

VISION

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Living the Dream

My name is Paul Bernard, I have been married to Janet since 1983. We have three beautiful daughters and as of August this year all have left home; which I am told I will learn to enjoy sometime down the track.

I was ten years old when my mum and dad became Jesus Christ followers. Our family started going to a little Baptist Church in my home town of Cambridge. Our world changed. Years later, I heard the story of several families from that church who had loved my mum and dad, prayed for them, and showed kindness to them in practical ways again and again over several years. How they celebrated when mum and dad were born again.

In February 2015 I was invited to a Full Gospel Business Men's fellowship meeting in downtown Dunedin, to talk about sharing my faith in Jesus in the workplace. It was an excellent night. I had fun, and there was good comradery as well.

Men were sharing and praying for one another. So I kept attending these monthly meetings.

In 2010 I had a dream. It was a scene I knew well from swimming tournament days as a child. Walking out with towel around my shoulders wearing togs and a singlet. I strip off and hand the towel and singlet to one of my work colleagues and head for the starting blocks. I notice that there are

no other swimmers in the race. Then in the middle of the dream I start up a conversation with God.

"God, there's no-one else in this race?"

"Yes Paul, I know. I set this race up just for you. It's a lap of honour... "

While standing on old fashioned, well-worn starting blocks, I realised that many people had swum this race before me. I became aware of the "Great crowd of witnesses." My work team mates were watching from beside the pool and my boss was there too, holding the starting gun. I knew that I was going to learn through this to trust God, "Our Father," at a deeper level than ever before. It was a lap that that would be linking two seasons of my

life. The season after the lap would be all about Janet and me going forward together in God's plans and purposes for and through us from there.

While standing there, looking down, I noticed I was wearing shorts with pockets. The conversation

continued;

"God, these are going to slow me down. What shall I wear instead?"

"Put on the garment of praise"

"That's so cool God, they will be the best."

I told my Christian friends about the dream and we were pretty excited about it. One day...



Fast Forward to the end of October 2014

I noticed something wasn't quite right with my pay. When I checked it out I found that for the financial year to that date I had been paid a significant amount too much. "Impossible," said our administration, but I was right. It was an error that had gone unnoticed for a number of years. The company wrote off the loss from previous years. We corrected the books for the current year and then came the wait until the end of the financial year to find out what that meant for me personally as far as the IRD was concerned.

January 2015. On holiday in Nelson out for a prayer walk. Suddenly God and I are back in the dream (in broad daylight).

God said, "This is it, you're in it," then He says, "Look down," so I look down. "What are you wearing?"

Me, "The garment of praise."

God, "What else are you wearing?"

Me, "Nothing."

God, "Exactly."



And in that moment I knew God created the universe, He created this world, He created me. Everything I am, everything I have, every gifting, every ability, everything of any value in my life was either created by God when he made me. I have nothing of any value that God hadn't given me in the first place - except 'thanksgiving and praise.'

That was and still is a WOW moment.

I knew exactly what handing my singlet and towel to my colleague meant. It had already happened.

When my tax return came back April 2015, the figures weren't bad but once all the penalties and interest had been added onto my total debt was in

the tens of thousands over and above the 80% mortgage I had. During the time of not knowing, I had slid into depression. I had only four sales for the year to that point. Being a commission based salesperson made matters worse and I owed my boss a heap as well.

My boss pulled the trigger on the start gun. This was Janet and I coming up with a "bare bones" budget. A new pay structure was put in place on that basis and I got paid whether the pay was there or not. However, the goal was to exceed my pay with performance until the debt was eliminated. First pay under the new structure was in May 2015.

At this stage none of the FGBMFI guys knew about this. I am wondering how I am going to pay the bills for the month as we are about \$1200 short. This was my first round of anxiety, struggling to trust God.

Tuesday June 2, evening meeting FGBMFI, I am heading down the stairs when this Michael dude runs after me. "Hey Paul, God told me to do something" he says.

God told him to, "Look in your wallet and give what's in it to Paul." It wasn't much money, but it was cool obedience, with joy. Something in my heart broke that night.

The following morning there was \$1000 in my bank from another lovely couple (also involved in FGBMFI) who had asked for my bank account number several months before "Paul we want to bless you and Janet."

Wednesday June 3. This was flood day in Dunedin. I had three unconditional sales on that day. The first one was for a Christian vendor who prophesied that I would be given a performance based

award in a year's time, that I would get presented this award in front of my peers, and that I would honour Jesus and thank God for stuff publicly when that happened. I didn't believe it actually, but that is exactly what happened, even though I was struggling with depression most of that year. My boss took me to one side and told me I had won an award, but he didn't want to give it to me now. He said he would like to give it to me at the team meeting ... so I had time to prepare what to say and so complete the prophecy, which was fun. A big chunk of the debt was eliminated that year and

right now as I type this, it is almost completely paid off.

I never felt like I was swimming the race very well, realising that all along I had been relying on my own strength and not relying on God. All along God has been so wonderful to me so many times over so many years.

