

God is Our Provider

A true story of God's leading and provision.

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A Little About New Zealand

As you read the following story, you will find many references to places in New Zealand, the country where I live. For those of you not familiar with NZ, let me give you enough information for the story to make more sense. ☺

New Zealand is a small nation (approx 1600kms from top to bottom) of some 4 million inhabitants in the South Pacific, a few hours from Australia. Other than the tip of Chile, NZ is the closest land mass to Antarctica.



New Zealand is comprised of two main islands, known as the North Island and the South Island, as well as a number of smaller islands. The North and South Islands are separated by a strip of water called the Cook Strait, after Captain Cook who discovered it. In order to cross from one island to the other you can fly or take the ferry. It is reputedly the most expensive strip of water in the world to cross, for it's size. To take a family of 5 with a vehicle on a round ferry trip across the Strait will cost approx NZ\$800. This is why many NZ families have never been to the other island. So, when we describe moving from the North Island to the South Island, it was a big deal for us as neither my husband nor I had ever been there - the South Island was like a whole different country to us. In fact, it is culturally quite different too - a slower, more relaxed pace of life, different population mix, attitudes and expectations. Very beautiful though - we quickly fell in love with it! But I digress...

Lastly, to enable you to visualize our moves, I am including a map with the locations where we have lived marked on it. See the last page of this ebook.

Let's begin our story.....

This is the story of how God took a very ordinary couple who were enormously in debt, and whose lives were a mess, and created something beautiful out of our lives! He restored our marriage, got us out of debt, blessed us with 5 children, led us to homeschool, took us all around the country ministering to others, and provided us with a home of our own. Want to know more? Read on.....

In the Beginning

During our first few years of marriage, Rob and I were probably like nearly every other young Christian couple - we both worked at first, until our first baby was due to be born, shortly after our second anniversary. We went to church, spent time with other young couples, and tried to make ends meet. Unfortunately, we weren't too successful at this last part!

By the time our second child was 9 months old, and we had been married nearly 5 years, we were in serious financial difficulties. The stress of this, along with other things, brought everything to a head, and our marriage endured it's greatest test.

On our own, we probably wouldn't have made it. But God restored our marriage, making it stronger than ever.

After we recommitted ourselves to each other, and to God, we began to long for a life that had more meaning. We felt that we were stuck in the ultimate rat race - just going around in circles in the daily business of living, but not really achieving anything of worth. We asked ourselves "If we died tomorrow, what would our lives have counted for? What have we achieved for God?" The answer - nothing! Since we had been married, we had been so busy just surviving that we had lost our first love for God. Sure, we still went to church regularly, still believed. But God had lost first place in our lives. Now, we wanted that to be different.

We cried out to God "Oh God, we want to do something for You! Anything! Show us what to do! If this is where you want us to live, and how you want us to live, then please help us shine for you right where we are. But if you have a different plan, please show us what it is."

We prayed like this for several weeks, and slowly the Lord gave us a picture of:

- Living somewhere fairly remote,
- Being fairly self-sufficient,
- And ministering to people he would bring across our path.

That sounded wonderful! BUT, it sounded like a retirement dream! After all, here we were, \$120,000 in debt, with a house that we had paid \$102,000 for in 1989, but due to market decline now was worth only \$70,000 - not even enough to pay off the \$85,000 in mortgages we had on it. So how could we live somewhere remote? We certainly couldn't buy a farm or anything! So, back to God: "Oh Lord, that sounds nice, but what do we do for you NOW?"

God's response was "I want you to get out of debt." Well, sure, that made sense! So I, being the financial one in the family, grabbed pen, paper and calculator, and worked out that if God would only help us somehow meet the minimum payments on everything (which we weren't doing at that point), then we would pay off all our smaller debts in 5 years, and then we could really concentrate on the two mortgages. "What do you say God?" Answer: "No. I want you debt free in 2 years!"

Hmm. Ok, well, if God is for us, we can do anything, right? Rob, who was already working a full-time job plus a part-time one, figured maybe he could get a third job. I was making some money selling make-up. Maybe I could make more. But as we prayed about it, God spoke again - "Rob is to leave work." Huh? Leave work?!?! But that doesn't make any sense - two kids, two mortgages, huge debt and falling further behind - and Rob LEAVES WORK???!

