

VISION

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From Depression, To Transformation

God is amazing and Jesus Christ is Lord. Every day God proves to me how good & how faithful He is in every area and detail of life, in the big and in the small. I am increasingly becoming aware of God's Holy Spirit as guide, strengthener and comforter through the ups and downs of life.

I am currently a self-employed arborist since July 2021 after having worked for over 10 years for the Hamilton City Council. While at the Council I spent 18 months as a grounds person at the zoo, 6 years on the tools as an arborist and 3.5 years as supervisor of 11 other arborists.

I have been married to Julie for 27 years. We have 3 girls and 2 boys, aged 24 to 16 with 2 year gaps. This is our 12th year of living in Hamilton, having shifted up from Taranaki at the start of 2010. Julie and I were both born in Stratford. She was a townie. I grew up on a family sheep and beef farm at Strathmore on the Forgotten World Highway which is halfway between Stratford and the 'Republic of Whangamomona'.

When our children left the Huiakama School the role dropped from 16 down to 12. Our kids had to adjust to a new life in Hamilton with school roles of over 500 kids. I first met Julie in the Stratford Baptist Church youth group (we later married in the same Church). After she had been away

overseas for 5 years, God brought us together in a way that only He could do.

Most of my early life growing up on the farm was in a lonely and dark environment in a spiritual sense. I was the younger of 2 brothers. Mum's

parents owned the farm. Mum met Dad at a local dance where he was working as a leading hand in the Te Wera State Forestry.

Fathers play a massive role in any child's life, whether it is for good or for bad. My Dad had a difficult childhood with an over tough father, having to work long hours even before school and then often falling asleep in class because he was so tired. He went to Ardmore Training

College to become a teacher where he suffered a mental breakdown because of overwhelming pressures on his life.

This led to many years of going in and out of psychiatric hospitals and many years on all sorts of medication. He had several good years in amongst the bad ones and he always tried hard to do the best for our family. It was really hard as a young person to understand why my Dad wasn't always there when I needed him, and why it was so hard to tell what sort of mood he would be in when he was at home or why his hands would always shake so much, particularly when he was taking his pills or trying to hold onto a cup of tea.



Mum's father was a strong supporter of the Masonic Lodge and he introduced my Dad to the Lodge, which was the last thing he needed in his current mental state. The Lodge, to its credit, helped our family out many times when Dad wasn't around. I am forever grateful for their support. Sadly, all lodge members have to swear oaths. Those oaths are directed to Satan and his underlying demonic powers, although the lodge members are ignorant of that fact. Lodge membership brings curses to the member's family to the 3rd & 4th generations.



Washingtonia Palm removal at Te Rapa

I can remember hearing lots of voices when I was young. At the time I had no clue that one of them would have been the God of the Universe telling me that he loved me and had special plans for my life. Other voices I heard told me that I was going to end up like Dad and that there was no point in planning for the future because there wasn't any.

I had no knowledge or awareness of God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, so I had no power whatsoever to control my thoughts or to protect my mind. The greatest battles in life are in our minds. If you are in a dark and hopeless place you can reach out right now and open up your life to God, the One who made you. The Bible is God's owner's manual for life. God wants to transform your life by the renewing of your mind and heart and to bring every thought captive to the Word of God.

In my early high school years I found a pornographic magazine in my brother's drawer. This put my mind even more on the back foot and started a long term addiction. However, God has

the power to set us free from its deadly tentacles. I was very lonely, mixed up, and it was hard watching my brother who was hardly ever without a girlfriend.

I made it through 4 years at Stratford High School with 1 hour of travelling on 2 different buses each day. I still had no idea what I wanted to do in life so I defaulted to what was right in front of me, that is the farm. Hindsight is a great thing and it is very obvious now that neither I nor my Dad were designed to be farmers. It is vitally important as parents to pray for and encourage your children to truly discover their strengths and their passions.

I went to Flock House Farm training school for 1 year, following my brother in what he did without really thinking for myself. I was given the same nickname as my brother and I continued to struggle with an ongoing identity crisis. At the end of that year I came to a major cross-roads where I could sense a certain freedom after my first year away from home. I saw how good it would be to get a job away from home to continue in that freedom. The flip side of that freedom was a feeling of obligation to go home and help out because they needed me. I chose to return home to the farm.

