

Issue 8
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Inside Life

Conquering *your* Everests

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ISSUE :



Inside Life

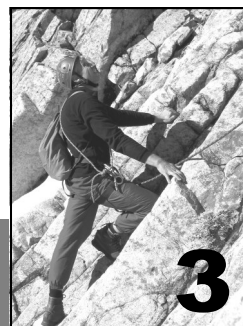
A magazine of understanding

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Inside Life is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, **Inside Life** seeks to delve inside the marvellous mystery that is life, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?

Inside Life seeks insight and answers to life’s deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help and encouragement for successful living in today’s fast-moving world.

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Our Cover:

“Brave hearts dare to climb the steep”. A climber facing a sheer wall of rock reflects the determination Sir Edmund Hillary had in being the first man ever to scale the world’s highest mountain. The same qualities that led Hillary to the top can be used by anybody to face the personal challenges or “Everests” each of us experiences in life.

Cover image © Elena Buetler; stockxchg.com

Page 3: The statue of Sir Edmund Hillary permanently gazing towards New Zealand’s highest peak, Aoraki/Mount Cook © Jonathan Keelty

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Conquering your Everest

By Rex Morgan

The death of Sir Edmund Hillary in January 2008 gave rise to a huge outpouring of respect and admiration for this outstanding New Zealander. Sir Edmund is remembered for qualities such as his courage in the face of obstacles, his grit, persistence and dogged determination, his generous humanitarian service to the people of Nepal, and perhaps most of all his remarkable humility.

I was privileged some years ago to interview Sir Edmund in his Remuera home for a magazine article. Our conversation focused on lessons we can all learn from the qualities that took him to the summit of the world.

The accomplished mountaineer spoke of Everests other than the one he had conquered – Everests that each of us faces in life. “Without a strong inclination to overcome and achieve, you simply wouldn’t try to climb Everest”, he pointed out. “It’s a tedious, miserable slog. But if you persist and get to the top, there’s a great

feeling of satisfaction. In life I think that everyone is battling a mountain like Everest, and the key to success is much the same.”

Different kinds of Everests

Are you battling an Everest in your life? What did Sir Edmund mean by this? He went on to explain: “Mountaineering is just a very minor thing as far as the world is concerned – there are far more important challenges in life than climbing mountains. I believe most of the mountains left to climb now are social problems. Human relationships and the overcoming of problems in the social field are far more important than physical challenges – climbing mountains, crossing Antarctica and so on. The tougher challenges that exist are the dealings with problems such as social disruption and war. Whereas most of us can have little impact on whether nations drop bombs on each other, individually we should try to deal with the problems in our

immediate circle and not give up hope, doing our best to create a good environment around us.”

“In life I think that everyone is battling a mountain like Everest, and the key to success is much the same.”
— Sir Edmund Hillary

We all have our own mountains to climb, as nations and as individuals. Your personal Everest might be a serious health problem or disability, a daunting financial situation, difficulties with your boss or workmates, an unruly teenage child, a relationship on the rocks – the list goes on and on.

On the international level, Everest-like peaks confronting the world



include such scourges as warfare, poverty, crime, terrorism and weather disasters. There's not a lot we can do individually to fight these global troubles, but wouldn't it be great if the achievements of Sir Edmund would encourage us to face our personal problems with the courage and determination he exemplified?

An Explosion of Knowledge

In recent years human knowledge in science, communications, technology and almost every area of existence has grown exponentially. The worldwide web has provided an explosion of global knowledge, with billions of pages of information available to anyone with a computer, all sorted into subject order by search engines within just a few seconds.

"I believe most of the mountains left to climb now are social problems. Human relationships and overcoming problems in the social field are far more important than physical challenges"
— Sir Edmund Hillary

But in spite of these incredible advances in knowledge, there are just as many personal and national problems, challenges and disasters as there ever have been. Financial problems, drug and alcohol abuse, rapes, murders, stress, and political upheaval continue to abound. If we compare these troubles to mountains like Everest, we are surrounded by the Himalayas many times over!

We are *still* facing many of the same problems faced by the ancient Egyptians and Romans, and the procession of other empires and civilisations that have risen and fallen throughout the annals of history. What have we learned over the centuries?

"Climb Every Mountain"

The words of a famous song from "The Sound of Music" are very inspirational. *"Climb every mountain, search high and low, follow every byway, every path you know. Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow, till you find your dream. A dream that will need all the love you can give, every day of your life, for as long as you live..."*



These sentiments compare the experience of mountain climbing with the personal challenges we face. The goal of reaching a snow-clad summit is compared to the goal of reaching a destination in life. It might be the construction of a dream home, the maintenance of a satisfying marriage, a promotion at work, or a successful fight against a crippling health problem. The courage and determination shown by people like Sir Edmund Hillary can be applied in the realm of our personal lives to help us overcome obstacles like this, and to achieve our dreams.

