



## Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

June 1, 1998



Dear friends,

Greetings from Bosnia!

I am writing from a nice apartment in a small town in the central part of the country. Last evening we ate at a nice Italian restaurant in a new shopping mall. Marble floors, huge fountain, ice cream cones...not what I expected to find here!

Jen and I are with Jim and Christine Erickson, leaders of a team of 15 people working with Impact Teams International. (Jackie has gone to Michigan.) This team is working in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to resettle Serbian people who have been uprooted by the war.

We came by car with Jim and Christine from Vienna, driving through gorgeous countryside, first in Austria, then Slovenia, followed by Croatia, and finally Bosnia. The beauty of the mountains and valleys here is awesome. The ravages of war are overwhelming. We drove for miles through areas where every home has been burned, destroyed, damaged or vacant. Since most were built of brick and stone, they stand without roofs unless they were blown up. Many are sprayed with bullet holes.

Bosnia had 4.5 million people before the 4 year war. 1/4 million were killed, another 1/4 million wounded. Another 1 million fled or were driven out. So about 3 million remain.

Yesterday Jen and I traveled with Christine to three villages to register returning Serbian refugees. These are people returning to their own damaged homes. Most returnees are in their 50's and 60's. Few families with children want to come back to these villages with no schools, no water, and no electricity.

Each returnee receives a package of aid: a wood stove, bed and mattress, plastic for broken windows, plastic for burned out roof, flour, beans, and cooking oil. Jim and Christine and their team have resettled 1500 families in the two years they have been doing this. About half of their staff are Croatian and Serbian Christian young men who have been saved through Teen Challenge in Zagreb, Croatia. Knowing the language, they serve in the field as translators. They also watch over the supplies and they regularly visit the families who have been settled to make sure they are OK. This team of Christians are

the only group that is showing such personal concern for the refugees. Pray that God will use their labor of love to open the hearts of the people to the Lord and pave the way for other ministries to do evangelism and church planting. There may only be a handful of evangelical churches in all of Bosnia.

### UKRAINE REPORT...

Our team of seven arrived safely in Kiev on June 13th as scheduled, and got through customs with our seven large bags of medical humanitarian aid. Olga, with a Lithuanian passport, was the only one who was questioned. The customs agent wanted to make her pay all the money she was carrying for the medical supplies in her bag. Jackie and I went over to help her. When the customs agent realized there was a team, he demanded to see all our luggage, and insisted that we had not followed regulations in bringing in these medicines. We didn't have the right forms, he said. We asked what forms he meant. He didn't know, but said the US government knew what was needed! We simply said we were trying to do the right thing, and would he like to look inside Olga's bag? (The rest of our team had already been passed on through, including us, without even a question.) It so happened that her bag had an assortment of things visible, and all that I could see of the medicines were eight large bottles of antibiotics, which he saw and counted. Suddenly he stopped, and waved us on through. Praise the Lord!

Pastor Uri and one of his men were there to meet us, and off we went to the train station. By 7 a.m. the next morning (Sunday) we were in Krivoy Rog, by 8 a.m. in our three host apartments, and by 10 a.m. splitting four ways to go to four churches -- Jackie and I to one, pastor Gordy to the second, pastor Roger to the third, and Jen, Olga and Bill to the mother church. This kind of activity continued throughout the week, so that we had about twenty meetings among the twelve churches before the conference started, as well as meeting with the pastors and leaders of the churches. In most of the meetings people were saved, though not perhaps as many per service as we have seen on other trips. Many were filled with the Spirit, and countless people were prayed with individually for healing, deliverance, family restoration, etc. It was normal for us to pray for everyone who wanted prayer, so all meetings lasted several hours.

*"Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession."*

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

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The conference lasted for three days, and though meant for pastors and leaders, was opened to all. There were perhaps five hundred in attendance, with pastors and leaders from twenty five churches, half of them from Krivoy Rog, the other half from other Ukrainian cities. The theme was "Working for the Lord Without Losing the Lord Himself" The direction that the Lord gave us was to teach and minister on staying filled with the Holy Spirit, and staying in close fellowship with the Lord.

Jen, Olga and Bill had meetings with the youth on two days of the conference. The first day was very difficult for them -- people asking irrelevant questions, and no one seeming to be interested in the topics. We realized that we had not adequately prayed over them and their meeting, and so we did before their second day. It was another example of the difference that prayer can make. They had the same people in the same room, but had a wonderful time. The young people were eager and hungry to learn, asked only pertinent questions, and there was a significant presence of the Lord!

