



APRIL 2010  
UPDATE

## AN OLD, OLD STORY THAT WON'T GO AWAY

**H**IGH UP IN THE STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL BAVARIAN ALPS (SOUTHERN GERMANY) IS A LITTLE ALPINE village called Oberammergau, famous for its wood carvings and the glorious frescos that adorn the walls of the old houses. Once every 10 years, almost half the population (more than 2000 citizens) take part in a remarkable spectacle of pageantry and devotion. And, in just a few weeks time, my wife and I will be there to see it for ourselves.\*

The world-renowned [Oberammergau Passion Play](#) dates back to 1633 and the Thirty Years War when, after much suffering and death caused by the plague, the surviving population of this alpine village vowed that, if they were spared from extinction, they would, each decade, perform *"the play of the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ"*.

They've kept their promise throughout the centuries. And the power and mystique of this unique, six-hour re-enactment – performed outdoors, with the sky and mountains as backdrops – continues to attract thousands of visitors.

It promises to be something very special. I know already we'll find the Passion Play moving and memorable. And it's on my mind at the moment as Easter rolls around again ...

There's something about this old, old story that simply won't lie down and be forgotten. Make of it what you will, according to the New Testament record ...



- God came here himself ...
- entered this world as a baby called Jesus ...
- grew to manhood in a Middle-Eastern trouble-spot ...
- lived by his own rules ...
- took his own medicine ...
- loved until it hurt ...
- and (finally, horribly) got himself crossed-out!

If you've ever looked around this sad, mad planet and wondered: *"Why doesn't God DO something? How can he just SIT there while his human kids bleed?"* ... you need to revisit the Easter story, I reckon.

Good Friday's more than just a million public holidays or a million chocolate eggs. It's a million gentle reminders that God really HAS done something ... that he's right here with us when we hurt ... that he'd rather DIE than be without us!

**W**HAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH GRAPEVINE? WELL, SEVERAL YEARS AGO I SHARED WITH YOU A LETTER WE'D received from a reader who signed himself/herself "TD". It arrived on my desk in April 1993 ... and here's what it said:

*"A while ago, I was flipping through a Grapevine that arrived in my letterbox. I was reading **STILLPOINT**, and had got about halfway through 'A PRETTY SHELTERED LIFE' – an item about God and human suffering, where it reads, '... before God could qualify as their judge, he must endure what they had endured. They sentenced God to live on earth as a man!'*

*"An overwhelming feeling of anguish welled up in me, and I found myself weeping – not a few snuffles over a poignant sentiment, but real, cathartic, eye-streaming, chest-heaving sobs. Because, you see, I already knew how the story would end, and I knew that it's true! "Call it a revelation, or just one of life's 'aha's, whatever. It was a moment of utmost lucidity, realisation, perhaps even grace.*

*"Suddenly, I don't seem to have issues or even concepts about God anymore. I'm content to just get on with my life the way it is, the best I can make it, with a sense of deepest respect and empathy for every other being, human and otherwise.*

*"So thanks, Grapevine, for being in the right place at the right time, and for providing the mirror that reflected insight. I'm not likely to forget this experience ..."*

In the right place at the right time ... Isn't that MARVELLOUS? Like we've often said, Grapevine's mission is to go into people's homes and do good! And somehow, for 29 years, with your generous assistance and encouragement – and despite the occasional headaches, hernias and heart-attacks – we've infected your neighbours and mine with fun, hope and wholeness. Somehow, over and over again, our little magazine has ended up in the right place at the right time ... and families have been enriched, funnybones have been tickled, relationships have been restored, and lives (like TD's) have been touched.

**WILL YOU HELP US PURSUE THAT MISSION THROUGH 2010** ... and put another year's worth of superb magazines into hundreds of thousands of Kiwi homes? Our latest edition hit the streets a few weeks ago (featuring '*YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN THRU THOSE FIRST THREE YEARS*' ... and another brand new edition (featuring '*SCARED OF DYING?*') is already in the pipeline.

Every dollar counts ... and your **extra-generous April donation** will result in more copies of Grapevine reaching more streets and touching more lives! Thanks!



\* Note: John's travels are entirely his own personal 'hobby' ... enjoyed in his own time and organised by *Lion World Travel* – at no cost to Grapevine. In fact, Grapevine *benefits* – by getting paid for John's travel ads.



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