



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

January 4, 2000



Dear friends,

We greet you in the New Year 2000 in the Wonderful Name of Jesus!

It was an unusual beginning to a new year, wasn't it? The hoopla of entering a new millennium (let the record show that it really happens next year) was expected to be overshadowed by Y2K computer glitches, but.....here we are, with flushing toilets and instant cash machines intact. So, what's next?

One of our elders works for a media company that helps produce television news. When he asked one of the executives there if he knew the millennium doesn't really begin until NEXT January, the man replied, "We know that, but our watchers and listeners didn't want to hear that." Our friend replied, "Is that how you report all the news?" "Well....yes, sort of..."

So, it seems we'll need sources of information other than the media to know what's next!

What's next for you? As you look into the year 2000, what do you see for yourself?

Sometime ago, I realized I had no vision for life after the year 2000. Somehow, in my childhood, I came to believe the world would probably end by then. I think it was a combination of preachers' predictions and my own evaluation that the world was falling apart.

I lived through several prophetic episodes, in which a well-meaning spiritual leader predicted the time of the return of Christ, or the beginning of the tribulation, or the fall of America. I guess even well-meaning Christians can be wrong.

However, I never scoff at these things, not even the dire predictions of Y2K. Thank the Lord for the technicians who fixed so much and prevented much trouble! And I certainly do not scoff at the seeming delay in Christ's return. I got that settled a while ago as I came to understand the Father's heart for people, and the significance of these words in II Peter 3:

"...you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation! ...The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

One thing delays the coming of Jesus: the Father loves people and wants them in heaven, not hell. If that is true, only one thing will hasten His coming: bringing people to salvation. If we long for His appearing, we will preach the gospel to the world. As Jesus said in Matthew 24:14,

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

God has determined the "end" to be at the finishing of the preaching of the gospel to the whole world.

Don't get me wrong. Only the Father knows the hour when it will happen. Only He knows when the task is finished. We must live as if Jesus could come today. What do you want to be

found doing when He arrives? ...Then do it.

We must also live as if He might not return in our generation. This means we need to invest our lives in that which counts, not only for ourselves, but for our children and grandchildren. It is not a Christian view to abandon the world to evil, thinking..."oh, it's a sign of the end", then hunker down in our corner and wait for it. Jesus said, "*Occupy until I come.*" He is not coming for a church hiding in caves. He is coming for a church invading the darkness of the world and shouting the good news from the housetops...regardless of the cost.

So, I now have a vision for the year 2000 and beyond. How about you? Are you seeing and dreaming and hoping and planning and determining and expecting and moving ahead with God?

Some of us are older now, and that can add to our thinking that the "end is near". I know people in their fifties whose main preoccupation is preparing for the "declining years". I know someone in their fifties who went out to purchase a rocking chair for retirement!

No way! Go spend that money on some knee pads for extended prayer. Get fresh marching orders from God. Buy a pair of jungle boots and go bring the good news to someone who doesn't know about God's love. Stay there until your money runs out, so you've got nothing left for that rocking chair. Then watch God take care of you. You'll find your youth renewed. You won't want that rocking chair for a long time.

Psalms 103 says "*He renews our youth like the eagle...*" I don't like the sagging in my 57 year old face. I'd like to look like my wedding picture. (50 lbs. lighter too!) But renewing my youthful face isn't my greatest need. (Or yours.) The greatest need is to be young on the inside. The greatest tragedy is to get old in your heart.

Young people generally have the ability to dream, to hope, to prepare to do something wonderful with their lives. Not all those dreams may come to pass, but what a tragedy it is when a young person has no dreams, no vision, and no goals.

To get old inside is to stop having dreams and visions, to shut down the sense of adventure and live just "hanging on 'till the end". Hey, face it! If that's you, you're already dead....you're just taking up space waiting to be buried!

No way! Stick close to Jesus...you'll get younger!

Jackie's dad was a pioneer missionary in the jungle mountains of South East Asia. They called him "the mountain man". He was no longer an American on the inside after 30 years in the mountains trekking for Jesus. He contracted a mysterious disease in his latter years, and while in the USA the doctors tried to get him to stay in the USA. He knew the mission would probably put him behind a desk. He would have none of that. They finally released him back to his mountains. Four months later he died in those mountains of that mysterious disease "with his boots on", as they say. He had "finished the course and kept the faith". He never stopped dreaming about the unreached people over the next

mountain. He never stopped trekking to bring the gospel to them, until his body gave out and he went to "glory", as the old saints called heaven.

