



# Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

February 28, 2001



Dear friends,

We greet you once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! It is a privilege for us to write to you, and always a blessing to realize that people actually read our letters and pray for us! We still call this letter "Lifeline" because we see your friendship that way. Yes, we must trust the Lord ourselves, looking to Him for all our needs, and yet we know we are not alone and cannot serve the Lord alone. We are members of His body. Thank you for being members with us in the ministry to which He has called us!

### **We carry the Ukrainian churches in our hearts...**

We returned home with the 26 Ukrainian churches, pastors and leaders more deeply in our hearts than ever before, due partly to having spent half of our time there in personal meetings with each pastor, and some of the other heads of ministries.

There are several practical needs in Ukraine for which we ask prayer, that God will release funds and provision. We know that no one is called to meet all these needs, but we do know that believing prayer releases the supernatural supply of the Lord. So, thanks for agreeing with us in faith and prayer. These needs are like the vessels the poor widow collected from her neighbors in 2 Kings 4: They are "vessels of need" collected from our Ukrainian neighbors and presented to God. We are trusting that the oil of the Holy Spirit will supernaturally flow into these needs. They represent much more than financial needs. They represent investments to reach many people for Christ and have their lives dramatically changed by the power of the Spirit!

#### **1. Feeding the poor**

Pastor Gregori is being asked by city officials to minister to the poorest of the poor in his part of the city. These officials have a specific list of twelve hundred families in this category, asking not only that the church would help feed them, but as the officials put it: "...that you would change their thinking." Wow, a great open door to serve the city and bring the gospel to the poor.

Also, doors are open to the prisons, but with a condition from the prison officials: "Bring us something we can feed the prisoners, and you can do your ministry here." In the economic hardship of Ukraine, the prisons are the last to get any help from the government.

Regarding this opportunity to feed the poor, pray for a link that seems to be developing with the European headquarters for Food For The Hungry. This worldwide organization has wanted to work in Ukraine, but due to the corruption in the country has been unable to ship food there. They have been looking for someone trustworthy to work with in Ukraine — we know the Churches of Praise would be faithful stewards! This could open up a major flow of food to help the poor into Krivoy Rog and other cities in the country.

#### **2. Church buildings**

Seven of the churches with whom we work are in the process of trying to purchase or build a building. It is frequently very difficult for them to find space to rent, and when they do, the agreements are sometimes not dependable. So, most of them need to get their own buildings. Thank God it is possible for them to buy or build (with considerable challenge in working with local officials, of course). The buildings being looked at range from a house with a burned roof that can be purchased for \$450, to "storefront" buildings available for \$1000 to \$4000, to a former restaurant for \$10,000, to a 30 classroom school property with several acres of ground that can be purchased for \$55,000. All of them would need considerable renovation. Western dollars go quite far there, but for a small Ukrainian church a \$1000 purchase is huge amount for them to raise. God can find those who can help them.

#### **3. Children's summer camp**

There will be children's camps this summer, reaching several hundred children, many of whom are unsaved (and who will come to know Jesus through the camps.) However, there is no camp available for them to use! So, Tanya and Igor, a married couple who head up the children's work among the churches, would like to do it in tents. They may be able to use some farm land near a lake and a forest, which is owned by one of the new pastors. They have no tents, of course, nor any of the equipment needed to feed the campers. They also need all kinds of athletic and recreational equipment. They need several sleeping tents, each sleeping eight or ten children, plus a tent for cooking and eating, and a tent for meeting (to hold a hundred at a time). Pray that such things can be found, and that God will provide.

#### **4. Sound equipment for new churches.**

Where would your church be without a good sound system? This is a primary need for any new church that is starting public meetings.

#### **5. Musical instruments**

All kinds of musical instruments are needed. The Ukrainians are very artistic, very quick to learn musical skills. The husband of one of the new pastors able to teach all kinds of musical instruments, but there are no instruments. In addition to keyboards, which can be purchased there, we'd like to send trumpets, violins, guitars, flutes, etc. Do you know anyone who has musical instruments sitting in their closets unused? Let these instruments become Ukrainian missionaries! Thanks for praying for these needs.

