



A LOVE LIKE JOHNNY & JUNE

by Mollianna Redding

Megan and Matt Magill are a modern day Johnny and June. Their relationship has grown into a bond that mirrors the same commitment made famous by the trials, tribulations and overwhelming faith of the late Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash. Finding a love like this may seem unrealistic in today's society but this couple is beating the odds everyday. Relocated to East Texas from New York City just months ago, the Magills are sharing their heartfelt testimony through their exceptional music and performing talents.

Although Megan and Matt classify themselves as "true New Yorkers" or "citified," their humble warmth and charm radiate true, southern hospitality.

JUNE

Megan Anderson Magill was born and raised in Tyler. She attended Grace Community and Robert E. Lee High School, where she was a Southern Belle Drill Team officer and graduate of the Class of 1996. She fell in love with performance at a young age and was classically trained in dance at Pam Irwin's Dance Factory. "I knew from the time I could speak that I wanted to perform, whether it was singing or dancing or both," said Megan. She credits her instructors at The Dance Factory for their discipline, training and development of her talents.

Being raised in the Tyler, which is often known as the "Buckle of the Bible Belt," Megan had strong Christian values instilled in her at a young age and could be found in her small Baptist church "every time the doors were open". She had a love for the Lord that was unwavering. "Had you asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would've said a singing, dancing, acting missionary. I had to get it all in there," said Megan.

Like many young ladies in this culture, in her teenage years Megan found herself making compromises as she gave into the peer pressure that surrounded her. "On the outside, I was the poster child of an all American, sweet Christian girl but on the inside I felt crippled by the double life I had begun living. I was a young woman divided; it's easy to be divided in this culture where we are taught to always put a smile on our face and say the right things on Sunday morning – regardless of our feelings and the pain we're masking."

After high school, Megan moved to Oklahoma to attend college and continue her dreams of performing. She worked for The Lyric Theater in Oklahoma City, dancing and performing in various roles. It was during a production of the rock opera, The Who's Tommy that she met Matt Magill, a local celebrity who was cast to play the lead role. "I can remember all of the chorus girls were very excited for his arrival," Megan laughed.

JOHNNY

Matt was no stranger to the stage as he was the front man for a touring rock band, opening for national acts and any other gig thrown their way. Raised in Western Oklahoma in a town of Christians and "good-ole boys," Matt didn't always fit in with his cowboy surroundings. Being an artist in a small town, he went in search of ways to validate his masculinity through rock music, womanizing or experimenting with drugs. Addiction soon followed as Matt began to mask the pain of broken relationships and an ever-hardening heart. "I was full of confidence on the outside but deeply insecure on the inside," said Matt.



A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

When the romance began between these two talented, strong-willed individuals, they were a fit from the start...but not for the right reasons. "We were the perfect worldly pair. We were both focused on our individual needs and nothing else. We were driven by our individual desire for the spotlight," said both Matt and Megan. What should have been only a summer fling soon developed into something much deeper than either of them ever imagined.

Identifying the strengths and weaknesses in each other's character and faith brought their relationship to a whole new level. Megan's faith foundation caused her to urge Matt to accept Christ into his life, but her worldly actions gave no example to be followed. Still Matt showed her grace and understanding. He admired her strength and said that there was one thing that let him know she was different from all the others, "she stayed with me even after she discovered how broken I was."

Megan jokingly chimed in, "I was the June Carter to his Johnny Cash." She couldn't have said it any better. Theirs was an experience of common grace as the Lord began to reveal what true love really means.

After working on a cruise ship and living in the Caribbean for a number of months, they moved back to Texas and Oklahoma while planning their wedding. They were married in Tyler in August of 2001. With virtually no lag time, the newlywed couple packed their things and headed for New York City to achieve their dreams of Broadway and rock and roll musical success.

RING OF FIRE

Walking into this whirlwind city, the door flew wide open to possibility and promise but also to trials and temptation. Moving on September 1, 2001 they began their lives as a married couple just prior to the terror attack of 9/11. Megan began auditioning immediately and luckily booked a job on her first audition. She joined the cast of the national tour of *School House Rock* and immediately went on the road. What was thought to be the first big step into her dream of theatrical success became a catalyst for temptation for her other half. "I left Matt in New York City in the aftermath of September 11th, friendless, jobless, drug addicted and alone," said Megan.

Matt began seeking odd jobs in the classifieds and on Craigslist for band mates. "I met all sorts of unsavory characters during that time in my life," he said. After being caught buying drugs in downtown New York City, he spent a night in Central Booking in Manhattan. "I remember looking around at those people and thinking to myself 'What am I doing here?' but the truth was, I was just like them," he said. Matt saw a reflection of the life he was living and didn't recognize who he was anymore. "I grew up believing that I would always have Jesus, but I had yet to feel that I needed Him," said Matt.

During Megan's time away from her hurting marriage, she found a sense of clarity and a renewed longing to be close to the Lord. She realized that she had accepted her current situation as her 'cross to bear'. She was now finally ready to surrender her marriage to the Lord that He might redeem it. Soon they discovered an authentic church family and



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began working together and trusting the Lord to clean up the wreckage their lives had become.

WALKING THE LINE

The church was so encouraging of their gifts and affirming of their marriage. "They didn't tell me to go get cleaned up and come back, they loved us through it all," said Matt. After a viewing of *The Passion of the Christ*, Matt witnessed what Jesus did on his behalf and was finally filled with hope. Head in hands, sobbing uncontrollably, he let go of the pain and the struggle of addiction and temptation and surrendered his life to God. "I asked Him to take control of my life and replace me," he said.

Their views of life and priorities were drastically changed. They began writing songs and performing their testimony around New York City. Their community welcomed their gifts and encouraged the healing that had occurred and the growth that was developing. When people began to recognize the ministry that was taking place, both Matt and Megan were shocked at what had God had created from their sinful experiences.

The decision was made to devote their lives to the ministry of the Lord. Megan left her dreams of Broadway stardom behind and made her family and her faith her central focus. "We're one flesh, this was now my life, too," Megan said of her want to share their testimony and support with her husband. After the birth of their daughter in 2009, they decided to leave the city that they had loved and embraced behind in order to give her the upbringing that they had experienced.

Today, Megan and Matt Magill are influencing the lives of people all across East Texas and preparing to welcome another baby girl into their lives. While they will miss the bright lights and big city where dreams come true, their focus is to spread the Gospel through testimony and song. And with every verse and story, they are bringing hope to those around them.

For more information about Megan and Matt's ministry, visit www.themagills.org or to see their outstanding performance in person, buy tickets now for One Night Only- An Evening with the Magills, Friday, April 16th at The Woman's Building at 8:00 p.m.