

Why I am a Christian

Pat Subritzky



DOVE
MINISTRIES

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Foreword

I am often asked why I am a Christian.
The following pages give the answer....

Dedication

To my husband Bill who has always been
an encouragement to me.

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Introduction

I never dreamed of the roller coaster ride that my life would undertake when I married Bill Subritzky, a struggling lawyer so poor that he borrowed money from me for our honeymoon.

Since that day life has been a blur involving business success, child rearing, marriage breakdowns, conversion to Christ and, finally, a very public international ministry.

If anybody had predicted such a progression before we married I would have laughed or cried. I never wanted a high profile Christian ministry and I had no desire to be called to evangelism, though I have had leanings that way for most of my life and have seen large numbers of people won for Christ. I certainly never dreamed that God would catapult me into teaching Christian truths to thousands of women worldwide!

But looking back I can see God's hand leading me through countless ups and downs to a position where He has been able to use me in these and other roles.

This book aims to record His faithfulness in the course of my life and ministry, and it brings with it the hope and prayer that those who read it will be encouraged and stimulated to greater endeavour in their faith and works for God.

In the Beginning

It wasn't much of a childhood, really though it was adequate, I suppose. We were fed, loved and, in general, clothed sufficiently. It provided a foundation from which I could enter the wider world and live a sound, moral life.

I was the middle child of thirteen with six brothers and sisters above me and six brothers below me. I was the filling in the sandwich. As an inbetween child, I was not really one of the older children and yet too old to fully fit in with the younger children.

Our life was centred around the railway line which runs the length of the North Island of New Zealand – from Wellington in the south to Auckland and beyond in the north.

My father worked with the Railways, beginning as a track worker and finishing up as a stationmaster. So we were always tied to the main trunk line – at various times living in Taihape, Mataroa and Ohingaiti, all of them in the King Country.

As a father he was rather severe. He rarely smiled or laughed, and he believed in obedience - instant obedience. Those who didn't obey knew they would be punished severely with the strap. At times Dad was so tough that my mother would throw herself between him and the offending child to try and stop his onslaught.

My ten brothers felt this side of Dad's nature more than I did. In fact, I can recall only one beating, but that was memorable indeed, as I had to be hauled out from under a bed before being disciplined in no uncertain terms.

Yet despite his severity, Dad was a good man. He loved us and he demanded such a high standard for our sake as much as his.

Dad worked hard, struggling in those Depression years to keep the family going. He milked the cows early in the morning, then did a day's work with the Railways before returning home to milk once more. He did his best for his family, providing for us and giving us stability. He instilled in me attributes which would be important in later years – particularly perseverance and a determination to learn and succeed.

My mother too was a hard worker. Her days consisted of attending to the children (she had nappies to deal with for more than fifteen years), preparing meals and not much else. That was a full-time job and more, much more. In her busiest years she would often fall into bed fully clad, exhausted at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, Dad never really allowed her to fully blossom as a person. She had so much to offer, but was terribly restricted by him. Yet she didn't ever complain, always deferring to him.

She warned me not to have more than four children which was sound advice and later fulfilled to the letter. One of the most precious

things my mother taught me was always to be forward looking, not to live in the past, and to be able to communicate with young people. At seventy-two years of age, Mum could do the twist with the best of us – in fact she was a great dancer, and taught all of her children to dance. I just hope I have some of her freshness of approach when I get to that age.

We were a close family. We had to be, I suppose. With so many children there wasn't much time or room for friends. The children were expected to help with the chores as soon as they were old enough. Night and morning, the boys helped Dad with the milking and other 'male' tasks, while the girls were assigned to assist Mum in her work. Many times I had to help with the washing or churning the milk before setting off for school.

Despite the undoubted love within the family, there was no outward show of affection. We had no toys, or books. We just had to make do with whatever was around, and so the boys often played football in the paddock out the back.

I did have a doll, once. That was until a group of us were pretending to be Santa Claus giving out presents. I wrapped up a beautiful porcelain doll that my mother had bought as my Christmas present, but one of the boys carelessly threw it on the floor and smashed it to smithereens. He replaced it, but with a rag doll. However, it was never the same. I still

yearn to have a beautiful doll on my bed.

Our first house, built by my father, consisted of four walls and a tarpaulin (“borrowed” from the Railways) for the roof. Later we moved to a larger house, still primitive by today’s standards but a great advance on the first place. To accommodate the growing number of children it was necessary to sleep four to a room, sometimes top and tail in the same bed. My father built a dining table to seat fifteen people, and as it was built inside there was no way it could ever be removed.

Home wasn’t a place I loved, or where I longed to be. It wasn’t special. It was just a place for food, and shelter.

I have never forgotten the words of a text on my bedroom wall: “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Throughout my childhood and beyond, I knew the natural outworking of this saying, because in each stage of my life there has been a special friend – at primary school, secondary school, in my working career and during my married life. But it wasn’t to be until much later in life that I discovered what the text really meant.

Childhood with so many children was full of incidents, some funny in retrospect, some still sad. I well remember my brothers being lined up, ten heads of hair to be taken care of and one pair of fatherly hands with the shears. My father would take hold of a tuft of hair at the front and shear everything else to within a centimetre. The McCulloughs were certainly known by their haircuts.

Then there was the time when one of my brothers, Arthur, contracted diphtheria and as a precaution the rest of us were dosed with a mixture of sulphur and kerosene. My mother formed a funnel of paper, put the mixture in the funnel and placed it in our mouths towards our throats then blew down the funnel. We also had our throats swabbed for good measure.

In 1939, world events were to overtake even our isolated and simple existence in the King Country. Two of my brothers, Jack and Ron went off to war, breaking up our close-knit family unit for all time. Both boys survived, but during the war our family did undergo a tragedy when another brother, Gordon, died in a motor bike accident. He was just twenty.

With modern medicines and techniques he probably would have survived. In those days there was no such luxury and after three days he died. It was my first experience of losing someone close to me. The smell of spring flowers still reminds me of funerals.

We kept our grief pretty much to ourselves. In those days, and especially in our family, you didn't express such things outwardly. But we hurt, and hurt badly, just as much as other families we knew who had lost sons in the war. Sometimes my mother, stricken by the loss, would go to Gordon's clothes and handle them. But in general we just got on with life. That was the done thing.

Our second tragic experience was quite different, but equally shattering. It came on a

hot summer's day when we were swimming in the river which ran through our property. I'm not sure whether it was the smell of smoke, or my mother's yelling that first alerted us, but by the time we scrambled back up the hill our house was well ablaze. Apparently it was caused by a spark from the copper. It was all over very quickly. Mum only had time to snatch the sleeping baby from his bed and pluck a few photographs off the wall, then scurry from the house.

It was a horrible feeling watching our house burn. Memories and fears flooded my mind, threatening to overwhelm me. Good times and bad; the possessions I would never see again, and the horrible, gnawing fear about what would happen to me now.

That night we gathered at a neighbour's house and the children were split up and sent to different homes. The town of Taihape responded wonderfully, sending boxes of food and clothes. Dad had a small insurance policy, and that replaced some furniture and other essentials, but it was a devastating blow from which we had to recover.

Not long after my father was given a new position eighty kilometres south, in Ohingaiti. We tried to leave our memories and past behind as we began again in a new setting. It took me years to fully recover. Every night when the earth shook and lights flooded my bedroom as the trains went past, I would wake terrified that the house was on fire again.

Evangelism in a Vacuum

God has had His hand on my life since the day I was born – of that I have no doubt. As a child, there was little encouragement to attend church, read my Bible or pray – but I felt drawn to these activities almost instinctively. I was the only member of the family who seemed to have such desires.

My father never went to church, though he had a staunch Presbyterian background and knew his Bible well. That's where he got his moral standards. My mother only went to church if I pressed her, or if it was a special occasion.

I went, faithfully, every Sunday and I was christened, along with my brothers and sisters, in the Anglican Church – we were “done” in groups because there were so many of us. Most of the family went on to get confirmed when they were twelve or thirteen because it was the accepted thing to do.

My commitment to the church went further than that. I was confirmed because I believed with all my heart it was what I had to do. I even took correspondence confirmation classes because there was no one in the vicinity who could teach me.