#### **6. Financial support for pastors of new churches.**

This support is needed until a new church becomes mature enough and large enough to support the pastor.

#### **7. Feeding the Bible School students and the rehabilitation center.**

This means that one hundred and fifty people are being fed daily at the main church. If the church itself paid for this, it would take most of the church's income. Giving toward this need is an excellent investment in the lives of these future ministers and in those whose lives are being restored in the rehab center.

#### **8. Supplying the free pharmacy in the main church**

This is used to help those who cannot afford medicine. Hundreds of people are helped each month. In addition to the need to supply medicines which are unavailable in Ukraine, there is an ongoing financial need to purchase medicines which are available locally.

#### **9. Bibles, Bibles, Bibles.**

\$2 will buy a Bible. Thousands are continuously needed. Many of these are given to new converts after they have completed a ten week Alpha course — an excellent introduction to life in Christ. People are so hungry for the Word that they will take the ten week class just so they can get the Bible! Hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine have never read a Bible or have ever seen one! Can you think of a better use of \$2? **Give a man a fish, then teach him to fish...**

Supplying these needs are ministries of mercy. We are all called to show mercy, to help the poor. Showing mercy is the beginning of seeing people lifted out of the poverty in their culture. We must feed the hungry. Beyond that, to become free from poverty and bondage takes the strong preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. As an illustration, consider this: it is good to give a man a fish if he is hungry. But beyond that, it is even better to give a man a fishing pole and to teach him to fish.

We praise God for those who have helped in the ministry of mercy to Ukraine, whether in supplying food and medicine, or in other needs. We hope much more will be given. The needs and opportunities for

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giving are getting bigger, not smaller!

Along with the ministries of giving and showing mercy, we believe that the most important thing is to give them the Word, and teach them how to trust God and receive from Him themselves. We have seen the beginnings of God lifting the believers out of poverty, but it is only a beginning. More than anything else, they need to learn the Word of God and put it into practice. Then they will be blessed in every way. It is a known fact that where ever the gospel has been preached well in poor settings, the believers come up out of bondage and poverty. This is why the Bible says that we must “preach the gospel (good news) to the poor.” The good news for a poor person is more than the fact that God loves them in their poverty. The good news is also that they can be lifted up out of poverty.

All this is to say that it is our desire to sow, more than anything else, the Word of God in the Ukrainian church. That is why we go to teach and preach, and send others to do the same. That is why we invest ourselves in the Bible School, so that these future preachers and pastors would know the Word and be able to teach it well. Nothing changes lives like the living Word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit.

***Four things remain as foremost to us for Ukraine:***

1. That every believer have a Bible.
2. That the Ukrainian church will hear clearly the good news that God will meet their needs, and He will prosper them in every way, so that they can be a blessing to others both near and to the ends of the earth.
3. That the church have an ongoing supply of faith building literature.
4. That the Ukrainian pastors and leaders be encouraged and taught the Word well, so that they can teach the churches well.

***Why we will continue the mission to Ukraine...***

The Ukrainian church must be brought into the reality of God's will to bless them in every way. Otherwise we will do them a disservice. We will end up causing them to look to us or to whoever shows them mercy rather than to God Himself. We will create in them bondage to people rather than freedom in Christ. Praise God that He can bless and prosper His people in any culture, in any nation, and in any economy – if His people will learn to trust Him and obey Him!

Please pray with us that we would be on track with the Holy Spirit in serving the Ukrainian church as it rises to fulfill the call of God that is upon it. The mother church is quite strong spiritually, and just looking at it, we might think that we are no longer needed. But twenty-five daughter churches are not nearly so strong, and have yet to develop the overflow of the mother church. Moreover, there is now a tiny new church in another main city of Ukraine, and three other major cities are being considered for church planting. All of which revolves around a new generation of young church planters coming out of the Bible School and mother church. We feel like the work is just beginning.

We look for the day when these churches are sending their own missionaries to the nations. We are praying about whether this summer may be the time to go with a Ukrainian exploratory team into central Asia and across southern Siberia. This would be a trailblazing work of spiritual warfare and relationship building for future church planting by Ukrainians in other nations. Ukraine was called the “breadbasket of the nations.” The call on the Ukrainian church is to be a spiritual “breadbasket for the nations”. We probably are called to serve them until we see the fulfillment of this call.

