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Mark & Friends

Julia Renee Holcomb: God Does Not Give Up on Us
Mark & Friends Classic Conversation - Part 1 • Tuesday, July 14, 2026

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Mark & Friends Classic Conversation: Today begins Julia Renee Holcomb's remarkable two-part testimony. Although the interview was originally recorded about 14 years ago, its message remains timely: God does not give up on us, and His grace can reach into even the darkest chapters of our lives.

A caring note: Today's conversation includes candid discussion of abortion, a relationship involving a minor, family breakdown, isolation, trauma, and a life-threatening apartment fire. Some portions may be difficult to hear. The program's purpose is to offer truth, compassion, redemption, and hope in Jesus.

Welcome to today's edition of *Mark & Friends*. Listen to the broadcast, read the proofread transcript, download a printable copy, and explore today's Program Resources.

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Program Summary

In Part 1 of this *Mark & Friends Classic Conversation*, Julia Renee Holcomb begins a deeply personal testimony of family breakdown, vulnerability, regret, and the pursuing mercy of God. Julia describes meeting Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler when she was sixteen, leaving home, entering a relationship that placed her in an increasingly isolated and dependent situation, and becoming pregnant. She also explains why she eventually chose to speak publicly: not to remain trapped in shame, but to testify that God's grace is greater than our worst sin and that Jesus welcomes repentant people with open arms. The program ends with Julia trapped in a smoke-filled apartment, turning toward a cherished picture of Jesus and praying for mercy as she loses consciousness. Her story continues tomorrow.

Key Takeaways

- God does not give up on people, regardless of their past choices, wounds, or consequences.
- Family breakdown and separation from healthy Christian community can leave young people especially vulnerable.
- Shame says there is no pathway back, but Jesus offers forgiveness, healing, and a new beginning.
- Julia chose to speak publicly so others could understand that God's grace is bigger than even her worst sin.
- Small decisions - leaving church, stopping prayer, or withdrawing from support - can gradually reshape a family's direction.
- Even in a moment of terror, remembered Scripture and a childhood awareness of Jesus became an anchor of hope.

Scripture References

- 1 Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.
- Psalm 34:3 - Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.
- Psalm 31:5 - Into Your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, Lord, my faithful God.
- Romans 8:38-39 - Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus our Lord.
- Luke 15:20 - The father saw his returning son from a distance and ran to meet him.
- 1 John 1:9 - God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse those who confess their sins.

Quote of the Day

“God’s grace is bigger than even my worst sin, and if I’m willing to do the hard work of repenting, Jesus is there with His arms wide open.”

- Julia Renee Holcomb

Broadcast Notes

- This is Part 1 of a two-part Classic Conversation with Julia Renee Holcomb.
- The interview was originally recorded about 14 years ago and is being presented again because its message remains timely.
- Julia explains how her story became public and why she chose to use it to speak about God’s grace, healing, and forgiveness.
- The conversation describes the breakdown of family and spiritual support that preceded Julia’s relationship with Steven Tyler.
- Today’s program concludes as Julia recalls praying for mercy while trapped in a burning apartment; Part 2 continues tomorrow.

Practical Applications

- Bring anxiety, guilt, and painful memories honestly to Jesus instead of carrying them alone.
- Stay connected to a faithful church, prayer, Scripture, and trusted believers; spiritual isolation is rarely harmless.
- Pay attention to young people who seem overlooked, unsupported, or vulnerable, and offer steady, Christlike care.
- Refuse to believe that a painful past places anyone beyond God’s reach.
- Memorize a verse that can anchor your heart when fear, pressure, or crisis makes clear thinking difficult.
- Listen to difficult testimonies with compassion, resisting both sensationalism and condemnation.

Today's Challenge

Take a few quiet minutes today and pray through 1 Peter 5:7. Name one burden you have been carrying and deliberately place it in Jesus' hands. Then consider whether someone in your life feels unseen or unsupported. Reach out with a simple word of care, prayer, or practical help.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You that You do not give up on us. Thank You that Your grace reaches farther than our sin, shame, confusion, and pain. Draw near to anyone who feels trapped by the past or separated from You. Protect vulnerable young people, strengthen families, restore those who have drifted from Christian fellowship, and help Your people become safe and faithful sources of truth and compassion. Teach us to cast every anxiety on You because You truly care for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Program Resource Library

Continue learning through the growing *Mark & Friends* Program Resource Library at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org. Revisit today's broadcast, share it with a friend, and return tomorrow for the conclusion of Julia's testimony.

