

# EDITORIALS

## THE BIBLE *and the Backstory*

BY BONNIE DWYER

**T**he *Sabbath School Adult Bible Study Guide* Lesson Four for the Third Quarter was my assignment to teach. The story of David and Bathsheba. Oh, boy, I thought. Discussing lust with a small group of recently new members in our congregation could be tricky. Thank goodness for Psalms 51, David's lament when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Perhaps we should just spend our time there.

Looking up a timeline of David's life helped me get started with my preparations. When David was ten, the prophet Samuel came to the family residence, and after meeting with all seven of his older brothers, chose him, the youngest, as the future King of Israel. David is special from that day forward. He defeats Goliath, becomes a

musician in the King's court, is given the King's daughter for a wife. He conquers Jerusalem, is named king. More wives follow. In fact, he already has seven wives when he sees Bathsheba bathing—by this time, no one denies David anything. He kills Uriah to get his way. David is a warrior; this is not the first time he has stood by while people were caught up in a battle. The whole situation made the prophet Nathan sick. And that is where I find my new window into the story. In the prophet's assignment to call David on his sin.

*The Secret Cord*, by Geraldine Brooks is a fictionalized account of King David's life, told in first person from the point of view of Nathan. As a member of David's court, Nathan watched David's machinations with Uriah, and knew that Uriah's death had not been necessary. "It was a

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To awaken his conscience, and to salve the pain this would cause him. To help him to endure through the hard days and years that lay ahead of him."

Geraldine Brooks

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simple abuse of power,” Brooks writes. Perseverating over the situation for days, Nathan finally knew what he needed to do. David would be “scalded by the consequences of his choices.” Nathan’s task would be twofold: “to stand up to him, and to stand by him. To awaken his conscience, and to salve the pain this would cause him. To help him to endure through the hard days and years that lay ahead of him.”

To stand up to those in power and to stand by them—and even more so their victims. That is the challenge in these days of #metoo. And so, that is what we discussed at Sabbath School, before we read Psalms 51.

Later, at work, the words “Stand Up and Stand By” came back to me, as I worked through the stories for this issue and thought about the conversations regarding the changes that are being made at Newbold. Faculty who feel betrayed. Administrators who feel justified in their actions. How can the story be fully told? Friends were asking me when *Spectrum* would be reporting on the situation. Several writers declined the assignment. Bless Reinder Bruinsma. He was willing to give it a go. He came back with good reporting on the administrative decision that had been made. But I knew we also needed to hear from faculty, students, etc. That side of the story continued to be elusive, with people unwilling to talk, afraid of retributions. We decided to run Bruinsma’s story on the website and encourage people to respond there. From their comments, we knew more needed to be said. Reinder agreed to try again. Helen Pearson, also. In this issue, we bring together all of those things. Of course, there is always more to the story. In the future, we hope that more people at Newbold will share their thoughts

and experiences. It is an important story. Not so unlike the stories of other Adventist colleges, so many of which have had their days of drama and dissent. I think of the Seminary in the 60s; Southern Adventist University in the 70s; Pacific Union College in the days of Des Ford; Walla Walla in the 90s; La Sierra University in the last ten years.

Being a place for their stories to be told has been *Spectrum*’s contribution to the conversation. However, the stories also need the people at the institutions themselves to be willing to share the details of what is taking place.

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Studying the Bible together with other people always brings new insights. That was the other lesson for me from the Sabbath School lesson.



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