Medical advances have been enormous, but our hospitals are still full to overflowing. Commercial and economic knowledge has surged ahead, but we still have company collapses and recessions.

Indeed, the knowledge explosion has actually spawned new and different problems. Thanks to the amazing advances in computer technology we can now add potentially catastrophic new plagues to the list besetting humanity – things like internet fraud, hacking, viruses, phishing, and cyber pornography.

Why hasn't the knowledge explosion made inroads into the troubles facing us? The reason is that these problems are not simply *physical* challenges. They include aspects that stem from *inside* us, from our attitudes, desires and moral weaknesses, in other words, our "human nature". They are matters of the "heart" or "spirit", and internal issues like this can't be fixed with purely *physical* knowledge.

The Core of the Problem

At the root of the problem is "human nature", the way that normal human beings think and act, which basically stems from self interest.

Peter Hillary's Perspective

Sir Edmund Hillary's son Peter made an interesting comment on the 50th anniversary of his father's epic climb. He remarked that he felt there was too much focus on the physical climb and that we should rather reflect on the *meaning* behind that first ascent. *The NZ Herald* of 27 May, 2003 quoted Peter as saying: "More than the actual climb, we should be celebrating what the achievement represents – reaching a distant and difficult goal, overcoming the seemingly impossible, stepping out into the unknown."

Viewed from this perspective, the achievement is something we can incorporate in our own lives. All of us have times when we step out into the unknown, doggedly strive to reach a goal, and need to overcome odds which seem to be impossible. At times like this we need to call upon inner qualities such as those exemplified so brilliantly by Sir Edmund.

It's only very rarely that a person of the calibre of Sir Edmund Hillary strides on the world stage, with the unique mix of skills and courage he possessed. But we can all learn from the example he set and strive to apply the same sort of qualities in conquering the individual Everests we face.



Physical mountains can be climbed, material challenges of all types can be overcome, but when it comes to solving problems involving *people*, it is a different matter. When human nature comes to the fore, people are motivated by deep inner, often selfish inclinations, not always seeking the common good.

What is the answer to these inner, spiritual Everests that revolve around human nature? Clearly physical knowledge isn't enough. No matter how much we learn, it is not solving the deeper problems. Something is missing. We need help from somewhere.

Thankfully, there is a place where help can be found. God, the one who created human beings, has inspired a guidebook that provides spiritual knowledge to solve our inner problems. It's called the Bible.

Notice an example concerning one of mankind's most destructive recurring problems – our chronic tendency towards warfare. "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" asks one of the Bible writers, who then goes on to give the answer: "Don't they come from your desires...? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight."¹

Wars are caused by *inner* attitudes such as lust or greed, stemming from inside the human character and will. These inner thoughts and desires come out in the open as physical acts of warfare.

The Only Lasting Answer

So the only real lasting answer to warfare would have to entail a change in the heart or mind of human beings – a change in our "human nature".

How can that happen? Each of us could try our best to be loving, kind, gentle and peaceable all the time. That would be an immense help, but even the most optimistic of us wouldn't expect such a transformation is very likely to happen! However, since we're talking of inner, spiritual values, let's look at what the Bible says about the answer to human nature, the solution to the spiritual Everests facing the world.

The Bible explains that after his

The Spirit Shines through Tragedy

In March 2008, seven young people lost their lives in a tragic canyoning accident in the central North Island. Six pupils and a teacher from Elim Christian College in Howick drowned when the Mangatepopo River rose dramatically in flash floods.

The nation looked on with amazement and respect as the parents of the dead youngsters reacted not with the bitterness, anger and even hate which could have been expected as a "natural" response, but rather with an atmosphere of kindness and forgiveness. The College, led by principal Murray Burton, reacted with the type of extraordinary love and grace which demonstrate the Holy Spirit in action. Mr Burton's initial response to the tragedy was recorded as: "The Christian faith is central to all that we do. It is in times like this when you measure how strong the faith is. It has taken a huge battering but we have an unwavering trust in God." Rather than giving vent to attitudes of blame, the families of the victims, although distraught with pain, were seen embracing and comforting the staff and guides responsible for the ill-fated trip.

Later it emerged that one of the students who died was Special Olympian Tom Hsu, 16, who had cerebral palsy. His teacher, Tony McClean, tried to save Tom by tying himself to the student, in an attempt to pull them both to shore. However, Tom weighed down his partner and they both tragically died in the rapids. In a reflection of Jesus' words that "there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another", this gallant teacher put the life of his disabled pupil before his own. Here was another demonstration of the selfless love that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also comforts Jesus' followers with God-given wisdom and promises for the future. The Christian families of the Mangatepopo victims realise that this is not the end for Tom, Tony and the other casualties. The Bible assures us that those who have the Holy Spirit will inherit eternal life.

short life in Palestine ending in his crucifixion, before Jesus went back to heaven he promised to send a "Comforter" or "Helper" to be with his followers.² This was a reference to the Holy Spirit, who has the power to change our human nature.

