



# At the Intersection of *What If* and *What Is* | BY BONNIE DWYER

Sitting across the table at Chili's from a screenwriter friend, I asked about his current projects and where his stories come from. First, he told me about the Christmas script that his agent is circulating, a charming small-town tale of two kids fascinated by astronomy who think they have found *the* Christmas star.

Then he added with a grin, "As for the stories themselves, they all come from a big warehouse in Utica, New York," a line he borrowed from Stephen King.

And I laughed.

"Actually, they always begin with some form of the question 'What if?'" he said. "What if two kids really could discover the true Star of Bethlehem?"

Ah, stories of possibilities. What fun they must be to write. As a journalist, my stories always begin with what is. Bits of reality. (Reality bites?) Pointing out *what is* can be hazardous. People tend to blame the messenger if *what is* is not to their liking.

Is there ever a meeting point between *what if* and *what is*?

The SONscreen Film Festival that we were both attending was over. My head was aswirl with ideas. That morning, Raewyn Hankins had given a powerful sermon titled "Why Tell Stories?"

To answer her question with another ques-

tion seemed logical. Well, what kind of stories? Stories of possibilities or stories of *what is*?

The source for her sermon was, of course, that great storyteller Jesus, in conversation with his disciples who asked him, with a sliver of irritation in their voices, "Why do you tell us stories?"

In Matthew, Jesus's stories of the kingdom always circled around the word "like."

For example, the kingdom of heaven is like a...

Does *like* hold the possibility of *what if*, together with *what is*?

Now, I have always been grateful to Jesus for talking in stories. But as I thought about different kinds of stories, it dawned on me that God, the Great I Am, lives at the intersection of *what is*, holding out his hand and softly asking, "*What if?*" Oh, the possibilities.

In this issue, we primarily have the *what is* variety of story, as we look at the state of the conversation on women's ordination, religious liberty, and Adventist identity. But, we also have Raewyn Hankins's excellent sermon.

And in each article, I think that you will find seeds of ideas, possibilities to consider.

Perhaps we need to contact the warehouse in Utica, for more *what if* stories. Or, ask my friend to send a few our way.

As we explore this Adventist life, holding onto *what if*, while we examine *what is*, perhaps, like T. S. Eliot, we will come to know this place called Adventism for the first time. ■

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