


AUSTRALIAN

VOICE





BUSINESS NOTEBOOK



A Conversation With
BERNIE GRAY

Bernie Gray is an International Vice-President of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. Resident in Brisbane, Queensland, Bernie directs the work of FGBMFI in Australia as well as travelling extensively and ministering world wide to men through the Fellowship.

Bernie's own business life centred around the automotive industry. He was one of the first in Australia to introduce specialisation within the industry by setting up a chain of specialist automatic transmission and air conditioning repair shops.

As a man whose business principles have been forged in the highly competitive world of automobiles, Bernie has strong views on marketing and management practices and how they relate to the spiritual life.

The following interview with Bernie Gray was obtained at the 1986 New Zealand FGBMFI Convention in Dunedin.

Can you describe how you got your start in business?

I left school at the age of 15 and started an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. After 3½ years of the five year term I assembled a mobile repair unit and began servicing the farming community — repairing tractors, trucks and such like.

When my apprenticeship was completed I went into partnership running a general repair shop. Right from the outset we decided to steer clear of the domestic market and went for fleet maintenance.

We were just small fry in the automotive world — we probably looked like peanuts on a stetson hat — but nevertheless we looked after some big fleets.

After a few years we purchased a building in the centre of Brisbane, developed a vehicle sales outlet and began the specialisation process into automatic transmission and auto air conditioning repairs and maintenance. These were to be our two key specialist fields for many years.

We had five companies in Queensland, including the Mazda and Renault/Peugeot franchises. Later we introduced Subaru to Queensland.

What influences shaped your approach to business?

During my apprenticeship I had a racing driver friend who said that his aim in life was to make more money than he could spend. Those words sparked something off in me and gave me the attitude of 'Look out, world, here I come!'

Right from the start I was bristling with commercial activity, and always looking for new marketing opportunities. I joined various overseas automotive organisations so that I could keep abreast of trends in my field.

Commercially I was going for everything I could get. My two stated goals were that I would not be pulling wheels off cars when I was 40 and that I would have a son and a daughter by the age of 30.

I achieved both of these goals — but at a price.

What was that price?

My business aspirations would take me out of town for three, four or five weeks at a time. In so doing I shifted the responsibility of the home off my shoulders and on to my wife's. So instead of being governed by the scriptural values I had learned as a child I began to be governed by the

desire for a big bank balance.

This led to stress within the family but even more significant was the flow-on effect this initial compromise had in other areas of my business life. Once you make one compromise and sell out on one value it's just a matter of time before you begin selling out in other areas of your life.

It wasn't until 1974 that I realised the extent of my compromise. It was during that year that I went through a crisis in business and private life that shook me to my roots and frankly turned me around.

Can you describe what happened?

1974 was to be the peak of my career in terms of the automatic transmission business.

My wife Nell and I and our family were at a summer holiday camp in December '73. A few minutes before midnight on New Year's Eve we were sitting in a large meeting where people were singing, praying and sharing their hopes for the new year.

It was an electrifying atmosphere but I felt uneasy. I asked God point blank: *Is this just euphoria or are you saying something to me?*

Suddenly I got the impression that something dramatic was about to happen — and that it related to my business. On the wall a blackboard appeared, visible only to myself. As the minutes ticked by I saw a division of assets of my partnership being written on that board. All of the details of how the properties were to be divided and the sum of money that would change hands was on that board. At the time I found it totally unexplainable since I had no intention of dissolving the partnership. My partner and I had had 19 years in business together and there seemed

no good reason to break up now.

Yet, in February, 1974, a situation initiated by my partner arose that meant we could no longer continue together.

It took two months for our accountants and solicitors to get our books in shape and draw up a division of properties but in the final analysis the amount of money that changed hands was not one cent more or less than what had been written on that blackboard on New Year's eve.

What did this experience mean to you?

It showed me that beyond a shadow of doubt God is more interested in my life than I had ever had dreamed was possible.

As a child I had had drummed into me the verse that says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths". (Proverbs 3:5,6)

It wasn't until 1974 that that verse became a reality in my life. All through my business life I had leaned awful heavy on my own understanding, relying on my own judgement and business acumen and not always allowing God His rightful place as "Managing Director".

When I saw how accurately and precisely God had worked out the dissolving of our partnership ahead of time, without any bickering or animosity, I knew I had vastly underestimated His desire to be involved in my business life.

How does the concept of trusting God work out in a business setting? Do you now set aside your natural expertise and judgement and rely totally on divine guidance?



Left to right: Former Australian Prime Minister Mr. Malcolm Fraser receives request from Full Gospel Business Men Keith Kelley and Bernie Gray to call for national day of prayer and fasting.

