

Jesus Loves You

For over 2,000 years the life of Jesus has fascinated millions. Even many who do not follow the teachings of Jesus are captivated by the way he treated others. Recently I have been listening to Mary DeMuth's insightful book, *The Most Misunderstood Women of the Bible*. DeMuth observes Jesus' lengthiest conversation in scripture was with a Samaritan woman. This is intriguing on numerous levels.

First, Jesus broke social norms of his day by speaking to a woman whom he did not know. In his society women were seen by many as second-class citizens. Some self-righteous religious leaders went even farther; daily thanking God they were not female.

Second, the woman was from Samaria. While that may not mean much to most of us, in Jesus' day it was significant. Samaritans were commonly referred to as "dogs" during a period when dogs were not kept as pets but ran wild. Today if someone calls you a dog it is no compliment, but to be called a dog 2,000 years ago was a serious insult.

Lest you think I am making too much of this, consider this misunderstood lady's words when Jesus asked her for a drink from the well where they met, "The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, 'You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?'" (John 4:9, NLT)

If that was not enough, when Jesus asked to meet her husband, she said she did not have one, yet we learn in scripture a short time later she had been married five times and was currently living with a man who was not her husband. This living arrangement does not alienate us today, but ancient culture was quite different and she was likely viewed as an outcast in her society. Some Bible scholars believe she was at the well in the middle of the day when Jesus arrived because she was avoiding judgmental neighbors.

In stark contrast, Jesus engaged in an extended conversation with her despite the fact she was a hated Samaritan woman, rejected by her peers. One whom 99% of Jews, both men and women, would likely have shunned. Jesus was not like others, he engaged in meaningful conversation with this despised woman.

Why? Despite the fact few people cared about her, Jesus did. She likely saw herself as worthless, but Jesus saw value in this woman from the proverbial "wrong side of the tracks." How he treated her demonstrates that he cares deeply for those whom society views with disgust.

I do not know how others treat you, nor do I know your past mistakes. I may not know how you feel about yourself, but I know God cares for you. His actions demonstrate how he does more than simply say he loves the world; Jesus loves you regardless of your past.