A few days after Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit came and entered the disciples, causing their lives to be transformed from the inside out. The Bible describes some amazing changes that occurred in their lives, and affirms that the Holy Spirit is still available today. This Spirit works inside the minds and hearts, the deep inner thoughts and attitudes, of Christians, instilling love in them,³ and helping them display qualities such as joy, peace, patience and kindness.⁴

Climbing a physical mountain like Everest depends on physical equipment, such as ice axes, boots and crampons. Climbing a mental, emotional, moral or spiritual mountain (such as drug abuse, marital strife, overweight, and financial traumas) necessitates moral or spiritual equipment, involving aspects of character, attitudes and inner qualities. This help is provided by the Holy Spirit.

Would you like some *spiritual* help to get you over the "Everests" you face? The Holy Spirit is available to everybody, and remarkably this encouraging and powerful gift is absolutely *free*! If you would like to know more about the Holy Spirit, why not visit a nearby church this weekend? Or please feel free to write to us and request our article on "The Holy Spirit".

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1. James 4:1-2
2. John 14:26
3. Romans 5:5
4. Galatians 5:22

Rex Morgan, the editor of "Inside Life", and his wife Marilyn live on Auckland's North Shore. Rex has worked in office administration and Christian ministry for over 30 years and has contributed articles to a number of international publications. Rex can be contacted at: rex@wgc.org.nz.



For Every Hill...

For every hill I've had to climb,
For every stone that bruised my feet,
For all the blood and sweat and grime,
For blinding storms and burning heat,
My heart sings but a grateful song...
These were the things that made me strong.

For all the heartaches and the tears,
For all the anguish and the pain,
And for the hopes that lived in vain,
I do give thanks, for now I know
These were the things that helped me grow.

It's not the softer things of life,
Which stimulate one's will to strive;
But bleak adversity and strife
Do most to keep one's will alive.
Over rose-strewn paths the weaklings creep,
But brave hearts dare to climb the steep.

— Author Unknown

The pursuit of **EXCELLENCE**



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The Olympic Games are always a time of great excitement, even if you're not a mad sports fan.

The founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre De Coubertin, said, "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part. Just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle."

This is a timely occasion to take a look at the difference between competition and the quest for excellence.

In our competitive culture it's easy to get trapped into a competitive mindset - that how good, effective, or successful we are is determined by how we measure up against other people's performances.

Most of us don't come first. Most of the time. We can't. No matter how good we are.

The opportunity for Olympic athletes to line up for their events is a culmination of years of training, display cases filled with trophies and

ribbons, qualifying races, heats, championships, and finally placing among the world's super elite. And only one can come first. It's simple mathematics.

Are the rest "losers"? Are they failures? Are they anything less than outstanding athletes?

Increasingly, teams are providing support for their athletes by counselling them about life after the big race or the grand final. And what they're telling them is that there's more to life and success than coming first.

Excellence

We can't all come first and we can't all be the best. But we can succeed. We can achieve. We can do our best. We can excel: academically, personally, athletically, morally, and spiritually.

Competition is focused on events, moments, circumstances. Excellence is enduring: it's a quality, a principle, a quest, a journey.

Competition focuses on our efforts in comparison with others at a moment

in time. Excellence invites us to challenge ourselves every day.

Olympic performances - like so many athletic endeavours - can motivate us to achievement and excellence. Indeed, the sporting arena attracts us not simply for the winning and losing (proven by the fact that we continue to go along to watch our teams even when they get beaten week after week!), but for the displays of excellence from both winners and losers.

It's important we not confuse achievement and excellence with gold medals and first places.

Life is not a contest. True, there are contests we have to (or choose to) take up in the course of life. But it's not about winners and losers, or first and second.

Families are not made strong by competing against each other. Smart work teams long ago rejected the notion of individuals competing against each other as a means of "bringing out the best".

Fear of failure

Competitive cultures naturally breed a fear of failure - and although that can be a motivator it's hardly a healthy one to live by.

As Anthony Robbins points out in his best selling book, *Awaken the Giant Within*, success and achievement often elude us because we focus on our fears of failure rather than on achieving our goals. And that's what so often happens when we pursue our goals on a competitive basis.

A culture that suggests, "my success requires your failure" is ultimately a

culture that will fail to bring out the best in people. It will encourage a self-confidence that depends on winning rather than achievement or improvement. It will encourage independence rather than interdependence. It will focus validation and recognition on a narrow rather than broad range of skills and qualities. The anthropologist Jules Henry said that "a competitive culture endures by tearing people down".

The view that competition is what makes us succeed and achieve is a myth. "It is widely assumed that

competition boosts achievement and brings out the best in us," wrote Alfie Kohn in his book, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*. "Many people who make such claims, however, have simply confused success with competition. This is easy to do in a society as wedded to winning as ours. But in fact the two concepts are quite different: I can succeed in knitting a scarf or writing a book without ever worrying whether it is better than yours. Or I can work with you - say, to write a report or build a house."