Well, God was very patient with us. The more we prayed about this, the more God confirmed it to us, mostly through Scripture. Again and again, as we prayed, we would be given verses that said things like "Trust Me, I will provide." We asked for confirmations over and over, and each time God confirmed his word to us "Rob, leave work."

About this time, I was offered (verbally) a job with a company I had been doing some part time bookkeeping for. The position would have paid about \$60,000 per year. Now, our belief was that Dad should work, and Mum should be home with the kids, but we figured, maybe, just maybe, Rob could be home with the children for a while, while I worked just until we got out of this hole. So we prayed, asking God to have this job offer be confirmed to me in writing before Rob handed his notice in at work. The scripture that we read that day was Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." As soon as I read this, a clear picture sprang into my mind of someone walking along a narrow path through a dark forest, carrying an old-fashioned lantern in their hand. As they walked, the lamp lit up a circle of ground immediately around them, but they could not focus it ahead as like a torch - but as they moved forward, the light moved with them, illuminating the next part of the path. And I felt God speak into my heart "I have shown you the next step - take it. Only when you do, will the step after that become clear."

Shortly after this, I prayed again "Oh Lord, before we do it, are you REALLY sure this is the right thing - that Rob should leave work. Please confirm it just one more time." That day's Scripture? Matt 14:31 "O ye of little faith, why do you still doubt me?"

Ok, so time to put our money where our mouth was, so to speak. Either God was speaking to us, or not. And if he was, we had a choice - to obey or not to obey. Rob handed in his notice at work.

One week after Rob handed in his notice, the company that had offered me the job went bankrupt. Rob's company had already replaced him - he was training his replacement, and finished with them two weeks later.

Now what? We could only cling to those often repeated words

“Trust ME! I WILL provide!”

And so began our life of adventure! We have many stories to tell of God’s faithful leading, miraculous provision and ever present help in times of trouble. Oh, and by the way, 2 years after God called us to this path, we were completely debt free, but that’s a whole other story.

Someone asked me recently the secret of an extraordinary life. I believe it is:

First, obey Romans 12:1 and present yourself to God as a living sacrifice. That means to give your WHOLE self to God - your body, your heart & mind, your dreams & hopes, all that you possess.

Then, obey Proverbs 3:5&6

“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all of your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.”

Six Hundred Dollars

After Rob left work, it was only a short time before we had only \$35 remaining, and no income. That day, Friday, I worked out that by Monday we needed \$600 to pay the overdue mortgage payment, overdue power bill and buy some food. I prayed, “Lord, you said you would provide - what do we do now?”. The reply I got was “Give your \$35 away”!

Wow! This was a whole new territory for us! With Rob’s agreement, I gave the \$35 away, dividing it between two charities I had literature for on my desk, and mailing the cheques on Saturday. All weekend I was praying “Oh Lord, please show us we’re not crazy! Please provide!”

We did not tell anyone of our situation - the Lord had impressed upon us early in this adventure that our finances were between Him and us - when he provided, it would be for His glory alone.

On Sunday morning, we attended church. Afterwards, we found enough loose change in our car to buy a loaf of bread for lunch, so we stopped at the local supermarket on the way home. As we came out of the supermarket, the treasurer from our church was just entering. She said “Oh, I’m glad I bumped into you. When I was totaling up the offering this morning, I found an envelope with “Please give this to Rob and Cindy Hancox” written on it, but you had left before I could catch you. Here it is.” and she handed us the envelope. In it was \$600 in cash!! Praise the Lord!

And so began our lessons in God’s miraculous provision, and in trusting in the Lord will all of our hearts!

The Next Step

When Rob left work, we really had no idea what we were supposed to do next. Rob kept looking at job ads, hoping something would jump out at him.

One afternoon, I was at home praying, while Rob was in town running errands and checking employment opportunities. I was asking the Lord what we were supposed to do next - we had obeyed and Rob had left work, but now we felt we were in a kind of limbo, and longed to know what to do next. I felt that the Lord replied "I gave you a vision - move towards it". So there I sat, mulling over how exactly we could "move towards" living a remote, self-sufficient lifestyle when we were living in the city up to our eyeballs in debt and with no income. As I pondered this, I was leafing through a local free newspaper that had arrived that morning. Suddenly a large advertisement jumped off the page at me. Its bold type asked "Have you ever considered training in Dairy Farming or Agriculture?" And I realised that was the answer - if we were to be self sufficient, Rob would need to learn about animals and agriculture. I had been brought up on a farm, and had been around animals all my life, but Rob was a total city boy and hardly knew the front end of cow from the back!

