



Timmy & Ryan Go to Queenstown

a proposal

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Dear Mom & Dad,

I've asked for some big things before, but this may be the biggest. I appreciate your time and consideration, and I'm glad you both like to read. As this is a significant request, I expect your response to require a significant amount of time and deliberation.

At the outset of this year, Crystal and I discussed our plans, our resolutions, our budget, and our marriage. We decided that we need to invest more in relationships & generosity and cut down on the wish lists—to focus more on living than making a living. After such a long-overdue, cathartic vacation, we purposed to make lots of indelible memories this year . . . and hopefully turn that into a life pattern.

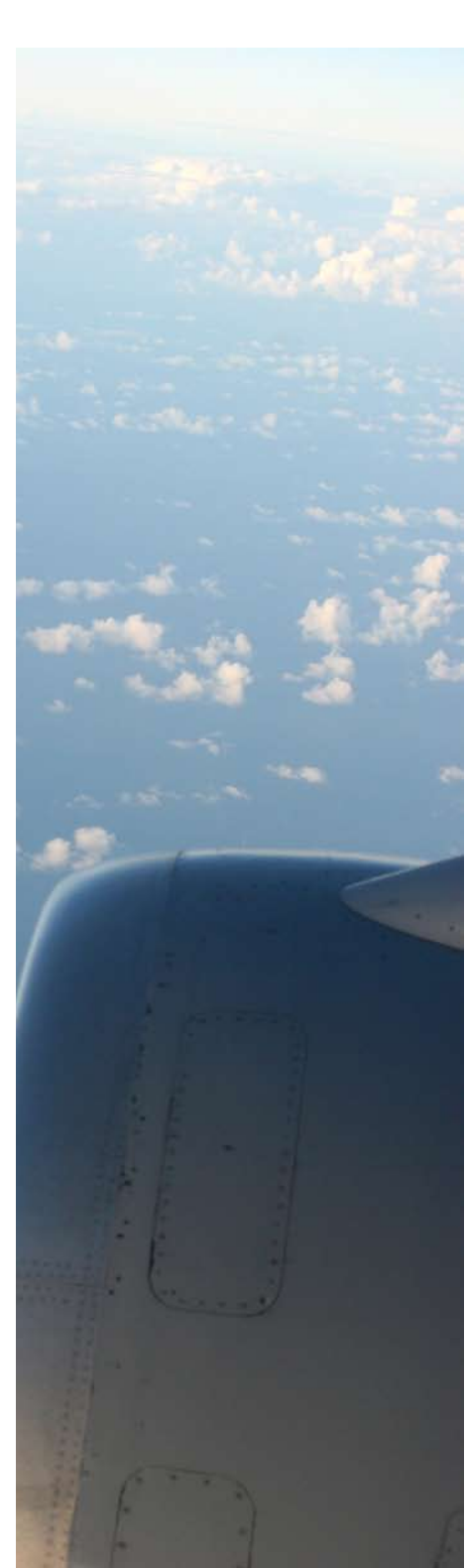
We paid off all but a couple hundred dollars of all of our consumer debt and have closed 3 credit cards. Other than our house and cars, we are practically debt free. In the coming year—even if my income only holds steady, we estimate to have a solid \$20,000 extra this year. Crystal's new pay structure will add \$10-15,000 to our annual gross. This does not count any painting revenue, which I told her should go to rewarding herself instead of the family pot. We'll also have less expenses. Last year we spent over \$9,000 on home improvements, about \$3,000 on physical therapy and my operation, and well over \$4,000 on our vacation. We decided, as a start, to financially support New Life Island, which was heavily damaged in a flood; and we will be contributing to

"To travel is to take a journey into yourself." (Dena Kaye)

a tuition scholarship for Ruby. We should be able to almost double our mortgage/HELOC payments and buy a computer for my office, too.

