Cloning and the Christian

Cry of the Forsaken
A Student Missionary’s Prayer
Bringing Light to Death Row
God’s Hand in My Life
Thank you for printing the testimony of three young adults serving in the church (see “God’s Hand in My Life,” April NAD Edition). We often read about what young people feel the church should do to meet their needs. How inspiring to read about young people meeting the needs of the church and serving the Lord with joy.

—June Loor
Via E-mail

Reading this article makes me realize why I insist that my son stay in our school system. Without the Christian education I received, it’s hard to tell where I would be today.

—Jackie L. Justus
Bryson City, North Carolina

I was excited to read these alumni stories. Just a little detail. These people were in the class of 1987, not 1986. Alumni weekend 1996 honored those classes ending in 7. I hope there won’t be too much grief over this.

—Becky Becker
Via E-mail

As a staff writer for a local newspaper, I’m told often to diversify—to give representation in news stories to a spectrum of people, experiences, and ideas.

I wish “God’s Hand in My Life” had done this. Stories of how God has worked in the lives of pastors, pastors’ wives, and medical personnel are nothing new to those of us who grew up reading the Review, Insight, and Guide. What about those of us who are business owners, corporate computer programmers, social workers, welfare recipients, or even journalists? What about a diverse racial representation?

How much more inspiring it would have been to read of those who have battled homosexuality or survived violence, molestation, and divorce. Many of those in my 1992 graduating class have been affected by these real-world, nitty-gritty issues. I would think your cover story would include them.

—Stacy Spaulding DeLay
San Bernardino, California

Good Move
I was heartened by and fully agree with the action taken by the NAD Religious Liberty Department in disassociating itself from Americans United (see Newsbreak, April NAD Edition). I have contributed also to AU in the past, but have come to feel that their agenda more closely resembles that of the American Civil Liberties Union than the original Americans United charter.

—H. M. Will
Redmond, Washington

No Spies!
I was shocked to read of your plans for a Mystery Visitor feature (beginning in 1998). Although the Review is a church paper, many of us pass it on to non-Adventists. Now you want to send a spy to pick out all the faults in our churches? How truthful would he or she be? No church can be perfect, but does this need to be aired to everybody?

—Gladys DeLong
Fletcher, North Carolina

We appreciate your concerns and agree that no earthly church is or ever will be perfect. The point, though, of the Mystery Visitor feature is to help all churches to
grow biblically and culturally by examining what’s working and what’s not on Sabbath morning. Certainly any critique is subjective, and we have no intention of naming churches that don’t fare well. But don’t be surprised if your non-Adventist friends applaud the honesty we’re striving for.—Editors.

Are Homosexuals God’s Children?


Certainly they are if they are not practicing their “condition.” Concerning her son and others, the mother writes of an “orientation over which they have no control.” If the mother means they have no control over the way they are, I agree. If she means they have no control over practicing their homosexuality, I disagree.

We refuse church membership to an alcohol drinker; we do not refuse church membership to an addicted alcoholic who has obtained the victory, not from addiction, but from participation in the addiction. There are tremendous sinful-nature addictions and terrible weaknesses in all of us, hereditary as well as cultivated, “conditioned” as well as “behavioral.” Through Jesus all can obtain the victory from sinful participation.

I sincerely hope this is what the mother meant. I would hope the church would accept the homosexual but refuse to condone his or her participation.

—Stephen Yost, retired minister
Apopka, Florida

It’s what the mother meant, and it’s what we meant. We’ve received heavy mail along this line and apologize for the confusion this ambiguous statement has created in the minds of many readers. As we noted in our May 8 issue (which our NAD Edition-only readers might not have seen) we draw a sharp distinction between homosexual tendencies and homosexual activity. On biblical grounds we support people who struggle with the former, but we reject the practice.—Editors.

I disagree with the people who say that homosexuality is not a choice. This, I believe, is a satanic deception that many Christians have embraced. The idea is completely contrary to the Bible.

God does not make an abomination (Lev. 18:22), which is what homosexuality is called. When Jesus creates a person, He does not give them the gift of sin. Going against God and His Holy Word is our choice; homosexuality is a choice someone makes either consciously or subconsciously.

We need to love the homosexual, but hate the homosexuality; not embrace it as “Oh, well, they were born that way, so that must be what God wants.”

—Dale Johnson
Camdenton, Missouri

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for “Are Homosexuals God’s Children?” I have struggled with my sexual orientation since I was 14. I have been married and have two children, yet I can never feel close to a man. Now age 44, I had been apart from the Adventist faith for 26 years, only to return a few months ago.

I pray and pray to be normal. I hear anti-gay statements from Christians that fill me with shame. I love the Lord so much, yet all around me is condemnation for who I am.

Don’t gay people get to know the Lord? Why do we have to be shamed into lifestyles of self-destruction? I know the Lord Jesus Christ accepts and loves me as I am. How can I be unworthy of His love, for I am made perfect by His grace and forgiveness?

This article has given me hope that I can remain an Adventist. You have stopped me from angrily turning away from Christ and going back to a promiscuous lifestyle.

—Name withheld
“Behold, I come quickly...”

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Keeping it all going—the family, the marriage, the career—sometimes that’s the easy part. But how do you keep it in balance? Where do the values come from? And how do you give those values to your kids and the ones you care about? My mom did for me. Now I’m trying to do it for them.
The dazzling global communication network of our age readily blinds us to what ought to be obvious: high tech doth not truth create.

If we ever needed the Bible before, we sure do need it now. Its clear light of truth will guide us out through the mists of crooked thinking in the media:

The dead are dead.

When we die, we don't go to heaven. Nor do we come back to this earth in another body or as an angel.

We are dead—no sensation, no thought, no memory. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. But at the second coming of Jesus we shall rise again: “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor. 15:52). Then we shall be clothed with new immortal bodies by the Creator.

For nearly 3,000 years two divergent streams of thought have flowed regarding what happens when we die. One derives from ancient Greece and teaches that the body is only a shell for the spirit, which is immortal. It surfaced unchanged in the mass suicides of the 39 members of the Heaven’s Gate cult in San Diego last March, who believed that their bodies were only “containers” and that death would release them to join the space vehicle behind the Hale-Bopp comet.

The proliferation of new religions and cults in our day shares this ancient error. Hollywood brings it into our living rooms with a rash of movies and programs about angels, reincarnation, and dead people going straight to heaven.

But the Bible cuts through the thought garbage and the mush theology. Our hope lies not in an immortal soul, but in resurrection of the body. Because Jesus died and rose again, we who believe—who are bound up in His life—will also rise again.

Sexual tendencies don’t mandate practice.

The mass media seem intent on persuading the world that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle. They consistently blur any distinction between sexual tendencies and sexual practice. Thus the Time cover story for April 14 on popular TV star Ellen DeGeneres’s coming out, “Yep, I’m Gay,” describes the experience of the star’s screen character and also her own, with the clear implication that orientation will lead to practice.

But Christians must draw the line. We all have inclinations toward good or bad in various areas of life—what Ellen White calls “hereditary and cultivated tendencies” (for example, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 259)—but we also have free choice. By God’s grace we can rise above the pull of our nature—this is the message of the Bible.

A person with homosexual tendencies is as much God’s child as anyone else. But the sexual ideal for him or her must be celibacy if it cannot find expression within a heterosexual marriage.

If this sounds like a severe standard, it is the same one that Adventists hold up for all single Christians. For the alternative—homosexual practice—is not a biblical option. “Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God,” wrote the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 6:9, 10, NIV; see also Rom. 1:24-27).

The year 2000 has no significance of itself.