When Rob arrived home, I showed him the ad, and told him about what I had been praying and felt God was saying. He concurred with me, saying, "It's funny, but the only jobs on the job board that I can remember, that struck me, were farming jobs, and I have NEVER considered farming before."

Rob phoned up the organization that was running the training course. They explained that their course was funded by a government program called TOPs, meaning that in order to be able to get on the course, one needed to have been registered as unemployed for a minimum of 26 weeks. When Rob told them he had only been unemployed for 2 weeks, they said there was no way he could do the course. But Rob was not deterred - he approached Employment Services the next day. They sympathized, and suggested that perhaps his low High School qualifications would allow him entry to the course. But they told him it was not up to them - he would have to go and see TOPs (Training Opportunities, a funding organisation to provide training to up-skill the long-term unemployed). So, off we went, to the offices of TOPs, to explain the situation. A middle aged woman in a business suit listened to our story, then bluntly proclaimed "No! Absolutely Not! No way! You must be 26 weeks unemployed!" and then swung on her heel and marched away from us.

My heart fell, and cried within me "Oh Lord! - I was so sure this was right". At that moment, the lady turned back to us and, holding one forefinger up, said "Unless!" Unless what? "Unless you have some sort of major disability - you're missing a leg or arm, have a serious back injury, are blind or deaf, that sort of thing."

Rob and I looked at each other. And I explained that "co-incidentally" Rob had been tested the previous week by the audiology department of the local hospital, in order to get a hearing aid, and the tests showed that he was profoundly deaf in one ear. Would

that do? "That will do." she says, "Go and see Workbridge." So we went to visit yet another government agency we had never formerly heard of, they wrote out an exemption, and the next day Rob was on the Dairy Farming course. ☺

Blowing in the Wind

Along with the Dairy Farming course came a training allowance, which somewhat relieved our lack of income - though it came no where near covering all our outgoings and debt. Yet the Lord continued to provide, and we continued to seek Him as to the next step.

One day, we had no money (as usual), and no prospect of any coming in for a few days. I urgently needed a few dollars to buy some milk and bread, and asked the Lord to provide. I went outside that morning to check the mail, and as I walked outside, a crumpled \$10 note blew up the path, literally to my feet. There was no one in sight who could have dropped it, so I thanked the Lord for His provision!

Just one more proof that God cares about even the little details!

Start thinking South

For a long while I had felt the Lord saying to me that one day he was going to tell us to go somewhere, and we would not be able to take many of our possessions with us, so to be ready to let them all go. I didn't really understand what that meant, but I had a clean out - gave away some unneeded items, sold a few things, reduced the surplus. Looking back, I can see that God was readying my heart to not be attached to "things", but to be willing and able to just let go and follow Him.

As part of attempting to make ends meet, we rented out our house - not for enough to cover all the expenses attached to it, but still, it reduced the pressure on us - and we moved into a house provided by a Vet clinic for whom we took on a contract manning the phones for 4 clinics after hours - nights, weekends and holidays.

Rob did well on the Dairy Farming course, and within a few short months it was time to begin looking for employment for when the course was to end. We looked ALL OVER the North Island - eventually we applied for one position just south of Auckland, the city where we lived, and it seemed like one that would be really good for us. We felt we had a chance. We went for the interview, and we PRAYED that the Lord would open this door, and that his will would be done. Well, it turned out His will was to NOT open that door; I got a call one morning from the farm owner, saying that the choice had come down to us and one other couple, and he just couldn't make up his mind, so eventually he tossed a coin, and he was sorry, but we missed out. Sigh.

As I hung up the phone, I glanced at a calendar from our local Christian Radio Station which was hanging on the wall, and noticed another month had ended, and it was time to rip off the top page, which I did. The very next month had a beautiful photo of a

Kiwifruit orchard in Golden Bay, in the South Island, and immediately it came to mind "maybe we SHOULD apply for jobs in the South Island" - we'd seen several possibilities, but neither of us had ever been to the South Island, all our family were in the north, and by now I was pregnant with my third baby, and NO WAY were we moving that far from family! HmMMM....

