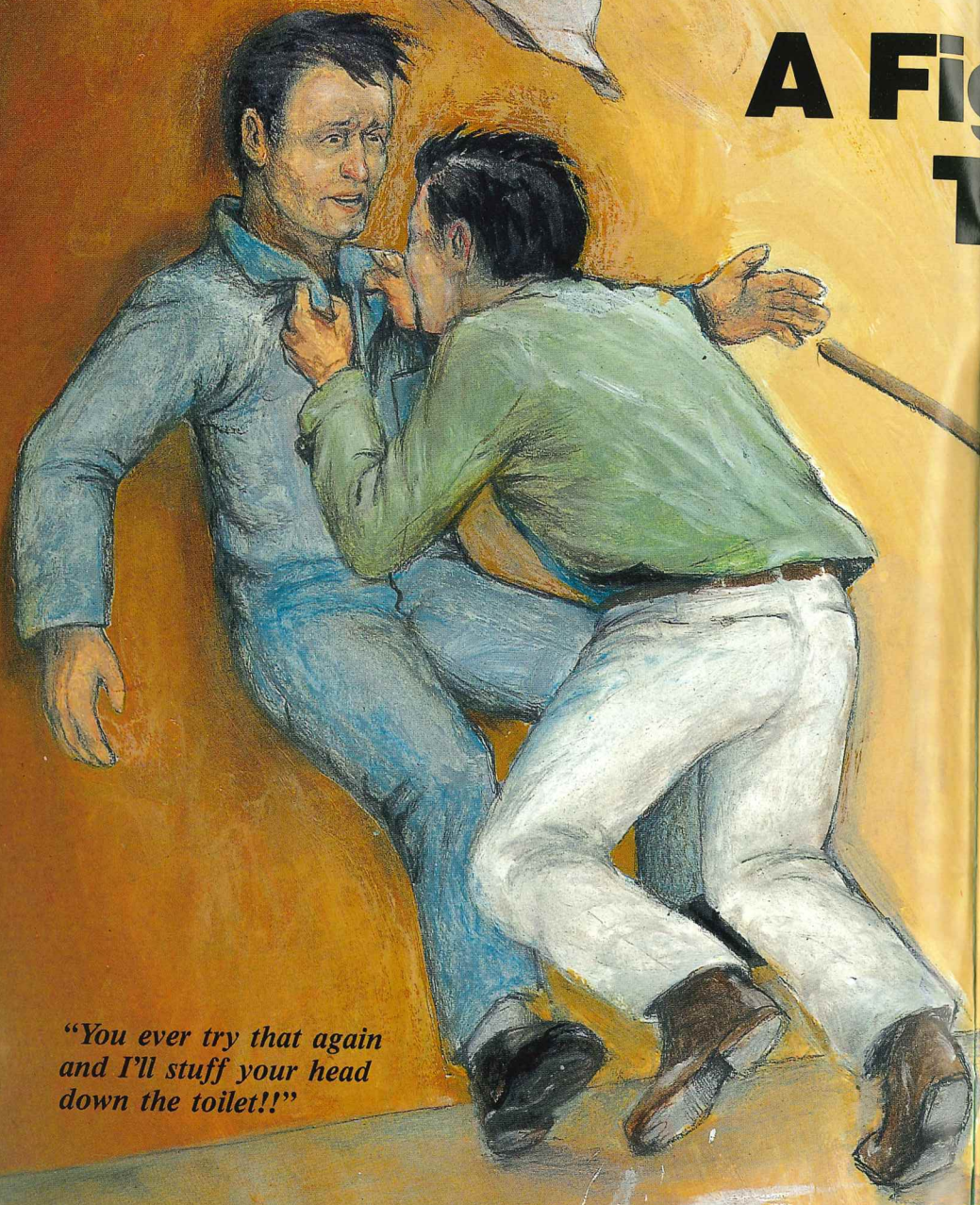


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Full Of Empty

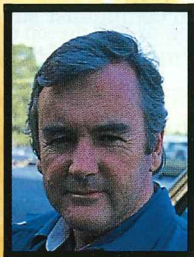
A Fight



*"You ever try that again
and I'll stuff your head
down the toilet!!"*

ghter All The Way

Bill Lowry,
Nambour, QLD



As far as I was concerned there was only one way to tackle a challenge or an unfamiliar situation. And that was with aggression. Physical. A crack-their-heads type of approach! I'd tell people what I thought of them and if they didn't think I was serious then I'd follow through with a bit of the old one two.

One of my responsibilities as personnel industrial officer with a large Australian manufacturing firm was to check that all facilities were up to scratch in hygiene standards. In one section that I used to check there was a cleaner who always tried to intimidate me. He was an ex-pug and a bit of a stirrer into the bargain and I don't know if he realised just how short my wick was, but he certainly found out.

I was walking past him on my rounds one time when he "accidentally" dragged his wet mop right across my boots, filling them with water. There was no time for the smug look to settle on his face; no time lapse between his challenge and my response. I whipped around, lunged for his coat lapels and rammed him up against the wall with such force that his hat went flying as he stared at me, momentarily stunned. "You ever try anything like that again and I'll stuff your head down the toilet," I spat at him.

Violence to me was a simple solution to any situation. I looked peaceable enough from a distance. But I could explode at very short notice.

Clean-up operation

I had worked as a personnel officer in two large companies, after graduating in personnel administration and industrial law at NSW and Sydney universities. I had a bit of an academic bent and saw it as the pathway to success.

Besides that, the Korean war was on at the time and they were drafting young men into the war. Students were exempt. And so my academic



bent took a quick bend a little further! I couldn't see the point in being involved in a foreign war. It seemed a fruitless exercise to me.

It wasn't that I was pro-communist or anything like that. In fact quite the opposite came to be true. While I was a personnel officer I came under the influence of Douglas Hyde — a former communist who had converted to Catholicism. I had had a few suspicions about the labour unions and the influence of the communists among them. Nothing concrete. I just didn't like the way they had infiltrated into the movement. After listening to Hyde and looking further into some of the things he was saying, the industrial jigsaw fell into place and I began to see some factual basis for my suspicions. It became patently clear to me just how the communist influence was undermining the industrial structure of the country.

