



## **Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story**

*Ken Tada, Joni Eareckson Tada, Larry Libby (Contributor)*

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This is the true love story of Joni and her husband of 30 years, Ken Tada. A love story showing what it truly means for a man and a woman to live in love ... in sickness and in health.

Even the honeymoon wasn't easy. Did Ken realize what he was getting into when he proposed to Joni, a quadriplegic woman? As their marriage years moved on, Ken became increasingly overwhelmed by the never-ceasing demands of caring for Joni, who begins to experience chronic, extreme, nightmarish pain. Ken sinks into depression, and the couple finds themselves on parallel tracks in life, married and living under the same roof but drifting apart emotionally.

But as they fight for their marriage and find their way through the mazes of depression and pain, they wrap their two lives around their rock---Jesus.

During Ken's denial of Joni's diagnosis, and Joni's thoughts of how wonderful a quick exit to heaven would be, they experience a personal visitation with the savior you will never forget.

## **Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story Details**

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## From Reader Review Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story for online ebook

### Callie says

This book is not only a love story of Joni and Ken Tada; it is a love story of God and us. Through Joni's tragic diving accident that left her paralyzed when she was only a teenager, she became unable to do most things we take for granted. However, God has not left her. Not only does He provide many helpers for Joni to help her get through the daily tasks of life, but then goes a step further to provide her a helpmate in Ken. Their marriage is filled with many challenges that most marriages never have to face. For example, Ken must dress Joni daily; he blows her nose when she is sick. There were times when the flesh certainly wanted to give up, but in God's perfect timing, He not only provides a Divine message of encouragement, but the strength to live the message out. This book was not only inspirational for marriages, it is inspirational for life. It reminds us that when you stay the course and submit to God for your strength, He enables you to do exceedingly and abundantly above all you ever thought you could do.

Thank you so much to BookSneeze for letting me read and review this book.

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### Janice says

As someone living with chronic illness, requiring my husband to be my caregiver, I was excited to learn that Joni and Ken had shared their story. I have been greatly blessed by her ministry and previous writing. In some ways this book was a great encouragement to me, and in others it was very disappointing.

In a number of places it has the familiar style of Joni's writing (particularly the *many* humorous comments about Ken's "thick black hair"). But I agree with some of the other readers here that the third person presentation does make it more awkward than if it had been from Joni and/or Ken's perspective.

The book has many strengths. Despite the constant struggles of living in a "fishbowl" of fame, with quadriplegia, chronic pain and cancer, and the normal challenges of marriage, Joni and Ken chose to open up their world to the general public in a very intimate way. True, I'm sure they didn't share the grittiest of all their experiences. And that is OK. We live in a "reality TV" culture that demands public personalities share every single sordid detail of their lives with us; but this is not realistic or fair to expect. The vulnerable moments that were shared were incredibly touching.

Ken and Joni's story is simply and powerfully that of two fallen human beings who are being sanctified and used powerfully by the Lord. As was one of the purposes of the book, it helped me to see them as normal, flawed human beings, not as saints. And the incredible grace, love and sovereignty of God is well displayed throughout the story.

The areas that address Ken's struggles with depression and learning how to be a sacrificial caregiver were of particular interest to me. If he ever chose to release his own book to discuss it further, I would want to read it.

### Why I Can Only Give This Book Three Stars

By far, the most concerning issue I have with the book is their (*and* particularly Ken's) severe lack of

discernment, despite all that they have been through, *and* despite having sat under the sound teaching of Grace Community Church. At times the book reads like an ongoing endorsement Ken's friend, John Eldredge and his books promoting many false teachings, including contemplative prayer. At one point as Ken engages in contemplative prayer, he asks, "What would John MacArthur think?" Indeed, what would he think, and why not actually ask him since he's a friend?

I am thankful to see Ken's increasing maturity as he learned to put Joni first and really dive into his role of the sacrificial caregiver. That is truly something for which most people are not prepared. So reading about his growth in this area is a great encouragement. But it is terribly disappointing that it is so wrapped up in the silliness of contemplative prayer. He listened to his own heart (which he calls "God talking to him") and it told him to step up and be his wife's champion. In this instance, his heart told him to do a good thing, and praise the Lord for that! But his endorsement of that kind of spiritual behavior can only encourage others who don't know better to walk down a terribly dangerous road. The human heart is deceitful, and listening to it can produce absolutely disastrous results. If you want to know what God has to say, open up the word of God and meditate on it! If he had done more of that instead, and perhaps taken those important times of isolation to pray through the Scriptures, he would have come to the same place of conviction, maybe even more powerfully so. I have no doubt of that. I hope and pray that he and Joni do come to realize the dangers they are promoting and repent of it in time.

