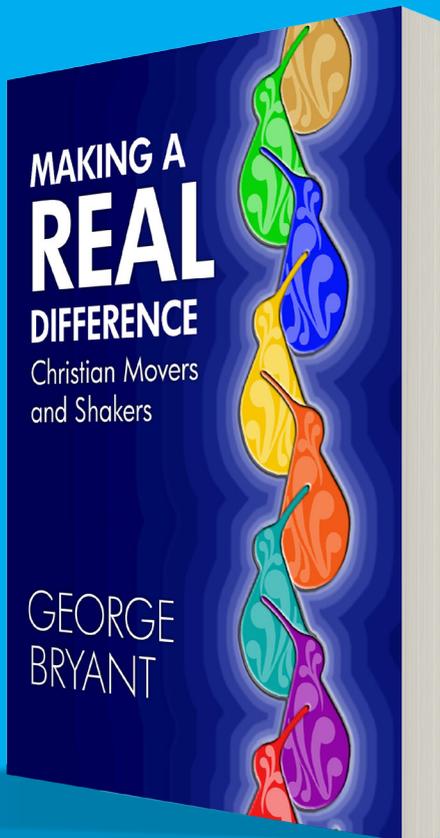


JUNE - JULY 2016

THE CHRISTIAN writer



BOOK REVIEW

Making a Real
Difference

BY GEORGE BRYANT

SEE INSIDE FOR

**Competitions
New Members
& Latest News**

Rightly explaining the word of truth – 2 Timothy 2:15
(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)



Editor: Debbie McDermott (email: sddp@xtra.co.nz)

Postal Address: 18 Matai Street, Waiuku 2123

Membership, Subscriptions and Address Changes:

Jan Pendergrast (email: jan@roads-end.co.nz)

Annual Subscription: Single \$35 (digital mag) / \$45 (hard copy mag)
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Student \$15

Subs are payable by direct or online banking to NZ Christian Writers, a/c 12 3040 0547346 00
Cheques can be sent via post to Jan Pendergrast, Seales Road, Oropi RD3, Tauranga

Book Review Requests: (members only)

Post a copy of your book to Julia Martin

286 Karapiro Road, RD4, Cambridge 3496

(NB: Your book will be added as a donation to the NZCW library on completion of the review.)

The Christian Writer is published bimonthly by the New Zealand Christian Writers and distributed to all its members. Contributions on the theme of writing are always welcome. If you have some advice or encouragement for Christian writers, or an announcement of some event of interest to members, do send it to the editor for consideration by the 20th day of the month prior to the publication date. Submissions must be emailed as Microsoft Word or Open Office documents and are to be no more than 500 words long, except at the discretion of the editor.

The editor reserves the right to condense and / or edit any contributions for reason of space. Ideas and opinions will not be edited, but editing of a technical nature may occur to maintain the highest quality of writing possible.

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The views and opinions of authors expressed in this magazine do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

Website:

Our vibrant, user-friendly website is full of interesting information, such as details of workshops and copies of past magazines. It also gives each individual member an online presence. So please encourage other Christian Writers you know to join us via our website.

www.nzchristianwriters.org

President's Report

Greetings to you.

What a beautiful autumn we have enjoyed this year. I trust the weather has also been lovely at your place.

It was great to see a good attendance at the recent seminar held aboard the Pacific Hope, when Rosie Boom and John Peachey were our speakers. I did enjoy the day and trust that others who attended were also encouraged. We were certainly made to feel at home by David Cowie and his Pacific Hope team.



Janet Fleming sharing a devotion at the Autumn Seminar

We currently have Mobile Mission Maintenance working on my sister's house as she is coming home after 45 years of missionary service in Japan. They were interested in hearing of our seminar aboard the Pacific Hope

as a number of their workers did maintenance work on the YWAM ship.

As mentioned in the last magazine, speakers for the morning session of the Spring Seminar on 3rd September are Ray Curle and Janet Balcombe. The afternoon session will be taken by Mark Holloway. The seminar will be held at Rossgrove Chapel, Mount Albert, Auckland.

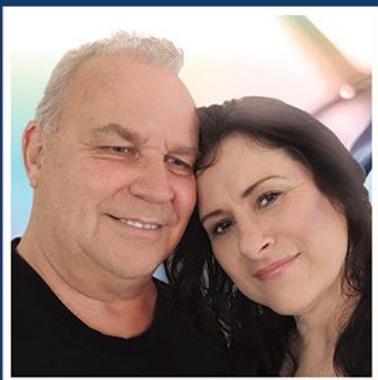
It's encouraging to see the steady increase in membership. Welcome to all our new members. We trust that being a member of NZ Christian Writers will be a blessing to you.

I was looking at a verse that was mentioned by the lady staying with us. This verse in Ecclesiastes 9:10 states 'whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.' This verse in turn made me look at Colossians 3:17 & 23. Verse 17 states 'whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus', while verse 23 says to 'do it heartily, as to the Lord...' Finally, 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us to 'do all to the glory of God.' May we each day strive to write with enthusiasm while seeking to bring glory to our wonderful God.

Janet Fleming

SEMINAR 2016

SEPTEMBER 3rd



**Janet BALCOMBE
& Ray CURLE**

Janet wrote the rollercoaster memoir, *Take a Walk on the Wild Side*. Janet's topic is: **"From outlaw to Ashton Wylie Literary Award finalist"**. Ray Curle, from pirate radio ad salesman to global media advertising manager. Ray's topic is: **"Tips on Self Publishing"**



Mark HOLLOWAY

Mark Holloway is the No. 1 best-selling Kiwi Christian author of *The Freedom Diaries*. He is Director of the advertising/marketing company Holloway & Hudson. Mark's topic is: **"How to know what to write about"**

DATE & TIME:

Saturday
3rd September
9:30am - 4:00pm

VENUE:

Rossgrove Chapel,
12 Rossgrove Terrace,
Mount Albert, Auckland

COST:

\$20 Per Person
\$35 Per Couple
(Bring a packed lunch)

www.nzchristianwriters.org

Letter to the Editor

A Heads-Up from your Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Subscription renewal begins on August 1st, because our financial year is from August to July. One adjustment is made for those joining from March 1st. Many of you pay your subs during July—and some earlier—which I appreciate immensely.

Every year I put a reminder in the June/July magazine, and a sticker on the envelope of those receiving the same hard copy magazine. The response to these has been disappointing with only a small proportion renewing in August, many in September and too many in October / November / December. In the past I have sent email reminders to those not paid by October, with a message saying this is their last magazine. Another email goes to those still not paid in December with a further message to say there will be no more magazines sent.

Dealing with this dribbling in of subscriptions, the subsequent reminder emails and the posting of now-wanted magazines is time-consuming. (Last December we ran out of magazines because I had ordered on the paid-up membership!)

So... for the next financial year (2016/17), if your subscription is not paid by September 30th (two month's grace), you will not receive the October/November magazine as in previous years, nor will you be eligible to continue entering the competitions. Since non-payment indicates membership has been terminated, your author and book profiles will also be removed from the New Zealand Christian Writers Web page.

If you choose not to continue as a member, I would appreciate an email expressing this and, if possible, a note explaining why. We do want to serve our members well, so if we are missing the mark in any way, we want to know.

You will find the fees, my address and bank account information below.

Thank you, in advance, for your prompt payment action for 2016/17.



Membership Renewal Reminder

Just a friendly reminder that each member's annual subscription renewal is due by **August 1st**.

Annual Subscriptions	A:	<input type="checkbox"/> Single (\$35)	<input type="checkbox"/> Double (\$50)	<input type="checkbox"/> School Student (\$15)
	B:	<input type="checkbox"/> Single (\$45)	<input type="checkbox"/> Double (\$70)	<input type="checkbox"/> School Student (\$20)

A = Digital Magazine, or **B** = Printed Magazine

Payment	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque enclosed (<i>Made payable to NZ Christian Writers</i>)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Debit : To ASB, NZ Christian Writers. 12-3040-0547346-00

Please include YOUR NAME in the Reference



Jan Pendergast
Treasurer & Membership Secretary

NZ Christian Writers
'Roads-End'
Seales Road
Oropi, RD 3
Tauranga 3173

jan@roads-end.co.nz
www.NZChristianWriters.org

Autumn Seminar Report

By Debbie McDermott

Approximately 40 people attended the Autumn Seminar, held aboard YWAM's ship M/V Pacific Hope on April 23rd. The day began with a tour of the boat, which was soon due to sail to Vanuatu to minister the gospel and provide free dental care to the needy people of this island nation. The tour was followed by lunch, after which the day began in earnest. It was great to see the conference room so jam-packed.



