



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

November, 1998



Dear friends,

Greetings again in Jesus' Wonderful Name! We're back in Minnesota after a great time in Ukraine. The Lord's blessing and protection was evident throughout our journey! Teaching in the Bible School in Krivoy Rog was a wonderful experience, with hungry students taking in all we could give them. Jackie's words were, "...the most rewarding ministry of our lives!"

Laying the foundation of Christ's redemption...

We taught along the lines of what we call "scarlet thread" teaching: basically a walk through the Bible following the path of our glorious redemption in Jesus Christ. From Genesis, in the garden of Eden where the Father Himself made the first blood sacrifice to clothe Adam and Eve in their sin, to Revelation, where we see the tribulation saints having washed their robes in the blood of the lamb, the scarlet thread of complete redemption in the blood of Christ is the most wonderful story ever told! What a privilege to lay this firm foundation of Jesus Christ in the lives of these Ukrainians bound for evangelism and church planting!

In addition to the teaching, we continued what was started by the September team, taking the students out for evangelism in marketplaces. They can now do this on their own very well! Dozens prayed to accept Christ on the street through this activity on Friday afternoons.

Getting gladly tired in joyful work...

Beyond the Bible school ministry, we also had other joyful things to do. One day I helped pastor Gregori baptize in water 163 converts, their largest baptism yet. (They have a water baptism several times a year.) It took three hours to do it all! A great way to get really tired! All of them received new Bibles. Being able to do this in their own baptistry in their new church building -- this was a blessing for them and us!

On another day we travelled about three hours away to a meeting of two churches that had recently joined Gregori's fellowship of "Churches of Praise". We went to ordain a pastor of the younger, or daughter church, and also ordained two assistant pastors for the mother church, which is only months old itself! Seeing two hundred people in this village meeting hall was quite amazing! These young pastors have their hands full!

Twice I travelled two hours with Gregori to minister at another "Church of Praise" only weeks old, yet already having fifty converts, with thirty of them now meeting weekly to be trained in evangelism!

We were asked by Gregori and Galena to teach on family life and pray individually with the laying on of hands over all of the families in the two churches that they themselves pastor. This we did in three meetings, praying together over each person and family group — probably 700 people in total. Many were deeply touched by the power and presence of God in these meetings. So were we, thank God, or we would have not had the strength to do it! At one point we were so tired that we stopped and huddled in prayer with our anointed translator, Lyubov, and asked the Lord for a fresh anointing and -- "BAM!" -- the Holy Spirit showed up in fresh power and came suddenly on each person as we resumed praying! Thank you, Jesus, and thank you friends for praying.

Please pray with us for the restoration of the family in these churches. Under communism, the family was severely damaged. In Krivoy Rog, it has been worse than in other areas. This city of one million is known for having the highest rate of chemical abuse in the nation. For most of these people, before they came to Christ, the family was a place of drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic abuse, and divorce. One event illustrated for us this widespread devastation: during one Sunday service pastor Gregori installed six new ushers, and had each of them give a testimony of their conversion. ALL of these men testified to being set free from long years of drug abuse!

On this trip, Gregori and Galena specifically asked us to be spiritual overseers to them. After much prayer, we agreed to this, seeing it as a continuation of the relationship already established, and with the agreement that we are friends standing beside them with encouragement and support, rather than in any way "over them". Actually, we'd just as soon have Gregori and Galena as OUR spiritual overseers! Please support us in prayer for this humbling and serious responsibility. These churches receive us as spiritual "mom and dad", but we don't feel adequate to the task. When we are asked for counsel, we must make sure our response is from the Word of God, and not from a Western perspective, or just from our own conscience. It is very important that these new churches become anchored to the Word, not to us or to our opinions.

Some of you sent gifts for the feeding of students in the Bible School. We were able to carry with us enough for this need to be met until January. We are trusting the Lord that we can carry more when we go back in January, and to help with this need each

month through the school year. Thank you for continuing to give toward this need (\$1000 per month) as the Lord leads you.

God also blessed us with a very skilled second translator, Slava, who was not found for us until the morning of our arrival in Kiev. He was also computer expert! No one except the Lord knew we had brought a new computer that needed to be set up in the Russian language. Slava did all that, and also trained in several people in the church to use the computer. Praise the Lord for this needed help!

The Lord has provided teachers for us to send each month to the school, which we count as an answer to prayer! Please pray for these teachers. Ministering several hours a day, plus evenings and weekends in the churches, is a huge responsibility.

Pastor Gregori has begun the process of doubling the size of the new sanctuary, so that it can hold 1,200 people. It isn't even finished! 20 people have been there daily, working on construction, all unpaid volunteers. Sunday services are packed, and 20-30 people come for salvation every week. The harvest continues!

An immediate need: One of the churches (100 people) meet in an unheated theater. They suffered through last winter, like a Minnesota winter, with NO heat. (The people kept coming anyway.) Pastor Sergei has started building a small building, which can hold 150. I asked Gregori what it would take to get this church into that new building, with heat for the winter. He said, perhaps \$1200 -- unfinished, but with heat and electricity. If the money was there, Gregori said, he would stop work immediately on the mother church, and put his workers on Sergei's building. They could do the work quickly. A tiny price to get a church out of the cold, don't you think? Knowing that the cost could be more, we'd like to see a \$2,500 gift go to Krivoy Rog immediately to enclose and heat that church building. Please pray for this to happen.

Looking ahead through the eyes of faith...

Back home, our next weeks will be filled with home meetings, prayer and prayer meetings, pastors meetings, etc., as well as much time continuing to coordinate international ministry. We are looking ahead to the new year, when we will probably be travelling overseas more frequently than in previous years. These journeys take considerable time and effort beyond the actual going, so please pray for us to be able to balance this international work with our ongoing life and ministry at our home base. It is a

privilege to serve the Lord in this way, though not easy, and we see His hand of blessing and provision along the way. This we know is due to His goodness and to your loving help. Your concern and prayer and giving is such a large blessing! Please pray for wisdom as we set the schedule for the months ahead.

We are considering a new name for our ministry which will include the diversity of ministry and missions that the Lord has been giving to us, as well as the work of mobilizing prayer. Prayer will continue to be at the heart, as it must be with all ministries, with evangelism and missions the heartbeat. Pray with us for wisdom as we proceed through this minor adjustment in our public identity. We believe the name will be Scarlet Thread, which reflects the message of redemption in the blood of Jesus, yet provides discretion when needed, such as when working in restricted access countries where security is an issue.

Thanks again, Jesus, and thanks, friends...

You probably know that we are unsalaried, and that we continue to look to the Lord daily for our household and personal needs as well as all that is needed for mission outreach. We value your prayer support at all times. Sometimes our most difficult trials come, not at times of mission outreach, but when we are at home. But in all things, we find God to be completely trustworthy and faithful, and it is to Him that we look for all our needs.

As you agree with us in faith and prayer that every need will be supplied, He provides in His way. Yes, so often, that is through some of you who are able and led to give. And for that, we say thanks...thank You Jesus, and thanks, friends.

We carry you in our hearts, and believe with you for the blessing of the Lord in your lives and ministry. You and we are blessed to be a blessing!

You can't get too much blessing...!

Some think too much blessing is bad for Christians. But the promises of God say otherwise. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?"* (Rom. 8:32) We have not exhausted His promises, nor can we ever do so. Keep God and His abundant promises as your "bottom line", not yourself or your own efforts. When you keep focused on His faithfulness, you will find yourself becoming more faithful and obedient. Soon you will be blessed enough to be a great blessing!

With love,

John and Jackie