An Olympian Dilemma

The sporting arena is often used as a metaphor for the pursuit of excellence. And the Olympic Games are promoted as the zenith of that pursuit. The Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter state: "The ideals of the Games go far beyond mere athletic endeavour. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

"The goal of Olympism is to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. To this effect, the Olympic Movement engages, alone or in cooperation with other organizations and within the limits of its means, in actions to promote peace.

"The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play."

Tarnished

But these admirable aspirations have been tarnished in the face of the demands of professionalism and sponsorship. The pressures on athletes and teams to perform in order to justify sponsorship have seen growing allegations and concern about drug-enhanced performances. Places on national teams are being decided in court cases. Organisation of the Games has been clouded by accusations of deceit, corruption and self-promotion. This year, the journey of the Olympic torch towards China was seriously disrupted by anti-China demonstrations in a number of countries. And there were threats of a boycott to protest the Chinese human rights record.

"Despite the huge world-wide attraction to the [Olympic] Games and what they are perceived to represent, they have failed dismally in recent years to celebrate and reinforce the values which are embedded in their history," said Professor John Milton-Smith, Deputy-Chancellor of Australia's Curtin University, in 2000.

He argued: "The search for sponsorship and patronage by sports people themselves has led to a focus on commercialism which is inconsistent with the Olympic tradition. As a source of moral inspiration, the Games are in steady decline."

In the Games of 2008 and beyond, we can only hope the spirit of excellence the Olympics strives to represent will overwhelm the potential political sideshows. May our enjoyment of the Games focus on the examples of true excellence displayed and not only on the gold medals achieved.



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Kohn cites numerous studies that expose the myth of competition, from 122 classroom studies across 60 years that showed in 65 cases cooperation promoted higher achievement than competition (eight found the reverse and 36 no significant difference) to Robert Helmreich's 1970s studies of professionals that showed in every case "a significant negative correlation between competition and achievement".

As Kohn observes, "trying to do well and trying to beat others are really two different things".

A political campaign is perhaps a most obvious example of this. But notice how inevitably upon "winning" - after months of attacking anyone with a different viewpoint or stance - the victor will immediately reject the competitive approach and say that "it's important that we now all work together ...". Right!

Win/Win

Competitive struggle can be entertaining and rewarding. But it can also be destructive. The

Shared triumph

A few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-metre dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry.

They slowed down and looked over their shoulders. Then they all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better". Then, all nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. As someone said: "We should all be that disabled!" We know there's more to life than winning. But sometimes we let it get in the way of excellence.

"survival of the fittest" may be accepted in evolutionary theory, but it's no way to live. Besides, there's a big difference between survival and living.

Stephen Covey promoted the concept of "win-win" in his bestseller,

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

"Win/Win sees life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. Most people tend to think in terms of dichotomies: strong or weak, hardball or softball, win or lose. But that kind of thinking is fundamentally flawed. It's based on power and position rather than on principle. Win/Win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one's person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. Win/Win is a belief in the Third Alternative. It's not your way or my way; it's a better way, a higher way."

It's hardly a contemporary wisdom; through the ages people have understood that first place is not necessarily the best place.

Lao-Tse, the sixth century BC Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, said this: "I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men."

The Golden Rule tells us: "Do unto others as you would have them do to



The Search for Excellence

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." – Aristotle

"Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in the hours, weeks, months and years they spend preparing for it. The victorious performance itself is merely the demonstration of their championship character" – T. Alan Armstrong

"Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude." – Ralph Marston

"The noblest search is the search for excellence." – Lyndon B. Johnson

"If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude." – Colin Powell

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." – King Solomon

you." As someone said, "We've all learned the Golden Rule, now all we have to do is live it".

Pursuit of excellence

An article in the *Australian Financial Review* noted the work of management researcher Jim Collins, who invested nearly a million dollars of his own money in a five-year research project examining the performance of America's corporate leaders. The results of his research produced "a picture of the successful CEO," Aaron Patrick wrote.