Part of the Pacific Hope Conference Room

After a brief time of prayer, Janet Fleming opened the seminar with a devotion on how a fruit can look good on the outside, but its flesh can taste awful if it's been feeding on the wrong thing (e.g. sea water). We too need to feed our spirits on the right things if we are to be a blessing to others.

The first speaker of the day was Rosie Boom, who spoke on:

25 Basic Writing Tips



Rosie Boom

www.rosieboom.com

Rosie began by saying we must not just think 'books' when writing. God's word is powerful and so are our words when we follow the Lord's prompting to write life-giving messages to others. Whether he inspires us to write a book or a simple letter, the important thing is to:

1. **Start.** Many writers become daunted by the prospect of the huge task that awaits them. Don't get caught up wondering where, when or how to start. Just start. Today is the day!
2. **Finish.** For a work to be used by God it needs to be finished. This is hard for those who get brilliant ideas halfway through a project. Soon they are working on a dozen masterpieces to the detriment of all. Discipline the creative urges and finish the work at hand.
3. **Be willing to learn.** We must put in the hours and humility to learn our craft. We all have blind spots. Listen to feedback, and don't gather around yourself a dotting audience who only tell you what you want to hear.
4. **Don't forget the reader.** We must work at communicating what is in our hearts and heads to our reader. The key is making our reader care. We must always think of our audience—who they are, what age they are, what they are reading and what they want to read.
5. **Manage your time correctly.** Seize the day. Be willing to sacrifice that TV show or extra hour of sleep. To be a writer you must make time to write.
6. **Don't neglect the masters.** Sit before the masters and study their works. Read current books. Identify what structure the author uses, how they use dialogue, how much white space they have. Attend workshops and courses. Listen and learn.

7. **Don't ignore your greatest asset—yourself.** Every publisher is looking for that unique something. Don't write a re-hash of the latest book. Find your own creativity. No-one else has lived your life. Write what you know.
8. **Define your work.** Write down in one short sentence the guts of what your manuscript is about. You need to know what you are writing or you will simply wander off course.
9. **Create an inciting incident.** This is the event that upsets your protagonist's world (e.g. a plane crash). This event is what gives your story credibility.
10. **Use a light hand.** Don't use repetition or over-emphasis to drive your point home. Your reader usually 'gets it' first time. An understated character can be more appealing than an overstated one.
11. **Watch out for clichés.** Clichés are boring. Try replacing them with something original and fresh.
12. **Avoid bad dialogue tags.** 'Said' is a word that is noted but not noticed. There is a place for tags, but use them sparingly. If 'said' will suffice, use it.
13. **Handle Point of View correctly.** The end of a scene marks a change in POV. Don't change halfway through. Readers must know from whose POV they are viewing the scene.
14. **Use conflict.** Each scene must have drama that revolves around conflict. Conflict revolves around differing motivations and must be inherent in your characters, not just created by situations.
15. **The importance of character.** We need to focus on character—that which makes our protagonist / antagonist unique. Each character must be distinct.
16. **Create the right number of characters.** Too many characters will diminish the reader's ability to empathise with any of them. Keep the focus on your protagonist and antagonist.
17. **Utilise the blind spots.** Each character will have a key trait. With that comes a blind spot; something they don't recognise as a weakness. These blind spots make for real characters.
18. **Set the scene.** The reader must be able to feel, smell and see the scene. Let them know if it is new, familiar or relates to the previous scene; who is in the scene; and what POV is being used.
19. **Be careful of flashbacks and memories.** Using a flashback or memory will upset the natural order of things and slow the forward movement of your story down. The reader wants to know what is going to happen, not what has already happened.
20. **Beware of falling in love with your own writing.** There will always be parts of your manuscript that you love. You must, however, be prepared to kill your 'darlings' if they don't support the overall work. Be ruthless.
21. **Use good basic formatting.** Editors reject around 50% of all submissions due to poor formatting, grammar and spelling. Follow any guidelines and word count requirements religiously.
22. **Learn the business side.** Publishers now expect much more involvement from their authors, so learn how to promote and market your work. You may be the only PR department it has.
23. **Show, don't tell.** It is vital that you master the art of using action to illustrate dramatic moments and infuse your stories with the right amount of tension and emotion.

24. Let your protagonist grow. The protagonist must be a different person at the end of your story than he/she was at the start. They need to have undergone all sorts of challenges and experiences that made them grow and change.

25. Don't quit. Get rid of the mind-set of overnight success. Be prepared to plod away at it. Bit by bit, word by word, line by line, you will get there.

The second speaker of the day was John Peachey—Radio Rhema broadcaster and Director of The Think Farm. His topic was:

Once Upon a Time...



John Peachey

www.thinkfarm.co.nz

Why do we tell stories?

1. They resonate with the human spirit.
2. They teach us empathy. It is hard to hate someone whose story you know.

The First Narrative

The first Bible story is that of Adam and Eve. In it we see intrigue, deception and transfer of blame. Also contained in the tempting of Eve is the fiction that God is withholding something from her and Adam.

As the couple give into temptation, so the 'aloneness of God' enters the narrative of Man. Shame and doubt in God's word causes Adam and Eve to mishear God. When the Lord calls to them, they hear accusation instead of concern. Communication with their Maker is now broken.

When communication stops, imagination takes over and a new narrative begins.

When is our God not enough?

The answer is never. A true understanding of God would have caused Adam and Eve to run to God, not away.

The Loss Line

Mankind lives in the loss of the Garden—the trading of life in the Creator for life in the creation. Before the Fall, Adam was enough because his relationship with God was intact. Then the serpent twisted fiction to look like truth, and Adam re-imagined it into a new fiction of lies about himself.

Who Are We?

Our quest is to bring the truth of God to others. We are 'war correspondents' combatting the lies of a propaganda state by telling THE truth. Truth is the most powerful force on earth. With it we find the unfindable and connect the unconnected. We are the grace bringers, the truth tellers, the once-upon-a-timers. We are the story tellers twisting lies back into truth. We offer courage. We are prophetic reminders of what was meant to be. We span the canyons of loss and strain to lift others so they can once more view the promised land.

What is my 'thisness'—my unique value proposition?

We speak to people's future. If God is sending us, then there is no time at which we are not enough in our narrative. We must not discount who we are and where we've been. There is only one of me through whom God can deliver a unique value proposition, and there is only one of you.

We must not let the naysayers cause us to lose sight of our unique value propositions.

Communication—the common goal, but with different approaches

How we communicate affects our internal dialogue. Shame or bad memories reshape our narrative and tell us lies about ourselves. What we believe is often what we become. So we write truth to reframe the lie and uncover the lost truth of who we really are.

The Power of Shared Memory

The more stories I hear about you, the more I relate to your humanity. So write.

Dinner and Concert

After John’s talk, those wanting to stay on for the evening activities were invited to go down to the galley, where we were treated to a delicious range of desserts by YWAM. These, together with the pizzas provided by NZCW, made for a veritable feast!

After dinner, we returned to the conference room and concluded the day with a concert. Janet, Rosie and Joy blessed us with their songs; Fred played his harmonicas and Eion his banjo; and Debbie and Carole recited some of their poetry.



Fred Swallow on his harmonica, accompanied by Rosie Boom on her guitar

Most of all, everyone had fun and it was great ending the day on such a high note.

In conclusion, this was an excellent seminar and the feedback we’ve received so far has been very positive. Our spring seminar looks like it’s going to be just as good, so do be encouraged to come along.



Julie Belding & Beth Walker

Top 2 shots:
Enjoying a few minutes on Pacific Hope’s top deck before the start of the seminar



Dianne Spain, Debbie McDermott & Selina Chan

Right:
Supportive husbands Mike Fleming and Peter Soole enjoy a bit of banter at the end of the concert



TWO IN ONE PUZZLE SOLUTION

1. Outré
2. et al
3. Neon
4. Blasé
5. Et tu
6. Qadi...
7. Ad infinitum
8. Risqué
9. Coup
10. S’il vous plait
11. Wai
12. Aide-de-camp
13. Auld lang syne
14. De facto
15. Maunga
16. Kaput
17. Cliché
18. Faux pas
19. Smorgasbord
20. Au pair
21. Angst
22. tapu
23. Alfresco
24. Bon jour
25. Bona fide
26. Ingoa
27. Cul-de-sac
28. Post meridiem
29. Au revoir
30. touché
31. élan

Now see if you can find all the words in the Find-a-Word grid on Page 12

Welcome to NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Anderson
Runanga, West Coast

Karen Loo
Avondale, Auckland

Rosamond Rowe
Bridge Pa, Hastings

Michelle Trotter
Warkworth

REMEMBER

to email your photo and mini bio to Justin
St Vincent (editor@xtrememusic.org)
for uploading to our website

Promote your book in
Christian Life



Low-cost package with **free**
synopsis of your book in the
editorial pages and advert in
the Resources section

Contact Ray Curle, Initiate Media
p 09 281 4896 or email
ray.curle@initiatemedia.net
Check out www.initiatemedia.net

GET CREATIVE

Thanks to Janis Cusack for this lovely poem.

