



# BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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## “I’ll Come Back When You’ve Changed!”

*Stating that a Christian rehabilitation center changes lives is easy. However, that truth glosses over the fervent prayers, serious discussions, Bible studies, and other measures taken to free people from their addictions to drugs or alcohol. A minister in a rehab center needs special wisdom from God as he works with such individuals. Here, BIEM’s Andrei Eliseev shares part of the story of one man at the rehab center near Ternopil, Ukraine.*

**D**ear brothers and sisters, greetings to you in the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Earlier I wrote to you about one man in our program, Vitaly. He came to us last autumn after being in a hospital, where doctors did not expect him live. But God, in His great mercy, is transforming his life, and even more....

Vitaly has a 5-year-old son named Artyom. All this time with us, Vitaly had wanted to see him. And each time he raised the subject, we have had to counsel him to forget for now all his earthly

connections, including child-rearing. “The main need right now is to pray to God, asking Him first to make you into a new man, husband, and father, who will be capable of making decisions and being responsible for them. That includes educating your son.”

In such moments, seeing him and hearing the way he talked, we could not recommend a meeting. Actually, you could say we forbade him from seeing his son for that time, because we didn’t want his appearance to traumatize Artyom. It wasn’t easy for Vitaly to break out of his condition. But he listened and waited for the time when it would be possible. We supported him in prayer, too.

In this case, the problem with a family meeting was complicated by the fact that Artyom’s mother is Vitaly’s former wife. That is, they are divorced. In light of the rehabilitation center’s existing policy, we could not allow Vitaly to be associating with Victoria, his ex-wife. *[To protect those undergoing rehabilitation from negative influences, only close relatives*

*are allowed to visit while these men are in the program. An ex-wife doesn’t meet that criterion. However, in time Vitaly’s progress has permitted occasional meetings in the presence of a minister.]* Even before picking Vitaly up at the hospital, I had met his wife there and learned that she smoked and drank, and it showed in her appearance. Therefore, we needed to get in touch with Vitaly’s mother (who was in Portugal at that moment) to figure out what kind of meeting we might arrange. It turns out that they have other relatives here, and they agreed to bring Artyom for a meeting along with their own children. So, at last, the long-awaited reunion took place! There was so much joy and emotions.

The next step was to organize a time when Vitaly’s mother could come to Ukraine and visit him. Naturally, we didn’t reveal these preparations, since we were preparing it as a surprise.

When Vitaly asked, “When is my mom coming?” we replied, “She said she

*continued on page 4*

*BIEM’s Andrei Eliseev (left), stands beside Vitaly and other men in this Christian Rehabilitation program.*



**Майте віру Богу!**  
Ісус Христос  
Марка 16:22



*In addition to Bible studies and personal counseling, the Rehab Center’s program includes physical labor and active involvement growing food for the center.*