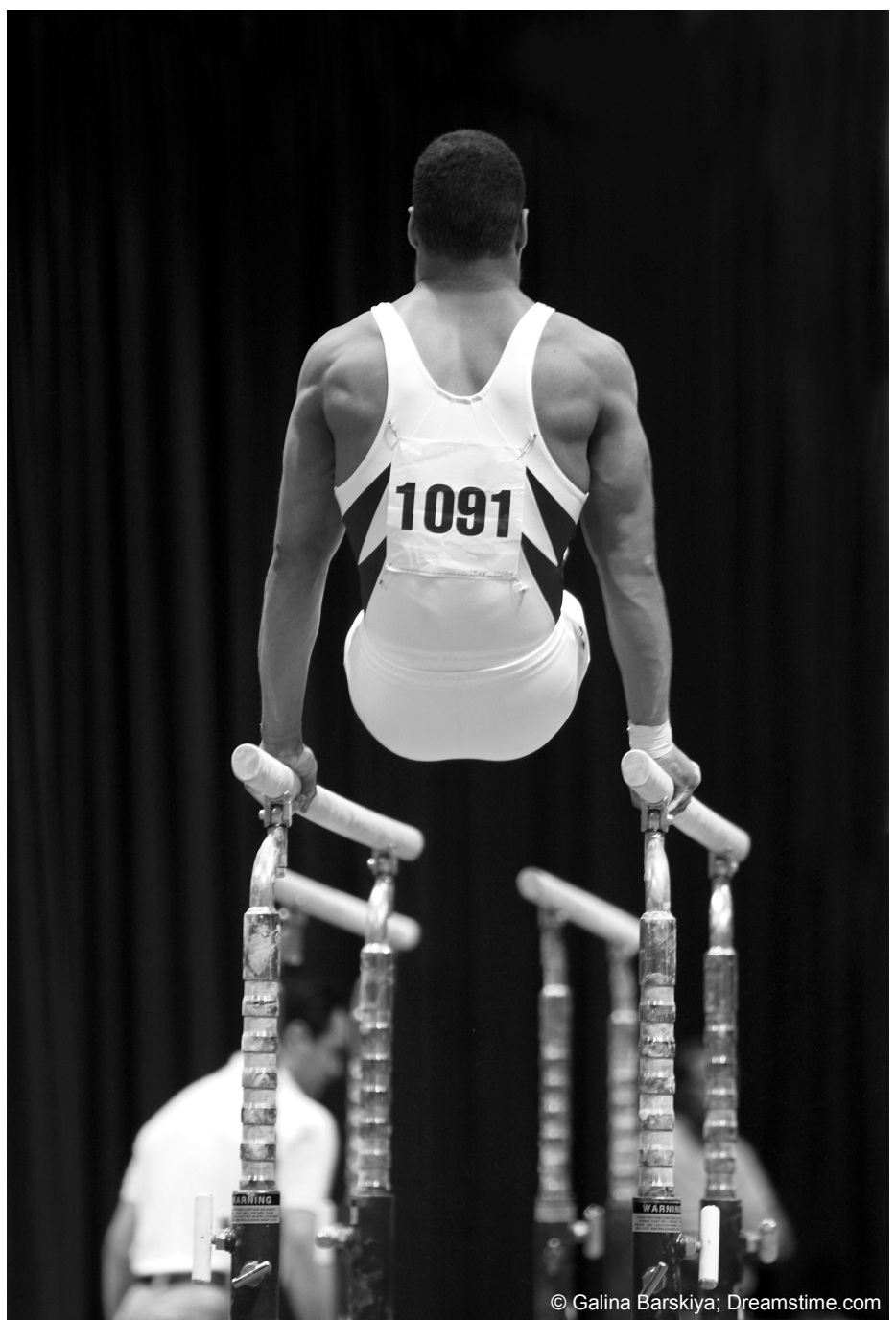
The picture?

"A person with an inherent belief in the pursuit of excellence."

Winning is not the same as success. Being the highest paid is not the same as being the most valuable. Coming second does not mean you lost. Winning is neither everything nor the only thing.

Excellence is, essentially, about who we really are. It's about how and why we do the things we do with our life.

As the long-term perspective of cooperation is preferable to the fleeting attitude of competition, so excellence is a lifetime journey that outweighs in value the temporary triumph of victory. Let's focus on cooperation rather than competition, and strive for excellence rather than winning. Then we will really find the "gold".



“Please HOLD ...”



By Aub Warren

"Hello, and thank you for calling God.

"If your call is urgent, please press 1. If you have a request, press 2. If you have a complaint, press 3. If you would like God to explain something, press 4. If you would like to confess sin, press 5."

Four.

"Thank you for calling God's explanations line. God is very busy with many other calls right now, but your call is important so please hold. God will be with you shortly."

Harps begin to play softly. The music is one of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons".

"Thank you for holding. Did you know God has recorded many of his explanations in a book? It's available in hundreds of languages and styles. This book took hundreds of years to write, involved more than 40 human authors and addresses many of the issues human beings face in today's world. It's available from all good bookstores. Just ask for *The Book*."

The harps return. The season has changed.

"Thank you for holding. God's explanation line is one of the busiest services he provides. Last year he handled more calls than McDonald's sold hamburgers. This growing volume of requests for explanations

is why around 2000 years ago God created the church. The church is now established around the world and was established to share the good news of what God has done. Check out the church today."

More harps. It's now Spring.

"We're sorry God hasn't been able to respond to your call. But please don't hang up. Your call has been placed in a queue. Did you know God invented queues? They've proved very useful through the ages. Remember the animals going on to Noah's ark? That was God's idea. The Israelites' exodus from Egypt? Marching around Jericho? Next time you visit a theme park, remember God invented queues. God will be with you in a moment."