Until then, we hope to cheer them on, and send others to cheer them on. We hope to keep telling them that God will provide for them abundantly above what they ask or think! (They already believe this!) We hope to keep funneling assistance to them in every way possible, and see them rise up to be a fountainhead for evangelism and church planting beyond their borders. The Ukrainian church that knows the overflow of God's blessings will become bread for the nations. Believe with us that the spirit of poverty will give way to them knowing they are blessed in every way so that they can be a blessing to the nations!

***Some time to visit our family...***

We are home for a while, or at least in the USA. We had been

anticipating going to Asia in March, but it doesn't seem that the Lord has confirmed for us that we should go. Instead, it seems the time is available to visit some of our family members, so we will head to Arizona and hopefully California in March. Time with our son Jeff and his wife Jermaine will come first, and hopefully then some time with Jackie's family who are all in California, whom she has not seen for a long time. Though not a mission trip, being with family is an important mission to us, and we think God feels the same way. Then we'll be home for a good part of April.

***Some time at home...***

While at home, our time these next weeks is being given to coordinating future teams to Ukraine, and catching up on my project of writing more mini-books like the few I have sent you in the past. I have a dozen more on a list to write, with two or three in process, but I am now way behind in getting them done. It of course takes much time, and there is a certain spiritual battle to win in order to do the work. Please pray for me in this writing ministry (and Jackie who does the editing).

I am also developing a Scarlet Thread web-site, hoping to have it online before we return to Ukraine. There is also administrative work to catch up on, since we are the whole staff of Scarlet Thread – financial records, mailing lists, etc. We also have weekly meetings in our home, though not in March, since we are going west. Jackie spends a lot of her time encouraging and counseling others. She has a ministry to many who look to her for help and advice and friendship. She is a great pastor and minister, you know! (I wouldn't let her edit this comment)

In the mornings, for me, it is pray, pray, pray. I spend much more time in prayer than ever before. It isn't because I am more spiritual now. It's because I am more desperate, and cannot maintain my life and my joy without a lot of time with God. And it just takes time to talk with God about everything that's going on. (And it takes time to listen to Him.) My greatest joy is early in the morning in the rush hour traffic...praying. OK, it may seem odd, but God showed me to circle our neighborhood and then the city and pray...and pray...and pray. Many mornings I do this when we are home. Some of this time is spent in prayer for the city, a lot of it is praise and worship, a great amount is praying by the Spirit. It is all mixed with a lot of ongoing repentance and in general could be described as talking to God about everything and anything that comes to my mind. After a couple of hours around the city, I frequently get in on one of the most enjoyable prayer meetings in town, at 8:30 a.m. every morning at Living Word Christian Center. This is usually led by Lynn Hammond wife of pastor Mac, a mighty woman of prayer. By 10 a.m. I start dealing with all the less important stuff.

***To Ukraine and Holland again...***

We will be heading back to Ukraine at the end of April, by God's grace. We will first spend a week in Holland ministering at a YWAM school led by Marcia La Rock, our missionary friend who is based there. (Marcia has been to Ukraine with us several times.) Then on to Krivoy Rog, to enter into the next phase of serving the beautiful harvest!

***And praise God we haven't run out of needs!***

Remember the oil kept flowing as long as there was another empty vessel. Hey, I was the one who thanked God last month that we'll never run out of needs! We saw financial miracles in the last few weeks, and praise the Lord we have more needs! We keep bringing our empty vessels to the Lord, and trust that the oil will keep flowing! You keep doing the same with your needs. If you run out of needs, go get some from your neighbors! That oil of the Spirit works for ALL needs!

***And finally there is you...***

We love you, we pray for you, we value your friendship. We thank you with big bunches of appreciation! Sometimes you are prayed for by name, and we always carry you in our hearts. Please continue to send us your prayer requests on the reply card. We always are trusting Him to bless you!

With love and blessing,

***John and Jackie***