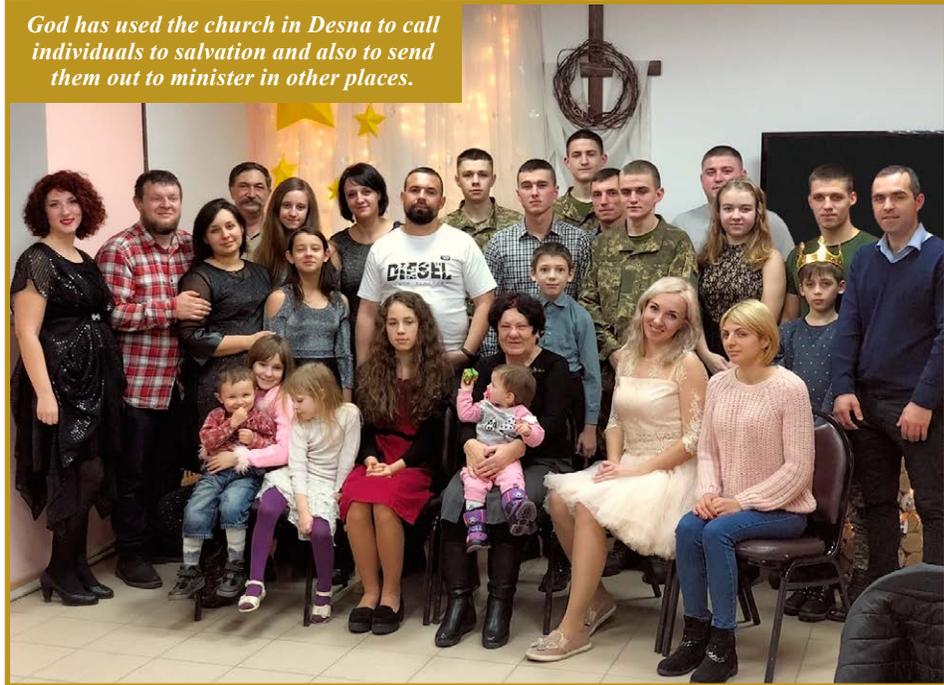
## With God, There Are No Coincidences

*Although Christmas is long past, we want to share one more Christmas story to warm your heart. This account comes from Igor Fomichov, BIEM's missionary pastor at the church in Desna, Ukraine.*

On Christmas, my family arrived at the church to decorate the auditorium for an evening holiday service. A number of people from church were already there, but I also noticed one man—a soldier—whom I didn't recognize. I assumed he just wandered in out of curiosity to see what was happening. But then I saw he wasn't alone. A second soldier accompanied the first one.

I introduced myself and learned that the first man had been in the army only two weeks. He'd wanted to come to church, but his superiors hesitated to grant permission. Since that day was Christmas, his commander eventually gave the new man

*God has used the church in Desna to call individuals to salvation and also to send them out to minister in other places.*



leave to attend our church, but only on condition that a more experienced soldier accompany him.

So, we chatted with that young soldier who desired to attend. Roman told us how he learned of our congregation via the Internet and about how glad he would be to attend church. But in army life, things are not so simple. Commanders don't like giving leave to new recruits.

All during this conversation, Roman's escort sat nearby. From time to time, he interjected the answer to some question that he already knew since he had served longer.

At the end of our talk, Roman and I traded telephone numbers. I promised to look for a way for him to get his commander's permission to attend Sunday services. He expressed regret that we had no service that morning, adding that he would try to return that evening, although he couldn't promise.

We were already at the door and saying goodbyes when Roman's escort and I started chatting. He told me, "I'm not a believer. I've never gone to church."

As far as the senior soldier was concerned, he was in our church by sheer coincidence. He was an atheist, but his commander had assigned him this duty. However, with God there are no coincidences.

Well, we were standing at the door, but I decided to share a quick version of my testimony, how God worked in my life. Roman came back and listened, too.

The man serving as Roman's escort couldn't help himself. He asked, "Can God help me, too?"



*Missionary pastor Igor Fomichov (right) is thrilled to minister to young soldiers serving in Desna.*

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*"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"*

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*continued on page 3*

## In the Snare of the Devil

*In the Challenger, we enjoy sharing spiritual victories. However, we don't want to give the impression that ministry in Eastern Europe is simple. Here, BIEM missionary Mikhail Titarenko shares a slice of reality...*

One day I dropped by the village store (it's quite small), where a husband and wife were shopping. Both were drunk, and they were talking loudly to the woman behind the counter. The husband was expressing his frustration that their village of Andreevka has no store, forcing them to drive ten kilometers [about six miles] to our village for groceries.



*The village store isn't large. But some villages in Ukraine have no store at all.*

Seeing me, this man tried to pull me into the conversation and support his anger. The faces of that couple struck me as familiar. Then I recalled—Peter and Maria had been in our home ten years earlier. Peter had driven Maria to our church for a service. I had witnessed to him about Christ, and he had promised to come and talk. That meeting never took place.

