

Bill Subritzky

**I BELIEVE in
MIRACLES!**

as told to Vic Francis

(Former Editor, N.Z. Challenge Weekly)

I Believe in Miracles!

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PO Box 163175, Lynfield, Auckland, New Zealand.

Original title: But I Don't Believe in Miracles.

This second edition: May 1994

ISBN 978-0-908950-13-3

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Foreword

What ideas do we have about the possibility of the miraculous - in this case miraculous healing? The story is told by the mother of her crippled son. When Christian friends saw him soon after his healing miracle, the mother relates, "Some rejoiced with us, others were sceptical, yet there he was, running and praising God... some still didn't believe his healing was from God... others waited for a relapse... we lost friends... we had to change our church!"

The reader will find a story of an increasing wave of blessing for the family and many others, and that's worth reading. A family filled with joy as burdens of years disappeared.

The story is simple and believable but the questions are: Who is Bill Subritzky? What does he preach? How does he pray? This book does not tell. The propagation of the Gospel should be confirmed by signs of divine approval. It's all God working, not man's psychology, skill and power. The content of the preaching must agree with the fundamental teaching of the Gospel. Those who have listened to Bill Subritzky know he expounds the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is part of the Spirit-filled community; the church carrying out the commission, "for the equipping of the saints... to the building up of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:12, ministering as Jesus did in the Spirit's power.

We are not told of the insights or reactions of the boy's doctor or of the many specialists who were involved in his care. The medical dilemma is, was it all psychological, or did the treatment finally work, or is the healing a temporary remission, or was it only a self-limiting passing illness? For doctors whose minds are moulded by scientific training and materialistic thinking, acknowledgment of the supernatural is unlikely. On one side there is a complacent aloofness from the annoying rabble of Christians and on the other hand the prisoner of a church system of beliefs with a rigidity of religious pious words. For Christian doctors these can separate us from some of the reality of the sick person's real needs. If your God is too small, is dead or nowhere to be found, the challenge deepens or has to be dismissed. This is our choice and yours.

This book then confronts us not only with a disease now strangely healed, but with TRUTH; the living God showing His present power in the medical arena. This account invites all of us to rebel against the conventional Christian sages who limit God and our humanistic society which denies God. His Word says He works in mysterious ways and these ways are past finding out.

Dr Bruce Conyngham
Medical Doctor

ONE

But It's Impossible

I lay flat on the floor of the businessman's office.

"This can't be happening to me," I kept thinking. Above me people were moving around, but it was all a bit hazy, somewhat unreal.

"I don't believe in the power of God," I thought. "I don't believe in healing. I don't believe in miracles."

Yet I couldn't deny what had happened - what was happening - to me.

Brian and I had only come here as a last resort. For the last eight months we had tried unsuccessfully to cope with the disease crippling our 11-year-old son, Grant. But nothing worked. The best medical advice in the world couldn't even tell us what was wrong, let alone how to cure him. Increasingly potent drugs proved useless, and the pain which racked Grant's body got worse and worse.

Now he was wheelchair bound, facing a life of misery and premature death.

It was too much for Brian and me to cope. Physically, emotionally and spiritually we were completely drained. We had reached the end of our tether. The incessant day and night responsibility had come close to destroying our family, our marriage, our finances and – worst of all – our faith in God.

So we were here in Bill Subritzky's office as a last resort. Even then, I personally didn't expect, or want, a miracle. In fact, I wasn't quite sure why I was there.

I was so uncertain and nervous that it was just as well he shut the door when he ushered us into his office. Otherwise I would have bolted.

Then things really got out of hand.

Instead of praying for Grant, he wanted to pray for me.

I remember him putting his hand on top of my head and then... nothing.

It must have been a few minutes later that I came round to find myself lying flat on the plush carpet in the office.

I didn't know how I got there. All I knew was that I was enjoying this experience.

Bill prayed for Brian and then, finally, he turned to Grant saying, "I want you to stand up."

But Grant couldn't stand up. I knew that. The degeneration in his back was so far advanced that he couldn't even get out of the wheelchair unaided. But this was to be my day of discovery. Slowly, surely, Grant got out of the wheelchair.

I was bewildered. It just wasn't possible. And then reality hit again - suddenly he collapsed to the floor. "Oh, he's fallen again," I thought. "That's it."

By then I had stood up and I looked down at my son, prostrate on the floor, still crippled. Even this great faith healer hadn't succeeded.

But as I looked, I could see something dramatic had happened. Grant's eyes were shut, but the most beautiful and peaceful smile covered his face.

It was then that I began to cry.

TWO

Complacency Shattered

Grant grew up like any normal child. He played rugby in the winter and cricket in the summer, rode his bike, took music lessons, and generally had a well-adjusted and positive outlook on life. Apart from a milk allergy which nearly killed him as a child, he led a very healthy life.

And I, Diane Parker, was like any normal proud mother. Why shouldn't I be? Brian and I had three children - Jody, Grant and Paula. All were well-adjusted, fit and healthy.

In fact, we had a lifestyle which would have been the envy of many. Brian and I both worked, so money wasn't really a problem. We lived in Chatswood, a much sought after suburb of Auckland. And we were both Christians, went to church regularly and our children showed every indication of accepting the Christian faith as well.

There was nothing to suggest that our family was soon to be dragged to the edge of the precipice. We were very, very comfortable. I realise now, we were also very, very complacent.

As a child, Grant was very gentle. Even when he was little he wasn't at all possessive, always being willing to share his toys and never dreaming of hitting another child.

He was so gentle that I sometimes used to worry about him. Would he be able to stick up for himself? Would the other kids take advantage of him? And yet his pleasant nature meant he had plenty of friends and he was never troubled by school bullies.

Scholastically he wasn't super-intelligent, being more of a plodder who always worked hard. But he was liked by his teachers and with hard work he did rather well at school.

Brian and I were proud of our only son.

But when he was 10, I noticed Grant slowing down. At first it was only a suspicion, barely noticeable at all. So small, in fact, that only a mother would pick it up. But it was there all the same.

Over a period of weeks and months this slowness gradually became more pronounced. It was as if Grant had lost interest in life. He was listless and totally

lacked the energy to get up and do things. He wouldn't move about, and stopped doing any of his old outside activities.

Physically he became very lazy, and this made me more and more concerned. It was so out of character. He had been an energetic child. Slowly he was becoming a sloth. Yet there didn't seem to be anything physically wrong. He never complained of pain or anything else. He just slowed down.

At first we put it down to being a childhood phase and hoped Grant would grow out of it. That was the logical

answer. Yet as a mother, a gnawing worry had begun deep down. Somehow I knew that all was not right with my son.

Matters came to a head in August 1983.

During the school holidays our family went to the Manawatu for a break. Brian's parents lived in Palmerston North and my parents were in nearby Feilding. Grant stayed with Brian's parents and we were with mine. But when we went to pick him up, Grant threw a tantrum like I had never seen any of my children perform before. He yelled and screamed at us, not wanting to come with us. He just went berserk, ranting, raving and screaming like a lunatic.

In the end we had to drag him forcibly into the car, eventually calming him down.

The next morning Grant complained of a sore throat and I said, not too sympathetically, "I'm not surprised, considering all the screaming you did."

But deep down the alarm bells were ringing louder. Something was not right. His laziness, the tantrum and now the sore throat. I was now very concerned.

But we could still explain the matter away. Our whole family had influenza that holiday, so none of us felt too bright. Grant, perhaps, had just an extreme case. Except, I knew it was more than that.

That morning I was going to the doctor because of my flu, so I decided to take Grant with me.

As we sat in the waiting room, Grant's sickness became even more apparent. He vomited all over the room. The doctor looked at him and immediately sent him to Palmerston North hospital. The initial verdict was suspected meningitis.

But dozens of tests later, we were told he only had a virus and the hospital recommended we take him home.

So we cut short our holiday – which none of us minded, seeing we all felt so sick with the flu ourselves – and returned to Auckland.

The rest of the family got better quickly, but Grant's condition continued to deteriorate.