Millennial fever has brought the crazies out of the woodwork, just as it did 1,000 years ago. The difference now is that they use the Internet and other mass media to recruit members and spread their message.

Some Adventists are getting caught up in the hocus-pocus. They are putting two and two together and making five, calculating jubilees and dates, and making predictions.

One sent us his pages of figuring with the warning that the entire General Conference leadership would be wiped out at Passover this year. Somehow we survived the slaughter.

The bad news is: the craziness will get worse as we get closer to 2000.

The good news is: the year 2000 has no significance of itself. That number is a wholly human number, not a divine one—it comes from a human calendar, not God’s. Yes, Jesus will come again, but, says the Bible, “God will bring [it] about in his own time” (1 Tim. 6:15, NIV).

Any other suggestion is hocus-pocus.
I get a huge lump in my throat at graduations. It’s difficult for me to sit through the measured strains of Pomp and Circumstance, watching graduates of any age stride down the aisle, without discovering that there are tears in my eyes. Maybe it’s because I’m thinking of all the sacrifices moms and dads, or grandmas and grandpas, or the local churches, have made to get them to this moment. Or maybe it’s that I recall all of the effort invested by faculty, deans, and work superintendents to make this milestone a reality. Or it may be that I’m simply rejoicing at how God’s mighty hand has gotten this diverse group to this poignant moment.

This is not the church of tomorrow. Oh, these folks will be part of tomorrow’s church, but they are also an esteemed part of today’s church. I am terribly proud of the generation of young people God has given to this movement.

Let me give you a few “for instances”:

A group of teens in Paradise, California, have conducted or assisted with prayer and ministry conferences in a score of places across North America and in other countries as well. Some were held for other teens, some for adults. Churches have been renewed, lives changed. Baptisms have followed. Two of their number conducted a weekend prayer conference at Spicer Memorial College in India, and in response to their invitation, nearly the entire 1,200-member student body stood to pledge their lives to Christ.

Thirty-two students from Andrews Academy built an entire church—with pews— in Agua Prieta, a Mexican border town adjacent to Douglas, Arizona. At night they conducted evangelistic meetings that resulted in six baptisms.

Some Indiana Academy girls surprised a young pregnant woman at a women’s shelter with a baby shower. “And you don’t even know me,” the woman kept repeating.

Two girls from Great Lakes Adventist Academy showed up at the foster home where Melissa Smith was living—the fourteenth such home in her 17 years of life—and invited her to join them for ice cream and Bible study. At the end of 1995 Melissa was baptized, and this school year she has served as assistant director for outreach ministries at Great Lakes Academy—from which she will graduate later this week.

One Pacific Union College senior served a two-month internship in Washington, D.C., for Congressman Frank Riggs last summer, doing everything from stuffing envelopes to summarizing legislative bills. His influence as a spiritual leader led him, along with six other interns, to organize prayer breakfasts and Bible studies for Capitol employees, in addition to his regular duties.

In North America last year, student literature evangelists visited 1,875,460 homes and sold $3,104,998 worth of gospel-filled magabooks. At least 106 people were baptized.

Students at Dakota Adventist Academy went systematically from one faculty office to another at the beginning of the school year to pray with each teacher and administrator. They also invited all the pastors and administrators from the conference to come to the campus so that they—the students—could pray for them.

Last year alone nearly 1,200 students took a break from their academic pursuits, raised their own funds, and went somewhere to serve their Lord as student missionaries. There are 65 in Europe serving as deans, nurses, and teachers. There are 50 in Africa, 50 in Russia, and about 70 in Central and South America—teaching everything from English as a second language to music and PE. There are 30 in the South Pacific, most serving as youth pastors, 140 in the Marshall and Caroline Islands, and more than 350 in Asia. Ten are serving with Adventist World Radio and 20 with ADRA. There are hundreds more serving in places you can hardly pronounce.

I don’t have time or space to tell about the other projects—large and small—carried on by those graduating from eighth grade, academy, college, and university. But I can tell you this: here comes the class of 1997. Let’s not coddle them. Let’s not make them prove themselves. Let’s not make them watch from a stool in the corner. Let’s not underestimate their ability to make a difference.

They’re a hardworking bunch—there’s not much pomp in their circumstance. We need what they can bring us. Let’s make sure they know that.

Alfred C. McClure is president of the 850,000-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.
GIVE & TAKE

HERALD’S TRUMPET

Summer’s here, kids, so cool down with a tall lemonade and the Adventist Review...OK, at least a tall lemonade.

Herald the Review angel is back, and you’re not going to believe this—Herald’s trumpet is again hidden in this magazine. Yaayyy!

In our last contest we received 61 postcards. Our three winners were Nathan Feather from Lincoln, Nebraska; Alisha Lasher from Everett, Washington; and Sara Lowry from Salem, Oregon. They received Amazing Stories From the Bible, by Ruth Redding Brand and Charles Mills.

Where was Herald’s trumpet? On page 14, halfway down.

If you can find the trumpet this time, send a postcard telling us where to the Give & Take address below. The prize is Secrets of the Forest by Colleen L. Reece.

Have fun—and don’t forget to put your lemonade glass in the sink.

ADVENTIST LIFE

Recently as our Dodge Center, Minnesota, congregation prepared for the foot-washing service, our 3-year-old grandson, Cole Bodner, observed Grandpa and all the other men leave the sanctuary. Knowing that some of the women slip out early to prepare the potluck food, he turned to me and whispered excitedly, “It’s potluck day! The men are going downstairs to get the food ready.”

My foot-washing partner and I were both amused at the thought that it would take all the men to prepare the meal.

—Hazel Boucher, Kasson, Minnesota

WANTED: YOUR ADVICE

So you’ve discovered a great new activity for junior Sabbath school. Or a Christmas musical that worked wonderfully. Or a fresh collection of worship songs. Or a dynamite way to reach your community. Why keep it to yourself? Send your favorite church-related tips (keep them brief) to Jots & Tittles at the Give & Take address below, and we’ll print them on this page. (Please include phone number.)

“WILL A DOZEN EGGS DO?”

When he was Review editor, James White once published a notice stating that those who could not afford a subscription could bring something to J. P. Kellogg’s Battle Creek store to barter in order to obtain money for a subscription.

After much deliberation the current Review editorial staff has decided to make a similar offer. Here’s what each of us would be willing to accept in exchange for a Review subscription.

William G. Johnsson: a week at the beach with Madeleine (my granddaughter).

Roy Adams: round trip to London on the Concorde—for two.

Myrna Tetz: a week in St. Thomas with scuba lessons.

Carlos Medley: box seats at Philadelphia Eagles games.

Steve Chavez: shiny red Mazda Miata.

Andy Nash: round of golf with Tiger Woods (he must play left-handed).

Ella Rydzewski: three weeks at the Silver Hills (British Columbia) health resort.

Chitra Barnabas: round-trip for five to India.

Mary Maxson: a chalet in the Swiss Alps.

Or to simplify things, you could just call 1-800-456-3991 and get the weekly Review at the discounted $33.97. (Order now and receive an exclusive new book, God Answers Prayer!, coauthored by 20 of the church’s leading writers.)

WE NEED YOU

Give & Take is your page. Send your “Adventist Quotes,” top-quality photos, “Adventist Life” vignettes, “Readers’ Exchange” items, and other short contributions to: Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; CompuServe: 74532,2564

Illustration by Terry Crews
After fertilization the interior of the egg cell is partitioned into two, then four, eight, and finally 16 smaller compartments called blastomeres. Each of these compartments is a separate cell with a complete set of chromosomes in its nucleus. At this stage of development the collection of blastomeres, the blastocyst, is attached to the wall of the uterus, where the developing embryo is nurtured to full term.

