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Subject: Messer Prayer Update March 2003

Dear folks,

Where to start and what to say. Anyone who has been around me lately knows that I have so much to share and it just does not seem to end. I was thinking last night about whether we should just count our blessings and tell them, or if we should share our burdens as well. The Bible does teach to bear one another's burdens, but it also teaches to cast our cares on Jesus. So, I've decided to share our burdens and our blessings; and to let you know that we have already taken them to the Lord in prayer. We know that He knew about these burdens before they even came up, but in obedience to Philippians 4:6-7, we have laid them before His throne and begged mercy and help.

First, lets go for the blessings. :) When we first got back here to the U.S., I was not sure if we were going to make it. It was so cold (blessing -- the weather has warmed up a bit), and within a week or so, the kids all had coughs (blessing -- all are better except Leah at this point). We prayed for grace and God really did give it to us. We have a wonderful mission house to stay in, thanks to Union Grove Baptist Church and for that we are so grateful. Because this house was previously reserved for a week of conference, we had to move out. God provided an awesome little cottage for us at Vernon Forest Baptist Church. The cottage was situated by a pond and with the warmer weather, the kids were able to enjoy playing outside (blessing -- I enjoyed them playing outside as much if not more than they did). Leah even caught a fish. That was a great week of resting and fun for our family. We did stay busy, but when we were home it was so peaceful and relaxing. We have been adjusting to the fast pace of life here. You won't believe how much cars and phones can complicate your life (actually, you know how much it complicates your life, you won't believe how much the lack of them can simplify your life). We praise the Lord for the mini van that He provided for us (a gift from the Cleveland family in Florida). What a huge blessing. We also thank the Lord for His protection as we have traveled to 3 of our supporting churches so far. We are looking forward to visiting all our old friends and giving a first hand report of God's work in Cote d'Ivoire. Another blessing is the good news that we hear from our church (l'Eglise Baptiste Biblique) in San Pedro. The attendance is good and the one leading it has been very faithful thus far. PLEASE keep him in your prayers. His name is YAO! He needs prayer because I don't think anyone much in Africa is praying for him. We are, but that's probably about it. SO, please add your prayers to ours for this man. He has a huge responsibility in leading that church and he has not had much training or experience. He does, however, have the Holy Spirit, so we pray and leave him in God's hand.

All in all, there are many many blessings that God has given us by his grace (unmerited favor). We don't deserve it and we owe Him our lives for all that He did for us on Calvary. We'll never be able to repay Him, and yet the blessings flow. What a kind, loving God we have.

Ok, it has been promised in the Bible that in this world you

shall have trouble or tribulation. We've had some. There are always those who have more or less, so we won't compare. Let me just share some of our burden and if you take it to God in prayer for us, it will be appreciated. We are burdened for Cote d'Ivoire. We ask you to pray for peace and for the new transitional government that is being established in the country. We beg you to pray that God will allow us to go back in January 2004. This is a heavy burden on our hearts.

Another heavy burden (more so for me than for Andy) is the state of our finances. I hear that it is rough all over the U.S. and that just makes me all the more nervous. Let me just be open with you all. That last month in Cote d'Ivoire (this past Jan.) we used up all of our money for the month of February plus all the gifts that came in during January. It was spent on the church building (cement, tile, toilets...), helping people who were trying to flee and trying to pay on bills etc. in Africa so that we could leave and still keep a good testimony. We did see God provide as we did not even have enough to do all of that, but through gifts and the sale of some of our personal things, we were able to leave things in order on that side of the ocean. We were also dealing with a drop in the exchange rate which made that crunch a bit tighter than it would have normally been. When we came to the U.S., we had no money left. God did provide us with clothes from my sister, a gift from Berean Baptist Church and this mission house. Our immediate needs were all met. I will say, that in all of this, we have always had food to eat and clothes to wear. Matthew 6:25-34 has become very precious to me. We do thank the Lord for the wonderful gift that Salem Baptist has given us of \$1,500.00 toward paying for our tickets. The plan is that if we can get caught up (extra costs from Africa and things like car insurance keep popping up to hinder this process) we will live on our monthly money and use any and all love gifts to pay off the travel expenses. The total that we owe is about \$7,500 (this includes tickets - \$5,500, travel expenses from New York to North Carolina, and money sent to Africa for the church construction work). We are also planning to sell our car in Africa and use that money to catch up. The good news is that after we had discussed this fully and prayed about it specifically, we got an e-mail from my sister, Joan, saying that they have sold our car. We do not know the details yet as to how much and when we shall see this money, but we are praising God for that speedy answer to prayer. So, why do I share all of this. It is not to make you feel sorry for us. We are very happy to face this challenge if it means we get to be used by God in any way. We have seen God do so much for us in the past (He is the same as when He lead the children of Israel out of Egypt) and we know that NOTHING is impossible or too hard for Him. This is another time of faith stretching. When we started, our faith was TINY and now it is just SMALL. We are praying that through times like these God will grow our faith to BIG and then on to HUGE. We want to face challenges like these with not the least speck of doubt, knowing that GOD has it all planned and cared for. AND HE DOES!! So, if you want to bear our burden with us, just start with praising the Lord for who He is and all He has done. Then ask Him to meet these needs in His time and pray that we will have much faith in Him.

The last burden we wish to share is the burden for our church

there in Cote d'Ivoire. We know that there were many people who needed Christ in their lives. We did not get to reach them all. We know that there were members in our work who needed to change and grow spiritually. We are not there to help or encourage them. We know that Yao is a young man with little training. We are not there to train him. There have been some problems in the church with a man who seems to be determined to cause division and trouble. Yao has had to deal with this on his own. We have advised him and prayed for him to have wisdom, but it is hard when we are not there to see the problem dealt with to the end. We know that more problems could (and probably will) arise. These may be for stretching Yao's faith. Pray for him and pray for us to walk with the Lord and trust Him. Pray much for us to have wisdom. If you will truly pray for us (even if it is just as you read this letter) you will be bearing our burden. We know that God hears and answers the prayers of His children, so please PRAY!

Well, I hope this letter was not too heavy. Please know that we are trusting the Lord and expecting to see great things. A good father will always take care of His children and we know that we have the best Father in the world. I sure hope He is your father too. If He is not, you don't know what you are missing out on. All you have to do to become His child is believe that He sent Jesus to die and rise again for you. Accept that Jesus' sacrifice is your only way to Heaven and a relationship with God. If you do and you ask Him, He has promised that He will adopt you into His family and you too will have the joy of being one of His beloved children. I sure am glad to be one. If you need more help with this, feel free to e-mail us or call us. Our e-mail address is: Andrulus1@juno.com and our phone number is (336) 692-2273. We'd love to help someone else join God's family. After all He has done for us, we'd hate for someone to die and go to Hell because we did not tell them how they too could be saved, or adopted by God.

Thank you to all who have given time in prayer for us as well as financial gifts. You are such a blessing to us and we hope you know that we do not take you for granted. We pray that God will bless you in return.

Much love in Christ,
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