

WHEN A WOMAN MEETS JESUS

Finding the Love Every Woman Longs For

DOROTHY VALCÁRCEL



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Author's Note

Throughout this book, there are texts of Scripture referenced from several different biblical translations or paraphrases. I specifically used this variety to better clarify the thoughts presented in each chapter.

It is my prayer that you will be refreshed and enlightened as you read these treasures from God's Word.

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AMP	The Amplified Bible
GNT	Good News Translation
KJV	King James Version
TLB	The Living Bible
Message	The Message
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
Phillips	The New Testament in Modern English
RSV	Revised Standard Version

Writer to Reader with Appreciation

Gratitude is the heart's memory.

French Proverb

I was seven years old when my mother took me to our local library. I had been counting the days until I could get a children's library card and "check out" my first book. The library building was an imposing structure with tall white marble columns, and it was located off the town square on "C" Street. As I walked up the fourteen concrete sculpted steps toward the large front doors, I had a distinct feeling I was entering a thrilling yet undiscovered world.

Awed by the rows and rows of books, my childhood happiness knew no limits. I was certain all the neatly placed volumes, when opened and read, would, as Shakespeare so eloquently penned, give me "the wings wherein we fly to heaven." Little did I know how vast was the wealth at my fingertips.

Whether I read the lyrical poetry of Emily Dickinson, the love sonnets of Shakespeare, the unadorned philosophy of Henry David Thoreau, or the morbid tales penned by Edgar

Allan Poe, books became my hiding place, my secret haven. Books transported me around the world, guided me on exotic adventures, and carried me back in history to times and places I could only daydream about.

My insatiable desire to read motivated me to seek out books on historical events, classical literature, philosophy, and religion. But of all the books I read, one of the most fascinating was the Bible. This book was filled with personal experiences that plumbed the depths of human love and tragedy, and while captivating Bible stories grabbed my attention at first, I found much more contained in that sacred treasure chest. As I studied, I was able to excavate spiritual building blocks that provided a foundation for my life. I was fortunate to have parents and teachers who not only supported but encouraged my study of the Bible, even when it meant I asked difficult questions and, at the same time, demanded answers to some of life's most perplexing problems.

As I grew older and maturity required me to face the decisions and trials of adulthood, I quickly realized that life's critical choices were easier when my "spiritual well" was full. The Bible became the place where I turned to find direction during times of confusion and despair. For when darkness has enveloped me, as it does all of us at one time or another, it has been the well of living water found in the Scriptures that has restored my soul.

At no time in my life was restoration needed more than during a life-changing event that occurred over ten years ago.

Returning home by car from a lengthy business trip, my husband and I were hit head-on by a drunk driver, who died in the accident and nearly took both of us with him. After days on respirators in separate hospitals, my husband and I awoke to lives that had been turned upside down. Following four months in the hospital, as we desperately tried to recuperate from life-threatening internal injuries as well as over thirty-five broken bones each, we were rolled up a ramp into

our home, sitting in wheelchairs that were to be our mode of transportation for over a year.

While this catastrophic incident upended our well-laid plans for the future, we found that “in all things God does work for our good” (see Rom. 8:28). Even though I freely admit the severe consequences of this accident have proved to go beyond anything we could ever have imagined, there have also been unexplained joys that have brought immense blessings into our lives.

We met wonderful individuals during our rehabilitation, who labored continually to put our broken bodies back together. The teams of physicians, nurses, physical and occupational therapists gave us the will to try even when we did not have the strength. Our lead rehabilitation physician, Dr. Carolyn Kinney, used not only her medical skill but also her generous heart to inspire and keep us focused on the healing process.

Once we arrived back home, our neighbors Ed and Mattie Monoscalco coordinated a neighborhood catering service. Three days a week, for nearly a year, a van fitted with lifts for carrying two people in wheelchairs arrived to take us to the hospital for an afternoon of outpatient physical therapy. When we returned home at 5:00 p.m., dinner was waiting for us on the counter in our kitchen. Ed constructed wooden ramps that allowed our entire house to become a wheelchair-friendly zone. And along with Wally and Laurie Klein, Ed and Mattie made certain a decorated tree showed up in our house a few days before Christmas. Dr. Angelo Demis, another neighbor, volunteered his time to drive my husband, Jim, to the doctor every day for nearly a month as medical specialists tried desperately to save his right foot from a severe bone infection. Our road to recovery has repeatedly been paved with the love and support of thoughtful family members, kind neighbors, and unselfish friends.

The appreciation my husband and I have for the thousands of prayers, letters, and cards we received during this

ordeal is impossible to convey because no words are powerful enough. We especially have deep gratitude for the spiritual encouragement and unfailing prayers of our dear friends, Ivan and Elvera Blake, David and Sharon Kirby, and Mark and Julie Jewett.