Harps. Summer.

"Hello."

A real voice!

"This is God's office. Please clearly state your name. If you have a frequent caller number, please state

that first. God will be with you in a moment."

0-0-3-1-7-7-1-4-6-9-3-3-8-0-6-3-5-7-5-9-1-2-4-8-7-3-4-8-3

"Hello?"

"God?"

"Yes."

"Look, this might be more of a complaint first, but what's the deal with the automated prayer line?"

"Do you like it?"

"Are you kidding? No way! Whoever heard of being put on hold by God?"

"So you don't like it?"

"No! It's ridiculous! God doesn't put people on hold!"

"Oh. I thought it might be good way to relate to people."

"What? How do you figure that?"

"Well, they put me on hold all the time."

Celebrating “Holland”

By Brenda Gordon

“Welcome to Holland” is an insightful essay written in 1987 by Emily Perl Kingsley about the experience of having a disabled child. All along you’d dreamed what it would be like to have a beautiful new healthy baby and had planned accordingly. Only the outcome was other than you’d hoped for. Rather like planning that dream trip to Tuscany, only to find that, when the plane landed, you were in another country. You’d read the guidebooks, learnt some Italian phrases, bought clothes suited for the season, only to have your hopes dashed.

meet people you never knew existed. The important thing is, you are not in an evil or dreadful place, just very different from what you’d planned. But after you’ve been there a while, you begin to discover that this new country has its compensations.

I understand exactly how Emily Kingsley must have felt. She’d had a Downs child. I had one with Williams Syndrome, a different genetic condition. The initial disappointment fades with time. You realize that if you spend your life mourning not experiencing “Italy”, you will never be free to enjoy the special things about “Holland”.

“I don’t know anything about Holland”, you protest. “I don’t want to stay!” But stay you must. You have no choice.

procedures for two non-interventionist parents whose two other sons had entered the world so easily. Adrian was delivered at 33½ weeks weighing not quite 1½ kilos and had to be incubated in the neonatal unit. His weight gain was slow, but after five weeks he was allowed to come home. During the first night he developed a strangulated bowel, vomited a stool and needed an operation to correct an inguinal hernia. There was a second hernia operation at six months and a third at 18 months.

“I Carried You”

About that time, because of Adrian’s failure to thrive, I was hospitalized with him so he could be bottle-fed on formula. At this time the paediatrician suggested that Adrian might have Williams Syndrome - a condition we’d never heard of. Armed with discouraging xeroxed photographs of not-very-attractive-looking children, he explained that Adrian’s elfin features, slow growth, and hypercalcaemia were symptomatic of a rare genetic condition, 1 in 7500, which results in retarded physical and intellectual development. The geneticist explained that the condition results



Eddie (left) and Adrian (right)

No Choice

“But I don’t know anything about Holland”, you protest. “I don’t want to stay!” But stay you must. You have no choice. You buy a new guidebook, learn new phrases, and

My third pregnancy, at age 40, came as a shock, as we had not planned to have more children. But my husband and I consoled ourselves that this would be the daughter I always wanted. Then complications introduced a raft of unwanted

That first year was hell for me. It was a time when I put God at arm’s length. I remember sitting on the bed shaking one time and saying, I can’t do this!

from the deletion of some genes on one of the 7th chromosome pair. She said she would prefer not to make a firm diagnosis until Adrian was at least 2 years old, giving us a faint hope that maybe the experts were wrong. But Adrian couldn't even smile until 9 months old - not a good sign.

That first year was hell for me. It was a time when I put God at arm's length. I remember sitting on the bed shaking one time and saying, I can't do this! The only way to survive was to give it all to God. This was the time described in the lines from *Footprints*:

"My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

God loves all people, but the ones he finds particularly irresistible are those who admit they are people with "special needs" and ask for his help.

He did this in many different ways, and still does. I had a guardian angel in a friend from church who would unexpectedly drop by at critical times. She would hang the washing on the line the way I do it, and she was the only visitor ever to vacuum my house.

We waited until Adrian was three to have his condition confirmed by a diagnostic fluorescence test on his chromosomes. I had well and truly landed in "Holland". He didn't walk until he was nearly four and started school with single-syllable sounds, although you wouldn't guess that now from his verbal self. He is 15, and if you were to meet him you would quickly know him and experience the love and affection that he radiates. And he is an effective evangelist! When he was seven, a teacher's aide sent home the following note:

"Today I came to school with a broken toe and couldn't wear my shoes in class. Adrian was very concerned and said to me, after giving me a big hug, 'Please God, give Rose toe big kiss, make better, Amen.' I was so touched, I thought I would share it with you. Nobody has ever said a prayer for me. It was so cute."

