



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie



January 29, 2001

Dear friends,

Greetings from Krivoy Rog, Ukraine! It is with the joy of the Lord that we greet you once again, from our "home away from home" in this ripened harvest field. We know we have flown here on the wings of prayer and faith, not just our own but yours! Like so many times before, it was the prayer of our friends that helped us through the "eye of the needle" of trusting God to provide everything for us to go. As always before, we watched Him do daily miracles right up to the time of our departure.

We ended up with ten large bags to carry, two with our own things, eight with gifts for the church. Medicines, tools, and the largest part, gifts for children. The little teddy bears and rabbits kept coming to our door wanting to be missionaries to Ukraine! Our home church children's ministry gave a large supply (thousands, I think) of little prizes, everything from tiny air-planes to plastic eyeballs.

We had more than our allowed luggage and went by faith to the airport. There was no way we could pay the \$125 or so per extra bag. Again, God made a way where there was no way. Hallelujah! (for the rest of the story, come to our Sunday night home meeting!)

We had plenty of time to thank God before leaving. The plane left more than four hours late. We landed in Amsterdam a few minutes after a bomb went off in an airport bathroom, shutting down the KLM office computers. It was a little chaotic. The airport was sealed off by police, and for a while we could not leave the airport. We missed our connecting flight to Kiev, and had to stay overnight in Amsterdam. We didn't suffer much, however. KLM airlines put us in a four star hotel, and fed us royally. We took the next day's flight to Ukraine, rested and refreshed. Bringing ten bags through Ukrainian customs puzzled the customs agent. We told him it was all gifts, mostly toys for children. He pointed to one of our bags and said to open it. On top were the plastic eyeballs. He looked disoriented. He went to get a supervisor. In a minute he returned and motioned us through with no further words. He seemed a little dazed. In a moment we were with our Ukrainian friends praising the Lord!

The oil that kept flowing

On the Sunday morning before we left home, I felt Jackie and I should take communion together as we sometimes do, bringing all our needs to the Lord and reminding ourselves of the finished work of Jesus Christ. As always, we had to look away from our needs to see Jesus, and apply His name and blood to our lives in expectation that He will meet every need. I took a jar of grape juice out of the refrigerator and noticed it was almost gone. I began pouring what little was in the jar into a small glass for our

communion service. As I poured the last drop of juice, suddenly I remembered the story in 2 Kings 4 about the widow and her two children. Her husband, a son of the prophets, had died. She was in debt and the creditors were about to take her children away. She came to Elisha, who said "What do you have in the house?" "Only a jar of oil," she said. Elisha instructed her to go to her neighbors and get all the empty vessels she could find. "Don't get a few," was the command. In other words, she was to get many vessels, a lot of them. Empty ones, of course. She did this, and then followed the instruction to go in her house with her children, shut the door and start pouring the oil out of her little jar into the empty containers.

I imagine she filled the room with these empty containers. And, as you probably know, the oil kept flowing and filling each vessel. It never stopped, until there were no more vessels to fill. I am sure that, had they found more empty vessels to fill, more oil would have flowed. As long as there was another empty vessel, the oil supernaturally kept flowing and filling. She was told to sell the oil, and pay her debts, which she did, and she and her children lived on the rest of the profit.

As I poured the last drop of juice, it was as if I stepped into this story, as if I stepped out of our kitchen into the house of that widow. When I came into the living room where Jackie was sitting, I sat down with the little bit of juice and the cracker for us to celebrate the Lord's communion.

We had placed our needs between us, a folder of bills and needs for this trip. In a moment I saw that these were not just needs, but vessels waiting to be filled. Instantly, I was actually happy for all these needs, for they were opportunities for God to pour in His supernatural provision. I thought, "Wow, am I glad we have all these needs. As long as we have needs, the oil of God's power and provision will keep flowing. And, praise the Lord, when we come home, we'll have more needs. And the next month we'll have more needs. And the month after, more needs." Not only was it our own needs beside us, but all the needs of the Ukrainians, as well as those of our children, our church, and our friends. "Hallelujah," I thought, "the oil will keep flowing, and I hope we never run out of needs!" (small chance of that.)

"I love problems!"