Complete Proofread Transcript

**We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.**

Reading from 1 Peter 5, verse 7, Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. That's 1 Peter 5, verse 7. Oh, magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.

It's Tuesday, Testimony Tuesday, July 14, 2026. Welcome to a special Mark & Friends Classic Conversation. From time to time we like to revisit some of the most meaningful conversations from the Mark & Friends archives.

As our Great News Radio office manager, Karen Harrison, likes to remind us, if it's good enough to hear once, it's good enough to hear twice. And maybe God simply wants someone to hear this message again today. Jumping right in to some of my introduction and opening comments.

I think of that verse in Scripture that says, Cast your cares on Him, because He cares for you. Julia experienced that care, but it took a while for it to sink in. And you'll hear through today and tomorrow's conversation, that God doesn't give up on any of us.

No matter what we've done, no matter our circumstances, the life choices that we've made, the mistakes that have maybe piled up, or the consequences that we've had to suffer through, God doesn't give up on any of us. So here's my conversation, and it'll cover today and tomorrow's edition of Mark & Friends. So please stay tuned, and I think you'll find yourself riveted, intrigued, challenged, convicted, and encouraged by her message and testimony.

Well, Julia, thanks for being on the line for today's edition of Mark & Friends. And when I first learned of the opportunity to maybe interview you, I thought, well, I don't know any of her story, any of her background, but I've certainly heard of Aerosmith. In fact, growing up many years ago, I played a lot of Aerosmith songs, maybe back then on my eight tracks or records, you know.

But many of our listeners are certainly familiar with Aerosmith and Steven Tyler because of his involvement with American Idol. But when I asked, I said, boy, I don't know Julia, but are there some suggested questions? And the response came back to me, Julia is fine with any questions. It's nice to touch on redemption and the ability to turn one's life around.

She always tries to include that God's grace and mercy can overcome our past sins. So, Julia, I just want you to begin with sharing some of your story because it's a story of heartache, but it's a story of redemption. It's a story of a broken heart, yet it's a story of learning about God's love.

And I put down three things. I think you have three love stories. Your story, your love story with Steve, your love story with God, and your love story with the pro-life cause, and for that matter, for others to know that God is a good God that can redeem all of our past.

So, how about just entering into a time of sharing some of your story with our Great News Radio listeners? Well, I'd love to. I'm a Silent No More campaign spokesperson under Priests

for Life. And I always like to begin my story by saying that I'm here to be Silent No More about the worst sin I ever committed.

Because when I was 16 years old, I met Steven Tyler, the lead singer of the rock group Aerosmith, and our past American Idol judge at a rock concert in Portland, Oregon. And we began a three-year relationship that ended in a horrific late-term saline abortion. And as a Silent No More campaign spokesperson, I want people to know that with all my heart, I regret my abortion.

There have been over 54 million abortions in the United States since Roe v. Wade. It's almost an unbelievable number.

And more than one in three women in the United States have had abortions. And I'm one of those women. And so I'm just out here.

I never dreamed I would ever speak about it publicly. I never thought I would ever talk about my relationship with Steven. Today, I have been married for 30 years.

I'm a devout Christian, and I have a beautiful family. I have seven children. And I had made the decision not to tell my children about my relationship with Steven, or certainly not my abortion.

It had been something so painful to me that I didn't want to burden them with it. I had told my husband about it. The two of us together had made the decision not to tell our children.

Steven made my story public. He told my story in his first book, Walk This Way. He did it in an inaccurate way, but he did not use my name.

So my husband and I discussed it. We talked about it. We made the decision that we would just let it go.

No one would know that it was me that Steven was talking about. But when he became an American Idol judge, he wrote another book, Does the Noise in My Head Bother You? And in that book, he again described our relationship in a very unflattering way. And this time he used my name.

And then the tabloids ran with it. My oldest son read about my relationship with Steven and my abortion in Star Magazine. He saw his mother's photograph, and he recognized me.

And I had to do my very first Silent No More talk at home in our living room with my children. And we shared a lot of tears that night. That was just a very emotional evening.

