



MILLION DOLLAR SUNDAY

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with
hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

SAVE THE DATE

September 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022



@EasternEuropeanMission



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UKRAINE AID NEWSLETTER

Medicine, clean water, personal hygiene products, clothing, diapers, canned foods, hot meals, produce, evacuation expenses, and shelter are among the humanitarian aid provided for Ukrainian refugees through your generosity during these last few months. In addition to this long list of items, EEM has also been providing Bibles and Bible-based materials across Ukraine and neighboring countries for refugees through hundreds of ministry partners. One of those EEM ministry partners, *Light of the World*, is serving thousands of Ukrainian refugees right now in and around Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Light of the World recently sent a video to us with a short report saying, “Thanks to your support, we have been able to provide 2,000 plus people with hot meals and distribute about

THE RIGHT TIME

Poltava, Ukraine has become one of the largest transition hubs for people fleeing from the east of Ukraine. EEM’s Bibles happened to be in the city at just the right time.

EEM ministry partner and local Ukraine Deputy, Vlada Shestak, was organizing a city-wide prayer breakfast in Poltava for local government officials and initially requested hundreds

800 sets of hygiene kits just in the month of April alone. We provided several bomb shelters with food boxes and evacuated 200 plus people to safety. Praise God! Nearly 1,000 people have chosen to become followers of Christ as a result!”

“Your contribution to the people of Ukraine in the form of humanitarian aid and God’s Word is simply invaluable. Together we can do much more.”

Light of the World is one of many ministry partners on the frontlines of the war in Ukraine bringing humanitarian aid and God’s Word to women, men, and children fleeing the Russian invasion. Your generosity makes it possible to be the hands and feet of Jesus with ministries like *Light of the World*!

of Bibles to distribute at the event. Once the Bibles arrived for the prayer breakfast, the Russian invasion began, and Ukrainians in the east began to flee. Vlada and other local officials and leaders began to organize a center in the city to provide shelter, food, clothes, and medicine. Without question, Vlada said she immediately made the newly arrived Bibles and Bible-based materials available with humanitarian aid.

Vlada wrote to our team with gratitude saying, “In the most challenging times, one can find support and answers to the most painful questions in the Holy Scriptures: the sufferer will be saved to the end. (Matthew 24: 12-13) . We invite all displaced people to the Humanitarian Center, where they can receive Bibles for adults and children with all other aid. May the Word of God fill our hearts with love. Our loved ones are in dire need of support, kind words, and love. I thank EEM for providing spiritual support for our displaced people. Pray for peace in Ukraine.”

CONSTANTINE

A Report from *Hope to the People*¹

Houses were destroyed and burned by air bombs in the neighborhood where Constantine, his wife Anastasia, and Timothy, their two-month-old baby boy called home in Mariupol, Ukraine. Their house was still standing when a Russian Special Forces Unit entered the city, plundering the city for medical aid and food supplies. The unit was surprised to discover that there were still many civilians in the city after being told that civilians had been evacuated and that their troops could freely ‘roam around.’ Before Russian forces took their neighborhood entirely, the area was shelled with various weapons for 72 hours non-stop. Nothing was left for the people remaining. Constantine saw three bright lights flying at his family’s home and thought it was imminent death, but by God’s grace, the blow was absorbed by what was left of the previously evacuated house in front of theirs.

When artillery attacks began in their neighborhood, Constantine and Anastasia lived in the basement, cooking food on the street during breaks between the shelling. With several other men, Constantine buried the dead in bomb pits up to 22 feet deep.

While sheltering in their basement, two-month-old Timothy became ill. Risking his life, Constantine walked for 6 miles to exchange a pack of diapers for half a jar of medicine. He saw just how much currency had decreased in value on his journey as he witnessed a car being exchanged for a pack of cigarettes and 21 gallons of fuel bought for UAH 80,000. (about \$ 2,700). Constantine did his best to search for and provide clean water and food to keep his family alive.

A day before the complete clearing of civilians in their district by Russian soldiers, Constantine and Anastasia grabbed what belongings they could carry along with baby Timothy and fled the city on foot. You could



not walk the roads, or you would die. They darted through the backyards, constantly searching with their eyes where to hide or to jump into a pit to dodge flying shells or avoid coming under fire.

After some time, they were picked up by a car and taken to Zaporizhia, where the local church hosted them. As the days continued, they moved to Kamyanske and then Rivne, and God’s church served them and met their physical needs all along the way. With each step of their journey, they experienced God’s provision for them, and when they were offered the Bible by our ministers, Constantine and Anastasia took one to read. They both explained that they had heard about Christ in their childhood while attending Christian camps.

Only a few days after we said our goodbyes to Constantine, Anastasia, and Timothy, we learned that Constantine gave his life to Christ! We thank the Lord for access to God’s Word and for the Christians who shared the love of Christ with Constantine and his family while providing for the family’s physical needs. Please continue to pray for them and the thousands of others just like them!

¹ *Hope to the People* is an EEM Ministry Partner delivering humanitarian aid and Bibles to Ukrainian refugees in Rivne, Ukraine.



WHAT UKRAINIAN CHRISTIANS HAVE TAUGHT US

By Dirk Smith, EEM Vice President

What we have heard and seen from our friends in Ukraine following the Russian invasion is that there is nothing like the reality of a life and death crisis to bring clarity around our priorities. While we know there is great suffering and hardship among the Ukrainian people right now, we've been amazed at how often they are seen with a look of joy and peace on their faces when their pictures are taken, even in the midst of war.

