



Have a Blessed New Year!

Do you really want to be blessed according to the scriptures?

I've broached the subject of prosperity in past newsletters, but I'm driven to address it once again from a different angle as we enter a new year. The message that is being hammered out from the pulpits, especially in Africa, is "God wants to bless you." The common interpretation of being "blessed" is somewhat disturbing and shortsighted. It is not uncommon for Bible teachers and laity to interpret "blessings" to mean mainly good health, wealth/cars/homes and all kinds of so called "heavenly perks." Many sitting in the pews are wanting God to bless them in a variety of ways. Yet, Jesus taught His disciples beginning in Matthew 5:1 — The Sermon on the Mount:

- Vs. 3 - BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Being empty of self—void of pride)
- Vs. 4 - BLESSED are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Sorrow for one's sins &/or to mourn/grieve for others, etc.)
- Vs. 5 - BLESSED are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (Humility is a wonderful Christian trait. Moses is a prime example)
- Vs. 6 - BLESSED are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (A passion for holiness—right living)
- Vs. 7 - BLESSED are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (Being compassionate and forgiving toward others)
- Vs. 8 - BLESSED are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Death to self—not self-seeking, sincere motives, pure eyes, etc.)
- Vs. 9 - BLESSED are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (One who makes peace and is peaceable)
- Vs. 10 - BLESSED are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Vs. 11 - BLESSED are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. REJOICE and be exceedingly GLAD, for great is your reward in heaven.... (The Christian life draws distain & pain.)

There is a large segment of Christians in Africa that believe that a pastor who has a car, bank account and nice home is full of the Holy Spirit—blessed. Many equate blessings only with material things and health. Yet the Apostle Paul had ongoing health issues (2 Cor. 12:7), at times worked to support himself and faced persecution and torture (2 Cor. 11:22ff) and yet, he was a blessed man. Our Messiah left the glories of heaven to rescue His creation. During His earthly ministry, He did not have a place to rest His head, was faced with constant opposition—especially from the religious community that resulted in death on a cruel cross; however, He was blessed and was an eternal blessing. Do you realize that scores of people in the world live on one dollar a day and live in a mud hut having access only to primitive healthcare. Can they say, "I am blessed?" Yes, Yes, Yes!!! However, very few people can handle prosperity. In fact, God, in His mercy will keep prosperity from His kids, if He knows it will cause them to drift from Him. What we call monetary blessings may not be a blessing at all. Our heart may shift toward guarding our possessions, hoarding funds (not blessing others) or using one's benevolence as a platform for pride—to toot one's horn as the Pharisees would often do before giving...to make sure everyone knows and sees their gift (Matt. 6:1ff).

I invite you to examine a few characters found in God's holy Word who learned about true blessings: **Solomon** had it all and at the end of his life he declared it to be empty. King Solomon, David's son, had a 1000 women, the best wines, more wealth than anyone in history, notoriety, wisdom, etc.). Solomon decreed that ALL WAS VANITY—EMPTY! He learned that life was about the "fear of God and keeping His commandments; for this is man's all" (Eccl. 12:13). **Saul/Paul**: As mentioned above, he counted his education dung, at times struggled with finances and took up tent making, and lived a life of ridicule and torturous pain as recorded in Second Corinthians Chapter Eleven. Yet, he was blessed counting it an honor to suffer for the Lord's sake and to carry the gospel to the gentiles. To be on mission with God was a great great blessing that ended with his head being lopped off by a Roman Soldier. Paul lived out Matthew 5:11, "BLESSED are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake."