Pastor Gregori says to us now and then, "I love problems. The bigger the better. It's interesting to me to solve them." I think God is like that. He loves problems. He loves to solve them. But a problem or need is not a vessel waiting to be filled until it is brought to the Lord in expectation and faith. In the widow's

case, she was desperate. But the oil only flowed when she heard the word of God and presented all the vessels in God's presence, in faith and obedience doing what He said. Then the supernatural supply came. And kept coming. And coming. And coming. I asked the Bible school students the other day to count their problems. I counted mine. I asked how many did they have. Ten? Twenty? Get more, I said. The oil of God's faithfulness and grace and power and provision is flowing, and it will keep flowing as long as there is another problem, another need, presented to Him. After all, a need is just an empty space waiting to be filled with God's solution! If you run out of problems, I told them, go next door to your neighbor and get his or her problems. Go out on the street and collect some more problems. Bring them all into the presence of God. The oil of His presence and power will keep flowing as long as there are desperate and hungry people who have large needs and the "foolishness of faith", the audacity to believe, the simplicity of obedience. The oil will keep flowing!

And so for you. In your mind, turn your problems into vessels that are waiting to be filled with God. The thing about a vessel, say a cup on the shelf, is this. It sits there waiting to be filled. It is available. So, let your needs and problems be placed before God, and give Him the opportunity to pour the oil of His Spirit into those needs. Remember, the oil fills all vessels. It doesn't matter what kind of a vessel it is. As long as it is empty. It could be a need for healing, for finances, for wisdom, for family restoration, for ministry. The oil of God's Spirit will provide for all those vessels. Praise God for your needs, and thank Him that you have plenty of them to be filled. Just get more from those around you to make sure you keep an endless supply of opportunities for God to show Himself strong and faithful!

What we are doing

We are busy with teaching and with much personal time with pastors. Mornings are in classroom, afternoons and evenings with pastors and their spouses, one by one. Hearing how they are, how is their family, their churches, etc. What are the most important things for prayer. Praying for them. Hugging, and even some tears. There is an abundance of vessels here to be filled by God's supply. Pray with us for miracles for the Ukrainian church.

Yesterday we met with all the Alpha teachers and counselors, more than fifty of them. Alpha is a ten week course for new believers, actually one course of ten weeks, then another course of twelve weeks. Right now there are twenty-two Alpha courses going on around Krivoy Rog. All of them are full of inquirers and new believers hungry for God. At the end of the first ten weeks, each of them receives a Bible. Many kiss the Bible, receiving it in tears of great joy. The teachers are awed at the hunger and joy of these new believers as they receive the word of God. Last evening we preached in a celebration for evangelism. Two church bands played, highly skilled and anointed, and

two people gave strong testimonies. The 500 seat culture center was overpacked with believers and unbelievers. Most of them stood for the healing prayer that Jackie led. I had three altar calls, the first for addicts of drugs, alcohol and cigarette, and the front filled with a hundred desperate people. We prayed the prayer of authority in Jesus' name and blood over all of them. Then I invited all who wanted to repent and give their lives to Jesus to come up on the stage with me. Most of the addicts and more from the seated crowd came up to pray the sinner's prayer. Thirdly I prayed for forty or more who wanted to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a beautiful evening! Pastor Gregori was amazed at the evening, saying the altar was filled with known bandits and drug addicts!

This morning we spoke on family and marriage, and prayed blessings on many couples who had started their family away from God and outside of marriage and now wanted their unions blessed by God. Twenty or more couples came for this, each then receiving a certificate of marriage from the church. We then prayed for hundreds in mass who needed miracles in their families. Notable healings have taken place this week in the course of church life. Through the prayers of the church a woman's tumor disappeared; in a leader's meeting someone's poor eyesight suddenly became very good. A normal week.

The birth of a Lovelines Ministry

The church has begun a Lovelines crisis telephone ministry such as we have in Minneapolis. Only a month old, hundreds of calls have come in each week, with two counselors sharing the phone line. It is available from 9 a.m. to 1 a.m., and soon to become twenty four hours a day. They love it, saying the power of God is so strong, and the counselors want to be in there all the time! Another net is being thrown out into this desperate city!

Thank you once again

Thanks for praying for us, for the days we are still here, to have strength in the busy schedule, and for the days after we arrive home on Feb. 7, when the enemy sometimes takes advantage in our weariness. You share in the fruit of what takes place here, in your praying, and of course for some of you in the ministry of giving. With your love and concern, the "oil keeps flowing.

Welcome to our home

We continue to open our home on Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. for worship, prayer and the Word. You are always welcome.

May the Lord richly bless you, your home, and your ministry in His kingdom. You are blessed to be a blessing. He remains faithful, and His grace and mercy continues new each morning!

With love,

John and Jackie