I saw in my children a great deal of love and forgiveness and maturity. But I made the decision that night that if I was going to have to tell my family about this dark passage of my life, that I would find the courage to go out and add my voice to the pro-life cause and talk about God's grace and goodness and his power to offer healing and forgiveness. One of the things that a woman who's post-abortive can often feel that she's separated herself from God in a permanent way, that there's no pathway back from here.

But my experience has been that God's grace is bigger than even my worst sin, and that if I'm willing to do the hard work of repenting, that Jesus is there with his arms wide open. So I begin my story by just answering questions that people have asked me. And one of the first questions people ask is, how in the world does a 16-year-old girl meet a rock star? And my story really begins with the breakdown of my family.

My parents were divorced when I was very young. I don't really even remember my father very much. My mother remarried.

You know, I remember her as a child being an ideal mother. She used to take us to church. We went to a little evangelical United Brethren church.

And I remember that she would pray with us in the mornings before we went to school. She would read us a Bible story. And I remember that even though she was a teacher and she didn't make a lot of money, she was very faithful about tithing.

So I had a very good beginning in the church. When my mother divorced, eventually she remarried. And the man that she remarried was an alcoholic and an atheist.

And that was where our lives began to change. After their marriage broke down and they divorced also, and that was also a point where my mother just almost, you know, she was so disillusioned. She made a very fateful decision there just to stop attending church.

And you wouldn't think that that could be such a dramatic changing decision, but it changed everything. It was so fast a change. It seemed like our whole family just began to spiral downward after that.

You know, we just separated ourselves from God, from our faith community, and we had no support. We stopped praying. We stopped reading our Bible.

And by the time I was 16, my mom was living with the next man. She wasn't married to him. And I had met a girl who had access to backstage parties.

She told me that if I wanted to go with her to the Aerosmith concert, I could get backstage and meet Steven. And at 16, I didn't think very hard at all about whether I wanted to go with her. I had heard the song, Dream On, on the radio.

I had seen Steven's photograph on the album cover, and I was fascinated with him. I idolized him. I remember going with her that night.

Nobody asked where I was going. I went along with her, and I did not come home. When I met Steven, it was just like my life stopped.

Everything just came to a halt, and he was all I could see. I moved to Boston to live with him within just a few months. And, you know, no one seemed to miss me.

It was something that, looking back, people can often wonder, how does that happen? And I can just say that, you know, our family life was just in turmoil. So, I mean, even though I was young and maybe I belonged at home, there just didn't seem to really be a place for me there. I was living with Steven for a few months, and he wanted to take me on tour with him as he traveled with his band.

He came to me and he told me that he needed to become my legal guardian so that it would be legal for him to travel with me. And I didn't really understand what that meant. I was just too young, and I had dropped out of high school to live with him there.

I told him I didn't think my mother would just sign over custody of me to him. But, you know, within a short time, he came to me and he had the papers signed, and she had given him custody. I remember just trying to take it in.

What did it really mean? I didn't understand. I knew that we weren't married, but that I didn't belong to my family anymore. I belonged to him.

And I just felt very vulnerable, and I just hoped that somehow this would all work out all right. I began touring with Steven, and I remember we rode in limousines and we stayed in hotels and we went to concerts, and it just seemed so exciting. It seemed like this was maybe the best thing in the world.

Maybe I was really lucky. Maybe there wasn't a place for me at home, but I seemed to have a place in Steven's heart, and maybe this was a good thing. And what I didn't know, I was just blind.

I could not really see. I didn't see that this path would lead me to the brink of death. I didn't see that it would leave me with a wound that I would carry with me my life.

But that's where I was headed. We were traveling on the road, and when I first met Steven, I was taking the birth control pill. And we had been to New Hampshire to visit his family.

They had a lovely resort there. And visiting his family really kind of reminded Steven of his desire to have a family of his own. And while we were on the road after that trip, one night he began speaking to me about his desire to have a child, that he wanted a family and children.

And he asked me, did I want to have a family? Did I want children? And I remember just being thrilled, thinking he must truly love and care for me if he wants me to have his child and if he wants me to be his family. And I told him, yes, I loved children, and I cared very deeply for him. And he threw my birth control pills off the balcony of this hotel where we were staying that night.

I don't remember where we were. It was a large city. And I remember we were really high up over the city.

There were cars and people everywhere. And I just watched those pills disappear under the street glow. And I became open to life in my relationship with Steven.