Getting back to John MacArthur for a moment, there are a number of references to him and GCC from the early part of their relationship, which is nice (though it did feel a little like "name dropping" at times). But as the story moved forward, all comments relating to their church ended. There was no mention of church support or fellowship during their increasingly difficult struggles. There was no mention of consulting their elders or appreciating support from their local church membership. I realize this may be due to editing constraints, or perhaps because Joni had to be shut in for some extended periods of time. But it was quite conspicuously absent. Perhaps if they were still investing their time sitting under solid, regular teaching, Ken would not have fallen so easily for such seriously false teaching? I understand they are no longer GCC church members. I would have liked to know more about what kind of church they have moved to and how connected they are there. The church family is such an important factor in our lives even at the best of times. To skip over this part in their struggles is a serious concern.

One final note: Joni is tremendously gifted her with beauty, speaking, writing, painting, encouraging, teaching, and singing, abilities (and many more, I'm sure). These gifts are so incredible that to the onlooker, they can overshadow her disability and physical challenges. Someone else shared here that they were even jealous of Joni. It may sound funny, but I can understand it! She has been unusually granted a tremendous, far-reaching ministry that I can't even imagine being a part of. It can easily become discouraging to see all that she has accomplished in her wheelchair, and how little I have done in comparison with a more functional body. But we have to remember that this is all in the Lord's plans. Some members of the body have more hidden roles, and others have more public roles, but all are for the glory of God. So I am challenged to keep serving the Lord with what He has given me. I may not have any of Joni's gifts, but that is up to the Lord, and He has His own unique plans for me.

I cautiously recommend this book to more discerning readers because there is great encouragement to be found in it. But because of the serious discernment issues, I would not recommend it to just anyone. Many of Joni's previous books are far more worth recommending.

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## **Kelli says**

Oh my goodness, they are the sweetest people with huge amounts of faith. Read this just to be uplifted by how God uses them. They aren't perfect they just have great perspectives on life. And I really love that. The only thing I wish the book had was the pov written in first person. It would have made the stories seem more personal. I think with the way it was written, at times, it came across as cliched. And I didn't always love how Ken was portrayed, I would have liked to hear his voice in first person really detail his struggle with depression in the 90s and how he felt about taking care of Joni. The ending is really sweet though, and you see the arch of where God has taken them.

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## **Amy Kannel says**

This was just OK. I admire Joni so much and she certainly testifies to the beauty and glory of Christ in powerful ways. But this book's style/voice struck me as kind of cheesy. I also didn't like the way it was organized--jumping all over the place in time, from their dating years to the early 2000s back to the 1980s. I might give it only 2.5 stars, but I'll round up.

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## **Mark Oppenlander says**

Ken Tada and Joni Eareckson Tada are remarkable. Unfortunately, this book is not.

For those who may not know her story, Joni Eareckson became a quadriplegic after a 1967 diving accident when she was still a teenager. Despite her disability, she came to fame as a writer, preacher, evangelist and motivational speaker, eventually earning world-wide renown. Ken Tada was a high school teacher and coach who met Eareckson when she was in her 30's, fell in love with her and eventually married her. This book is about their relationship over the past 30 years, the ups and downs of it and the challenges they've faced, both physical and emotional.

There were two major obstacles for my enjoyment of this book. First, it feels quite disjointed. Large chunks of this are told in flashbacks, with the narrative moving between the younger days when the Tadas were in their 30's and just getting started, to their later years when Joni faces cancer, to their middle years when Ken is struggling with his identity while being married to a celebrity. The reason for these leaps forward or backward is not always clear and I just couldn't always tell what the author wanted to emphasize. Perseverance? The universality of struggle? The parallelism between age and youth? I think a simpler more straightforward storyline might have helped this book a lot.

