



# BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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## Thanking God During War

**T**he Bible tells us, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess. 5:16–18). But can there be anything for which to thank God during a time of war? BIEM’s missionaries in Ukraine reply, “Yes!”

Of course, we won’t minimize the horrors and heartaches of the war in Ukraine. Russian bombs, bullets, and artillery have blasted homes and businesses into rubble. They’ve killed innocent men, women, and children; forced millions to flee their homeland; shattered lives; and caused

mental anguish... Can even God bring the least bit of good out of these sickening events? Again, believers in Ukraine declare He not only can, but is.

### **Evangelism as never before**

In the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, BIEM missionary Yura Levtseniuk says, “We understand God is opening a new door of evangelism. People coming here have fled for their lives. They left everything behind just to save their lives. So, when we have our meetings in the evening and pray for peace in Ukraine, we share the Gospel with them. They say, ‘We’ve never heard this. We’ve never read the Bible.’ I’ve been shocked, but I can see God’s hand in this. We need to preach the Gospel to them.... God is doing something amazing in the hearts of these people. They weep as they receive the Word. They say they have found peace in it....”

In the city of Dubno, Pastor Igor Levtseniuk is even more vocal in declaring the war has given his church unprecedented opportunities to win souls, especially among refugees.

Pastor Igor says, “War is negative. It brings tears. It brings sorrow. We talk so much about war, about how the Devil is in it and what grief and horror war brings. People are so weary of it. But we turned our attention to what God is accomplishing during the war. What we’ve seen is that our all-powerful, wonderful God is using something negative to bring about blessing. So, we see a lot of positive things as well. I look out at our congregation on Sundays, and I see a completely new congregation. There are people from all over Ukraine, people who came from very troubled, war-torn regions. Many of them are lost, and

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*Ministry to refugees has led countless souls to Christ.*



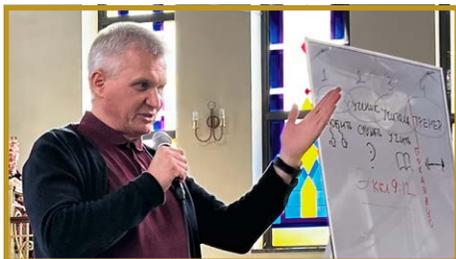
*Believers don’t simply deliver physical food. They also deliver New Testaments and Christian tracts—spiritual food!*



*By providing food for soldiers and praying with them, Ukrainian believers have opened a new door for evangelism.*

## Counseling During War

*Because of the battles in Ukraine, we couldn't hold the Spring Session of our seminary in Kyiv. However, we felt the seminary could still play a role in assisting believers there. Ultimately, we offered one key seminar on a crucial topic for these difficult days: "Crisis Counseling."*



*Pastor Igor Levtseniuk poured much personal experience into his presentation.*

Dear friends, workers of the BIEM mission, and all who pray for us!

Thank you for the opportunity to host an important seminar on crisis counseling. As never before, this topic has emerged as extremely relevant in

our country, where hostilities are taking place. People are losing loved ones, losing homes, property, jobs, and livelihoods. Praise God, much humanitarian aid has been coming in, and people are receiving it. However, in such times it's also vital to provide spiritual support. After all, people suffer physically, but they also experience mental anguish. You need skill to help such people, to assist them, not harm them. That's why we organized a seminar on crisis counseling.

The seminar took place over two days. Due to the war, many of our seminary students couldn't attend. But we livestreamed the seminar online, and it's available for viewing on YouTube. In fact, within just a few days, about 1,000 people have already watched the seminar. This underscores the relevance of the topic. All participants of the seminar are grateful for the chance to be there. We plan to hold similar seminars, and we hope for your continued support and assistance. We're extremely grateful to you for your assistance during the war in our country. Thank you so much! Pray for us.

I'm including a few recollections and expressions of gratitude we received from participants of the seminar. I present them as they were written. God bless you!

*Sincerely yours,*  
**Vitaly Yurchenko**

**Rector of Kyiv Theological Seminary**

*To all our supporters, BIEM would like to add our own expression of deep appreciation for supporting our regular outreaches plus special ministries made necessary by the war. You enable us to bless others for God's glory!* ■

### Feedback from "Crisis Counseling" participants

“ I thank everyone who was involved in conceiving, organizing, financing, providing technical support, and holding the "Crisis Counseling" seminar. For me, as a young pastor from a young church, the seminar was tremendously useful. Moreover, we help and serve people affected by the war.