Vonnie's Surprise

When we went out the gate
for the first time,
I jumped for joy
and yapped excitedly.
I raced all around,
my nose into every new smell.

Then off down the drive we went
and on to the road...
Wow! What an interesting place that was.
Tantalising smells
just drew me along...
I pulled on my lead—
left, then right, then all around.
We got all tangled up!
It was so exciting—
what else could I do?

That was my 'day of delight'
back then when I was just a pup.
But I haven't lost my zest for living.
I still get excited
when we go out the gate.
So much fun out there—
always some new smell
waiting for me to check it out!

By Vonnie (Cavalier King Charles spaniel)

The next topic will be **I felt scared when...**

Maximum 250 words for prose and 4 verses
(6 lines or less per verse) for poetry. Include
the words 'Get Creative' with your
submission, as well as set the next 'Get
Creative' topic. You may also include a
picture with your piece if you wish.

Deadline: 10th July 2016
Email submissions for consideration to
sddp@xtra.co.nz

NZCW Writers' Groups

AUCKLAND – WEST
Hosted by Dianne Spain
Tel: (09) 626 3141
dispain54@gmail.com

CHRISTCHURCH
Dave Palmer
Mob: (027) 216 5743
davepalmer@xtra.co.nz

HAMILTON
Eion Field
Tel: (07) 856 6518
eionfield@gmail.com

HAURAKI
John Milne
Tel: (07) 862 6861
johnmilne38@gmail.com

NORTHLAND
Janice Gillgren
Tel: (09) 433 9752
jangill1359@gmail.com

TAURANGA
Jan Pendergrast
Tel: (07) 543 2147
jan@roads-end.co.nz

TWO IN ONE PUZZLE

Foreign words and phrases often used in English

Answer these questions. Then find the answer in the FIND-A-WORD.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. French—gone to excess. (5) 2. Latin—abbr. for 'and other things'. (2, 2) 3. Greek—a colourless gas that can glow red. (4) 4. French—bored because of overfamiliarity. (5) 5. Latin—you too (famously said by Julius Caesar when he was being assassinated). (2, 2) 6. Arabic—magistrate in Muslim societies. (4) 7. Latin—forever, without limit. (2, 9) 8. French—hazardous, bordering on indecent. (6) 9. Latin—successful move; a master stroke. (4) 10. French—if you please. (2'1, 4, 5) 11. Maori—water. (3) 12. French—assistant in the field; acting to assist senior officer. (4- 2-4) 13. Scots—days of long ago, especially remembered nostalgically. (4, 4, 4) 14. Latin—from the fact, though not necessarily legal. (2, 5) 15. Maori—mountain. (6) 16. German—broken, destroyed. (5) 17. French—A phrase that has become stale and feeble through repetition. (6) 18. French—false step, social blunder. (4, 3) 19. Swedish—buffet-style assortment of hot and cold savoury dishes. (11) 20. French—young person from abroad helping in home and with the children. (2, 4) 21. German—strong feeling of anxiety. (5) 22. Maori—sacred. (4) 23. Italian—in the open air. 8 letters 24. French—a greeting; hello. 3, 4 letters | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 25. Latin—in good faith; genuine or sincere. (4, 4) 26. Maori—name (as of a person). (5) 27. French—bottom of the bag; street closed at one end. (3-2-3) 28. Latin—between noon and the following midnight. (2, 4) 29. French—farewell; a good bye. (2, 6) 30. French—touch; used to acknowledge a hit in fencing or a point made in an argument. (6) 31. French—dash; rush; impressive style. (4) |
|--|--|

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

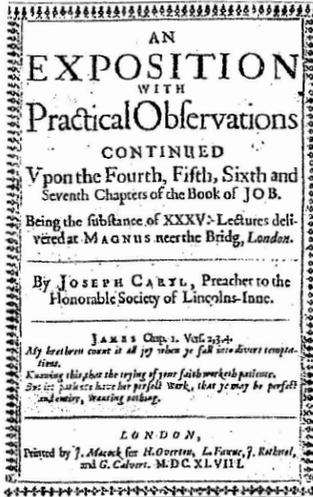
Chambers Concise Dictionary, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh. 2004

S	I	L	V	O	U	S	P	L	A	I	T	E
█	█	A	R	I	O	V	E	R	U	A	R	R
A	I	D	E	D	E	C	A	M	P	█	I	T
M	O	I	█	A	E	T	T	U	A	B	S	U
E	C	N	I	Q	█	F	N	C	I	O	Q	O
I	S	F	A	U	X	P	A	S	R	N	U	C
D	E	I	W	█	U	S	L	C	R	J	E	L
I	R	N	█	O	E	A	E	E	T	U	█	I
R	F	I	C	D	T	█	S	U	█	O	█	C
E	L	T	L	E	█	A	P	█	T	R	█	H
M	A	U	L	D	L	A	N	G	S	Y	N	E
T	C	M	█	B	K	E	A	O	G	N	I	█
S	E	H	C	U	O	T	A	G	N	U	A	M
O	█	█	█	N	E	D	I	F	A	N	O	B
P	D	R	O	B	S	A	G	R	O	M	S	█

Two in One Solution on Page 10

WRITING BRIEFS

Inspiring Christian writing of today and yesteryear—by Frederick Swallow



Job
Opening page
Chapters 4, 5, 6
with Commentary
Printed in
London 1674

Bible Sunday—Ideas for Participation

Ask Church members to bring and tell about their oldest Bible or Christian book in any language. (At one Bible Sunday, Job's Exposition—as pictured above—created much attention.)

Posters designed with 2 Tim 3:15-17 in mind.

Bible titles. e.g. *Book of Books. The Forever Book.*

Hymns. Choose relevant singable numbers with fitting words. e.g. 'Father of Mercies in Thy Word what Endless Glories Shine.' Google. Select verses. Tune: 'How Sweet the Name'.

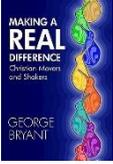
Bible wonders. Its wide circulation and many languages.

Writing Briefs relevant to the Bible as in *The NZ Christian Writer* can also add interest to platform messages.

Bible Societies suggest a Bible Sunday can tie in with church programmes.

Library Corner

Julia Martin's Book Review



Making a Real Difference

By George Bryant

George Bryant, one of NZ's leading writers on social issues, was prompted to write this book after the 2013 census showed the number of adherents to Christianity was declining sharply. He felt it was time to remind New Zealanders of the part Christianity played in laying the foundations of our nation, and to show the positive impact ordinary Christians continue to make today. George refers to such people as **movers and shakers** and defines them as 'energetic men and women of vision who make changes and influence events in a big way'.

As a starting point, George documents examples from history of notable people who were devout Christians and who made a positive and lasting impact on our world. The rest of the book is devoted to the profiles of 20 or so dynamic men and women George has chosen from all walks of life. Not all are well-known, but they are all making a difference in our society as they live out their Christian faith in practical ways.

Finally, George draws principles he's observed that are common to many of the movers and shakers. With religion often being associated with violence and evil deeds in today's world, it's refreshing and timely to read about ordinary people among us who follow the principles of Jesus Christ and endeavour to live them out as salt and light in their spheres of influence.

I believe these stories will inspire and challenge Christians and non-Christians.

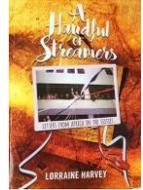
Published by DayStar Books. RRP \$27.99
www.daystarbooks.org

Library Additions

Thanks to the following members for donating a copy of their book to NZCW:

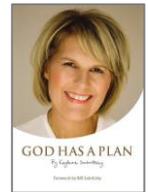
A Handful of Streamers

—a compilation of 2,000 letters the author and her husband, Maurice, wrote while serving in Africa in the 60s
By Lorraine Harvey
[castlepublishing.co.nz//](http://castlepublishing.co.nz/)



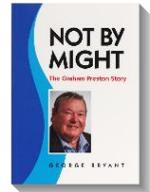
God Has a Plan

—An honest, touching and meaningful testimony of the author's personal journey to Christianity
By Kaylene Subritzky
www.doveministries.com/



Not by Might

—The biography of Graham Preston, founder of Bethlehem College, Tauranga
By George Bryant
www.daystarbooks.org/



Need Professional Editing/Writing Services?