There was only one thing for it as far as I was concerned. I would do what I could to clean up the union where I worked. I would fight for a communist-free union.

We were heading into an economic recession and a retrenchment programme was called for. In such instances the accepted mode of operation was to lay off workers according to the length of time they had held their particular job. Last on, first off was the rule. I outlined a plan to management some months earlier which would ensure that during this programme the chief communist activist in the plant's union would be laid off. The company agreed and I moved this man from one section of the plant to another. In a retrenchment programme lay offs occur right across the board in every section. It's not necessarily the length of time a worker has been with the company that counts, but the length of time he has worked in a particular section.

As the months passed it became clear that I had managed to

manoeuvre the chief agitator into a position where I could legally drop him. The retrenchment crept closer and closer to him and as it did so the management began to get cold feet over dropping him. He was a powerful man in the union and if he was laid off there was bound to be industrial trouble. That didn't worry me at all. After all, there were principles at stake here and I was not about to give in to communist stirrers.

Cold feet

But the company was. I was called in to the general manager's office and told to back down, to take the heat off this guy. "Not on your life," I told him. I wasn't motivated by any religious convictions in my stand. It was just that I could see how the whole industrial structure was being threatened and I wanted to do something about it. And I wasn't going to be pushed around by any commy stirrer.

"You've got two alternatives," was the general manager's reply to my determination. "Either drop your clean-up operation, or we'll drop you." Well, that laid the cards on the table.

The consequence of my stand was an unceremonious boot! At least that's what it amounted to. I resigned rather than give in to the demands of both the union and the company. But the agitator whom we were working to remove was retained. That's justice for you.

From that point on I was a hot potato in the industrial field. No one wanted me. My ex-general manager saw to that. He spread my reputation far and wide. Too much tarred with the metal trades brush, he said. Too inflexible when dealing with the more fanatical elements of the union (that meant I wouldn't pander to those disruptive elements). I was under a black ban from a management point of view and consequently couldn't crack another job in the industrial scene.

Money talks

If nothing else, I learned one thing from that incident. Money talks. Even more than principles. Even more than concern for others. I had long ago given away my nominal Catholic upbringing. It had no relevance to the direction my life was headed — into the business world. Besides, there was developing a conflict of principles between what I had been taught and what I wanted to do, or had to do, to make a killing in the business world. So I found it far more convenient to lay religious principles aside and to get on with my life. My first foray on leaving school was into banking but I soon discovered that was not what I wanted to do. So off to university I went to prepare myself for the rugged world of big business.

Leaving my job as personnel officer under a black ban did nothing for my ego, but it did plant within me a fierce determination to gain control of whatever it was I was doing. And I realised that the only way to gain control was through controlling the purse strings. I turned with a vengeance from my self-imposed mission of playing saviour on the industrial battleground and took off, hell bent after the dollar.

Life insurance was my lifeline to self-confidence. In this field I had a good deal of success as a salesman. This led me into a management field for which I seemed to have a natural flair and soon I floated to the top of that. By this stage I was feeling pretty perky again and I was beginning to make the dollars.

An industrial engineering partnership was the next venture I got into, and it was this that almost handed me my goal of making a million dollars. One particular venture held the key. I was negotiating the sale of a manufacturing concept to an American organisation and we were almost ready to close the deal. My partner was the brains behind the project but

it was my idea to sell it to the Americans so I was doing most of the marketing.

My partner got a bit jealous and didn't want to go along with the deal. He got it into his head from other associates that if we sold to the Americans they would rob us blind, and he began to make these sorts of noises to the organisation I had set the deal up with. I had the contracts drawn up. All that remained to be done was the actual signing of the papers. But my partner scared them off at the last minute. They sensed that he was unstable and consequently were not prepared to work with him. Bang went two million dollars a year. Everything folded up over night. I had put all I possessed into the partnership and the development of that latest concept and I had been "done" just before the payout. I was wild. I was also down the tubes.

Down but not out

I found myself slapped a second time. I was penniless. Everything I owned was sold to pay the debts and I was left once more to pick myself up from the floor and try to start again.

We moved to escape the environment. It was too depressing. I eventually landed a job with a chemical manufacturing company and eventually recovered from the second major setback of my business career.

I started making my mark in the company and began to regain my self-confidence. My eyes also started looking to my own horizons in search of the illusive million dollars. I was on the way up again, and I was feeling cocky. My ego was running high, people were flattering me; my marketing expertise was coming to the fore and I was becoming an increasingly effective marketing machine.

And then it happened. God interrupted my life. Not in person, but through my wife, Josephine. You can understand that the pressures of

financial collapse had placed a great deal of strain on our marriage. We were still hanging in there but things were pretty rough. Jo could see that my drive for the top was ruining our family. I could see it too but I never used to let it affect my performance or the number of hours I devoted to the job. I was determined to make it at all costs.

Now I was on the way up again I desperately wanted to be successful. I cried out to God to help me. I don't know what I expected to happen, but I did know that most people ask for God's help when they are in the pits. Yet here I was asking for his help when I was on the way up. I guess in a sense I didn't really need his help then. I was making it. But I didn't want a repeat performance of the last two failings.

I arrived home one day to find Jo out of her head with joy. I couldn't understand it. A while back the realisation of what was happening to our family and to our own relationship had awakened in Jo a desire to see us all put back together. She had a desperate need to reconcile the failing family and she began to look once more into our Catholic faith, so long ago forgotten.

Enter God

A nun had given her a book on the Holy Spirit. Jo read it and at the end of it said, "God, I want what this Holy Spirit is all about." She was in the kitchen and God answered her on the spot. There was an awakening in her. Somehow she knew that God was present with her. Something had taken place inside her and in a moment she knew she was changed. And then to cap it all off a warm sensation began to envelope her whole body. She didn't know what it was but she knew from reading the book that it was the Holy Spirit. It was like what the Bible talked about in the book of Acts when the same thing happened to the believers on the day of Pentecost. Jo

was overjoyed. She knew she had met with God.