Roger, Gordy, Jackie and I each preached during the conference and we all ministered to the people at times of prayer. It was a great time, with a powerful presence of the Lord and a great hunger in the people for the Lord. Altar calls were a little dangerous, as people would press forward for prayer. On at least two occasions when Roger called out for people to come forward for a fresh anointing of the Spirit, people ran to the front and I thought for a moment there would be a small riot! Care had to be taken in praying for the people, because the power of the Spirit was strong; many times people would collapse to the floor before our hands touched them in prayer.

One blessing was noticing the number of translators available during this conference. Counting the experienced ones as well as the young ones, there were as many as seven with us on the front row. What a difference from our first trips there, when sometimes we had only one inexperience, unsaved translator! Thank you, Jesus!

Throughout the time we were there we had ongoing discussions about the starting of the Bible School, which is scheduled to open September 15. Such a project is an adventure in cross-cultural communication, and stretches the limits of what we can do without knowing the Russian language. One of the biggest needs is for an experienced interpreter to be at the Bible School for all nine months, to work with each foreign teacher (two weeks of each month), and to help train potential translators who are there in the churches in Krivoy Rog. Will you pray for this

need? One young lady who worked with us this time and on previous trips is our first choice, but it would mean her being uprooted from important responsibilities in Kiev. She is now praying about this. Please pray.

We will be working with pastor Gregori by phone and fax in planning the curriculum and other aspects of the school during July and August. Oh, how we need the grace and wisdom of God in this Bible School adventure! Pray!

During the conference we met with perhaps 60 potential students to talk about the Bible School and answer questions. Many of them are the present pastors and leaders of the churches. Gregori informed them all that students will be required to start evangelistic home groups during the school year: that is, reaching out to new people, seeing them saved, and caring for them in a small group. He said the goal would be to see those groups grow and divide by the end of the school year! He also announced to the conference that they want to see at least five new churches planted out of this Bible School! When applying to the school, each student will be asked if they are ready to relocate to another city for evangelism and church planting!

You can see from these goals that teaching in this school will be a valuable investment in the future work of church planting and missions outreach from these people. Our reason for partnering with them is to see that they become a sending base for many new missionaries and church planters. Please pray for this to take place, by God's grace.

Pray for all who will be teachers -- the four Ukrainians who will be the local staff, and we who will come monthly to supply half the instruction for the school year. Some have already agreed to go, and we will be asking others. All must hear from God, and the Lord will need to supply for all who go. Please pray for us as we coordinate the sending of teachers each month of the school year.

Pray for all who will be students. It means a big change for them, attending classes 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., studying, and also reaching out into the community as part of their training. Many have families to support while they are in school. Pastors will continue to pastor while they are in school. Attending this school will be a major challenge for each student. Please pray for them. The plan is to limit the size of the student body to thirty for the first year, so that each one can be properly cared for and disciplined.

### **OUR SUMMER...**

We had hoped to take a team to China the first part of August. We now are thinking that we will stay home during these next two months to properly prepare for the Ukrainian Bible School. Also, during this time, our missionary friends who work among the Chantik people in Indonesia will be home, and we need time with them to plan future ministry there. They are asking us to come next winter during Ramadan to minister to the growing team of workers who are there. Late in the summer will be another Chantik consultation in Denver. Immediately following this we are scheduled to teach for a week in a new YWAM school, a Family Discipleship training school, in Wells, MN. I also hope to finish some house remodeling while the weather is warm.

Please pray for us in these next important weeks of planning and cross cultural communication.

### **LOOKING AHEAD...**

Come fall time, we will be heading back to Ukraine, by God's grace. And again in the winter. And again in the spring. Indonesia will also be on

our schedule, and hopefully China. As always, when we are not traveling, we give time to our home church, and to our city. Please pray for wisdom in setting our priorities and use of our time. May our lives be spent in His will, done in His timing, and in His way.

### **A BIG THANKS...**

It took many financial blessings to bring our team to Ukraine and Bosnia. Thanks to each of you who listened to the Lord and who gave to send us here. And thanks for continuing to pray for us. You are partners in our ministry. Will you trust the Lord with us for the summer months? As always, He must provide for us at home, as well as when we travel. We believe He will meet every need. Thanks for trusting Him in agreement with us. You are a great blessing!

May the Lord bless you and your family, and we look forward to seeing you in God's time!

With love,  
John and Jackie