

Jim And Jill Kelly Talk About What Saved Their Marriage In "Without A Word"

Posted By: Scott Brown ■ Date last updated: 9/9/2010 8:35:18 AM

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BUFFALO, N.Y. - Following their son Hunter's death, the public saw former NFL quarterback Jim Kelly and his wife Jill as a seemingly happy couple, dedicated to the Hunter's Hope foundation, and each other.

But behind the public appearances, the private reality was very different.

In her new book "Without A Word," Jill Kelly details the severe troubles in their marriage and how the couple overcame them.

Scott Brown: "In the book you said after Hunter passed away, you just assumed that you guys would get divorced?"

Jill Kelly: "Oh yeah, I thought for sure because there was nothing left of our marriage at that point."

In hindsight, the Kelly's say that Hunter's birth and the around-the-clock care he needed, exposed the cracks that were already developing in their marriage.

Jim Kelly: "Early on we were separate, we were two different people even though we lived under the same roof. In order to make a marriage work you need to communicate and we weren't very good communicators, not at all."

Jill says she thought that Hunter's fatal diagnosis of Krabbe disease would lead to Jim staying home more, and traveling less, for television work, public appearances, and trips with his friends.

That, however, was not the case.

And in some of her journal entries that are included in the book, Jill doesn't hide her anger.

"We live under the same roof, but we live worlds apart, what a shame. I don't have time to focus on anything but the kids, especially Hunter," Jill wrote.

Jill, who became a Christian when Hunter was two years old, often prayed for herself, her husband, and her marriage.

"To me it looks helpless and hopeless, I think Jim needs you more than Hunter does," Jill wrote.

Without going into details, Jim admits that he was not faithful to Jill.

Scott Brown: "Would you say that you were not a good husband for a long time?"

Jim Kelly: "Oh yeah, I would say that without a doubt."

Following Hunter's death, Jill convinced Jim to begin marriage counseling with their pastor.

Jim Kelly: "I went through a time in my life where I knew I had to make changes in my life if I still wanted to have a family. I know that the ultimate is seeing my son someday being able to run in heaven and I knew that with the life I was living, I wasn't going to have that chance."

Jim says a few years ago, as he tried to change his ways and save his marriage, he too became a Christian.

Scott Brown: "Jim, people watching this and they hear Jim Kelly say 'he's a Christian, he's changed' and people roll their eyes, what do you say to them?"

Jim Kelly: "If people knew me from the past and haven't seen me in the last couple of years then they could probably say that because they don't know the Jim Kelly now. What counts is what's in our hearts, and the reality for me set in a few years back. I know it, that's all that counts, my wife knows it and the number one person, God knows it. I was strong enough to admit my mistakes, I've been forgiven and I'm a ten times better person than I was yesterday."

Scott Brown: "What is your message to other couples who say 'we don't talk, our marriage is over we're going to get divorced'?"

Jim Kelly: "Never give up. If we can get through this - the struggles that we had with a special needs child, anybody can do it. If you really want it to do it, it can happen, just never, ever quit. Do a lot of praying, that's what we did. And if you need help, seek help."

Jill says one of the reasons she wrote "Without A Word" was to send a message of hope to other couples.

Jill Kelly: "We want people to be in the place that we were at - as dark as it can get -because it got really, really dark, there's still light at the end of the tunnel."

Starting new week, the couple will be doing a number of book signings in Western New York:

* September 13, 7:00 p.m.
Barnes & Noble
1565 Niagara Falls Boulevard, Amherst

* September 18, 3:00 p.m.
Barnes & Noble
3701 McKinley Parkway

* October 12, 6:30 p.m.
Bender's Bookstore
8550 Sheridan Drive