Jesus made it absolutely clear that we are blessed when persecuted, and that we should REJOICE and be EXCEEDINGLY HAPPY! **FACT**: The Bible clearly proclaims: "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12 NASB). The only place in the Bible we see Jesus **standing** at the right hand of the Father is in Acts 7:56 when Stephen is being stoned to death! **FACT**: I Peter 4:14 states, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are **blessed**, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." When we compare our standard of living to the rest of the developing countries, even our poor have it far better materially than half of the world. Yes, God gives good gifts, and many are rewarded for working hard, saving and being benevolent. Yet, true blessings are NOT the prosperity tangibles. True blessings are discovered in the nine (9) beatitudes found in Matthew 5:1-11. The most blessed person is one who has a passion for Christ and who is completely sold-out for his/her Master. To invest one's life in Kingdom living, willing to die to self and suffer for the King of Kings is truly a life of blessings. One well known TV preacher constantly proclaims that he is financially blessed by God and is personally worth over \$175,000,000. The truth is—God allows us to have wealth so we can be "a channel" for God to bless others. Unfortunately, many will die with millions only to have their family fighting over the wealth at one's death. Listen: True blessing is simply and emphatically a life well lived for Christ...a life that is passionately in love with the Savior...a life invested in Kingdom concerns. There are many who are materially poor but exceedingly blessing in spirit. **Hence, be careful when you ask God to bless your life.** The POTTER will mold you into a vessel of honor while your life attracts persecution; He will instill in you the nine beatitudes. Again, do you really want to be blessed? God will certainly answer your prayer and bring true blessings into your life if you ask Him. **Rick**

MISSION LINK'S NEWS BRIEFING: TWO GRADUATIONS ARE PLANNED FOR THE MLI CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTERS IN JANUARY.

We need "at least" **\$450** for the **Mubende** graduation and **\$225** for **Bwingi**. At this point we still need of \$525.

AFRICAN WIDOWS MINISTRY: MLI desires to distribute soap, paraffin/wicks (for light) to our widows. Please...**ANY AMOUNT** is appreciated!

UNDERWEAR & SANITARY PADS NEEDED (KEEP THEM COMING): We are grateful! Paige Lipscomb, a member of MLI's February medical team, is collecting women's **underwear** (Most—Medium & some Small/Large). We still need volunteers who are willing to sew/make reusable sanitary napkins (Email Paige for instructions: plip08@gmail.com). All is needed by **Jan. 12, 2017**. PLEASE recruit helpers!



Philip's Wedding Finally Took Place: On Dec. 10th, 2016 Phil (MLI Director for Uganda) and Jackie tied the knot!!! Thanks for helping!

NEW TEACHER TO TRAIN PASTORS: Raymond Mayega, a former student of Mission Link Christian Study Center, is being considered for this position. The school will be in the evenings in a village called Kitigoma. Monthly need is \$100.

PHASE II MLI SCHOOL IN ELDORET, KENYA (ANY SIZE GIFT IS APPRECIATED & WE CANNOT START UNTIL WE HAVE SUFFICIENT FUNDS): Starting budget is **\$7200+** to put up a metal frame & roofing (no walls). When completed, students from all over East Africa will come to learn the Bible under the leadership of Pastor Anthony Ndambuki. Praying this phase will be completed in 2017. Also, we need to begin constructing pastor's home.

Pastor Anthony Ndambuki of Kenya: Pastor Anthony has taken on more and more responsibilities. However, like most African churches, they pay their pastor very little due to poverty. He needs to pay for his milk cow - \$700 (milk will give him monthly income) and \$300 for yearly feed. He also needs help with ground rent for the church/future-school of \$120 (for the year). Thank you for help this man of God. We hope one day to build a house for his family.

DEAF SCHOOL: (On going needs) MLI has become the much needed "link" for the deaf school in the Kamuli District. Pastor Herbert and Director Elizabeth are both very grateful for the help given by Mission Link thus far. The ongoing monthly need for food is around **\$370**. Any funds left over from the feeding is applied to help pay other expenses that are listed. **Monthly needs:** Food **\$370**; dorm for kids **\$70**; salaries for 5 teachers in total is **\$250** (gross minimum). There are other expenses, but this is a start. Thank you!

PASTOR EUTICAUL OF KENYA (TEAM FORMING FOR JULY 17-29, 2017): All interested parties contact Rick: thelinkoffice@gmail.com. Recently, we have made some significant changes to cost and logistics. Each person will be responsible for securing their ticket, visa, and insurance for the trip due to volunteers coming from different parts of the USA. At this point, in country cost will be **\$1375**. Group fare is not possible; however, the cost for individual fares can be significantly lower, if you shop around. You must have the following dates for arrival to and from Nairobi. **Arrival must be on July 18th** which means you must depart the USA on the 17th. The return must have you leaving Nairobi on **Friday the 28th** and arriving in the USA by 29th. Check-in with Rick before purchasing tickets (Office - 434-984-1995 or 434-981-9101). We need various skills ranging from evangelism to construction.