For some time it has been possible to carry out fertilization of the human egg and accomplish the early stages of blastocyst formation in culture medium. At the eight-cell stage of growth the embryo is implanted into a uterus, and if all goes well, a normal baby is born in due time. This in vitro fertilization technique has been a blessing to many couples who would otherwise be infertile. A potential benefit of this technique is the possibility of finding chromosomal abnormalities prior to uterine implantation.

Cloning from embryonic cells can be accomplished if identical blastomere cells are separated from each other and implanted separately. Since 1986 such procedures have, in fact, been practiced in animal husbandry by United States Department of Agriculture scientists attempting to produce animals low in fat and resistant to disease. In the future, genetically altered cows or goats could produce milk containing drugs for treatment of human disease.

A second type of cloning is nuclear cloning. It has been known since the 1950s that when nuclei of embryonic cells are placed inside an unfertilized egg, devoid of its own genetic material, a cloned organism will form. Such experiments have been performed in many...
species, from mice to cattle. The nuclei, however, had to be from a two- or four-cell embryonic stage, nothing older. During normal development, after only a few cell divisions, embryonic cells begin to differentiate to form the various specialized tissues of the organism. This process involves an apparently irreversible modification of the genetic material. It has been assumed that older nuclei, even though they still carry all of their inherited genetic information, can utilize only a certain portion of it, as determined by the differentiation process.

This is why it was such astonishing news that a nucleus from a fully differentiated udder tissue could be coaxed to behave as an early embryonic nucleus. The trick was to starve the cultured udder cells first, causing an onset of dormancy in their nuclei, mimicking the conditions prevailing in early embryonic cells. Then by administering a small electric current, these cells were fused with egg cells whose own chromosomes were destroyed by radiation.

After blastocysts were formed in culture dishes, they were transferred into sheep uteri. However, there was only one successful cloning out of 277 attempts, indicating that more needs to be learned about this process.

Following the announcement of the nuclear cloning of Dolly, it was revealed that at the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center two monkeys had been cloned from embryo nuclei. (These were the only two survivors from 61 embryos transferred into surrogate mothers.) The center’s purpose is to produce a group of genetically identical monkeys that could be used for drug testing. The results obtained with such subjects would be far more accurate because of a lack of genetic differences among them.

Reverberations

Dolly’s appearance caught the world by surprise. After the initial shock wore off, leaders in government, science, and religion began calling for urgent consideration of the ethical implications of cloning. President Clinton announced a temporary ban on federally funded human cloning research (currently no such research is funded by the government) and asked for a moratorium on nonfederally supported research on this subject as well. The president also requested a Bioethics Advisory Commission to review this topic.

Dr. Wilmut, one of the Scottish scientists who cloned Dolly, said, “I think now to contemplate using our present technique with humans would be quite inhuman.” At least two bills have been introduced to the U.S. Congress that would permanently ban human cloning research in this country. The Vatican called for a worldwide ban.

However, Senator Bill Frist, chair of the Committee on Public Health and Safety (which is also looking into the ethics of cloning) and a physician who has performed numerous heart transplants, compares the current excitement over human cloning to the 1960s, when many believed heart transplants to be unethical. “Now is the time,” said Frist, “for us as a country, as a nation, as a world, to address these issues in a systematic way—not too hastily, but in a calm, reasoned, rational, balanced way.”

This is excellent advice. The profound social, ethical, and medical issues raised by human cloning require a sustained and balanced dialogue among all segments of the world community. There is considerable overlap between this topic and in vitro fertilization, genetic engineering, and the Human Genome Sequencing project. Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders recently issued a document regarding genetic engineering prepared by the church’s Christian View of Human Life Committee. The 10 ethical principles stated could also apply to human cloning.

Key Questions

The possible cloning of humans raises questions, some of which perhaps only Adventists would ask:

1. Is there any example of human cloning in the Bible? Maybe.

Being among those who accept the literal reading of the first chapters of Genesis, we note with interest that the creation of humankind appears to have started with a modified “cloning” process. “So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took
one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

From current cloning experiments we begin to understand why Adam had to lose a rib early in his life. “Cloning” Eve from Adam (with some modification, of course, for they were hardly identical) established a genetic kinship between the first human couple.

2. Can human nature be cloned?
No.

Having identical chromosomes does not make humans identical persons. Although genes determine our physical attributes and even our basic personality traits, it is the content of our brains that defines who we are. From the moment of birth, or possibly even before that, each brain receives different stimuli. In the early developmental phase of children, there are particular critical “time windows” of opportunity that, if utilized properly, will stimulate the neural development (hard-wiring) of selected regions in the child’s brain. These centers control motor development, emotional control, vision, social attachment, language skills, math and logic, learning to play musical instruments, etc. It is now believed that, whether utilized or not, with the passage of time these windows of opportunity permanently close.

To a great extent who we are is determined by what we read, hear, see, feel, think, and do.

If our genes do not dictate our activities, then we are not hostages of our genes. Were it otherwise, we would not have moral freedom. The powerful notion of free moral agency undergirds the Christian concept of who a human being is. We are convinced that Adam and Eve were created free to choose between obeying or disobeying their Creator. But when the first pair sinned and lost their robes of light, which symbolized their sinless state, did their chromosomes suddenly become “sinful”?

I do not believe so. But humankind did inherit something from Adam and Eve that is sometimes called “fallen human nature” or “the propensity to sin.”

While Adventists are careful not to confuse a “tendency to sin” with sin itself, the potency of this inherited tendency is best seen by considering that every human being, with the exception of the Saviour, sinned.

The tendency to favor self is the genetic factor that wages war against the higher principle upon which the entire universe is founded: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Christian is admonished to choose love over this pull of genetics. Jesus stated this principle in the starkest of terms: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

4. Would cloning of humans hasten the second coming of Jesus?
No.

A legitimate Adventist concern
is whether human cloning takes us into a forbidden territory, forcing the Lord to step in and end history as we know it. We know that God brought to an end the unspeakable wickedness of the antediluvian world, although not without 120 years of warning. Following that, when the post-diluvians defied the Lord by attempting to erect a flood-proof structure, divine intervention occurred again. Would the cloning of humans be such a distortion of Creation as to merit termination of human history?

We are not aware of any divine injunction against cloning. On the contrary, built into the natural order of life is the occasional birth of twins, triplets, even quadruplets. From this one surmises that although genetic diversity prevails, genetic identity among some of God’s children is not displeasing to the Creator. Therefore, the cloning of humans itself is not likely to precipitate divine intervention.

It may be that in the almost-universal call for caution in proceeding with human cloning experiments, the thought leaders are responding to the Holy Spirit. We believe that it is God’s desire that the increased scientific knowledge of the end-time should be used exclusively for the benefit of humanity. ■

2 Dan. 12:4.
4 Gen. 2:21-23, NIV.
6 Rom. 3:23.
7 Rom. 7:23, NIV.
9 Gen. 3:12.
10 Mark 12:30, 31, NIV.
11 Matt. 10:39, NIV.

George T. Javor is a professor of biochemistry in the School of Medicine at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Ethics of Cloning

By Calvin B. Rock

The morality of human cloning may be judged by two time-honored ethical indicators—intention and consequence.

Just why would one desire the cloning of one’s self or of another? The various reasons commonly heard by proponents of cloning may be grouped into the following areas:

(1) ego cloning—replication for the purpose of perpetuating oneself;
(2) medical cloning—replication as a source of needed body parts;
(3) genetic cloning—replication as a means of perpetuating superior human qualities, i.e., beauty or genius;
(4) research cloning—replication for the purpose of scientific investigation into such puzzles as heart muscles and brain tissue that do not regenerate after injury or cancer cells that revert to an embryonic stage and multiply uncontrollably.