I remembered an ad we had read at the same time as the one for which we had just been declined, that had seemed perfect....except that it was in the South Island. So I dug out the ad, phoned up and asked if they had filled the position yet? The sharemilkers wife told me they were just coming to a final decision between three applicants, but when I thanked her, she said "Tell me about your husband anyway". So I did. To cut a long story short, we got the job - despite the fact that all the other applicants were traveling to the farm in Culverden for interviews, and we could not afford to. But God has kept saying, as we prayed for SOME way to go to the interview "Don't worry about it - you're not to go - I've got this under control". Of course, He did!

Ok, so now it's March - we're leaving for the South Island at the end of the month. We can't afford to hire a truck or transport our furniture, so we have to sell EVERYTHING - it would have cost more for furniture removal than any of that stuff was WORTH!

So we advertised items, had garage sales, gave stuff away. Nearly every penny we got for them went towards (a) buying ferry tickets (b) paying overdue phone/power bills etc or (c) paying off debt. We even sold our car.....

Betty Bucket

You see, we owed money on our car. Back before God had told us to get out of debt, and we were still running our lives our way, our old car had come to the end of it's life, and we had no money to replace it. So, we did what every normal young couple does - we got a loan.

Anyway, now we were committed to getting out of debt. We knew this was something we couldn't possibly achieve on our own - God would have to do it, but we were committed to doing our part - being wise with our money, and settling any debts we could.

So, the car. We figured we owed more on it that we could possibly sell it for - but what if? We began to feel an urge to sell the car and pay it off. So, we advertised it for more than it was worth, but enough to cover the debt. Just. And it sold to the very first person who called about it.

Great! One less debt of some \$5000. But no car! And we were supposedly leaving in a week for the South Island - by car!

Well, with God all things are possible!! So we told him our need, and left it in His capable hands.

A couple of days later, Rob's grandmother asked us to visit her. She was a dear soul, a believer and a faithful pray-er. She said she wanted to give us some money, to keep and use for whatever we felt was the most urgent need. She gave us \$1000.

The next Sunday, our last one in Auckland, our church was holding a shared lunch to farewell us. Rob arranged for us to borrow his mother's car for the day, so that we could go. He collected the car the night before, and that Sunday morning, while I was getting our two young ones ready for church, he dashed down to the car fair at Manukau City.

At 9:20 he was back - saying he had found a car we really should look at, that the guy agreed to hold it until 9.30 so I could have a look, and let's go!

We arrived at the town centre at 9:29, and couldn't find anywhere to park, so Rob pulled up on the side of the main entry, right next to the retaining wall around the side of where the car fair was held. We leapt out of the car and down the wall, landing right next to the prospective car at 9.30 - just as another buyer was about to get in it. But when the owner saw Rob, he said to the other person "He's back just in time- I said he had first option". Well, we had only minutes before we needed to head for church. No time for a test drive. I asked Rob if he'd already been for a drive - he said "Yes, a short one." "Is it ok?" I asked. "I think so" says Rob. "Does everything work?" "I think so" says Rob.

Ok, well, how much is it? They're asking \$1495. "Will you take offers?" I ask. "Try me" the vendor says. So I say "\$1000", knowing that we had that much. The response - "No way!". Sigh. Now what?? How much can I offer? Help me Lord! We'd had a garage sale the day before, but hadn't had time to count the money yet - I knew it wasn't very much. Finally, praying under my breath, I said "\$1250". I could see the man's mouth form the word "No", but suddenly he nodded and said Ok. Turned out his wife was standing behind me, where I couldn't see her, and was nodding her head. It was really her car - she had lived in Culverden as a child, on a dairy farm, and had named the car, a little white Chevette, after her pet calf, Betty Bucket. The had travelled up from the Coromandal that day to sell the car at the car fair. And Culverden was the little speck on the map where we were moving to, to work on a dairy farm!

We explained that we were due at church, and arranged for them to come and drop the car off later, after they had had lunch with friends. We got the \$1000 out of an ATM, and headed home after church praying we had enough for the car!! When we added up the change from the garage sale, so long as we "kept" the amount needed to pay the change of ownership (the seller's responsibility in those days), and took care of that ourselves later, we had enough for the car, TO THE CENT!

Looked like Betty Bucket was headed back to Culverden!

And that poor little car - we brought a trailer, and piled it high with our essentials - bedding, clothing, a few toys, some kitchenware. On the way South, Rob was driving, and couldn't see through the rear-vision mirror because of the height of the trailer. And the wing mirror kept flopping against the side of the car. He told me later that at first he

was annoyed with not being able to see behind, but then felt the Lord say “Don’t worry about it - you only need to look forward - There’s no looking back!”.