I always seemed to have this natural attraction to Christian things and wanted to

know more about God, to know God Himself. It seems incredible, in retrospect, that despite my whole-hearted and devoted commitment, no one ever once asked whether I knew the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. If I had been asked, I would have had to say, "No". But that didn't seem to be important – being a good girl and attending regularly mattered most. I prayed, but there was no reality and definitely no expectation that God would answer. It was to be years before I really understood about a personal God who answers prayer. Not that this vital omission dimmed my enthusiasm for church.

When I was in my teens, my father decreed that my younger brothers needed to attend the local Anglican Church to learn the difference between right and wrong. It was my job to enforce his decision.

My mother and I washed six sets of feet, hands, faces, and combed their hair. I had to make sure the boys had their memory verse tickets, and could recite them off pat. Then we all marched off to morning church.

In the afternoon I rounded up more children and took them to the local Brethren Church. One of my brothers remembers me as being forever at church. I even won a prize for taking the most new children.

Little did I realise that it was an early sign of God's call to evangelism on my life. But it was evangelism in a vacuum because for all my dedication, I still hadn't found new life in Christ myself.

Communion was particularly important to me. After confirmation I was allowed to take the bread and the wine with the adults, and was thrilled by the opportunity to spend time thinking about God and anything in my life that troubled me. It was a special time, a time alone with God and I never missed it.

From there I went on to teach Sunday school and Bible class. This was where I did my learning. I had no particular Bible knowledge, and each week I had to learn the material to keep a step ahead of the class.

But I applied myself to the task and ultimately learned the Bible quite well - though I still didn't know Jesus in a personal way.

My secular education was achieved in a similar seat-of-the-pants kind of manner. I was the first in my family to attend high school. The others had all left to find work by the end of their primary years - but I had a strong desire to learn and advance myself. I suppose this was inherited from my father, who always strove to better himself despite his lack of education. At one time I begged him to let me stay at school another year, and to his everlasting credit he allowed me to, even though it meant considerable financial sacrifice.

We had no children's books at home, and this was a major disadvantage to my early education as I couldn't read like other children.

School was always a challenge to me. Some may have been daunted, even put off, by the

disadvantages, but I thrived on it. It was hard at times, feeling inferior to more intelligent and better prepared classmates, but my father's competitive streak came to the fore, making me determined to succeed. I took mainly commercial subjects and ultimately did rather well, even winning prizes in bookkeeping, typing and shorthand.

Education proved to be my ticket out of the King Country, because it formed the basis for a secretarial career. The Second World War was well under way, and when I finished my schooling I got a job in the capital city, Wellington, releasing another man for the war effort.

After training for six weeks as a telegraphist, I went to work in a job at the telegraph department which involved, among other things, taking coded messages.

I was seventeen, new to city life and naive, but quickly saw the possibilities that Wellington offered in terms of entertainment and enjoyment.

Initially I lived in a hostel and then flatbed with my older sister, Ann. We hadn't been that close as children but thrown together in a big city we became inseparable.

One of the main attractions of Wellington was the American soldiers, as most of our own men were overseas in the armed forces. I could see the American ships coming into the harbour from my office window and Ann and I had a great time going to dances and dating the men who swarmed ashore from them.

We didn't go crazy. We didn't drink or smoke and I always adhered to my decision to reserve my body for the man I would marry. The sexual pressure wasn't too great in those days and if any man got too forward I had no hesitation telling him where I stood.

We had tremendous fun, dating and dancing. I was rather tough on my boyfriends, though. As soon as they showed undue interest in a longterm relationship, I ditched them and moved on to the next. It was a case of being cruel to be kind. I was out for fun at that stage, not commitment.

Yet over the years I became increasingly aware of what I wanted in the man I would marry – and one of the top priorities was money. I had no intention of eking out a living for the rest of my life like my mother had to do. I wanted a man who could provide, and provide in style. In fact I dropped one boyfriend simply because his only ambition was to be a grocer, and that didn't sound nearly profitable enough for me.

After four years in Wellington my firm transferred me to its Auckland office for a month. As soon as I got there I knew I wouldn't be going back. Auckland was so much warmer and by now I had four brothers living in that city. Within a short time I had changed jobs four times. Ann had moved north too, and I was well settled in my new location.

We moved into a house close to where all my brothers were living, and set about

helping them with their washing, cooking and cleaning.

Within a few years my father, too, was transferred to Auckland and the family began to come back together again – though it would never be quite the same as in the King Country days.

The Right Man

Marriage wasn't an overwhelming desire during my late teens and early twenties, but I always knew that one day I wanted to be a wife and mother.

While dating a variety of men, I was always half on the lookout for Mr Right. I had various criteria for such a man. He had to be knowledgeable, like my father, someone I could respect and someone who either had money or the potential to make money. Love, funnily enough, wasn't that important.

I didn't know back then that I could pray and trust God to bring along the perfect partner. In those days my church life, while active and consistent, still didn't encompass a God who heard and answered such personal prayers. I prayed at times, of course, about the things which concerned me, but never really expected God to answer.

Yet despite such ignorance, God had it all in hand anyway. He knew my future, He knew

what was going to happen, and He gave me the right man as my husband.

I met Bill Subritzky in an unusual, almost rebellious sort of way. I had been going out with a Catholic man, Des, who played rugby for the Marist club. But after a tiff with him one day I went alone to a dance, feeling like a wallflower, rejected and forlorn, and then this handsome young man invited me to dance. Oh, how I loved to dance - and he could dance so well.

It didn't take me long to work out a strategy, not so much to catch Bill, but to get back at Des. "Would you take me to the Marist rugby ball?" I asked sweetly. "I'll pay, for both of us." And so the date was set, at my leading, and the relationship began. I made my point, too. I wore a stunning dress and we danced the night away. Des was there by himself!

Bill and I had plenty in common, we both came from poor backgrounds and we both aspired to make money. He was serious, educated and knowledgeable. It seemed an ideal match.

Not that our courtship was the most romantic of all time. Bill was studying hard to be a lawyer, and when he set his mind on something he wouldn't be swayed from it. We could go out only on Saturday and Sunday nights as a result.

I remember being surprised to realise that we had been seeing each other for three months (two months was my usual limit with a guy).

When nine months had passed, then a year,

I knew it must be serious but was content to allow the relationship to develop slowly, and to some extent to play second fiddle to Bill's studies.

After two years I decided I needed to know where I was going. I wasn't interested in wasting my life waiting for something which might never eventuate. So I gave Bill an ultimatum. Marry me within six months or goodbye. It wasn't long before I received my engagement ring.

The leadup to the wedding was dramatic, as about a month before the big day, I had a nervous breakdown. It began one night when I awoke feeling I was dying and hearing angels singing "Safe in the Arms of Jesus". The wedding preparations and overwork had taken toll of my nervous system and my body was collapsing.

It was touch and go for some time. I had to leave my job as a legal secretary (I had taken it up with the thought that one day I could help Bill). I would go shopping but have to flee the building because it seemed to be closing in on me. I would get the shakes at night. For a couple of weeks I could see only my minister because I kept breaking down and crying.

Even on my wedding day the minister, who was marvellous to me throughout, had to take me out of the reception for a while so I could relax and get myself together.

I never was cured as such, but over a period of months, even years, the pressure eased

and the symptoms appeared less and less frequently. Both Bill and I became adept at recognising the attack coming – particularly the tautness in the chest and breath – and we were careful to take it easy when such warning signs occurred.

That nightmare overshadowed some of the excitement of the wedding. But I made it, if only just. We were married in my local church in Newton.

It's supposed to be the greatest day in a girl's life, yet I don't remember much of the wedding because of the nervous breakdown and its ongoing effects. But I do recall the Sunday School children in the choir bringing tears to my eyes and an enjoyable, though not extravagant reception.

I also vividly remember two rather bizarre episodes relating to the wedding. The first was when Bill broke the key in the lock of the car boot as we got to the hotel for our wedding night. Inside was my night attire, and many other things, and I spent our first night together sleeping in Bill's pyjamas.

The second was Bill borrowing a hundred pounds from me for our honeymoon expenses in the Bay of Islands. I had saved it diligently to go to Australia, a longstanding ambition of mine, but lent it to him happily. I certainly didn't marry money – only the potential to make money!

Our early years of marriage were happy and fulfilling. Initially we lived with Bill's parents who had renovated some rooms to

accommodate us. This was a great help. We were still struggling financially as Bill strove to set up his law business.

