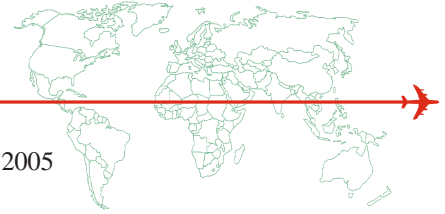




Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie



February 19, 2005

Dear friends,

Jackie and I greet you once again in the Wonderful Name of Jesus! To us it is a privilege and honor that you read our letters, and an awesome thing that you would pray for us. For those who financially support the Churches of Praise and us, we consider as precious every gift that is given, and we are humbled by your giving.

Since I left home...

I have been in Ukraine for a month, and Jackie has remained in Minnesota. I have had the privilege of teaching the Word of God to hungry students in two colleges: the three-year day time Praise Bible college and the three-month 24 hour-a-day Praise Mission College. In both colleges, the students are a joy to teach.

The Blood Covenant is my teaching assignment — laying the foundation of our salvation through Jesus Christ. “No other foundation can any man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11. This is the subject I have continually taught in Ukraine for the last 11 years - whether in the colleges, in the churches, or to the leaders.

The rest of my month has been filled with preaching in churches, meeting with leaders, and traveling to areas that have new village churches. I have also had some time to work on the book project.

The Mission College...

The students in the Mission College have a special zeal and fire. Only people who are ready to go as missionaries and church planters can come to the three-month Mission College. Church planting leaders have sent them to the Mission College from many of the 15 provinces (oblasts) of Ukraine where there are now Churches of Praise. All of these students know they will go from this school right out to village evangelism and church planting. This makes them all the more eager to get all that they can while they are in the classes.

Let me introduce you to three mission college students.

1. Mousa is from Crimea in southern Ukraine. He is from the Tatar people group, and he was a Muslim until six months ago. Mousa spent 29 years in prison for various crimes, including three murders. He came upon an evangelism team from Krivoy Rog worshipping the Lord on the street of his city in Crimea. Through them he found Christ. He is actually going through the Missionary College the second time, since he arrived in October unable to read. Last week he led his first meeting as a missionary-in-training, and the college dean reported that he did an excellent job, and has a strong anointing in prayer. Various (Muslim) friends and neighbors of Mousa in Crimea have recently written him that they have come to Christ, and ten of them want to come to the next Mission College in June!
2. Galena is a woman in her thirties from a village some distance from Krivoy Rog. All she knew until three months ago

was a life of drugs, immorality and crime. Her mother stopped in yesterday at the college to visit her daughter. She told Gregory and me that her daughter had brought only suffering and grief to her for a long, long time. Three months ago this Galena heard about Christ in her village. She repented and was brought to the rehab center by the Church of Praise team that led her to Jesus. After just two weeks at the rehab center, she looked like an entirely new person! She said to us yesterday that she wants to use the rest of her life to help others find the same new life and same new joy! Her mother, though very pleased, was not yet saved as of yesterday. She said, “Probably my daughter’s faith will be mine too.” Her daughter Galena smiled her mom’s remark, and said to us that her mom would be her next evangelism project. I think by the time you read this, mom will be securely in God’s family.

3. Sasha has been with the Lord for five years. His pastor, who left a city church to give his life to the villages, told Sasha to come to the Mission College if he really wanted his life to change. Sasha thought he knew a lot about the Bible when he arrived, but he said the Bible has exploded with new truth for him in the Mission College. He said he was at first embarrassed that he had been saved so long, unlike most of the other students, when he saw that he was not as mature as he thought he was. Sasha is an obvious leader, however, and has been appointed the student leader of the class of forty. He assists Anya, the college dean, in watching over the students.

A new building...

The main church is constructing an additional building right across the street. This building is being put up like the main church building was constructed - by people in the rehab center. Lives of former bandits, drug addicts and alcoholics are being restored as they build. Coming from prison or from life on the streets, these men and women are more than glad to work hard every day for God. Rising at 5:30, prayer and Bible study lead to breakfast and then to a full day of physical labor. Evenings are for Bible classes, study and ministry training. Within weeks, the transformation of lives is dramatic. More than 50 of those who went through the rehab last year are now serving full time in church planting. Many others are faithfully working at jobs and restoring their family relationships. Some are studying in the Mission College.

The new building will sleep 136 people, with eight bunks to a room. There is also a large classroom. The building will be used for three purposes:

1. House 35-40 men and women in the Adult Rehab Center.
2. House 40-50 Mission College students.
3. House 30 or more children in the soon-to-begin Children’s Rehab Center. The vision of the children’s rehab is to rescue homeless children trapped in drugs and crime.

