

A COUNTRY THAT'S SAFE & STRONG with a reputation we can be proud of

Every now and then you've got to live dangerously. Every now and then you've got to cross the line, step out of your comfort zone, and go somewhere or do something you've never gone or done before. Every now and then you've got to risk all. Some people go sky-diving ... or do a bungee-jump ... or ride camels through deserts ... or swim with sharks. But, not that long ago, my wife and I did something far more daring ... far more dangerous.

WE INVITED NOT ONE BUT SIX GRANDKIDS TO stay – and not just for one day but TEN! We became full-time caregivers – Camp Mother and Camp Father. And our quiet home became a noisy dormitory, with wall-to-wall kids creating mayhem and madness around the clock.

It took us a day or two, but we quickly got used to small bodies in our bed ... food vanishing from our pantry ... fights over toys ... and swimming pool water that was forever being displaced by overactive children who just couldn't stop leaping, lunging, doing bombs and half-drowning each other.

We growled a little ... laughed a lot ... served a million meals ... washed a zillion dishes ... never went anywhere without two cars, three booster-seats, spare nappies or drinks ... and became seriously sleep-deprived.

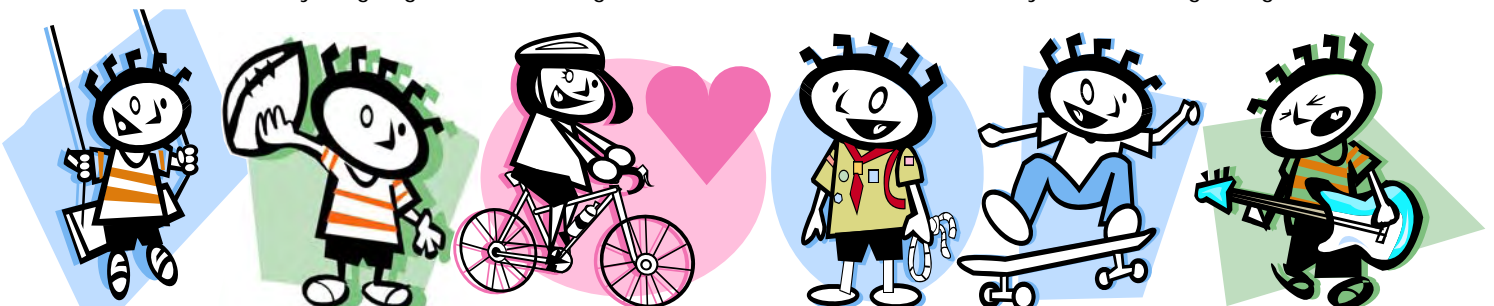
But do you know what? We had a BALL! We fell in love with these young rug-rats all over again ... and

missed them like crazy when they finally went home.

Don't tell their parents, but we might even do it again ... one day!

OUR GRANDKIDS ARE A TREASURE, A DELIGHT, A gift from God. And I'm sure you feel the same about yours. But sometimes I can't help wondering (and worrying) about the world they're growing up in. As I said in a recent letter to Grapevine's sponsors, New Zealand has gained a reputation, during the past decade or so, for all the WRONG things: child abuse, drug abuse, youth suicide, teenage pregnancy, violence, crime, and more. And I'm sure you're no different from me: that's the OPPOSITE of what we want – right?

We want our kids and grandkids to inherit a beautiful country that's got a reputation they can be PROUD of – a country that's strong and good, safe



for kids and kind to families – a country that tops the world in the things that really matter.

How are we going to achieve that? I'm not sure ... and I certainly don't have all the answers. But a story I read recently reminded me about one of the key ingredients.

AT TOLD OF THIS LADY IN A RETIREMENT HOME. Her name was Joan, and a stroke had robbed her of the use of one arm.

Joan had been a musician in earlier years. A pianist ... and quite a good one. But now all she could do was look at the piano and remember musical days gone by ...

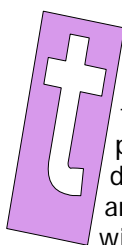
Until a thoughtful nurse had an idea.

She remembered another woman in another wing of the home who had also been a pianist in her earlier days. And ... believe it or not ... the second lady, Eileen, had lost the use of one arm, as well.

The nurse introduced the two old ladies to each other. And it wasn't long before the two of them were sitting at the piano, side by side ... Eileen and Joan, each with her useless arm around the shoulder of the other ... playing Bach and Chopin and Beethoven with their good hands, both happier than they'd been in a long time.