No, natural expertise is a gift of God to help us do our best. If we have committed ourselves to God and are trusting him, then what we cannot do, he does — often in supernatural ways.

However you do need to differentiate between a man's natural abilities and his character. The Bible is clear on this point: God commits himself to character, not ability. In a business setting, if you have loyal management staff, you can always increase their skills through training. However, if you go out and hire a hot-shot you may spend all your time trying to keep him loyal — and that's a long track to travel.

I believe that if you want to grow big business then grow big people — big on character, big on loyalty, big on non-negotiable values.

These days the business world is a high pressure, high risk area. How do you avoid being squeezed into a short term mould where values are up for grabs in the race to close a deal?

Entrepreneurs have to learn that there is no such thing as a short-term event in business. Sure, there is a pressure packed world that deals in instant solutions. Sure, there are all sorts of people conjuring up get-rich-quick schemes. But that's a road that leads to disillusionment.

What is business? It is servicing a need, doing it the best way you know how and maintaining repeat business by giving excellent service.

You can have grandiose ideas about being an overnight success but all you'll end up with is an apprentice's smile, an aching heart and no lasting rewards.

The Bible says to obey is better than sacrifice. I say that you can never compensate by sacrifice those things you lose by disobedience. I have seen men sacrifice their family just to see another dollar in the till but they'll find out, just as I did, that they are the biggest losers.

A man should establish early in life the values he is going to operate on. If he doesn't he will be a vacillator all his life. It is a delusion to think that you have to adapt your values according to the changing world in which we live. The basic values never change.

What have you been doing businesswise since 1974?

After my partner bought me out I started to deal in property investments and also taking over failing companies — businesses that had potential but which had become run down through bad marketing and management.

Often those business were in trouble because the man at the top was a walking disaster with his chequebook and his bankbook. The owner of the business would be living off plastic cards, floating along in a fantasy land and failing to understand the basic principles of business.

Once those basic problems were rectified the business could be turned around and would start to show a profit.

In 1978 I built premises in central Brisbane and opened what I called the One Stop Car Clinic. This was a specialist repair shop that did work not usually done in the average service station — steering geometry, suspension, automatic transmissions, auto air conditioning, plus a panel and body shop.

I sold that business in 1983 and since then I have been free to put virtually my entire time into the work of FGBMFI.

What advice can you give to a young businessman who wants to honour God in his business life?

I think one of the key principles to learn is this: that which is born of the flesh is maintained by the flesh and that which is born of the spirit is maintained by spirit. Where is God in your business activities? Is he the steering wheel or the spare tyre — the directing force or merely something for an emergency?

A man should ask himself, *how much time and energy am I putting into this project simply to keep it going?* And then he should consider whether in fact he should allow that thing to die or whether he should make some quality changes.

It's the difference between running on adrenalin and running on power that the Spirit of God supplies.

Secondly, don't use God's name as a magic charm. Good commercial increase will result from applying sound Biblical principles not from presuming that you have a sanctified Midas touch!



... in hearing personal testimonies like those you have read in this magazine, other men are sharing their testimonies at F.G.B.M.F.I. breakfasts, luncheons and dinner meetings across the nation.

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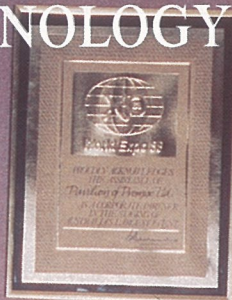
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EXPO 88 . . . JESUS IN THE AGE OF LEISURE & TECHNOLOGY



One of Bernie Gray's tasks that has kept him busy throughout Australia's Bicentennial year has been to oversee the Christian presence at Brisbane's World Expo '88.

Known as The Pavilion Of Promise, the futuristic presentation was made possible through the combined resources of the churches of Australia and the FGBMFI. The pavilion was extremely popular, being voted amongst the top 10 best pavilions in one Expo guide book, as well as receiving a Golden Platypus Award for excellence from a public poll in Queensland's Sunday Mail newspaper.

As Pavilion Commissioner, Bernie Gray has seen the Pavilion as a time of real unity for Australian churches, bringing together thousands of Christians from hundreds of churches of 20 denominational persuasions. As a result, many thousands of people have been touched by the inspirational message of "The Scroll" presentation, especially written and composed for the pavilion and featuring the talents of Malcolm Mugeridge (narration) and The National Philharmonic Orchestra of London.