It wasn't easy living with my inlaws. They were good living people, but they belonged to a closed Christian sect and our lifestyles didn't really match theirs. There were no radios in the house and dancing, which we both loved, was frowned upon.

Bill's parents didn't really approve of me. In fact, they had another girl, Dorothy, lined up as Bill's likely wife and my arrival on the scene upset their planning. I increased this alienation by showing Bill's mother my photograph album with pictures of many of the American servicemen I had dated – I called them my “passing parade”. This didn't go down well at all.

It was ironic, but both Des, my old Marist boyfriend, and Dorothy, Bill's intended wife, came into our lives later. I learned to my surprise one day that my hairdresser was Des' daughter, and then Bill employed Dorothy as his secretary for a time.

Despite her reservations about me, Bill's mother was a kind, generous woman who tried hard to accept me into the family. Unfortunately, we never really got time to know one another. Three months after the wedding I watched her being driven out the driveway on her way to hospital, little knowing that she would never return. She had had serious asthma for years, and this time she needed an operation. Although

this was successful, complications set in afterwards and she died not long after.

Four months later Bill's father remarried, selling the house to us and moving away – making Bill's family home our family home.

I initially helped Bill in his new practice and then turned my attention to motherhood. Janne was born a couple of years after we married. Two years later I had Paul, and Maria arrived after a similar gap.

I thought that was my lot, and so I was unprepared for the arrival of my fourth child, John, five years after Maria. I dreaded the thought of five more years with a preschooler and when he arrived weighing in at eleven pounds, I thought I had produced an All Black! All Blacks are rugby players who represent our country wearing black jerseys embroidered with a silver fern. On the whole, they need to be muscular, big and strong. But John, like the other children, was delightful and when I got myself back into kilter I thoroughly enjoyed my children. I think my mother approved of the fact that I had taken her advice and had the recommended four children.

I was a faithful wife, a loving mother and the future looked rosy indeed. I couldn't have dreamed of the hell that was to come.

Worshipping Mammon

I first realised that our marriage had turned sour when I was seven months' pregnant with John. Until then I had been happy to be the devoted wife, raising the children and allowing Bill to develop his business. Bill would leave home early in the morning, often before the children and I arose, and get home late at night, after the children were in bed. He worked seven days, eighty hours or more a week. I didn't question the wisdom of this, just accepted it as the way it had to be. But I didn't realise, at least at the beginning, that this all consuming desire for wealth and success was killing our marriage and our family.

In the meantime, Bill became a stranger to his children – and to me. He was a devoted father in many ways, but he didn't have the time which is essential to develop relationships with young children.

And yet the wealth had its advantages, or so it seemed at the time. A boat appeared, a beach house and eventually a large home with spacious grounds and a swimming pool. We moved with a fast crowd and were constantly partying or planning to party. Our parties were outstanding events with rock bands, hula girls coming through the

banana palms, water ballet girls performing in our pool. The neighbours were constantly complaining about the noise, but we didn't care.

We seemed to have so many friends, and for a time I thought we had truly discovered what life was all about. In worldly terms, we had made it. We had a luxurious, stimulating and full lifestyle. We could afford the best of everything and we made the most of it.

We all took up snow and water skiing – the children began when they were five and became extremely proficient. Water skiing was my speciality and we skied throughout the winter with our yellow “dry” suits covering us from head to toe.

I even progressed to slalom and trick skiing competitions.

My skiing, both on the water and the snow, was assisted greatly by a “wonderful” little pill called Valium, which took away my nervousness. I didn't realise, however, that it could also become addictive.

So that was the high life. Money. Friends. Activity. But the emptiness of it all hit me one day like a sickening blow. I was seven months pregnant, feeling ugly and rejected, probably more emotional than usual, and desperately needing extra love and concern, and when I didn't receive it, I realised I wanted to get out of my marriage. Suddenly I could see through all the fake glamour and discern the falseness and futility of our lives.

Bill and I had drifted apart. Our marriage

had broken down without us even knowing. It hadn't been so bad at first, particularly as I had anticipated and then savoured the worldly benefits of Bill's devotion to work and money. But the strain I was under as a young mother raising a growing family with a nonexistent marriage relationship had to tell in the end.

I felt as if I was just an adjunct, albeit a necessary one, to Bill's booming law and business career. Despite the highs of all the partying, desolation and loneliness were creeping into my soul. Life was passing me by and I was desperately unhappy.

Home had become like a boarding house. There was little or no communication between Bill and me, even when we did see each other. I received no appreciation from him, and began to feel I was nothing more than a household slave.

I thought to myself, "If this is all there is to marriage and family, is it worth it?" It was against this background that I turned, inevitably, to my parents, who had seen it all coming but hadn't intervened. Their attitude was that you made your bed, you had to lie in it. So they said nothing, but tried in a variety of ways to help, including moving into our house at times to look after the children so Bill and I could go away and have time together.

My father, surprisingly for an agnostic, advised me to go to our minister. Bill and I were both still regular church attendees, and

Bill had risen to some fairly high lay positions in the Anglican Church. The minister's suggestion was, radical and surprising for someone in his position: "Tell Bill I have advised you to get a separation."

I readily agreed with that course of action. I was quite happy to leave him, such was the depth of my despair. And so one Sunday night, I waited for Bill to come home from church and told him of my decision. He was stunned. He didn't even know there was anything wrong in our relationship. How could he when we didn't communicate?

I don't know if the minister was serious that I should leave Bill – although I certainly was when I said it. He was, I'm sure, concerned for us and wanted the best for us both. Maybe he only suggested it to shock Bill into making changes. Whatever the reason, it worked.

Bill, typically, began to refocus his energy and time to work on our relationship and rebuilding the family. We worked hard and things improved remarkably. Before long our relationship was back on the track, although it still contained flaws which would be dealt with years later. I look back on those awful days and realise how right Jesus was when He said you can't worship God and mammon.

We had tried to do both and failed. We had attended church faithfully, christened our children and tried to live as properly as we knew how. But all the time we were carried

away by the god of money. Ultimately our kingdom had to crumble. All the wealth in the world can't heal the hurt and emptiness inside. Take it from someone who knows.

Meeting Jesus

During the following years we made strenuous attempts to improve our marriage. We were shaken, Bill especially so, by how close it had come to splitting asunder and were both driven by a desire to make it work – for our sake and the children's. We realised that we had to do more things together, and so we made time to go out to dinner, have friends around and arrange activities with the children.

Bill's business and law interests were well established by now, and so he had more time to dedicate to the family than previously. We began to talk, share and dream together. It was like starting off anew. But although we still attended church regularly, our efforts to restore and rebuild our marriage were made purely in our own strength.

We had no real relationship with God and didn't see the need to seek Him for direction or commit our lives wholly to Him.

And yet despite decades of attending church I still hadn't been introduced to salvation through Jesus Christ. I always knew there

was something lacking in my church life, and in my church itself.

I was still an evangelist of sorts. The days of rounding up my brothers and other children from the neighbourhood had long gone, but I was still regularly inviting others to various church social activities and even went door knocking with my children in their pushchair, looking for Anglicans who weren't attending church.

But somehow I knew that what my church was offering wouldn't help the people I brought along. I was bringing them to a structure, but not to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour. As a result, my fervent efforts were basically fruitless. It was against this background of dry church attendance and trying to piece together a rocky marriage on human strength that Bill and I came, inevitably, to a second crisis in our relationship.

Once again it began with a gradual falling away from the ideals we had embraced when we had got married and when we had made up the first time. The second breakdown was even worse than the first, if that was possible. We were further and further apart and our children were beginning to go in various, not altogether healthy, directions.

Things were so bad that I began to look for appreciation from elsewhere. Being the mother of four children, and having committed myself in marriage to one man didn't really come into it any more. It would

have been so easy to start a new relationship which would provide me with the things that Bill couldn't or wouldn't.

I believe I would have if God hadn't intervened. But amid all this turmoil, the Holy Spirit had begun to work in our family – beginning with perhaps the most open of us all, our younger daughter Maria. On Sunday evenings, Maria and I had begun attending a nearby charismatic Anglican service where they sang songs with a swing and the whole service was alive and vibrant.