MLI TEACHER NEEDS HELP: Pastor George Stanley needs assistance to be self supporting. George has started a fish farm. He needs help with feeding the Tilapia. We want to commit **\$45** a month for 10 months to help him be successful with this project. He is trying to be SELF SUPPORTING.

MARY - A BAKER: Most team members remember Mary for the cup cakes and cookies she baked for us to enjoy last January. She is trying to establish her own business. She now has a store (room) but needs a **STOVE costing \$975**. A MLI donor has committed to **\$550** leaving **\$425**. We are also going to collect items to bring to her in February: Bread, muffin & square tins; mixer; juice extractor; measuring cups; utensils; & more. Please drop items off at MLI.

GENERAL FUND (VERY IMPORTANT): Your gift to the General Fund (GF) is always appreciated. If giving to a project or person, please indicate what amount is for GF. Thank you for helping us help our African brothers and sisters!

GENERAL ITEMS NEEDED FOR UGANDA TRIP—Needed by January 12th: Used Key Boards (Usually \$50 per unit used); Strong Table Saw (\$300); 2 Hand Saws (\$15 per); Chisels (\$17); Router Bits; 2 Small Amplifier; 2 Converters (\$75 per); heavy duty mixer, mixing bowls and other kitchen items (help an African named Mary to be self-supporting). Also, **funds for transport & feeding 200 pastors** for a pastor conference; women's underwear (**critical**); baseball caps; small testaments; pens; soccer balls; balls; children's bible school or Sunday school teaching materials. Also need old cell phones.

OTHER NEWS: We had another feeding with the widows for Christmas; the staff had a festive party with special gifts given to each; two of the MLI schools are close to finishing course work; the leper ministry's harvest, though small, is in progress and the deaf school had finished final testing. PTL!!!

LOOK AROUND THE HOUSE, ASK YOUR FRIENDS AND AT CHURCH

Cell Phones, Digital Cameras,

Laptops, Christian Books

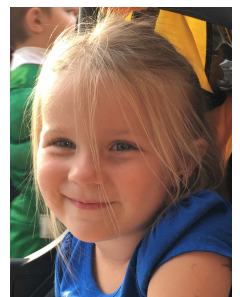
One iPhone 4s (or above) is needed for our Thomas, our bookkeeper. Drop items by the MLI office OR mail them to: 1677 Avon St. Ext, C'ville, VA 22902. Christian books/Bibles also needed for next shipment to Africa. Thank you so much! KEEP THEM COMING!!!

Please Continue to Pray for Iris Jo Wall

Brain Stem Tumor: Rick and Candy's 4 year old granddaughter will be visiting the UVA Medical Center for another MRI on 12/28/16. This will determine if the next step is Saint Jude Hospital for surgery or wait. Please continue to pray that the MRI will show that the brain tumor has shrunk or has completely dissolved.

Uganda Mission Trip February 11-24, 2017 — We have a total of 23 volunteers signed up to travel to East Africa. Above is a list of items needed. Phone number is 434-984-1995 or thelinkoffice@gmail.com if you have need to contact us.

Kenya Mission Trip July 17-29, 2017 — We need to know of your interest soon. Various skills and talents needed: Youth workers, computers installers, carpentry, painting, evangelism and laborers. Call Rick at 434-984-1995 or 434-981-9101 (cell) or email him - thelinkoffice@gmail.com



Widow Elizabeth Byakika — *No widow has ever been listed for this long!*

For **\$30** a month (just a dollar a day) you can make a difference in the life of a widow. Your support will help pay for school fees, medicine, home-based businesses, food, and much more. **So very little makes a BIG difference.... God states true religion is helping a widow! Will you bless this dear woman with a monthly gift? Thank You!**

Elizabeth Byakika: Elizabeth is 68 years old and has 4 children. Her husband died of a heart attack 11 years ago. "I thank God for protection, care and support through Mission Link International receiving soap, stove, water filter and medical care." Her challenges are her grandchildren.