On Thursday 1st September at precisely 12.50 p.m. the 500,000th visitor entered the Pavilion's large outdoor amphitheatre. Susan Taylor, from Victoria, was "touched by the presentation and felt a real sense of peace the whole time". The Pavilion Of Promise has been a life changing

experience for many people. The undeniable presence of Jesus and the reality of presentation of Jesus's story has touched many and will continue to be a source of inspiration long after Expo 88 has finished. Bernie Gray recalls some of the Pavilion's anecdotes:

"A man phoned in to tell us he recently came through the Pavilion and left without speaking to anyone. However, he felt compelled to go to church and committed his life to Christ. He is now trying to reconcile with his former wife and they have both begun wearing their wedding rings again after a long separation".

"A businessman came through the Pavilion a few weeks ago with his wife and family. Afterwards, he was visibly shaken and went to talk with one of our Commissioners who shared openly with the man about the Lord. A few days later, the man rang our Commissioner to tell him he'd become a Christian at a south-side church and was so thankful for the time they'd shared together".

The theme of the World Expo 88 was "Leisure in the Age Of Technology," yet the Pavilion Of Promise was a reminder that even amidst the hectic pace, large crowds, noise and excitement of Expo, Jesus Christ's presence cannot be denied, that He is real and that he can change every life for the better.

** Staffing the Pavillion was achieved through the dedication of some 1,000 volunteers.*

"Being a big Australian for God"

COCKBURN, Lance Edward, B. Com (Hons), FASA, CPA;
General Manager Finance and Planning, BHP Petroleum since September 1987; Financial Controller, BHP Petroleum 1984-1987; Assistant to Corporate Treasurer, The BHP Company Ltd 1984, Manager Finance and Control, BHP, Whyalla 1979-1983; Finance manager, Mill and Engineering Products, Comsteel 1974-1979. Joined BHP at Newcastle Steelworks as Commercial Trainee in 1963.
b 4 April 1946 Armidale NSW, ed Armidale and Moree High Schools, University of Newcastle, University of Melbourne Advanced Management Programme; m Juliana; 1d 2s; recreation sport.



To most of us BHP is "The Big Australian." Images of huge mining, steel and petroleum operations, business acquisitions and board rooms deals are all associated with Australia's largest company.

Being responsible for aspects of BHP's petroleum activities worldwide requires a "big Australian." God has such a man responsible for the Finance and Planning of BHP petroleum in Lance Cockburn.

A man who in his own words, is just every-day Australian. A family man who values time with his wife and three children and who enjoys a game of football or tennis as much as the next. Only Lance spends slightly more time than the rest of us away from Australia as his business commitments take him across the globe several times a year. Last year BHP Petroleum's profit was \$384 million, with cash flow in excess of \$1 Billion, and, as General Manager, Lance is responsible for the finance and planning associated with profitability and continued growth of the division.

"Originally I thought I wanted to be a school teacher" says Lance. "Coming from a small country town anyone who went to university was either a doctor or a school teacher! The doors that I thought were opening to this career soon closed but then a door opened to BHP — something I hadn't even been thinking about. I now recognise this as being the leading of God, and a lesson to trust and learn that in all things God works for good. That was 25 years ago."

Lance's history with BHP began in 1963 as a Commercial Trainee at the Newcastle Steelworks. Lance's his-

tory with God is intertwined with his career path and, as his story tells, the reason for its happening.

Lance has, as he says, "benefited by growing up in a Christian family where I realised in my teens that Christianity was more than just head knowledge. The "big" questions of life had to be answered. "At this stage he accepted Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord, an experience which he now recognises as being an anchor point for his life.

"John's gospel describes it as being "born again," and John Wesley described it as "his heart being strangely warmed," explains Lance. From his indescribable change suddenly all the "head knowledge" came alive.

Lance's story though, like most, isn't about from going there onto a simple and easy path of life. Lance takes up his story . . .

In University I was challenged on many issues and had the need to defend the faith I had. My association with other members of the evangelical union was a great support and helped me to understand more, although at this time my Christianity started to become very clinical. I began to lose my first love for the gospel and replaced it with the academic side. I had it all sorted out and if you didn't agree with my views you were wrong! But I have found throughout life God has a good way of dealing with us. He brought across my path a beautiful woman who was both a Roman Catholic and a newly converted charismatic — two aspects of Christianity with which I could not concur. Juliana ended up becoming my wife.

Reconciling our different beliefs helped me sort out and question

what had greater essence and importance for life.