It soon became obvious that it was worse than influenza. He had the shakes and a dull ache, centring on his back but spreading throughout his body. My inner warning bells were positively jangling by now.

It wasn't too bad at first. The dull ache was always there, impeding his movement and happiness. But it was bearable. However, the pain gradually got worse, more intense, and spread throughout his body. Grant described it as "something holding on to my backbone and squeezing it really hard." Pain-killers worked for a while, but then the pain would return.

Although his temperature disappeared, the back soon became an object of constant discomfort and pain. It got worse and worse and no amount of rest or painkiller seemed to help.

At first I didn't have much sympathy for Grant, and delayed seeking expert advice in the hope the back would clear up. But one Sunday afternoon in September I became so tired of hearing about it that I said abruptly, "I'll take you over to-day and get it cleared up."

So off we went to the medical centre in Takapuna.

The doctor on duty, who used to be our family doctor, was immediately concerned.

Grant was dispatched for an

x-ray. There followed a seemingly never-ending round of visit-ing doctors. Grant was referred to an orthopaedic surgeon, then passed on to a neurologist and finally to a rheumatologist. They would shake their heads, look concerned and come up with no diagnosis. The disease crippling my son couldn't even be classified.

By now I was scared. Everything was not all right and there didn't seem any prospect of it coming right. My comfortable, complacent world was beginning to crack up and I was powerless to do anything about it.

I had always had the greatest respect for the medical pro-fession. If there was anything wrong I knew they would help, find the cure, set us back onto our normal family course again. At least that's what they had done in the past.

But this was different. All the doctors could do was to pre-scribe painkillers, make suggestions that Grant needed psy-chiatric help and send him off to another doctor.

No one could give any hope - and hope was increasingly becoming my most desperate need.

Within a couple of months I felt 10 years older and positively ragged round the edges. I was cranky and irritable, con-fused and worried. I felt at the end of my tether. My happy home had been shattered. My world was falling apart at the seams.

THREE

A Big Black Hole

Winter stretched into spring, and spring stretched into summer.

But for the Parker family there was no warmth, no joy and no shedding of the winter blues.

Grant's condition became an all-consuming fire. We simply didn't have time for anything else.

The early days, when Grant suffered only a dull ache in his back, we could live with, make concessions and accommodate Grant and his sickness.

He got worse and worse, even though we tried to kid our-selves otherwise.

Grant's illness, visible only to those close to him, soon became more obvious. In October we were again in Palmerston North and Brian's father, seeing him struggle up the path, was so moved he said, "Just look at that poor kid."

Before long Grant began having agonising spasms which would make him drop like a stone. Some would last just a few minutes, others would leave him in a paralytic heap for hours on end.

The spasms reminded me of a woman in labour. They would get him, grip him and hold him. They were like severe, agonising cramps.

The attacks were unpredictable in their timing and their severity. Sometimes Grant would be walking – hobbling is probably a better word to describe his movements – and would suddenly crash flat on his face. Then he would lie there, breathing up the dust. Any movement aggravated it. We were always finding him lying around the floor somewhere. At least when he was on the floor he couldn't hurt himself.

The spasms, which occurred at any time of the day or night, made me feel useless. There was absolutely nothing I could do except be with him as he rode out the pain. I could only let him know I was there – there wasn't anything else.

I got pretty desperate at times. Many times during the spasms I would just walk off and have a cry because I felt so useless.

It was like living in a big black hole, with no light coming in from anywhere. You knew you couldn't give him anything and this helped contribute to the increasing sense of frustration and pressure building up within me.

Schooling quickly became almost impossible, though Grant's teacher, Wes Stevens, was wonderfully understanding and sympathetic.

He was determined to have Grant at school, rearranging his classroom for him and making sure he gave him as much attention as possible – even when it disrupted the rest of the class.

One day I went to see Mr Stevens to explain why Grant hadn't been able to come to school. But when I told him one of the main reasons was that Grant now had to be carried to the toilet, he responded, "If you can do it at home, I can do it at school." He was a wonderful man, a real help and inspiration.

But even when Grant got to school, he could only last an hour or an hour and a half at the most.

On one occasion Mr Stevens and I determined to keep him at school for a whole day, so we loaded him up with drugs and sent him off. An hour-and-a-half later the school phoned. Grant just couldn't cope with sitting.

Several times we got so desperate that we put him into Princess Mary Hospital, the children's hospital in Auckland. He was too young to be in the adult rheumatic ward.

It wasn't that they were able to do anything for him, but it gave us a break when we couldn't take any more – say after a particularly long spasm.

In the hospital they would do more tests and each time I hoped they would find something. But it was a vain hope. They could never come up with any glimmer of light.

Throughout those early stages there was always the thought in the back of my mind that Grant might just be making up his whole illness. So one of my hidden reasons for putting him in hospital was the hope that because he didn't get the attention he got at home, he might pull himself out of it. That, too, was a vain hope, and in retrospect I realise such a thought was probably mere selfishness on my part. But it was a reflection on how I was at that time.

The hospital staff tried their best, but there was nothing they could do. When he went through the spasms they tried packing his back in ice. When that didn't help, they tried hot towels instead. But nothing they, or we did, seemed to give him any relief.

The hospital had never seen anything like Grant's illness, and didn't quite know how to deal with him. This caused a lot of friction, with one orderly saying callously, "The kid's got a sore back so what?" Another one scolded Paula one day when she was crying after seeing Grant. That really made me see red.

The state of Auckland's children's hospital has caused controversy in the city for many years. Built in the 1940s, it is way below standard, and after a long fight about money a decision has been made to build a new one.

And, as far as I am concerned, it will not come too soon. The conditions there were very bad. I was horrified when Grant came home from hospital suffering with nits and scabies. We had to lie him in the bath to try and to get rid of them.

Grant's condition destroyed the family life as we had known it.

I gave up my job to look after him, and this put us under tremendous financial pressure.

I couldn't go to the supermarket for fear that Grant might have a spasm. And I couldn't leave him in the car on his own for the same reason.

I couldn't even have a shower in comfort. I'd wait until he had just got over a spasm, rip through the shower and hope to be back before he had another one.

It had a terrible effect on Jody and Paula as well. In fact, in a sense they had the hardest time of all.

We had a routine whereby we would pick the girls up from school, go straight to the hospital, and pick up takeaways for dinner on the way home.

The damage it was doing the girls really hit me one day when Grant commented on how appalling hospital meals were, and Jody responded that she was sure they were better than the ones she was getting at home.

Brian and I knew we were neglecting the girls. The problem was how to avoid it.

We talked to them after leaving the hospital one night, asking them to let us know if they felt too neglected. We told them we were blinded at the moment by the enormity of coping with Grant, but we still loved them as much as ever.

The words were fine, and we meant them. But how do you cope with a child who needs 24-hour supervision and attention without neglecting your other children.

Wanting to do my best for all my children, I had an increasingly desperate knowledge that I couldn't cope with Grant, let alone Jody and Paula. Unless Brian was home I couldn't leave Grant and do anything with them.

In the circumstances, the girls were marvellous. Jody was 14 and I can remember her crying on the way home from the hospital and saying she hadn't realised how much she loved Grant. And Paula used to get upset in the hospital and walk off saying, "My eyes are prickling again."

Their lives came to a standstill in a lot of ways. If Grant had been an only child it would have been a lot easier. We could have just poured everything into him and not have the added burden of knowing we were neglecting our other children. Another problem we faced was the reaction of our friends. People didn't know how to cope with Grant's problems and so many just stopped coming round, visiting and phoning. That really hurt.

Then there was the unspoken feeling among many that we were overreacting. They would see us and Grant and wonder what all the fuss was. Because he wasn't emaciated and terribly sick looking, they couldn't imagine the hell we were going through.

But by January his sickness was becoming increasingly obvious for all to see. That was when he was put into a wheelchair.

He had become so immobile that I piggybacked him everywhere. We would drive up the driveway and then I would lug Grant on my back up the steep steps to our front door.

One day, though, we went to the doctor and as I piggybacked him in he said, "Why haven't you put him into a wheelchair?"