The highlight of the service for me was the singing in the Spirit, or singing in tongues. When I closed my eyes and listened I felt as if I was hearing a heavenly orchestra. It was an introduction to a dimension of Christian life that I had never experienced or imagined.

At one of these services we listened to an American businessman from the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International speaking of being "born-again".

Maria, an Anglican like the rest of us, was fascinated and wanted to know more. So she bought a book, read it and was born-again and baptised in the Holy Spirit alone in her bedroom. Inevitably, her life was transformed. She radiated life and happiness. She couldn't stop talking about what she had experienced. And, most important of all, she began to pray for the rest of us.

I could see what had happened to Maria, and could only agree that it was a good thing. But it wasn't for me – at least, not yet. My life was

far from right and I wanted to straighten out some areas so that I could totally offer myself to serve Jesus Christ. Maria and I continued to attend the church, and while my marriage kept on deteriorating I began to find new hope and purpose in my spiritual life.

Here at last was something tangible, something life-changing which may indeed be the answer to my life's problems.

Eventually an Irish evangelist called Harry Greenwood came to speak at the church and Maria and I began attending his nightly meetings. I was immediately impressed by the man. He was so joyful, so happy and free, so human – not really like a preacher at all. He had been a drunken sailor in the British Navy and had a conversion testimony of coming from out of the pit of hell to the glorious knowledge of salvation in Christ.

Here was a man to whom I could relate, and I hung on his every word. He prayed for the sick, and I sat in wonder as I observed miraculous healings take place before my very eyes. By the time of his Saturday night meeting, we had persuaded Bill to come along. Both of us had knee problems caused by skiing, and the children half joked as we went out the door that we couldn't come back until we had been healed.

We were the last to arrive and the last to leave. Bill wouldn't allow himself to be prayed for while other people were present, so we waited until well past midnight for everyone else to leave. Finally it was just us and Harry

Greenwood. He prayed for our knees and it worked!

Over the next couple of weeks we were both healed. The Lord had begun to draw us to Himself. The Greenwood meetings became a talking point around the dinner table over the next few days. By now Harry had moved on to hold a series of meetings in Hamilton, a city a couple of hours drive south of Auckland.

On March 10, 1971 I decided to get ready early and go to Hamilton and hear more. Little did I know that Bill had decided the same thing. It was a sign of our appalling communication that we each didn't find out where the other was going until we were standing in the driveway about to get into our respective cars. The conversation went something like this:

Bill: "Where are you off to?"

Pat: "Hamilton."

Bill: "Me too. What for?"

Pat: "For the Harry Greenwood meeting."

Bill: "Me too. I suppose we might as well go together then."

And we did, along with our four children. That's where God truly met us in our time of greatest need. God often has to allow us to get to the depths of despair before He can reach down and pull us out.

We were desperate. Our lives were crumbling about us and the message of this jaunty Irish evangelist seemed about the only thing that

could help. We sat at the front - Bill wanted to see the healings for himself, his lawyer's brain determined to work it all out. I can still see it so clearly today, our whole family in a line, except Paul, who for some reason was sitting in front of me.

The songs were bright and lively, Harry's message was simple and the healings were impressive and faith building. At the end of it all, Harry directed everyone to close their eyes and bow their heads, then challenged us all to commit our lives to Christ and to indicate this commitment by raising our hands.

I peeked up and saw Paul's hand high in the air, and thought if it was good enough for him it was good enough for me. Little did I know that along my row Bill, Janne and John were doing exactly the same thing. Six months after Maria's commitment to Christ the rest of our family were following in her footsteps. We were led up the back and people began to pray for us for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I spoke in tongues immediately - almost as if the pent up religious endeavour of decades had finally found freedom and expression. The words of an unknown language poured out of my mouth, long and loud, like a machine gun bursting forth.

Bill also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and so did the other three. Maria tearfully watched on from the side, overwhelmed at God's mighty answer to prayer. That simple decision completely

transformed our lives. Our marriage was instantaneously, miraculously healed. Attitudes, emotions, lifestyle and expectations changed literally overnight.

Our communication returned because we wanted to talk to each other about the exciting things happening in our lives. Our church life came alive, our family life was invigorating. We discovered together a whole new world of music, reading and learning.

We expected answers to prayer and they came – no more firing off empty prayers and not expecting a reply. There didn't seem to be any limit to the changes God was able to bring. The old life dropped away easily. We no longer went to worldly parties, and we avoided attending functions merely to increase business contacts or to climb the social scale. Most of our old, superficial friends dropped us at this point, but they were replaced by people who cared about us and loved us just as we were.

In fact, everywhere we went we seemed to stumble across Christians. It was like children going to the beach and finding crabs under every stone. There seemed to be a vast number of people out there who shared our experience and joy, and we quickly adapted to the feeling of being part of the great universal family of God.

New patterns and attitudes emerged in my life, ones quite different from anything I had previously experienced. My Bible reading came alive and I immediately began to tell

others so that they might also be changed. The Holy Spirit had long been drawing me towards evangelism, the saving of souls.

While my previous efforts had been rather fruitless, now I was able to share with fervour and fire. Thankfully Bill shared the same desire. I finally knew what the text meant on my bedroom wall as a child. At last I had met the “true friend that sticketh closer than a brother”. I was forty-seven years old, but it seemed as if my life had just begun.

The Stretching Begins

I was hardly a natural when it came to public ministry – but it didn’t take long for God to begin stretching me far beyond my natural ability into areas which I never would have dreamed possible! Bill is a natural speaker, and had experience in law to back him, and not long after his conversion he began a widespread preaching and evangelistic ministry.

However, I had never been, and never wanted to be, a public figure. I was quite prepared to be a back-up to Bill. But God seemed to have different ideas and before long I, too, was being thrust into prominent Christian ministry positions.

My first real ministry as a new Christian was among the elderly people in our church. This

was significant, because I had previously tended to shun older folk because they seemed out-of-date and irrelevant to my lifestyle. But God created in my heart softness and love for the elderly that I can only describe as supernatural.

People became more important than things. Until then, possessions had been my main god but now the real God was teaching me about the importance of people, even those I had previously spurned.

The ministry to the elderly began after it dawned on me that many of those older people in the congregation had dedicated their lives to working for the church. I began to ask myself, and others, whether something could be done to give back to them some of the love, care and practical appreciation they had given out themselves and now surely deserved in return.

So I got together with a few other women and we decided to hold monthly functions for the “senior” members of the church, plus any others from the community who would like to attend. The meetings began with a church service, then an entertainment programme and ended with a home-baked morning tea.

The folks were picked up and returned home after the functions. All in all, it wasn't too hard an introduction to public ministry, but it did teach me valuable lessons about the importance God places on people.

From there, however, God seemed to turn up the heat on me as far as ministry was

concerned. Bill and I had, quite separately, developed a strong impression that we should start a prayer meeting in our home.

We began without any great fanfare, and about six people attended the first meeting in our lounge. From there, though, the numbers grew over the next eight years until we had to move to a larger venue.

It became a focal point for a huge number of Christians, who in some cases travelled long distances and even booked seats in advance. Before long we had two meetings simultaneously in our house – the main one in the lounge, and an overflow one, where people watched the events on closed-circuit television in the basement.

Thousands of people attended those meetings over the years, and hundreds upon hundreds committed their lives to Christ at them. God used these meetings to decisively deal with my materialistic streak. As the meetings began to swell in number, I became increasingly agitated about possible damage to my precious home. At one stage I put a note on all my new velvet covered chairs forbidding people to sit on them.

On another occasion I watched in horror as a tall man jumped enthusiastically to his feet during a meeting and smashed with his head my lovely petal glass light shade. It's still in pieces today! Bill found it much easier to let go of our possessions than I did, but it took incidents such as those for God to slowly teach me that everything I had was His and

that the people using the possessions were infinitely more precious than the possessions themselves.

Today I am willing to share everything – except my husband.

I began my Christian life terrified of saying anything in public. It took me six months at those prayer meetings in my own home to actually pray out loud, and even longer to feel confident to minister in my own right.

And just when I thought I had that aspect of life under control, God stretched me even further, this time by introducing me to public ministry. Bill's ministry was growing quickly by now, and people started asking me to say something at the start of his meetings.