For some time I wrestled with my wife's experience of the Holy Spirit and, as business moved us, I became increasingly more involved in the life-style of the world, despite my going to church. I was like a garden hose, still connected to the tap and appearing to the outside to be doing its job, but inside the supply was being blocked and so the life-giving water wasn't flowing. The water first goes stale and then evaporates. This is what was happening and I approached the cross roads where I knew I had to either get serious or dismiss Christianity altogether. Was my spiritual experience merely a figment of my imagination, just a crutch to get by in certain aspects of life or was it the reality of knowing in a special way a person who had come to give life and live more abundantly. By deciding to be honest about it all and repent of my ways I had an experience that was another anchor point in my life. Juliana layed hands on me and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I knew immediately. I had a thirst for the Holy scriptures and a renewed faith in Christ which transformed and reassured me.

This enabled me to reassess priorities and recognise that I had fallen behind and that there was more to life. A dimension that was satisfied only through being close to God. I knew I was created in God's image to do what pleases Him. Joy, peace, and fulfillment were only possible through this realisation. I knew then that this was also the way to conduct my personal and business life.

As a Christian in business I try to conduct interpersonal relations and

business activities according to biblical principles. Even though my knowledge is not complete and I don't have the answers to everything, the bible has answered more questions than it has raised. I see it as a valuable blue print for life.

I sum it all up by quoting from Micah 6:8. "What is required is to show mercy, love, justice and walk humbly with your God. The hardest thing in business, when the pressure is on, is to maintain these principals and react in a way that shows the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

I attempt to do my best in whatever and wherever I'm involved. Being a Christian takes away tomorrow's anxieties. Sometimes I ask myself how would Jesus have reacted in this circumstance, or if the world were to finish right now would I be pleased to be seen doing what I am doing.

Although my story isn't as dramatic as some — from the bottle to the bible or the gutter to glory — it's basically about ordinary experiences with extraordinary ramifications. There are no sensations, but things that are very real and miraculous.

There is an inexplorable joy and peace doing those things we are created for and that Scripture shows to be right. Ultimately there is a dullness and an unhappiness when you're not doing those things that God wants."

As of December 1, 1988 Lance was promoted to the position of General Manager of Trading Services Division of B.H.P. Steel.

Six weeks to live

November 22, 1982 is a day I will not forget. I woke from the exploratory operation after one and a half days of unconsciousness. A persistent cough, loss of energy and appetite had made my doctor suspicious of lung trouble. He ordered a bronchoscopy.

My vision was hazy at first, but slowly, I made out the blurred lines of the room, the bed, the doctors and finally my wife. As my eyesight started to resume normality I saw that her eyes were glistening with tears.

The doctors had already told Lesley of their findings. Now it was my turn — I had cancer. They had removed nothing from my body as it was too late for that, they had said. The results showed that I had an aplastic carcinoma that would double in size each week. It had already penetrated the lymphatic system and eaten into the bronchial tube rendering it inoperable. Sitting there with my wife I couldn't believe the things I was hearing.

"We're sorry," said the doctor, "but there is nothing we can do to remove the cancer. It is growing rapidly. In fact, it is growing at such a rate that we can only offer hope for about six weeks to three months."

Only six weeks to live? Or at the most three months? Suddenly my rational, sceptical world came crashing down around me. All my hopes had to be lived out in the space of a few short weeks! It hardly seemed fair. It shattered the complacency with



which I had been accustomed to living my life.

Scepticism

I had been raised in a church going family, though as the years progressed I opted for a more sceptical outlook on religion. As a professional engineer I looked at the world logically and rationally. Things had to fit the pattern otherwise there was no place for them; everything must be able to be deduced according to a logical pattern. Later, formal studies in philosophy only consolidated this view.

Opportunities were created and were meant to be seized. If you wanted something you could achieve it by hard work and determination. I still held a nominal belief in some sort of God but it was a belief that had no relevance to everyday living. Like so many of my peers I was very goal orientated and determined to achieve material success.

It did not take long before I began to climb. Eventually an experimental position as a consultant led me to being sent to the USA, UK and Sweden to study educational developments in those countries. In 1979 I was asked to undertake a development survey on the upgrading of technical colleges in Papua New Guinea. So our whole family moved back to Papua New Guinea for a year. On return to Australia I was prompted to vice principal of a Technical College and was looking forward to further promotions. In fact I was short listed for a number of positions when the cancer was discovered.

What are we going to do?

The doctors left the room to give us some time alone. We looked at each other and I noticed a calm assurance about Lesley. Unbeknown to me, the doctors had told her of the outcome the day before and Lesley had time to pray. We hadn't done too much of that over the years but when confronted with a crisis its amazing how old values come to the fore. From those prayers God had instilled in Lesley a peace and strength that enabled her to cope. "What will you do now," she asked?