I've landed a new client in the past week who deals in executive homes in South Florida and has two other offices in Indiana and Arkansas—and already completed 2 jobs for them. I've got 2 more who said they're waiting on some deals to come through, but they like my package and will be using me as their vendor. And I've got 3 conventions in the next 4 weeks to shake some hands and make some deals—another in July (double the number of conventions attended in 2005 or 2004). I spoke with my top four clients about our respective relationships and have been convinced that their lucrative accounts are still in good standing and planned to be long term. My printer dropped his printing prices 40% to help me keep my clients and win new ones. So, 2006 may surpass my previous years (2004 = \$xx,000; 2005 = \$xx,000).

Crystal will be using her vacation days this year for sporadic days off (to help Amber with her wedding and vacation with me during my Orlando NAA convention in July, etc.) We talked about me taking a vacation with one of my buddies. But most of my college buddies can't afford the time off. Plus, I'm getting together with a bunch of them at a wedding in August. And I sneak up to see Bob & Ben from your house several times a year anyway . . . talking about doing Sight and Sound as a double date for Easter. So, Crystal and I talked about me taking Timmy on a trip; and I got really excited at the prospect. I only have a couple more years until college (and maybe college sports) grab all chances to escape with him.



In 2004, Timmy and I proposed a trip together:

ryangeorge.net/apersonal/ryanandtim2004.html

But with (1) me still building BiPlane and (2) Crystal working retail, you thought it unwise for us to invest in such a trip. That trip wouldn't work as well now, as the best times of year to visit Disney, etc. are when school is in session and my work is busiest. My best time to take time off is early/mid-December.

So, just like Crystal and I did in 2005, we looked at heading somewhere warm—even the southern hemisphere. And just like we did in 2005, we dreamed big. Thankfully unlike 2005, my American Express points cover our desired flights. [Drum roll, please:]

Tim & I would like to visit Queenstown in December.

Queenstown, New Zealand.

New Zealand is the world capital for adventure sports like bungee jumping, white water rafting, and repelling. Even if they are professionally managed to be extremely safe, I'd like to experience some of these adventures before we start having kids in the next couple years. It is also the filming location of Timmy's favorite movies: Lord of the Rings—and a much less secular environment than Australia. Crystal has family there, though I don't know if we would visit them. I think it would be cool to worship in a church down there to see how their culture affects the ceremony. Timmy and I have long talked about being on the Amazing Race someday, and this adventure would have many similar moments.

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page." (St. Augustine)

"Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience." (Francis Bacon)

After searching through travel books and literally scores of web sites, we have trimmed our list of desired activities down to a few must-do thrills. We would spend 8 or 9 days in activities down there plus 2-3 days built in for travel, rest, church, and jet-lag recuperation. We lose a day going down but gain it coming back. So, we would leave on a Monday (for a 2-day real-time trip) and return on a Saturday (for a 1.5-hour real-time trip).

Our tentative itinerary is attached, as is a budget in US dollars.

New Zealand dollars are worth a lot less than US ones (actually a lot less than even Canadian dollars); so, eating out, hotels, car rental, etc. will be relatively inexpensive. We will be using traveller's checks for various activities to avoid carrying cash as in the DR, though the crime rate in NZ is very low compared to even the States. Many of our excursions include meals, and I think the hotels offer breakfast, too.

Yes, Timmy will write a report. I'll probably write a bit, too. We will be compiling a video in the evenings and open dates from our footage. This is an educational process and will allow us to share the experience. We will also be compiling a vacation book with still photos taken during the trip, including from waterproof cameras. We can check in regularly via email or international phone card.

In addition to asking your permission for Tim to join me, my big request includes: sponsoring Timmy's passport (\$80), contributing \$500 (or allowing him to work for it) toward his expenses, and transportation to and from Dulles.



I want to preempt some of your objections, though I welcome the discussion and any additional questions.

This Is Too Expensive

Crystal gave me no budget, but I had a \$5,000 limit in mind. Timmy and I have pared out activities until we got down to \$5500 (which includes a new digital video camera that straps to the head/helmet, so that we don't have to pay for the expensive vendor-made videos). All of this money must come out of my allowance, which comes from BiPlane profits not designated to the family budget. So, the harder I work, the better my reward. I should not need to go into debt to do this, and this will count as Timmy's birthday and Christmas gifts. God has blessed us financially—more than I would have dreamed—for this stage of our life. With proper stewardship, we are able to enjoy some luxuries our peers cannot. What fun is making money, if money can't make fun? And what good is money or fun, if I can't share it? This trip will be an incredible motivation for me, someone who lives, works, and sleeps in the same 1,500 square foot building almost the entire year.

