

JESUS: A MEDITATION ON HIS STORIES AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOMEN by Andrew M. Greeley

01. In the introduction, Father Greeley states that Jesus is a man of surprises. He says, "...when we think we at last have figured him out, truly understand him, and can sign him up for our cause, we find that he has slipped away." Later, he says, "If he doesn't disturb us, then he's not Jesus." How does Jesus surprise and disturb you?
02. How would you describe Jesus to a non-Christian? What ten adjectives would you use? What are your top five descriptors? Could you describe yourself with the same adjectives that you chose?
03. What do you find surprising and/or disturbing about the nativity story. For example, have you ever struggled with the idea of a virginal conception?
04. On page 23, Greeley calls the Father-in-Heaven the God of happy endings. He also states that God's nature is to play and to love. Does this fit your image of God? Why or why not?
05. What aspects of the Resurrection story do you find most mysterious?
06. Jesus begins his public life with this scripture:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-20

In this passage, who are the poor? The captives? The blind? The oppressed? What is surprising and/or disturbing about the way in which Jesus began his official public life? Would you describe Jesus as a dissident?

07. Fr. Andrew Greeley calls the stories of Jesus' relationship with women the most astonishing of all. In general, what was astonishing about Jesus' relationships with women?
08. What was astonishing about Jesus' relationship with his mother, Mary?
09. What is astonishing about Jesus' relationship with Martha and Mary in Bethany?

10. Why do you think Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, first, outside the tomb? How would you describe their relationship?
11. Do you think the apostles were influenced by the way Jesus treated women? What do you think their reaction was?
12. What do you find the most intriguing about the story of the Samaritan woman at the well? How must have women felt about Jesus?
13. What is astonishing about these other stories of Jesus with women?
 - a. The woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears and poured perfume on them.
 - b. The woman cured of a hemorrhage who touched Jesus' garment.
 - c. The woman willing to take "table scraps."
 - d. The widow whose son was raised from the dead.
14. How closely have attitudes in the Church towards women modeled Jesus' attitude towards women?
15. If Jesus walked the earth today, do you think he would approve of his Church? Would he make any changes? What would he be like? Would we recognize him?
16. What do you find surprising or disturbing about the four "Great Parables?" What do you find consoling?
 - a. The Crazy Vintner
 - b. The Indulgent Father
 - c. The Good Samaritan
 - d. The Lenient Judge
17. What do you find surprising, disturbing, or consoling about each of the other stories that Greeley mentions in his book?
 - a. The Bridesmaids and the Talents
 - b. The Talents
 - c. Stewards & Servants
 - d. Banquets & Vineyards
 - e. Cleansing of the Temple
 - f. Jesus' parable about himself, "I am the Good Shepherd."
 - g. The Crucifixion
18. What is your favorite parable and why? Which parable is hardest for you to grasp or understand?
19. What did you learn about Jesus from this book? Has this book made you think about Jesus in a new way? Explain.