I reached out and picked up a Bible from beside the bed and abstractly flipped it open. Suddenly the words on the page seemed to be one foot tall and virtually lept off the page. It was a message from Matthew "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness and all things shall be added unto you." Well this was not quite what I would have wanted. I needed to know if God was going to heal me or not. I believed He could if He wanted to but would He want to?

Right then and there we decided we would seek the kingdom in a way we had never done before. We at once knew this meant getting to know Jesus in a way we never had before, instead of He being some vague remote being somewhere "out there." Rather than head knowledge and logic, which had governed my life, we wanted to know Him in a real and tangible way. We wanted to know the love of God more than anything else in the world.

At that instant God responded and I knew that this was not something logically arrived at or deduced, it was something that had to be experienced. In that instant the "peace of God that passes all understanding" suddenly not only flooded Lesley and I but also filled the room. Pain, fear, panic all left and in their place was a peace and calm beyond all telling.

So powerful was the peace and presence of God that even the doctors and staff commented about our attitude and the atmosphere of the room.

Surprisingly in spite of early years in the Church we didn't know what to do next so we asked God to teach us. He responded at once. The night nurse was also a "born again, spirit filled" pentecostal nurse who from the moment she walked in started to teach, encourage and pray for us.

The next day my traditional protestant ego was further shattered when a little old Roman Catholic Nun dropped in and told me the same things as the Pentecostal nurse. That day an Anglican Priest came in with the same story so by now even my Methodist mind was starting to get the message. I could see God was teaching me a vital lesson. It was that the labels we put on ourselves were unimportant, it

is what is in our hearts that God cares about. As one man said "labels fall off on the way up or burn up on the way down." Paul the Apostle said we are all of one body but with different functions and this was one of the things God wanted me to learn.

Total healing

Five treatments of chemotherapy had left me a physical wreck, hair gone, weak, nervous, with hearing and feeling starting to be affected. When the therapy was recommended we were told it was not a cure but it may slow down the growth. So I decided not to have any more treatments.

It was then that the consultant ordered a scan. The scan revealed nothing, so they ordered another broncoscopy. Not was there only no trace of the cancer but to the amazement of the surgeon, there was no scar tissue on the bronchial tubes where the cancer had been. I have been examined many times over the last six years and have been told that I am medically unique, considering the type, location and stage of the cancer. For this I thank God, the doctors, nurses and people who prayed.

Continuing testimony

Our walk with God has not been without its share of suffering. Christ said he came to free us from sin not suffering, but having God as our partner means we have been able to face our problems with the confidence and the assurance that in the end we overcome.

I started a new career path as a lubrication consultant which meant more study and work. Trouble with investment in a Research and Development Company nearly cost us our house.

Here we were again in a situation about which we could physically do nothing but pray. This time as we took it to God we had an assurance that He would help us. Within weeks He had provided relief from the interest payment in most unusual circumstances. Many months later and two days before the loan was due God provided a buyer, one who paid up on the spot because of our situation. What was more important during our time of waiting was that we were at peace, surrounded by that calm again.

God has continued to stand by us guiding us and helping us. We are both very conscious of His presence. He has restored our marriage, it got better every year.

I no longer look upon God in a cynical light. I don't try and logically deduce a relationship with him because I have discovered there's a spiritual dimension to life that can only be experienced by faith coming as a child.

I often used to wonder why me? I wasn't a famous preacher or big time businessman, I was just an ordinary person whose life God saw fit to touch. But now I know why: It is God's way of showing that He has no favourites and in one way or another His hand is reaching out to all of us. Maybe He is reaching out to you right now!

Ian Corrie is currently the Manager of his own Company, which deals in Lubrication and Carpet and Textile Machinery, National Director of the F.G.B.M.F.I. Ian and wife Lesley live in Benteigh Victoria with two of their four children.

“The grass was green” b

Football and making money. They were the two main aims in my life.

I'd played Australian Rules Football for Melbourne Reserves, Port Melbourne and in West Australia for West Perth during the sixties. To supplement my income I turned to the stock-market after my father, who owned Florist shops, said "I've educated you this far, you really shouldn't be a Florist." He was right!!

In 1969/70 the stock market was booming, you could literally buy anything and it would increase in value. Never did I anticipate how shares could and would fall, and of course they did — heavily. At the same time there were tremendous pressures coming into my life in that I was drifting away from my wife, Maureen. The more I made on paper the emptier inside I became.

