

## God Can Resurrect Your Marriage from the Ashes

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It was January 7, 2005 and a group of friends gathered at Don and Jona's house to watch the Dr. Phil show. Jona had written in to a contest that Good Housekeeping, in conjunction with Dr. Phil, organized on "life change." Of fifteen thousand applicants, Jona was the grand prize winner! As the winner, Don and Jona were guests on the Dr. Phil Show to tell their story. But I didn't need Dr. Phil to tell me the story, I lived it with them. Let us share how we remember it...

Don was twenty-seven-years old when Jona first met him on a spring church beach retreat. Immediately, she knew he was exactly what she had always dreamed of in a husband. Don had a strong faith in God, a good job, a college degree, drive, and dreams for the future. He was physically fit, witty, adventurous, sexy, and "just plain gorgeous." On top of that, he was constantly surrounded by women at the retreat that were vying for his attention.

When they returned home, Jona could hardly believe her good fortune when Don asked her to dinner. Don and Jona dated only three months before he asked her to marry him, and on March 30, 1985. Before the next spring beach retreat, they were husband and wife.

Their first year of marriage was a blissful blur of candlelight dinners, spontaneous lovemaking, and endless conversation. The icing on the one-year anniversary cake was the purchase of their first home. By their second anniversary, Don quit his job to start his own business. Life was clicking along at a steady pace toward acquiring the American Dream. By their fourth anniversary, Jona had their first child and joined the ranks of "stay-at-home-mom." But, after twenty-four months of Don's new business venture, the couple faced a second mortgage, a dwindling bank account, and a looming cloud of debt. Jona was forced to go back to work and seeds of discontentment, disrespect, and disenchantment began to take root.

"I was so mad at Don for the mistakes I felt he had made," Jona explained. "Deep down, I wanted him to be God and to fulfill all my needs. He made a poor God. When my mother died in 1993, I sank into a clinical depression. I spent most of my time at home in bed. And even though I had two children by this time, I withdrew from being a mom, as well as being a wife. I then began to eat...and eat. I went from 140 pounds to 240 pounds."

"Don and I had the perfect engagement, a beautiful wedding, and a fantasy honeymoon. But when the obstacles came along, I wasn't prepared to maneuver over, around, or through them. I thought, 'this is not the way the story goes. What happened to the fairy tale?'"

"Don changed jobs about every other year, however, he always provided for our needs. It just drove me crazy that he couldn't stay put."

"I remember one day Don said, 'Why are you eating and gaining all this weight?' I shot back, 'I'm doing this because I don't want you to touch me. Besides, I can lose the weight if I want to, but you'll always be a loser.' Little by little, word by word, angry look by angry look, rejection by rejection; I began the process of destroying my husband. Comments like 'You're so stupid,' 'duh,' and 'can't you do anything right?' were constantly spewing from my mouth. I was in pain and I wanted Don to be in pain too. One day, I made a list of all of Don's faults. He found the list, but I didn't even care."

Jona always thought that since Don was a Christian, he would never leave her. However, there came a point where he could not take the emotional turmoil any longer. On May 6, 2001, Don left the home that had become his prison cell and whipping block. Jona had destroyed her marriage and her man. On January 31, 2003, the divorce was final.

"A couple of months after our divorce, I woke up to God's still small voice," Jona explained. "He seemed to say, 'Is this what you wanted? Did you want a divorce? Do you want Don to marry another woman and have your children torn between spending time in two different households? Do you want to be alone? Were you the wife I called you to be?'" "

"Oh God," Jona cried, "What have I done?"

Now friends, the next part of the story is what Dr. Phil did not tell you... God began working on Jona's heart. She didn't change because of a self-help book or a ten-step program, but because of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Do you want to know what really happened? Do you want to know what Dr. Phil did not tell his viewers? Grab a cup of coffee and keep reading.

God took Jona to a place of repentance and began to soften, remold and remake her very heart. That's what God does. He doesn't try to cover up our flaws; He starts from scratch and makes us new. While the divorce was final, God was only just beginning to work on Jona's heart.

"God took me to a place of repentance," Jona explained. "For the first time, through a support group, I saw clearly what I had done to destroy my marriage. I had always blamed our problems on Don changing jobs so often, but the real problem was my lack of respect for the God-appointed leader of my home. I was the real problem and Don simply couldn't take it anymore. I had rejected Don with my words, my appearance, and my withdrawal of physical touch."

Whether or not God could salvage the marriage, Jona made a commitment that she would allow God to salvage her.

Jona's heart longed to be reunited to Don, but her ultimate goal was to become the woman God wanted her to be. She immersed herself in Bible study and prayer, and began to take an interest in her appearance. Interestingly, as the pounds began to drop, so did the scales that had covered her eyes.

"I began to understand what God's Word said about the relationship between a husband and wife. I was not Don's Holy Spirit. I was not the leader of my home. God had called me to respect Don as the leader, to honor him as a child of God, and to love him with my all. One day when Don came to pick up our two boys, I shared with him what I had been learning."

"I told Don that I knew that we are divorced, but I was making a commitment to submit to him. I didn't when we were married, but I did from that time forward."

"That's fine," he told me. "But you need to know I'm moving on with my life."

"You can move on," I said, "But I'm staying right here."

Jona continued to encourage Don, and give him her BEST.

"BEST stands for bless, edify, share, and touch," she explained.<sup>1</sup> "I began to touch him when he came by the house. I'd pat his back or give him a quick hug. When I knew he was coming, I'd put on a nice dress

and fix my hair. I'd tell him I was proud of how he was handling the boys and share with him what God was teaching me. Some people told him I was trying to trick him, and that he should ignore me. But it wasn't a trick. God had changed my heart and I was committed, no matter what happened between us in the future, to never go back to being that bitter woman I had been before."

"Sharon, I hate to tell you this," she said, "but for the first time, I prayed for Don. I had never prayed for him before, but now I pray for him all the time."

Jona lost 100 pounds and gained a beautiful glowing countenance. It was amazing. More than the change in her physical appearance, the glow of Jesus Christ shone through her radiant face.

Don was confused at times and a bit leery of the change. "Why do you think I'm wonderful, all of a sudden?" he asked her.

"Because now I see you through God's eyes," she explained. "I see that you are a wonderful man."

Don fell in love with Jona all over again. No, it wasn't a trick - it was a miracle. God has given them a second chance. They were remarried on August 24, 2003. Oh how I love Him...He is the God of second chances.

Dear friends, Jona has so graciously allowed me to tell you her story because she has decided that she will do anything to help one woman not make the same mistakes she has made. She cried and cried all through the recounting of the story, and relived the pain...for you. "God allowed me to go to a terrible place," Jona explained. "My prayer is that others will not have to go to that place before they wake up and realize what they are doing to their men."

And that...is what Dr. Phil did not tell you.

1 Taken from Love Life for Every Married Couple by Dr. Ed Wheat (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1980) p177.

This story was taken from Sharon Jaynes' new book, "Becoming the Wife of His Dreams". To read more about Don and Jona's miraculous story, visit [www.sharonjaynes.com](http://www.sharonjaynes.com).

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