At one meeting in Wellington, I was given five or ten minutes to speak before Bill came on. I prepared meticulously, as I always do, and began my address nervously but confident that I had done my homework to the best of my ability. But after a minute or two I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, that Bill was sitting on the edge of his chair, Bible in hand and radio microphone on and ready. He was obviously anxious to get going, and apparently impatient that I was taking so long.

I abruptly and lamely, closed my address and Bill was under way. Later I asked Bill what the hurry had been. "I was just being ready," he replied. "You didn't have to finish like you did".

I firmly told him not to do that to me again,

and the problem has never arisen since. These days when I speak he sits as far away from me as possible and either prays or seemingly takes no interest in what I am saying. The next major test of my public speaking ability was at a large conference in the United States where Bill was one of the main speakers. He said to me, "I'll need to introduce you and you may need to be prepared to say a few words".

A few words! I was petrified, so I put together a nine word sentence, "Greetings, it is good to be here. Bless you." Every so often I would forget part of it and panic. But finally the time came around and, thankfully, I was able to speak the words out. The organiser said to Bill, "She's my girl." He didn't realise that I didn't know anything else to say. He appreciated my brief comments.

The first time I had to speak to men just about finished me. I had prepared an address for a gathering of women, and found out at the last moment that many men would be there too. It was too late to pull out, and too late to reconsider my material.

John was present at the meeting and just before it was time for me to get up, he said, "Let's feel your hands, Mum." Sure enough they were clammy.

"I'm glad you feel the same way as I do sometimes," he said with a smile that helped me get through my ordeal. But perhaps the most challenging address I have had to do was at a major conference of Christian

leaders in Brighton, England. Bill was one of the key speakers, and I was asked to provide a series for the women on “Foundations for Spiritual Growth.” I was extremely nervous for weeks leading up to the event, because I knew I would be speaking to many women whom I considered were far more capable than I. The whole thing was being videoed as well, which added to the pressure. However, with meticulous preparation and the great grace of God, I endured it and, I trust, was able to minister effectively to those gathered.

I have always said that I am good for Bill. He is always serious, and although I have my serious side too I also have a mischievous, light hearted streak. This made us a good combination in public ministry.

Bill would often invite me to the platform, without warning, to say something. As I came up he would say, “I’d like you to meet Pat, my first wife...” And then I’d take the microphone and add, “And his last wife, unless I go to glory before him.” Such levity often helped give an evening some light relief and meant people were more relaxed when they heard the serious side of the proceedings.

Such off-the-cuff remarks helped me gain confidence speaking to large groups. Whenever I had a few minutes I would greet people with a light and breezy welcome, complimenting them on their city, or their gardens, or their weather, or whatever I had experienced. I became adept at judging the tenor of a meeting and blending my words

in with what had gone before and what was about to come. Bill was always positive and encouraging. He didn't ever make me feel inferior in my expression or my speaking. He would always say that I had done just fine, that it was perfect and my message was great.

One of my strengths lies in preparation. When preparing a message I accumulate a large file of information, and the subject constantly is on my mind as I gather my thoughts.

I spend a long time developing the theme and ensure that I am well and truly ready before I stand in front of a group of people. I think it was Derek Prince who said, "Always give your best to God. Never offer Him anything at a lower level than your highest ability." That's my motto for ministry. Obviously in the early days there was a lot of room for improvement - we can all look back and cringe at some of our early efforts - but Bill never singled out my failings. If he had he would have crushed me.

However, Bill never allowed me to settle for second best, always encouraging me to reach out in new areas. In those early prayer meetings I would nervously blurt out a word of prophecy, relieved to have taken the plunge, only to have Bill gently prod me again, "Pat, I believe you have something more to share."

My children, however, were much harder to please. "Mum, you ought to spare a thought for the people listening to you - they have to

fill in too many gaps,” one would say. Another would comment, “Mum, I hope you’ve done adequate preparation for your message. I don’t want to have to sit through a lot of waffle.”

I acknowledge that my messages are sometimes short on detail, but I maintain that I never waffle. I have learned, though, with God being my helper, to drop in the odd story and illustration to help present the meat of my subject. Bill is a natural storyteller, I am not. But with perseverance I get by. Bill’s unfailing support and promptings, and the children’s demands for excellence, have greatly aided my ministry.

Their combined efforts have helped enormously as God led me forward step by faltering step. When you commit your life to God, the challenges never stop. Just when I began to get comfortable in my public speaking roles, He began to stretch me in other areas. In fact there have been times over the years when I have felt that there was no “stretch” left in me, only to have God push me forward again and discover new realms of service and ministry.

Over the years I have been introduced to radio, video and television ministry, and the world of literature.

My first television experience came as a complete surprise. Bill and I had arrived in the United States and the woman who met us at the airport told me, “I’ve arranged for you to be on Christian television on Thursday as an

introduction before you speak at the ladies' luncheon on Friday!"

I hoped they couldn't get me to the studio, which was an hour's drive away, but the car arrived on time and I was whisked reluctantly away. I felt like a person heading for the gallows, or someone on the way to the operating theatre.

The minutes were ticking by and the inevitable was drawing inescapably closer. It was too late to change my mind and I just had to trust God during this new time of stretching. The programme went well enough, in retrospect, but I spoke strongly to the Lord after that episode: "No more of that, thank you!"

My first radio experience nearly ended before it even began. A letter had arrived from a Christian radio station inviting me to join a panel discussion, and I accepted. But when Bill saw the letter he said, "Oh no, Pat, you can't do that. It's beyond your realm." He phoned the station and declined on my behalf. I was greatly relieved, I hadn't even had to say, "No" myself. But to my horror the station manager phoned and twisted my arm, assuring me that it would be quite easy and within my ability.

When I finally arrived at the station I discovered I was on a panel with five prominent well-known citizens. I stammered through yet another challenge with the silent prayer, "Not again Lord, please!"

A couple of weeks later I was asked to do

a series of five programmes. Video was the next challenge, and I have been involved in various productions along with the rest of the family. Bill bought video production facilities and we were able to do this more or less in-house. I was petrified to start with – I'm no actress and feel uncomfortable with the lights and scripts. But my attitude is that if the videos are going to help people, especially women, then I am prepared to stretch far enough to make it happen. As a result, my ministry, and Bill's, has spread literally worldwide.

My ministry has progressed step by step, stage by stage. It's been rather like climbing a ladder – the first six steps are easy, the next six more challenging. The higher you go the scarier it becomes – both looking ahead and looking back.

Each step, each stage is a challenge. I have developed a style of my own (I didn't want to be a carbon copy of Bill Subritzky, or anyone else) so that I can be myself and express my feelings, emotions and desires in a natural way.

“I Married You, not the Whole Thirteen”

Bill's words, soon after our wedding, were to effectively cut me off from my brothers and sisters for the next twenty odd years.

It wasn't surprising, I suppose. Bill had been an only child since he was eight when his younger brother, Keith, died from cancer.

So the thought of taking on twelve countrified brothers and sisters-in-law must have been daunting indeed. I couldn't blame him for neglecting and even rejecting them. But his attitude was hurtful all the same, because it didn't take into account my feelings and needs.

I found the withdrawal from the family devastating. All we'd had was each other when we were kids and so family ties were very important to me. A further blow came when Ann, the closest of my siblings, married and moved to Dargaville. I visited her during school holidays, but to all intents and purposes she had been removed from my life. From then on my only contact with my brothers and sisters came through my parents who were wonderful to us.

It was a gap that wasn't filled for a long time. Life was so busy with our own family (and our high life and marriage problems) that I was able to cover up for this loneliness pretty effectively. Our children came along, and I devoted myself to their upbringing. I took motherhood in my stride – I'd had plenty of practice at home in the King Country

and was greatly helped by my mother.

I made the children's clothes, and took great pride in keeping them spotlessly clean and well dressed, also becoming involved with groups like Plunket and Kindergarten. I was like a taxi driver for years as I took them here, there and everywhere to appointments, lessons and sports activities.

Finally, patience wearing thin after years on the go, I said to John, the youngest, "You can join anything you like as long as you get there yourself."

We had our family hiccups – like my annoyance when I became pregnant with John, and Bill and Paul often being at loggerheads until they both became Christians. But the family progressed well and the children never knew of our marriage problems so they weren't disadvantaged. We had many memorable times together.