*Pastor Parfenyuk*

“ I've been involved in counseling ministry for many years, but at this seminar I learned much new and useful information. Thank you to all the organizers and participants of this seminar. God bless you!

*Unsigned*

“ Thank you very much for this workshop! We heard correct, biblical understanding of how to assist people in crises, as opposed to secular psychology. The practical advice on how to help people was especially valuable. For me—already familiar with biblical counseling—the idea God can turn any evil into good struck me in a new, valuable way. His goals for me are kind, even in the most tragic circumstances. God can completely heal the spiritual wounds of suffering people.

*Olga Stepanova, a refugee from Kherson*

“ The seminar revealed the truth that in every difficult situation one must see God's plan, knowing that the Lord will give strength to overcome difficulties. After all, the Lord doesn't allow testing beyond one's strength. We learned to help those who are experiencing crises, those who have lost loved ones or property. There were good, practical examples for applying truth to help others during the war.

*Unsigned*

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*"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"*  
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*Both experienced pastors and younger ministers gleaned insights to help them offer biblical advice during crises such as war.*

# S.O.S. for Summer Camps!

Earlier in 2022, we in the BIEM home office had assumed summer camps could not be held in Ukraine this summer. However, even though we can't hold camps in regions under Russian occupation, our Ukrainian personnel insist camps are possible and *needed*.

Due to the war, young people in Ukraine have been terrorized. Reality has often forced youths and even young kids to see brutal sights. They need opportunities to play, to sing, and simply to laugh again. More vital, they need to hear the Gospel and understand God's way of salvation. The

uplifting atmosphere in Christian camps will provide an ideal setting to answer questions concerning life after death and for God to touch young hearts.

In the past, our annual goal for camps has been \$40,000. However, prices have increased dramatically due to the war and shortages. This year we hope to raise \$50,000. Of that, we already have \$21,400 on hand, leaving \$28,600 still needed. Can you help us to hold camps for kids and youth, not only in Ukraine but also in other countries of Eastern Europe? If so, please designate your gift "Summer Camps." ■



*In BIEM-sponsored camps, young people are well fed, both physically and spiritually.*

**...Thanking God** *continued from page 1*

they're hearing the Word of God for the first time. Isn't this a miracle from God?

"One time I took the microphone and interviewed people right in the auditorium. I asked, "Can you name anything good that has come out of the war?" Many people answered, if not for the war, they never would have heard the Gospel or accepted Christ as Savior. But now they are born again — new people. Our church has been revitalized. Our church has changed! So, we're pouring our lives into serving these people. It's a very strategic ministry."

**Ministering to needs in God's name**

In central Ukraine, one BIEM missionary-pastor led his church in buying and cooking food for Ukrainian soldiers

encamped not far away. They delivered these meals as gifts given in Jesus' name. What an impact this simple act of service had. The church's reputation soared! Then, in an unexpected twist, Ukraine's military even bestowed special medals ("For selfless service to the homeland") on our BIEM missionary and on the two church members who helped him to deliver food to hungry soldiers.

Another side effect of ministering in the name of the Lord is the impact that service has had on believers. For instance, men who had been enrolled in the drug and alcohol rehabilitation program in Desna agreed to help distribute humanitarian aid provided by BIEM. By assisting needy ones, these men found new purpose in life. Instead languishing as victims of addiction, they've been transformed. Becoming good

Samaritans in a time of national need has boosted their morale and developed their character. They rejoice to feel God using them to make a positive impact on their countrymen, all to the glory of the Lord.

Similarly, church members all over Ukraine are stepping up to the plate and ministering to others' physical and spiritual needs in a variety of ways.

So, no, God is not limited. Even in time of war we can find reasons to thank God and sing His praises!



*To watch a video of Pastor Igor Levtseniuk sharing his excitement over how God is using his church during wartime, go to*

<https://vimeo.com/717531414> – "Blessings from the War?" ■



*These brothers expect Heavenly rewards for Christian service, but the Ukrainian army honored them, too!*



*Wartime has mobilized believers of all ages to get involved in their church's outreaches.*

## Meeting Needs with Humanitarian Aid



*Refugees carry few possessions because their homes were destroyed or they fled with no time to pack.*



*These young people volunteered to organize aid into plastic sacks for delivery to needy ones.*



*Praise God, BIEM is providing foodstuffs that many families haven't seen for quite a while.*



*When stores have been destroyed or emptied, even basic supplies mean a lot.*



*Here's a sampling of the full-sized trucks, vans, and volunteers we use to transport our aid across Ukraine and to local distribution points.*