And so we went to the extra-mural office of the hospital to get him a wheelchair. But despite the respite that gave me, I viewed the chair with mixed emotions. It was almost like an admission of defeat - we all knew the odds against him ever getting out of it.

The wheelchair temporarily gave Grant the kind of freedom he had missed for months. He couldn't wheel it himself, but Brian built a ramp into our back garden and he sat alone outside, breathing in the atmosphere. He felt free again.

I was amazed at how willingly Grant accepted the wheelchair, far better than I would ever have imagined. He realised. it was the best for him. Without it he couldn't stand the pain of the pressure of his back on his legs. He would just collapse. The wheelchair was the best way to cope.

But, of course, our own private nightmare wasn't solved as easily as that. Grant still needed constant care and attention.

He was so demanding that I got sick of the sight of him and his cries of pain.

Night times were the worst. We brought his bed down-stairs because he could no longer go upstairs to his bedroom. Instead, he slept in the lounge, which backs on to our bed-room.

Our routine was to settle him down and have him asleep by, possibly, 10 pm. Then we would go to bed and sleep lightly as we waited for the knock on the wall to signify Grant's first spasm of the night.

I spent most of those dark nights sleeping in the lounge with Grant - alternating between his wheelchair and his bed. When he has a spasm, I would lift him out of bed and put him in the chair to try and relieve his pain. An hour later we would swap places.

Nights can be very long, very dark, very lonely and very scary when you are in that situation.

As usual, these times were compounded by my feeling of uselessness. I couldn't do much for him at all, apart from try-ing to be with him through the agony. But I felt I had to be there.

One night the pain was so bad that we called in the emergency doctor. He stood at the foot of the bed with tears in his eyes. He had never seen anything like it in a child and he could do nothing to help. Grant was already on more painkillers than his body could handle.

Throughout this ordeal I had a stormy relationship with the various doctors and experts who looked at Grant.

My initial respect and faith in doctors vanished as they, in my eyes, seemed to fail when I needed them most. They couldn't even agree on the type of treatment to administer, nor could they discover the cause of the pain.

When your child is sick you become very protective and are willing to do anything to get the best for them. I became pushy and demanding.

I pressured the doctors to tell me what it was that Grant had. But the closest they could get to a diagnosis was to say they thought it could be ankylosing spondylitis - a disease in which the tissue between the vertebrae deteriorates.

In older people it makes them very stooped, but is reasonably painless. In Grant's case it was the intense pain that went with it which had them baffled.

At no time did we find out for certain what it was. The spinoff of this was that because they didn't know what was wrong, they couldn't prescribe the cure. The best they could do was to give him increasing dosages of painkillers.

But nothing ever stopped the pain. New drugs might deaden it for a few weeks, but never dealt with it completely. Eventually they, too, became ineffective.

The drugs also had side effects. Grant's face became very puffy and his general health deteriorated badly. At the height of his sickness he was taking eight aspirin

and Naprosyn twice a day. The anti-inflammatory capsule was so hard on his stomach lining. that it made him vomit.

One doctor told us that on that medication Grant would only have 12 months to live. In fact, they were so concerned about the damage it must be doing his kidneys that they did a scan to make sure he was still all right.

The drugs were killing him almost as much as the disease. All medical avenues seemed to end in a brick wall. We'd read of marvellous cures available overseas, but the doctors told us that it was no use going elsewhere to seek treatment. They were in contact with hospitals overseas and were offering us the best services available anywhere in the world.

Had there even been a remote possibility of finding help overseas, we would have found a way to get him there. We were desperate enough to do anything within the realms of medical possibility. There was nowhere in the world where he could be healed by medical means.

The black hole was getting blacker.

I was stuck inside my house – my four-walled prison – day after day, doing exactly the same thing today as I did yesterday. And I was getting nowhere. When a child has the measles or mumps at least they get over it. But this was not getting better. Throughout his ordeal Grant was marvellous. He never got angry and even apologised for being a nuisance. That didn't help at all. In fact it made me feel worse.

FOUR

Cracking Up

February and March passed in a depressing haze.

It was sheer hell, a 24-hour blur as Grant became less and less self-supporting and relied on me more and more.

I was cracking up – physically, mentally and spiritually. The atmosphere was unbelievably tense, particularly between Brian and I. Something had to break and I knew it would most likely be me.

The early benefits of the wheelchair vanished as we came to realise its limitations. There were the small things, which in my frame of mind became very large things – like the constant jaggling of clothing and stockings on the shiny appendages of the wheelchair.

Then there was the layout of the house – three flights of stairs, bathrooms and toilets that were too small and just about every other hitch imaginable.

Grant didn't sleep in his room for months on end – meaning a waterbed mattress cluttered our lovely lounge.

It was the worst house possible for a boy in a wheelchair – but of course we hadn't bought it with wheelchairs in mind.

We'd bought it a thousand years ago when all the family was well.

I became sick of looking at the wheelchair in the house, sick of getting it into the kitchen so Grant could be where the action was, and generally just sick of Grant and his back.

Confinement to the wheelchair also brought on a physical change in Grant. He was getting no exercise, as even wriggling his feet could set off a spasm. And so he was getting plump, both from lack of movement and the drugs he was continually taking to ease the pain.

The trials of the handicapped can never, I'm sure, be fully understood by those who haven't experienced it for themselves.

When people look in a wheelchair they don't see a person's physical disabilities, but automatically assume a mental handicap.

As soon as Grant was in his wheelchair, people began treating him differently. They talked down to him, as if he was intellectually handicapped, or they asked me questions they would have normally asked him.

My replies were often curt, born out of anguish. Tears were frequent, so were outbursts of anger and frustration.

Trips to the doctor became an all too familiar nightmare. I would get mad, indignant that here were medical men, the top in their field, yet they couldn't give me an answer about what was wrong with my son. When you have three specialists say they don't know what's wrong with your child you get agitated. I used to get so mad I would ask, "Why are you in the job you are in then?" I feel bad about it now. I found that I would do more for my child than I would do for myself.

One day I decided to take Grant back to school. He hadn't been able to attend much for the last few months, but this day I was determined.

We drove up to the school gates and got him out of the car into the wheelchair. We were just about ready to go in when he threw up everywhere. He was on yet another new medication and the vomiting was a side effect.

I was absolutely furious. School had been going to be my baby sitter that day and all my plans of a relaxing time without the burden of Grant fell to pieces before my eyes.

I dumped him out of the wheelchair, put it back in the car, slamming everything in sight. Then I took him round to a friend's house and left him there. I had to, otherwise I wouldn't have been responsible for my actions.

Then I drove into a nearby street and sat in the car crying for nearly two hours. I cried and cried and cried and cried until there was nothing more left. Then I went back to pick him up. It was sheer frustration, the black hole, the tunnel with no end. And the tunnel was getting narrower and narrower and I was getting squeezed tighter and tighter.

About the only thing we knew for certain was that Grant had a bleak future. One possible solution was for his spine to be surgically fused. But at 11 this would stop the growth of his spine while his vital organs would continue to grow. He would be very misshapen. I tried not to think about that possibility.

Eventually I got to the stage where I wished he would die rather than go through life like he was. If the pain had stopped it wouldn't have been so bad, but the

constant agony was more than I could take. He was a Christian and we all would have seen death as a great relief. It would only be us who suffered if he died. We knew the long term possibilities for Grant if it was ankylosing spondylitis. One of Brian's customers had the disease. He used to be a tall and athletic man, but the disease left him bent over and crippled, barely five feet tall. He suffered a lot.

Yes, I decided, Grant would be better off dead. Grant's disease also made me lose patience with God. When we discovered how hopeless our house was for anyone in a wheelchair, we decided to sell and find somewhere more suitable.

Before long we had found the perfect house. When the land agent rang to tell me about it she said it was so good that it sent shivers down her spine. "I'm beginning to believe that prayer works," she told me.

As soon as we got the house I knew it was right. It wasn't flash, certainly nowhere near as good as the house we were in, but I knew it was right.

The house was owned by a couple who had had two sons suffering from muscular dystrophy who died. Now the house – specifically designed for someone with a handicap – was for sale.

