



## Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

April, 1998



Dear friends,

It is with joy and urgency that we write you again. It may seem routine to you that we send these letters monthly, but to us this prayer letter is never routine. Each one is written with a fresh understanding that we have no ministry on our own. Left to ourselves, we would be out of the race.

Yes, our reliance is on the Lord, and to Him belongs all the glory for all good that happens in us and through us. (and in you!) Nevertheless, we cannot and do not stand on our own faith alone. We need the gift of friends whom the Lord has given -- those who stand beside us, pray for us, and support us. Psalms 118:7 says *"The Lord is for me among those who help me."* We have seen His help come over and over through the care of friends.

The "bottom line" for us, however, is in the very next verse, Psalms 118:8, which says *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."* Never can we get our eyes on people as the source of our help. *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth..."*

For that reason, this letter continues to be a PRAYER letter. It is not a fund raising letter. Perhaps it is a "friend-raising letter", but it is not intended for us to look to you as the source of our help. God is our source. And you are our help as you pray for us. Believing prayer moves the unmovable mountains, and calls into being things that didn't exist before.

Your prayer of agreement, such as "Yes, Lord I agree with John and Jackie. Open the doors for them, provide for them, and keep them safe under the Blood of Jesus", this is our greatest resource. As Jesus said, *"If two of you agree as touching anything, it shall be done..."*

YES, we are in need of more and more financial support as the work increases. If God leads you to help us, for that we are grateful. But we are convinced that the supernatural release comes through believing prayer partners.

*And so we ask, will you pray in faith with us, that God will protect us, sanctify us, lead us, and provide for us? Thanks again.*

### **Bloom Where You Are Planted...**

As I walked beside my dad to heaven's door in recent weeks, I found myself facing my own mortality. Though he was 26 years ahead of me when he entered glory, that difference in years began to seem really short. Will I have 26 more years? The Word says we can have a long life. Will they be years of health and purposeful living? Because of God's promises, that is what I am expecting.

That being true, 26 more years still seem short. As I added up what I could see of the result of the last 26 years, the length of our full-time ministry so far, the fruit seemed inadequate. Yes, I know I shouldn't do that, but I did. It especially seemed that way as I compared my life with others in ministry. Yes, I shouldn't do that either, but I did. I saw that many have had great fruitfulness. I was not so sure about

me. After several weeks of this dangerous "navel gazing" (that's what Jackie would call it) I began to wonder if I had really missed it with God over the years. You probably already know where that brought me. To the place of discouragement. "Oh if only....., I should have, I should have not..., I ought to be..., Blah, Blah."

I finally came to a simple place with God. I said, "Lord, I just want to be in Your will; I want to be obedient." And He said one little thing to me: "Bloom where you are planted."

It was not hard to figure out where God has planted me: it was in my home, my church, my family, my city, and in the ministry he had given me. The "blooming part"? It reminded me of Joseph keeping his heart right and prospering abundantly in circumstances he didn't like, of David serving God faithfully when being chased by Saul, or Daniel keeping on praying when Nebuchadnezzar said to stop it or die! These men just kept on displaying the character of God and being obedient to Him right where they were, regardless of where they were. They "bloomed where they were planted."

Thinking about this, a line in a Sunday School song from my childhood came up to my mind: "Brighten the corner where you are....!" I knew it was a reminder to stop wishing I was someone or someplace else, or regretting my imperfect past, or trying to judge the fruit of my life. I was called back to trusting God and allowing His joy and love to flow through me to others -- right now.

My life is now. God's will is now, where I am, who I am with, in the place where I have been "planted" by the design of God. I was wasting time examining myself, which only brought discouragement. Well, HELLO!! That's why the Word calls us to "fix our eyes on Jesus..."!

So I decided (again) to take life as it is, not as I wish it would have been -- accepting myself as God has made me, not wishing I were somebody else. I decided to believe (again) that He can make something beautiful out of my life, even if the beauty comes from ashes!

This choice takes mostly some humility -- and only a little bit of faith. Psalms 131 reads,

*"My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty (lofty); I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful (difficult, profound) for me.*

*But I have stilled (calmed) and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

Most of the discomfort of our soul comes from trying to figure things out that we can't figure out, and trying to understand things that are beyond our understanding. This comes from pride in our soul. A little humility of mind will let God handle the big stuff and the confusing stuff. Then we can calm down and lean on Him. Once there, it is only a short distance to renewed faith and joy. Leaning on Him, we are ready again to "bloom where we are planted".

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### On the move again, to Ukraine...

By God's grace, seven of us will leave for Krivoy Rog, Ukraine on June 12. This includes Jackie and me, Gordy Steck, pastor of our home church, and our friend Roger Sutch who is establishing a new church in our area. Our daughter Jen and two of her classmates (Olga and Bill) from North Central Bible College are also planning to go. Olga is a native Russian speaker from Lithuania, and Bill and Jen each speak some Russian. **Please pray** for the unity and anointing of the Spirit, and that we will trust God for everything.