Then why not contact the following NZCW members?

Janette Busch

E: WritingAnswers1@gmail.com
Mob: +64 21 233 7691

Marie Anticich

E: marieanticich@gmail.com

Sue Beguely

E: sue@triplecoilscript.co.nz
Mob: +64 27 533 0188

Selina Chan

E: selina_chan@hotmail.com
Mob: +64 21 104 3686

Competition Results

Under 20s

Judge:

Vicki Nogaj

Requirement: Pick a Fruit of the Holy Spirit to focus on for a week. Journal your experience and observations of how it outworked in your life or another's. 300 words.

First Place



**Bonnie
Smithies**

of Christchurch
(16 years old)

Journaling my Joy Quest

Day 1 – Monday

Today is the first day I'm focusing on a spiritual fruit and journaling my experiences. I picked joy. Although it's my middle name, I feel like I used to be a lot more joyful when I was younger! I know there are lots of Biblical ways to lead a joy-filled life and I want to explore some of those.

Psalm 16:11 talks about fullness of joy being found in the Lord's presence. How often do I try and find joy and happiness through things other than God himself? Yes, those things can bring temporary joy but I know we can only be truly joy-filled through Him.

Lord, help me to hunger for your presence. Teach me to yearn for it, to soak in it. Bring me joy through you and you alone!

Day 2 – Tuesday

Today I was thinking about joy and righteousness and their relationship to one

another. As Proverbs 10:28 says, the hope of the righteous shall be joy.

The thing I love about this is that the righteousness mentioned doesn't come from us trying to reach Heaven's perfection under our own steam. That righteousness is only found through Christ's sacrifice!

I snapped at my siblings today. Most definitely not a good way to find or bring joy! Oh dear.

Day 3 – Wednesday

James 1:2-4 talks about considering it pure joy when we face trials, because the testing of our faith develops perseverance. This is about finding joy in all of our nasty circumstances because we're trusting God and know he's got it all under control!

Easy to say. Hard to do.

When life goes pear shaped on you and you feel totally overwhelmed it's so hard to trust God and even harder still to consider your trials JOY!

Day 4 – Thursday

We're told in Acts 20:35 that it's more blessed to give than to receive. This is so true, especially when it comes to encouragement. It is truly a blessing to be able to give away encouragement and spread joy!

Today I wrote a note for a friend and spent a while writing encouragement, drawing cute doodles on the envelope and praying for her. I felt joyful knowing the joy she will feel when she receives it!

Day 5 – Friday

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 it tells us to give thanks in all circumstances. Being thankful

to God about the oodles of blessings he's given to us is a great way to find joy.

How easy to complain, and how one must really set one's mind to it when one decides to be thankful and joyful in all circumstances! I had to stop myself so many times when I noticed myself about to complain.

Conclusion

It was a neat experience, journaling my joy quest. I will definitely be drawing on the things I've learnt in the future. It's so easy to be critical and complain and discourage.... But so worth it to focus on being joyful!

Judge's Comments

I'm so impressed you gave this a go as it is hard exposing our inner thought processes. I apologise for the lack of insight in having such a low word count and thank you for your request to increase it to 500 words due to the nature of the assignment.

I loved reading your journaling and could almost see the Holy Spirit working through the progression of your journey. The honesty in your writing is refreshing and edifying to the reader. The tone throughout was so positive and reflected the 'fruit' you were focusing on.

Congratulations on being the only brave soul to attempt this. Perhaps it was due to the original word count! This ability to be real and share your testimony shows a depth of relationship to God that will encourage and inspire readers to do their own journaling. Nice work.



Level One

Judge:

Debbie McDermott

Requirement: CREATIVE—Write a tale that is full of suspense or intrigue. Use the following 10 words at least once in your story: *bag, clock, tissue, can, cuckoo, screech, ball, lamp, snap, window.* 500 words.

General Comments

Congratulations to the four entrants to this competition—and welcome to Lynda and Clare who are new to Level One. Each of you four have met the requirements very well.

When writing suspense stories, it is vital to keep the tale fast-moving and to the point. Avoid including unnecessary detail, adverbs and adjectives. These slow the story down and dampen the impact you want to have on your reader. To write an engaging story, we must remember how important it is to 'show, not tell'. In other words, we need to enable our reader to experience our story through action, words, thoughts, senses, and feelings rather than through our exposition, summarisation, and description.

The key is to give our reader just the right amount of information to enable them to visualise the scene and follow what's happening. Then we must trust them to use their own imagination to 'see, feel, smell, touch and taste' our story in their mind. Of the four entries received, Lynda and Pamela achieved this most effectively. Well done.

I would also like to commend Dennis for writing a story that targets a younger audience. This was well done. My only recommendation would be to add a bit more of the sort of excitement children like.

Overall, each entrant made a great effort and I look forward to receiving further entries from you.

First Place



**Lynda
Otter**

of Tamatea, Napier

The Empty House

He stood in the shadows of an old walnut tree, surveying the house. The rambling two story colonial was completely dark, showing no sign of occupancy. Old habits die hard and he was taking no chances. He had been patiently waiting for thirty minutes and a few more would make no difference. Finally, he felt it would be safe to move. Skirting the bushes on either side of the driveway, he crept silently towards the rear of the house. Quietly setting his bag down beside a small window, he removed a can of CRC ready to spray hinges that may have jammed. He certainly did not want the screech of rusty hinges to warn neighbours of the break-in. Carefully working with his pocket knife along the bottom edge of the window, he felt rather than heard the snap as the latch gave way. Replacing his tools in his bag he edged the window up, placed his bag inside and hoisted himself to the window sill. He had known that this window offered the least security and congratulated himself as he balanced on the sill before jumping down, narrowly missing the tools and landing safely on the carpet.

Taking his bag with him, he silently slipped from room to room. It was a large house but he knew the layout intimately as he had been in it many times. He intended climbing the stairs to the main bedroom, where he would lay in wait for her. He felt sure she would not have disobeyed him but was not willing to depend on it. He bit

back an exclamation as he knocked into the hall lamp and quickly grabbed it to stop it falling. He would not announce his presence in case his meticulous planning and observations of the house had been wrong. Standing for a moment to orientate himself in the darkness, he noted the ticking of the grandfather clock almost opposite him. The stairs were to the right and he slipped towards them, barely disturbing the warm slightly musky air. He could smell the faint perfume from yesterdays' long gone and felt nostalgic for a moment. Reaching for the stair banister he tripped over a basketball left carelessly by the first step, falling heavily on his injured knee and involuntarily groaning as pain sliced through his leg.

At that instant, all the downstairs lights turned on and a chorus of "Happy Birthday Rick" rung throughout the hall as groups of family, friends, colleagues and neighbours surged into the space from the adjoining rooms. His wife mopped the tears from her eyes with a tissue, helpless with laughter. "I can't believe the lengths you will go to, to avoid having a birthday party you cuckoo," she choked out as he put his arm around her waist, smiling ruefully at the grinning faces of his party guests. She had outsmarted him again and he knew from years of experience to just grin and make the most of it.

Judge's Comments

Lynda's story is very well written. It is also plausible. This is an extremely important aspect as plausibility in our writing enables the reader to identify with the narrative. Her sentence structure is also excellent, particularly for a piece such as this, where a good balance of short and crisp sentences are needed to build and maintain the suspense of the story, and keep it fast-moving.

However, attention to paragraph structure is just as important when writing a suspense story. Long paragraphs can slow a fast-moving story down as they require more concentration from the reader. Typesetting also needs to be considered. For instance, in *The Christian Writer*, the content of Lynda's story is laid out in narrow columns, which means her lengthy paragraphs appear even longer. To rectify this issue, I recommend splitting paragraphs 1 and 2 into shorter paragraphs at the following sentences:

Finally, he felt it would be safe to move...

Carefully working with his pocket knife...

He bit back an exclamation...

Standing for a moment to orientate himself...

Although paragraph 3 is shorter than the first two, the direct speech and final sentence need to be a separate paragraph in order to fully drive home the story's punchline.

