



when you feel like giving up  
**KEEP YOUR EYES  
 ON THE SHORE!**

I was guest speaker at this conference recently. Talking to mums and dads about parenting. Offering some suggestions about what to do when kids, especially teenagers, go wild. Sharing insights and experiences from our family and other families I know. Encouraging any in my audience who felt battle-weary and beaten-down to hang in there ...

MEAN, SOME POOR PARENTS ARE REALLY UP against it, eh. And some kids seem hell-bent on making a ghastly mess of their lives. They erupt like volcanoes ... go all secretive, surly and abusive ... dodge school ... run away from home ... mix with unruly mates ... drink too much ... sleep around ... get into all kinds of strife ...

And my question that weekend was: *What are you supposed to do if one of them turns out to be YOURS?*

I spoke from the heart. Reminded my listeners that kids go wrong in the very best of families. Pointed out that parents aren't perfect, any more than kids are. Stressed that the goal is progress, not perfection. And urged them to keep things in perspective:

*"You're not the first parent to have a 'volcano' in your home," I said, "and you won't be the last!"*

At the end of my session, I was approached by a young mum who obviously just needed to talk. Her 14-year-old daughter had launched a red-hot rebellion, lashing out, letting rip, exploding angrily over the slightest little upset.

Her mother (not surprisingly) was shell-shocked, desperate, and didn't know where to turn next. She still loved her daughter, (she told me – in tears), but when her love kept getting trampled on she felt like giving up ...

She said lots more. And I said lots more. We talked about keeping the communication lines open ... about being adult and grown-up and trying not to react ... about patience and praise, clear limits and correction, forgiveness and hope.

And I let her in on a Deep Dark Secret: that some of the nicest, most caring, most capable people at this conference had been unholy, hellraising 'volcanoes'

THEMSELVES when they were teenagers! *"What happened?"* I asked. *"They got through it! They matured! They came right! Just like YOUR hellraising daughter will ..."*

CAN'T REMEMBER THAT WEARY MUM'S NAME. BUT I hope she went away affirmed and reassured. And I thought of her and other parents like her just the other day – when I stumbled across this story:

In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the Pacific Ocean, just off Catalina Island. She'd already been the first woman to cross the English Channel – 32 kilometres both ways. And now she planned to swim to the Californian mainland.

But the weather was foggy and cold. She could hardly see the boats that were with her. And after swimming for 15 long hours, she wanted to throw in the towel.

Her mother, who was in a boat alongside, urged her to keep going: "You're so close – you can do it!" But, exhausted and discouraged, Florence finally stopped swimming and was pulled from the water.

It wasn't until she was on the boat that she realised the shoreline was less than half a mile away.

At a news conference the next day she said, "All I could see was the fog. If I'd only seen the shore I think I would've made it."

*"If I'd only seen the shore ..."* That's a sad line, eh. And I can't help wondering: How many parents have quit, abandoned the task, given up on their kids – not knowing that the shoreline was less than half a mile away?

You don't have to be a long-distance swimmer to know how it feels when the thing you've longed for, ached for, prayed for, hoped for, fought for and cried for seems

impossible. When it's just too far ... or it costs too much ... or it hurts so bad ... and every voice in your head, every bone in your body is screaming "QUIT!"

There's a message for every mum and dad in Florence Chadwick's story: *Don't quit. Don't lose sight of your goal. Hang in there. Keep your eyes on the shore. You're closer than you think, you really are. Keep going. You'll make it, you really will ...*

But it's also a message for you ... and me ... and Grapevine – don't you agree?

**D** ID YOU KNOW THAT IT'S **GRAPEVINE'S BIRTHDAY** this month? That's right, folks – our colourful warm-hearted family magazine is now **26 years old!**

Through those 26 long years we've published 212 different editions. That's 212 different times we've gone into labour and given birth to a brand new magazine ... 212 different times that enormous piles of shiny wet Grapevines have rolled off the press, been trucked all over the country, and delivered with love to thousands of streets and suburbs.

212 different covers and 212 different messages – but, at the end of the day, all doing the same thing: 'GIVING FAMILIES A LIFT'.

Many of you (incredibly!) were supporting us right back in 1981 when we published Grapevine No.1. And some of you, I know, still have your own copies of those early magazines. To each and every member of Grapevine's big nationwide family, I want to say: **"THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU"** for helping us get this far! But there are many more homes still not getting Grapevine. So let's not quit, let's not lose sight of the goal, let's keep our eyes on the shore, because we can make it, we really can!"

Last month I announced our **AUTUMN CLEAN-UP** – and asked for an extra **\$37,000**. We'd had a couple of sluggish-income months (remember?) and urgently needed those extra dollars for further website development and a major computer upgrade.

*Well, I'm delighted to announce that we're over halfway there, and our AUTUMN CLEAN-UP is underway!*

Will you help us complete the project this month – and raise the rest of the \$37,000? Who knows? Maybe one generous supporter will decide to invest \$10,000 ... or 20 generous supporters will choose to donate \$1000 each ... or 200 generous supporters will gladly give \$100 each. I mean, it can be done – and I know you'll rise to the occasion ...

But it's not just about money, eh. It's about putting Grapevine into the hands of people like that mum I spoke to at the conference – parents who are battling their kids ... couples whose relationships have turned sour ... grandparents who are overdue for some fresh hope ... young people who are just getting started in this business of being a family.

Please act quickly. Please send us a **DOUBLE-SIZED JUNE DONATION**. And please accept my thanks for your part in Grapevine's never-ending story.



God bless you!

## GRAPEVINE'S PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

**L**ord, we pray today for Kiwi families ... for the couples whose affections may have grown cold ... for the one-time lovers who feel bored or ignored, trapped or betrayed ... for the husbands and wives who, maybe even this morning over breakfast, were secretly thinking of cutting the last few threads that hold them together.

We pray for them Lord. May the warm glow return, and may their first-love be rekindled.

We pray for Kiwi parents ... for the mums and dads who, despite all the books and seminars and good advice, are bombing out badly in their most important role. We pray for absent parents, tired parents, abusive parents, and parents who never wanted to be parents. We pray for parents who've forgotten how to hug kids, how to praise kids, how to play with kids and have fun. And we pray for the desperate parents of desperate kids who, perhaps only yesterday, had their love thrown back in their faces.

Refresh and empower them, Lord. And may this day be different.

We pray for Kiwi kids, each and every one of them – for the bright kids who are really going places ... for the scared kids who have no place to go ... and for all the ordinary kids in-between who aren't quite sure where they fit, or what they're worth, or whether they'll ever be good enough.

Protect them Lord. Remind them that God doesn't make junk – that they're unique and not alone. And may they grow up to do a better job with their relationships than many of us have done with ours.

We ask forgiveness for mothers who are always getting out on the wrong side of the bed ... for fathers who are always getting home on the wrong side of dinner ... for toddlers and teenagers who seem determined to drive their parents nuts.

We ask forgiveness for unfaithful husbands ... for unloving wives ... for too-busy parents ... for kids who curse ... for mates who hate ... and for families that are families no longer.

You've told us that "love never gives up". Help each of us, Lord, at home where it counts, to become the lovers we were meant to be.

AMEN.