Two more experienced translators are needed while we are in Ukraine; please **pray** that the Lord will provide them.

The main purpose for this trip includes four things:

#### **1. Regional Pastors' conference.**

Pastors from all the churches that we have been working with will be there, plus other pastors in the region who are in need of encouragement and support. We hope to take an offering for the pastors conference to help provide for pastors to travel and be fed while there. **Pray.**

#### **2. Minister in the churches in Krivoy Rog.**

We will divide up and go to as many churches as possible during the days we are there. **Pray** for many to be saved, healed, and built up through the ministry of the Word.

#### **3. Carry with us medical humanitarian aid.**

This will be as much desperately needed antibiotics and medicines as we can carry. They have none available. **Pray.**

#### **4. Launch a two year Bible School.**

This Bible School will begin as a two- year training for ministers and workers for planting new churches and going as missionaries. There are many waiting to be trained and sent!

We are planning to provide teachers to carry half the teaching load, at least for the first year of this Bible School. This means we will send a different pastor or Bible teacher to Krivoy Rog two weeks of each month, starting in September. They will teach during the day, and minister to churches in the evenings and on weekends. (possibly each taking a small team.) We ourselves plan to do this in Oct., Jan., and May. In other words, we will mobilize 10 outreaches to Ukraine in the next 12 months! **Please pray!**

### Will you pray with us for this next journey to Ukraine?

1. *That our travel funds will be provided. (\$1500 per person)*
2. *That we will have 7 large duffels of medicine and humanitarian aid to carry with us! (one per team member, perhaps \$1000 need per bag.)*
3. *That we can bring an offering for the pastor's conference. (\$2000)*
4. *For anointing and wisdom in ministry during the conference and meetings in the churches.*
5. *For all pastors to be able to get to the conference whom God wants to be there.*
6. *For our health and protection.*
7. *For the launching of the new Bible School, that the vision will be clear, plans well organized, and especially that we will be able to send at least one anointed Bible teacher per month during the coming school year.*

I (John) have been planning a journey into Bosnia following our time in Ukraine, but now this may not be

possible. You may have heard or read of an uprising in a Bosnian city on Friday April 24, Croatians against Serbs, with the destruction of the UN building and vehicles. Our new friends Jim and Kristine are working there with the UN to resettle refugees. They were out of town the day of the uprising, and as of this writing could not get back to their home and office, and fear that it all may have been looted or destroyed. **Pray for Jim and Kristine and their team** in Bosnia as they bravely work to show the love of Christ to war ravaged families. **Pray that, if the Lord wants me to go, He will confirm** it even though it now appears impossible.

### China!

Enclosed is a flyer announcing meetings with Dennis Balcombe, missionary to Hong Kong and China. If you live close enough, please attend! Dennis is a seasoned missionary statesman, known all over the world for his more than 30 years of investment in China. We have worked with his ministry (Revival Christian Church in Kowloon, Hong Kong) in the past as "donkeys for Jesus", delivering Bibles in China. The need is as great as ever, and the way is open! Would you like to go to Hong Kong and be a "Donkey for Jesus"? We would like to take a team **the last two weeks of August**. Let us know if you would like to join us. The cost will be reasonable, perhaps \$1300 for a two week grand Chinese adventure with God!

### Our personal needs....

**We need wisdom** in establishing ministry goals and scheduling our time. Our ministry has three prongs: our home church, our city, and the nations. The international work of missions is our primary call, and not unconnected to our work in the church or the city. God has instructed us to help build up the body of Christ and mobilize them into the work of the Great Commission, especially where the need is great and the workers few. This means mobilizing people into *praying, caring, giving and going* to "make disciples of all the nations." We want to encourage and strengthen believers, and give them opportunities to be obedient to God.

In closing, please agree with us in faith for our financial needs. Here is how we receive our support: we are not salaried. Our home church supports us generously, and then the greater amount that we need comes through people like yourself, who are led by the Lord to give. We are very grateful to all who are able to support us financially. May the Lord richly bless you in return.

We see our own responsibility in finances to be faith, giving, stewardship and obedience. **Please pray that we will move ahead in bold faith, be extravagant in our giving, painfully pure in our stewardship and fiercely obedient to the Holy Spirit.** We believe God will provide.

We see the responsibility of our friends is to do the same. **Please pray for those whom the Lord calls to support this ministry, that they also will move ahead in bold faith, be extravagant in their giving, painfully pure in their stewardship, and fiercely obedient to the Holy Spirit!**

If you read this far, you must be a friend. Thanks for being our friend. Remember, you are blessed by God.

With love,

*John and Jackie*

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

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