



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

April 10, 2005



Dear friends,

Jackie and I greet you once again in the Wonderful Name of Jesus! We thank you again from our hearts for receiving and reading our prayer letters. It has been nearly twenty years since we left the pastoral ministry and entered into this "coming and going" ministry with friends like you. We are more dependent on your prayer and support than ever!

Jackie's testimony...

I wish to give testimony to the faithfulness of God and to answered prayer. Last spring 2004 I was complaining of epigastric pain. During a gastroscopy the doctors discovered I had thirteen stomach ulcers. With medication they are now healed. In the fall, I went to the doctor again with epigastric pain, and suggested to the doctor that it was maybe from my gall bladder. He felt it was important to check my heart first. The cardiologist diagnosed me with a damaged heart, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and put me on four medications. After further testing, including an angiogram, two different cardiologists decided that there was no heart damage, no high blood pressure, and no high cholesterol, and I was taken off all medication. Praise the Lord!

In October, I went to the emergency department with epigastric pain again, and I suggested that I was having trouble with my gall bladder. This time, after multiple testing, they discovered that I had dozens of gall stones, and that I also had a symptom-free, benign kidney tumor. Surgery for my gall bladder was scheduled for December 2.

In the meantime, bunion surgery for my painful feet was recommended. I talked them into doing both feet at once, even though I had many gruesome reports from people telling me how terrible it was. My thought was, I'm going to be laid up anyway; lets just get it all over with at once. My foot surgeries were done on October 18. In a pre-operative workup, the doctors had great concern about a probable bleeding disorder, for which they did thousands of dollars worth of tests. Praise God, they all came back normal!

My gallbladder surgery and foot surgeries were performed six weeks apart without any complications. Recovery was remarkably pain-free. Following dozens of doctors' appointments and tests, I am in remarkably good health. The doctors commented that my recovery was way ahead of expected recovery time. God intervened in my life. He gave wisdom to doctors, and speeded up the healing processes of my body, resulting in minimal pain and discomfort. And praise God, heart and blood pressure problems and blood clotting problems proved not to be so. We can praise the Lord that, through that period of time we had unusual health coverage that covered nearly all of the expenses.

One remaining thing is follow-up on testing for the kidney tumor. My confession of faith is that upon retesting this spring, it will prove to be nothing.

We give God the glory for the great things He has done. Thank you for the cards of encouragement, and to the many who prayed for me. What the devil intended for evil the Lord turns around for good. Because I can now eat whatever is healthy and tastes good to me, and my feet are nearly pain-free, I am set to go to the places of the world God has called me without special diets or painful feet to slow me down. Thank you for your sustaining prayers of faith.

Church planting continues...

The work of evangelism and church planting among the Churches of Praise continues strong in Ukraine, Armenia and Central Asia. Though not without setbacks, the fruitfulness far outweighs the challenges and issues.

Churches of Praise exist in 14 of the 28 oblasts (provinces) of Ukraine. Though they number in the hundreds, this is still a drop in the bucket among 22,000 towns and villages of Ukraine that still have no evangelical church. Consequently much work remains in the nation, and the fire of evangelism and church planting continues unabated.

We feel that fire especially strong in the monthly conferences of the pastors and church planters. About 250 gather for two days each month. These meetings are marked by passion for Jesus and the lost, explosive praise and worship, and caring for one another.

The church planters face great challenges every day, requiring much sacrifice, much faith and much love for lost people. Testimonies of healing and miracles are common in this work — as they should be if the gospel is being preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! Jesus loves to heal the bodies and the lives of broken people, and set free those who have been captive to the effects of sin.

Please continue to pray for these laborers. So many of them are young Christians. Though they work under seasoned leadership, they face continuous challenges of faith and character that require maturity beyond their years.

A new outreach to homeless and street children is starting right now at the main Church of Praise in Krivoy Rog. Large numbers of children are abandoned or on the run, living on the streets and sleeping wherever they can — usually taking refuge in the basements of apartment buildings. Drugs, sickness, and crime follow them wherever they go. Many die without any help.

Here is a summary of this homeless children's vision from pastors Gregory and Galina:

"Right now we are trying to do everything to start working with street kids, homeless kids. I gathered all the children's teachers and other leaders and teachers. We talked about the opportunity to help these kids and asked each other how we can help them. Homeless kids who live outside have many diseases and sicknesses. They have no opportunity to take a bath or wash their clothes. And of course they have bad behavior. They don't study in schools. They smoke, drink alcohol, and sniff glue.