Lynda's grammar and punctuation are very good. The only corrections needed are:

Para 1

- Sentence 2—two-storey should be hyphenated. Notice, too, the correct spelling of 'storey'.
- Sentences 7 & 8—delete the words 'ready' after CRC and 'certainly'. They are superfluous.
- Sentence 11—Delete 'that'.

Para 2

- The last sentence is too long and has mixed tenses. Rewrite it as: 'Reaching for the stair banister, he tripped over a basketball left carelessly by the first step and fell heavily on his injured knee. He groaned involuntarily...'

Para 3

- Sentence 3—insert a full stop after '...choked out.' Delete 'as' and write 'He put his arm...' as a new sentence.

All in all, this is an excellent effort, Lynda. Well done, and do keep writing.

Second Place



**Dennis
McLeod**
of Hamilton

The House

One day I decided to explore our new neighbourhood. Around the corner there was this old house which was real scary looking. It was well over due for painting and the front fence was rotting and falling apart. I sure didn't want to go past there on a dark night.

However one night my sister and I did have to walk pass there coming from the Church. As we walked passed we could see what looked like a small lamp shining through a crack in the curtains covering the front window. So we figured someone must live there but we were not waiting around to find out.

A few days later we were playing with my soccer ball in the yard, when my sister kicked it down the street. We all ran off after the ball but it hit a lamppost and rolled around the corner. As we followed it, we suddenly realised there was an old man standing there who had picked up the ball. He was real scary looking, dressed in clothes that had seen better days and a bag over his shoulder that truly fitted his appearance. He glared at us, as if we shouldn't be any where near his house.

"Is this yours boy?" he snapped.

"Yes sir, sorry, can I have my ball back, please?"

He threw the ball to me followed by the words, "Be off with you and don't disturb me again." Of which we had no intention of doing.

Over the next few weeks we heard people were not very happy with this old house in their neighbourhood. One night as we were coming from youth group we heard the sound of a cuckoo clock coming from the old house. I wondered what other interesting items the man might have. I would love to have seen the clock, as cuckoo clocks fascinated me. As we walked on we heard a snap in the undergrowth by the house. Thinking the old man was coming for us we ran for our lives so to speak.

In our rush to get away I dropped my book, so I had to go back for it. As I came around the corner I heard the screech of car tyres and there was a car speeding up the road with no lights on. Then I saw the fire at the side of the house. I yelled to my sister, “Phone the fire brigade,” as I ran to the house.

I started banging on the front door while shouting fire, but there was no answer. The fire engine arrived in no time and the firemen quickly had the fire under control. The men broke down the front door and soon had the old man out on the grass, where he recovered from the smoke he had inhaled. My sister wiped her eyes with a tissue, as she was so upset that people could be so horrible. God had me drop my book that night, of this, I am sure.

Judge’s Comments

Although Dennis’ story doesn’t quite have that ‘sitting on the edge of my seat’ aspect, it is well written from start to finish. Of the four entrants, he alone targeted a younger audience and I highly commend him for making such an excellent effort. Writing for children is an art in itself and it is vital to include plenty of action and excitement in your story if you are to hold their interest. Children—especially boys—like to enter into the spirit of adventure. This is where

the ‘show, don’t tell’ technique (mentioned in my general comments) is so important.

While phrases such as ‘real scary looking’ are not grammatically correct, I realise Dennis has used them on purpose to convey the modern jargon of the younger set. Such a technique is acceptable when writing a narrative like this, as it adds credibility.

Other recommendations and areas for correction are:

- *Paras 1 & 3: ‘overdue’ and ‘anywhere’ should be one word, not two.*
- *Para 2—sentence 1: ‘walk pass’ should be ‘walk past’. Insert a comma after ‘However,’*
- *Para 2—sentence 2: As ‘walk past’ has recently been used, change this sentence to ‘As we did, we could see...’*
- *Para 3—sentence 1: quantify the ‘we’’ by rewriting it as ‘a group of us kids...’*
- *Para 3—sentence 3 is clumsy. Perhaps rewrite it as ‘We followed it, then suddenly came to a screaming halt. There stood an old man with our ball in his hands!’*
- *Para 5: replace the commas with full stops, so that it reads “Yes sir. Sorry. Can I have my ball back, please?”*
- *Para 6: ‘followed by the words’ would be better written as ‘and said’*
- *Para 7—sentence 2: the word ‘home’ needs to be inserted after ‘coming’. There also needs to be a comma after ‘One night’ and ‘youth group’.*
- *Para 7—sentence 6: delete ‘so to speak’*
- *Para 8—sentence 1: delete ‘I’ in the second part of the sentence*
- *Para 8—sentence 2: delete ‘car’ before ‘tyres’ as ‘a car speeding...’ infers the tyres belong to a car.*
- *Para 9—sentence 2: replace ‘had’ with ‘got’*

Third Place Equal



**Pamela
Lowrey**
of Havelock North

NOT ON MY CARPET !

Inside the old family home, Jane threw her coat and bag down on the bed, lit the fire, demolished dinner and sat down to relax and knit.

The light began to flicker and suddenly went out. Jane dropped her ball of wool. “Bother !” she muttered as she went to fetch a torch. The fire cast strange shadows into the darkened hallway. Jane felt uneasy as she rummaged about to find a new light bulb.

At that precise moment she heard a screech of brakes directly outside. A car door opened and then clunked shut. Surely, it wasn’t someone coming. A visitor at this time of night? She wasn’t expecting anyone. Gripped by fear, Jane strained to hear any sound, apart from the wind that was beginning to wail dismally around the house. She crept to a window and peeked through a corner of the curtain. It was too dark to see anything.

Something snapped ! Someone must be sneaking up the path. In her anxiety Jane pulled a string of tissues out of the box and pressed them all against her lips. She felt like screaming .

An ominous silence ensued. Then she heard a rasping sound at the window as if it were being prized open. A burglar with a knife? The rain started – big loud drops hitting the old watering can Jane had left on the garden path. She gasped inwardly as

someone dropped something. A tool bag. A hammer perhaps ? “ Please help me, God ! “ she whimpered. Then she heard footsteps retreating, a car starting and driving away. O-h-h the relief !

After regaining her composure she cautiously opened the front door just a fraction, and shone her torch on a large bag of Gardening Magazines. Of course ! Shirley promised me some. She giggled hysterically. How silly of me!

Back in her favourite chair, the cuckoo clock started to cuckoo. Jane counted the cuckoos as was her custom. The bird offered a sense of comfort, stability and routine. But tonight the cuckoo kept on cuckooing twelve, thirteen, fifteen --- twenty one ! Whatever was wrong with it? She stopped the clock and made a mental note to take it to the clock repairer in the morning.

Jane shakily picked up her knitting. Another tap at the window. It must be a tree branch hitting on the glass. She took little notice until the tapping became a frantic scratching accompanied by a pitiful crying sound. Mustering all her courage, she beamed her torch directly on the windowpane. Two imploring eyes met hers. Two paws were deperately clawing the glass. “ Oh! You poor thing !” Jane opened the window and hauled in one very cold, miserable bundle of fur. She gently dried it in front of the fire , opened a can of sardines and poured some milk.

And then she saw something else. “You’re going to have kittens ! Oh no! Not on my carpet!”



Judge's Comments

I really enjoyed Pamela's story. Apart from a few typesetting errors (i.e. putting spaces before punctuation marks and a space before the closing speech marks in paragraph 5, and thus causing them to face the wrong way), her story is well-written. It is also easy to relate to as I'm sure most of us have been in situations where our imaginations have played tricks on us. Had Pamela not omitted to include 'lamp' (one of the set words listed in the competition requirements, I would have given her a higher placing.

Pamela's grammar and punctuation are very good. The only corrections needed are:

- *Paras 5 & 8—'prized' should be spelled 'prised' and 'deperately' should be spelled 'desperately'*
- *Para 3—sentence 2: replace 'and' with a comma*
- *Para 3—sentence 6 would be better written as '...Jan strained to hear any sound above the wind...' Also delete 'dismally' as 'beginning to wail' infers it*
- *Para 4—sentence 3: delete the word 'all'*
- *Para 5—sentence 5: I suggest deleting 'inwardly' or replacing 'gaspd' (which is an audible sound) with a more apt word*
- *Para 6—sentence 1: 'magazines' should begin with a small m*
- *Para 7—sentence 4: numerals above 10 should be written as figures. i.e. 12, 13...*

Third Place Equal



**Clare
Matravers**
of Whangerei

One Dark Night ...