Jo's next meeting was with me. She was joyful but when I saw her and learned from her what had happened, I was livid. Here was something beyond my control — a challenge to me. I reacted, as per normal, with aggression. I had asked God to help me make it but this was ridiculous. I thought I was overcoming my problems and here was my wife acting like she was mentally disturbed. At least that was what it seemed like to me. I even considered having her committed. She smiled all the time and had Bibles scattered throughout the house. Most unusual.

I tried to convince her to let go of these ridiculous beliefs and to act normal. I even locked her out of the house a few times to try and bring her to her senses. But she wouldn't be brought. She knew she had found something that could give us what we needed and she was determined for her man (that was me) to have the same thing in his life.

One time Jo invited a group of Christians around to our house for a Bible study. After she arranged it she told me. Talk about Mount Vesuvius. I erupted. But I couldn't do anything about it because Jo had arranged it all and the people were coming around that night. It was organised by a group called Campus Crusade for Christ and I was a little surprised to find that the people who came that night were professional types.

I had to stay in the room to save face while the evening's activities wore on but I made sure I stayed aloof from what was being said. I let my contempt for what they were saying about religion and God show. And then I was really put on the mat.

The woman who was leading the whole thing was a one-time actress and she was showing the group how to explain the steps to becoming a Christian to an interested enquirer.

She needed a model. She chose me. I couldn't refuse because I wanted to be seen in the best light by everyone in the room. So I reluctantly agreed to her request and played my part by answering her questions in the affirmative as she directed. She finally came to a question, "Would you like to receive Jesus Christ in your life?" "Yes," I replied, playing my part as I had been instructed, not meaning a word of it and all the time thinking, "If I can get my hands on this bird I'll throttle her!"

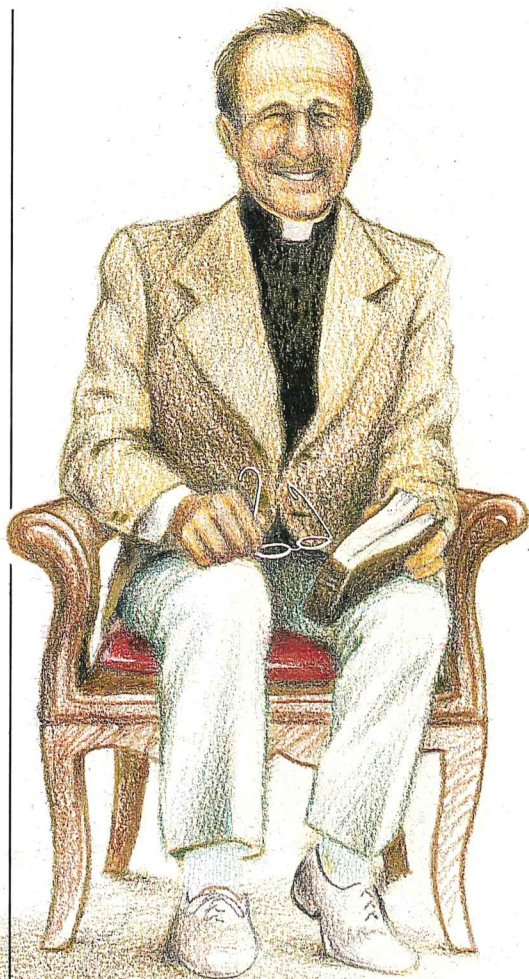
It was strange. To me it was all an act, but after that night I felt that the hounds of heaven were after me. I couldn't shake the feeling that God was waiting for me to acknowledge him. I began to feel convicted about the way I had lived my life, the goals I had set and the neglect I had shown my family. But it was going to take more than that to move me.

Cracked heads

Two experiences brought the turmoil inside of me to a head. Jo wanted me to go to a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting with her. My brother was going with her and that irritated me so I went too, just so that I wouldn't be left out. But I told her that if she brought any more of these strange people home to talk about God I'd crack their heads.

There was a professor of applied maths leading the group and that appealed to my academic bent. The first timers, me included, got in a group with the professor to discuss the meeting and our feelings about it. We had a round robin and when it came to my turn I told it like it was. "I think you're the greatest bunch of nuts I ever met. You're cracked!" Typical me. Unfamiliar surroundings, threatening situation, respond with some good ol' aggression.

An "affirmation time" followed and people were walking round telling each other they loved them. One wom-



I kicked the door open and there, sitting in front of me, was a little old man.

an came up to me, looked me in the eyes and said, "I love you." What? What in the world are these people up to, I thought. Are they off the rails completely? Or are they running a racket?

That did it. I couldn't get out of the place fast enough. I told Jo that if she ever went back to a place like that I'd give her something to think about too. She didn't go back. She made a pact with herself that she wouldn't go to any more prayer meetings until I had become a Christian too.

The second thing that happened involved a Catholic monk called Gerald, whom Jo always quoted. "Gerald says this and Gerald says that." I couldn't stand it and thought I'd fix this Gerald's wagon! I imagined him to be a young guy and since aggression was the name of the game I was going to have it out with him.

I located his office at the university and pounded heavily on the door. I thought a bit of aggro might soften him up a bit. A quiet voice from within called out, "Come in." I kicked the door open, making as much noise as I could, and barged into his room. And there sitting in front of me was a little old man. Well, I wasn't expecting that. It knocked the stuffing right out of me, as I didn't exactly know what to say. Gerald could see I was agitated and asked if he could talk to me. The one thing about him that floored me was the sense of peace there was about him. It was completely the opposite to what I stood for.

I blurted out my grievances, how I thought they were all a bunch of maniacs bent on wrecking my family (something which I had been doing for years) and running themselves off the rails. Here was a place to put the blame for all the things that weren't right in my life. I accused Gerald of being a charlatan and leading Jo astray. He just sat there listening and then he asked, "What do you know about Pentecost?" "About what?" I replied. "Absolutely nothing. I've never heard of the word!"

