



An Open Book

Discussion Guide for *A Woman of Words*

1. Matthew wants to do big things for God like he sees Peter and John doing, performing miracles and evangelizing. Instead, he is asked to do accounting work for the body of believers. What do you think of his desire to do “big things” and subsequent disappointment? How do you see him grow throughout the story in his understanding of how God uses different people to do different things?
2. Mary insists that the writing of the account of Yeshua’s life should be simple and unadorned, not modeled after Greek or Roman memoirs, so that it might draw attention to Yeshua rather than to the writer. What do you think of her perspective vs. Matthew’s idea of trying to write it beautifully? How might have that kind of writing affected how the Gospels were recorded and passed down to us?
3. Although Achiakos was not a real person, the events he relates are historical. What was your reaction to learning some of the historical events surrounding the early church?
4. Had you thought about the significance of Jesus calling himself the Son of Man to a Jewish audience in light of Daniel 7:13–14 before? What did you think of Mary and Matthew’s conversation about this subject?



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5. Mary's rebuke to Matthew after their visit to Nicodemus goes along with the idea expressed by Paul in Galatians 3:28: ". . . there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." What do you think of her rebuke? What significance do you think such a view of men and women would have had in first-century Jewish culture?

6. When Pheodora is in labor, Mary says to her, "With joy comes great pain. But only for a moment." How do you see this theme manifested throughout the novel? What other themes do you see?

7. What do you think of Mary's irritation with Matthew after she gets back from visiting her daughter? Do you think it is fair of her to be so angry with him? What else might be going on to make her upset?

8. Matthew grew up with a stern father, was kicked out of the house, and then became a tax collector. How does Matthew's past affect his faith journey? How does his past shape how he acts and thinks in the story?



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9. Did you enjoy watching the relationship of Dina and Matthew play out? What do you think it adds to the story?

10. Sometimes fictional retellings of biblical times can help us see a familiar story in a new way. Did the novel cause certain elements of New Testament events to stand out to you in a new way? Are there any questions or insights the story brought up that you might not have thought of before?