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Jesus Chicks
by Sarah Bowling

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INTRODUCTION

Women have a unique predisposition to connect along relational lines. Men tend to connect through work and activity but women connect through conversation and on different emotional levels. We like to talk over coffee; we like book clubs; we join zumba groups; we enjoy our friends on Facebook and much more.

When we think about Jesus' followers, we frequently default to Peter, James, and John, along with the other nine men whom Jesus selected to be His apostles or close followers. These men followed Jesus for around three years and as we read through the Gospels, we learn a lot about these men and even more about Jesus from their interactions with Him.

In the Gospels, we're also given some really unique perspectives on Jesus based on His interactions with women. I've written this book to help each reader connect with Jesus in a powerful, relevant, and daily way.



CHAPTER 1

RELATIONSHIPS

Samaritan Woman

Have you ever experienced relationship failure? Several years ago, one of my central friendships completely hit the fan with lots of bleeding heart splattered everywhere. It was u-g-l-y, ugly and painful for a very long time. When I say a long time, I'm talking more than ten years of ugly. But it was interesting to watch God work in that relationship, change me, grow me, and help me to make some very important adjustments. That particular friendship had been through some dysfunction and God started to really work on those things in my heart. After more than ten years, my friend and I met up to talk through some of the challenges that we had and after some time and constructive conversations, this friendship has been restored and it's a wonderful, wonderful testimony to the goodness, love, and transforming power of God!

As women, one of the central values in our lives is relationships. Relationships are so important to us that often our sense of value can rise or fall based on how things are going in our various relationships—be that our marriage, with our kids or parents, friendships, work or school connections, etc. As a woman, relationships are a big deal to us in small, medium, and big ways. If you think about it, women are the ones who are most frequently found in book clubs, work-out classes, going to the bathroom in groups, and participating in various small groups. Women's ministries at churches are stereotypically larger and often more dynamic than their male counterparts. Relationships are important to women. So when a woman isolates and detaches herself from relationships and normal, healthy and daily connections, it's often a red flag that something isn't going right. Most often, something has gone tragically wrong and there's pain in this person's heart.

We've all had failure in relationships. Whether that's through a divorce or maybe a friendship that's been seemingly lost, there's irreparable damage. Often times, things are said that shouldn't have been said and a lot of hurt can linger in a person's heart from painful conversations and even painful silence. But what seems like failure can also be the starting point for redemption.

Let's consider the dialogue that happens between a very broken woman and Jesus in John 4. In this chapter, we see that there's a woman who has experienced failure after failure after failure and many broken relationships—and she struggled. She wanted healthy intimacy, like all of us. We want closeness and there's nothing wrong with that because that's how we are wired up by God. We are designed to have healthy friendships and relationships. But the woman in John 4 experienced one train wreck after another, and she was living in that failure.

And maybe that's you today. Maybe you're living in failed relationship after failed relationship after failed relationship. I want to speak hope into your life that God can redeem that, can transform that, and bring you out

and through to tremendous victory. That's what we see in John Chapter 4. And so when we think about this woman, let me give you some context.

In John 4, we meet a woman who was a Samaritan. In the beginning of the chapter, we read that Jesus *needed* to go through Samaria. What's the big deal about Samaria? Let me walk you through just a little bit of historical background so you can understand some of the surroundings and the context of what's happening between Jesus and this woman. First of all, you recall, Jesus is Jewish and he's going through Samaria. Samaria and the Jews didn't really have a good relationship between them. Samaritans usually did not like the Jews. And the Jews looked down on the Samaritans, seeing them as second class, at best. So there was already cultural conflict between these two ethnicities. And when the Bible says, "He needed to go through Samaria," this is noteworthy because He could have gone around. He could have avoided Samaria and it was very common for most religious and proper Jews to avoid Samaria, so they didn't get tainted or corrupted by the "yucky" Samaritan second class people. But Jesus didn't do that. He went through Samaria - even *needing* to go through Samaria.