It was perfect. It had an indoor spa. It was all on one level, apart from the girls' bedrooms which were upstairs. I felt that would be marvellous, because whenever they came home and brought their friends, it was essential for them to get away from Grant and do their own thing. Other prime features included a hoist, a wheel-in shower and doors which could cope with Grant and the wheelchair.

It was exactly, to the dollar, the right price - \$120,000. With Grant's sickness we had come under increasing financial pressure. With me not working we relied on one wage when our bills had skyrocketed - expensive fast food and doctors' fees being added: to the usual mortgage, household and car expenses.

We had been comfortable financially, now we were scraping. Our savings had dwindled away to virtually nothing. And so we decided when we sold the house we would pay off the mortgage and buy our next place freehold. This would lessen the financial burden in the years to come. We also wanted enough money left over to buy a station wagon for Grant's wheelchair. My little car, with a boot in the front, was hopeless.

And so all our prayers were answered. A \$120,000 house designed for the handicapped - what more could we ask. So we signed up subject to selling our own house.

I was so confident about the whole deal being "right" that I rather brashly said to the land agent, "We have prayed about this, now we'll pray about our house selling." I was convinced God had given us the perfect house.

But try as we would we couldn't sell our house, even though it is in one of the more sought-after-areas of Auckland. People came through, but it just wouldn't sell.

One night we had a phone call from a person who wanted to buy it. He had-cash and would be around in 15 minutes to discuss terms for the sale. It sounded as cut and dried as it could be without an actual agreement being signed.

So we delayed our dinner and waited for him to arrive. We waited... and waited... and waited. He never turned up.

To this day we don't know what happened, but he just didn't arrive.

The heartbreak over not selling the house made me lose patience with God again. I had it all worked out. It was perfect. We had a house, we had a buyer - and the whole thing fell apart, just like the rest of my world.

Grant's illness caused tremendous friction in my relationship with Brian.

Actually, it made Brian my worst enemy. We were two people living in the same house, but that was all. He was travelling a lot with his job, which was just as well. It kept us away from one another.

When he arrived home at the end of a week away I would sometimes walk straight out the door as he walked in, not even speaking to him. I'd go shopping or have my hair done.

By the end of each week I was at the end of my tether and knew I was on the verge of exploding. If I spoke to him I would say something we'd both regret.

I tried to explain to him but I knew it hurt.

This rising hostility worked both ways. Brian had always phoned us in the mornings when he was away, just to see how things were. But while Grant was sick he stopped - he just couldn't cope with the bad news all the time.

Even the way we handled Grant caused friction.

To Brian, Grant was the only thing that mattered. He would try to help him through the spasms, flannel him down and support him. But I was hard. I wanted to just leave him and let him get on with it.

And Brian used to let Grant get away with murder. What he didn't recognise was that even though he was sick, Grant was still a young boy and he still got naughty. There were times when you had to growl. But Brian was so sympathetic he was really hurting for him.

And so the friction heightened. Brian was soft and I was hard and ne'er the twain shall meet.

And all this time Grant was dying before our eyes. He was taken off Naprosyn and put on Feldene, yet another potent drug. The next alternative was Temgesic, an addictive analgesic. If that didn't work there was only morphine left. Grant didn't have long to go.

And I was cracking up, dogged by this dreadful feeling of hopelessness.

It was like standing on the edge of a pool and watching your child drown and being unable to do anything to help.

FIVE

Broken

The final straw came on April 3, 1984.

The previous day we had taken Grant back to the orthopaedic surgeon, carrying him into his office. He shut the door, stripped him off and just shook his head. He could not believe the deterioration in the seven months since he had first seen Grant.

So he immediately booked him in to an orthopaedic conference at Auckland Hospital the next day. The matter was coming to a head, worsening by the day, and something urgent had to be done.

There were 25 people at the conference, not all orthopaedic surgeons, but all attached to the orthopaedic unit. When they came out one of them said, "Well, I really have not got an answer for you. We will now try the plaster cast."

The plaster cast was to stretch from under Grant's arms to the tops of his thighs. It seemed drastic but if ever there was a time for drastic measures it was now.

The reason for the cast - which would be for three to six months - was to stop Grant moving and therefore lessen the pain. He could come off some of the drugs.

The benefits of the cast seemed small when compared with the negative effects.

The worst would be that Grant's immobility would make it much easier for the disease to move through his body. But the pain would be less - or so they thought.

Another problem was that Grant wouldn't be able to take a deep breath or cough.

He would just be able to clear his throat - that is if he did it slowly.

It would be a plaster coffin!

The decision to use body plaster caused dissension among the doctors. Some were adamant that the bad would outweigh the good. It was hard seeing doctors in conflict, the very people whom you put your faith in because you think they know the answer.

Once I saw what he would have to go through I began having second thoughts. I was frightened at the experiment we were putting our child through.

However, it seemed there was no alternative, so we left the orthopaedic conference and went straight away to have the cast applied.

But Grant did not go through months in a plaster coffin. Six minutes proved to be more than he could handle.

They balanced him on a T-bar and told him to stretch as tall as he could go. But the pain was so intense that he wanted to vomit. He was told to stand still and rest. But as they began to layer the wet plaster on his body he panicked, feeling claustrophobic from the casing around his chest. Then he fainted.

We were standing outside in the corridor and suddenly heard the sound of running and someone calling, "Get it off him fast." People were running everywhere. It was absolutely chaotic.

We rushed into the room and saw a horrible sight. There was my son, lying on the bed looking terrified; a tortured child. I have never seen fear in a child's eyes as I saw that day. He looked the ultimate of a person who is demon-possessed. The terror in his eyes was unbelievable.

The last resort, the plaster cast, had failed.

After he recovered, we took Grant home, propped up in the back of the car. He shook and looked white as a ghost all the way. Every time I went near him he would back off, like a child who had been beaten. Later he just slept for hours.

That was the episode that finally broke me. I felt dreadful that I had consented to putting my son through that kind of terror. It was then, for the first time, that I gave up hope of doing something practical for him. There was no hope any more.

Everything had been tried and everything had failed. That afternoon I was sewing - something I often do when I'm uptight or depressed. It's the greatest form of relaxation I know. I'd been doing a lot of sewing. The day before I had made a dress, an indication of the growing tension within.

But sewing couldn't pacify me this time.

My crumbling world caved in when I saw Grant in the hospital. Down on the floor, sewing and crying, I let out a tortured cry to God and said, "What now?"

SIX

My History Of Unbelief

In retrospect it seems absurd that I should wait until I was absolutely desperate before I cried out to God.

I had prayed for Grant many times, but never for his heal-ing. My prayers were more general - for his well-being, his ability to handle his sickness, even for the pain to go....

But I had never asked God to heal my son. After all, as far as I was concerned those things just didn't happen today. And if they did, they certainly didn't happen in New Zealand.

My opposition to healing and any supernatural evidence that God still existed was deeply rooted in my childhood and upbringing.

My childhood is one filled with fond memories of a fabulous family with a mother and father who loved us deeply and lots of caring and sharing.

Mum was Christian and Dad a non-Christian, but he always encouraged the family to go to church. He would walk us to church each Sunday, and drop us off for all our church activities. Occasionally he would go to church picnics. Even more occasionally he would attend church himself.

He did make a commitment to the Christian faith when I was 12 and we were living in Dunedin.

But this was to last just 24 hours. The next night some church leaders came round and pressured him into getting baptised. It was the completely wrong approach for him, in-credibly insensitive, and Dad just walked away from his new faith.

The next year we moved to Palmerston North, a move which Mum believed would be the beginning of a real change in Dad. She hoped that without all his old Dunedin friends to hold him back he would come to Christ, particularly as her two sisters, who both had Christian husbands, also lived in Palmerston.

In 1965, five years after we moved to Palmerston North, Mum's prayers were answered. Dad became a Christian, something that should have meant rejoicing for the whole family.

But Dad's decision to follow Christ destroyed our previously warm relationship and before long my father became my enemy. I hated him.