So Gerald started there and told me the whole story of salvation. How Christ died for me and had risen from the dead. How he had told the disci-

ples to wait for the Holy Spirit to fill them with power. It was this same power that was at the prayer meetings.

As Gerald spoke I felt a sense of peace creep over me. It was refreshing, and a little uncanny. He invited me to come back and natter some more. I said I would but I was jolly well sure that I would not. This guy was rattling my cage and I didn't like it. My initial reaction was to get as far away from him as I could.

But I couldn't get the things Gerald had been saying out of my mind and two weeks later I fronted up to his office again. I told him he had shaken my life. "If I don't do something about all this I'm going to come unstuck," I told him. I knew what I had to do.

Meeting the referee

In Gerald's office I prayed. In full awareness, I invited Jesus Christ to take control of my life and to forgive my sins. I was a person who never cried. I considered it weak and only for women and children. But as I prayed I found myself battling tears. Something dramatic was happening inside of me. I was changing. I sensed a total change going on. It's hard to explain but I knew it was happening. I had become a Christian; I was born again and I couldn't wait to tell Jo.

My whole attitude changed. I realised for the first time just what a rogue I had been in the way I treated my wife and children. Jo saw and experienced the change in me and we began to get our whole life sorted out.

We went back to that charismatic prayer meeting and the same "crackpot" who had been leading the first time we went was at it again. But this time he was overjoyed at my becoming a Christian and wanted to pray for me to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. So he and some other men laid their hands on me and prayed.

As they prayed for me I said, "Lord, I don't want to mimic these men. I

don't want to be a hypocrite." As I prayed that I closed my eyes and there before me, dressed in gold was Jesus. "This is it," I thought, "I've really cracked." I thought I must have been losing my mind but then the next thing I remember is people saying "He's singing in tongues." And I was. I was singing in a new language. God had really given me something different. Not only did he have me singing in public (something I'd never done before) but he had me singing in a language I had never learned before.

I floated out of that meeting on a super high and from that time on I began to gain my feet in terms of growing in my understanding of God and what it meant to be a Christian. My millionaire aspirations were reallocated further down the priority list. It took me a while to grasp the idea of God's forgiveness but I got there. And as I began to see how I had treated Jo and neglected the whole family relationship things started to change for the better. My self-centred life-style (it was easy for me to work 100 hours per week) gave way to a God- and family-centred one.

The insecurity that resulted from my dismissal as personnel officer and the financial crash of the partnership was no match for the new security I found in Christ. It went out the window and I didn't need to crave after success to feel that I was someone. God had shown me that I was someone just because Jesus Christ had died for me. The love of power gave way to the power of love.

Bill Lowry is currently in his own Real Estate Management Consultant Business. He no longer fishes for the dollar but is involved extensively in evangelistic work "fishing for men". He and Jo have used their home to minister to young people from many alternative lifestyles and have seen God break through to give many of them new lives for old.

On the following pages Bill explains some of the Biblical principles he has adopted in business.

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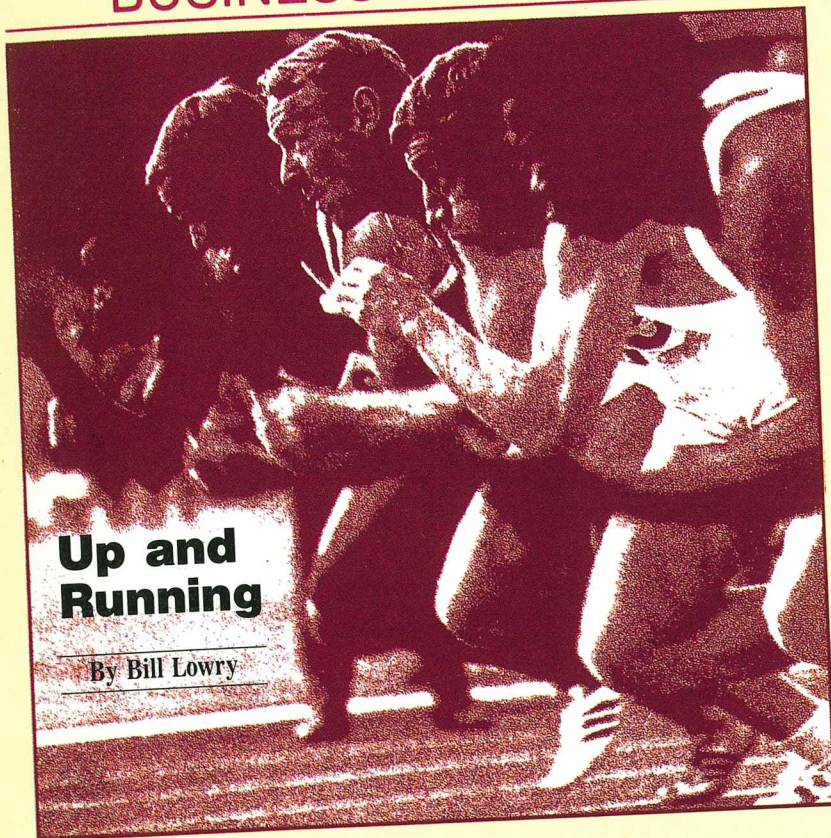
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BUSINESS NOTEBOOK



Up and Running

By Bill Lowry

When it comes to the business world Australians and New Zealanders often exhibit the characteristic of only working for a boss until the day they can set up in business for themselves. Such is the prevalence of this practice that government departments issue information directed towards the budding small businessman in an effort on the one hand to encourage such initiative and on the other to give instruction on good

business practice. By doing so they are attempting to reduce the incidence of failure in small businesses.

Bill Lowry operates a successful management consultancy and real estate business in Nambour, Queensland. He has had experience in many facets of business, including industrial relations, insurance, business management, industrial engineering.