Furthermore, at this time in history, men and women didn't really talk to each other unless they, of course, were married. If this was a foreign woman or a stranger, and Jesus had never met her, it would be completely inappropriate and culturally unacceptable for Him to talk to her and for her to talk with Him.

And when He starts into Samaria, John 4:6 says that Jesus was tired from His journey, so He sat down next to a well around noontime or so. His disciples had gone into the nearby city to get some lunch. But it's important to consider that at this time in history, the water wells were oftentimes at the outskirts of a city or a town for hygienic reasons. So Jesus being tired from the journey sat down by this well, on the outskirts of a Samaritan city around noontime or so.

As He's sitting by the well, a woman comes to draw water from the well and this is a really interesting time for this woman to come and draw water. Normally in this culture, the women would come and draw the water either in the morning to have water for the day, or in the evening to get water for the night. They also went in the morning or the evening because you would avoid the heat of the day. Now when you think about it, we women tend to do everything at least with a couple friends. We go for coffee. We go to the bathroom together. We talk with each other on the phone while we shop. We message each other on Facebook, text a friend while we wait to pick up our kids from school, tweet our friends about a homework assignment and lots more. Generally, we're very social because that's how we're wired up.

So when this woman comes to draw water at noon, something is shady. Things get even more dicey when she comes to the well and a Jewish man is sitting at the well. Let's take an account of what's strange in this picture thus far.

- *First of all there's Jesus, a Jewish man going through Samaria—that normally shouldn't happen*
- *This Samaritan woman comes to the well at noon—a very unusual time*
- *This same Samaritan woman is drawing water alone—consider that most women look for opportunities to socialize or hang out and chat rather than looking for ways to isolate, hide, or withdraw*

These are three strange things and if you think about it, when we are broken in our relationships, we do strange things. We sometimes act abnormally, isolate, and withdraw. But if you find yourself doing some of this stuff because you have some broken relationships, Jesus wants to help you, just like He did with this Samaritan woman. Jesus comes to

you, passing beyond the social and cultural norms to connect with you—even in your brokenness, pain, and hurt. Jesus comes to us to bring redemption and to mend that which has been broken and dysfunctional.

So Jesus jumps over all the cultural and social norms and asks this lady for a drink of water because He has something way bigger in mind than merely a drink of water. Don't ever think that what seems as common as a drink of water can't become something extraordinary and miraculous with Jesus. You can tell by her reaction that this Samaritan woman is blown away by Jesus' request for a drink of water.

In John 4:9 she immediately says what is culturally acceptable, saying, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of water from me, a Samaritan woman." Basically, she's saying, "You shouldn't be talking with me! You are violating all the cultural norms." But one of the things that is so entirely cool about Jesus is that He defies all cultural norms. And I love that He initiates this conversation. It wasn't the woman who started the discussion. It was Jesus coming into her world, coming into her brokenness, coming into her state of failure and really speaking into that and initiating the relationship. And that's what Jesus does with us. He initiates the relationship with us. Number one, because He loves us. Number two, because He wants to repair, redeem, and restore us so that we can have healthy relationships and healthy intimacy.

So this broken and dysfunctional Samaritan woman starts to talk with Jesus, a Jewish man sitting by a water well, so common and daily but incarnate. If she only knew with whom she was speaking. "How is it that you, a Jew, a Jewish man, speak with me, a Samaritan woman?" Jesus keeps the conversation going, drawing her into an increasingly deeper conversation. He just doesn't tell her, "shut up lady and give me some water". Jesus doesn't do that

because that's not who Jesus is. He's the personification of love, relationship, and connection - wanting to have a deep, healthy, and vibrant relationship with us. So He starts talking with her and He says, "If you knew who it was that was asking you for a drink of water, you would ask me and I would give you living water."