Mind-readers

One characteristic of "Williams people" is that they are mind-readers. Certainly they are empathetic. One of the members of the church I attend told me how one day she went to church feeling quite depressed and as soon as Adrian walked in the door he went to her and gave her a big hug. When my husband invites friends and colleagues home for dinner, Adrian often makes a point of thanking God for the meal and visitors, and usually gets everyone holding hands, generally to the wry amusement of non-Christian guests.

Adrian's best friend at high school, where he is mainstreamed, is a Down's boy called Eddie, who has quite severe speech difficulties, but they complement each other in their respective strengths and deficiencies. They also stick up for each other. They both attend swimming lessons after school with other special-needs friends. We mothers sit on the sidelines and watch, talk, and network with each other.

My husband says Adrian has taught him something important about God - that, just as Adrian as a special-needs child evokes our compassionate response, so people with *spiritual* "special needs", who are trapped in their self-destructive lifestyles, evoke God's concern. In most cases, such people, who started life as innocent children, were corrupted along the way. We all fit into this category to some degree or other, when you think about it.

Fortunately, God understands our condition and how it came about. He

loves all people, but the ones he finds particularly irresistible are those who admit they are people with "special needs" and ask for his help.

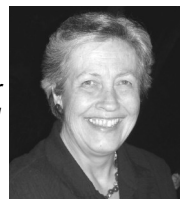
In a sense, this world is an incubator for the children of God, a kind of spiritual neonatal unit in which God sees helpless individuals fighting to survive. His heart is captured by our vulnerability. This explains why God is able to love the sinner. He is not put off by the spiritually retarded human condition. Rather, he is drawn to it, so as to alleviate it.


Even though you may not be exactly where you planned, you can still make the most of the trip.

I have been in "Holland" for 15 years. It has become home. Here I have met others whose plans changed like mine and who could share my experience. We have supported one another and some have become good friends. Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if I had landed in Italy as planned. Would life have been easier? Would it have been rewarding? Would I have learned some of the important lessons I treasure today?

The journey has indeed been challenging, and at times I would (and sometimes still do) protest in frustration and concern. But what is more important is what you make of your journey. Someone wisely said: "The will of God will never take you where the grace of God will not protect you." Even though you may not be exactly where you planned, you can still make the most of the trip.

Brenda Gordon lives in Wellington, with her husband, Dennis, and Adrian.





Claiming to be true



By Gael McInnes

All new product! Revolutionary! Greatest ever! Messages are constantly leaping out at us through the television, the internet, radio, magazines, billboards, and copious bundles of advertising flyers in the letterbox. The products assure us that they are new, improved, fantastic and capable of transforming our lives.

For only a few dollars we can have 'whiter teeth', 'cleaner clothes', be 'slimmer', or whatever. The latest tooth whitener, enzyme-packed cleaner, or 3-minute-a-day fitness programme is guaranteed to bring happiness, friends and the good life.

But talk is cheap, and all too often we realize the boasts are hollow and far from the truth. Our teeth are still yellow, the stain is still visible. You haven't lost the guaranteed 10 kilos in 10 days, and what's more, you are out of pocket!

We are very gullible, we humans, and all too quick to part with our money. Unfortunately, many people are taken advantage of, particularly the elderly. Recently there has been publicity about people dialling up huge phone bills by calling astrologers and tarot card readers. Some people won't venture outside their homes without reading what the day will be like! What remarkable trust in someone else's prediction and direction over your life – and even more so if you don't know them.

A spiritual dimension

The human spirit can never be fully satisfied with material things, nor with merely aesthetic or intellectual pleasures. I believe every person has a spiritual dimension (which may or may not include a religious aspect), and therefore has spiritual needs, which are influenced by life's experiences, both cultural and personal. Everyone is exposed to a variety of behaviours and influences in society, and in their families, both good and bad. However, if there is

no direction in our lives, we can fall into the trap of experimenting in alternate lifestyles. If we are not familiar with our own heritage and culture, this too, can create confusion.

We can find true wealth by developing our spiritual life, rather than by increasing our financial or material assets. I believe humans are spiritually hungry, hungry for fellowship with someone greater than themselves. There is a void in the lives of many people – a vacuum that they are trying to satisfy – trying to fill with material things or new age teachings.

I believe in God, the God of the Bible, who has "planted eternity in the human heart"¹, and who offers a spiritual dimension to life that gives everlasting fellowship, beginning here on earth and extending beyond the grave².

He has promised to be with us when the going is tough. We can ask him for wisdom to help solve our problems, and he will give us the strength to endure³. He will

guide us to the path of peace⁴. Life will not always be easy, but that's life. There are times when we all struggle to pay the bills, find or keep a job, maintain a healthy lifestyle and keep stable relationships.

We are free moral agents and able to make life choices. Sometimes our choices are not so choice! They are not well thought out – we react instead of taking time to explore all the options. Sometimes we consult with some 'not-so-wise' people, and other times we get 'caught up with the crowd', or act and spend out of our emotions.

