
- Selena:** Just to speak to the truth...I mean, his heart surgery was just kind of a metaphor for where Fierce Marriage came from like eight to 10 years later of...
- Ryan:** Yeah, we never saw that until 10 years on the other side of it, of this is how God is choosing to redeem that. Not that God caused it, but He's choosing to redeem that brokenness. We live in a broken world, in a shattered everything, yet He is still active and redemptive. And He's working to shape everything for our good and for His glory. Anyway, healing your story, I could just sit and listen.
- Selena:** We have a lot of connection points, just to get personal real quick. My brother lives just right outside of Maidenhead. He's been in London for a number of years. Then we've been to Oxford, one of our favorite places, obviously. And then you...
- Ryan:** I have this real pipe dream. We should talk off the air about how I can get into Oxford. *[all laughs]*. I'm going to seminary at Westminster with the specific purpose of trying to figure out how I can parlay that into a degree that Oxford actually thinks is worthy to do. *[Selena, Ryan laughs]*
- Sheridan:** Oh, wow.
- Selena:** But you don't know. God may break that dream. *[laughs]* So we'll see.
- Ryan:** I might have to learn from it. *[all laughs]*
- Sheridan:** Well, gosh, it would be so good to have you guys on this side of the world. All I can do tell you is that I don't know a lot about the Oxford system. My wife now has a PhD from Oxford. Of course, it's actually called a DPhil here in Oxford, because Oxford is different to the rest of the world.
- Ryan:** *[inaudible]* first University you can do that, right? *[Ryan, Selena laughs]*
- Sheridan:** You can pull a few *[inaudible]*. That's true. It's incredibly difficult to get into. At the same time every year, of course, many people do. So I would suggest that one of your first points, of course, should be Wickliffe College. Anyway, we can talk about more of that. Wickliffe College is a very fine Christian College connected to Oxford University. That would be the first point of call I would suggest to you.

Ryan: Oh, wow. Okay. Well, I'll definitely be bothering you about all that.

Sheridan: If you're talking to somebody...I could not get into Oxford. I mean, the fact is, even if I wanted to. It's a really interesting town in that regard. People talk about the town-gown divide is that there is this whole world of academia. Of course, I think it's 40 odd. Presidents, Prime Ministers, world leaders have come through Oxford University. It is a place of changing the world. But it's a world unto itself.

There are whole places in Oxford, I can't get into it, because I'm not a student. But as a student, you can. Then the rest of the outside of that world is just a regular old town and we've got homeless people, we've got rundown eateries that desperately in need of work. So the heart [inaudible] kind of lofty idea that most people have Oxford is partly true. The rest of the place is just a beautiful place with amazing, stunning buildings, but also with a lot of poverty attached to it as well. So it's a fascinating place.

Ryan: Yes, yes. Yeah. I think that echoes our experience when we were there is it's like you see that. It's just a town, people live in here, and then there's just massive institution right there. And massive in terms of influence, but also just the presence there. Out of curiosity, Merryn got her PhD and you're both living there clearly. What do you both spend your days doing as you're living there together?

Sheridan: Well, Merryn is involved in medical research, particularly in vaccines. So she has these amazing projects, multi-country projects, where she is researching. Ironically, she's done big projects on child health. So looking at maternal antibodies and various vaccine programs for developing countries. So amazing stuff. She's consulted to the World Health Organization. It's been a wonderful place for her to come.

For me, well, I'm talking to you right now in my little study/studio, and I'm surrounded by my loved books. I write books. I contribute to BBC Radio 2, which is the largest broadcaster here in Europe. It's got 15 million listeners every week. And I speak at conferences. So here's a little bit of a spiral back to where we began.

When I first came, I did those career identities for good 18 months to two years. But God straightened it up, and He's taking it in a completely different direction. So in Australia, we were kind of pioneering broadcasting that was Christian Broadcasting, connecting with the mainstream secular mind of Australia. And it's not really done anywhere else outside of Australia. It's not

done even here in the UK. It's certainly not done the United States. But that was wonderful work.