In the South Island

So, we moved to the South Island, to a place we’d never been, to a house we’d never seen. The sharemilkers we were going to work for had kindly sent us a photo of our new home - it showed a row of trees, with an arrow drawn on it pointing to something invisible behind the trees and the words “the house is behind here”.

When we arrived there, we had nothing, except our little Chevette, a trailer, some basic items of clothing, bedding etc. We had no furniture, no money to buy any. And we still had lots of debt. But God provided, just like he said he would.

Trust Me, I will provide!

The sharemilkers lent us beds for the kids until we could buy some, and there was a fridge in the house, along with one ratty old couch, and a small table and chairs. The house was gorgeous - a 100 year old villa, with 14 foot ceilings, a lounge the size of a ball room, carved panels around the fireplace, and some built in drawers in the bedrooms. It was everything I’d ever dreamed of in my “perfect house” - so different from the little, impersonal shoebox we owned in Auckland. God had given me my heart’s desire!

And then it snowed - and it was FREEZING! The power was out for long hours, the roads impassable. The temperature hovered around 10 degrees C below zero for 3 weeks. The house could not be kept warm, except for the tiny dining room, into which we crammed the ratty couch and the table and chairs. And Ben (our third child) was born in the midst of this - though thank the Lord he sensibly waited 3 weeks past his due date for the weather to improve and the roads to clear! But by then I knew that at least one of my hearts desires (this "perfect" house) wasn’t so desirable after all!

Our expectation was that we would work at least one full year on this dairy farm - to gain experience and also references. But we soon learnt the truth of the scripture in Isaiah 55: 8-9 that says

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”.

Within 2 months, the Lord was nudging us to move. At first we ignored the gentle nudges, thinking “No, that can’t be right - we have to stay here for a year”. The nudges got stronger, but we stubbornly resisted. Then, four months after we arrived in the South Island, things came to a head - a situation arose which left us no choice but to leave the job in Culverden, and hence the house that came with it - it probably would all have been so much easier if we’d listened in the first place!!

We moved to Murchison, to another dairy farming position. Since then, over the 10 years we lived in the South Island, we have lived all over the place -

In Murchison*

Motupiko

Timaru*

Central Otago

Tapawera

Ruby Bay

Motueka*

Paton's Rock

Upper Takaka

Onekaka

Bainham

The Tory Channel

Pelorus Sound

Mapua

Pangatotara

And Greymouth*

*Note - the places marked with an * are small towns - the rest are remote rural villages or locations, all in the South Island of New Zealand.

Did we expect to move so much? No!

Did we want to move so often? NO!

Why did we move so much? Because the Lord led and we followed!

Would we make all the same choices if we had to do it over again - absolutely!!

So why did God take us to so many places?

Because he had a plan!

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

And Phil 1:6 says "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

You see, God had begun a good work in our lives when we each became Christians when we were young. When we grew up and married, while he was still with us, and still working in our lives, I believe that what he was able to accomplish was limited by the fact that we had taken back control of our own lives, and were making our own decisions, and living as seemed best to us. When we came to the point where we realised we had NO hope for a good future doing things our way, and yielded ourselves to him, he was able to REALLY get into action shaping and transforming us!

Nearly every place we have lived over the last 12 years, there has been someone that the Lord used us to help or minister to - and that was truly a blessing and a privilege.

But in EVERY place we lived, there were lessons we needed to learn, experiences that taught us more about God and how to follow him, or people that helped us to grow.

Each time, when God has achieved his purpose in each place we lived - whether for our good, or for the good of another, he immediately told us it was time to move on.

He continued to provide for us - sometimes naturally, through employment, sometimes supernaturally! And he constantly "worked all things together for good" in our lives - so often we were in the right place at the right time to "just happen" to meet someone that opened a door either to reach their hearts, or to effect some future event that we knew nothing of at the time.