The reason was that he became a Pentecostal Christian. It happened during a Pentecostal campaign in town at which one of my cousins was speaking. Mum went along, enjoyed it and returned the next night with quite a few others. This time she was baptised in the Holy Spirit - was filled with God's power. She began speaking in tongues and instantly - despite a lifetime of previous Christian commitment - became a different person.

She walked into our house that night and Dad could see the change. Immediately he said, "What you had before I didn't want, but what you have now I want."

The next night Dad, too, went to the meeting and made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. He came home, threw his cigarettes in the fire and never smoked again. He stopped drinking as well. It was a complete change.

But as far as I was concerned he might as well have worshipped the devil.

The church that Mum and I had happily attended for years didn't approve of the Pentecostal movement, so Mum and Dad began going to another church. I

remained where I was and heard all my church's teaching against

"Pentecostalism." I began to hate my father. It was illogical really, particularly seeing it was Mum, not Dad, who started the whole thing. But I took my anger out on my father.

Meanwhile Dad had the tremendous zeal that most new Christians get and he tried to convince me that I, too, needed this Pentecostal experience. He said I needed power in my very life, an infilling of the Holy Spirit. He wasn't very tactful, and the more he did so the more it got my back up. The split in the family got worse and worse.

Mum and Dad would have noisy Pentecostal meetings in our house and I would sit in my bedroom and fume. One night, unable to control myself any longer, I stormed downstairs and told them all to go home so I could get some sleep.

At my church the service would go for an hour, but at theirs it would drag on into the night. I used to wait impatiently for them to get home and give them a terrible dressing down for being so late.

It was like I was the parent and they were the children. The situation eventually got so bad that Brian and I advanced plans for our marriage, just so I could get out of my parents' house.

I was so determined to do something about future inter family tension that Brian and I made it a rule in our home that religion was never to be discussed with my parents. Each time they came to stay we had an uneasy truce and Mum would talk flat out to try and keep the peace.

Of course they hadn't made the same rule in their house, so whenever we went there we were sitting ducks for their style of Christianity. Many times I just walked out when they started talking about it. I felt very vulnerable when I was there. It was just as well we had shifted to Auckland and they were by now living in Feilding. That way we rarely saw each other - otherwise the whole situation would have exploded.

In Auckland, Brian and I drifted in our faith and our marriage, never knowing the vitality in our Christian life which deep down I sensed we were missing. Many times I wondered about the vibrance in my parents' lives, but my pride never let me search any further.

When Grant got sick I noticed that my mother was the only person whose prayers seemed to have any effect. She would sit by his bed with her eyes closed and I could see she was praying quietly. I didn't realise it at the time, but she was praying in tongues and rebuking all the evil power robbing Grant of his health. I didn't know or understand any of this, I just knew Grant became very calm when she prayed.

My father also prayed and told me he knew Grant would not stay like that. He didn't know if he would be healed or die, but he knew he wouldn't have to endure it for long.

I wasn't so sure. After all, looking after Grant day and night, week after week and month after month, seemed like forever to me. As far as I was concerned he wouldn't be healed. I just didn't believe God did those sorts of things. I shut my mind off, having been so anti anything which smelled of Pentecostalism.

Another person I knew was a businessman, John Wanhill. We met while participating in a Christian musical in Auckland. He seemed a nice enough guy to me, but when I found out he, too, believed in some Pentecostal doctrine I completely rejected him. At one time I bitterly exclaimed to him, "I will never speak to you again. I am not interested in you now I know you are one of those."

But he said something that turned out prophetic. "One day you're going to need this."

Years later I had to ring John when Paula had to find a job for a day as part of a school project. He was the only person I could think of so I swallowed my pride and phoned.

The next year the same thing happened, so I again rang John and we began talking about the family. It was at that time that Grant's sickness was nearing its peak and so I poured out the whole tale. He was terribly shocked and later rang back to ask if I would consider taking him to Bill Subritzky, a businessman who prayed for sick people and saw them healed.

My mother was in Auckland to help me for the week and when I told her about John's suggestion she said, "Oh, what a good idea," wisely hiding the excitement she felt at the possibility.

The next week I did ring Bill, but when I discovered he was overseas I put him out of my mind. Besides, I wasn't really concerned about Grant being healed. All that really worried me was the pain. After all, there are so many people in wheelchairs these days. And, looking on the bright side, I knew Grant couldn't have picked a better time to be crippled. People were becoming increasingly used to the handicapped and catering more and more for them.

If the pain had gone I would have been quite happy for him to stay in the wheelchair. But the pain didn't go.

And so I struggled through the next six weeks and my world continued to fall apart. I became increasingly weighed down by the hopelessness of the case presented by the doctors and, as the final straw, the episode with the plaster cast.

The thread of my sanity was being stretched taut and I knew I had reached breaking point.

That was when I was on the floor and finally shook off years of indoctrination to turn to God in despair and cry out, "What now?"

SEVEN

I Believe In Miracles!

It was the first time I had ever really turned to God in total desperation. And it was completely a last resort. I had such a feeling of weakness, uselessness and inadequacy.

And as I sat there weeping out my frustration, a series of messages started coming to me.

"Ring Bill, ring Bill.

Take him to be prayed for.

You know what you should do.

I have already told you."

They were almost audible voices, unlike anything I'd ever heard before. I know no one else would have heard them, but to me they were crystal clear. There was no question that something, someone was telling me something. Deep down I knew it was God.

Everything pointed to one thing. Go and see Bill Subritzky. And so I phoned Bill's office and made an appointment for noon the next day. His only condition was that Brian and I had to go too. It was six weeks since I had previously phoned Bill and I remember being vaguely surprised that he was in New Zealand this time.

I still wasn't sure it was the right thing to do, however. I had heard a bit about Bill and his Pentecostal leanings. I thought, "Oh no, not another weirdo." Even the name Subritzky put me off. "Why does he have to be a foreigner?" I wondered.

"Why couldn't he just be John Brown?"

I had never seen anyone prayed for and I didn't believe anyone who claimed to be healed through prayer. I simply believed they hadn't been sick in the first place.

Despite the apparent supernatural messages in answer to the cry of my heart, I went to bed that night feeling no emotion, no mounting excitement, no hope. I was completely neutral. I certainly wasn't expecting a miracle the next day.

In the morning I rang Mum and rather uncharacteristically asked her to pray that I would go through with it. I still had a good relationship with Mum, but to ring and ask her for prayer took a bit of doing.

What I didn't realise was that my phone call set in action an enormous chain of prayer throughout New Zealand. Mum's phone bill was enormous as she rang

every Christian and prayer group she could think of around the country. Then she and Dad settled down to pray. They left the others to pray that Grant would be healed. They just prayed that we would go.

That morning I decided to go to a Bible study held by the women's group at my church. I figured that if I had to get up, get Grant ready and go out, I might as well attend the study first.

Our study was on patience and it made me lose my cool. I told the women how I had lost patience with God, how the house wouldn't sell, how things just weren't going right.

From there Grant and I went into town to keep the appointment with Bill, not telling the women at the study where we were going.

As we came to Bill's office I sensed a faint glimmer of hope. I thought that perhaps after Bill had prayed for Grant we would see an improvement. Maybe the doctors would find something or he would slowly come right. But I still didn't entertain the possibility of a miracle.

We met Brian at the office and one of Bill's staff, Alan Campbell, came down when we arrived to help carry Grant, in his wheelchair, up the carpeted staircase.

Then we waited in the reception area for about 10 minutes. I was shivering, but it wasn't cold.

When Bill came out my first impression was that he had a kind of aura around him, a complete calmness. He came to the reception desk and spoke briefly to the person there before he acknowledged us. Then he went off, evidently to pray in another room.

We continued to wait and I continued to shiver.

Brian, too, was quiet, nervous and jittery. He admitted later how much out of his depth he felt.

Eventually we were ushered into his office and Bill shut the door. It was just as well, otherwise I may have left. I was nervous about the whole situation. It was so much against my upbringing and beliefs. The office was pretty posh, I thought as I looked around, but my main reaction was one of rising panic - "I have got to be mad."

I said very little, which is unusual for me. Bill did most of the talking.

First he asked us if we believed in Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour. We all said, "Yes." Then he asked us what church we went to and we told him.