Personally, while this time of convalescence forced me to concentrate my energy on physical healing, I also benefited from the solitude that was not possible in previous years because my frantic work pace left little time for reflective thought.

As my recovery progressed slower than planned, I had the opportunity to begin to formulate the outline for this book. Several dear friends stepped forward to assist me in the most extraordinary ways:

Madonna Matheson, whose intuition and astute perceptions have refined this project. Madonna defines the word *friend*.

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It was Pearl S. Buck who said, “Nothing in life is as good as the marriage of true minds . . . it is life itself.” How fortunate I am to be able to share my life with my husband, Jim, my biggest fan, my most trusted ally, and my best friend.

Yea, gentle voice, though the fair days depart,
and the skies grow cold above the restless sea,
God’s gifts are measureless, and there shall be
eternal summer in the grateful heart.

Celia Thaxter, “The Grateful Heart”

I’ve never quit loving you and never will. Expect love, love,
and more love!

Jeremiah 31:3 Message

Where there is great love there are always miracles.

Willa Cather



Bro-ken (*brÿ-ken*) *adj.*

1. *Splintered, fractured, burst.*
2. *Violated: as, a broken promise.*

1

The Broken Women

I am forgotten . . . I have become like broken pottery.

Psalm 31:12 NIV

It was one of the most painful nights of my life. I was sitting by the bed of a close friend who had been brought to the hospital by paramedics who found her unconscious after ingesting a handful of sleeping pills.

As Emma began to regain consciousness, she turned her head in my direction and whispered, “I wish somebody really loved me.”

I will never forget those words because I believe they echo a universal longing, the desire we all have to be loved. Not the fantasy love we read about in a fairy tale or the make-believe type of love we see in a movie. Not a romantic flowers and candy love, but an abiding love that lasts forever.

Recently, my twenty-four-year-old niece and I were watching the movie *Ever After* for the fifth time. As the handsome prince rescued his cherished damsel, Bethanie looked at me

and sighed, “I wish love happened like this in real life, Effie. But everything doesn’t always turn out happily ever after.”

I looked at her innocent eyes and beautiful golden hair and thought to myself, *She could have been Cinderella*. Yet even at her young age, she understood the road to lasting love can be bumpy, with potholes and detours along the way.

I know my own pursuit to find the love I dreamed about was not easy. There were times of disappointment and times when my heart ached. In your search for love you may have run into some of the same rocky terrain and been jolted by the rough patches along your way.

One thing I began to realize was that the state of nirvana-like bliss I hungered for always seemed to hinge on finding the right person—the person I thought would be my “true” love. I willingly ignored my own emptiness, hoping someone would come along who would make me feel complete. But just when I thought I had found the perfect person—the one who would unlock the vault to eternal happiness—he would slip away like an elusive butterfly. And I would be left alone, heartbroken and disillusioned.

Often I asked myself, would I ever find what I was searching for? Would the love I longed for be found in the arms of another person? Or would I discover healing for my broken heart in the self-help section of the local bookstore? Sometimes I wondered whether my journey would lead me inside some sacred edifice. Or would my quest finally end with a moment of illumination on a mountaintop?

This book is born out of my personal desire to find a lasting love, a love that would bring me total fulfillment.

I’m talking about the type of love that is there when you go to bed at night and has not left when you get up in the morning. A love that climbs with you to the mountaintop and does not take off when you hit a valley. A love that does not waver when the wind blows in a different direction. A love that turns heaven and earth to find you, then wraps its

arms around you and never lets you go. Don't you want to find this kind of love? Doesn't everyone?


If you are searching for a love that fulfills your heart's yearning, I have news for you. You are not alone. You have company; other women who, just like you and me, wanted to be loved, not for who they were or what they were, but simply as they were.

These women came from a variety of backgrounds. They were young and old. Wealthy and poor. Married and single. An unwed teenager and a wealthy socialite. An adulterer and a mother-in-law. An ambitious working woman and a destitute widow. A woman with severe physical disabilities and a woman who could climb any mountain. These women wanted to be accepted, encouraged, and loved, yet all too often they were abused, used, or ignored.

Something in these women's lives was not working, and even though they could not put their finger on the problem, they felt broken. They wanted to get their lives fixed and put back together in working order. As each woman searched—relentlessly—to find what she longed for, her pursuit led to one Man. An ordinary Jewish laborer with a common name—Jesus.

He wasn't a candidate for the current issue of *People Magazine's* Sexiest Man Alive. He didn't make the Society Register's list of Most Eligible Bachelors. He was not a Harvard graduate. He wasn't handsome or rich. He did not drive a fast car or own a multimillion-dollar home. The establishment detested him. And his job prospects were poor at best.