God's love is not based on my performance. There was a day when God set me up and said to me: "Paul, you have been measured and found wanting but Jesus was measured on your behalf and found more than enough in every way." This was another wonderful bright light in a dark moment.

For most of the time "living the dream" was not much fun. I spent a lot of time crying out to God. Sharing and prayer times at our monthly meetings

have been hugely helpful for me. Knowing that through Jesus I am a son of our Father and these blokes are my brothers. Choosing to praise each day and declaring that which God has said is true and thanking Him for these truths, has been crucial. He truly is my provider. My cup overflows - on days when I feel like it and on days when I don't.

At the FGBMFI regional camp this year a few things came together for me and God made it obvious that through all this He has been developing wider and deeper trust in Him as the foundation of my life. I guess there is some more building coming up.

Paul Bernard, Dunedin Chapter

From The National President's Desk

Sleep with your Boots On.

Recently I saw a bumper sticker on a car, which I rather like, "Eat dessert first, life is uncertain".

The world scene sure is changing fast in this 21st century.

Koom Jong Oong, or whatever his name is, is going to blow us all to bits, unless Donald Trump beats him to the draw. The Middle East is so busy fighting among themselves, they are self-destructing. Jacinda is making us employers pay higher wages. Woe is Me.

It's all very exciting, don't you think? Yeh right!

For us as Christians, we don't need to dwell on the "What if's", because we know someone who has a plan and a purpose for our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Proverbs 16 :3,4 "Commit to the Lord whatever you do and he will establish your plans. The Lord works out everything to its proper end, even the wicked for a day of disaster."

Yes, there are trials and tribulations for many of us along the way.

As that old song says, "We have an anchor that keeps the Soul, steadfast and sure while the billows (waves) roll."

I have encountered many times, particularly in business, when things looked pretty grim, but the God factor kicks in and the bleak circumstances get miraculously turned to blessing.

In the last few weeks, one of my adult daughters has had a brain tumour removed (praise God, it was benign) she has 4 children and she will be out of action for about 12 weeks.

Linda and I both laid hands on her and prayed a blessing on her as she went into the hospital and we prayed with her after she came out of the operation. (The prayer of blessing upon the children by Godly parents is very powerful.)

Praise God all went well and its mainly recovery time over the next 10 to 12 weeks.

Who else can we turn to in our times of need, but the Lord. Our Future is in his hands.

How are you sleeping at night? Do you toss and turn with worry and stress? I don't, (well not very often, only when I worry!).

Look at 1 Samuel 13: 22 *"On the day of the battle, not one soldier with King Saul had a sword or spear".*



Not exactly a recipe for success in battle, or a positive future!!!, but read on in Chapter 14:6, Just two men, with a trust in God, turns the tide and wins the battle.

V6 They said, "Let's go over there, perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf".

Sometimes we just have to put legs on our prayers and move forward into the battle.

Our National Secretary John Speirs, has been compiling a list of prophesies given over this Nation, over the last 40 years.

Many ministries visiting this nation, have been saying something is about to happen.

John has been poking us all with a sharp stick, he's a visionary, me personally, my attention span is about 12 months out, either direction.

Get prepared now, he keeps saying, don't wait until the time comes, be prepared, do it now. (He sounds just like my wife!)

Me, I'm a person who can only see a certain distance ahead, I'm a little slower off the mark, but like the tortoise, I get there in the end, right up front with the finishing bunch.

But what I do see and hear clearly is this: *Sleep with your boots on, something is about to happen.*

Be prepared and ready to spring into action (and / or, be ready to be taken up with the Lord).

(I am sure my wife will make sure I keep my boots nice and clean and shiny, ready for the day.)

Are your boots clean and ready as well? Otherwise you will have very grubby sheets and your wife will not be happy at all.

Happy wife, happy life.

Blessings and peace amidst life's battles.

Graham Eagle, National President.

The Mountain Experience

Before the year 2000, once a month, the Saturday prior to our usual chapter dinner meeting, some of our chapter members would meet for prayer and breakfast at a member's house.

At that time, Jagdish Sudhakar was president of the Royal Oak chapter and Amyas Storey was President of the Mt Albert chapter. Both chapters were in recovery from low numbers. At one of our joint dinner meetings, Amyas mentioned to Jagdish, " Let's join together and take our prayers up Mt Roskill and pray as Jesus did, up the mountain." So prayer on Mt Roskill began once a month.

As our combined mountain prayer experience continued, our chapters started to grow. At one dinner meeting at a cafe in Blockhouse Bay the meeting was packed out, spilling out of the entrance on to the footpath.

WHICH MOUNTAIN

Brian Alexander rang Amyas to say "The brochure Len has printed says: 'Come pray on Mt Albert', not Mt Roskill. What do we do? "

So we changed to Mt Albert. Our Lord works in mysterious ways.

THE LORD SPEAKS

One beautiful morning on 31st December, after a time of prayer, during the peace filled pause that

followed, Jesus spoke to Amyas, "Only once a month?"

