

the back page - Sheth LaRue, Senior MDiv.

Noah spent a little over a year in the boat, surrounded by smelly animals and odoriferous family members. He stepped onto dry ground, breathed in the fresh air, then built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord. A covenant was made with the old man, who then planted the first vineyard, made some wine from the fruit and ended up passed-out-drunk in his tent.

As the story goes, his son Ham saw his father's nakedness, told his brothers, and they covered up their father. When Noah woke up and cleared the post-drunk fog, he learned what his son had done to him.
(record scratch)

Wait...done to him? Ham merely saw his father's nakedness...nothing was done to Noah! If you've had a class with Dr. Park, you should hear her voice now: "Welllllll..."

I distinctly remember hearing this interpretation on a Thursday night in my junior year, and I was knocked off-kilter. It was shocking to me because my conservative upbringing never imagined the possibility of sexual relations between father and son in this story. Quite honestly, Noah's nakedness was taboo enough for us to avoid this part of the story altogether.

A few weeks after learning this interpretation of Genesis 9, when my parents asked me what I was learning in seminary, of course I had to share this information. This was what those in the education field call a 'teachable moment'. It turns out that sharing this with my conservative family was not the best idea. Not only could they not believe it, but they were offended that someone would even imagine the possibility of father and son having 'relations'.

We learn a lot in seminary, but we only learn from experience what we're to do with this information. After my faux pas, I asked my retired pastor and friend what I should do with these provocative, edgy, probably-true biblical interpretations.

His response was simple: "Don't destroy people's Noah."

We can't go around sharing this stuff everywhere we go because people are deeply connected to these stories. They aren't only attached to the stories themselves, they're attached to the memories around the stories. Grandparents telling grandchildren about Noah's adventures on sunny, summer days. Favorite Sunday school teachers - one's only trusted confidant - sharing the adventures of Daniel in the lion's den. Parents spending ten quality minutes with their child in the busy-ness of the day to read about King David. These are holy stories and holy memories.

But we can't bottle up these stories, either. We must care for these stories, and carefully share these stories. We must be humble in our storytelling, we must be gentle in our imparting of information, and we must be wise as we teach what we know. As we leave this campus - either for an hour, a long weekend, or a lifetime - we must remember to honor what we have learned, and more importantly, to honor those with whom we share these stories.

much love. sheth.