

## Why Your Scars Are Beautiful To God

By Belinda Elliott *CBN.com Daily Life Producer*

**ICBN.com** – “Bad things happen to good people.” We hear it all the time. We know that it is true. Yet, when the “bad thing” happens to us, we somehow often seem to be caught off guard. The deep hurts that we experience in life can plague us for years to come.

Author and speaker Sharon Jaynes knows this well. For years, she carried around wounds from her past without even realizing it. Jaynes grew up in a home filled with fighting and violence. Her father was an alcoholic, and his drunken rages left her crouching under her covers at night trying to shut out the sounds of her parents arguing.

At age 12, Jaynes met a Christian woman in her neighborhood and began spending time with her. Although her family attended church every week, she had never seen a relationship with Jesus modeled in her home. Through her new friendship with her neighbor, she saw more than just religious rituals like her family performed on Sundays. She learned how to have a relationship with Jesus, and she accepted Christ two years later. Within five years both of her parents also came to know Christ. Her story seemed to have a fairy-tale ending.

However, the years of fighting and violence at home left her very insecure. Among her deep-rooted insecurities was the belief that she was ugly and unloved.

“Even though I became a Christian, I still had those wounds,” Jaynes explains. “And I carried them around with me well into my 30s.”

Jaynes began to feel like something was missing from her life. As she attempted to discover what it was, she sensed God telling her to let go of her past hurts. That’s when she began the process of healing – a process that she calls “turning the wounds into scars.”

“There is a big difference between a wound and a scar,” Jaynes says. “Because a scar says, ‘I’ve been healed, and this is my story.’”

In her book, *Your Scars Are Beautiful to God*, Jaynes encourages readers to embrace their scars and allow God to use them in the lives of others. She says God prompted her to write the book after reading the familiar Scripture passage about the resurrection of Christ.

“When Jesus appeared to His disciples, they did not recognize Him when He walked in the room until He showed them His scars. Once they saw His scars, then they knew who He was,” Jaynes says. “And as I was reading that I felt like God was saying to me, ‘that is still how people know Jesus today.’” Jesus could have healed His scars and come back without them. Instead, He chose to keep them. Jaynes believes that is because He had a message for us. Our scars are important, and He wants to use them.

## **When Bad Things Happen**

We will probably never understand some of the things that happen to us in life. When approached with the question of why God allows pain in our lives, Jaynes says she usually refers to something she once heard Dr. James Dobson say. "He said that for us to try to understand God's ways is like an amoeba trying to understand how the human body works. We just can't do it," Jaynes says. "And that is something that we have to come to grips with."

It is during our times of struggle that we find out what we really believe about God. A tragedy in our lives often leads us to a crisis of belief, Jaynes says. "I think that it's very easy to believe in God when life is good," she says. "But when life is not good, then that's when we really decide if we believe it." She tells the story of Wendy, a young woman who was raped. "She was very angry at God because she had been a good girl," Jaynes explains, "and she thought that if you were good, then bad things would not happen." Wendy was left with a choice to make.

In the midst of her pain, Wendy had to decide between three options: God was not powerful enough to stop what happened; God was powerful enough, but simply didn't care enough to stop what happened; or God allowed it to happen and He has some greater purpose behind it. After struggling for several years, Wendy decided God must have a purpose for what she endured, and she chose to release her pain to Him and trust Him with the outcome. It is a choice we all face when troubles hit our lives.

## **Choose to Be Healed**

Each of us can be healed, Jaynes says, but first we must answer a question. She recalls the story in John 5 of Jesus healing a man who had lived as an invalid for 38 years. Before He healed him, Jesus asked the man, "Do you want to get well?"

Perhaps the reason Jesus asked this, Jaynes says, is because the man's life would drastically change once he was healed. He would have to learn to walk and get a job, among other things. Our lives, too, will change when we allow Jesus to heal our wounds.

"I think we can be so comfortable with that wound that it almost becomes who we think we are," Jaynes says. "'I am a rape victim.' 'I am a woman who has been abused.' 'I had an abortion, and that's who I am.' We can become very comfortable in that and to let go of it and be healed is scary. You take on a whole new life."

Healing, Jaynes points out, also involves choices about forgiveness. If our wounds are from poor choices that we made, we must ask God to forgive us and accept that His death on the cross is enough to pay for our sins. Then we need to release the guilt and shame that we have felt.

Healing often involves forgiving others as well. "I think that many people believe forgiveness means that we are saying that what they did is okay," Jaynes explains. "It's not okay. What it is saying is that I'm not going to let that control me any longer. I'm giving it to God."

Until a hurting person accepts God's forgiveness, forgives themselves, and forgives the person who hurt them, Jaynes says, healing can never take place.

## **Show Your Scars**

Once we are healed, the way we allow God to use our scars is by sharing them with others. Too often, Jaynes says, we hide our past hurts from people around us either because we are ashamed or because we fear rejection. Carrying these burdens around – something Jaynes compares to the dust cloud that follows Pigpen around in the Peanuts comic strip -- can limit the ways in which God is able to use us.

"I lost a child a long time ago," Jaynes says, "and when that happened I didn't want to talk to anybody except someone who had gone through the same thing I had. I think that is how most people feel when they have gone through a struggle."

Perhaps the increase in the number of people seeking help from secular support groups supports this idea.

"People are going anywhere and everywhere to find someone who has struggled with the same thing they have struggled with," Jaynes says, "and it's a little heartbreaking to think that they are having to go outside the church."

One reason people are afraid to show their scars is because they feel that their past will disqualify them for ministry. Jaynes believes that this doesn't happen in churches as often as one may think. And if it does ever happen to anyone, she says, they should seriously reconsider their connection with that body of believers.

"If we are at a place where we share that struggle and people do not rejoice with us and with God for restoring our lives, then we need to go somewhere else," Jaynes says.

Churches should seek to create safe places, such as Sunday school or small groups, where members can tell their stories. When that happens, Jaynes says, congregations will see a lot of healing take place.

## **Beauty From Ashes**

Often, if we allow Him to, God will use our deepest hurt to develop our greatest ministry. The reason our scars can be beautiful, she says, is because God gives us opportunities to invest in other people because of the struggles we've gone through ourselves.

For this reason, we should not despair when we experience painful circumstances. Rather, we should look for how God may want to use those circumstances.

Jaynes says, "I've learned over the years to stop saying, 'Why did this happen to me?' Instead, I say to God, 'Okay, what now?' This is a shattered dream, now what do I do with it? Where do I go from here?" If we allow God to replace our wounds with scars, and we are willing to use them to help others, He will redeem even our most painful experiences.

As Jaynes writes in her book, Satan wants to use our past to paralyze us. God wants to use our past to propel us. The choice is ours.