Two gifts totaling \$25,000 last year got the construction going for this building, and it was thought at the time that this would be enough money to complete it. Expenses rose, however. In addition, the original plan had to be improved and enlarged to accommodate these three groups of people. Consequently, there is a need for \$25,000 to finish this strong building, which includes paying off a debt of more than \$13,000 that was borrowed to keep the construction going. The need for housing made it impossible to halt the construction.

Consider the three major ministries to be housed in this building: the adult rehab center, the mission college, and the children's rehab center. \$25,000 is a small investment for such plentiful and long lasting fruit!

It is being built solidly, including the best bathroom facilities I've seen in Ukraine! Right now, without this building, one shower serves eighty people! Twelve good showers and sinks (with hot and cold water!) will soon be operating in the new building, plus very good toilet facilities — half for men, the other half for women. Wow, what a breakthrough and what a blessing!

Rehab testimonies...

There is a woman who is in the rehab center with her husband. The lives of this couple were severely broken by drugs. It was discovered, after they were rescued and welcomed into the rehab center, that the husband is an expert in ceramic tile. His beautiful work will endure for many, many years. Both of them take great joy in the finishing of these bathrooms!

In fact, all the men and women who are in rehab love to do the construction work. After a life of uselessness, they are so overjoyed to know that they are doing useful work that will last long and help others like themselves.

Another woman in rehab has the following testimony. She and a man were living together. Once or twice a woman named Olga from the Church of Praise visited her, inviting her to church, but she did not go. Months later, she and her man were both near death. The doctor had sent him home to die. She also became very ill and was dying. Neither of them could even get out of their beds, and were just lying there without help waiting for death. She prayed one prayer: "God, if you exist, please send Olga to us." In a very short time, Olga came to their apartment door! She got the woman transported to the rehab center, and there she began to heal quickly. Now she works full days with rejoicing, and with Olga's prayer and visits, the man has also been healed and is walking!

The village churches...

I could go on and on with testimonies of changed lives and miracles in the village churches. Having had the honor of visiting a few distant places during these recent weeks, I have only grown in my admiration of the church planting missionaries working in the villages. Dedication, faith and love mark their character, and great answers to prayer are happening in village homes that had previously known only spiritual darkness and despair.

Few village churches are larger than 12 or 15 people. But the testimonies of healings and restored lives make these small lighthouses seem larger than they appear!

The ongoing opportunity for giving...

This week, the monthly pastors and church planters conference will convene as usual. At that conference, monthly church planting funds are distributed to the leading pastors who oversee the church planting teams.

The monthly gifts through our ministry have supplied the majority of that money. For the last year, we have sent \$8500 a month regularly, in addition to several other larger amounts for special projects. The \$8500 is used as follows: \$6000 goes directly to the church planters. Another \$1000 is used to help feed the two Bible Colleges and the rehab people. The remaining \$1500 is for the 12 churches in 12 prisons, to help with special needs of prisoners. Two thirds of this monthly \$8500 came from two very large gifts given a year ago that we kept as a reserve fund. That reserve fund has been emptied.

Hallelujah though! Just as I was writing this very sentence in Krivoy Rog, Jackie called me from the USA to report that a special gift just arrived in the mail. Praise the Lord, we are able to meet the February amount of \$8500!

Jackie and I believe for the supply to come each month and to increase as the church planting expands, but we need others to exercise faith with us. Our gracious Father provides, and people give as He provides. As the Lord enables you and leads you, thank you for doing your part. We think you will agree with us that money given for this work is bearing good fruit, and will continue to do so. By working together, we can all rejoice in the harvest!

My travel plans...

I will return home on March 2, after being gone from home almost six weeks. This means I am postponing travel to Armenia and Central Asia. Please remember Jackie at home, as well as my remaining time here with Churches of Praise. We will travel again after a few weeks have passed.

Pray with us for our goals during March and April in Minnesota. There is a whole lot of work to be done in writing, in communicating this ministry and vision, in administration, and in general to "keep the home fires burning". Fruitfulness at the home base is as important as fruitfulness in Ukraine and beyond.

Thank you...

May the Lord richly bless you and your family. How could He not, when He has said you are already blessed with everything in Christ? Keep your eye of faith on Him, and do not be troubled at the world's trouble. You are called to be a blessing to those around you who have no hope in Christ, so keep yourself in the love and peace and joy of God.

Though the darkness may increase in the world, there is an increase in God's great harvest in the nations. The things that we see and hear in the news are not all that is happening in the world! Did you know there are a quarter of a million new Christians in Iran? Almost all of them have come to Jesus in the last two years. Wow! (reported by Open Doors)

Thank you for your friendship and partnership with us in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With love,

John and Jackie

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

63 105th Lane N.W., Coon Rapids, MN 55448 Tel: 763-755-6612 Fax: 763-755-2045 E-mail: ScarletThreadInc@cs.com