



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

March, 1997



Dear friends,

We greet you in Jesus' Wonderful Name from pastor Gregori's living room in Krivoy Rog! It is Monday morning, a breather after many days of intensive ministry. How do we describe the fullness in our hearts and the gratitude to the Lord for all that has happened since we arrived here in Krivoy Rog, Ukraine? How can we express the obvious answers to your prayer for us? To God be the Glory!

OFF THE TRAIN AND RUNNING...

Soon after our early morning arrival by train the first Sunday here, we were taken in three different directions to minister in three different parts of the city. By late afternoon we were again in three different evangelistic meetings. Consequently, within 12 hours of our arrival in Krivoy Rog, dozens of people were newly saved, many baptized in the Spirit, and many more individually prayed over for healing of bodies and families. It soon became clear why the Lord provided us with FOUR translators! Our ongoing "difficulty" also started this first day: lavish and loving Ukrainian hospitality. Food was poured on us several times a day (though often with little meat or vegetables). In spite of their low economic condition, these wonderful people made sure we were stuffed full at all times!

The second day found us making final preparations for the pastors' conference, and by the evening we were in it — a special opening night for city pastors and church workers with about 150 present. Praise and worship lifted the roof of the meeting room, which was the locker room of an old soccer stadium. An unexpected anointing fell on the meeting. Though it was not planned that way, it became evident that God wanted this to be a prophetic prayer conference. Prophetic words were spoken over some, and the word of the Lord was proclaimed concerning God's heritage and destiny in the nation and the church. A great cry of prayer arose from all that God would move mightily in this nation.

Pastors from other cities kept arriving during this meeting, and on through the night. By Tuesday morning about one hundred pastors and assistant pastors from Krivoy Rog and other parts of Ukraine had gathered for the conference. With the other church workers present, the old locker room was packed!

PRAYER LIKE THE ROAR OF A WATERFALL!

The next three days were a glorious mixture of worship, preaching and teaching, testimonies of

pastors, prophetic ministry, and prayer, prayer, prayer. I was reminded of the Scripture that says the Lord's voice is like the "sound of many waters". Whenever prayer broke out, it sounded like the mighty roar of a waterfall! Our teaching themes focused on the private and family life of the pastor, with myself, Jackie and Jeff Orluck speaking. We met from ten a.m. till eight or nine in the evening.

The pastors' testimonies were touching and unique. Many of these men and women were from obscure villages, faithfully bringing the gospel to poor, unknown people. Some were from larger cities, and told of God's intervention for them against impossible odds. One had been a criminal; another a drug addict; another an alcoholic; and so on.... Needless to say, our hearts went out to each one. Following each testimony, we would lay our hands on that pastor, and from all would come another roaring waterfall of prayer.

One leader had come to the conference with three fingers in a bandage. Part of each of them had been cut off in an accident. He testified that they were growing back during the conference, and even was seeing part of the finger nails reappear.

A man came for prayer during the conference who was the manager of the soccer stadium — an unbeliever. His wife was desperately ill, and asked us to pray, which we all did. Up came another roar of prayer! The next day he reported that upon arrival at home, his wife (also an unbeliever) told the following story: A severe attack of her illness came on her during the day. At a specific time it suddenly disappeared! She knew the time it happened, and the man knew by his watch that her attack had disappeared at the very minute all the pastors had started praying for her. They knew it was a sign from God, and it was later reported that she is healed.

The church had placed intercessors at the soccer stadium several days before the conference to fast and pray. In fact, they also prayed all the way through the conference. We could hear them praying up a storm in the back while we were ministering. One day during prayer before the conference, a man came to the intercessors, cursing and railing on them, and demanded that they leave the building. The next day, while working on his house, he fell to the ground and broke his spine. His neighbors, all unbelievers, told him and each other, "Now you know what happens when you curse the church of God!"

BOLSHA! BOLSHA! BOLSHA!

The last night of the pastor's conference was combined with the regular Thursday service of the main church. The goal was to see these pastors receive a fresh anointing from God. Jeff, Jackie, and I all spoke on receiving more from God, and Jeff spoke three words in Russian which became keynote words for the next several days: "Bolsha, Bolsha, Bolsha!!" "More, More, More!!" Soon the stage floor was covered with pastors who had fallen under the power of the Holy Spirit. A great refreshing from God had come to us all!

PREACH, PRAY! PREACH, PRAY! PREACH, PRAY!

Somehow, in addition to the pastors conference, the three of us also preached at fifteen different evangelistic outreaches! The Lord also anointed Dr. Bev to bring a word at times. Bev's daughter Natalie functioned in the ministry of helps; her previous knowledge of the Russian language was quickly revived in her interaction with so many people every day. The outreach meetings were in homes, theaters, and cultural centers. Most were in outlying villages, so none were large in attendance. But in every meeting except one, people were saved. Concerning the one exception, it was due to the bitter coldness of the meeting hall, making it necessary to move the meeting to a large home. It seemed the unbelievers who had first come to the meeting were not ready to go into this Christian home, so it became a meeting for believers.

ANOTHER AWESOME WATER BAPTISM!

The local indoor swimming pool is beginning to feel like home, since we have helped baptize so many there. This Saturday afternoon baptism was the largest ever, with 120 baptized. (Just last November we helped baptize 70!) The gallery was full of rejoicing friends, the music and worship was loud, and the baptism was with great joy. Jeff, Jackie and I preached; then Jeff and I joined pastor Gregori in the water, and were honored to help these new believers enter their new life. Such an experience brings revival and new passion for Jesus and for lost souls!