This Is Unfair To The Other Kids

Last year I paid for the Bells' trip to St. Thomas. This year, I will be taking Dad to Alaska and hopefully Emily (another—much more modest—proposal pending) on her senior trip. Lydia is too young to travel. Faith is in college. And I'm more than willing to make it up to Mom in 2007 (as I know the White House trip is not comparable). Tim and I as brothers are naturally tighter and make a less awkward travel team than a brother-sister duo.

You Should Be On Vacation With Crystal

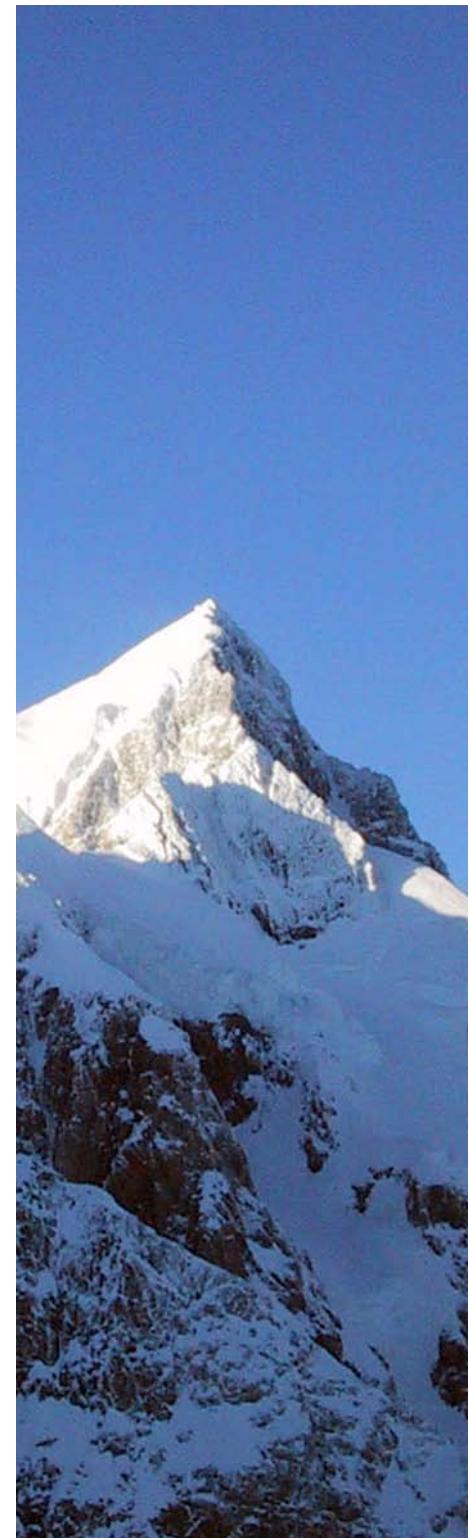
Crystal approves this trip (see attached). I sponsored her to go alone to Bolivia for almost 2 weeks and to live in New York City for 4 during her art training. We will be making several trips together: long weekends, etc. She is also probably going to accompany me to Orlando in July. She plans to spend a lot of time here with Ruby upon the Youngs' return and with Amber planning the wedding. She wants me to have significant time with Tim before he leaves for college and finds this a good way to accomplish that.

We're Wary of Your Influence

I am trusted with him for a week each year to train with José, a week in which I have not lobbied him to do anything against his (and your) faith. I'm sure theological or ecclesiastical discussions will happen, but I will respect his (and your) opinions, as always. We will be maintaining conservative sleep patterns, as much as possible; this will not be a movie marathon.

"We may run, walk, stumble, drive, or fly, but let us never lose sight of the reason for the journey, or miss a chance to see a rainbow on the way."