There was no moon and the high wind chased the scruffy clouds across the star-

encrusted sky, ruffled the treetops and set the leaves shivering.

A figure in black moved stealthily around the corner of the house. There was a small screech as a window was opened. The man groped around in his bag and pulled out a can of oil. After it was applied and the excess wiped away with a tissue, he slithered into the dark interior. Once inside, he stopped to snap on the tiny head lamp attached to his cap.

“Cuckoo!” The man froze as the clock announced the hour, its cheerful voice incongruous in the gloomy night. But when nothing stirred, he stole across the hallway to a door. It screeched like a pukeko as he opened it. Once more he stood statue-like but again there was no sound of movement in the house. He applied oil to those hinges as well. When there was no squeak left, he entered the room and pushed the door to. From his bag, he pulled out several objects and placed them on the table with care.

“Hold it right there!” Hard metal dug into his back and brightness from behind cast his shadow on the floor. With a dull thud the bag landed on the rug. The man raised his hands slowly.

“Turn around.” It was a command, not a suggestion. Glaring torch light reflected off a rifle barrel. Then there was a flash of silver as the man snatched a blade from the table. Metal hit metal and sparks flew. The torch crashed to the floor and went out. The only light remaining was from the tiny lamp.

“Oh, it's you, Laura! I thought you were a burglar. You do know that thing's not loaded?”

“Dan? What on earth are you doing? I thought *you* were an intruder.” Laura

snapped the overhead light on and dropped the rifle on the couch. “I was about to call the police.”

“Silly me, I managed to lock myself out.”

“Why didn’t you just knock on the door like a normal person?”

“I didn’t want to disturb you or Tim. I was planning to set up the lounge for his birthday today. As a surprise. I brought decorations and everything.” He indicated the items on the table.

“Did you manage to get the ball he’s been hankering after?”

Dan nudged the bag with his foot and a round parcel rolled out. “Guess what that is.” He chuckled. “If a real burglar had realised that rifle was only for decoration, you would have been in big trouble!”

Laura snorted and pointed at the blade he still grasped. “And how exactly were you going to defend yourself with a cake slice?”

Judge’s Comments

Clare has met the requirements of the competition very well by effectively setting the opening scene and then maintaining a good level of suspense throughout paragraphs 2-5. Had she not included some unnecessary detail and adjectives, her story would have been even more fast-paced and exciting than it already is.

One of the aspects of Clare’s story that I most enjoyed was discovering that the ‘intruder’ was none other than the husband. This added a healthy touch of humour and credibility to her tale.

Clare’s grammar and punctuation are good overall. Corrections to be made are:

- Title—delete the space before the three ellipsis points.
- Para 3—sentence 2: as a cuckoo clock is

an inanimate object, ‘cheerful voice’ would be better written as ‘cheerful sound’

- Para 3—sentence 2: replace ‘gloomy night’ with ‘gloom’. The reader already knows it’s night time.
- Para 3—tighten sentence 3 up by deleting the unnecessary ‘But’ and rewriting it as: ‘When nothing stirred...’
- Para 3—sentence 5: ‘statue-like’ would be better written as ‘still as a statue’
- Para 3—final sentence would be better written as: ‘...and carefully placed them on the table.’
- Para 4—sentence 2. ‘brightness from behind’ would be better written as ‘a light from behind’
- Para 5—final sentence: As it is some time since you introduced the headlamp into the story, I recommend you delete the unnecessary adjective ‘tiny’ and rewrite lamp as ‘headlamp’
- Para 8—replace the comma with a full stop. Then write “I managed to lock myself out” as a new sentence.

Apart from the above recommendations, this is an excellent effort, Clare. I look forward to receiving more entries from you.

Level Two

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, on a current social or moral issue. Present a sensitive Christian view of the subject, although it isn’t essential to use Bible references or even use the word ‘Christian’. 200-250 words.

General Comments

The opportunity we have to write letters to editors which can be published in newspapers and magazines is a privilege we should make use of in our relatively free and democratic society here in New Zealand. The

letters give us the opportunity to express our views or opinions on a wide range of subjects.

As Christian writers we should be encouraged to use this forum as an effective way of getting our viewpoint across—free of charge—to thousands of readers we couldn't reach in any other way. (The NZ Herald circulation for November 2014 was 144,157.)

Writing letters to the editor, however, requires certain skills and there are rules and procedures we need to follow.

- Letters need to be clear, concise, challenging, and on current topics.
- Keep to the rules of the newspaper. Full details are required and *nom de plumes* are not accepted. Letters are usually restricted to 200 words.
- Address only one topic or issue. Don't try to set the world aright in one go.
- Capture the reader's attention in your opening statement and make sure your topic is obvious.
- Keep the tone positive and polite. Address the issue, not the person. Never send off your letter in the heat of the moment.
- Don't preach or use 'Christianese' language.
- Your conclusion should bring together your ideas and leave the reader provoked and challenged.

I received five entries and found judging difficult because some of the writers did not adhere to the requirements of the topic. The letter had to deal with a social or moral issue, and with a sensitive Christian view of the subject.

First Place



Keith Willis

of Kaukapakapa

To Live Is To Die

It was recently reported that Sam, the elderly Chimp at Wellington Zoo, had died. The Zoo Manager said, "Sam's heart condition was having an impact on his health and there was no further possibility of improving his overall welfare. Animal welfare is our top priority, so the decision to euthanize Sam was made in his best interests."

Yet this Zoo manager would be in jail if he extended the same loving care to his elderly terminally ill mother!

No matter that she may be in constant pain requiring her to be doped to the eyeballs.

No matter that her dementia may prevent her even recognising him.

No matter that her life savings, intended to be used for her grandchildren's university education, are being dissipated.

No matter that the government's health budget is being wasted whilst those funds are desperately needed for improving the health of young people.

Surely our priorities are askew. We seem to have an unhealthy attitude to death. It is after all a natural part of living. Church leaders condemn euthanasia but does our loving God really want us to keep a dying person alive when their quality of life is zero?

We share the Zoo keeper's attitude towards our much loved pets. When all hope of

recovery is gone we can't bear to have them suffering a lingering death. In fact it would be regarded as cruel to do so. Why then does the law not allow us to be equally loving towards our parents?

Keith Willis

Judge's Comments

Keith's letter starts off well and we have no doubt about his topic. His heading, which the editor may not use, is thought-provoking and attracts the reader straight away. Quoting the zoo manager's comment is effective and gives authenticity to the subject.

Keith then proceeds to argue his case for extending the same compassion the chimpanzee received to that of an elderly person who is terminally ill. His string of arguments starting with 'No matter...' is effective and drives home his point. He leads our thinking down a certain path by appealing to our emotions and sense of fair play. He then suggests that our priorities are askew.

Euthanasia is an extremely sensitive subject which is constantly in the news and the political arena. Here Keith debates the issue from both points of view. He acknowledges the Christian stand on the issue but also promotes the pragmatic argument by playing on our emotions and powers of reason. His use of questions is effective at the end of the last two paragraphs.

I commend Keith for his compelling arguments on a difficult subject—even though many of us will not agree with them. His letter is a good example of the way this forum, available to all of us, can be used to influence the thinking of others.

While 'Wellington Zoo' requires capital letters, 'Zoo Manager' should be in lower case letters.

I suggest a comma after the word 'elderly' in paragraph two.

The expression 'doped to the eyeballs' sounds coarse and disrespectful of the elderly person.

His four sentences starting with 'No matter...' could all be in one paragraph. A newspaper would not space them out like that.

Second Place



**Karen
Belk**

of Takapuna, Auckland

To the Editor,

Homelessness is a community problem although many deny there is a problem. "There is no homelessness in New Zealand," is a common statement. Others blame the government for causing the increase in the numbers of people being homeless therefore they should be the ones to fix the problem. Arguments abound that the homeless should get off their backsides and work but what about the children whom have to sleep in cars at night time because their families do not have suitable dwellings for them?

Instead of pointing the finger at others and judging them on what they are and are not doing maybe we should be asking ourselves what are we doing about the problem? But then that would mean we would have to look at ourselves and maybe move away from selfishness to selfless actions.

As a nation we need to come together in unity. Our country unites together when one of our sporting teams are taking on the world, so why can't we unite together as a nation and support our most vulnerable?

Poverty has and will always be with us and right now this country is crying out for healing. Therefore we as a nation can't ignore the increasing number of homeless people in our nation. Eventually poverty and homelessness will affect us all. The wealth and health of our nation depends upon it. The health (spiritual, physical, emotional, financial) aspects of our people make a healthy nation.

