



...a prayer letter from John and Jackie



February 9, 2009

Dear friends,

We greet you once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! I (John) returned from Krivoy Rog, Ukraine a few days ago. My time there was totally given to preachers, preaching schools, and preaching.

Please understand that this letter contains the heart of what we do in our ministry: *teach people to live in the gospel and to preach the gospel.*

We held a conference of senior leaders of the Churches of Praise, and their assistants (75 people). This was largely given over to learning to preach the gospel. Pastor Gregory and I also led the opening days of five preaching schools. Gregory continues leading them since I returned home.

The five preaching schools are for the twenty one Churches of Praise that are within the city of Krivoy Rog. The churches run in size from the main church of 1000+ down to the newest one of just 12 people. You must understand that the city of Krivoy Rog is made up of eighteen communities, each built over an underground iron mine. The city is a necklace of these eighteen beads (communities) strung out over a distance of one hundred miles. One church location cannot meet the need of such a city, and so the twenty one Churches of Praise are sprinkled along this one hundred mile necklace.

The first preaching school was for the twenty-one pastors of the city churches. We have known most of them since we helped Gregory and Galina open the first Church of Praise sixteen years ago. We remember when many of them were saved and healed, when we taught them in the Bible College, when we ordained them into the ministry, and remember times of praying with many of them through the struggles of life and ministry.

The other four schools were held at four different Churches of Praise around the city, each drawing ministers and potential preachers from several of the nearby Churches of Praise. In total, nearly three hundred men and women from the twenty one Churches of Praise in Krivoy Rog are in these preaching schools, held once a week for four weeks.

Here is what we have observed in Ukraine: this country seems to produce a lot of preachers per square kilometer! It is as if the country has been

given a gift of preaching. Within even the small churches, you will find numerous people who can stand and preach the gospel....or at least preach something. The idea of the school is to make sure that they actually preach the gospel! One pastor of a fifty-person Church of Praise said that she could count twelve people in her church who are able to preach!

We believe God put in Ukraine a divine destiny to feed the gospel to the nations. Through history, the country's rich soil has been the "breadbasket of nations". We see that her spiritual soil was given by God to provide the Bread of Life as well.

In Mark 16:15, we read the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to His disciples: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel..."* At the end of the chapter, it is recorded that *"they went out and preached everywhere..."* This is the basic call for all the followers of Jesus -- not only the Ukrainians!

I preached three main points to these preachers and potential preachers:

**1. Preaching comes from your heart, not your head.** Jesus said, *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his belly (his innermost being) shall flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:38*

He did not say the life would flow from your brain, but from the deepest part of you, which is your spirit. Jesus spoke this way to help you locate your spirit. You will find that your spirit is centered closer to your belly than to your brain!

**2. The place of preaching is a sacred responsibility.** When the preacher approaches a pulpit in a church building or simply stands to preach to people gathered under a tree, he must have placed himself under the strictest spiritual discipline. For the goal of the preaching is this: *"Let him who speaks, speak as the utterance of God."* I Peter 4:11

As a young pastor, I thought for a long time that people came to church to hear me preach. I was wrong. One day, as I stood in the pulpit to preach, and gazed at the two hundred people sitting there looking at me, the Lord showed me the truth: They were not waiting to hear from me. They were waiting to hear from God!

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

The preacher must remember this: the pulpit is not his pulpit, even though he is called the pastor. That pulpit belongs to God. It is Jesus who has come to speak to them, and it is Jesus they must hear.

Before a preacher approaches the pulpit, he must remember that he (or she) is not the "main event". He must invite Jesus to take over his body, his brain, and his mouth. He must step into Christ and know that he is clothed with Christ. The preacher must also welcome the Holy Spirit to come and the preacher must consciously yield to the leadership and inspiration of the Spirit during his preaching.

This assumes the preacher has prepared in prayer and Bible study. This assumes that all sin has been confessed and repented of, all wrong attitudes laid down, all problems cast on the Lord. This especially means repentance from all ungodly attitudes to the people to whom you will preach. You must have no fear of them, no anger towards any of them, and no motive to manipulate them or control them. Jesus is their shepherd, and to the best of your spiritual ability, you must let Jesus have His way in the preaching.

**3. The preacher is called, first of all, to preach the actual gospel.** This means we are to continually preach Christ, both to the lost and to the Church. The topics that can be found in the Bible are endless, but it would be good for all preachers to follow the example of the apostle Paul, who said of himself,

*"Like a wise master builder, I laid a foundation.... For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

1 Corinthians 3:10,11

Paul further defined his job as minister, a preacher, an apostle: to proclaim *"the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory."*

**"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."**

**"To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me."**

Colossians 1:27-29

The beginning of the gospel is preached to the lost; but the majority of the gospel can only be preached to the saved. Only believers who are filled with the Spirit can understand the grand and glorious message of complete redemption in Christ!

If you are preaching to the Church, you need within your preaching the apostolic foundation which is clearly written in Paul's letters. Paul was given the stewardship to lay the foundation of Christ in the Church. You must do the same thing Paul did, if you are preaching to the Church.

Romans, Ephesians, Galatians, and Colossians lay down the backbone of the gospel message, the expla-

nation of Christ, Christ in You, and You in Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which everything else rests, and upon which the rest of the Bible opens up and becomes clear.

*Perhaps these words will help you understand some of what keeps driving us forward: a deep desire to see the good news of Christ proclaimed clearly and completely to the lost, and more clearly and completely to them once they are saved!*

**The work in Ukraine is going well...**

We have been continually encouraged as we see the spiritual growth develop in the Churches of Praise. The city churches are financially independent, and whether small or large, are helping each other in many ways, as well as supporting in some way the pioneering work in the villages. The main church, however, carries the "lion's share" of the responsibility for the expansion of the work into more villages.

It was announced that work to open six new churches will begin this month. The church planters have been ready for some time. This was mainly a step of financial faith by pastor Gregory and the main church to provide the monthly financial support. It was a firm stand that the work of the gospel must move ahead, not stopped by economic fears.

The main church was packed on Sunday mornings, with some people standing, unable to find a seat. The atmosphere was vibrant, the praise and worship was on fire, and I could see the light and life in people's eyes and on their faces.

The love among the pastors is very deep. They have become a strong spiritual family. This gives us confidence that the Lord will continue to bless their ministries and that churches will continue to be added in places where people still sit in spiritual darkness.

We are privileged to be part of this spiritual family, and you, through your relationship with us, are joined to the family of Churches of Praise as well!!

**Thank you!**

We are very, very grateful for your prayer and financial support.

Romans 10:15 says, *"How will they preach unless they are sent?"*

You are our "senders". Your prayer and financial support enables us to go. We are still unsalaried by anyone, and depend totally on the gifts of people like you. We trust the Lord for miracles every month.

Keep your heart and mind fixed on your faithful Father in heaven. He is everything you need.

With love,

**John and Jackie**

*p.s. Someday we'll tell you about the lady in Churches of Praise who walked on the water. Verified.*