What made the picture even more evocative was the fact that one of these old ladies was tall, dark-skinned and slender – while the other was short, with pale complexion, and, well, somewhat 'dumpy'.

Ebony and Ivory, playing in perfect harmony. And a powerful reminder of what we can achieve – together – for our kids and grandkids and future generations of young New Zealanders.



THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR LOTS OF KIWI families. And when families are under pressure, relationships inevitably suffer. You don't have to look far to see marriages that are coming unstuck ... parents who are at war with their kids ... grandparents who feel confused and broken-hearted ... families that are self-destructing.

Personally, I often feel helpless. I can't make much difference on my own. And I imagine you face the same limitations. **But if we join forces and play "together in perfect harmony ... side by side on our piano keyboard" – we can make all the difference in the world!**

When you stop and think about it, that's always been a key ingredient for Grapevine. With YOU alongside us, we're able to fight for families ... stick up for children ... equip parents ... strengthen relationships ... and, little-by-little, help make New Zealand a happier, safer place for young boys and girls to grow up in.

I reckon this is the LEAST we can do for our kids and grandkids. Which is why I make no apology for asking, again, for your help:

- ☺ **Are you a parent?** Please join us in our efforts to equip other parents, by sending your April gift.
- ☺ **Are you a grandparent?** Please invest in your grandkids' future, by writing your cheque now.
- ☺ **Are you a younger supporter?** Please respond generously and help us spread Grapevine's message of fun, hope and wholeness into every corner of Godzone.

Many thanks (in anticipation) ...



LOVE IS ... LOVE ISN'T ... LOVE IS ... LOVE ISN'T ... LOVE IS ... LOVE ISN'T

- **LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND** – even after having said something again and again and again. It doesn't easily blow its fuse ... stamp its feet ... toot its horn ... or get mad.
- **LOVE IS NEVER JEALOUS OR ENVOIOUS.** It's not petty, or insecure, or afraid to let go. It doesn't suffocate or smother ... clutch or cling. It gives others the right to be free.
- **LOVE IS NEVER BOASTFUL OR PROUD.** It doesn't parade or big-note or beg for applause. It's in no hurry to say: "Look what I did!" "Where would you be without me?" It's not afraid of losing face, and is quick to say: "I'm sorry, my mistake." "I blew it, please forgive me."
- **LOVE ISN'T STUCK-UP OR SELFISH OR RUDE.** It doesn't make a point of being first, being blunt, butting in, or shooting its mouth off. It's courteous ... willing to step back ... able to give way, and treat others with respect.
- **LOVE DOESN'T DEMAND ITS OWN WAY.** It doesn't bully or blackmail, get the pip and pout. It isn't out to master or control, but says: "Let's do this together!"
- **LOVE ISN'T IRRITABLE OR TOUCHY.** It doesn't snap and snarl, get its knickers in a knot, or give others the silent treatment. It doesn't nag or nit-pick or find fault with everything.
- **LOVE DOESN'T HOLD GRUDGES.** It won't compile statistics, keep the score, or chalk up words sent in anger. It hasn't got a long memory, and it doesn't seek revenge. It chooses instead to forgive.
- **LOVE IS NEVER GLAD ABOUT INJUSTICE.** It never cheers when someone comes a cropper, or gloats when the other person is proved to be wrong. It won't paint over the cracks, or sell the truth, but goes out on a limb to see that right is done.
- **THERE'S NOTHING THAT LOVE CAN'T FACE.** It never screams: "That's it!" "That's the last time!" "I'm going no further!" "If you do it again ..." It can cope with the unwanted, the unplanned, the unpleasant, the unchangeable.
- **LOVE NEVER STOPS BELIEVING, NEVER GIVES UP, ALWAYS ENDURES.** It's a survivor and won't quit – no matter how black the night or bleak the forecast. It says what it means ... means what it says ... and can outlast, outrun and outlive anything that moves.
- **LOVE WILL NEVER COME TO AN END.** It really is the answer. It's the only thing that works when nothing else will. After all the other solutions have wound down, worn out or withered away, love will still be doing its job.
- **GOD IS LOVE ...** and this kind of love is God's. Maybe with his help we can become the lovers we were meant to be.

(from the Bible – 1 Corinthians 13 – adapted by John Cooney)

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