Since human replication (cloning) is not yet a reality, its consequences have not been demonstrated, but there are some effects both positive and negative that are quite predictable.

Among the negative consequences are: the muting of such vital human emotions as affection, respect, and love because of feelings of infinite replaceability; the devaluation of life as a result of reproducing humans via an industrial or “factory-like” methodology; the further denigration of marital intimacy because of the disengagement of sexuality from human reproduction; the weakening of the family system because of the creation of a human class that has neither father nor mother; and the ratification of self-centeredness and elitism in consequence of the selectivity that decides who is worthy to be cloned and who is not.

Among the positive consequences envisioned are the enhancement of life that would result from the use of body parts such as bone marrow or a kidney, and the perpetuation within society of the genius of an Elizabeth Barrett Browning or an Albert Einstein or a George Washington Carver.

When we add to the probable negative consequences of cloning the fact that the replication of genius does not guarantee its development or use to the same degree or for the same purposes as seen in the original, it is fortuitous that 91 percent of those surveyed in a recent U.S. Time/CNN poll (Time, Mar. 10, 1997) said they wish not to be cloned and that 74 percent said they think that it is against God’s will.

Nevertheless, attitudes toward such technology are subject to change with time. That tendency, driven by human curiosity, pride, and greed, means that in spite of the present societal fears and the cautions expressed by various scholars and governments around the world, the cloning of humans will eventually take place. All of which is to say that we Christians, in particular, need to consider prayerfully the pros and cons of this exciting but radical advance that God has permitted into the secrets of life and be well prepared to address its challenges.

Calvin B. Rock, a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, holds doctoral degrees in religious ethics and ministry.
SALM 103 IS ONE OF THE MOST joyful of the biblical psalms. It is the spontaneous expression of heartfelt praise for divine grace and compassion. “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” the sacred poem begins (Ps. 103:1; cf. 104:1).

First, David praises God for blessings in his own life (verses 1-5). Second, he tells of God’s loving-kindness to all created beings (verses 6-14). Third, he emphasizes humanity’s dependence upon the mercy of God (verses 15-18). And finally, the sweet singer of Israel invites the whole creation to worship God (verses 19-22).

In this article I want to explore the reasons for David’s testimony, to explore what it was that encouraged in him the spirit of worship, celebration, praise, and thanksgiving.

The psalmist delineates six blessings that should call forth thanksgiving and demand our highest praise—a “benefits package,” so to speak, available to those who give their utmost for His Highest.

The first benefit is in verse 3: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary sees a connection between this phrase and Psalm 32:1, 2, which discusses “sin” under three designations: transgression, sin, and iniquity.

Transgression, according to this source, points to rebellion: willful, premeditated sin. This could be called the sin of commission. Sin, on the other hand, refers to missing the mark, failure to do one’s duty. This second aspect might be described as the sin of omission. Iniquity refers to moral distortion, crookedness, guilt.

God forgives all three—transgression, sin, and iniquity—in all its shades of expression. In fact, says Ellen White, “God not only forgives sin, but also accepts the truly repentant as if he had never sinned.”

With the same divine assurance David declares: “Bless the Lord”; “O give thanks”; “Praise ye the Lord” (Ps. 103:1; 105:1; 106:1). I have some friends who would respond spontaneously to such exuberant pronouncements with an exclamation of their own: “Thank You, Jesus!”

The second benefit is also recorded in verse 3: “Who healeth all thy diseases.”

—He heals the physical diseases of the body.
—He heals psychological disturbances of the mind,
Divine love is self-sacrificing love. It is making yourself giving without expecting anything in return. It is putting in your mind) divine love.” One songwriter used about 250 times in the Bible. Its meaning includes “mercy,” “kindness,” “tender mercies” is the Hebrew word for “lovingkindness” and “tender mercies.” The word for “lovingkindness” and “tender mercies” is the Hebrew chesed, used about 250 times in the Bible. Its meaning includes “mercy,” “kindness,” “tender mercies” is the Hebrew chesed, used about 250 times in the Bible. Its meaning includes “mercy,” “kindness,” “tender mercies” is the Hebrew chesed, used about 250 times in the Bible. Its meaning includes “mercy,” “kindness,” 

The last benefit in the package reads as follows: “The youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (verse 5). As the eagle lives and keeps its vigor longer than most birds, so the forgiven sinner keeps sowing the freshness of youth. Hasn’t research documented that Seventh-day Adventists live four to six years longer than the general population? It pays to serve Jesus. He keeps hope alive.

I have heard my nieces sing, “After all the things I’ve been through, I still have joy.” In the psalm before us, David is moving from a stumbling block to a stepping-stone experience. From a pauper in sin to “a man after God’s own heart.” From mourning to praising. From disaster to doxology.

The decade of the 1660s in England was filled with disaster. The plague of 1665 made its way through the city of London, leaving 70,000 dead. A year later a fire destroyed much of the city, leading the prophets of doom and gloom to predict that London and England would never recover.

But Bishop Thomas Ken kept encouraging the people to see God’s purpose and presence even in the tough times. And one night he felt inspired to write a song that testified of his conviction that God was still sovereign, still worthy of praise. Church congregations the world over still sing that song today, 300 years later: “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Like David we can confess that God “hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103:10). With a checkered past, David had personal reasons for praising God in worship and celebration. He had experienced the joy of transformation from disaster to doxology—because God forgives all our iniquities (regular and king-size); heals all our diseases (acute and chronic); protects our lives; crowns us.

half the U.S. population is overweight.

While working on a third master’s degree at Loma Linda University, I took a class in nutrition in which the instructor had on display all the vegetables we could eat that would provide the basic nutrients for one day. The whole class could not eat all we saw. Not everything good for you has to taste like spinach, carrots, or broccoli.

On the other hand, if we overcome appetite, we will have enough moral power to overcome every other temptation. 4

■ The last benefit in the package benefits package.”

Even while satisfying your mouth with good things, the Lord can provide appetite control. American television recently announced that more than

The Lord redeemed my life from destruction. After suffering from a bleeding ulcer, I can now eat raw onions and raw peanuts. And the Lord has done something similar for my wife. After suffering from an acute cardiac problem and a very rare disease, my wife has been reclaimed from the “valley of the shadow”—from disaster to doxology. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

■ Verse 4 also contains the fourth benefit: “Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”

The word for “lovingkindness” and “tender mercies” is the Hebrew chesed, used about 250 times in the Bible. Its meaning includes “mercy,” “kindness,” “favor,” “righteousness,” “hope.” But in most cases it means “divine love.”

Another rendering of the phrase is “Who crowns you with (puts in your mind) divine love.” One songwriter described it as “something within me.” Divine love is self-sacrificing love. It is giving without expecting anything in return. It is making yourself vulnerable—risking yourself to save another person or a relationship.

It may be difficult to like or love some people. However, the Lord wants us to do it, and we can do it through Him. He crowns us with divine love; He puts it in our mind. O give thanks for this benefit!

■ “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things” (verse 5). This is the fifth blessing in the “benefits package.”

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with divine love (old-time religion that makes me love everybody); satisfies our mouths with good things (making us eat right and talk right); and renews our youth (helping us feel good about our potential).

David trusted the promise and power of God and the merits of Jesus. And Ellen White summed it up in her seven last words: “I know in whom I have believed.”

Jesus is not just a sculptor who works from the outside in. He is the original Creator, who works from the inside out.