"I figured out that when they sniff this glue it has the same effect as drugs but more dangerous. It causes fast destruction of the brain covering. And a lot of kids do this. I have been finding literature about these kids and how to have good results in working with these kids.

"When someone asked these kids who helps them, 30% of them said that Christians help them; but 70 % of them say they have no help at all. I discovered that our churches feel a movement of God toward these kids and want to take care of them. I understand that if we'll organize this ministry we will reach a lot of them for Christ. We will establish our work with these kids on several levels:

Level #1:

"Some kids will be rescued to live in the new building at the church, but I think this work cannot be supported by our church only. We will have Christian methods of teaching and training them.

Level #2:

"Some kids will just stay overnight in the church. When someone asked these kids if they want to live somewhere, they almost always said NO, but they would appreciate a place just for a night. Of course in the evenings and mornings we will feed them, give them medical help and give them new clothes.

Level #3:

"We will create teams who will go to different parts of our city to look for homeless children. They will start friendships with these kids. They will have meetings. They will play different games, give them sandwiches and eat with them. They will help the children to learn Christian songs and pray. This work will be for those kids who do not have homes or families and who do not want to go and live in the church

Level #4:

"We will do children's church with kids where we find them. This will not depend on special buildings. Instead, we will have services with these kids in various apartment basements where most of them find places to sleep. And once every three months (or more often) we will gather all the kids in the church building to have a service. This service will be very bright and interesting. We will give them food there, and we'll give them opportunity to take a bath and change their clothes.

"For all these programs we need to finish the new building. We also need to build a sport field. These kids will come and play and meet Christians. All this cannot be supported just by our church. Of course, for all this we need God's supernatural financial provision."

"With love, Gregory & Galina"

Pray with us for the completion of the new building, which will house 40 or more homeless children. (It already houses the adult rehab and the mission college students.) A \$12,000 construction debt remains which must be paid soon. **Perhaps \$4000 more is needed for finishing and furnishing the building.** With the \$25,000 already invested, this is a very low cost for a well constructed building which houses 140 people! In addition, there is room for sports fields right behind this new building.

Pray with us also for the ongoing financial support of the new children's outreach ministries. Funds are needed to care for the homeless children who will live at the church, and for the teams who scour the city to find, feed, clothe and minister to the children on the street.

We plan to return to Ukraine in June, by God's grace. The annual Congress of the Churches of Praise will be held June 22-25. Last year the Congress brought 1200 leaders and church planters together.

We will also teach in the next Mission College, which will probably have the largest student body yet. (More than 40) Students come from all the regions where there are Churches of Praise, sent by the senior leaders, and only if the student intends to plant churches. It is a one year intensive program: three months living and learning together at the main church, followed by a nine month internship in village church planting.

When we go, we will of course be involved in many other things as well. As always, we are trusting God for all the provision to go, as well as trusting God with pastor Gregory for the large cost of doing this conference.

Meanwhile, we need God's wisdom and fruitfulness here in the USA. Please agree with us for anointing in administration and communication, breakthroughs in writing, and divine appointments with ministers and churches for the continuing work of the harvest.

May the Lord richly bless you and your family and your service for Him. Keep yourself in the love of God, and in the joy of the Lord. Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength. If you find yourself weak and tired, it may be because you have lost your joy. Ask the Lord to show you anything that is robbing your joy, and let Him cleanse your heart and mind from the burdens. Then reach down into your spirit by faith and "with joy draw water out of the well of salvation" that is in you! (Isaiah 12:3).

With love,

John and Jackie

p.s. An apology concerning the video about Churches of Praise that we have been offering: A few of you have not received your copy yet, because of our prolonged electronic problems. Sorry. DVD's are in the mail, VHS's will soon be sent. Also, I want to apologize to someone who asked for a DVD and did not sign your name on the form. Someone else asked for a VHS and did not sign your name. Because the forms got separated from the envelopes, they were set aside and then misplaced. Now they sit on my desk, and I wonder who sent them. If you did not get a DVD or VHS that you asked for, will you ask for one again? Sorry. John