We had Sunday night show, hundreds of thousand listeners. About half of those were not Christians that were listening in. So it was wonderful work, but there was no real platform for that over here when I got to the United Kingdom. But now I'm able to go into the Breakfast Show on BBC Radio 2, which alone has about 8 million listeners every day, and I'm able to go in there as a committed Christian with my little Christian head-on if you like, and I'm allowed to give a two-and-a-half-minute God's spot. So I'm reaching a lot more people with the space that we're talking about that brings life and hope and redemption, which the world is hungering for by the way. The world is hungry for it. Far bigger than what I was doing in Australia. It just took a little while for God to work it around.

I get to now speak at some really interesting, very large Christian conferences, not just here in the UK, but also in the United States and around the world. But also I get to walk into secular spaces. Get this. I was asked to be a closing keynote speaker at this conference that brought artists, so filmmakers and dancers and choreographers and visual artists together with fertility experts. Now I had never heard of an event like that before. *[all laughs]* It's Britain. Things are a little bit different over here.

But this conference, so it's bringing together both art and science when it came to childlessness. And I was able to walk in and I was able to tell these secular folks, all of which was a couple of hundred people there, all of which we're trying to work out what to do with their lives because they were also on their infertility road. They didn't know what to do. They didn't know who they were going to become now, and yet they didn't have God to be the prime anchor point for their interesting lives.

I was able to come in and I was able to share with them some wisdom from the Sermon on the Mount. I was able to talk about Christ and the things that He said because even at a secular level, the things that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, things like love your enemies and turn the other cheek, are profoundly respected even if not followed, respected in the secular space.

So I was able to walk into those people's lives. And that's kind of what God's opened up now. I used to be an apologist on Christian radio in Australia. And that's still my heart. I love to give some good solid reasons why you can believe that there is a good God out there, even with all the difficulties and the disappointments and the broken dreams.

Selena: Wow.

Sheridan: But now it's like God's given this ministry of redemption, of helping people to find who they can become when life hasn't gone as planned, and actually does discover that you are much bigger than that one little thing that you're trying to build your life on, that one little identity, be it mother, father, wife, husband, writer, speaker, broadcaster, engineer, teacher, you're already bigger than that. And the greatest gift you can ever receive is to be a child of God and get deep into that identity.

Ryan: And that's that whole piece, right? Just curling up in that identity that you have in Christ as a child of God. I mean, I love hearing that that you were invited this event where you...it's this collision of art and science, right, and here you are bringing hope and faith to area that so clearly and desperately needs it. I mean, you just said it. How beautiful is that work of redemption that God is doing?

So listeners I can't urge you strongly enough to check out Sheridan's books. Two we've mentioned here are "Resurrection Year." He wrote that one about - what? Eight years ago or so but it's still as relevant today.

Sheridan: It came out in 2013.

Ryan: Perfect.

Sheridan: And yeah, continues to sell.

Ryan: Beautiful. Man, again, your story and then everything we talked about obviously are built out. Then the second one is "The Making of Us". So both of these books I think...listeners, if you're dealing with I think any sort of hope lost or hope unfulfilled and how is making your heart sick, I think both of these books are going to bring hope to that.

Sheridan, obviously I want to give you a chance to close out. Anything else you want to say about those specific books or any other of your resources? Where can people go to find your resources specifically?

Sheridan: Oh, well, you can get the books from Amazon or Barnes and Noble and all of the regular places. Go to your local bookstore. If they don't have it, they can order it. But otherwise, sheridanvoysey.com is where you can find out more about me. Or actually, I'll give you the other URL, themakingofus.com. That'll take you directly to the book. Also, that's where you can download a little kind of poetic piece that I've got in the back of the book at the end when we go on this journey. I kind of have this little kind of epiphany as to what my life should

be about and what our lives can be about. And I wrote it up into something called "The Creed."

If you go to themakingofus.com, you can download that as a printable and put it up on your wall. I read that every day just to give me a little bit of inspiration.

Ryan: I'm going to do that right now.

Selena: I love it. So final question here, just because we always do this. Next time we need to have Merryn on here. *[Sheridan chuckles]*

Ryan: I would love that. She sounds like a busy lady.

Selena: I know. *[Ryan laughs]* Maybe she can make time in her day.