Talk is cheap, and too often we realize the boasts are hollow and far from the truth. Our teeth are still yellow, the stain is still visible. You haven't lost the guaranteed 10 kilos in 10 days, and what's more, you are out of pocket!

God's Time on Earth

God came to earth as a human named Jesus Christ. He was born into a chosen family by miraculous means, lived a normal childhood, and at the age of 30 years began his ministry. He lived among us, walked and talked with people who were like us – the sick, the mentally

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Auckland: The Mt. Eden Senior Citizens' Club Hall, Corner Dominion Rd and Brixton Rd, Balmoral, Saturdays at 2.00 pm. (Contact: Rex Morgan, ph. 489 8910)

Rotorua: The Buffalo Hall, Tarewa Place, Saturdays at 10:30 am. (Contact: Peter Lindop, ph. 349-2272)

Wellington: The Senior Citizens' Club Hall, Elizabeth Street, Petone, Saturdays at 2:30 pm. (Contact: Dennis Gordon, ph. 386-2094)

Invercargill: The Southern Light Community Centre, 64 Conan Street, Saturdays at 1:00 pm. (Contact: Les Evans, ph. 216-3680)

Small groups meet regularly in other cities nationwide. For details, contact Dennis Richards, ph. 06 353 6224, or visit www.wcg.org.nz.

ill, wealthy, divorced, arrogant, poor, educated, uneducated, criminals, prostitutes, and people who came from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

His time on earth was filled with amazing stories that pointed people to his father. He healed the sick, calmed storms, turned water into wine, and raised the dead. He had answers to all who questioned him. Many didn't like the answers he gave.

The truth can hurt, but he was right, because he is our creator. He knew us before we were born⁵. Imagine that! He was eventually put to death because he appeared to be a threat to the authorities of the day. Because of his divinity he was resurrected and lives and reigns today in heaven and in my life.

I personally have accepted that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God, the creator of everything. He has given me new life and I have a wonderful relationship with him. I trust him implicitly. He is a God of love. He cares about me and he cares about you⁶.

My life isn't all 'plain sailing', but it is one hundred percent better than it was. He guides me in every aspect of my life, including my finances⁷. I talk with him regularly throughout the day and I can't get enough of his word⁸. I am contented, guilt-free, debt-free and have an incredible peace in my life⁹.

This new 'product', a new life in Jesus Christ, comes with an unconditional guarantee that he will never abandon you¹⁰, and a comprehensive instruction manual¹¹, which if read regularly, preferably daily, will guide you through your life and in every situation you face.

At no financial cost, your 'smile' will be brighter, your life worth living, and you will find joy. The 'stain' of sin, frustration and neglect of your body will be erased, and you will be cleaner from the inside out. Those who let God provide will always be satisfied.

Why not try it? This is one claim that really is true!

References:

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11
2. John 3:16
3. James 1:5-6
4. Luke 1:79
5. Psalm 139:13-16
6. Ephesians 3:14-19
7. Ecclesiastes 5:10
8. Psalm 25:14
9. Romans 15:13
10. Hebrews 13:5b
11. The Holy Bible

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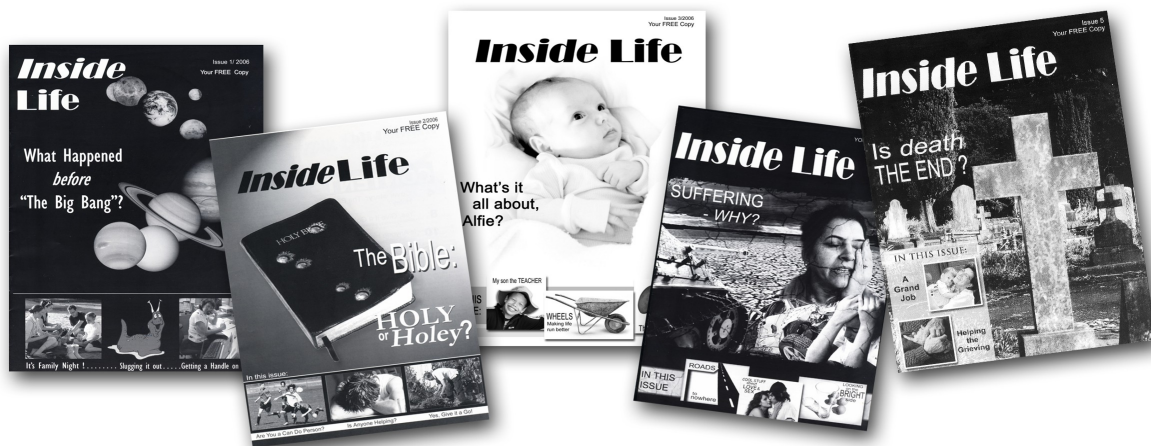
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In Inside Life So Far...

Important questions covered in previous issues of "Inside Life":

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- ◆ The Bible — Holy or Holey?
- ◆ What's it all about, Alfie?
- ◆ Why does God allow Suffering?
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