The other thing with which I struggled was how perfectly Christian the couple seemed to be at nearly all times. They quote scripture, sing spiritual songs and - outside of brief mentions of fishing and meals - rarely discuss anything that does not relate to God and their ministry. Yes, they face adversity and yes, the book occasionally describes the grittier day-to-day realities of being a quadriplegic but when all is said and done, everything is mined for its spiritual lesson. I don't want to sound like this is inauthentic in any way - this could in fact be exactly what's it like to be around Ken and Joni. But it was hard for me to relate to. None of my Christian friends, even the really devout ones, behave like this at all times. For me, a portrait of a more down-to-earth saint with feet of clay would have carried more weight.

Chalk this one up as a book for people who are already fans of Joni and want a more intimate view of her personal life.

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### **Nola says**

I've read all of Joni Eareckson's autobiographical books (Joni, A Step Further, Choices Changes, The God I Love) and was really looking forward to reading this recent work about her 30-year marriage to Ken Tada. I knew that it would cover the trademark transparency that marks all of her books, but I was wondering how much of Ken's heart we would hear. Well, I needn't have asked the question because they are both so honest and courageous in sharing their ups and downs. Joni's quadriplegia certainly brought challenges to the marriage, but they also faced Ken's depression and Joni's battle with chronic pain and breast cancer. Even one of those circumstances would be enough to crush some marriages, yet they have come through it all with a greater love for each other and dependence on God. They are the first to insist that they're nothing special and that it is all due to God's grace, but there's no denying that they are a remarkable couple. Hearing their story certainly puts other people's little marital glitches into perspective.

While some parts of the book are poignant, there is also a great deal of warmth and humour. Indeed, Joni's breast cancer brought them closer together than ever before and actually became a source of joy. It was also wonderful to hear more of Ken's story and how God shaped him into the warrior he was designed to be.

My only slight reservation with the book is that it's told in third person. Larry Libby writes really well and does a good job of conveying Joni and Ken's thoughts, but I was expecting a first-person narrative like Joni's other books. I know that would have been more complicated with two people having to share their personal thoughts, but I think it could have been done. Once I got over that, I really enjoyed the book.

This is a marriage that has been refined in the fire and come out as precious silver. A truly inspirational read.

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### **Rebekah Rodda says**

What a love story! This is the true story of a real romance, of a man who sacrificially loves his quadriplegic wife. Joni can not even turn herself in bed (she has to wake him to do it for her!). Ken has faced numerous challenges in being the spouse of a famous person with intensive special needs. His struggle with the daily grind of it all honestly conveyed here. My favourite part is when God speaks to him, and he chooses to love his wife with all he has.

I did find the storyline a bit jumpy here (for some reason the person compiling this chose not to go for a chronological approach but the sections themselves are well told).

I think this is quite my favourite romance of all because it is real and so Christ-like.

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### **Kayla Mahnken says**

I agree with many of the other reviewers that the book was disjointed and confusing due to how the book

was set up similar to diary entries--not even chronological! So you really have to pay attention to those dates!

It was also not as raw as I expected it to be but perhaps that kind of vulnerability is expecting too much. As others have said, there was a great deal of Joni's view of Ken's experience of their marriage but Ken's own voice was lacking at times. Some questions the book itself raises are then left unanswered.

I was also surprised that this book quoted the Message version of Scripture and even more surprised at the mention of John Eldridge's book Wild at Heart.

Overall, I am amazed at how such a couple has been able to sustain such seemingly insurmountable challenges and am encouraged by their commitment and devotion to each other. It is hard to imagine a more difficult road.

One last thing, the Personal Note from Joni and Ken conclusion left me disappointed. It was clearly written to already-married couples. Perhaps the whole book is geared toward them? I did not initially make that assumption when I picked it up. It ends with "After all, loving that one to whom you said yes to, well...it's just another way, maybe the best way, of loving and serving God." I feel that statement is alienating and perhaps too bold a claim to endeavor to make. To say that the best way to love and serve God requires a spouse...well, marriage is indeed a high calling but we are also called to love and serve God in singleness. And perhaps I am wrong, but I do not think God sees one as superior than the other as they both have their own set of unique challenges and trials and we are called to persevere through them with or without a spouse.

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### **Gail Welborn says**

\*\*\*an untold love story, written with realism and raw vulnerability\*\*\*

Ken Tada and Joni Eareckson married in 1982 after their two-year friendship turned into loving courtship. Their authentic Christ-centered relationship taught them the meaning of sacrificial commitment in the months prior to their wedding where Ken learned to help with Joni's care. Still the true cost of their mutual commitment was one time would test. This book is their "untold love story."