As the children grew older I was able to pursue my passion for sports. In my younger days I had played a little tennis and watched various other sports. But as a child I didn't have the opportunity to actually take up sports, and when I was a young mother I didn't have the time.

But as the responsibilities of young children dropped away, I had both the time and the opportunity and I was

determined to make up for missing out earlier on. Snow and water skiing were favourites, of course, but I also thoroughly enjoyed golf, horse riding and even windsurfing.

My cheeky grandchildren, highly amused at my first shaky windsurfing attempts, even struck up a little ditty, “Go Granny, go Granny, go, go, go” to give me encouragement (or was it dis-couragement?).

My first attempt to ride a horse was particularly inauspicious. I had a pair of Paul’s jeans on, which didn’t fit properly, and I stood on an old box trying to get on the back of the wretched animal. I was the laughing stock, as usual, but I eventually got on and developed a new love.

I still take great pleasure in riding all over our farm in the Bay of Islands and surveying God’s magnificent creation from horseback.

Similarly, I still find golf extremely enjoyable and relaxing, though I have never developed to my full potential in the sport because I am careful that it doesn’t become an idol in my life.

Many golfers will be surprised at this, but I have found that if you seek the Lord as you go around the course He helps you in amazing ways. Sometimes that little white ball does miraculous things, and God can give you an incredible peace as you step up for your next shot. I call it playing golf with the Holy Spirit, and it really works. God has also spoken to me through golf. He said to me once that just as I couldn’t expect to play

great golf without practice, I couldn't serve Him without a similar degree of commitment and dedication.

The peace that I have cultivated on the golf course was conspicuously lacking in my life when my two daughters got married. Every mother worries over her children's choice of marriage partner, particularly with her daughters, and at the time I didn't approve of either of my daughters' choices of husband. Marriage, I knew, was a serious affair and I had high ideals for the men my daughters would choose as husbands, to my way of thinking, neither man measured up.

Our first shock came when Maria, aged just eighteen, began going to a Baptist church and quickly met a young man. He was her first real boyfriend and I became alarmed at the speed with which their relationship turned serious. I urged Maria to reconsider, to look around, to enjoy life (like I had, I suppose).

On Bill's insistence, they stopped seeing each other for twelve months, but after that period they were more serious than ever. My heart sank lower and lower. A Baptist was stealing my daughter! Eventually the wedding date was set, but I still wasn't happy and barely took an interest in the plans, even though by now I had become a Christian.

However, one evening at the prayer meeting in our home, the Lord said to me, "If you give her back to Me, then I will give her back to you." I did, and God did the rest.

Janne's situation was different. She had

been engaged to a handsome young medical student of whom I approved. But his parents kept interfering and the relationship ended just two months before the wedding. Before I knew it, she was going out with a Hungarian car salesman and they married almost a year to the day after her first date. Again I took no interest in the proceedings to signal my disapproval loud and clear.

But I have learned gradually that I was wrong to react so negatively. The more we react, the less chance there is of change taking place, and if we don't accept the marriage choice of our children we can damage our relationship with them irreparably.

I had to make a conscious effort to rebuild damaged areas of my relationship with my daughters, and also begin to establish loving relationships with my sons-in-law. And God has been faithful to His promise to give them back to me. It has taken time – it is far easier to build barriers than to break them down.

My children have achieved a great deal and I am proud of each of them. Janne, who has a diploma in home science, is my “Martha”. She is an excellent organiser and the person I approach when needing to arrange food for large numbers.

Paul has a degree in law and has practised in a Christian legal firm for many years as well as helping in Bill's affairs. He is national director of Promise Keepers New Zealand, a very successful men's organisation that holds annual events throughout the nation.

Promise Keepers also holds coaching seminars which encourage men to be faithful to the Lord and faithful Christian husbands and fathers.

In the past 12 years more than 50,000 men have attended these events and the resulting impact on their lives has literally affected hundreds of thousands of people.

Maria has a bachelor of arts degree, having excelled in English. She is my “Mary”, a spiritual power house, a great encourager and a perfect sounding board on spiritual matters. It was her nagging that encouraged me to write this book.

John also obtained a bachelor of arts degree for the simple reason that he wanted his picture hung in the study beside his brother and two sisters. He loves the outdoors, being a farmer at heart, and enjoys the machinery that goes with it.

John is also a director of Promise Keepers New Zealand. He has exceptional writing skills and this together with the wisdom God has granted him, has contributed mightily to the work of that organisation.

We have a wonderful family, and I praise God for each of my children, their spouses and my eleven (so far) grandchildren.

I also praise God for miraculously restoring my relationship with my brothers and sisters. Once we were born-again our selfishness dropped away and we began to reach out and have concern for others.

We began to pray for my family every day. It took Bill quite a long time just to name them and their spouses! Eventually he, with prompting, was able to remember all their names himself! I believe that when we pray we are called to put feet to our prayers when and where possible, and so Bill and I decided to invite my brothers and sisters to a meal as a way of reconciliation. It took some coaxing. They were wary of Bill and his achievements and in the past he had been quite rude to them, refusing to even acknowledge them as they walked through the room.

But most of them came and we arranged phone calls throughout New Zealand and overseas to link up with the ones who couldn't be there. I remembered the Derek Prince quote, "Never offer to God anything at a lower level than your highest ability" and determined that this was going to be a great occasion. We provided the best food, the best wine and the best fellowship possible. My youngest brother, the most sceptical before the night began, was the last to leave.

Another brother, Jack, was the black sheep of our family and restoring our relationship with him was perhaps the hardest of all. Jack was a returned soldier from the Second World War. He had come through some harrowing experiences, and later turned to alcohol to help him cope with his problem. After my father's funeral Jack was saying, in his usual fashion, something untrue about Bill and I exploded, "I don't want to speak to you again and I don't care if I never see you either!"

Some of the family had commented that, “If that Jesus of yours can do anything with Jack, there will be something to it.” I prayed fervently and the answer seemed to come back, “Go to him in the love and compassion of Jesus.”

After making contact, I invited Jack to drive for the seniors’ fellowship, picking up the elderly men and women, taking them to church and home afterwards. Although he didn’t attend the church service, he enjoyed the outing. He also helped set up the room for my Women’s Aglow meetings – about three hundred chairs in all. We began visiting one another. I encouraged him to paint his house and he sent me home laden with flowers and vegetables from his garden.

Over a time he changed. He became accepted by the family and seldom put a foot wrong. Eventually, in a beautiful way, he committed his life to the Lord. In June 1991 he went to be with Him. Truly Jesus had done something special with Jack.

A Ministry to Women

Two Scriptures sum up my attitude to the Christian life: “I will go wherever you want me to go” (Psalm 86:11, Living Bible); “I will do whatever you want me to do” (James 2:22, Living Bible). From Jesus: “It helps to grow

when you never say no to Jesus.” With those verses echoing in my spirit, I promised God when I received Jesus and was baptised in the Holy Spirit that I would never refuse an opportunity to serve Him. And I will keep that promise whatever the cost. There are no steps backwards, only forwards.

Keeping my promise has been difficult and challenging at times because I would be perfectly content to be out of sight and out of the limelight. Yet one week after I made the promise, the president of a Women’s Aglow fellowship asked me if I spoke at women’s meetings.

I was able to say, “No” truthfully at the time as I didn’t but that my husband was a capable speaker. Little did I know that it was to be the launching of my own ministry. It’s that promise, too, that drives my lifelong commitment to evangelism and fosters an overwhelming desire to see people come to know Jesus. I am prepared to be a fool for Jesus in this area at any time or place.

The Bible says that God wants no one to perish, but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Thousands of souls have been brought into the kingdom through Bill’s ministry and mine, since we became born-again, on-fire Christians. And we yearn for more Christians to catch some of the zeal, the desperation even, that we feel for reaching the lost. We are all witnesses and I believe we can all tell others of our experiences of how we came to know Jesus.

A major component of our ministries is the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is these that give us the power and insight to be effective. I soon discovered that if I was going to speak at meetings, I needed to practise these gifts. Practice makes perfect, they say, and I was certainly far from perfect in those early days.

I found some women with similar desires and we set about discovering, from scratch, what God could do. Twenty five women gathered on that first night under the authority of my son, Paul. The first gift we studied was prophecy. Then each week for six weeks, we taught on various gifts and followed them up with practice during the week.