And then he read from the Bible, telling us that it is not God's will for us to be sick, that God allows sickness but never gives people sickness. And emphasised that God heals today. Grant's condition may have been a testing time for us, but there was no way God wanted him to be like that.

He talked for about 15 minutes - asking us about our home, whether we were into witchcraft, horoscopes or were Freemasons. Then he explained how people could have demon spirits. At that my hackles started to rise, thinking, "Who is he to tell my child that people can have demons?" I was not impressed.

He was quite blunt throughout, saying exactly what he meant, not mincing words. Brian, Grant and I barely spoke. Bill just talked, now and again looking at us to see if we were following him.

At one point he asked Grant if he believed God could heal him and, to my surprise, Grant immediately answered, "Yes." I whispered a quick prayer under my breath that he wouldn't be too disappointed if he wasn't healed.

After his talk Bill asked Brian and I to stand in the centre of his office. I closed my eyes, he put his hand on the top of my head and the next thing I knew I was lying on the floor. He hadn't pushed me, I hadn't slipped or tripped, but somehow I had been knocked over backwards. I just went out like a light, oblivious to anything going on around me. I didn't feel myself going and I didn't even feel myself hit the floor. I just opened my eyes and there I was.

I wasn't too sure about it, but I knew it felt good. I now know it was God who "knocked" me over as He touched my life.

Suddenly, and against my will, I had become one of those holy rollers whom I had so bitterly opposed for my whole life! I was like Dad!

After a few minutes I got up, feeling different. I was more relaxed and confident, as if a load had been lifted from my shoulders. There was something in the room that I had never felt before. It was a peace which I think we all felt.

Bill prayed for Brian and his prayer was that our attitudes wouldn't stop Grant being healed. Brian remained standing, he wasn't "knocked" over.

Finally Bill went to pray for Grant, anointed him with oil, then prayed again.

He had his hand on Grant's shoulder as he sat in his wheel-chair and then simply said, "I want you to stand up."

I thought, "This is dumb, he doesn't stand up. He is not able to stand up."

But Grant stood up, by himself, something which was physically impossible for him to do. If he was helped he could stand up for 10 seconds, but he could not push himself out of the wheelchair like he was now. I was dumbstruck and could only think, "My goodness."

Bill pushed the wheelchair out of the way, turned him round, prayed again for a few seconds and suddenly Grant crashed to the ground.

All my doubts began flooding back. "He's packed up again, he's had it," I thought. What I didn't realise was that Grant had fallen under the power of the Holy Spirit, just like I had. God was working in his life.

Then I looked down at Grant and I saw the most beautiful expression on his face. His eyes were shut, but he was smiling.

The difference between Grant then and the Grant I had seen the day before, just after the plaster cast incident, was unbelievable. They were two different people. If you'd seen photos of the two you wouldn't have believed they were the same. All the torture had been taken out of his face.

Bill knelt down and again dabbed oil on his forehead, demanding in the name of Jesus that all tormenting spirits come out of Grant's body. Grant lay completely calm and still.

Still I fought the possibility of a miracle happening. I was witnessing the most amazing expression of God touching someone's life, and yet I still couldn't shake off my belief that God didn't work today. I even warned Bill that Grant couldn't walk, thinking that somehow the things taking place before my eyes had to stop.

But Bill wasn't ready to stop yet.

He asked Grant to get up, which he did, and then told him to touch his toes. I couldn't believe it, but Grant did so without the slightest hesitation. During his illness, if he stood with his hands at his side, he could only slide each hand an inch down his legs.

Now he was touching his toes.

Bill then began walking Grant around, like you do when you teach a child to walk. He led him round the room - and there was my boy, just like a toddler following his father around.

Brian was sobbing and I think I was too. It was all too unreal to be true and yet I knew it was really happening. I felt so excited and realised for the first time in my life that God is not to be limited by man.

My doubts were still there, but they were being quickly dispelled. As Bill led him round the room, Brian and I hovered anxiously, waiting to catch him if he fell. I knew something wonderful, a miracle, was taking place. But I still thought it would have to happen over a period, that this would be the start of a recovery process. In fact, I didn't really want any more right then and there. I didn't want to be greedy. But Bill still wasn't finished.

Next he opened his office door and asked Grant if he would like to walk down to the reception area and back. The corridor is about 60 metres long and he managed that quite well.

When he came back, Bill said, "Would you like to run?" And so off Grant went again, running up and down the corridor.

And all the time the office floor became wetter and wetter with our tears and Brian and I cried for joy. I was uncontrollable, sobbing and sobbing. Alan Campbell was there too, also crying and smiling.

And I began to feel Bill's sympathy and compassion, whereas before he had seemed a bit clinical. Now he was human again.

It was an amazing feeling to be so desperate and feel there is no hope and then see such a victory. It was something you could never describe, something that will be with us for the rest of our lives. Even now, when we talk about it, I cry. I find I get very emotional when I think just how wonderful it's been. Grant returned from running up and down the corridor looking a bit sheepish, slightly embarrassed. But he was exhilarated all the same. His face was a bit pale, but it glowed.

He was healed! God had healed him. God was alive and working in the 20th Century. It was an amazing discovery.

The reality of God working in the modern world was brought home when one of the workers at the office looked in, simply said, "Oh, another miracle, praise the Lord," and walked off.

To him it was commonplace - he saw it all the time. To us it was the most wonderful thing ever, a total revolution in our thinking and indoctrination.

And then, suddenly, Bill was gone, saying something about grabbing a sandwich for lunch. I wanted to hug him and thank him, but looking back I know that would have meant I was giving him the glory and not God.

I looked at my watch and it was 12.45. It had taken 45 minutes for our lives to be turned upside down - Grant was healed and we would never be the same again. Now I believe in miracles.

EIGHT

Totally Healed

That afternoon became a blur of telling: people about the wonderful thing God had done in our lives.

It was like a tap had been turned on that couldn't be turned off. Our excitement poured out as we rejoiced.

The healing was immediately used, right there in Bill Subritzky's office, as a witness to non-Christians. Alan asked, "Can we stop at this office? There are a few unbelievers in here."

One of them asked Grant how he was and Grant just grinned and said, "Good."

Then we went to John Wanhill's shop. Somehow he had already heard and he came out to meet us and said excitedly, "I can tell by your face."

From there we went back to the city for lunch, at Grant's request going upstairs to eat. He could climb again!

After lunch Brian returned to work and Grant and I went to visit a former missionary friend of mine. It was as if I wanted her to tell me it was okay. She cried and cried and cried, and so did her daughter. She prayed and thanked the Lord for healing him. She was so excited.

It was all right, it was real. I felt reassured:

That afternoon we had to visit one of the doctors because Grant had been about to spend another spell in hospital. We arrived at the surgery and the doctor happened to be out on the street waiting for someone to pick him up and take him to the hospital. We parked about six car lengths away and walked up to him together. He knew how bad Grant had been, even that morning, yet here was the same boy bouncing around him with a huge smile all over his face. We told him what had happened and he patted Grant on the shoulder and said, "Good on you, Grant. Now go and enjoy your life."

And that was all. Yet it was enough. God had done what, in this case, no doctor could do - heal my son.

Then we returned to the house where we'd attended the Bible study that morning - just to show them. Only two women were left and it took them a few moments to click that Grant wasn't in his wheelchair any more.

They were absolutely speechless. Having only seen him that morning themselves, they could barely believe what they were seeing. They were thrilled for us, but they were very hesitant. Nothing like that had ever happened before.

We got home that afternoon and Grant ran up and down the stairs. He went into his bedroom for the first time in months. By 5 pm he was riding around the streets. We cried and laughed and praised God, sometimes all at the same time. It was the most marvellous sense of release, a bit like your favourite dream coming true. We knew we weren't going to have to wake up from this one.

News of Grant's healing spread fast and soon our phone was running hot. Some of our friends took it very well, rejoicing with us. Others were more sceptical - like me, brought up to believe healing wasn't of God. Yet knowing the situation, they couldn't deny its reality.

