

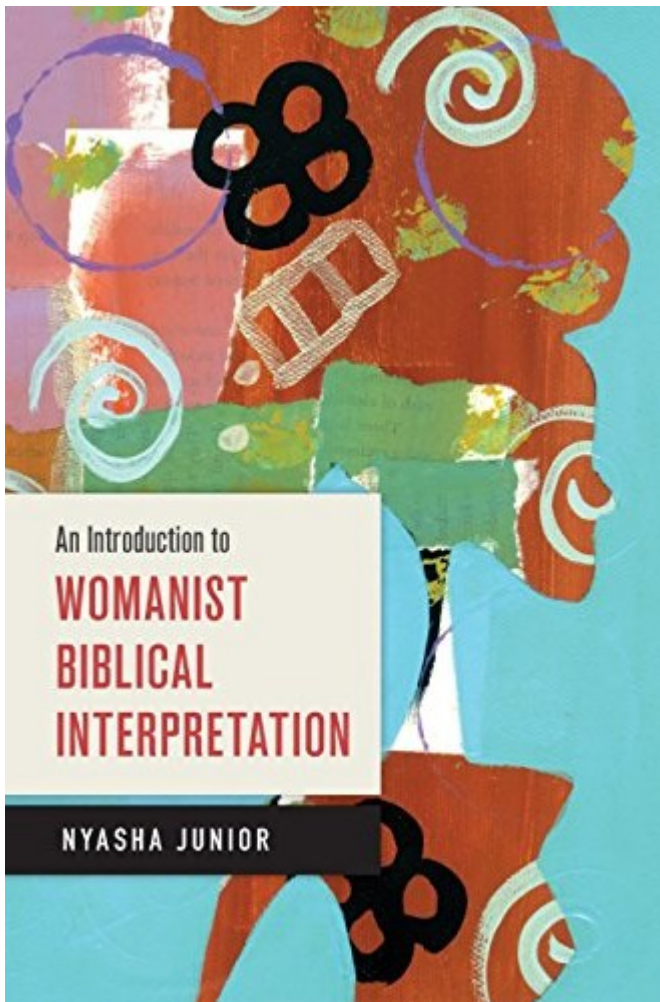
Why I'm reading Nyasha Junior

**If we want our biblical interpretation to align with the fullness of who Christ is, we need new lenses.**

by [Christena Cleveland](#)

April 23, 2019

## In Review



**An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation**

by Nyasha Junior  
Westminster John Knox

*Like many magazines, we generally only publish reviews of new books. But every once in a while, we ask a favorite writer: What's on your bookshelf—new or old—that you currently recommend?*

The late black tennis legend Arthur Ashe once shared about his childhood experience with a white male God: “Every Sunday, Arthur Jr. had to go to church, either First Presbyterian or Westwood Baptist, where his parents had met, and where he would look up at a picture of Christ with blond hair and blue eyes and wonder if God was on his side.”

I’m like Ashe. I was raised by black parents and in black church spaces, but I was implicitly taught by US culture that God is a white man whose social location is distant from people on the margins.

While many of us might explicitly refute the idea that God is a powerful white man, at the same time our actions might implicitly support it. Ideas are powerful, and this idea of God has influenced every aspect of American culture. For example, we tend to read the Bible through the perspective that is most valued in our society and most readily available: the white male lens.

If we want our biblical interpretation—and the way we live it out—to come into alignment with the fullness of who Christ is, we need new lenses. This is why I recommend reading Nyasha Junior’s writing. Junior’s new book, [\*Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible\*](#), will be published this summer by Oxford University Press. In the meantime, I recommend reading [\*An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation\*](#), which was published in 2015. In this accessible and eye-opening book, Junior illuminates the long tradition of black women’s biblical interpretation and invites us into it.

Many well-meaning Christians seek to be “good neighbors” but they find that their efforts are stymied by their lack of familiarity with their neighbors’ lived experiences. Junior offers a deeper understanding of not only black women’s lived experiences but also how those experiences impact their interpretation of scripture and connection to the Divine.