Back on the farm I enjoyed belonging to the Toko Young Farmers Club, playing rugby for Whangamomona and helping neighbours out with shearing and haymaking. The farm and family life was still hard. Without realizing it I started to slip into a state of depression.



Deadwooding a gum tree at the Hamilton Lake Domain

Depression is a really hard condition to deal with for the person and the family and others. I eventually wanted to get away from the farm and

go somewhere different. I ended up driving round parts of the North Island, meeting up with family and friends. Many people shared with me how they had invited God into their lives and that He promised to help them no matter what they were going through.

I ended up in the far North where I fell in love with a beautiful English girl for all of about four days before she left for Australia. I then drove to my Auntie's place in New Lynn, Auckland where I sat on the couch reading her scripture posters on the wall. She would have been out on the step praying for me. After a while I called out to her and asked her how to become born again. I prayed the sinner's prayer and accepted Jesus Christ into my life to be my Lord & Saviour on the 31st March, 1986. This happened to be Easter Monday at the time.

Going back to the farm was even more of a battle. The next 3 years were really hard as my new found life in Jesus started to confront the old strongholds of freemasonry and pornography as well as depression and loneliness. Life was a major roller coaster until September 1989 when I truly learnt to be still and know that God is God and that life is not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of God. I drew a line in the sand at that point to seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness. I began a long journey towards growing in faith and grace, allowing God to change and heal and restore all of my brokenness and painful memories. Today I testify that God has set me free from depression, pornography, loneliness and the curses passed on by freemasonry. The key to staying free is to stay in God's Word (the Bible) every day. Speak it out, meditate on it, memorise it and become a doer of the Word. He will indeed transform our lives by renewing our minds and hearts through the Word.

When I was young I believed a lie from the enemy that I had no future. Now God's Word tells me that He knows and directs his thoughts towards me, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give me a future and a hope. God's Word tells me that He puts the lonely and solitary into families, that He restores all of the years that the locusts have eaten, and that as I wait on him, I will mount up with eagle's wings to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

God has given me a wonderful wife and family, a new career that I am very passionate about and strength to still enjoy it at an older age. Most of all, God helps us to forgive and to move on into the rich inheritance that He has for each of us. God's Word says it and I believe it.

Julie and I are involved with the Gateway Church in Hamilton which has been a great network for our family to grow in God. I have helped out with intermediate age Kids Church for the past 8 years and am currently on the prayer team roster. I really enjoy going to FGBMFI meetings when I am able to but have not been as active as when I was in Taranaki. I am very grateful for many years of prayer and encouragement that I have received from being part of the Fellowship.



Removing a Rook nest at Fitzroy Park, Hamilton

I cannot testify at this time of having led lots of people to the Lord but I do firmly believe that there is a mighty harvest coming and that after many years in the wilderness, God has placed me in His Kingdom for such a time as this. He is beginning to pour out streams of water in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

If you are reading my story today and are struggling, have faith, hope and courage to face the future. It may be your marriage, your job, your health, your family, your finances, maybe hidden addictions and sins that only you and God know about. You may be reading my story and have never ever given your life to God. You may be thinking to yourself that God might be worth a try. Open your heart and life to Him and you will never be disappointed.

Matthew Harrison, Hamilton Chapter

Purpose, Vision and Generous Provision

The fresh testimony of the Te Awamutu Chapter

For the past couple of years our committee has agreed to pledge \$1,000 a year to the National Office of FGBMFI. This has been our contribution towards the administration costs of successfully operating the National Fellowship. Because of the Covid lockdowns, as with several other chapters, we held no meetings between October last year and June this year. Financially the wheels fell off without receiving regular offerings at our monthly meetings. We had accumulated enough in our account to pay the full amount of our pledge by the end of May, but we had little left in the kitty for the future. At our May committee meeting I suggesting that we ask our members in our monthly newsletter to consider making a generous offering, aiming for a goal of \$500 at our June meeting. They agreed with me. We added the chapter bank account number in the newsletter to enable payment by internet banking. (I also wear the treasurer's hat.)