And thus begins the process Jesus uses to transform this amazing and wonderful Samaritan woman - all starting with Jesus asking her for a drink of water. As the conversation progresses, she asks Jesus, "Well how is it that you can give me living water? You don't have anything to draw water with." So this conversation continues to go even deeper, to develop, grow and unfold...and it seems to me that this Samaritan woman is enjoying it. Clearly, Jesus is talking with her because He's interested in who she is, not just what she can do for Him. And that speaks to the very core of what is sometimes so very wrong in our hearts. So many times in our lives we struggle because we've been used. We've been used as an object. We've been mistreated. And truthfully, God has really dealt with me on this. Sometimes when we treat other people as objects or we use other people, that hurts us. In Proverbs 1:19 it says, when you hurt someone else, it hurts you. You can't hurt somebody else without hurting yourself.

Despite the questions from the Samaritan woman, what Jesus does next absolutely takes your breath away. Jesus and this Samaritan woman are having this beautiful and enjoyable conversation and Jesus throws a massive monkey wrench in the whole discussion. He makes the entire conversation explode and go nuclear because He goes to the very heart of what her issue is. He says in John 4:16 "Go and call your husband." And the Samaritan woman, who has been so conversational up to this point with this really cool Jewish guy, suddenly becomes extremely abrupt. There is a sudden and dramatic halt to the discussion. And she says, "I don't have a husband."

What Jesus did was hit the rawest nerve He could possibly touch in this woman. And this is one of the things that I love about Jesus. When Jesus started this conversation, He's Jesus Christ. He's the Son of God. He knows all things from the beginning to the end. He knows who this woman is. He knows He's going to sit down and ask her for a drink of water. He knows how the conversation's going to go. He knows all of her background. He knows who she is, all her failures, her vulnerabilities, and her shortcomings. He knows all of that stuff. He knows her history. He knows her better than she knows herself, and yet He still initiates the conversation and relationship. Most humans avoid people who they know to be broken, dysfunctional, abnormal, and defective. But Jesus doesn't.

Today, Jesus has initiated that relationship with you because He loves you. And He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your failures. He knows those dark spots. He knows those weaknesses. He knows those vulnerabilities and dysfunctions. He knows where you have repeatedly had disaster and failure and hardship and struggle. He knows the relational struggles you've had and the failures you've had. He knows all of those. And yet today, He's still speaking to you and wants to have a conversation with you, but not just kind of go through the surface and the shallow, frothy stuff. He wants to zero down into that very raw, exposed nerve, that weakest vulnerability, where you are most defective—He wants to speak into that.

Number one, Jesus wants to expose that brokenness to uncover it and have a genuine, healthy, and constructive relationship with you. The deepest relationships have to have truth. You can't have intimacy without truth. Jesus wants that intimacy with you. So He goes and exposes that weak spot so that He can have a deeper relationship with you than ever before, to heal you and make you whole. This is

exactly what He did with this Samaritan woman when He says, “Go and call your husband.” And she says, “Hm, ah, (coughs) I have no husband.” Jesus speaks straight to her issue and says in John 4:17-18, “Yep, that’s accurate. You’ve had five husbands and the guy you’re with now isn’t your husband.” Don’t you know she was choking on her teeth!? What do you say to that? He just read all of her mail, took the deepest hurts in her life and in this brief discussion, put her deepest pain on the table for discussion - with a virtual stranger.

Take a step back and consider why she was there by herself? Think about it. Here’s a woman who in her own town has had five husbands. She’s sleeping with the sixth guy. She’s had broken relationship after broken relationship, failed intimacy after failed intimacy. No wonder she’s there by herself around noontime to draw water. She’s probably been shamed and ostracized in her town. Perhaps the women in her town treated her with disdain and disgrace. Sometimes women can be catty with each other particularly when it comes to our relationships and vulnerabilities. We can be ruthless, take shots and jabs at each other and cut and hurt and say mean, cruel things. Well, no wonder she was there by herself. She probably wanted to avoid that entire social struggle and all those conflicts and all those mean things; but Jesus exposes the whole thing.