Herb Robertson then pointed to the concrete where the inscription "PS 77" was imbedded. Presumably someone whose initials were PS



impressed those initials into the concrete in 1977. Herb opened his bible and read:

Psalm 77, "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice: and he gave ear unto me."

30 years later (2007), Psalm 77 was read out on the mountain. Then Herb prophesied that our prayers would go from the east to the west, from the south to the north.

THE MIRACLES

Mrs Rangi was in an Australian hospital, having suffered blood poisoning through a medical event. Her life support was about to be turned off. Our group prayed that when the life support machine

was turned off she would wake up and live "in Jesus' name". So, the family gathered around to say goodbye. They turned off life support. When the tubes were removed she sat up and said, " What are you all doing here? " and lived.



Left to right. David Edgar, Patricia Cooke, Brian Alexander (back), Steven Dunn (forward), George Matatia (front), Lindsay Lightfoot (middle), John Dunn (behind), Ben Hall (rear), Joseph Panakel, Amyas Storey.

HELEN CLARK HAS A WAKE UP CALL

Our group prayed she would have an experience to bring her to call upon God and get a new job. A light door on her plane flight flew open and her body guard had to hold it shut. Later on she had a new job.

SAMUEL RANGI COMES HOME TO THE LORD.

Our group prayed to the four winds for Samuel. He was overgrown by hair, an unkempt drunk who was doped senseless in Christchurch. He woke up, got a haircut, a job and with his first pay-check bought Bibles for his family.

A SUPER BROTHEL FOR AUCKLAND.

The Chow brothers had all their plans in place, the finance and land. Auckland was getting a super brothel less than a kilometre and a half from the casino.

Our group prayed against this, (many other Christians did), that they would be obstructed, frustrated and defeated; that they would be transformed into Christ and put their money to good use. Now they build houses in Christchurch.

UPHOLDING FGBMFI leadership, National Board, Regional Directors, chapter Presidents and members in prayer. The mountain experience in Jesus is focused, but Holy Spirit guides the direction of that focus. We always remember that Jesus is the healer.

THE BLESSING

"Coming down from the mountain is like stepping down in Kingdom time, life seems to be in a different colour," says Amyas.

"You really miss it when you don't come up the mountain, things just don't seem right!" says Steven Dunn.

BREAKFAST AT DENNY'S

These days we pray and have fellowship weekly from 7am on top of Mt Albert till 8am; then breakfast at Denny's, New Lynn at 8.15am table 30, the experience is awesome.



Left to right. Amyas Storey (front), Patricia Cooke, John Dunn, Steven Dunn (rear), David Edgar (front RHS), Brian Alexander (behind), John Phin, Ben Hall, Lindsay Lightfoot.

The Greatest Typo

A new monk arrives at the monastery. He is assigned to help the other monks in copying the old texts by hand. He notices, however, that they are copying from copies, and not from the original books.

So, the new monk goes to the head monk to ask him about this. He points out that if there was an error in the first copy, that error would be continued in all of the other copies. The head monk says, "We have been copying from the copies for centuries, but you make a good point, my son."

So, he goes down into the cellar with one of the copies to check it against the original. Hours later, nobody has seen him. So, one of the monks goes downstairs to look for him. He hears sobbing coming from the back of the cellar and finds the old monk leaning over one of the original books crying. He asks what's wrong.

"The word is 'celebrate'," says the old monk.

Chapter Tips

As I travel around the region and talk to others across the country it is obvious that a number of chapters struggle to maintain a healthy bank balance. Therefore, chapter executives can lack confidence to plan and undertake activities that will impact their community for Jesus.

The finance arena has changed significantly in New Zealand in recent years, with electronic transactions becoming the norm rather than the cash and checks of a decade or two ago. Many people (especially younger ones) no longer carry cash and if we rely solely on people putting their hand in their pocket to give at meetings we will find it harder and harder to make ends meet.

One method that we have successfully used in Dunedin is to encourage our members to set up an automatic payment to the chapter. This provides a regular income into the chapter account and allows us to plan ahead with some certainty.

Recently the chapter was able to bring Jimmy Njino across from Australia to the city for four days of meetings. Total costs for this were in excess of \$4000, but we had confidence to proceed because we had a base funding method we could rely on, this was then supplemented by offerings and donations.

I would encourage chapters to consider this and other new methods of funding our activities in a changing financial environment.

John Speirs, Regional Director

I have found that by **Texting** out meeting reminders several times in the week leading up to our meetings, that attendance has improved. I would encourage you to give it a try.

Also, at our recent end of year fellowship meeting we brought in a catering pack of Subway for a meal and this worked very well. It's not expensive but has a variety of options and is healthy.

Mike Bunt, President Taieri Chapter

Several chapters are now using Facebook to communicate and advertise their meetings. If we wish to reach a younger generation we need to adopt their means of communication to make ourselves relevant.

There is plenty of advice on how to set up a Facebook page on YouTube, you could start with <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KO3tK8YBJc> which explains how to set up a new Facebook group. He makes it a closed group, so if you wanted to set one up to mainly advertise meetings or publicise events then you would want a public group so that all can see the posts (i.e. notices).

Steve Spring, Regional Director