Selling our House

We had not long been in Murchison, when we felt it was time to put our Auckland house on the market. Remember, we had paid \$102,000 for it, we owed \$85,500 in mortgages, plus we were behind in the rates, and the market value was \$70,000. We just prayed, Lord, let it sell for enough to pay it off - we don't want to be paying a mortgage on a house we don't even own anymore!! We had a number of offers in the first month it was on the market - mostly for rent-to-buy situations, all of which wouldn't work out financially good for us, so we turned them all down, despite pressure from the agents to accept. God just kept reminding us of Psalm 37:5 "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this" and v7 "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him". At the end of a month, we sold the house for enough to pay the agents, the mortgages, but not the rates (land taxes). But, then we got back the paperwork, and I suddenly realised that I had forgotten about the mortgage repayment insurance we had paid in a lump sum for 20 years cover when we brought the house. The rebate from that paid the outstanding rates, and all in all we walked away with \$1.32. No house, no deposit - but no debt on it either! God is good! 😊

Jim Elliott, one of 5 missionaries who was killed trying to reach the primitive Auca tribe, said

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

God has asked us to give up

- Rob's well paying job
- our home
- our "right" to live in Auckland and be near family
- our friends
- all our possessions
- our car
- our "right" to control our future

But ultimately, we couldn't have kept any of these things anyway. And in return, we've had incredible experiences, the knowledge that God loves us and is in control of every aspect of our lives. We've seen miracle after miracle happen right before our eyes.

God Provides

When we were in Murchison, I became pregnant with our fourth baby. We were fast outgrowing our little Chevette - it was so small, that every time I went to Nelson to buy groceries, I had to take a trailer to put them in! And now there was a sixth family member on the way, we knew we would need to have a van - but we had no money. So we did the only thing we could - took it to the Lord in prayer.

A few months later we were given a 9 seater coach!

When we lived in Motupiko, we had a lot of meat from farm animals. But I was getting so sick of red meat! How I wished we could afford to buy some fish for a change. One morning I was hanging out the washing, and telling the Lord how much I would like some fish. I find the washing line is a great place for thinking and praying! A few minutes later, the phone rang - a friend up the road wanted to know if we would like some Salmon they had in the freezer - apparently they had more than they could use. "Sure!" I said. She dropped off a large trash sack FULL of whole Salmon! God likes to give more abundantly than we expect!

While we were living in the Marlborough Sounds, getting firewood to keep the coal range going was becoming an urgent problem - we used the coal range for cooking, heating and hot water. We were surrounded by hills on which pine trees had been felled and left lying, but had no way of getting to them due to the steepness of the terrain, and fact that there are no roads, and a lack of suitable equipment or transport. Lord, we need some firewood!

Shortly after that, we found out that our German neighbour, who had contracted to have all his pine trees logged, and had asked the company doing so to fell the rest that they didn't want, was having to get the company back in, because some of the trees they had felled had fallen over the waterline and on the Queen's Chain, and the Department of Conservation wasn't happy about it. The logging company flew in a helicopter, who's job it was to grab and lift each pine tree from down near the water, take it up the hill, and drop it.

Rob had a word with the pilot, asking if he would mind dropping a tree on our lawn instead of up the hill. Seeing it would cost the company less fuel, he was happy to do that. That day we had two entire pine trees delivered by helicopter onto the paddock beside our house for us to cut up for firewood!

There is nothing too big for our God to do, nor too small for him to care about!

A Home of Our Own

Two years from the time the Lord had told us to get out of debt, we were debt free! What a wonderful feeling! We'd gone from \$120,000 in debt to debt free. We didn't own much - but we didn't owe anything either!

However, since the vision the Lord had given us was to live somewhere remote, self sufficient etc, we supposed that that meant on land of our own, somehow, somewhere.

And we kept wondering and hoping and expecting God to provide some way of us owning our own property again. After all, we were now debt free, so surely he would do that soon!! But he didn't.

7 years later, we still were no closer to owning our own home. After all, with 5 children, and low paying jobs, you just cannot save money for a house!

One day, I was lamenting the unfairness of it all to the Lord. I went out onto the paddock of the house we were renting, sat amongst our milking goats, and had myself a real good pity party! It's just not fair! We'll never be able to buy our own home! Boo Hoo!

But God is patient and kind, and I got over it. In fact, I got to a place of complete surrender of the issue. After all, we were living in a beautiful 6 bedroom home on 5 acres overlooking water near Nelson. It was a blessing to be there, and I knew I could be content there as long as the Lord wanted. If he decided we were never to own our own home again, I could be content with that too. And I was, truly!

God also has a sense of humour and an amazing sense of timing!