I didn't get pregnant right away, though. It was within about a year I became pregnant. Steven had been away on the road, and he came back.

And I told him that I was pregnant. And he seemed surprised. He had almost forgotten that I wasn't taking the pill anymore.

But at first he seemed very kind and supportive. And I thought, well, this is going to be wonderful. We're going to have a baby, and we'll start a family.

He came to me within a few months, and he told me that we were going to marry. I hadn't expected him to marry me. We had friends that weren't married and had children.

But he told me we were going to marry. And I remember just thinking that life could not get better. I cared so much for him.

He was just everything to me. And we were going to get married and have a child. And we went from our place in Boston to visit his family again in New Hampshire at their resort and tell them about our decision to marry and about the baby that we were expecting.

But that night just did not go very well. His family was not as supportive of our situation as we had hoped. And, I mean, it's understandable that they would have concerns.

His mother was a very sweet woman. She was worried for us, but she thought that somehow we would get through it, that we would just have to take it one step at a time, that it would be difficult, but we would just have to make things work. His father, his attitude was much more serious.

He spoke to Steven privately, and he was very grave in his reservations. He let us know that that wasn't something he could support. Steven had asked his grandmother if she would let us have her ring for us to marry with.

He was the oldest son of an Italian family, and he wanted his grandmother's ring when we married. And she just took one look at us, and she thought we did not look like a stable relationship, and she was not going to gamble her wedding ring on our relationship. She told him that that wasn't something she wanted to do.

And I really just don't blame her at all. She was such a sweet woman, and she loved him very dearly. But we left their house that evening, and we were just arguing amongst ourselves.

I remember realizing for the first time how vulnerable I was, that I had thought that Steven would stand by me, that I could see that that was all falling apart, that he had had a change of heart after visiting with his family. And we went back to our place in Boston. And let me jump in and pause just for a moment here.

In case you just tuned in, I have Julia Holcomb on the phone with me. Back in the late 70s, when she's about 16 years old, she went to an Aerosmith concert, met up backstage with Steven Tyler. Many of you are familiar with him.

He's kind of one of the front men for Aerosmith. He's come out with a few books, has been well-known throughout the years, and has been an American Idol judge. So many of you are very familiar.

He lives the rock and roll lifestyle that many of us project on. What are these rock and rollers all alike? Here he's at a point in his life where he's in love with this young girl, with Julia. And as Julia mentioned, they go and visit with their parents, and suddenly the relationship is going through this struggle.

So continue, but in case our listeners just tuned in, this program will be archived at GreatNewsRadio.org, and we'll probably continue our conversation into tomorrow's edition of Mark & Friends. So stay with us, because this redemptive story will be an encouragement to all of us, because God can use all of our past experiences, our mistakes, how we botched up our lives, how we've made errors in judgment, and yet he can bring about a resolution where

he is glorified, people are healed, and that transformational work that Jesus can do in our heart can happen. So continue on, please, Julia.

Well, after leaving his parents' resort, and as I said, we were just arguing amongst ourselves. I felt that Steven should stand by me. We should go ahead and get married anyway, and just get a ring at a store.

And he was very quiet. I could see that he had had a change of heart, and we went back to our apartment. Steven made the decision to begin touring and leave me there at the apartment.

I was at least five months pregnant. I don't really know how far along I was, because I had not seen a doctor. I had not been given any prenatal care.

Steven didn't want me to go to a doctor, because I would be asked, how did you become pregnant? Who is the father? And those were not questions that he was prepared to answer, so I had not been to a doctor. He left me in the apartment. I had no car.

I didn't know how to drive. I had no driver's license. And as I mentioned, I had dropped out of high school, so I didn't really have an education.

I wasn't very well educated at that point. And I had very little food in the place. There was a little bit of food when Steven left, and after a week or two, that food was running low.

I remember he would call me each day and just check on me and see how I was doing. But at one point, I was down to milk. I remember just living on milk for a day or two, and Steven asked to, you know, I told him that I needed to get to the grocery store just to buy groceries.

He told me that he would send his friend the next day to the apartment to take me to the grocery store. This was his friend that he wrote about in his book. His name was Ray Tabano.

And he said Ray would come and get me and take me shopping for food. And I remember thinking, great, you know, I'm going to get out of the apartment. And I sat by the window the next morning.

I got up. I sat and waited by the window for Ray to come. I remember watching him arrive and watching him walk up the stairs.