A Communist and a Christian were debating the merits of their respective philosophies.

The Communist said to the Christian, “See that man in tattered clothes?” Communism will put a new suit on that man.”

The Christian thought for a minute and then responded, “Communism may put a new suit on the man, but Christianity will put a new man in the suit.”

Have you ever seen a litter of five or six puppies? And were they all furry and so happy to see you that they just wanted to play and play? And did you say “Oh, puppies” or “They’re so sweet” or “Please, can’t I have one”? I thought so. When we see something wonderful, we have to say so—even if the only thing around to hear us is a strawberry or a comet or a silly little puppy.

That’s praise. People praise the things they like. When you learned to walk, your parents praised you. When your puppy learns to go outside, you praise it. When your teammate makes a goal in soccer, you give praise.

When we praise something, we show that we think it is valuable. And somehow, praising it—saying it is valuable—makes it more valuable to us. When we say we enjoy something, it makes our enjoyment complete.

And so we praise God. We thank Him. We sing to Him. We tell Him how much we appreciate all the wonderful things He has made for us. We praise God because we love Him. “Praise the Lord, because he is good. Sing praises to him, because it is pleasant” (Ps. 135:3, ICB).
A Student Missionary’s Prayer

If you like this story, good news: there are 19 more just like it.

BY RICHARD DUERKSEN

The story that follows is taken from a new book published by the Adventist Review, God Answers Prayer! Twenty of the best-known writers in the church share from the heart, telling their own experience. Jeannette Johnson shares her “most sacred experience.” Hyveh Williams tells how a crowded jumbo jet ready for takeoff turned back to the gate—because of her. Randy Maxwell and Manuel Vasquez share accounts of battles with cancer. Roger Morneau tells of the copier that kept on copying long after the toner ran out.

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Two deep drafts of fresh air took away most of the aura of death that had diffused itself throughout the room, but a trace still hung about my chaplain’s uniform. They were dying. All of them! Each patient in the ward, caught in the clutches of a disease no one could heal. Each lying on a bed of hopelessness, surrounded by families crying for hope.

As the student missionary hospital chaplain, I was to provide that hope. But I was failing. Oh, yes, I knew all the right words of encouragement and the Bible texts to go with them. I even carried copies of the prayer of Francis of Assisi as I went from bed to bed. I listened and shared,
listened and prayed, and then listened some more, all the while trying not to breathe the stench of death that hung above each bed.

Francis prayed, “Where there is despair, [let me sow] hope.” But I was not able to see beyond the hopelessness.

Then the phone rang. “¿Oficina del Capellan. Como puedo servirle?” Mrs. Leon’s greeting always sounded like her buoyant smile. In many ways she was more chaplain than secretary.

“It’s for you, Dick.” Then with her hand over the mouthpiece she whispered, “It’s Barbara from downstairs. I think someone’s dying.”

The nursing supervisor’s voice was friendly yet professional. “Dick, Mrs. Castillo is about ready to go. Her family is here, and I think they could use the services of a chaplain. Could you please come down? She’s not going to last more than a couple hours.”

I put on my light-blue sport coat, the one with the black plastic name tag that proclaimed me to be the assistant chaplain at Bella Vista Hospital. Then I grabbed my Spanish Bible and stumbled down the stairs, wondering why I had chosen to be a student missionary.

Mrs. Castillo was in bed 3, over by the window. I focused on the poinsettias in the garden and tried to ignore the atmosphere of death pervading all four beds in the room. A voice deep in my soul shouted for me to leave, to “run out of this place to somewhere safe!” But I had a job to do.

The whole family was there. Nine people. Eighteen eyes boring into me as I slipped around the curtain and joined them beside grandma’s bed. Each face demanded words that would help them accept the death that was devouring the one who loved them. Each one cried desperately for hope.

I cleared my throat and mumbled a simple Spanish greeting. But no more words would come. All my carefully practiced speeches of Castillian courage became dust in my throat. These people wanted hope that only God could give. And I had come into their room without Him! My uniform was right. My Bible was right. My smile was right. But my life was empty, and I had nothing to give them. Nothing at all! The voice inside became a howling command.

“I tried desperately to dredge up a few more words. Nothing came. All I could see was me standing empty before God. All I could hear were condemning words and cruel laughter from the satanic wielder of the voice. “You’re supposed to be the preacher but you don’t even know the God you’re supposed to talk about. How can you give hope when you know no hope?”

The eyes of Grandpa, son, daughters, and grandchildren all pierced deeply into my mind, calling for something I didn’t have and couldn’t provide.

Then I broke. Collapsing onto the stiffly starched sheets, I put both hands by the bed again and again. My prayer was right. My Bible was right. My smile was right. But my life was empty, and I had nothing to give them. Nothing at all! The voice inside became a howling command.

I collapsed among the poinsettias and felt my future crashing in around me.

I wish I could say that I prayed much and eloquently in the garden. But I did not. I simply lived and relived the scene by the bed again and again. My prayer of empty desperation hung too heavily for me to form new words.

Two hours later I stumbled slowly back toward the hospital, ready to face the end. Dr. Ivan Angell met me at the tall glass lobby doors. “Dick!” He grabbed my shoulders and began to shake me. “What did you say to the Castillos? What did you say to my patient’s family?”

Sobs masked my words so that neither of us could understand my apology. Dr. Angell kept asking, and I kept crying, until we were suddenly surrounded by the family. Grandpa smothered me with a full abrazo while children and grandchildren grabbed my arms, hugged my legs, and joined their tears with mine.

“Mama is gone,” I heard her son say. “Thank you for praying such hope for us. Your words made it so much easier to let Mama go.”

We cried together, hugged some more, and then they were gone.

Dr. Angell spoke first. “Dick, what language did you use when you prayed with the Castillos?”

“English,” I whispered, wishing no one had heard my cry for help.

“Dick,” Dr. Angell’s words blew a sweet breeze of hope, “the Castillos heard you pray in perfect Spanish! Whatever words you used, God translated them into a prayer of peace.”

The doctor shook me once more, wiped away his own tears, and walked toward the poinsettias.

Stunned, I walked into the hospital, where the cancer ward smelled like spring roses and my heart overflowed with wonder.

Richard Duerksen is vice president for creative ministries at the Columbia Union Conference.
KSBN-TV Spreads Christ in Northwest Arkansas

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, ADVENTIST REVIEW NEWS EDITOR

Just one year after its official grand opening (May 8, 1996), Adventist-owned KSBN-TV of Springdale, Arkansas, is making such an impact in the Southwest that Arkansas's governor is promoting its message.

Founded by a group of Adventist lay members, KSBN introduced a new concept—“safe television for all ages”—that has been welcomed throughout the state. The broadcast facility is the only full-power television station of its kind owned by Seventh-day Adventists.

“Many local and state government officials have expressed appreciation for the concept,” says station founder Carlos Pardeiro, president of Creation Enterprises International. “During our groundbreaking ceremony in 1994, state senator John Brown III predicted that ‘this TV station is bound to be a model to the entire country of what television should be.’”

In 1996, during their grand opening, five city mayors in northwestern Arkansas proclaimed May 8 as Safe Television for All Ages Day, Pardeiro notes. “Now, for our first anniversary on May 8, 1997, Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee proclaimed Safe Television for All Ages Day for the entire state of Arkansas. This historic event demonstrates what the Lord will do to expedite the proclamation of the gospel in these last days.”

KSBN programming is directed to the nonchurched community. “Our goal is to meet the needs of our viewing audience through our carefully selected programming,” says Pardeiro. “It has taken us five years of research to come up with the best of the best in TV viewing. It does not contain violence, bad language, or immorality.”