Within two weeks of my surrendering my desire for a home of our own, we had a visit from Rob's mum, who announced she had decided she would like to buy a property with us, so she could live with us and the kids, and to help us get a start. Only problem was, all her money was tied up in a property she owned with Rob's brother, who was showing no inclination to buy her out, so she expected it would be a year or three before she could, but would like us to think about it. However, Rob's aunt and uncle had visited the area only a month or so earlier, and being a former real estate agent and aware of the market trends, Pat had advised Rob's mum that if she was thinking of buying in the Nelson area, she should do it sooner rather than later.

Well, to cut a long story short, God just opened doors, and within 3 months we were moving onto a beautiful 17 acre river front property near Motueka with a 4 bedroom house, huge sheds, an acre of native bush and the most lush productive land I've ever seen! Us, who didn't have a bean to our names! We couldn't even pay the legal fees! Rob's mum paid for half the property in cash, and we mortgaged the rest.

The intention was to build a small cottage for Rob's mum, but that never worked out, as none of us could afford it. Eventually, after much prayer, and knowing we all needed our

own space, we decided to sell the property and buy less land, but two houses. Meanwhile, as predicted, house and land prices in Motueka and Nelson had skyrocketed, and so when we sold 14 months after buying, the increase in the value of our property was over \$200,000!! After paying expenses, and splitting the rest, Rob and I had been blessed with \$80,000. ☺

The Lord led us to move to Greymouth, where we brought a house, and then 18 months later to move back to the North Island to be nearer family. Since then, there has been a series of HUGE crises in our families, and it has been such a blessing to be in the same island and able to travel to help and support our loved ones.

With the two moves since buying near Motueka, we now have more equity in our own home than the entire value of the house that we gave up in Auckland, on which we lost everything. God is totally faithful!! ☺

What of Our Vision?

And what of our vision to “live somewhere remote, be self sufficient, and minister to people the Lord would bring across our path”?

A few years ago, before the Lord enabled us to buy our own place again, I was seeking him about that. Why did it seem as if we were no closer than we had been at the beginning? Why wasn't he opening doors? Why was it all so hard?

And the Lord caused me to look back over the years since we had left Auckland, and opened my eyes. He spoke to my heart, and told me that that vision had not been an end in itself, but had been a mission statement for the journey. That over the 7 years up to that point, we had been living in some of the most remote and beautiful places in the South Island, had been quite self sufficient - keeping our own goats for milk and meat, growing veges, fishing, grinding our own wheat and making our own bread, living with alternative power systems we had built ourselves, cooking on a coal range, chopping wood for our heating and cooking. And everywhere, we had ministered to people the Lord had brought across our path - whether they had been families we met, folk we worked with, the old lady running a shop in her 80's but unable to cook for herself, the minister and his family needing friendship, help and encouragement, the single mum living out in the Sounds, needing to know that the Lord was still with her, the sailor who would have been lost at sea if we hadn't intervened, the Christian Community that had no one to fix all their broken down machinery, and many others.

All along, we had been doing what the Lord had told us - living in remote places, being reasonably self-sufficient and ministering to those the Lord brought us in contact with!

Conclusion

As I was writing down some of our testimony to share, I was pondering and praying over what the most important point was; what did God most want me to say? I believe it is this:

You don't have to be a giant of the faith to please God or be important to him! Ordinary every day people living ordinary every day lives are just as important to him as the Superstars of Christianity. And you know, when you really look at them, those Tall Poppies of the Bible or modern times, you can see that nearly everyone of them were just ordinary folk too, going about their business, and through them God achieved extraordinary things.

The two things that God looks for in his people, the people with and through whom he will do the extraordinary, is faith and trust. And if we lack those, he is willing to give them to us, if we just ask.

God has an individual plan and purpose for every life. But the one thing that is the same is his desire for us to know him, and grow in him. His ultimate work in each of us is the transforming of us into the image of Christ. That is what he works things together to do - to smooth out the rough edges, to increase our faith, wisdom and love. And he's not in a hurry like we are - his perspective is eternal, his project will take a lifetime.

But know this - each and everyone of you reading this story is just as precious to God as all the Billy Grahams, Jim Elliotts, Corrie ten Booms, Abrahams and Sarahs of this world!

And you too can live an extra-ordinary life - one that may seem ordinary on the surface, but that is filled with joy, miracles, love and delight in the Lord.

All you have to do is

"Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding - in all of your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths"!

May the Lord Bless You!

If you do not have a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ, and would like to experience the transforming power of God at work in your life, then please visit www.cynthiahancox.com/gospel.html

On the following page is a map of NZ showing the places we lived. They are numbered in order.