I understood their dilemma. I wondered what my reaction would have been if I had been in their shoes. I think I would have been happy for the child and his parents, but perhaps not so delighted in the way it happened.

A praise time was arranged at church that evening and the place was really full. There were even one or two sceptics present. I don't think there was a dry eye in the place, except perhaps for the sceptics. They had Grant up the front and they must have run him up and down the steps 10 times. It was as though they needed convincing that it was the same boy, and that he was now well.

The last time he actually ran up the steps and at the top threw his arms in the air and praised God. I thought, "Oh goodness, you don't do that here."

Funnily enough, Grant had been to church just the Sun-day before. Because he'd been so sick, it was the first time he'd been in months. But I had woken up that morning and something kept saying to me, "Take Grant to church."

Initially I suppressed the idea because it was such an ordeal to get him dressed. And keeping a 10 o'clock appointment was beyond me.

But it kept nagging at me, so I took him. I felt sorry for the people that day, there were so many tears. At that stage most of them just thought he was a little boy with a sore back. But when they saw him with sunken eyes, very pale and sitting in a wheelchair it was quite moving.

The effect of him being at church that day was that people there saw him at his worst. Now, just a few days later, they could see him completely healed. It was

amazing. I realise now that God was telling me to take him to church so people could witness how bad he was before he was healed.

Some still didn't believe. Others wanted a doctor's analysis, but I didn't agree. I believed we had to take the healing at face value, accept the miracle as it was. That morning he couldn't walk, that night he could run and ride a bike. What more evidence do you need? There was no doubt in my mind what had happened. Other people sat back and waited to see what might happen. If they were honest they were eventually convinced. Grant never regressed. The only physical problem he had was blisters from walking and an initial stiffness and cramp from his long unused ankles.

Nothing of his illness remained.

As events unfolded, we could see how God's hand had been in the whole situation - even in the darkest times of Grant's sickness.

A couple of weeks after the healing we got a cash offer on our house. But our agreement on the other place had expired so we weren't obliged to move. We didn't want to move anyway. Suddenly the stairs weren't an obstacle any more! I began to understand some of the processes God had taken me through during the illness. He took me to a point where I would give up my house willingly. I realised my home had become my god. To me it was just like a palace and I had treated it as such. I was the queen in the palace.

Now I was willing to give it up for God - and when I had come to that point, He didn't require it of me anymore. God had had His hand on the whole situation. If we had sold our house and bought the other one - I would - have accepted Grant's sickness as God's will. He never would have been healed. As it was we got the best of both worlds - a son who recovered and the house we love.

Then there was the episode, a few days later, of trying to take the wheelchair back to the hospital.

The woman took one look at me and asked, "Is he deceased?" I didn't appreciate the question because it would have been very insensitive if I had been a grieving mother. But I said, "No, he is actually well."

She said, "But you don't get well from that."

"If you've got a few minutes I will tell you," I said, and proceeded to detail just what had happened. She's probably still got her mouth open. She didn't even comment, apart from suggesting I keep the wheelchair in case the problem came back.

But I knew it wasn't coming back, so I left it with her. Grant's healing also healed the relationship between my father and me. Soon afterwards it was Easter and I went down to Palmerston North.

Dad and I just cuddled and cried together. Now whenever I go down we take out our Bibles and launch into heavy, but amicable discussion. If I have a low 1 ring him and go down for a week and study the Scriptures with him:

Grant himself immediately adjusted back into normal life. He went back to school the next day, started playing sports and became a normal 11 year old.

On his first day at school I arrived with this child with a beaming face and walked to the office where there were prob-ably six to eight teachers. The woman in the office kept saying, "Look at his face, look at his face." It was shining like a light. The poor headmaster was quite stunned. It's very hard for somebody to acknowledge a situation like that.

His teachers and classmates accepted the healing with varying degrees of incredulity.

His teacher encouraged him, but I think he wanted to see if he was going to deteriorate again. He wanted to put a sheep-skin on Grant's chair and said, "Well, we won't do any sport." "Look, he's fine," I replied. "He's to do everything."

And so Grant immediately began full participation, though now and then in some strenuous activity like high jump the teacher would ask whether Grant really wanted to do it.

He did, with no ill effect.

Why not indeed? He had been totally healed by God!

NINE

To God Be The Glory

Nearly three years have passed since we had our lives turned upside down by God. They have been good years, full of fun and learning more about how big God is.

There have been sadnesses as well. We've left our old church because, when the initial euphoria died down, they couldn't accept the healing as being of God. We've also lost some of our old friends and there are still many who shake their heads in disbelief, preferring to shut Grant's healing out of their minds.

But the pluses enormously outweigh the minuses. Grant's health was actually better after he was healed than it had been before he got sick. Months later, almost by accident, he discovered that his lifelong allergy to milk had disappeared as well. Now he drinks gallons of milk with no ill effects.

Then there's the family. We now have three healthy children who know so much more about God and how He works. We have grown strong as a family. We still have the normal bickering and disputes among the children, but there is a depth of experience there which we would never have had if we hadn't been through the experience with Grant.

Grant's illness has brought Brian and me together in a far closer way than we had previously experienced.

The tensions we faced then were real enough, but in a strange way they built a stronger bond between us. Our marriage is far stronger now than it was before. We now know how much we depend on each other.

The list of people touched and changed by Grant's healing is endless.

Brian's brother became a Christian soon after his marriage had broken up.

Brian's mother was baptised in the Holy Spirit at the age of 70 as the depth of God was revealed to her.

Two people at work became Christians after hearing the story.

A friend of ours who had been a Christian but had fallen back recommitted his life to God.

The list goes on and on. Many times I've shared our story at church meetings and people have been touched by the power of God. Earlier in my Christian life I

wished I had something dynamic to say in my conversion testimony so people would sit up and listen.

Now God has answered my prayer.

My Christian life is much stronger now. I had become very lax in prayer and reading my Bible. There were times when I wasn't happy at church so I just didn't go. People coming to my home wouldn't have even known I was a Christian. Nowadays I'm fired up. I've really found something worth talking about.

Ankylosing spondylitis - or whatever it was Grant had - has never reared its ugly head again. Today no one would know he had ever been sick. He's just a normal, healthy boy of 13.

We still don't know precisely how he got sick. The turn he had that day at Brian's parents suggests some sort of demonic attack, and perhaps the sickness resulted from that. However, that doesn't explain why I'd already seen a slowdown in him.

To me it's unimportant anyway. He is well now, that's all that matters to me.

Apart from Grant's suffering, I don't regret one moment of it at all.

We all came through far better.

People often ask why. Why do people get sick? Why did Grant have to go through that? Why do we suffer?

I don't have all the answers. I'm not dogmatic enough to suggest that the same thing must happen to others as happened in our family.

But I know one thing. God does heal today. He healed my son when the doctors couldn't.

To God be all the glory and the praise.

How you can receive the greatest miracle of all....

TEN

How to be Born Again

By Bill Subritzky

1. WE MUST COUNT THE COST

There is a cost involved in being born again. The Bible tells us to count that cost before we decide to follow Jesus. "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it - "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, "saying, `This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

"Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:27-33)

Becoming a Christian is not simply joining a club. It is a decision to take up a new way of life and become like Jesus Christ Himself, a revolutionary. This does not mean that we set out to pull down fleshly governments, but that we decide to adopt a radically changed lifestyle in the sense that Jesus Christ is now going to become Lord of every part of our life. Hence we need to consider the cost that is involved and be sure that we are prepared to pay the price. Once we have made that decision and never turn back, then we will begin to understand the job of being a Christian.

There is no "cheap" or "easy" grace. That is, we cannot expect God's favour to be upon us if we do not actively turn from sin and obey the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. BECOME LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

Having considered the cost, we then need to become like a little child in our approach to God. We need to put aside all prejudice, arrogance and pride and humble ourselves before God.

"Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me." (Matthew 18:25)

Our education will not get us into heaven, nor will our works of themselves. Jesus has pointed out that we need to humble ourselves like a little child if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ shocked His disciples by washing their feet before He went onto the cross. Peter objected to this but Jesus said that if He was not allowed to wash the feet of Peter, then Peter would have no part with Him. Peter quickly agreed to the washing, not only of his feet but also his hands and his head. Jesus then said:

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:13-15)

Satan fell because of pride. Pride is the greatest enemy to our coming to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Jesus has given us the example of humility.