The program mix includes a careful selection of Christian, children’s, news, and business programs, and broadcasts gleaned from cable services and media outlets. Though the station broadcasts 16 hours of Adventist-generated programming each week, the bulk of the schedule is directed at an unchurched audience. “We approach our viewing audience where they are, and we show them a better way,” Pardeiro explains.

Starting a full-power TV station is a long, arduous task. “When we began, we attempted twice to get a low-power station, but failed both times,” Pardeiro says. “However, we learned that a full-power frequency was available in our area. After months of anxiety and prayer the frequency was allocated to our area, but it had to go to public bidding. This meant that anyone could apply against us, and we would then enter into a competing process to see who would obtain the license.”

In the last week before the cut-off date one applicant applied for the license. The Federal Communications Commission then issued another cutoff date—the time for Pardeiro and other applicants to work out a withdrawal of one of the applications, or both would have to go to court for a “comparative hearing,” a very expensive and lengthy process.

“During a subsequent meeting with our competing applicant, we expressed to him that the purpose of our TV station would be to air wholesome, family-oriented, ‘safe’ television,” Pardeiro says. “The other applicant was determined to obtain the frequency, even if it meant a court battle.”

After the negotiations reached an impasse, Pardeiro told his competitor, “We will be praying that God will impress you to withdraw your application”—at which the competitor laughed and replied in a scornful tone, “Me too.”

Many faithful supporters from local churches in northwestern Arkansas, along with other friends and church leaders, joined in prayer for the project. Two weeks later the competing applicant withdrew his application, and the FCC awarded KSBN-TV to Pardeiro’s not-for-profit foundation.

Each step from then on has continued to be miraculous. After
Walla Walla Pastor Joins Review Staff

William M. Knott, senior pastor of the Walla Walla College Seventh-day Adventist Church in College Place, Washington, has joined the Adventist Review staff as an associate editor, effective May 15. He replaces Myron Widmer, who became an associate professor of religion at Pacific Union College last year.

In his new post Knott will be editing, writing, nurturing authors, assisting in staff management, and covering speaking and other appointments.

Review editor William G. Johnsson stated that the invitation to Knott came after an exhaustive search of possible candidates in North America and the world church. “I am very happy with the results of these months of searching,” said Johnsson. “In Pastor Knott we have a person who preaches powerfully and writes unusually well. I believe his skills, quality of ideas, and love for the Lord and His church will prove a great blessing to Review readers.”

Knott has served in the gospel ministry for approximately 16 years, holding the Walla Walla pastorate for nearly four years. A graduate of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Knott also held pastorates in the Michigan, New York, and Southern New England conferences.

William Knott

North American Giving Jumps Sharply

For the first three months of 1997, tithe in North America totaled more than $113 million, a 7 percent increase over the same period last year, says Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the North American Division president for communication.

Both the Canadian and Mid-America unions posted gains of 15 percent. Two conferences, Dakota and Kansas-Nebraska, posted gains of more than 30 percent.
Signs of the End?

BY KERMIT NETTEBURG, ASSISTANT TO THE NAD PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Weather Disasters Sure Sign of Christ’s Second Coming.” The Weekly World News headline almost attacked me in the grocery store checkout line.

The Adventist Church has some history with the Weekly World News. In 1996 they ran an article quoting a biblical scholar at the Adventist seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Of course, there isn’t an Adventist seminary in Tulsa. The scholar, the seminary, and the quotes were fictitious.

We lodged a protest. While the editorial staff haven’t replied, neither have they quoted any more fictitious Adventists.

Still, I was wary. So I bought the May 13, 1997, issue of News. No Adventists quoted. Instead, an article quoted “one of the world’s leading experts in biblical prophecy, the Rev. Theodore Bernel, of Butte, Montana.”

“The evidence for an imminent return of Jesus is overwhelming,” said Rev. Bernel, citing the March floods in Indiana and Kentucky and tornadoes like the ones that ripped through Arkansas. He also cited wars, false messiahs, and angel sightings.

But the article is false on two counts. First, there’s no Theodore Bernel in Butte, Montana. At least, if he does live there, he doesn’t have a phone. AT&T information lists no one with the last name of Bernel in Butte.

Second, weather disasters are not a sure sign Christ will return soon. A careful reading of Matthew 24—and the parallel passages in Luke and Mark—shows that weather disasters and wars and earthquakes only presage the end.

So what’s the true sign of the end? Verse 14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” In other words, Global Mission has more to do with Jesus’ second coming than floods in Minnesota. Reaching Afghanistan—and Pittsburgh—is more important than charting earthquake rates. Sharing peace is more important than talking war.

And reading the Adventist Review is more important than reading the Weekly World News.

Four conferences, Maritime, Montana, Ontario, and South Central, had gains of more than 20 percent.

The increased giving carried over to mission offerings as well, where more than $4.6 million was given in the first three months of 1997, a 2 percent increase over the previous year.

Adventist Review Honored for Excellence in Design

The Associated Church Press, a community of Christian journalists representing 200 publications, recently honored the Adventist Review with its Award of Excellence for the best redesigned journal for 1996.

The award came at ACP’s annual convention in Chicago on April 22. In awarding the certificate, the judges cited the Review’s change in cover design, new typefaces, and interesting photos.

The Review also received an honorable mention in the theme-edition category for its special issue on the Sabbath (Aug. 29, 1996). Other Adventist publications obtaining awards were Liberty magazine, which received five awards, and Ministry, which received two awards.

The ACP awards were distributed in 39 different categories. The winning entries were selected from more than 1,000 submissions.
For Your Good Health

Cold-free Diet

Diets rich in dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables and tomatoes—foods rich in beta-carotene and related carotenoids—can help you fight off colds and flu as well as cancer. For three weeks volunteers lunched daily on kale, sweet potatoes, and tomato juice—consuming 10 times more than average carotenoid intakes. They had a 33 percent increase in their bodies’ immune response.—United States Department of Agriculture.

Take a Hike!

When you’re faced with emotional or stressful situations, don’t eat—walk. Brisk exercise can help minimize stress and other feelings that leave you feeling depressed.—Johns Hopkins Health After 50.

Please, Mama, Less Juice

While fruit juice is the beverage of choice for toddlers, a new study finds that preschool children who drink more than 12 ounces of juice daily are more likely to be shorter and fatter than children who drink less.—Pediatrics.

Ways ACS Responds to Disasters

Adventist Community Services has had a busy spring—the tornados in Arkansas, the flooding and freezing throughout the Midwest. What does ACS do when disaster strikes?

1. Sets up emergency distribution centers where families can get bottled water, diapers, groceries, can openers, blankets, work gloves, and cleaning supplies.
2. Staffs a warehouse where incoming truckloads of donated goods are sorted, prioritized, and sent to distribution centers.
3. Organizes community-wide collections of relief supplies.
4. Participates in an interagency team under the auspices of the governor’s emergency management office to coordinate relief logistics.
5. Initiates telephone committees to mobilize hundreds of volunteers to accomplish the first four.

—Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the North American Division president for communication

NEWS BREAK

July 2  First Wednesday, church news, 7:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Galaxy 9, channel 1
July 5  Northeastern Conference Camp Meeting, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., satellite to be announced; 2:30-5:00 p.m., satellite to be announced

What’s Upcoming

June 1  Church Growth and Evangelism Focus
June 7  Women’s Ministries Day (North America)
June 14  Multilingual Ministries Offering
June 28  Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Euro Africa Division
July 5  Home Study International Day
M Y FACE BURNED AS, disbelieving, I heard words that confirmed my worst fears. My spouse of several years had admitted that the love poem I had accidentally discovered in our computer was written for another.