He blows it up on her and says, here’s the real deal. You’ve had failure after failure after failure and I’m still having this conversation with you. I’m still here talking to you because I’m after your heart. I’m after a relationship with you.

Have you had broken relationships? Is your relationship with Jesus broken? Jesus wants to help you, but more than that, Jesus wants to heal you and restore your intimacy with Him. Jesus wants to take your pain, guilt, failure, discouragement, hopelessness, and

brokenness and turn all of the mess into something beautiful. Pain in Jesus' hands can become perfume. Jesus wants to have an ongoing conversation with you and get to the nerve of what those issues and areas are. That's exactly what He did with this woman. He said, "Yeah, you've had five husbands. And the guy you're with now, he's not even your husband."

And so her response back, after she swallowed her teeth, was to change the subject—a classic ploy we use when we don't know what to say. "Let's change the subject and talk about something religious, since you're a Jewish man and it's well known that there's lots of religious conflict between Jews and Samaritans. Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet. Where is the proper place to worship?" Jesus continues this conversation and keeps talking with her about worship and worshipping God with the right heart. But He also does something breathtaking. As he keeps talking with this very broken woman, she brings up the whole topic of how when the Messiah comes, He will declare all things, make everything clear. And what Jesus says next is the most revolutionary thing He did throughout this entire exchange. The next thing that Jesus says in John 4:26 is, "'I who speak with you am He.'" We have to realize that Jesus not only revealed this woman's darkest secret, but with this simple statement, He also reveals to this broken, dysfunctional, and outcast Samaritan woman His most hidden identity up to that point. There's a good chance this Samaritan woman is the first person that Jesus lets know that He is the Messiah - maybe even before His disciples knew who He really was.

Perhaps it's true that the more we let Jesus know us the more we will get to know Jesus.

At this point, Jesus' disciples return from getting lunch in the city and they see Jesus talking with this Samaritan woman. They were amazed that Jesus had crossed over what was considered politically correct behavior and was talking with her. "What are you doing talking to a Samaritan woman?" they thought. Once the disciples show up, the Samaritan woman leaves her water jug there and she goes back to the town and this is what happened. In John 4:26-28, it says, "She went to the men in her town," the men, not just the women but to the men. I point this out to remind you that she had been a wife to five of those men and, and she probably had a reputation among them. She says to them, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did." Don't you know that the men in the town are like, "Whoa, we need to go and see who she's talking about." Maybe some of them were kind of nervous and maybe some of them were curious. Whatever their thinking, in John 4:30, it says that they went out of the city and were coming to Jesus. The results of this woman's announcement is very interesting, particularly in light of Jesus' disciples reaction when they brought Him lunch.

If you think about it, Jesus' disciples bring Him lunch because He was hungry and tired, which is totally great. Jesus needed that physical sustenance. In contrast, this woman doesn't bring Jesus lunch. She brings to Jesus her whole town. And that is often what happens when we have these kinds of conversations with Jesus and we are honest, vulnerable, and transparent with Him. When we say, "Look, I'm struggling. I'm having a hard time here. I've had these failures and I need Your help. I need You to bring truth into my life. Show me who You made me to be. Show me where I believed deception. Show me where I've been broken because of things that have happened in the past. Strengthen those weak spots. Deal with me and quickly, Holy Spirit come in. Give me strength. Be truth in my heart."

When we have those conversations with Jesus, then He redeems us. He repairs us. He restores us. He heals us so that we can go back and be a sign and a wonder because that's exactly what this woman did. And when she did that, the whole town came out. They're all like, "Wow, we need to go see who this guy really is. Oh, my goodness, here's the woman who has been kind of the town floozy and now she's talking openly with all of us about a very curious man. She's been redeemed, repaired, healed, and restored. We have to see this with our own eyes." And that's exactly what happened. The whole town comes out and to see Jesus. Jesus starts to talk with them - all because a broken, defective, and dysfunctional woman entered into a transformational conversation with Jesus.