The first week's "homework" was to lead someone to the Lord and I told Bill that I thought Tom, a Maori taxi driver who took us from Kerikeri to our Bay of Islands farm, was going to be my homework. Bill was sceptical that Tom was ready but I was sure that he was my man.

Later in the week I went up to the farm and when we were alone I asked him, "Tom, have you got assurance of your salvation?" He wasn't sure and so I said that if he would like me to pray for him, then he should come early to pick us up on Sunday. He rang up later and said that he had rearranged his work schedule on Sunday so he could come and see me. He duly arrived and I duly led him to Christ – despite my distinct unease at Bill being present. I always feel freer to minister without Bill around.

Tom was baptised in the Holy Spirit and his life was completely transformed. He went out and ministered greatly among his own Maori people in Northland. After that first six week course ended, six of us met and prayed about what to do next. We all felt that what we had learned should be shared wider, so we decided to do a seminar for women called Ministering in the Power of the Holy Spirit. It seemed like the right thing to do, but I began to panic when one hundred and fifty women rang wanting to attend the course.

But after the initial apprehension, when the Lord reminded me from Scripture of how the net didn't break even with an abundance of fish, we appointed fourteen groups with a leader for each. The seminar was a great success. One woman missionary, who was home on furlough, told us that she didn't want to go back to the mission field powerless. "There's so much occult activity that you have to show them that God is greater." She came through beautifully and her ministry was greatly enhanced.

After that seminar, the women went home and told their husbands. By now they wanted what their wives had received, so Paul held another seminar for teaching them the same material. From there the seminars spread throughout New Zealand for both men and women and greatly empowered the ministry of thousands of people. We have even put it on video.

Paul has been crucial to my ministry. The

Bible says women aren't to teach or take authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12) and Paul has helped tremendously by providing me with a male oversight or covering. He also stands with me at my meetings when I move in the word of knowledge and he is quite capable of ministering in any area where he is needed.

The Bible's decree on women teaching men has become controversial in these "enlightened" times, but to me it has never been an issue. I simply believe what the Bible clearly says and as a result I have no desire to teach men. When I go to church I want to hear a man teach when men and women are present.

There are numerous opportunities for women to teach women. It has taken me a long time to discover just what my role is in relation to my husband's ministry. I always felt that I should some how partner him and be alongside him, but when we were flying back to New Zealand from an overseas trip one day, God gave me a revelation which has completely changed my philosophy. That revelation, which I wrote down as it came, says:

"You are not a part of your husband's ministry but a support. Be prepared, search, write down those things that you need to use in My name. You shall minister beyond anything you may have visualised, for I am calling you to an exceptional ministry to women. Be prepared in every area, for I am calling

women today as never before. In today's world it is different from the days of the early church. Women need to be more dynamic, more forthright in what they believe is their role as women. Research, use every means available to make known My purposes for women who are precious in My sight. Teach them, admonish them to become vital, bold, single-minded."

With that word I knew I didn't have to compete or keep up with Bill. I now concentrate solely on my ministry to women. We still coordinate our ministries a lot of the time, however. In recent years Bill has been involved in meetings throughout New Zealand and I usually travel with him. Initially I didn't know what to do and grew frustrated with following him around and spending four days straight in a motel room. So I now minister to women, holding women's meetings to coincide with Bill's meetings, and so my calling dovetails in with Bill's.

We also had monthly meetings in Auckland – a derivative of that prayer meeting we began in our house about twenty years ago – in which Bill would speak at night to large groups and I would hold a women's meeting the next morning.

I find our meetings in smaller places particularly fulfilling. Women in these areas don't often get a chance to hear the big time overseas speakers and as a result they have a great hunger and expectancy when they come to my meetings. They also under gird

such meetings with prayer and arrive truly ready to receive from the Lord. He never lets us down.

We also travel extensively overseas, but always in a ministry capacity as we have long since tired of simple tourism. This has given us the opportunity of meeting some amazing people on the Christian scene, particularly in the charismatic arena, and seeing the work of God in many diverse places.

A personal highlight for me was attending a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting in Los Angeles, while I have also greatly benefited from getting to know the godly Freda Lindsay, who took over as president of the Christ for All Nations Bible College in Texas after the death of her husband, Gordon.

We have also had considerable contact with politicians, royalty, bishops, governor generals and other distinguished people. Once, when we were in Tonga, the royal family there loaned us their country residence which has an incredible array of silverware in cabinets dotted throughout the house.

I had to recite constantly under my breath, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." Another time I was asked by a princess to visit the Queen of Tonga, and rather reluctantly made an appointment with her lady-in-waiting. I turned up armed with flowers, a Women's Aglow booklet and a booklet with Bill's testimony in it. To my surprise, the Queen answered the door herself and before I knew it I was breaking

protocol by walking in front of her (in Tonga no-one turns their back on royalty). Tea was served and I found the Queen very gracious and willing to share her feelings and emotions, especially re-garding her family. From the conversation I was aware that she needed to be born-again and filled with the Holy Spirit and this is exactly what happened.

In Life and Death

At times God has asked me to do things which in my own strength were completely beyond me. So often I have felt inadequate and desperate – leading me to cry out to the Holy Spirit for wisdom, enabling and inspiration. He has never failed me. One such occasion involved one of my early speaking engagements. I was frantic, not knowing what to do or say. But the Lord woke me at two o'clock in the morning and told me that He would be a metre in front of me. I didn't know God spoke in metric, but He did!

He also told me to get the audience to put their notes away, which I knew was His indication that it should be a practical session. When the meeting took place, it went just as He directed. The women were tremendously receptive, soaking up the message like blotting paper and thrilled to be learning.

I silently thanked the Lord for His guidance, knowing that without Him it just couldn't have happened. Another occasion was when I had to give my testimony at a meeting in the United States. I was anxious to present it in just the right way, not wanting to start out, "I was born into a family of thirteen children...." Too boring! But as I sought the Lord, He gave me the words, "I married a struggling lawyer who had to borrow money from me to take us on our honeymoon...."

The address was brilliantly received and I still often use that format when I speak. God has proven Himself absolutely true to His promises. Often we grow only as we are placed in positions of total dependence on the Holy Spirit and discover personally that God will indeed never leave us nor forsake us. Healing has been an area in which both Bill and I have had a special ministry. I used to expect every person I prayed for to be healed and didn't even worry about getting sick myself because I was sure God would heal me anyway. But it doesn't always happen that neatly. Not all people are healed physically.

I have seen people, some of them quite close friends, die despite prayer for healing. I have learned, sometimes the hard way, that healing is entirely in God's hands and that we will never know why some are healed and not others.

Today I pray for people's healing with whatever faith I have and then relax in the

knowledge that it is God alone who heals. I used to take it personally, somehow thinking that by my sincerity or by mustering greater faith, I could make it happen. It's not true.

God is God and we must let Him do what He will. If we try and do it ourselves we only get worn out. It is dangerous to take the glory away from God.

I have experienced the trauma and worry of a potentially fatal illness myself and discovered that the critical thing in such circumstances is knowing God. In Him there is total peace.

I was a non-Christian when I first felt a lump in my breast. I was terrified, petrified. Words can't describe how a woman feels at a moment like that. Gripped by fear I turned to the only help I knew – Valium. Those little white pills had eased my fears many times on the ski field and they did the trick again. Liberally dosed with Valium and alcohol – my taxi driver said he had never taken such a happy person to the hospital for an operation before – I underwent my exploratory operation. The first thing I did on waking was to check myself out and was relieved to find I still had two breasts, plus a few stitches where they had removed the benign lump.

A few years later the same thing happened again – another lump, another operation. But this time I was a Christian – and God didn't let me down in my time of need. This time there was no need for drugs or alcohol.

I had such a peace and was quite prepared to accept the outcome – whatever it might

be. I gratefully received communion on the morning of my operation, enjoying the presence and closeness of God.

I secretly hoped that Harry Greenwood, who was staying at our holiday house up north, would come and pray for me. But he didn't, and so I had to rely exclusively on God - and He proved Himself again. He gave me three Scriptures of reassurance as I read in the Psalms and I went through the operation completely trusting in Him. Once again the lump wasn't cancerous and I came through more or less intact.

Recently I visited a dear friend who was dying of breast cancer. After leaving the hospital I realised that I had taken on a fear of cancer. The fear came from Satan who was suggesting to me that I could die, and even gave me the symptoms of a pain in the breast. I fearfully took the tests but I was clear.

