

December 8, 2002



Celebrating 40 years married!

Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie



Dear friends,

Jackie and I greet you with love this Christmas season. We are so glad that Jesus came to earth! We are so glad we heard about Him when we were very young, and so glad someone showed us how to put our trust in Him! In these days of "post-Christian" culture in America, we think it's important to celebrate Christ and Christmas *even more*, in every way possible.

I (John) frankly have not always appreciated holidays. Jackie has always loved them. As you know, it takes work and usually money to have a celebration. Many people don't bother to have friends or family or neighbors in their house and I learned why. *It takes work.* It takes an effort to reach out to others. It's work to clean your house, put up the decorations and make the food. It's work to clean up afterwards. Jackie and I have to be *a committed team of two* to open our house to others. It takes effort to reach out to people, to set the dates, to communicate. It takes an effort to show love to people and to make them welcome in your home.

That is what the holidays are for: to renew your friendships and family ties, and show some love and appreciation to other people. These special days are also a time to raise up the standard of the things you value the most. As you know, there are world religious forces that want to destroy all faith in Jesus Christ. In some places in the world, it is dangerous and illegal to celebrate Christmas.

Of course, we know that our holidays in

America are commercialized, but think about it: the Christmas business is huge for the very reason that this celebration is so important to so many people.

So, celebrate. Celebrate Christmas. Instead of grumbling about how the world is doing it, do it your way. Do it in some way. Use the holidays to honor your faith in Christ and use the holidays to reach out to those people who are important in your life. It's also a time to reach out and bring some others into the circle of your life.

Your home is a powerful tool. Get on the phone, call some people, and have them over for coffee. Put some Christmas cookies on the table. (Go buy them if you can't bake them.) Show a little love, and offer a smile.

Ask your neighbors in for a "neighborhood holiday open house". That's what we began to do three years ago. Invite your neighbors to your living room. Have a cup of coffee together. Talk about their lives and yours, about anything. Show them that you are interested *in them*. As they go, assure them that you are praying for them. ALL of them will appreciate your prayer!

For us it took a huge effort to do something in our neighborhood, having lived for decades in the same neighborhood, and still knowing so few of our neighbors. An American neighborhood can be a very lonely place. People cloistered in their houses, coming and going often without even being seen, seemingly wanting to be left alone.

"Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the very ends of the earth Your possession." Ps. 2:8

"Lord," we asked, "how can we reach our neighbors"? It can feel like a harder task than going to another nation. Most Americans don't like strangers coming to their doors. I finally picked out four square blocks of houses surrounding ours, and decided to circle those blocks each day and pray for these 94 homes. I did that for two years, in the early morning when I left the house for morning prayer. Finally, I got a word in my heart: "Don't try to get inside their houses. Invite them into your house." I didn't know most of them -- we had never even seen many of their faces!

I drove around and wrote down each house number. Then I used the internet to find out who lived in those houses (you'll find 80% of the names and phone numbers.) Then we mailed an invitation to those 94 homes: "You are invited to a neighborhood open house, meet your neighbors, have a cup of coffee..." Before the date, we called each house with the same invitation. (We talked to a lot of answering services.) Then we sent another reminder card to them just before the date, which was on Saturday afternoon between Christmas and New Years day. Not everyone came of course -- only a small part of them -- but our neighbors have filled our living room on that day each year. We know some of them better now. They know we pray for them, and our neighborhood seems warmer and more open. We look for the Lord to do more in the future.

Use the holidays to celebrate Jesus and to love others. It takes some effort, and it costs something, but it's worth it!

January: we go to Ukraine and Armenia...

By God's grace and His supernatural provision, Jackie and I will again go to Krivoy Rog, Ukraine in mid-January. We hope to spend the majority of the time in the primary place we need to be: in the classroom with the Bible College students, teaching the priceless foundations of the Word. It is our greatest joy to be with these students, laying the foundations of Christ and His completed redemption.

We love to take these hungry men and women through the Bible, helping them to follow the "scarlet thread" of redemption, and showing them how to put that redemption to work in their daily lives. These are the new generation of laborers, and if we are called to anything, it is to help them have a good foundation in the Word. Of course, many other things will demand our attention while there: encouraging the pastors and leaders and the many new churches, helping solve issues and problems, and having too many places to go...

And a new adventure: to the country of Armenia, in what is called the "Caucasus region", nestled uncomfort-

ably in between Georgia and Azhjerbijan, on the northeastern border of Turkey and the northwestern border of Iran. We say "uncomfortably", since it is mostly surrounded by unfriendly nations.

Armenia has a strong Christian heritage, unlike most of its neighbors. The country suffered tragically early in the late 19th and early 20th century, when many hundreds of thousands of Christians were killed or deported by Turkish forces. Though the present generation of Armenians has known a Christian tradition, few of them have experienced the new birth and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

It seems important that we go with Gregori to Armenia, where two young men from the Churches of Praise have recently been sent as church planting missionaries.

Please join us in faith, as we are in the process of obtaining visas for these two countries, and making the travel plans. Never a routine, we always need supernatural provision to go, and a fresh anointing from the Holy Spirit.

His faithful provision...

Does God's provision keep coming in days of economic ups and downs? We believe so, and we have the opportunity to put that to the test every day. (So do you, we are sure.) Thank you for believing with us for His provision in our lives and for Scarlet Thread Ministries. We are believing for His provision in your life as well. Let's trust God together for the days ahead. He remains faithful, and He will bring His own purposes to pass, as we stay close to Him and do what He tells us to do.

As you know, we are always trusting God to bring in the funds for our 1) personal support, 2) needs of Scarlet Thread office, 3) missionary travel, and 4) financial help for the churches in the countries where we are working.

Our purpose is taking the gospel to the nations -- here in the USA, in Ukraine, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and regions beyond!

This takes many financial partners, many more than we now have. Perhaps the Lord will lead you to become a partner, if you haven't already done so.

Our appreciation for you...

Thank you for reading our letters. Thank you for praying for us. To those of you able to give financially, we say a big thanks.

May you and your family experience the Presence of the One whose coming we are celebrating, and the Blessing of the Father who sent Him -- that you might have eternal life, freedom, health, prosperity and peace of mind.

With love,

John and Jackie