When we have a genuine touch from Jesus, we're changed. We're never the same. We're transformed. He comes in and takes that brokenness, restores, redeems, repairs, and brings us back to wholeness. And the truth of it is, we cannot have wholeness in our relationships without first having that with Jesus. In the Samaritan woman's conversation with Jesus, he repaired, restored, and redeemed her so that she could go back and start to have healthy interactions in her town. And what her heart so deeply longed for was found by accident with Jesus when she was trying to isolate and withdraw. Jesus came smack into the middle of her dysfunction and initiated a transforming conversation. Jesus initiated the relationship out of genuine love. Jesus started a connection with her and her life was never the same.

After her revolutionary conversation with Jesus, her town came out to hear what this amazing man had to say. They listened to Jesus and this is what they said to her. After they listened to Jesus, they said, "You know, we were amazed by what you told us because there was clearly something really, really revolutionary about this guy, Jesus, whoever He is. But now that we've heard Him for ourselves, we

believe." In John 4:43, it says that Jesus stayed there a couple days and the whole town basically came to Christ and put their faith and confidence in Jesus - all because of one broken woman who had failure after failure after failure, came to Jesus.

Jesus can do the same for you today. Jesus can heal you and redeem your relationships.

Consider a few of the following helpful action points:

- What's the honesty quotient in your relationship with Jesus?
- In what ways could Jesus heal you so that you could have more healthy relationships?
- Consider some people that you may need to forgive, including yourself.

MODERN EXAMPLE

Please remember that this section isn't designed to show you a perfect person but rather an inspiring woman who had some amazing moments and achievements. As you read about her, consider how God could work in your life to help you be a Jesus Chick.

IRENA SENDLER

Whenever we look at someone's life, we can find great courage, admirable traits, and inspiring achievements. On the flip side, everyone is human with flaws, shortcomings, deficiencies, negative characteristics, and foibles. The ladies that I've chose to accentuate in each modern example section are every bit as human as you and me so if you dig around enough, you're sure to find they weren't perfect. My goal in this section is to inspire, encourage, and motivate us to see a possible modern counterpart or possible parallel to the Jesus Chicks in each chapter. Some of our Jesus Chicks are easy to make connections to in our modern living and some are a little more challenging. Nevertheless, please read about each as an encouraging example who might motivate each of us to be a Jesus Chick in our own unique way.

Irena Sendler was a polish social worker during WWII. She worked covertly to smuggle babies and children out of the Warsaw ghetto and saved the lives of approximately 2,500 Jewish babies and children from the atrocities of concentration camps during the Holocaust. While Irena was secretly smuggling out these babies and children (sometimes she would hide a baby in a toolbox), her efforts were discovered by the Nazis and she was tortured and sentenced to death for her covert defiance. She managed to survive the execution sentence, but after the Nazi's discovered her illegal activity, they brutally beat her and broke her legs.

After WWII, there were extensive efforts made to reunite these children with their parents, but unfortunately the majority of these parents' were killed in concentration camps or various other ways during the Holocaust. Nevertheless, Irena Sendler was a tremendous hero that has been memorialized in the twenty-first century for her life-saving work.

It's noteworthy to consider that possibly some of her motivation to put herself in such risky work came partly from her dad. When Irena was seven years old, her father, who was doctor, contracted typhus from treating patients whom other doctors refused to treat, many of whom were Jews.

I commemorate Mrs. Sendler in this chapter with the Samaritan woman because she put herself at great risk to save babies and make a difference in their future. Similarly, our Samaritan woman took a great risk after her conversation to bring the good news about Jesus back to her town. Because she took this risk, her whole town came to meet Jesus and be transformed by His message.