Joni Eareckson Tada, immobile from the shoulders down and confined to a wheelchair is most remembered for her heroic walk of faith after the diving accident that paralyzed her. In time, her "Christian outreach in the disability community" led to the founding of Joni and Friends, an organization that "...provides practical support and spiritual help to special needs families."

Her amazing achievements only started there. She would learn to paint holding a paintbrush in her mouth and write books with voice recognition software, yet as amazing as this was, she never considered the challenges of marriage. However, God had other ideas.

When Ken, a high-school teacher-coach, and Joni said their wedding vows in 1982 they anticipated a "happily-ever-after" marriage. Neither realized how their bond would be challenged and tested once romance faded into the required routine basic to Joni's health care...Full Review:  
[www.examiner.com/list/joni-ken-an-unt...](http://www.examiner.com/list/joni-ken-an-unt...)

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## Lindsay says

Even though a dear older friend at church loved this book about the marriage of Joni and Ken Tada, I never meant to read it.

Rather, Joni Eareckson Tada kept finding her way into conversations with a different friend at church. That friend asked me to repeat Joni's name, asked what she wrote, asked for her name written down. So I left for the used bookstore on Sunday, hoping it might have a book I saw there before or another of Joni's works. Flipping through this, I thought it looked too full of suffering (something I've really been fearing lately). Yet this was the book in stock. So this was the one I bought.

Early on the story seems so hopeful. A woman who is nearly 32 and paralyzed, and thus thinks marriage will elude her, finds a man she once prayed for (after admiring the back of his head when distracted at a worship service) starting to admire her. Really admire her. He even empties her leg bag of urine on the first date.

Yet the story turns awfully gritty and hard. It turns out Ken partly loved Joni's personality, her beauty, her love for the Lord bigger-than-life persona. Living with a quadriplegic woman, providing so much of her care, of course is more involved than Ken had expected before marriage. (Granted, marriage is harder for anyone than imagined.) The daily grind begins to wear on him, distance builds in the relationship, Joni distances herself to lessen the strain on Ken while hating the distance... After a while it all seems so grim.

Being 32 with damaged arm tendons and a slightly questionable immune system, I found myself moving from relating to (wrongly) using the account as a barometer. If I should find my autoimmunity to ever include more than thyroid disease, would this be the burden a husband would feel? Should I determine to never marry? Empty apartment or condo (a house seems like quite a high aim with damaged arms because it might necessitate finding a more sustainable career path), empty kitchen table, empty bed, empty passenger seat, empty womb, empty life, friends being less available as age brings more marriages, struggling to find suitable jobs (though I must say the Lord always has gotten me through - just in ways that show His hand had to have given the answers because they were too unique for me to find/recognize)... That's how fear speaks, right? That what we fear will happen. That it will turn out as just as we think or worse. That the grace of God won't be there (incidentally, Jay Adams is very good at speaking into this last point in a tiny booklet called "Christ and Your Problems"). That's it's all about me, my desires, my idols (\*gulp\*), my circumstances.

And yet, by the end this book spoke hope where fear had settled deep into my bones. Sure, what Joni feared sometimes happened. Similarly, what you and I fear might happen. Plus good changes that are given may be taken away. We can't count on what God hasn't promised. Yet the grace of God IS intricately woven through any believer's life (even if we eclipse it in our imaginings). And sometimes, Christ is seen most, and the most good comes, in the grittiest, harder-than-ever-imagined circumstances. Circumstances like paraplegia (where one can't even go to the bathroom unassisted), compounded by horrible and distracting chronic pain, cancer, a mastectomy, pneumonia (something quite dangerous after years of paraplegia). What has proved most insightful from Joni's life for me is what I love most about this book. It brings the reader back to Christ. His presence. The hope He brings. How we find fulfillment (without looking for it) in following the Lord and, out of service to Him, pouring our lives into others.

As the light creeps back in dawn is on the horizon. The hardness is there, but so is the surpassing beauty of

Christ. Suffering threatens to conquer, but Christ is most present in it and working more good than Joni and Ken ever guessed in their lesser struggles. The Lord is deeply binding the hearts of two people, bound formally by a covenant, through great trials. Their life changes to rejoicing in their union with God and each other. Home changes to being about an \*us\* rather than a structure or two \*I's\*. We find that GOD is present, GOD is strong, GOD is loving, GOD sustains, GOD changes circumstances sometimes and His people always, GOD gives growth and peace and hope, GOD fulfills, that GOD does all things well... Christ's grace is sufficient because His power is made perfect, seen, felt, in weakness. The rest, the hope, the help are not in us but in the Lord.

