

How Jane Fonda Met Jesus

Tuesday, 28 March 2006

By Donald L. Hughes

Sometimes the most unlikely people become followers of Jesus, at least from the human perspective. But the Lord takes us all on a unique journey, and Jane Fonda is no exception. The only thing about her journey that separated her from others is that she has long held a place in the public spotlight.

Who Is The Real Jane Fonda?

Jane Fonda was the daughter of the legendary actor Henry Fonda, and his wife Frances Brokaw. Her father became legendary by playing heroic characters in movies like "The Grapes of Wrath," and "Twelve Angry Men." However, it does not seem he was as heroic in real life as he was abusive to his family. Her mother committed suicide in a mental institution when Jane was 12. Jane Fonda attended Vassar College, and during that time struggled with bulimia. Not really sure of her direction in life, she ended up studying at Lee Strasberg's Actors' Studio. Today she has made over 80 film appearances and won Academy Awards for her work in "Klute" (1971) and "Coming Home" (1978) and has been nominated five other times.

The Years As An Activist

So much of her career was about finding herself. Once she was involved in acting, she excelled. Later she married movie director Roger Vadim because she was taken by his "European intellectualism," which most people identify with liberalism. Fonda was the loser in this relationship too, for Vadim, who had been formerly married to Bridget Bardot publicly ridiculed Jane, and she took the heat for starring in his 1968 failure, "Barbarella."

However, armed with a liberal world-view, Jane Fonda became a political activist and received wide criticism for visiting Hanoi in the mist of the Vietnam War. She has since apologized for this act saying, "It hurt so many soldiers. It galvanize such hostility. It was the most horrible thing I could possibly have done. It was just thoughtless."

Peter Fonda, her brother, probably summed up the Hanoi visit in the most accurate way. He said, "Her heart was in the right place, but her head wasn't."

Jane Fonda continued to be outspoken about political issues, and was later married to radical activist turned politician Tom Hayden. She and Hayden divorced in 1989 after a 16 year marriage.

A Season Of Changes

In the late 1970's Fonda turned her attention to being a film producer ("The China Syndrome," "9-5," and "On Golden Pond" among others) and later produced and starred in a series of popular exercise videos.

In 1991 she did something that shocked those close to her, and that was marrying Ted Turner, founder of CNN. Turner was a conservative, but worse, he often acted in unrefined ways and is known as, "The Mouth of the South." He has verbally attacked Christians on many occasions and once said, "Christianity is a religion for losers."

Turner said it was his wife's conversion to Christianity that was responsible for the divorce that ended their nine year marriage. In a New Yorker magazine article Turner said, "She just came home and said: 'I've become a Christian.' That's a pretty big change for your wife of many years to tell you. That's a shock."

How Jane Met Jesus

Fonda's conversion did not come overnight. She was on a very specific spiritual journey for two years before receiving the Lord. One of her close friends says that embracing Christ was "very real, very deep" for Fonda according to a published report.

Several Christian friends in Atlanta were among those involved in Fonda's path to Christ. These are said to include Ginny Millner, wife of Georgia Republican leader Guy Millner, and Nancy McGuirk, whose husband is an executive in Turner Broadcasting, according to an article in the Washington Times.

The key figure in Jane Fonda's spiritual search may have been her chauffeur according to the article. When Ted Turner became upset when she began attending Atlanta's fashionable Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Fonda asked her chauffeur where should she go. The chauffeur invited her to attend his church, the predominantly black Providence Missionary Baptist Church. She accepted the invitation, and became a regular there.

The Rev. Gerald Durley, pastor of the church was quoted by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution as saying, "I am extremely impressed with the genuineness and sincerity in [her] search for spirituality and wholeness."

Jane Fonda has not not tried to capitalize on her faith, and this is a credit to the character she has shown throughout her life. As a person of conviction, she is not likely to turn away from Jesus.