Come the June Meeting, at the appropriate time, pots were passed around and the meeting continued. The pots were stashed away in my meeting box. I counted the takings the next morning. I was astonished to find a number of pink rectangular pieces of paper and some green ones that added up to \$450. Wow! Then I checked the deposits into our account and found that three members had contributed \$500 among them. Another blessed moment! So the members had given \$950 to replenish our kitty. Praise the Lord! He is the one who prompts people to give freely.

Two chapters are giving \$1,000 or more annually for our National office. Only a dozen members gave our generous offering. I am challenging other chapters to lift their vision for giving so that their chapter can bless the important ministry of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship across the nation. It's not about the size of the chapter, but the size of our supportive vision for FGBMFI NZ.

Rod Bent, Te Awamutu Chapter

En Hakkore Camp

Every time I've been to an En Hakkore camp, something has changed. Healings, deliverance, new insights, spiritual advancements.... God is always doing something. This time was no exception.

The journey to camp with others is part of the experience as well. Friday was a good chance to catch up with those from further afield. It is really good to see people making the journey from Kaikoura and Christchurch. For the evening session Paul Bernard shared stories from his testimony... although I'm sure he could have shared all night about the goodness of God and Paul's deepening relationship with God. Some of the key themes from his stories were trust, being really honest with God and to keep presenting our lives as an offering to Jesus. Paul then prayed for those who related to some of his struggles and experiences, while others went to talk over a hot beverage and a biscuit.

The next morning Paul was leading the prayer meeting. In my experience from previous years,

these meetings are a great time to talk and hear from God. Also a great chance to express our praise for Him. Following breakfast John Satterthwaite led a worship time accompanied by Steve Taylor



on guitar and keyboard with Paul Evans on bass. We were honoured to have excellent musicians prepared to press into where God was moving. Our main speaker Raj Kumar was officially introduced, though he had been present for all the previous sessions, even when he wasn't the speaker, which impressed me. Raj had interesting testimonies from his time in the police, life in Fiji and how God started revealing Himself after Raj moved to New Zealand.



Our newly minted Regional Director Michael Miller then led a small group brainstorming session asking each group to discuss strategies for reaching more people and being more effective as an organisation. This might sound a bit boring, but I actually really enjoyed hearing other perspectives on these themes. There was a free time after lunch. Some people sought ministry, while others enjoyed a walk in the quiet beauty of the location or simply took the opportunity for a quiet recharge. This meant we came in fresh for Raj's second session and were able to clearly listen and digest what he was saying. Raj focused on the spiritual battle that is going on around us - often when we aren't aware of it. Because such a battle would cost us blood, sweat and tears, preparation is vital but Jesus is more powerful than any government or principality. I felt that I needed to stop coasting and become more aware of and engaging more seriously with life in the spiritual realm.

Every time Raj would prophesy over someone, he would ask "Father, what do you have for your son?" This intimate approach reminded us that we rely on God's Spirit, not our own strength. Raj prayed for everyone at least once, some people went up a few times. This wasn't the only opportunity for

prayer. It happened at all sorts of places between us - at meals, outside, in corridors - God is everywhere after all!

There was a public meeting in the evening. Residents of En Hakkore joined us. Raj asked us how committed we truly were. I don't think many of us really understood what he was actually asking. Raj spoke passionately about how it was important to be all in and have hunger for God in tough situations. One illustration he used was that

to make wine, grapes need to be crushed, otherwise they dry out and become sultanas. Only the best wine makes it to the table for the King.

On Sunday morning Raj spoke on the importance of worship and how that it could lead to deliverance. The worship on Sunday morning was something different. A new level was reached. After a time of singing, the chairs were cleared away and we were encouraged by Mike Jenkins to dance. We had a time of worshipping in



the Spirit leading into a time of prayer for those in positions of chapter leadership. As can happen when the Spirit is in control, things like staying to the schedule become less important. We had a time of testimonies before lunch and thanked the cooks for their wonderful gift of serving. Before long it was time to clean and pack up. This was another successful camp, but like all the others, unique. I feel God was highlighting how important the spiritual realm is and how it affects daily life even though we aren't always aware.

Ross Calverley, Dunedin Chapter