Hadn’t I been a faithful companion, doing everything I could to make this marriage work? Now she loved someone new.

I sought a Christian counselor in a city a two hours’ drive away so I could hold up my head in my home church, and no one would know of my private hell. I went there to save my marriage. It didn’t turn out as I had hoped. I knew by the incessant knot in my stomach that it was over. The marriage was lost. My question then became Could I survive this emotional devastation?

I remember attending a convention where the third party had come to a nearby city to be near my spouse. In the conflicts that followed, I found myself on the ninth-story balcony of the hotel room listening as she conversed with this new love on the telephone. I was terrified to realize what I was thinking—that a quick jump over the rail, a few seconds falling, and all this unspeakable pain would be over. The shocking thought of suicide sounded so inviting, and I was terrified. I literally ran through the room, into the hallway, and raced down those many flights of stairs until I stood on the ground and walked and cried until I could regain my composure.

A broken relationship is extremely difficult to heal when there is a third party. And it is impossible to heal a broken marriage when the relationship turns toxic—when even things that are done in love are seen as self-serving. No matter what is done by the dumpee, it is almost always seen as manipulation, not love.

It is said that the beginning of divorce is when the partner who decides that they want out of the marriage rewriting the history of the relationship. When people enter marriage, they tell the wonderful things said and done by their companion. That is the history they create. When they want to get out, they quit telling the wonderful stories and start telling about the irritations and difficulties. Hearing these new stories about yourself is very painful. These stories help the dumper justify the course of action.

My life had not been difficult before this. My prayer life...
My life was falling apart. Terrified, I raced from the room.
was full of warm fuzzies and felt satisfying. I had everything going my way, so why shouldn’t I be thankful and happy? Now I’d start to pray and end in tears. “God, where are You? Why has my life gone so terribly wrong?”

In the transition out of that marriage I moved to a new city and a new job. The costs of supporting myself as well as my estranged family in a far-off city seemed impossible. I was unsuccessful in my search for a reasonably-priced apartment and in maintaining the necessary funds to support two households.

What happened to my once-orderly world? Then in this darkest hour of my life, an unexpected conversation led me to a house-sitting situation. Seemingly out of nowhere a lovely home, surrounded by an orchard, on a large river, became available. I would need to pay only the utilities. I, a devastated man, found a place where healing could begin.

During those days I remember driving home from work, crying in my pain and calling out to God, “Why have You forsaken me?” When I drove my car into the circular driveway, I would sit for a moment looking at the lovely scene of a sunset reflected in the peaceful river. By shifting my gaze to the right I could see a large, comfortable house, now my home. It was not possible to look at these things and feel abandoned by God. This was not where I wanted to be, but I was at a place that provided me with acres of beautiful outdoor scenery and no neighbors nearby to reflect on my life.

My prayer life was still not warm and fuzzy. My dark valley was painful and unspeakably difficult. In fact, I was feeling forsaken by the God I had known so well. Yet every time I looked at this home in its spacious setting I saw it as a compelling argument that God was with me in my grief. He had prepared a table in my wilderness. He had provided for my need.

There, imperceptibly and slowly, I began to heal. After the passing of years I could sing again without dissolving into tears. In the loneliness of the place I could sense that being abandoned by one once trusted does not mean you are forsaken by God.

Now a new chapter in my life has begun. Things have taken a turn toward wonderful—a new family, a new home. Life has given me a steadiness not known before. My prayer life is different now, perhaps more realistic, rooted more deeply in the core of my being. I face the future without fear because He has demonstrated His care in such a firm way, especially in my darkest hours.

It is said that light shines most brightly in a dark place.

Charles Worth is a pseudonym.
Tracking the Divine Blueprint

There used to be a children’s book with the fascinating title The Chance World. It described a world in which everything happened by chance. The sun might rise, or it might not. If one jumped up in the air, it was impossible to predict whether he or she would ever come down again. That a person came down yesterday was no guarantee he or she would do so today.

However, our Creator did not intend us to drift without course or chart in life. Despite the reluctance of some to acknowledge any sort of blueprint for life, He does not expect us to formulate meaning by human reason alone, or by simple trial and error.

Immediately after the Creation, God began to instruct Adam and Eve, beginning with moral principles, for He is Himself moral. Then He incorporated practical elements as He unfolded the way to live in harmony with Him.

Our first parents were not presented with generalities and told to fashion life for themselves within certain parameters. To the contrary, we witness a parade of quite specific details as He set before them the specific structures of human society—from His divine cosmic perspective.

The family. By a divine act the family is established as the foundation of all human society. “While [the man] slept [the Lord] took one of his ribs and . . . made [it] into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:21, 22). So the Creator welds the first man and woman into the first family, “and they become one flesh” (verse 24).

The Sabbath. This special day is initiated as God’s way for humans to acknowledge their special heritage as creatures made in His image, as well as their joy to have Him as loving Lord (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:8-11).

Ideal diet. The ideal diet is prescribed in these words: “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed . . . and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food” (Gen. 1:29).

Work. God confers dignity on productive work with His assignment to Adam. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Humankind’s world is to be understood and developed to yield its bounty (Gen. 1:28).

Society. As part of the plan, each new family is to separate from parental shelter to become a self-sustaining unit in the broad mosaic of society. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother andcleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

Gratitude. God plants a sense of stewardship in the Edenic couple, setting them in harmony with their surroundings, while they acknowledge final dependence upon Him, the gracious giver of all gifts. All are parts of God’s original plan. All were introduced prior to the entrance of sin. Established in intimate linkage between God and humanity, they are footings of a divine blueprint presented in the context of profound trust and deep togetherness.

The point is inescapable: here is a divine pattern for successful human living, both profound and practical, built around a radiant walk with the Creator. From this point the pattern expands, both vertically and horizontally, as humanity’s grasp of God’s majestic character grows. Life is more than biology—its truly satisfying nucleus grows within a moving cosmic perspective that links heaven and earth.

The invasion of sin deforms God’s plan, setting it to serve selfish human urges. Soon the beautiful earth is ravished by conflict and corruption. “From the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8), Jesus says, affirming the original format while stripping away the self-serving distortions.

A true walk with the Saviour reveals itself in a subdued, surrendered spirit that seeks His perfect will. True happiness and peace come only as the intimate link between us and our Creator is alive.

No, ours is not the “chance world” described in that children’s book. As our Creator-God views His creation through His cosmic perspective, He sees it as it once was, in the beginning—and as it will be again, one day soon.

* All texts are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
GINA: Satan controls the mind not directed by the Holy Spirit.

Modern medicine has made advancements in everyday life that once seemed impossible. However, the drugs used in the art of healing are becoming more and more dangerous to our bodies, which are the temple of God (see 1 Cor. 6:19). The “gurus” of modern medicine might tell us that something is “good” for us and can possibly cure us, but that does not mean that as Christians we are at liberty to use such products.

So it is with marijuana. Proposition 215, which passed recently in California, gives permission for the legal use of marijuana for medicinal purposes.

Although all drugs—and even some herbs—have side effects, marijuana carries with it effects that Christians should avoid. These include hallucinations, mood swings, sexual disturbances, addiction, and paranoia.

Marijuana also contains properties that lead to mind control. The use of marijuana for whatever reason allows Satan to stand on ground that doesn’t belong to him. It gives him entrance into the avenues of our soul, which should be carefully guarded.