(Gloria Gaither)





We're Concerned For His Safety

We are following Dad's footsteps, except all of our adventure activities are guided by professionals. All activities are relatively safe, if we abide by instructions. The sky swing, for instance, has the tensile strength to support "4 Volvos." Some of our outfitters were chosen by CBS to host their Amazing Race roadblocks. Much of our transportation is by the outfitter, limiting my driving—which will be mostly urban and highway, anyway. I have already found an online driving rules guide. Timmy will never be driving anything motorized except an ATV/dirt bike—and only on our guided tours. If you'd rather not let him tandem sky dive, I can do that alone, while he films.

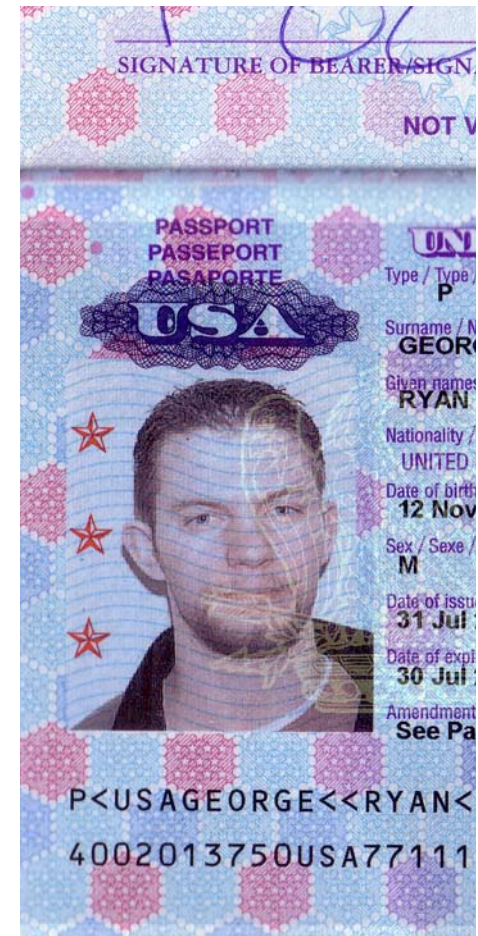
"The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one's own country as a foreign land." (G.K. Chesterton)

This Would Mean 2 Weeks Off School

This would be the ultimate field trip! You can quiz him afterward with geography, currency conversion, P.E., and physics. He told me he's willing to cut his Christmas break shorter. And if these activities can't motivate him to work ahead in his homework, nothing will. Besides, isn't flexibility what home school's all about? Plus, he'll get to try his hand at multimedia: creating a video & commemorative web page(s). I'll be teaching him photography techniques, and global flight will teach him about international relations.

Your Shoulder Is In Question

It won't be by then, as my rehab continues to give strength. The pain is not supposed to be around then. If it is, I will have had 18 months to acclimate to the pain threshold. Much of these activities are similar to what Crystal and I tried in the DR, all of which were within my capacity.





DAYS 1-3

We would land in Auckland, as Queenstown is not an international airport—or at least an economic one. Yes, you read that right: we take off on Monday and arrive on Wednesday (time zones, anyone?). I have enough AmEx points already to get both sets of round trip tickets from Washington, DC to LAX and enough to get Timmy's ticket to NZ for under \$500. By the time we fly I should have enough points for me to fly for free to NZ

and maybe enough for Timmy's to be free, too. After a day of sleep, we'd trek over to the SkyTower to try their 192 meter jump/repel and take pictures of the city from the highest building in NZ.



DAY 4

The next day we would go cascading, the waterfall climbing/jumping sport Crystal and I loved in the DR. Unlike our 2-hour tour, this one is 6 hours (8 including their transport time from Auckland).



DAY 5

The next day, we would visit Hobbiton, the set on the North Island where the Lord of the Rings Hobbit village was filmed and is still set up for touring. We'd finish the day with a new sport called black water rafting. We repel down into a cavern and float on inner tubes along an underground river lit by glow worms (and our helmet lights). We rock-climb out to a warm shower.



DAY 6

We begin the day white water rafting on a river which hosted the Amazing Race. They provide lunch, equipment, and a hot shower at the end. We might stop on the way home at a public Polynesian hot springs to further warm our bones.