THE CHURCH OF PRAISE CELEBRATES ALL DAY...

Yesterday was an all day meeting of the twelve daughter congregations and the main church. They are all called "Church of Praise". More people were saved, many baptized in the Spirit, and quite a few healings were immediately evident, especially as we prayed for those with severe, long standing back problems. Over and over, people testified of pain disappearing, and normal movement returning. One woman with a paralyzed shoulder for six months

suddenly was healed. Another with two missing vertebrae and constant pain from this condition was suddenly freed of all discomfort. Jackie was unexpectedly asked to leave at mid day to speak at two more village evangelistic meetings. They especially wanted her! Though exhausted, she and Dr. Bev went, and the grace of God kept flowing...

A DOOR FOR GOD'S MERCY...

Tired but rejoicing, we are sorting medicine this morning. (Jackie and Dr. Bev are doing it...I'm writing and watching them.) We will be distributing the thousands of dollars of medical aid that God provided for us to bring with us in four huge duffel bags. By the way, prayer was answered at customs regarding this medicine. Customs agents could have made much trouble for us, had they seen all that was in these bags, though we were doing nothing illegal. When we arrived at customs, it was chaotic, and the agents were opening and examining most luggage, or so it seemed. Jackie noticed the VIP line was empty and asked the official there if we could come through. He said, "Yes, yes, yes" very impatiently, and told us to get moving and get these things out of there! He didn't look at anything, and barely even looked at our passports!

The Lord seems to be opening up a major channel of medical supplies to go to Ukraine. It appears that, with a few more miracles, the first shipping container could go this spring, full of valuable equipment and supplies that are desperately needed in the hospitals here. However, the Ukrainian government passed a law recently requiring all humanitarian aid to be taxed 35% on the retail value! This would make it impossible to send anything. A 20 ft or 40 ft shipping container of medical equipment would be highly valuable! We asked people to pray about this before we left home. Since coming, we have received the news that the government has canceled that law, that humanitarian aid will not be taxed! Hallelujah! God may be opening a major door of help, and continuing prayer is needed for it to come to pass.

Our purpose is that humanitarian aid not only meet physical needs, but also provide a door for evangelism. The church here will be the distributor of future shipments, and we believe this will increase friendship and openness to the gospel within the heart of the city. It will put the pastors and churches in a favorable light with city officials, which is no small thing. It will allow the believers to enter hospitals in new parts of the city to pray for people. Furthermore, security officials have already offered to help pastor Gregori and the church see that none of these supplies end up on the black market. Please

Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to Prayer International, with note attached "for the Matthews"

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pray for this humanitarian aid project. It could be that God will open up a major supply of help to upgrade entire hospitals in Krivoy Rog. They are each similar to the one that told us "we are a hospital without food or medicine".

Please pray for our friends in Minnesota and the Christian medical supply missions with whom we are working to see this vision unfold. God is up to something big. We must enlarge our capacity to receive and to serve what He is doing. Do you want to help us?

GOD, GIVE US BIBLES, BIBLES, BIBLES FOR UKRAINE!!

And now a request: Will you consider an offering for Bibles for Ukraine? The need is desperate here, the people are poor. In many places, they have had no salary for a year, even though they are working. Most people cannot pay the rent on their apartments. A large percentage of the Christians have no Bibles. They can be purchased for about \$2.50. The need is for thousands of Bibles. We have now a little more than \$3000 toward this need. We would like to send a large offering for Bibles to Ukraine before the end of April. **COULD YOU HELP WITH THIS NEED? WILL YOU PRAY WITH US FOR A LARGE RELEASE OF MONEY FOR BIBLES?** We are not ashamed to beg for this need. I think you understand. Pray that a major shipment of Bibles to these young churches can happen soon. It is the policy of the churches to give them freely, and not sell them. What greater gift and blessing can come from the price of a Big Mac, than this? ...the precious gift of the written Word of God.

We also want to see that each pastor has a study Bible. The NIV Topical Study Bible has just been printed in Russian, available in Minsk, Belarus. It's cost is under \$10. Few pastors have study Bibles. Almost none have any other study tools. One hundred study Bibles for one hundred pastors would cost \$1000. Such a gift would bless one hundred congregations!

There is also a beautifully printed children's Bible that we would like to see placed in each Christian home where there are children. With colorful illustrations, people of all ages love it. There are 600 new Christian families that would be greatly blessed with one of these children's Bibles...(\$2.80 each).

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

As always, we thank you for praying for us and for the ministry to which we are called. Your prayer has released much for this mission to Ukraine! Every step we have taken is an answer to the prayers of our friends! We believe that your prayer and giving

are also seed for a much larger harvest to come!

We are grateful for your gifts, whether towards our personal support, towards Jen's administrative help, or towards outreach projects. May the Lord bless you abundantly in return!

Pastor Gregori told of a factory about to be destroyed and all the people about to lose their jobs. This factory of unbelievers gave steel girders and pipes to help construction the new church building. Now, instead of the factory closing, it is active in business, and one of the few factories that are paying its employees on time! Gregori told them, "Look how God blesses you when you give to God's work!"

May the Lord bless you richly, and we hope the snow is almost gone when we get home!

Love, John and Jackie