Ellen White observed, “When the mind is not under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Satan can mold it as he chooses. All the rational powers which he controls he will carnalize. He is directly opposed to God in his tastes, views, preferences, likes and dislikes, choices of things and pursuits; there is no relish for what God loves or approves, but a delight in those things which He despises; therefore a course is maintained which is offensive to Him” (Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, p. 22).

In these last days there will be many things that are declared legal (same-sex marriages, etc.) that are from the very pit of hell. Remember the rule: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

LORETTA: Many legal drugs negatively affect the mind as well.

Gina, I know that I’m going to get into big trouble for this, but I think it’s important to consider carefully the use of all drugs, not just marijuana. For most people—even Christians—the very thought of using marijuana as a medicine is morally wrong. The popular argument is that we will end up on a slippery slope that will end in the legalization of the drug.

But here are a few things to consider regarding marijuana for medicinal purposes:

1. It does not require smoking (which would certainly be a problem).
2. The side effects, in many cases, are not much different from those derived from conventional prescription drugs. And in some cases the side effects are less harmful than conventional prescription drugs. I’ll just give you one example. Cancer chemotherapy often causes extreme nausea and vomiting. The active ingredient in marijuana, THC, reduces vomiting and nausea and alleviates pretreatment anxiety. The conventional treatment, Marinol (a synthetic THC), can cause intoxication (Newsweek, Feb. 3, 1997, “The War Over Weed”).
3. Addiction is a very big concern. For years marijuana has been considered a “gateway drug.” And I believe that using marijuana can lead to the use of other drugs or an addiction to marijuana. However, the same is true of other prescription drugs, such as morphine and codeine.

The issue is not really whether or not marijuana should be used for medicinal purposes as much as whether we should be consistent. Maybe (here goes) we should be concerned about all drugs and medical treatments (legal and illegal, prescription, over-the-counter, and otherwise) that alter our minds and reduce our Creator’s ability to speak to us. I’m not against medicine per se. We should think long and hard about any drugs we take.

So if the argument is against using marijuana for medicinal purposes, that’s fine. I trust that it is as strong with regard to other conventional legal drugs that have very serious side effects as well. If we’re going to take a stand . . . then let’s stand all the way!

What do you believe? And why? Gina and Loretta challenge you to read your Bible, live your convictions, and take a stand . . . for Jesus!
I wish we could challenge church people to take it upon themselves to get the names of some death-row inmates and write to them. It's important to come in contact with them and know them as people... to find out about these people that society has condemned to die" (mother of Mike Berryhill, a death-row inmate).

Death row can be a dark and lonely place. If you are a condemned person, society says you are not worthy of life. Deemed too dangerous to be placed with the general prison population, you are isolated from other prisoners by being housed in a separate unit ominously called death row. This isolation goes even further. Many condemned men and women eventually lose contact with or are abandoned by their families.

How do I know this? Because I am a condemned man on death row. But I am lucky. I have contact with some of my family and have several pen pals from as far away as Ireland. However, I am an exception and not the rule.

I know of inmates who receive no letters and have no visitors. I know of persons who have been executed and had no one to claim their bodies. Their last resting place is a pauper's grave, with no one at the services but the prison chaplain (if they have services at all). Their final indignity is a prison number on the grave marker instead of a name. Their lives end as faceless convicts, executed by the state and buried in nameless graves. No one notices their passing or mourns them.

You have the power to change the isolation of death row. You can bring a ray of light and hope through the dismal darkness. At the same time that ray of light might touch your own heart and teach you things you never imagined.

It's as easy as writing a letter. Letters can be that ray of light and hope to a prisoner. That's why the Death Row Support Project, a pen pal service for death-row inmates, began.

The experience of writing often has a profound effect on the individuals involved—on both sides of the correspondence. The persons on death row know that someone is concerned about them, and that makes them better able to deal with their difficult life. Those persons on death row who feel connected to support on the outside are less likely to waive their appeals and volunteer for execution.

Those persons on the outside learn that to know a prisoner can dispel misconceptions and fears. Many prisoners have become interested in life beyond the bars, even writing for newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. They may become actively involved in support groups and causes.

Jesus clearly calls for us to visit those in prison. Correspondence can be your way of visiting. So how can you get involved? For the name and address of a condemned person, write to: Rachel Gross, coordinator, Death Row Support Project, Department R, P. O. Box 600, Liberty Mills, Indiana 46946; or call 219-982-7480. Tell her Michael Ross sent you.

Michael Ross is on death row in the state of Connecticut and is active with the Death Row Support Project.
Afer years of dating, Robert and I agreed we wouldn’t marry until we’d graduated from college. Commencement was scheduled for the first Sunday in June. We decided to marry the following weekend.

Since we’d be out of state until just days before our wedding, December found us choosing cake flavors and designs, wading through reams of invitations, and narrowing down musical selections.

We didn’t plan a big celebration or an expensive one. I wore my mother’s wedding dress and made my own veil. Neither our caterer nor our photographer financed a Caribbean vacation on their profits from our vows.

The only area where I refused to cut corners too closely was our flowers. My mother and I visited every florist for miles, asking questions and filling out endless estimate requests. We were showered with a deluge of catalogs until we were completely numbed by the “greenhouse effect.”

One florist in particular took an active interest in our quest. He was helpful and informative. He showed us examples of his work. And he seemed genuinely interested in meeting our needs while keeping costs reasonable. We made our decision, wrote him a retainer check, and left.

As our wedding date approached, the florist and my mother talked regularly. When he discovered that using a different flower would save us money, he called for our approval. He was professional, involved, and attentive—everything I had hoped for when we retained his services.

As planned, our florist arrived at the church several hours before the wedding began. He set to work arranging and making last-minute adjustments. Then, his job finished to our satisfaction, he offered his congratulations and left.

At the time I thought very little about him. He had done his job well, and I had other things on my mind just then.

With no more than an hour until the ceremony, I began changing into my wedding gown in a small basement room. Suddenly on the other side of the door I heard a rather frantic commotion. Though I couldn’t make out the words, it was clear that my mother was speaking emphatically to someone who was emphatically speaking back.

“What’s the matter?” I called, sure that something devastating had happened.

Silence fell outside the door.

“Nothing,” my mother answered. “Don’t come out.” More mumbled exclamations followed, but all was quiet by the time I was dressed and opened the door.

In reality, a bit more than “nothing” had transpired. I later learned that another florist had arrived with a van full of flowers! We had not spoken with him since asking for an estimate six months earlier. We had paid him no money, signed no contract, formed no relationship.

So when he showed up and Ruthie, my wedding coordinator, wondered what to do with “the other flowers,” the discussion ensued. My mother, who is as diplomatic and as tactful as they come, quickly established her superiority and sent the man away. As she later explained, she wasn’t about to let anything ruin my wedding.

Please forgive me when I admit that the parallels of that experience to the wedding story of Matthew 25 escaped me for a few days. But in rehashing the incident with my husband, I couldn’t help seeing the similarities. I’d always felt that the five girls who were denied entrance to the wedding party were given the short end of the stick. “At least they got there,” I’d reasoned. “Better late than never, right?”

Wrong. A wedding is a joyous occasion, but it’s not without stress. The five foolish virgins shared a problem with my foolish florist. They figured that just by showing up they’d be allowed to enter.

A solid relationship must be established before the wedding. Unburned oil and unwanted flowers won’t make up for the fatal flaw of not being involved in the celebration. Only when the bride and groom’s happiness is important to you are you a welcome guest.

Ami L. Hendrickson is a freelance writer and lives in Coloma, Michigan.
HEALTH & TEMPERANCE

The Adventist Review on-line is made available free through the sponsorship of the North American Division Health and Temperance department—coordinators for “The Year of Health and Healing.”

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