A member of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International-

al, Bill believes that FGBMFI has a role to play in advising businessmen on sound business practice, especially on the interplay between a man's personal life (marriage, family, spiritual life) and his business commitments.

For Bill, being a Christian does not negate the necessity for sound business practice and planning; in fact the two go hand in hand.

"There is a Biblical principle which states that everything must be done decently and in order," says Bill. "That applies equally to business management as it does to our personal lives. Just as it is folly to have a thriving business while letting your marriage fall apart, it is crazy to think that prayer will cover up slackness in business.

"If God has a plan for this universe, who are we not to have a plan for our business ventures? God does not support ill-researched projects, sloppy business practice or irrational decisions."

Going into business? Then according to Bill there are three criteria you need to consider long and hard before committing yourself.

1. You have to have a product or service for which there is a market that can be readily tapped. This means market research needs to be carried out. A vague feeling is not enough to go on. The costs of marketing and production need to be investigated and a market plan drawn up to provide direction.

2. You need sufficient cash to be able to meet operating expenses and overheads in the initial stages of the business. "You can't take a Rolls Royce trip on a Holden budget," says Bill. "If you

can't be assured that you can meet your initial overheads; if you haven't done a feasibility study on the whole venture; if you haven't researched your market and its potential, all the praying in the world won't get you through."

3. Fulfilment of the first two criteria leads to the third: what sort of arrangements need to be made in order to finance the project? Credit is generally easy to come by and the ease with which it can be obtained poses the greatest danger to the prospective business operator. For example, some trading banks offer commercial bills, which, on the face of it, are an attractive source of finance.

Commercial bills are issued for a set period of time and operate on the repayment of interest only until the expiry date of the bill, when the principal must be repaid. And that's when many people get caught out — they don't have the ready cash, and that can spell disaster for the venture.

"An important Biblical principle to be remembered here," explains Bill, "is that found in the book of Proverbs: the borrower is the lender's slave. One should never get into a situation where there is no hope of ever repaying the principal.

"If, in order to keep the business going, you have to borrow on a continuing basis, you're in trouble. Especially if the growth of the business is not keeping pace with the borrowing."

In matters of money, common sense can be, and often is, bullied by desire. Enthusiasm to establish a business can often override better judgement and the principles of God.

Multi-Level Selling and the Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome

Multi-level selling is one of the most common examples of how human desire can dominate common sense. "Suppose you are a person who wants to be your own boss, or you just want some extra cash," says Bill. "You see an advertisement in the local paper promising returns of \$500 a week for a little spare time work. This immediately appeals to your desire to get a better car or to keep up with the Joneses. Suddenly you can picture a swimming pool in the back yard and the dollar signs start flashing in front of your eyes. You respond to the ad and find you can take over a geographical area in which to sell a product — usually jewellery, toiletries or cleaning products.

"Such an arrangement is an inducement for people who don't have the necessary finance to get into a 'business' of their own. The lure of easy money and the attraction of being their own boss draws them in.

"After the membership fee (usually high) has been paid for the privilege of selling the product, you then have to buy the product from the supplier. Of course, the price is structured so that the more you buy the cheaper it is, so you stretch yourself to the limit. Now you are ready to face the market — a market you haven't analysed — with a product you know little about. To your horror you find that door-to-door selling isn't all that easy, and after your first pair of shoes and no sales you are wondering whether you are cut out for this sort of work.

"Then there is the high price of the product. All multilevel systems have a highly-priced product because so many people have to get a cut along the way. In the sales pitch the high price is offset by the fact that the product is super-concentrated and will last the purchaser for six months or longer. Now that may be a good thing for the customer but it isn't for the salesman because he gets no repeat business out of it. So to make a good turnover he has to work doubly hard.

"Thus, while the dollar beckons you on, your family life and spiritual life are starting to suffer. In the end you decide to call it quits and you're left with a bedroom full of product you can't sell."

Of course the picture doesn't always look like this. Many people make a go of multi-level selling, but Bill's point remains: "When it comes to business, don't be bullied by desire. Use your common sense, apply sound business practice and live by the principles laid out in the Bible."





Turning Point

Trevor Brayshaw,
Auckland, N.Z.

As we sped into the corner I could feel the sports car skidding sideways on the loose metal. There were three of us inside the soft-top and as we slid towards the ditch on the side of the road confused thoughts tumbled through my mind: "We're out of control! This is it! Here comes the crunch!"

It all happened so quickly. One minute the two-and-a-half litre Riley Sports was purring down Bleakhouse Road; the next we were hurtling through the air as the car rolled and crashed upside down on the front lawn of someone's house.

There was no roll bar in the car so the convertible hood was squashed flatter than a pancake to the top of the bonnet and boot. The wheels were spinning in the air. The dirty belly of the car was exposed with the gleam-

ing white and chrome body-work resting on the ground. The electric petrol pump was frantically ticking as petrol flowed out down the garden path. The impact had burst a water main in the low dirt bank on the side of the road and this was now sending a fountain of water twenty feet into the quiet night sky. It was quite a scene.

Amazingly, two of us were thrown from the car as the vehicle twisted during the roll. The driver was still trapped in the car but had been thrown across the seat. The metal roof supports had been thrust into the back of the seat where he had been seconds before. As I looked at the wreck I knew for a fact that the road toll could have risen by three that night.

Now the driver was shouting for someone to turn off the ignition because of the risk of a fire or an explo-

sion, and to get him out of the car as his foot was stuck. We scrambled across to him and dragged him free. We took stock of our injuries and found we were all remarkably okay, apart from a gash on my head which was attended to by the local doctor who was summoned from his bed.

The owners of the house on whose garden path we had unceremoniously landed were shocked when they saw how lightly we had been hurt. So were my friend's sister and her boyfriend when they came to pick us up.