Maureen started going down to the local Anglican church which coincided with an enormous movement of God's Spirit upon the people there. Maureen took me down there and I became upset at what I saw — people smiling, looking happy singing and I thought *strike*, this is a bit of a ratbag show! So I told her not to go to that church any longer. I was certain that any problems in a marriage were caused by that church.

At the same time I was on television playing football. I was known as "Mad Dog Ireland" because I had a habit of being reported frequently.

One particular Saturday Bessie came to see me and asked "Garry do you know anything about Jesus?" I'd

heard his name a lot in football clubs but not in the way she meant! Bessie simply told me about Jesus and I thought she really is a fair-dinkum nut. She asked me "do you mind if we pray. You know Maureen is a Christian". They knelt and I couldn't take that at all — and prayed. I sat on the couch and just closed by eyes.

I don't know what it was but when I closed my eyes something went through me from the tip of my toes to the top of my head. It shook the living daylight out of me. One acquaintance said later "It shook the Hell out of you didn't it Garry" and I said "you're not kidding!"

I was so naive. I thought this was why Christians spend so much time in prayer, it must happen every time. But I wondered how did they take it because I was really shaken. I opened my eyes, looked at them and thought there is no way they're feeling this. I closed my eyes, I closed my eyes again and it happened again. I've not had this feeling before or since.

I knew that at that moment that God was God. But I wasn't going to tell anyone. I couldn't even stand up as Maureen farewelled Bessie. It took me two hours to move. In that time I justified everything and worked it all out.

"I was faint. It was lack of food". After four hours I was positive I'd had a fainting attack.

At about 8 O'Clock a friend came around with some bottles and took the top off one. As he did bubbling through me like fine champagne bubbles was the thought of wanting to

Garry Ireland.



know who this Jesus is. My friend left and I thought "Garry, you're going insane". I told Maureen and she said "Garry, that's the Lord. You've had a touch from God — why, no-one knows, but he Has". So we asked Bessie around and I knelt and said a very simple prayer. I just confessed and said "Lord, I've made a real mess of my life, I want you to come into my life and take over".

For some years I couldn't sleep without chloryl hydrate tablets but that night I had the best nights' sleep in my life — without them. We had shutters on our windows and next morning I opened the shutters and the grass was green. It was if a film had been removed from my eyes and I

saw the softest green I'd ever seen. I saw God's creation as it is. Perfect. I thought "I am part of that creation."

I'd like to be able to tell you that life was then a bed of roses. Within six months I was flat broke. I had no job, made a bad decision to sell our home. I went lower and lower and lower. It took me two and a half weeks to apply for the dole. And at this time Maureen was expecting our fourth child.

I ended up digging ditches. But God wouldn't let me go. I got so low I was desperate. I was even a failure at digging ditches. I cried out to God "I'm going to be digging ditches all my life". We lost the beautiful home we had and I didn't know where to turn. I had to make a decision to get out of

that ditch and suddenly realised faith without action is worthless". I was sitting there wrapped in self-pity.

From digging ditches I applied for a position packing biscuits and through persistence eight months later I was promoted to Sales Representative and then joined Medibank Victoria in the marketing area. I had found my niche in marketing management. Within a short time my salary had gone up 300% — from someone who had been digging ditches. What happened was the Lord opened door after door after door. I went from 1600 in the organization to a key executive. It was totally unheard of, I literally couldn't believe it.

God blessed and prospered Maureen and I mightily but only after letting us really taste what a valley is like. And I tell you what, it's deep and its rough to get out of by yourself. It's so much easier when there is someone to help you, who never fails.

Conducting business as a Christian

If you want to read what the Lord has given us when we become Christians in business, have a look at the first seven chapters of the book of Proverbs in the Bible. In there there are twelve references to the Lord, that when we are in Him, He gives us commonsense.

He develops that commonsense to an incredible ideal where we should know what's right and what's wrong. We ignore that to our peril. We start thinking "help, I can't make a decision because the Lord hasn't told me in here, I haven't heard it as a word" when in reality He's saying "I've

already done it for you. I've given you commonsense". We often move against that commonsense and start making silly business decisions.