Ryan: Busy for doing PhD things and solving world's problems.

Selena: Changing the world.

Sheridan: Solving world's problem. That's more like it. *[all laughs]*

Selena: Yes. What would be one of your most memorable dates together? Typically, the wife and the husband usually have *[laughing]* different ones.

Ryan: They have their own dates. You're the manager.

Selena: But you could say yes. You get to take over on this.

Sheridan: That's right. I get to hold the mic on this one. *[all laughs]* I think Merryn would probably agree with me. There was this one date that we had, and we had it in Paris. Now I know that sounds incredibly romantic already. Again, when you live in the UK, you can literally spend a weekend in Paris. It doesn't take that long to get over there. But we had just come over to the UK.

It was December of 2011. It was our 15th wedding anniversary. We went out and we booked into this special, lovely little French restaurant and we had the most amazing meal. But it was what that night signified really, is that we had survived these 10 difficult years and it had just ended then remember. We've been married five years before we started a family, 10 years of trying to start a family so this is right at the end of that journey, right at the beginning of us starting our new lives.

We were able to just sit there and talk about all the special moments we've had as a couple already in that 15 years, about the time when she had

sacrificed for me, for us to leave Brisbane, our hometown, and move to Perth in Western Australia for me to get my first radio gig. Then she sacrificed again when we then move to Sydney for me to start this national radio show. Then I sacrificed for her for coming over to the UK.

We just kind of started remembering all of these important moments that have come in our lives that had ultimately brought us stronger together and had bound us more and more together. That was a very special moment. I don't think we'll ever forget that. Since then we've had our 20th anniversary, and we're going on to our 23rd. But that was a very special moment. That was a very special day. I don't think we'll ever forget that one.

Ryan: Praise God. So much of our heritage as God's people is us being called to remember with clarity what God has done throughout our lives, but also throughout history. And I think so much that is we have to, I would say, we mark them with milestones. I use the word "relic" sometimes where you kind of have something that reminds you of who God is and what He's done. What an awesome story, the two, in Paris of all places. I know it's got kind of this romanticized view of it. But the food there is unreal. *[all laughs]*

Sheridan: Oh, my goodness. It was such a good meal. I can tell you that.

Ryan: Oh, my goodness. So thank you so much, Sheridan, for being with us today. This has been a gift to us. I know our listeners are blessed by your transparency, your sharing your story and your wisdom, and just, man, your faith, your great faith that has obviously been forged in fire over the years. And here it is on display for us. So thank you for testifying for God's goodness and just being a faithful servant.

Listeners go to sheridanvoisey.com. You can find all of his amazing resources and everything we've mentioned here today, and then some...If you're in the UK, make sure you watch for him on TV. *[all laughs]*

Selena: Listen to him.

Ryan: Yeah, TV, radio, wherever you are. I'm sure you're prolific. So anyway, thank you so much, Sheridan. It's been a joy. Hope to talk again soon.

Sheridan: So good to talk to you, Ryan. So good to talk to you, Selena. Thanks so much.

Ryan: Our listeners, we trust that you've enjoyed this episode. I know that we had an amazing time speaking with Sheridan and just hearing his story. Like we mentioned in the podcast, make sure to check out Sheridan's books, namely, "The Making of Us". That's his latest title. But also his other book was

"Resurrection Year". So check both of those out. Wherever you get your books, you can find both of those. Pick up a copy of each one, read through them. If you're looking for more resources from Sheridan himself, you can go to sheridanvoysey.com. There's all kinds of resources there. Once again, thank you for joining us for the Fierce marriage podcast and we will see you, I don't know, in a few days.

Selena: And stay fierce.

Ryan: Stay fierce.

Selena: I was waiting for it.

[00:48:38] <outro>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit FierceMarriage.com, or you can find us with our handle [@FierceMarriage](https://www.facebook.com/FierceMarriage) on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:22:47]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Psalm: 131, ESV

- **[00:28:56]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Proverbs 13:12

 - Sheridan's Books:
 - [Resurrection Year](#)
 - [The Making of Us](#)

 - Sheridan's Website:
 - [Sheridanvoysey.com](#)
 - [Themakingofus.com](#)

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