Near miss

It was a real turning point in my life. I was twenty years old at the time and already had another "near miss" to my name. It was when a cousin and I were swimming in the Tamaki River. We were having a great time until I was sucked down into a deep channel as the tide turned. I could see the sunlight glinting on the surface of the water far above my head, but was powerless to reach it. At I struggled with the current, my lungs nearly bursting, a wave just at the right time helped me to the surface and washed me to the shore. Completely exhausted and half full of salt water I couldn't even drag myself out of the water until my cousin came over to help. A few years later I was to learn that one of my friends had been dragged out to sea from the same spot. His body was never found.

After attending seven different schools I had joined the workforce as a Ford spare parts assistant, and worked for seven years in this job at four separate dealerships. After that I decided it was time for a change and went lawn mowing, pruning and tree felling for another seven years on Auckland's North Shore.

In my teenage years I used to have lots of questions about the purpose of life and what happened to you when you died. Was death the final cut-off? Were we the only planet that had life

among millions of lifeless ones in the universe? Were we put here by a creator or did we just evolve?

As I looked at the wrecked Riley I wondered again what it would be like to die.

Blind date

Though I liked to muse about philosophical questions it didn't affect the way I lived to any real degree. For example, it was one thing to wonder whether we got here by chance or by design, but I refused to believe that my life was ruled by chance. I think there's an intuitive knowledge inside all of us that says there's got to be a purpose to the things we're doing. Like the blind date I went on at a Teachers' College Ball. The young lady I partnered that night has become my life partner and wife. She was from a farming family in Hawkes Bay, 500km away, and there's no way in my mind that it was chance that brought us together.

Life cruised on for us. We were enjoying married life with a baby son, landscaping our section and making a comfortable home. We weren't religious people, so it was something of a surprise when there was a knock on our front door one day and it was the local minister introducing himself to new families in the area and inviting them along to church. We decided this was not for us, as we were too busy. We were developing a large, sloping section into garden, we had family to visit and friends to see and the weekends went quickly enough as it was without church as well.

A few weeks later there was another knock on the door and an invitation to a home meeting. We declined this as well, saying we didn't have a babysitter. One was promptly offered, along with transport to the meeting. How could we refuse?

It was at this meeting that we began to really think about God. There were songs sung by people who sound-

ed like they really meant them, a joyful atmosphere, a young girl who spoke about the reality of Jesus in her life, and finally a man who read the Bible and explained its meaning. The more we heard the more disturbing our neglect of spiritual things appeared to us. We had completely ignored the creator of life itself, allowing our own self-interest to dominate our lives.

Right there at that meeting Elizabeth and I asked Jesus to be the Lord of our lives and to forgive us for our self-centredness. It was September 11, 1970.

The next day I woke up and knew that I was a new man. The spiritual dimension of me had awakened and God's Spirit was living inside me. It was all so clear to me now. Why hadn't I seen it before? The living things all around us were so clearly designed – why had I not bothered to discover the Designer? And now I had met Jesus Christ – my introduction to the Lord of the universe.

My eyes were now opened to the world of the supernatural. Not things that go bump in the night, but the reality of a world where there is a battle raging between the forces of evil and the forces of good, Satan versus God. Looking back to the night the car somersaulted I realised that Satan could easily have had three more people to keep him company for eternity. Yet God had used the accident to shake up my complacency and prepare me for my later meeting with him.

Though lawnmowing was a great job, after seven years I felt it was time for a change. We hadn't had a decent holiday in years so we decided to buy a van and take our two boys for a trip around the South Island. When we got back to Auckland I was casting about for a job, and thinking about the vast number of people who go through life without knowing about the love God has for them.

Book parties

We made ourselves available to God and asked him to direct us into the right occupation. And that is how we came to be introduced to a retired couple who were selling Christian books to shops and holding book parties in various people's homes. They had been praying for a younger couple with a van to take over from them and here we were, fitting the description perfectly.

Nine years later we are still doing the work. Though some people only think about food for their stomachs, we encourage as many as we can to stock up with food for their souls. I didn't used to read much when I was a boy, but now I realise the importance of learning the ways of God through the Bible and other Christian books.

For years I failed to make the connection between the physical world and the one who put it all together in the first place. It took an upside-down car to start me thinking how upside-down my life had been. In Christ I have truly found my feet, and my purpose in life.



Trevor and Elizabeth live with their two sons Ian and Alan in Pakuranga. Trevor travels around Auckland city and suburbs servicing bookshops from his mobile book "warehouse." His wife helps him with book parties in people's homes. Trevor is a member of the East Auckland chapter of FGBMFI.

Full Of Empty

Paul Jones,
Brisbane, QLD



Talk about George Orwell's 1984. It had nothing on Paul Jones's 1974. That was the year of a credit squeeze that stripped me of all I possessed. A year of destruction that instilled in me a fear of failure and robbed me of the luxuries of life that I had come to rely on.

As a young fellow I had done the usual things most Aussie blokes get into — surfing, yachting, football, golf. I married Helen and we moved north where I joined my brother in real estate in Queensland. Together we built up a company that ranked in the top six development companies in the state.

Coupled with success came a magnificent lifestyle. One revolving around expensive cars — Rolls and Mercedes — yachts, parties and high brow socialising. I had everything anyone could wish for — on the outside.

The way our company operated was to buy up large tracts of land and then borrow heavily from finance companies to develop them with roads and other facilities. The system worked well until 1974. That's when the credit squeeze set in and the finance companies recalled their money. It was a bombshell if ever there was one. Fortunately, the company didn't go into liquidation but in order to pay back our loans we had to sell everything up as quickly as we could. And that meant not only the properties the company owned but also the houses we lived in, the cars we drove and the yachts we partied on. Everything that I had come to identify as the "real me" was stripped from me. It was a devastating experience and one that turned me in on myself.

Trying to climb up

But you can't stay down forever and from the real estate business I moved into running a hotel. Again the venture was successful and I began to acquire the trappings of my former

lifestyle. Even so, I couldn't avoid a persistent nagging that maybe there was more to life than the things money could buy. I guess it was a carryover from my Catholic upbringing. From childhood my mother had instilled the belief that there was a purpose in life. To date I hadn't found it.