God is in control. At one of the following women's meetings I was given a Scripture which is very appropriate for anyone in similar circumstances: "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord." (Psalm 118:17). I never cease to be amazed that, despite the fact that I am just one of billions of people here on earth, God speaks to me personally - and always at the right moment.

Once when I was in a small plane on a particularly bumpy flight and beginning to fear reaching my destination safely, He said to me quite distinctly, "Why don't you

look out the window and enjoy My creation instead of being scared out of your wits?" I did what He said and as I looked down I saw the coastline extending as far as the eye could see in either direction. It was thrilling and exhilarating and I did enjoy the rest of the flight – despite the on-going turbulence.

Another time He spoke to me loud and clear when my son John was facing a life-or-death illness. Bill was away in Ethiopia with World Vision and John came home early from work one afternoon with a violent stomach upset. "Mum, did you put poison in my sandwiches?" he moaned as he arrived, clutching his stomach. By five o'clock he was worse so I suggested asking the doctor to call but John just asked me to get a prescription and medicine. Hindsight always knows best – I should have called the doctor.

Two hours later he had deteriorated considerably. I talked to Paul and we agreed to call the emergency doctor. He arrived and, after prodding and pushing John's stomach an inordinate amount, he called the ambulance and a surgeon.

When John left he was in great distress with peritonitis. I was almost beside myself with worry and blaming myself for not having called the doctor earlier. My anxiety wasn't helped when the hospital told us that things would be touch and go for forty-eight hours. However, the Lord knew of my distress and began to speak. I grabbed some paper and wrote it down. It was a word of comfort and

prophecy, telling me the plans God had for John. The prophecy, in part, said that John would have the cloak of his father and that in His time he would minister to a greater extent than Bill.

Through this word I knew John would live long before the hospital gave him the all-clear. Parts of the prophecy have been fulfilled and I am waiting for the rest to come to pass. God is truly great. He is, indeed, our comforter in times of trouble.

The Present

The Christian life is an ongoing one in which you move from strength to strength as your relationship with the Lord matures and develops. Over the years I have grown much stronger in my faith and ability to serve Jesus Christ. I have developed an assurance, based on countless personal experiences, that Jesus never leaves nor forsakes me. I have come to realise that only God can answer and meet the needs of women - and I have seen Him do this time after time in meeting after meeting.

Take, for example, a woman who came to Bill to receive prayer for barrenness. She had been trying to conceive for seven years and was desperate at the prospect of never being able to have children. God answered that prayer and showed His sense of humour at the same time. A few years later we met her

again and she presented us with evidence of the miracle that had taken place – five children comprising one single child and two sets of twins. “Please,” she pleaded, “no more.”

A similar miracle occurred recently in one of my meetings when a woman, who had also been barren for seven years, quickly became pregnant after receiving prayer. God is great indeed! An increasing number of women at my meetings need prayer for the healing of memories in the areas of incest, child abuse and rape. It is a privilege to be used by God to pray for these women to be set free.

One dear woman told me I was the only person she had confided in about her father committing incest with her. She had married and had two children, but then divorced because she was unable to sexually love her husband. After she was counselled to forgive her father, and received prayer for the healing of her memories, she was set free from guilt and condemnation and was able to rebuild her life.

Another woman came with the heart-rending problem of having discovered that her husband, who had a high position in the church, was committing incest with their two daughters and was involved with other women. God spoke to me clearly that hers would be a long-term healing, and so it has been. But God is gradually restoring the years that were robbed. I can see the Lord’s love and compassion shining through the ashes of

her life.

These are just a few of dozens and dozens of examples of God meeting the needs of women. He alone knows their concerns and wants to save, heal, set free and encourage. It has been my privilege to be part of His work in their lives.

The Future

I face the future with great anticipation, knowing it is completely in God's hands. Each day I am expectant, believing every moment is a blessing to be used purposefully, wisely and fruitfully. While I have health, strength and breath, I will continue to serve my Lord and Saviour. It is a privilege to be used by Him.

My mother used to say her great desire was to see her youngest son reach twenty-one. My great desire is that my children will serve the Lord in a greater capacity than we have, as their circumstances allow. Part of this desire is being accomplished. I can see the Lord's hand on them, shaping and moulding them for His purposes, though we aren't given the opportunity to fully know God's plan for their futures.

Bill's mother died three months after our marriage, so she didn't have the chance to see her son as he is today – an evangelist

serving the Lord. I'm sure it would have brought great joy to her heart. I am grateful that I have lived to see my children enter Christian ministry of one kind or another.

At one of my meetings, all four of my children were involved. Paul ministered beside me, Janne led the meeting, Maria was in the creche and John was doing the sound. To have all your children minister alongside you is one of the ultimate privileges and pleasures. We have 16 grandchildren, all of whom know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. We regularly have family meals where all 26 of us are there. My prayer is that Jesus will continue to be first in their lives and in the lives of their children. Thanks be to God for His immeasurable love and grace towards me and those whom I love. To Him be the glory for the great things He has done and is continuing to do.

What about you?

When we give our lives fully to Jesus Christ the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. With the Holy Spirit there is great power and believers can experience what is called the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This is the manifest presence of God within us. We often experience it as heat or actual power and He gives us the ability to tell others about God without experiencing any

fear. This is how the early Christian Church developed.

In addition, God has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us if we will follow Him. With the power of the Holy Spirit within us we can pray for the sick and cast out demons and see great miracles.

I read my Bible every day and there is always some fresh aspect of truth revealed to me.

As Bill and I pray every day for our family and others we find our prayers are answered.

God is real. The Bible says that not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise men inherit the Kingdom of God. We have to become like little children and submit ourselves to God if we want to enter His Kingdom.

The point is that we can enter His Kingdom right now by submitting our lives to Him.

I have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and I know Him as a loving Father who takes care of me and to whom I can go in prayer during times of difficulty.

This is what I mean when I say I am a Christian. I am a son of God by adoption through Jesus Christ. He has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in me as a believer and I know His Presence all the time. Jesus Christ said He would send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to be our Helper and this is exactly what He is, our Helper.

God offers the same privilege to everybody

who is prepared to listen and submit themselves to Him by asking Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Saviour.

Good people do not necessarily get into heaven. Our works will not get us there. It is our faith in God that matters. If good works alone could get us into heaven, it would not have been necessary for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be beaten, bloodied, scourged, mocked and then hung on the Cross to die.

As the Lamb of God, He took upon Himself all of our sin and gave those who believe eternal life. This is a gift from God. We cannot earn it. We receive it by confessing our sins to God, humbling ourselves before Him and asking Him to become the Lord of our life.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day and sent the Holy Spirit to be with us.

You can know His Presence in your life if you are prepared to submit yourself to God. The only way to God is through Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

If you died tonight, do you know whether you would be going to heaven or hell? Every breath we take is one that God gives us. Our life is but a vapour and can end at any moment. Are you ready to die? When my spirit leaves this body at death, I cannot take my possessions or money or anything. Naked I came into the world and naked I will go out.

The only inheritance that matters, that I can leave in this world, is my children. If they continue to live on as Christians then they can leave children who also know God.

The only other inheritance I can leave are “spiritual children”. That is people whom I have led to the Lord and are born-again of the Spirit of God and walking in true holiness before God. They will also enter heaven. It is all so simple we almost miss it.

Are you prepared to submit your life to Jesus Christ and be born-again of the Spirit of God? If so I would encourage you to go on your knees and say this prayer:

*“Dear Heavenly Father,
I come to you in the name of your Son
Jesus Christ. I confess all of my sins.
I believe you sent Jesus Christ into the
world to die on the Cross for me in order
to pay the penalty for all of my sins and to
give me the gift of eternal life.
I believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead
on the third day and is seated at the right
hand of God. I turn to You now Jesus
Christ. I turn away from all sin and I ask
you to be my Lord and Saviour.
Thank you Lord for saving me.”*

If you have said that prayer with belief God will answer it. You need to be in a church which believes the whole Bible and you need to read the Bible every day. You also should be baptised in water as soon as possible. You should also seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. This will give you power to witness to others about Jesus Christ, and the power to heal the sick as well as cast out demons. You will know the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s love will fill your life.

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