Judge's Comments

Congratulations Karen. I've awarded you second place because you chose a topic for your letter which is both a social and moral issue and you have attempted to deal with the subject in a sensitive Christian manner.

Your opening statement could be improved. It needs to be straightforward. You can then proceed to give your points of view as to who is responsible and what can be done to solve the problem.

Karen challenges the role played by the government in the problem, as well as the homeless themselves, and the rest of us.

By using a series of questions, Karen draws the reader into her topic and makes her challenges personal.

I like the way she questions why we cannot unite as a nation to help the needy among us in the same way we can unite when it's a matter of national pride in sport. This is a valid argument.

There are several places where your letter could be improved:

Para 1: Your first sentences need to be re-arranged. I suggest you write 'Homelessness in New Zealand is a community problem. While many people may deny there is a problem, others blame the government...'

The word 'backsides' is colloquial and in this context would be better expressed as 'the homeless should make an effort to work'. There needs to be a comma after 'work'.

Replace 'children whom have to sleep' with 'children who have to sleep'.

Para 3: 'Our country unites together when one of our sporting teams are...' The 'are' should be 'is' as the subject of the verb is singular.

Para 4 needs restructuring. In the second sentence, you have used the word 'nation' twice. For better effect, replace the word 'nation' at the end of the sentence with 'communities'.

Place a comma after 'eventually'.

The final three sentences could be expressed more clearly and economically by saying, 'If solutions to the homeless problem are not found, then all aspects of the health and wealth of our nation will be affected.'

Even though it won't be published, you should include all your details for the editor to check your bona fides. Also, please include a word count as required by our competitions.

Third Place



**John
Lindsay**
of Christchurch

Tourists on NZ Roads

On Monday 3 May the driving of international visitors hit the headlines again. This time an American tourist appeared in the Kaikohe District Court charged with careless use of a motor vehicle causing the deaths of two local women.

It's alleged the tourist turned out of a side road onto the right hand lane of the highway, as he would if he were back home. But in New Zealand it was a fatal move.

Our behaviour on the road is deeply ingrained, as I found when I stepped in front of a car in Canada back in January. I knew I should be watching for traffic coming from my left, but I had not allowed for a local right turn rule and was too focussed on the pedestrian signals. Fortunately I escaped with minor injuries.

I support moves to give incoming tourists a brief quiz and review of our driving rules before they hire a vehicle, but it seems almost impossible to prevent the automatic reaction of a driver that puts a car on the wrong side of the road. How do we reduce these crashes? All of us, Kiwi drivers and visitors, must concentrate on our driving at all times.

And when we travel on foreign roads, as thousands of Kiwis do each year, let us follow the old principle: drive in their land as we would want them to drive in ours.

John Lindsay

Media Reference:
The Northern Advocate
3 May 2016

Judge's Comments

This is a well written letter but I was disappointed that John did not quite observe the requirements of the competition. At a stretch you could regard dangerous driving by foreigners as a social and moral issue, but I fail to see how you have presented a sensitive Christian view of the subject.

Nevertheless, your entry is a good example of a letter to the editor.

Your title is clear and your opening statement sets the scene for your comments and observations to follow.

Quoting your own experience of negligence in Canada adds weight to your criticism of foreign driving in our own country.

I like your principle at the end and your conclusion comes as a challenge to us all.

John's letter is well written and there is little to correct. He includes his personal details as required by an editor. There is no word count.

Para 1: The date at the start sounds better if you write it as... On Monday, May 3,

Para 2: Put a comma after 'New Zealand'.

Level Three

**Judge:
Ruth Linton**

Requirement: PERSONAL TESTIMONY—In a maximum of 500 words write a personal testimony of 'How I overcame ...', or 'What I learned when ...'

General Comments

Thank you to the nine people who sent excellent entries for this competition. I enjoyed reading them all and found them encouraging. There was very little between the entries that were placed and those that missed out. Often it was because of small things like forgetting to include a word count or using the incorrect font. At Level Three these things should be a 'given'. Please note too that NZ spelling of all right is still in two words with 'alright' being the American version—though I suspect that may change in the next few years. Make sure your computer spell check is set on NZ English.

A personal testimony is just that—a personal affirmation of the goodness of God in your life. Scripture should be used to emphasise the lesson learned but the story is the most important ingredient. Bible verses can be woven in throughout the story or inserted strategically to illustrate and endorse a point of learning. Bible references are best in brackets or as footnotes but the source should be acknowledged. The danger is using the

scriptures to teach or preach rather than illustrate. A testimony is a story not a sermon.

As always the introduction needs to capture the reader's attention; the conclusion should tie the thoughts together into a satisfying whole and often links to the introduction. It is also a good idea to provide your own title, making it as interest-grabbing as possible. The competition theme (How I overcame...) can be included as a subtitle if you wish.

The entries covered a good range of topics from those dealing with everyday frustrations and weaknesses to those with more spectacular interventions of God. In the finish, a lively style of writing is what gives a testimony impact.

First Place



**Judith
Powell**
of Oxford

The Lesson of the Sheets and the Kenwood Mixer

Many years ago at Sunday School I learned a verse from John's book in the Bible; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Sadly, although my head accepted the words and knew God loved me my heart was less sure. I felt that because I was such a tiny part of that world God loves I was not of great importance. No matter what my head told me my heart felt that my problems were too minor for God to worry about. After all, there was a world full of people with greater problems all more urgent and desperate than mine. I lived in a beautiful country, in a house with a roof that didn't leak, with family who loved me.

God used a fun activity at a Ladies Group and a casual comment to teach me His truth in a way that reached my heart and my mind.

The game we played involved tearing pictures and words of things we would like from newspapers and magazines. We stuck our pieces on a sheet of paper and then shared our choices. I have no recollection of why we did it but I remember I glued a picture of a Kenwood mixer on my sheet of paper.

I told the ladies how I had never had a mixer. Our children and I mixed cakes and biscuits by hand with a spoon. Once we even beat egg whites for marshmallow topping with a hand beater, taking turns until at last it thickened.

A few days after the Ladies meeting as I was hanging washing on the line I noticed some sheets were getting thin. As I chattered to God I mentioned, "I'll soon need new sheets, these ones are wearing out." I only commented; I did not ask for any sheets.

The very next weekend we visited my mother-in-law. We were chatting about many things. During the conversation she asked if I would like the Kenwood mixer she had received as a wedding present. She had bought herself a new food processor. A short while later Mum P. told me she had been tidying her airing cupboard and had some sheets she didn't need. Would I like them? Of course I accepted those as well.

We drove home amazed, with Kenwood mixer and double sheets. I hadn't asked God for either but I had been given both. I learned then that God knows what is happening in our lives. He likes us to ask, but even if we don't He loves to give us what we want. I learned I am important to

my Heavenly Father. Every time I used the sheets or the mixer they were a reminder that God has time for me. He loves me and knows even the smallest details about me.

Judge's Comments

Judith's title caught my attention straight away. What was the connection between a cake mixer and bed sheets? I wondered. As the testimony progressed it all became clear! The Lord's provision of everyday items was very encouraging.

This was Judith's first entry at this level and is well-deserving of a placing even though there were a few improvements to be made.

In the first paragraph the words 'John's book in the Bible' could simply be replaced with 'the Bible' in this Christian context. Also a comma after the words 'my head accepted the words...God loved me', as it then emphasises the last phrase '...but my heart was less sure'.

In paragraph four replace '...by hand with a spoon' with 'by hand using a spoon' and insert 'only' before 'a hand beater' in the second sentence.

In paragraph five use a full stop after "I'll soon need new sheets" and make a new sentence beginning with 'These...'

Delete 'P' from Mum's name in paragraph six. We all know who is meant.

Finally, the tense in the sentence, in paragraph seven, beginning with 'Every time I used... should be altered to fit the sentences immediately before and after it. To do this change 'used' to 'use' and 'were' to 'are'.

A great first entry Judith! I look forward to many more.

Second Place Equal



**Deborah
McDermott**
of Waiuku

How I Overcame the Fear of Death

Sean and I had been married for six months when he took up the well-paid position of Resident Engineer at Dalny mine, Zimbabwe. I was thrilled we were at last earning enough to make something of our lives. Sean was also happy, but his attitude suddenly changed. He looked worried; scared even. After some persistent probing on my part, he finally told me he'd been having nightmares of the mine-shaft collapsing and crushing him to death.