Anyway, I moved back into the social scene, loving every minute of it, not realising that the tentacles of drink and loneliness were reaching out for me and beginning to drag me down. I had a tremendous need to be accepted by others and life in the hotel world put me in touch with a large circle of friends. I used those people to keep me from having to face the emptiness and pointlessness of my existence.

All my life I'd had a fear of being empty inside. I was afraid that if someone tipped me upside down there would be nothing there to fall out. So to cover up I would entertain a lot, throwing all night cruising parties on Sydney Harbour; I would always make sure I had the best of everything so I could feel important and impress everyone. Drink and women figured prominently in my life.

Needless to say, Helen didn't share my love of this existence. I don't know if she knew what drove me on but I did know that she had had a gutsful of the why I was living and the havoc it was producing in the family. She didn't join me in the social whirl, preferring instead to remain at home and look after the children. Their lot was pretty rough and it got worse as I got further into drink. I started to pay the price of living in the fast lane.

Alcoholism got me in its soul-destroying grip. And I couldn't break out of it. It wrecked the business, or rather I did, and destroyed what was left of our family life. Everything collapsed around my ears. Despite my efforts to put the business back together, the more I tried the more I failed. Helen wanted out, and I

couldn't blame her. She had put up with a hell of a life. Divorce was the only option open to us and we started moving in that direction.

Timeshares

In the meantime money was still needed, so I got back into real estate. It was about the time when the timeshare concept was being developed and I began selling the idea.

Six of us were manning a promotional stand for timeshares at a K-Mart Shopping Centre. It was a Friday, the centre's busiest day and we were expecting a good response from the many shoppers who were out and about. We were getting into the swing of things when a group of people came along and began to set up speakers and a P.A. system right in front of our stand.

I immediately complained to the manageress. We'd paid for the spot and I wasn't about to have anyone crowding us out. She explained that the group would only be there for an hour and requested that we allow them the time. For some reason I agreed to the request, though for the life of me I don't know why. They were a religious group, too, which made my attitude even harder to rationalise. Four of the guys on the stall weren't staying around to listen to what was going down. They said they'd be back when the religious outfit had packed up and gone.

It was a music group who started playing some Christian songs. And suddenly it seemed as if every person in the centre converged on them just to stand around and listen. I didn't know why people were attracted to them so much. Something different, I suppose. But whatever, a large crowd gathered and kept coming and going throughout the hour, presenting me with a ready-made audience to which I could hand out the brochures on the timesharing scheme. I managed to distribute more materi-

al that day than on any other. And all in the space of an hour.

As I distributed the brochures and talked to some people I couldn't help hearing bits and pieces of what the group was on about. I picked up they were Christians and born again ones at that. Not that I knew too much about what that meant. Being a Catholic I just naturally assumed that heaven would be my destination when I died. I didn't see too much relevance in the whole Mass bit but I figured I'd probably stored up a few points for my meeting with my maker, whenever that should happen. But these people seemed to be more definite about who they were and who God was. It was pretty obvious that they were into something they were really keen about.

While I was giving out my material I remarked to a guy standing next to me, "They're pretty good, aren't they," referring to the band.

"Yes they are," he replied. "Would you like to come along to church and hear them?"

Now hang on a minute, I thought, who's doing the selling here, this guy or me? But something was stirring inside me and I reckoned there couldn't be any harm in going along to have a listen.

Hypocrite

So I went home at the end of the day and told Helen that I was going to church. We were living in separate bedrooms at this stage and didn't have too much to do with each other. And we never went to church. "What do you want to do that for?" Helen scoffed. "You're nothing but a hypocrite." As you can imagine we didn't discuss the issue too much further! But come Sunday, 4pm, as we passed in the hall Helen said to me, "I'm coming too."

Sunday evening we were at church. We arrived to find the place packed out, with people even standing out-

side. The aisles were full and there appeared to be not a spare square foot of space anywhere. Until I spotted two seats in the front row, right in front of the pulpit. We made our way to them in time to catch the band — “The Carpenter’s Tools” — and the rest of the church service that followed.

At the end of it all the preacher asked for those who wanted to give over control of their lives to the Lord and become Christians, to put up their hand. My hands were in my pockets and I couldn’t figure out why Helen was trying to pull one of them out. My arm was shaking and I looked across to her to tell her to stop pulling on my arm. “I’m not doing anything,” she whispered. “I’m not touching you.” And she wasn’t. But my arm was jerking and the next thing I realised, it was up in the air and I couldn’t pull it down. It was like a rope was holding it there.

The pastor and others came and prayed for me although I didn’t have much of a clue what it was all about. The next day a chap from the church came around to explain it all and went over with me what it meant to be Christian. It can’t have hit home because I didn’t make the connection between my new beliefs and my lifestyle. I did feel a certain peace inside me though, so I suppose that was something. I continued going to the hotel; people continued trying to tell me I was an alcoholic, and I kept telling them I wasn’t.

If you’re really there...

Three weeks went by and I had had a bit of time to think over what was happening in my life. I knew I was in a mess. A slave to drink, family on the verge of breaking up, children battered and bruised, wife not happy and me sadly lacking confidence to mount any business venture of my own. Finally I let it all out. “Jesus,” I said, “they tell me you’re alive. If that’s true I want you to come into my life and I

want you to prove it by freeing me from the curse of alcoholism, smoking and womanising. I want you to put my family back together again, the children, Helen and I.” Finally I was putting my life on the line.

Well God took me at my word. Almost immediately I sensed a change come over me and I began to see things happening. From that time on I’ve never touched drink, smokes or other women. The desire left me immediately. That was the first thing that became obvious. People were rather cautious in accepting the new me. At first they all thought it was only a fad as alcoholics are well known for their seven day wonder reforms. They all reckoned I’d be back in the bar before long. My family were sceptical too. They’d put up with too much to believe I could change so suddenly. They wondered how long I could stick it out.

It was hard. Especially the first three months. Helen became a Christian too about three weeks after me but it still took some work and effort for us to make it together. She had more of a background in it than me, having been introduced to Christianity as a young girl.