Yet in spite of a less than promising résumé and a plain appearance, Jesus drew women to his side like a magnet. From his birth to his death they followed him. Long after other people took off in disappoint-



Women wish to be loved
without a why or wherefore;
not because they are pretty,
or good, or well-bred, or
graceful, or intelligent, but
because they are themselves.

Henri Frederic Amiel,
Journal, March 17, 1868



Man is born broken.
He lives by mending. The
grace of God is the glue.

Eugene O'Neill

ment, disgust, or frustration, the women stayed by Jesus's side, hooked like superglue. And I asked myself, "Why?"

I found my answer by examining the way Jesus treated every woman he met.

Instead of pigeonholing women the way society had, he looked at each woman as unique. No one ever heard Jesus trivialize one of their problems by calling it a "woman-thing." He didn't smooth-talk women, or flatter them to get their attention. And he didn't tell them what they wanted to hear—he told them what they needed to know. What's more, he did not believe what many of the women thought about themselves, because so often their own view had been grossly distorted by others. What Jesus did was to focus his attention on each woman's greatest need, and then he met that need—in ways they never expected.

Jesus taught women to look beyond their outward appearance for acceptance. He showed them they were valuable when others said they were worthless. He challenged the rules that bound them and broke down the walls of prejudice that entrapped them. Even when a woman was labeled a "failure," he believed she could be more than her broken past. Most importantly, Jesus gave unconditional love to every woman no matter what her past history, present condition, or future prospects. He was a man ahead of his time, a Renaissance man who understood what loving a woman was all about.

This is why the women stayed with him. And the longer they stayed, the more they grew to love him and to love themselves. When you are accepted just the way you are, encouraged to reach your potential, and empowered to follow your dreams, don't you feel loved?

If you long for a love that restores your self-worth . . . gives you purpose . . . fills you to overflowing . . . and never lets you go, then I invite you to come on a journey with Jesus. Just as

he transformed the lives of the women he met, so today, he will transform your life in ways you never imagined.

He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Luke 4:18 KJV

A Time for Reflection

I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Jeremiah 18:3–4 NIV

Exploration

My thoughts on feeling broken . . .

1. Is there a part of my life that is broken?
Emotionally?
Spiritually?
Physically?
2. How long have I felt broken?
3. What have I tried to do to heal my brokenness?
4. What do I believe will heal my brokenness?
5. Has my search for love healed the brokenness I feel?
How?
If not, why not?
6. Do I feel loved just as I am—right now?

Inspiration

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

Isaiah 64:8 NIV

Recently I decided to take a pottery class at our local art school. Not being what you would call a natural “artist,” working at a potter’s wheel and learning to mold clay has been a challenge to say the least. More than once, I have found to my dismay, that the small clay pot I was trying to form became a pile of misshapen wet mud. Simply put, my attempt to make something that looked beautiful often turned into an indescribable mess in the hands of an amateur like myself. One evening I pulled the clay off the wheel and headed toward the closest plastic garbage container only to have the professional potter teaching us ask me, “Dorothy, what are you going to do with that clay?”

I thought it was obvious and kept walking. “I’m going to throw it away. It’s a lump of wet mud. I can’t do anything with it,” I whined.


The instructor quickly informed me I was completely mistaken. “Place what you have in that bucket,” he said as he pointed to a used can filled with other pieces of clay that looked an awful lot like the unformed lump I was holding. “We’ll use it later.”

Sure enough, the following week, after his experienced hands had worked the clay into a well-shaped ball, my “mess” became the material I needed to make a lovely small bowl. Trained hands formed something beautiful from the debris I wanted to throw away.

If you have ever felt like my mess of clay, believing nothing beautiful can be formed from the broken shards of your life, take encouragement from the words of the psalmist David: “Your hands made me and formed me” (Ps. 119:73 NIV). Compassionate hands. Experienced hands. Hands that love

you and formed you to reflect the beauty the potter sees in you.

1. What does it mean to be formed by God?
2. Knowing I am formed by God, how does it make me feel?
3. How does this knowledge affect the way I think about myself when I feel broken?
4. What do these words mean to me: “He who made you, who formed you in the womb” (Isa. 44:2 NIV)?
5. In what ways do I believe God can bring healing to the broken places in my life?



To love is to come to see beyond and despite . . . love sees us as we are, as we really are, and as we can be . . . love sees little but good in us and forgives everything that is not.

Joan Chittister,
There Is a Season

[You] will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:21 NKJV

Affirmations

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3 NIV

Daughter, how did you put the jigsaw map of the world together so quickly? Because, Daddy, on the other side was the picture of a man, and when I put the man together, it put the whole world together.¹

Jack W. Hayford, pastor and author,
Rebuilding the Real You