My blood ran cold! I was aware of the dangers miners face. I was also a Christian who believed God can speak to us through dreams. What if this wasn't just a recurring nightmare? What if it came true? Swallowing, I pulled myself together and suggested we pray about it. We both felt better afterwards, but for me this was the beginning of a spiritual battle with the fear of death.

The nature of Sean's job meant he was often unexpectedly detained at work. This wouldn't have been an issue had he been able to phone me from underground. Instead, I'd sit watching the clock, thinking the worst had happened. By the time he arrived home safe and sound, I didn't know whether to feel relieved, hurt or angry. Unfortunately, it was usually the latter. I was in such turmoil over the possibility of losing Sean—so afraid of death! I needn't have been, though, for God kept him safe.

When we left Dalny two years later, I thought my fear of losing Sean would leave me too, but I was wrong. If anything it became worse and drove me to become a desperate, possessive, manipulative woman who idolised her husband to the exclusion of all else—even God.

Three years passed and suddenly the thing I feared was imminent. Sean was critically ill with an obstruction in the bowel that had not been diagnosed in time. His stomach was so swollen from not being able to pass anything and he hadn't eaten for days. He needed surgery, but I knew it was too late. He was going to die and I didn't know how I would manage to bring up Daniel and Peter alone.

I think it was the thought of our two little boys that brought me to my senses. Sean was not my possession; he was God's. And just as we'd dedicated our children to the Lord, so I too needed to surrender my husband to God and trust him with the outcome.

"Please, Jesus, help me to give Sean back to you!" I wept.

The sense of freedom was almost imperceptible at first, but as the day wore on I knew God had replaced my fear of death with his peace and the assurance that my identity and security are in him alone.

As it turned out, Sean and I enjoyed ten more happy years together. Never again did the fear of death come between us. My surrender to God had brought true life, security and freedom to our marriage.

Judge's Comments

Well done, Debbie for a clear and carefully written testimony of God's support in your life. The main change I recommend is replacing 'so swollen' in the second sentence

of paragraph five with a more emotive word, such as 'extremely', 'terribly' or 'dangerously swollen'. Another suggestion to lift the tone slightly would be to check the beginning sentence of each paragraph. Paragraph two is excellent whereas paragraphs one, three and four tend to be ordinary.

Well done for your use of direct speech in paragraph seven. Always a good move! Interestingly, no scripture was quoted or referred to, yet a sense of God's support is apparent throughout.

Thank you for writing on a topic which I know many people struggle with at some stage during their life.

Second Place Equal



**Vicki
Nogaj**
of Tauranga

The Long Way Round

When I was diagnosed with *Graves' disease*, an auto-immune hyper-thyroid condition, I didn't take it too seriously. I believed God would heal me and life would continue as before. God had a different journey in mind...

Prior to my diagnosis we were involved in a sudden church split in which my husband and I were part of the leadership. I had been running the children's church and we were about to oversee the youth group one week, then the next we were churchless and grieving the loss of our 'family' and support network. I didn't realise I had become wrapped up in the 'doing' of Christianity and had lost the sense of 'being' in relationship with my Father until it was all stripped away. I was too busy to notice the symptoms creeping up like a

silent stalker. It wasn't until I collapsed at the gym, had a minor fender bender and was rushed into ED after a coffee date, that I realised my body was trying to get my attention.

I broke out in hives after two weeks of being on my medication which lasted for three months and it felt like being bitten by hundreds of mosquitos with no relief. I had a breakdown when I was given two options: Surgery or drink a cocktail of radiated iodine and go into isolation. I refused both, so they bought me some time, prescribing a rarely used medication I had to apply for special permission to use. It had a one year time limit.

I begged God to heal me; terrified of the alternative. He gave me two words: TRUST and SURRENDER. Be led by the Shepherd even if it took me through the 'valley of the shadow of death'. To relinquish my expectations, my fears and my control to the One who sees beyond the hills. All I needed to do was raise my eyes to the hills (Psalm 121) but I wanted to know what was beyond the hills. This was my challenge.

I went up for prayer every chance I got, exercised my faith, put on my armour, took up my cross, rebuked the devil, renounced all manner of things and declared all biblical promises of healing over my body until I was convinced I was healed. My specialist, also convinced, took me off my medication after 10 months. The symptoms returned and my year was up. I had to decide or risk liver failure. I picked what I thought was the 'safer' option: Surgery. Surely, I would sail through carried on the wings of heartfelt prayers?

I felt uplifted by every prayer as I went through the fire, He was there, as I felt the waters threaten to drown my hope, He was there. When everything that could go wrong, did, I chose to trust Him for each

minute of each day. As I surrendered, I emerged free and whole and changed.

Three years later I am healed. I have not caught a single virus or infection since I recovered. I am returned to my First Love, am at peace and rest.

Judge's Comments

Although there are a few errors in this testimony, the story was told in such a gripping way it, and the message it contained, was so important I felt it deserved a placing.

The title was an excellent summation of the narrative and reminded me how often, as Christians, we are slow to apply what God says to our life.

In most instances my suggestions are to improve the story rather than correct errors. I have suggested shorter sentences in several places as they heighten tension in the narrative. For example, split the first sentence of paragraph three after 'medication' and begin a new sentence with 'This'. In paragraph five split the first sentence after 'I got' and begin the next with 'I exercised...' as this emphasises the effort put into seeking healing.

Finally, in paragraph seven I would split the first sentence into three thus: 'I did feel uplifted by every prayer (the word change links it back to the last paragraph). As I went through the fire, He was there. As I felt the waters threaten ...' This change highlights the scripture referred to (Isaiah 43) which should also have been acknowledged with a footnote. The same could be said about the words 'valley of the shadow of death' in paragraph four, which come from Psalm 23.

In the final paragraph insert the word 'and' (omitting the comma) after 'First Love' as it is a second equally-important outcome.

I commend Vicki for such an honest and up-building testimony of a difficult journey.

Competitions for August 2016

Due by July 10th

EMAIL ENTRY AS AN ATTACHMENT, COMPLETE WITH WORD COUNT AND YOUR NAME.

Font: Times New Roman, 11 pt. **Heading:** Bold, 14 pt. **Line spacing:** single.

Spacing between Paragraphs: 6 pt. **Paragraph Indentation:** None.

Send a high resolution photo of yourself in the event you are awarded a place.

NB: If you are not sure what level you're on, email the editor at sddp@xtra.co.nz

Level One—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE—Interview someone who is making a real difference in your community. Then, with their permission, write a short newspaper article about them. You may include a photo with your entry if you wish. 350 words.

Email entry to: Debbie McDermott at: sddp@xtra.co.nz



Debbie

Level Two—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: WRITING FOR CHILDREN—Write a story for children, telling about an event in your childhood which was and still is meaningful to you, and what you learned from it. (Avoid any moralising though). This should be aimed at children between ages 5-8, so make sure the language and style is appropriate. 250-300 words.

Email entry to: Janice Gillgren at: jangill1359@gmail.com



Janice

Level Three—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: POETRY—Write a poem about the change of seasons in New Zealand. Encourage the reader to use their imagination by using 'images' based on our five senses. Maximum of five stanzas and 20 lines. Rhythm (based on number of syllables and their patterns of accent) and a rhyming pattern required. (*Resource article: Five Senses in Poetry by Tynea Lewis, Page 8 The Christian Writer, Dec 14-Jan 15: Virtual Writing by Janice Gillgren, Page 7 The Christian Writer, Dec 2013-Jan 2014.*)

Email entry to: Ruth Linton at: ruthlinton2015@gmail.com



Ruth

Under 20s—for members 7-19 years old

Requirement: What are three everyday problems that bother you and what can you do about them? (Opinion piece.) 250 words.

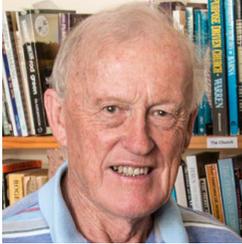
Email entry to: Vicki Nogaj at: nogaj@vodafone.co.nz



Vicki



NZ CHRISTIAN
writers



GEORGE BRYANT is a prolific Christian author and one of New Zealand's leading writers on social issues. He has written over 30 books and booklets about people in society, edited many volumes

and written numerous articles, based on his experiences as a teacher, preacher, public speaker, politician and social worker. His 18th book, a biography, was published in March.

He is also a publisher (DayStar Books) which produces work that inspires and gives hope. George holds a number of qualifications in education, theology and management, including a Master's degree in English. A former high school principal, he is also an ordained Christian minister and active member of many social organisations. He lives in Tauranga.

www.GeorgeBryant.co.nz