Don't you see the HOPE for you Joni and Ken there? And the HOPE for you and me (whether or not our health holds, we can ever afford houses, our wombs stay empty and our homes at least emptier than hoped)??? For the God who \*sustains\* the Tadas, who \*teaches\* them, who \*works so wondrously\* in and through their very real pain and trials, who \*binds\* them closer, who \*gives\* joy when circumstances can't account for it, is ACCESSIBLE TO ANYONE IN CHRIST. By being so real about their struggles and God's work in them, they show WEARY, WEAK, SINFUL, MISERABLE people something of THE SUFFICIENCY AND GOODNESS OF CHRIST. For that, I am very thankful the Lord led me to buy a book I didn't want to read!!!

This is a bit too autobiographical, but it shall do.

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### **Mary Kenyon says**

I loved reading Joni and Ken's story. What an amazing couple. I enjoyed it so much I wrote them a personal letter and got one in return! Like Ken and Joni's my marriage improved dramatically through my husband's bout with cancer.

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### **Joyce says**

Public library copy. Years ago I read Joni, the story of her accident which caused her quadriplegia. Not knowing anything about Ken, I decided to read their story. It is truly a love story, with twists and turns and an enduring love which mirrors our Saviour's love for us.

I like the way the book is written, in the third person which gives it good flow. It's a very transparent story, especially for Ken.

For those who have read my reviews of John Eldredge's books, I'd like to comment on the connection between Ken Tada and John Eldredge. I might not mention this, but it stuck in my craw until I searched it out. The short of it is this. I am disappointed to see Ken Tada working in ministry with Eldredge, whose theology falls short of the Bible's view of Who God is. The book, Joni and Ken, clearly endorses Eldredge's Wild Adventures, which Ken helps to lead. As a point of reference, Tim Challies also warns against Eldredge's departure from a scriptural view of God.

This does not effect the reading of the Joni and Ken's story, which is a beautiful tribute to our Almighty Father and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

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### **Homeschoolmama says**

This book was good, but it was sort of disjointed- it read like a series of diary entries all scrambled up, with one entry being from 1985, then it jumps to 2000, then back to 1991, etc..

I also wish, as another reviewer mentioned, that there would have been more about Ken and his struggle with depression. As it was, the trials mentioned were only touched upon, and in this sense the book lacked some depth. One of the difficulties Joni faces, and she says so herself, is that people idolize her and put her up on a pedestal. She wanted people to know in this book that she is a real person, with struggles like anybody else. Her attempt to share some hardships here and to dispel the myth that she is ever-patient and ever-kind is good, but she stops short of it simply because the descriptions of her arguments with Ken, her short, sharp replies, are little mentionables. She doesn't reveal too much. So I'm not sure her goal was met here.

I admire Joni and her ministry very much. She is an example of someone who experienced tremendous losses in her life, but instead of growing bitter and isolating herself, she formed an organization to help others in similar situations. I only wish this book had gone into more depth.

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### **Rod says**

Probably the most I have ever cried reading a book. (Almost all were tears of joy.)

I am partially the Christian I am today because of Joni Eareckson Tada. I would have rethought all of my theology based on her. I was blown away when I discovered that she and John MacArthur are friends - and that she has attended HIS church for decades. (How did I NOT know this?!)

Her lack of healing has caused me to be skeptical of the Charismatic movement for many years. Also her ministry and who she supports has inspired me slightly.

If God hasn't healed her then that tells us a lot about God and his plans for this world.

But THIS is a love story. I look forward to giving them both a hug in heaven someday. Amazing people with a very challenging life. And this book takes us through their journey WARTS and all. Thank you guys.

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### **Christina says**

Don't you love how you have a book on your "to read" list for some time, and then when you finally do read it, the timing is perfect? I am also reading the book "Sacred Marriage" by Gary Thomas with our small group this spring, and this story is the perfect illustration of how God uses marriage not necessarily to make us happy, but to make us more like Him. There are two parts of this story I love: one is Ken's change in attitude towards his wife's health concerns when she develops breast cancer, and the other is Joni's recognition that Ken is the physical representation of Jesus serving her in her suffering. This book is a beautiful testimony to marriage.