Do you have your "boots on" for Jesus? Some Christians I know have a certain blank look in their eyes when asked what their hopes and dreams are. There was never a question what the dreams of Jackie's dad were. He kept following that dream until he died, and he kept giving that dream away to the younger missionaries. "Now don't get too comfortable here," he would say to them. "Just over that mountain there are villages who have never heard the gospel. You must go to them also."

I'd like to have my "boots on" for Jesus until it's time to go to "glory". I'd like to keep dreaming and planning and doing and going with Jesus wherever He goes.

Some folks say, "Oh, I just want to be like Jesus." "That's my goal", they say. Well, that is a good goal. We are destined to become like Him. But what is it to be like Him? I think we need to read the gospels again so we can see Jesus clearly. What do you find Jesus doing? Up on the mountain to pray all night, and out in the world all day bringing good news and healing to every one around Him. I'd like to be just like Jesus also.

Paul said it this way...

"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:12-14

God has taken hold of your life for a purpose. Do you know what that purpose is? Press towards it. Forget what is behind. Push forward to what lies ahead.

It is an art to forget what lies behind. In the last few weeks I have been asking God to take all the emotional baggage out of me from 28 years of ministry. I was feeling "old" on the inside, cluttered up with memories bad and good, feeling too tied to the past to get a clear look at the future. Maybe you need to ask Him to do the same thing for you.

If you are up in years, God wants to renew your youth on the inside, so that you keep hoping and looking ahead and dreaming and planning and doing with Jesus what He has chosen you for. Then you can spend your remaining time on the earth in those things which matter for eternity, and you can impart hope and vision to those who are younger than you.

Psalms 71 is a prayer of an old man. Here is how he prayed:

"I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds. Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come."

Let's come to the end of our life on earth saying that we "fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith". And let's let God renew us on the inside, help us to stay *young on the inside*. Let's have our "boots on for Jesus" until we go to heaven, so that we can impart vision and direction to those growing up around us, so that we can point them to the next mountain to climb!

What's next for us?

I (John) leave for Ukraine next week, Wed., January 12. I will return on February 1. Jackie will be at home. Please pray, not only for my ministry and travel, but for Jackie at home. We are expecting God's favor and grace and provision for everything, and thank you for your agreement with us that every need will be met -- not only for the Ukraine trip, but for Jackie's needs at home. (For us, staying and going is the same -- depending on God for everything.)

I will visit a church in Germany for two days on my return, who have also become involved with us in Krivoy Rog through our friends Steve and Marilyn Hill. I have not yet met them, and was asked by them to visit. So, it is a friendship building time for the sake of Ukraine.

Schools of Prayer, 2000

On February 22, we will begin the most extensive school of prayer that we have yet done. It will function when we are in town, and will be in five segments of six weeks each, on Tuesday evenings, for a total of thirty weeks of 2000. (Scheduled around four mission journeys.) We have enclosed a brochure about the school. In addition, we are planning two special prayer events:

"Living in His Presence" April 13-15 Worship, teaching, and prayer. A time of refreshing and rerooting ourselves in the finished sacrifice of Jesus. We will spend the whole time at the communion table. You are welcome.

"Redeeming the Land" June 15-17 A school of onsite intercession. Practical instruction on strategic prayer to change the spiritual climate of neighborhoods and cities. Join us!

Please pray with us for these schools, especially the beginning February 22. It is our hope to encourage many old and new prayer warriors in these schools.

Our children:

Jay and Lana have just purchased a home in Fridley and will move there this month. Jay works at Gabberts Furniture, and Lana for Hennepin County Social Services.

Jen and Scott also live in Fridley. Jen is in her senior year as a vocal performance major at North Central University, and working at Lejuene Steel Comply. Scott works for American Express.

Jeff and Jermaine are in Gold Canyon, Arizona. Jeff works for Arizona State University and Jermaine teaches first grade at a charter school.

Thank you for agreeing with us in faith for our children, that they grow and prosper in their walk with God, and that they are blessed to be a blessing to many! They are loved.

As always, thanks!

We thank you again for your care and partnership with us in serving the Lord. Thank you for praying for us as the Lord reminds you. For those of you who are able and led, thank you for supporting us financially and giving to the needs in Ukraine. Could we say it a thousand times, it would not seem enough. And most of all, we thank the Lord for His mercy and grace in bringing us all into a new year. For you and us, the mercies of the Lord are brand new! May you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus in the year 2000! Keep your boots on for Jesus!

With love,

John and Jackie

Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to "Scarlet Thread Ministries"

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