DAY 7

We hop from the North Island to the South Island, arriving by commuter plane in Queenstown—a short flight. (Had we more days, we would have taken the train-and-fairy tour from Auckland to Christchurch and a 2-person mini-camper—very

popular down there and inexpensive—from Christchurch to Queenstown). Before going to bed that night, we'd ride the mountain gondola up for photo ops and a survey of our pending day trips. The gondola venue holds inexpensive seated luge courses—more like gravity go-karting than street luge. Open Day for church.



DAY 8

White water sledging. This is shooting the river, half swimming / half riding a modified kayak. In a combo deal, we spend the second half of the day over at the Nevis bungee (also done on the Amazing Race)—to give that thrill a try.



“An agreeable companion on a journey is as good as a carriage.” (Publius Syrus)

DAY 9

Another combo day: tandem skydiving and then the Shotover Canyon sky swing (the world's largest swing). These activities don't actually take up that much time and may give us time to explore the countryside or national park, catch extra sleep, etc.



DAY 10

ATV/motor cross tour to the area where the bulk of the Lord of the Rings movie series was shot. They have a bus version, but we'd rather do some riding. We might also do this on the day we arrive in Queenstown, if our flight arrives early enough—as the tour is only a couple hours long. This would cut a day off the trip.

DAY 11

We fly back to Auckland and then toward the US, either directly to LAX or with a stop in Sidney. We arrive in Maryland with tons of photos, video footage, and stories—and maybe even a tee shirt or two.

*"You lose sight of things...
and when you travel,
everything balances out."
(Daranna Gidel)*


*"Travel and change of
place impart new vigor to
the mind." (Seneca)*

*"We wander for
distraction, but we travel
for fulfillment."
(Hilaire Belloc)*

| | Tim | Ryan | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Flights | \$ 1,500 | \$ 1,500 | |
| AmEx flight discount | \$ (1,100) | \$ (1,500) | |
| travel meals | \$ 30 | \$ 30 | |
| Hotel: Auckland (4) | \$ 186.32 | \$ 186.32 | crowne plaza |
| Hotel: Queenstown (4) | \$ 171.14 | \$ 171.14 | scenic circle |
| car rental Aukland | \$ 126.00 | \$ 126.00 | Budget |
| car rental Queenstown | \$ 133.00 | \$ 133.00 | Budget |
| AUK/QUE flight | \$ 286.00 | \$ 286.00 | Qantas |
| meals | \$ 150.00 | \$ 150.00 | dinners |
| canyoning | \$ 113.87 | \$ 113.87 | Auckland |
| sky deck/observation | \$ 14.49 | \$ 14.49 | Auckland |
| sky jump | \$ 134.57 | \$ 134.57 | Auckland |
| Hobbiton | \$ 34.51 | \$ 34.51 | Hamilton |
| black water | \$ 68.32 | \$ 68.32 | Hamilton |
| ww rafting (IV) | \$ 46.93 | \$ 46.93 | Rotorua |
| hot springs | \$ 20.70 | \$ 20.70 | Rotorua |
| frogz sledging | \$ 196.68 | \$ 196.68 | Queenstown |
| bungy jump (Nevis) | \$ 137.33 | \$ 137.33 | Queenstown |
| sky dive | \$ 169.07 | \$ 169.07 | Queenstown |
| sky swing (2) | \$ 122.84 | \$ 122.84 | Queenstown |
| LOTR moto tour | \$ 138.02 | \$ 128.02 | Queenstown |
| gondola/luge (5) | \$ 24.85 | \$ 24.85 | Queenstown |
| passport | \$ 80.00 | \$ - | |
| waterproof cameras | \$ 14.00 | \$ 14.00 | |
| head camera | \$ - | \$ 200.00 | |
| photo development | \$ - | \$ 100.00 | |
| exit tax | \$ 25.00 | \$ 25.00 | |
| | \$ 2,823.64 | \$ 2,633.64 | |
| | \$ 5,457.28 | | |

Mom & Dad Gertie -

I think Ryan & Timmy
should have time to spend together.
I know that traveling overseas is always a
learning experience and one that can be
treasured for a lifetime. I have no problem
with Ryan taking Timmy on a trip.

Just so you know, 
Lys.