And I remember letting him into that apartment. And that was my last clear memory of what happened. I woke up, and that apartment was on fire.

Ray was gone. We hadn't gone to the grocery store. But I was alone, and I couldn't see anything but smoke.

I was choking. I couldn't breathe. I stood up.

I had been laying on a sofa that was near the front door. And I tripped on a coffee table. And when I fell to the floor, there was air on the floor.

It wasn't, you know, there was about a foot of air that I could see and breathe better. And I crawled to the front door. And when I got to that front door, it was locked.

It had multiple locks on it, but normally you could just unlock them easily and move them to the side. But the bar lock was jammed. It wouldn't move.

So I began to crawl to the back stairway. There was a stairway down into a kitchen that had an outside entrance. When I got to that back stairway, there were flames and smoke pouring up that stair.

And I still remember thinking, I have to get through these stairs somehow. And I grabbed the railing, but it was just burning hot. I burned my hand on that railing, and I realized that I couldn't go forward.

I had to just take shelter in the apartment. I realized I wasn't going to get out. And I remembered seeing a public service announcement on TV, and it said, if you're in a fire and you can't get out, look for shelter in an empty fireplace and open the flue, because most people who die in fires die of smoke inhalation.

And if you open the flue, you can get a little air. There was a fireplace in our bedroom, and we had never used it. It was perfectly clean.

I crawled to it, and I collapsed on the floor of that fireplace. And the flue was already open, and the smoke was just churning up that chimney. It was so black, that smoke.

It was so frightening. And I remember thinking that I was going to die. And I was frightened because I knew that I had committed so many grave sins.

I believed that I deserved to go to hell, and I did not feel prepared to meet God. There was a picture of Jesus hanging over that fireplace. That picture was called The Light of the World.

It was painted by Charles Chambers, and it had been my grandmother's. She was a first-grade teacher, and when she taught school years ago, all of the classrooms had a picture of Jesus in them. They had, at this little elementary school, Wichita Elementary, every classroom, it had a picture of Jesus, and every teacher was allowed to open the day in prayer.

And over the years, they changed that law, and they took the pictures of Jesus down. But my grandmother, she had been there for so long, and she wouldn't take her picture down. And the principal wouldn't make her take it down because she had been there so long.

But when she retired, he said, Helen, you take that picture with you because we can't have that in the school anymore. And I had always loved that picture of Jesus because I had seen it in her room when she taught grade school. And she let me have it.

After she died, it was given to me. I had taken it with me, and it was hanging over this fireplace where I was laying on the floor dying. And that picture of Jesus as a child gave me the courage to pray for forgiveness.

It reminded me that Jesus was merciful and kind, just like a little child. And I prayed the words of the psalm that I remembered learning as a girl. Into thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I remember thinking of those words. They were Jesus' words as he died on the cross.

And I thought of them as a prayer for mercy. And I didn't think I would live, but I wasn't frightened anymore. I felt that God had heard my prayer, and I became unconscious.

I fell unconscious. Julie, I'm going to pause you right here because we want to continue with this story because there's so much more. And you sound like such a mature believer at this point in your walk.

And I'm glad God raised up a husband for you and your seven children. And there's so much more to the story and the healing and how you're an advocate, an ambassador for God now. And we're discipled by the Lord Jesus Christ in a good church and the study of Scriptures these many years.

So we're going to have you on tomorrow's edition of Mark & Friends and continue with the story. Actually, I'm going to have you back up a little and start from the point of being in that apartment and we're going to continue on. So if you can stay with me, Julia, we're going to continue on tomorrow's edition of Mark & Friends with this story.

Sure. Powerful testimony, Part 2 tomorrow, and it reminds me of the ending words of Chapter 8 of Romans. For nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God be with you today and always. As mentioned at the beginning of today's broadcast, this was a Mark & Friends Classic Conversation from about 14 years ago. Tomorrow, we'll

conclude Julia Holcomb's remarkable testimony as we discover how Jesus brought healing, forgiveness, and new life from one of the darkest seasons of her life.

Let me also invite you to continue learning by visiting the Mark & Friends page at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org. There you'll find today's broadcast along with a growing collection of resources designed to help you continue your walk with Jesus. Thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family.

This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you and have a great day and night.

Thank you for listening and being part of the *Mark & Friends* radio listening family.