During that three months I even decided I couldn’t make it myself and was skipping out headed north for Townsville. I was going to take up the offer of a job there and leave my past behind. Make a fresh start. I was a mile from home, heading out, when as clear as a bell a voice said, “Paul, you love the girl you married. It’s going to work,” Man, I thought, this is crazy. I drove on for another half mile but the compulsion to turn around and head for home won out and I did just that. As I drove back in through the gateway of our rented house I knew I had done the right thing.

Full of love

Now we have a beautiful marriage and a strong faith. Probably the

greatest thing — the greatest success in my whole life — has been getting to know myself and the worth I have in God's sight. Nothing can do more for one's confidence and security than that. When I had material things I had nothing. I was a wreck inside. In Jesus I gained a new internal strength and a new ability to be a loving husband and a loving father.

God restored the children, all teenagers by this stage. He healed the hurts and the bruising my life had put them through. I didn't push my new faith on them. I let my life and it's accompanying actions speak for themselves. We went through a three month period when I wasn't working and that enabled me to spend a lot of time with the kids. One day during this time I received a message from our 15-year-old's teacher asking if I would come down and read over a paper Kirstin had written. I went down and there read her reflections of her childhood. I wept inside. It let me see what I had done and how much I had hurt everyone. The teacher was too overcome to mark it but she rightly thought that I'd be interested to read it. The paper was about life in an alcoholic family. About the fighting and the screaming; the arguments and the heart ache. Kirstin talked about the ways the children had tried to keep the family together and the tremendous pressure they all felt in the situation.

Home for the kids used to be just a roof over their heads and a place to sleep. Now it is a place of love. Each of them: Michelle, Kirstin and Adrian, have learned how to love and have melted my heart in telling me how much they love me. And I have learned how to love them. And Helen. Helen has opportunities now to talk at meetings and shares about the trials and testings of living with alcoholism and adultery. We have all come through it to begin again in an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

One thing I'm adamant about is that Christianity is a 365-days-a-year contract — not a once-a-week gesture. And for me that means being real about my faith in the cut and thrust of the business world. I've known some nominally Christian businessmen who look well on Sundays but who look very dangerous on Mondays. To be successful in the world's eyes you have to flower the truth and tell it like it's not. When the Spirit of truth comes to live in you that way of living becomes unacceptable. The Lord has had to deal with me in this area by saying, "Paul, let your yes be yes and your no be no."

Another godly principle on which I have tried to build my business is that of giving: going the extra mile, providing more than what the contract spells out. In this the Christian just lives out what Jesus himself set as our example. Because he gave his life, we can give our time, money and resources and know God's blessing in the process.

At times it's hard. Christians aren't immune from cashflow problems. But there comes a time when you're either in with both feet into what you know is right or you're just playing around. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me shall not be put to shame." Now you either believe that or you don't. When you do come to the place or trusting in Jesus as the ultimate provider, the source, then you can really start to experience the fullness of life.

Why settle for less?

Paul became a Christian four years ago. God blessed him and provided new business opportunities for him so that today he has a family company called Queensland Country Developments. Paul has been involved with Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and has helped set up FGBMFI chapters in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and in eastern Australia. He lives with Helen and their three children in Sunnybank Hills, Brisbane. Michelle is now 21, Kirstin 19 and Adrian 14.



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SIX SCRIPTURAL STEPS TO SALVATION

Men still cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible provides a clear answer.

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23. "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" Luke 18:13.
2. **REPENT:** "Unless you repent, you too will all perish" Luke 13:3. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" Acts 3:19.
3. **CONFESS:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" Romans 10:9.
4. **FORSAKE:** "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him ... for He will freely pardon" Isaiah 55:7.
5. **BELIEVE:** "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" Mark 16:16
6. **RECEIVE:** "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" John 1:12.

Why not make your eternal decision right now?

"I am convinced by God's Word that I am a lost sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died for sinners and shed His blood to take away my sins. I now receive Him as Lord and Saviour of my life and will, by His help, announce that fact to others."

When you have made this greatest of all decisions, please let us know so that we may send you further information. Mail the adjacent coupon now.

SOUTH PACIFIC
VOICE

Number 45

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The Threefold Purpose of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship

1. *To witness to God's presence and power in the world today through the message of the total Gospel for the total man, and by this to reach men for Jesus Christ, especially those having the same social, cultural or business interests as the person doing the witnessing.*
2. *To provide a basis of Christian fellowship among all men everywhere through an organism not directly associated with any specific church but cooperating with all those of like mind, and to inspire its members to be active in their respective churches.*
The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International does not start churches. Rather, we desire solely to be a service arm to existing ones.
3. *To bring about a greater measure of unity and spirit of harmony in the body of Christ, where members are united in a common effort for the good of the whole body*



FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 33-424 Takapuna, Auckland.
P.O. Box 87, Stones Corner, 4120, Brisbane.

- Please send me information on how to be a Christian
- Please send me further details on membership
- Please send me further general information about FGBMFI.

NAME (print clearly)

ADDRESS

..... Phone



Have you ever had one of those days?

Everything's going great guns. The car/business deal/relationship/holiday is really cooking. Then it happens. Complete and utter disaster. Murphy's Law with a vengeance.

You scrape yourself up off the floor wondering what hit you. "Why me?" You know how it is.

What do you do? Put it down to the universal cussedness of life? Or look for a more satisfying answer? Like whether there is a way out of the tyranny of circumstances. Or whether we can out-manoeuvre the wheel of

fortune. Or does Murphy really hold all the cards?

The good news is that Jesus is the way out of the maze. He's the door to a new way of life where providence and purpose really mean something. Where chance no longer reigns supreme. Where "all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

By comparison, those who ignore God are simply building castles in the air, for "there's a way of life that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 16:25).

Choose life. Choose Christ.

**FROM: FGBMFI, P.O. Box 33-424, Takapuna, Auckland;
P.O. Box 67, Stones Corner, 4120, Brisbane.**