In our conversation, both of them promised to come to church the following Sunday, but they never showed up. My wife and I decided to visit Peter and Maria at their home. The night was dark outside, but lights shined from every window of their house.

We knocked, and Maria came to the door. She wasn't sober, but invited us in. Peter was asleep on the couch, still wearing his boots. When Maria woke him, he stared at us, not comprehending who was in front of him and what these people wanted. He was drunk.

When Peter realized who we are, he said, "What do you need? Do you want to lure me into your faith?" He proceeded to say there is no God, that He's a myth. Next he said, "I was in Afghanistan. I killed people." He repeated these phrases many times.

Peter left and lay down in another room, where he went back to sleep. Maria looked awkward, so we left. Thinking back on all that we had seen and heard and how Peter didn't want to hear the Word of God, we concluded the Devil is gripping this man in the fear of death. He is keeping these people from repenting and from the desire to hear about God.

If God prompts you, pray for these people.

*God's Kingdom is full of people who once wanted nothing to do with Jesus Christ, including the Apostle Paul. Please pray for our missionaries, since they often deal with hard hearts.* ■



*BIEM's Mikhail and Natalia Titarenko serve the Lord in Fedorivka, Ukraine.*

**...No Coincidences** *continued from page 2*

I responded that all a person needs to do is turn to God in prayer and to repent.

"I'm ready to try. Except... I've never prayed before."

"There's nothing scary about it," I

explained. "I can help with your first prayer. You can repeat after me."

So, he and I prayed. He called out to God. Roman stood nearby, amazed because he couldn't believe his eyes and ears as he listened to an atheist calling



out to God. I rejoiced that yet another sinner had come to the Lord. This event became a huge testimony and encouragement for everyone in the church. In my opinion, this is the best gift

for God, when a sinful person places belief in Him.

Truly, with God there are no coincidences. This was His special plan.

That evening, we celebrated Christmas in the church. It was a joyous evening. Many different sorts of people came, including unbelievers. We had an opportunity to witness to them about our Lord and Savior.

I ask you to pray for the ministry of our church, that God would add more saved souls to our congregation.

**Igor Fomichov**

*BIEM is currently helping other small congregations to obtain their first church buildings. Can you help? If so, please designate your gift "Building Projects."* ■

## Gearing Up for Summer Camps

The season for BIEM's summer camps will be here before we know it. Even though organizing and running camps demands tremendous amounts of time and energy, both we and our churches overseas understand camps are an amazing tool.

For many kids, camp is where they first hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. They learn to pray, how to find truths in the Bible, and many give their heart to the Lord in camp. Also, children and teens who have already come to Christ deepen their knowledge and appreciation for spiritual truths. As the Bible phrases it, camp helps them to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Thanks to friends who made year-end contributions for Camps in 2019, we already have \$9,900 designated for this year's camps. That's nearly one-fourth of our \$40,000 goal! But \$30,100 is still needed. Can you help? If so, please designate your gift "Summer Camps."

Thank you so much! ■

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By "liking" BIEM on Facebook, you can receive updates, blessings, prayer requests... even an occasional video from our mission fields. See you there!



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Baptist-International-Evangelistic-Ministries>



*The goal of this fun camp game in Russia was to bend low physically, but the main goal of summer camps is to lift up young people spiritually!*

"...When You've Changed" continued from page 1 will come when you've changed!" This is because his mother had already told him, "If you ever take drugs again, then know this: I will no longer have a son!" Despite those words, his mother remains a loving mom.

That meeting took place on a Sunday at church, for a service. There were so many tears of joy and emotions. I, too, rejoiced so much that when I used my cell phone to make a video of it, I forgot

to press the record button! Due to the complicated circumstances, many of his relatives now come to our church for services.

I also want to mention changes in Victoria. She has put herself into order and is dressing neatly. We hope that God will help her, too, to change her life in these complex circumstances. ■

*Your brother in Christ,  
Andrei Eliseev*



*At long last, Vitaly got to meet with his mother, son, and other family members. Since then, other visits have taken place at the church.*