

Women in the Bible The Woman at the Well

Interpreting the Text:

1. At what point in the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman does she come to believe in him? What convinces her?
2. What happens to the Jew/Samaritan conflict throughout their conversation? What is the purpose of including the detail of her ethnicity in the story?
3. How would you characterize the different parts of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? Is it angry? Playful? Curious? What clues in the text indicate the tone(s)?
4. Dr. Lin and Dr. Vayntrub discuss the shifts in how this story has been interpreted, seeking the woman now as vulnerable rather than scandalous. How does this change the story for you? Are there other stories from the Bible that could benefit from a similar reimagining?

Applying the Text:

1. Re-imagine the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman as, rather than being at a well in a faraway land, happening at a local bar. Do the romantic implications of the setting enhance your understanding of the text? Are they uncomfortable? Why or why not? Would these undertones still be here if Jesus had been talking to a Samaritan man?
2. We may consider the Samaritan woman to be a vulnerable person; she has had to marry five times and now lives with a man who is not her husband. If Jesus were encountering someone similarly vulnerable today, whom would he meet?
3. The woman comes to believe in Jesus after a very short conversation. What would Jesus need to say to you (or what secrets would he need to know about you) to make you believe him to be the Messiah?