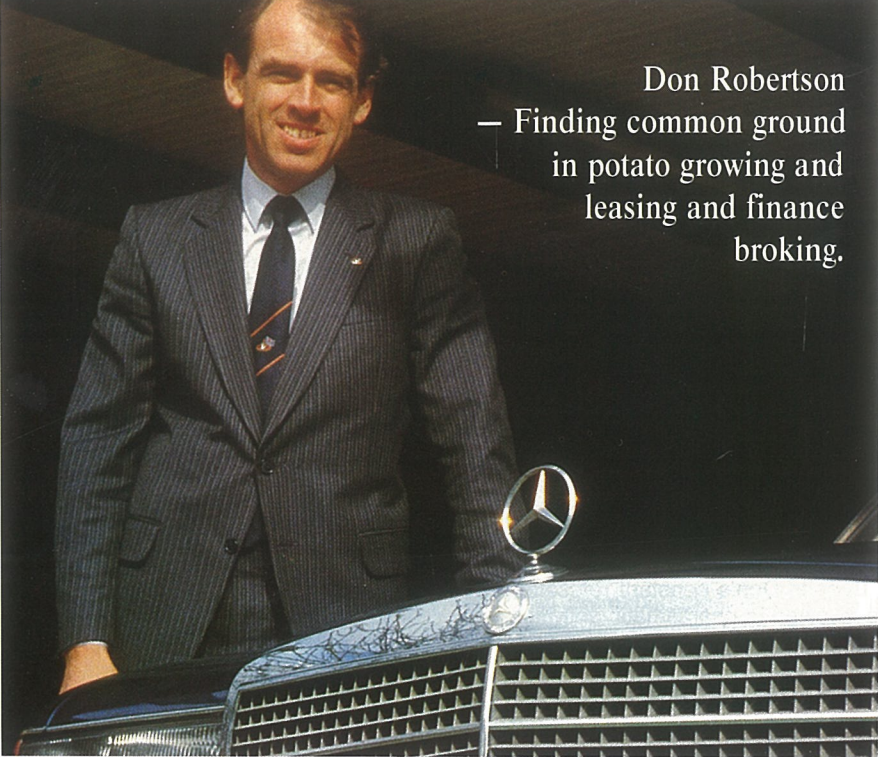
Proverbs Chapter 24, verses 3 and 4 says "Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through commonsense (If you read in the first seven chapters, it's the Lord who gives us that commonsense) and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.

There are too many of us Christians, quite frankly, who sit on our backsides in our businesses and say "I'm in the Lord I don't have to do anything else. He'll bring the customers through the door". The Lord's saying "get out and be competitive, learn about our competitors, know what's really going on, study, and keep abreast of the facts.

Then He will pour out blessings on us in a way we have never ever experienced.

Today Garry Ireland is National Marketing Manager Credit Cards for ANZ Bank. He lectures in marketing at the College of Management and Preston TAFE. He also counsels businesses in financial difficulties, and is an Examiner for the Marketing Council of Australia. Maureen is training to be a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. They have five children.

Our thanks to the Publishers of South Pacific Voice for permission to reprint articles on Bernie Gray and Don Robertson.

A photograph of a man in a dark pinstriped suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is smiling and standing next to the front of a silver Mercedes-Benz car. The car's grille and the Mercedes-Benz logo are visible. The background is dark.

Don Robertson
— Finding common ground
in potato growing and
leasing and finance
broking.

What do a potato grower and a lease and finance broker have in common? Not much. But you ask Don Robertson about them. Don has been both and his story is an incredible example of God's capacity to lead and change lives when you open your life to be used for God's glory.

In his own words, Don's story is one of a stubborn man. Raised in a non-Christian household, Don was never really serious about God until his early twenties when he began to attend his local Anglican church in Adelaide. At about the same time as he decided he wanted to become baptised and confirmed he set out on his chosen career path as a potato grower. In 1971, Don

set a goal of becoming the largest potato grower in the Adelaide hills. Four years later he was second largest and still growing. He had married his wife, Elizabeth, in 1972 and never missed a Sunday morning's church.

Both Don and his wife believed in God but they had no power in their lives nor knew that power was possible. It wasn't until early in 1979 that Don read a book "Nine O'clock In The Morning", given to him by a friend, that he encountered a reality about Jesus he had never known. At the same time he had been asked to go with his book-lending friend to an Adelaide coffee shop, "Jacob's lad-

der". Don saw a love there he had never seen before, but also saw lots of things he "wouldn't have a bar of". It was another three months before he reluctantly went back, and then read another book "When The Spirit Comes" by Colin Urquhart.

At this time Don's right hand man in his potato business left and they were unable to replace his vital role. The business was not able to cope without his presence and the demands made on Don as president of four agricultural groups during the 1979 season, caused the business to plummet. Don Robertson now recognises that the demise in his large potato operation was the design of God, but such direction was not so clear in 1981 when he was declared bankrupt.

Despite Don's constant refusal to be involved in charismatic activities such as speaking in tongues or hands in the air praising of God, Don started to want to receive passages of Scripture. At the end of a retreat for church lay people Don asked for the baptism of the Holy Spirit but still did not receive these spiritual gifts.