3. REPENTANCE

Repentance does not mean being sorry for our sins, but rather turning completely from them. It is a 180 degree turn. It is a decision to turn from sin,, not a feeling. When Jesus met Paul on the Damascus Road he spoke words which very clearly described the meaning of repentance:

"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18)

Repentance is therefore turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. When we turn from darkness to light it means we allow the light of God fully into our lives and we turn away from all the darkness of sin.

John the Baptist, who was six months older than Jesus Christ and came as the forerunner to proclaim the coming of the Lord, preached the message of

repentance. Among the first messages that Jesus preached were the words, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Repentance involves a complete change of heart, not just an emotion.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the young man left his father's home after receiving his inheritance. He went and squandered it. When the son came to himself as he lay among the swine and wanted to eat their food, he said:

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" (Luke 15:18-19)

And the next words we read are:

"And he arose and came to his father." (Luke 15:20)

He decided to repent and go back to his father. He in fact did something, namely he arose and went to his father. This shows the decision needed for repentance.

On the other hand, we are told that Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ, was remorseful after he saw that Jesus Christ had been condemned. He brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. However, he was not repentant and therefore could not know God's forgiveness. In his remorse he went and hanged himself.

Remorse is a feeling, repentance is a decision. Repentance is where our will meets the will of God on the cross of Jesus Christ. We place our will under God's will and decide to follow Jesus. That is true repentance. No matter how we feel we make the decision and follow it.

We need to get on our knees and confess our sins to God. It is good to do this aloud and as we confess them the devil begins to flee from our life. We should do this from our heart. Tears of conviction may well flow. We need to forgive others, especially our parents and those who are closest to us. Lack of forgiveness on our part is the greatest barrier to a true walk with God. He has forgiven us of all our sins and therefore we must forgive others. We must renounce all involvement in the occult, all wrong forms of sexual activity, all lying, cheating, immorality of all descriptions. The more repentant we are, the more we open ourselves to the Spirit of God. We can confess our sins directly to God through Jesus Christ because there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. On occasions it is good to confess our sins or trespasses to one another.

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16)

Whichever way we do it, it must be a heartfelt decision to turn from sin, to bring all the darkness out into the light so that the darkness flees. As we do so we will begin to know true deliverance from the power of sin.

4. RENOUNCE

Having confessed those sins, we then need to renounce them. That is, we need to turn absolutely from them and say that we do not want them in our lives and renounce them in the name of Jesus Christ.

5. GOD'S GRACE

In all of this we must remember the grace (favour) of God. It is through His favour that we have been saved through faith which God gives us. As we truly repent and turn from sin and turn to God, we find that the gift of God's faith and favour begins to operate in our lives.

If you have followed the above steps, then you are now ready to be born again. In following the above steps you may already know the infilling presence of God upon you, but in any case, we should remember the condition of entry into the kingdom of God set out in Romans 10:8-10:

"But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:8-10)

Thus, as we confess with our mouths the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.

6. ARE YOU READY?

If so, could I have the privilege of suggesting a simple prayer which you might like to follow as you go on your knees:

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I come a sinner and I now renounce all of my sins. I confess the sins of (name those

sins) and I utterly renounce those sins in the name of Jesus Christ. I absolutely turn from them. I especially renounce any involvement in the occult (if you or your parents or ancestors have been in Freemasonry or Druids Lodge you should especially renounce that involvement). I renounce all the works of the devil. I believe Jesus Christ came into this world, born of the virgin, that He walked this earth, that He was crucified on a cross and that He died in order to cleanse me from all sin, to reconcile me to You, Heavenly Father, and that through His precious blood He bought me back from the hand of the devil. I believe He paid the total penalty for all of the sins I have ever committed and that through His blood I am cleansed, redeemed and sanctified, that is set apart to God, and justified, that is just as if I had never sinned.

I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day and is seated now at the right hand of God. I turn to You, Lord Jesus. I turn away from the power of darkness to the power of light, from the power of Satan to the power of God, and I ask You, Lord Jesus, to come into my life by Your Holy Spirit. I surrender absolutely to You and I confess You as my Lord and my Saviour.

As you complete this prayer, you may well feel the peace of God descending upon you. It is good to stand to your feet and begin to thank God and praise Him for His goodness. You will start to realise the certainty of salvation in your heart and the fact that God has forgiven you and reconciled you to Himself through Jesus Christ. The joy of God will begin to flood your heart.

7. WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

On the day of Pentecost when Peter was preaching to the Jews and they were convicted in their hearts of their sins, they asked Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

The response of Peter was:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) You have now repented and now you need to be baptised in water if this has not happened to you before.

(a) WATER BAPTISM

Jesus Christ gave us the example of the need for water baptism as He Himself went under the waters of baptism. Even though John the Baptist argued with Jesus when Jesus asked John to baptise Him and said:

"I have need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14)

The response of Jesus was:

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness."

(Matthew 3:15)

Thus Jesus Christ gave us the example of the need for wa-ter baptism. When we undergo the waters of baptism, we fulfil what should have already been accomplished in our heart. Water baptism is the outward manifestation of the transaction which has taken place in our hearts as we have given our lives to Jesus Christ. In undergoing water baptism we identify with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. As we undergo the waters of baptism, we recognise that our old lives have died and we are rising to a new life in Jesus Christ and that we are no longer the slaves of sin.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the like-ness of His resurrection,

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:3-6)

Most cultures recognise the power of water baptism in one form or another. They recognise that it is a cutting off from the old life. For example, in India where I have seen many come forward to make a decision for Jesus Christ, there is often no real difficulty in their home life until they undergo the waters of baptism. It is then that the real cutting off point occurs be-cause their Hindu brothers and sisters recognise that this is a complete cutting off from the old life. Many times they disown the relatives who undergo water baptism. They may even throw them out of their homes. Thus there is a real price to pay to be a Christian in that land.

Water baptism is an act of obedience towards God. It is good for it to be carried out publicly before other believers with the candidate testifying about God's life-changing power in his or her life.

Church Attendance

It is important that we belong to a church that worships Jesus Christ and believes in the whole Bible. It is recommended that if you do not already belong to a Christian church, that you join a Bible-believing church so that you can grow as a member of the body of Christ.

(b) BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Christ told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. He had already breathed on them on the Sunday night of His resurrection when they received the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22) Now He was telling them to wait for the promise of the Father so that they could be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49) We see those same commands set out in Acts chapter 1:4-8 when He promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

They duly waited a further ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven and then on the day of Pentecost the power of the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke in tongues. Peter explained that Jesus Christ, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, had poured out this which they now saw and heard. (Acts 2:33).

How to ask for the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

1. Go on your knees before the Lord and confess all your sins and receive God's forgiveness.
2. Acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
3. Allow the Holy Spirit to remind you of any areas of occult involvement on your part or on the part of your parents or ancestors. Renounce that involvement in the name of Jesus Christ.

4. Believe in your heart that the Word of God is absolutely true and that God, through Jesus Christ, will give this great blessing to you as you believe.

5. Say a simple prayer like this:

Dear Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce all my sins (name those sins) and I especially renounce all involvement in the occult or witchcraft on my own part or part of my parents or my ancestors. I renounce all fear and unbelief and any blockage of my mind. I ask You Lord Jesus to baptise me with the Holy Spirit.

How to Receive

You may be standing or kneeling. It is good to close our eyes and think of Jesus seated at the right hand of God, ready to pour out the promise of the Father upon us. As we quietly wait upon Him and allow Him to do this, we begin to sense the peace of God. We should not listen to what we are saying, but let God give us a new language. Then we will find that from our innermost being will flow a river of living water of words as the Holy Spirit helps us.

"but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

While we are kneeling and praying to God through Jesus Christ, we should realise that the Holy Spirit, deep within our heart, will rise up as we allow Him to do so. He will come like a river onto our tongue and help us to speak out in our new language.