It wasn't until February 1982 that Don realised what he had to do was to really accept Jesus as Lord and to have God as the boss in his life. Don discovered there were two things holding him back. Firstly he knew he was saying "God I don't care what you want me to do so long as it's not to stop growing potatoes" (Don was by now working for another grower), and secondly, Don would not trust God for the provision of money. "Which was pretty stupid as I didn't have any and couldn't be any worse off" Don recalls. Don then simply said: "O.K. Lord I back down and accept you as boss of my life." Immediately he star-

ted to get passages of Scripture from the Lord and, in the next week or two, to pray in the Spirit.

Finally Don knew he had to obey "the boss" and in May 1982 he grew his last potato, uncertain of the future God had in store for him. On that very last day Don read from Psalm 127: "Unless the Lord builds the home, those who build it labour in vain. It was a real confirmation that I was obeying by getting out", confirms Don.

By giving himself a week before beginning his next step, Don knew he had to make a public confession of sin before his priest and that he was to spend the immediate week preparing. Each morning he would pray that God would show him his sins, so he could write them down on a piece of foolscap paper. Each day God showed Don passages of Scripture that revealed things right back to his childhood — things God wanted Don to confess. By the time it came to front the priest one week later, Don had three pages of foolscap to repent of. Having cleared his heart of sin Don looked for his next step but it was two months before it came. Meanwhile, he lived on unemployment benefits.

After praying very quietly in the spirit for three quarters of an hour one afternoon, Don heard the words "lease broking" very loudly in his mind. "I'd never heard those words before" exclaims Don, "I worked out what they meant, but I thought the words were from the devil so I prayed in tongues even more so the words would go away!" "The next morning in prayer the words came back again, very gently this time, and I knew they were from the Lord, and that I had to do something to follow them up".

"There were a couple of immediate

problems I could see, including being bankrupt, having no experience or qualifications in the field, and probable licensing requirements.” However these problems did not eventuate as Don investigated them. Even the leasing manager of the finance company from which Don had leased his potato machinery and who were his largest single creditor in his bankruptcy encouraged him by saying; “In the lease broking industry most go into it go out again within six months, but I think your chances of success are better than most and here is a personal reference to assist you. “After six weeks research Don Robertson Lease and Finance Brokers began from Don’s kitchen table. On that very first day he collected his largest client for the first two years. There were some hard times but things grew, new business was referred, and within just eighteen months of starting Don Robertson was being told that he was the largest leasing and finance broker in Adelaide.

By 1985, Don was mostly arranging finance for office buildings, shops and the like and these loans totalled over \$31.5 million for that year. All this was achieved without advertising. In 1984 God showed Don to stop all advertising and depend on Him alone to bring the business in. Don promptly stopped and immediately saved himself \$1200 a month and his business’s growth continued to increase.

Today corporate finance constitutes the major part of Don’s business.

Don’s life story continues to be one of daily growth and change. It would be possible to fill many more pages with miraculous stories of God’s hands guiding Don’s life in both his

business, family and church life. Here Don summarises the most important lessons he has learnt for allowing dynamic change and fulfillment to occur in life.

“The lessons that I have really learned are about, firstly, the Lordship of Jesus, that Jesus has to be boss of every situation. Secondly, repentance, that to see God’s power at work in me, I must repeat of any sin which He reveals to me, as it occurs. Thirdly, obedience; the faith to obey God however incredible or impossible the situation appears to be, and fourthly, acting on specific words from God. The power from God will not be released in anyone’s life without repentance. Repentance applies to anything being done my way instead of God’s way”.

“In my experience, repentance is the key to hearing God speak. To repent and then ask God the specific questions and expect Him to answer. Doing some thing your own way, without really handing the situation over to Jesus as Lord of it, has to lead to repentance. Everybody has said things like “I don’t care what you want me to do so long as it’s not to stop growing potatoes”.

“God is a loving God and He wants clean vessels to use. We are his vessels on earth. If you are convicted by the Holy Spirit, confess and admit your uncleanness. If you want to be clean and useable for God’s glory, God will give you the faith to obey His prodding of your heart. If the sin of pride is stopping and holding you back, or fear, they should be the first sins you repent of. Be bold and honest and come and acknowledge your need to repent. Men as head of their families should be the first to repent”.



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2. **REPENT:** Unless you repent, you too will all perish" Luke 13:3. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" Acts 3:19.

3. **CONFESS:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:19. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" Romans 10:9.

4. **FORSAKE:** "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him . . . for He will freely pardon" Isaiah 55:7.

5. **BELIEVE:** "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" Mark 16:16.

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