Added to this are the ongoing concerns about food shortages and famine in the next six months, with 30% of the fields in Ukraine – the breadbasket of the world – rendered unusable due to the war. How are these resilient people able to keep a spirit of joy and peace while carrying on? We believe it is because they have confronted life's big questions and understand that this world is not their eternal home. Ukrainians recognize that their hope is not dependent on human hands because they have placed their trust in the God who alone can save them.

Ukraine has for many years been a spiritual light in Eastern Europe, and because of the influence of believers in that nation, the Gospel is spreading like wildfire. Requests for Ukrainian and Russian language Bibles from our (Eastern European Mission) ministry partners are off the charts, and are coming in from all over the world, including regions where refugees have sought shelter that we've never been able to reach before. The Ukrainians have found that they were prepared for the storms of life, and so many of them are able to say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him (Job 13:15)."

Another biblical passage, Habakkuk 3:16-19, seems as if it could have been prophetically

written for Ukraine in 2022:

"Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior."

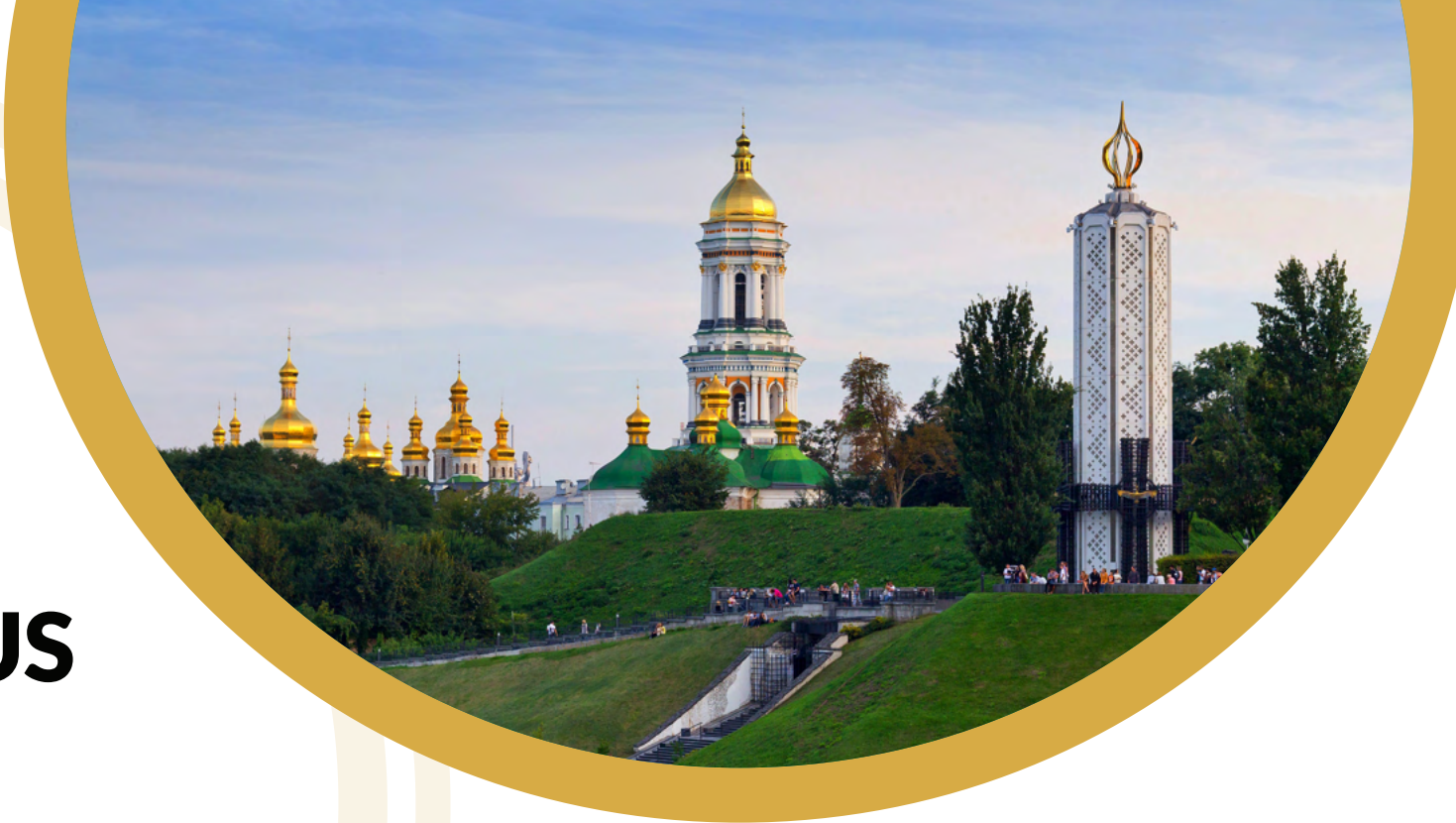
Here in the U.S., however, as we face uncertain times with food shortages, inflation, and ongoing violence, will we be able to stand strong in our faith? Will we handle it with a spirit of joy and peace? Unfortunately, this might not be the case. Instead, we see people trying to numb the pain with alcohol and drugs, mental health issues soaring, and suicide rates climbing.

During these times that cause us to look at the bigger questions of life, many of us may discover that we are actually not sure of our faith. Might we find that we are putting our hope in our circumstances, our money or our health? Does it take a tragedy to remind us

where our stability and security originate? In the storm, can we say God is on his throne? We might find that our foundation is built on sifting sand rather than the bedrock of truth. We need to go back to God, the source of our life and faith to get our footing back on solid ground again.

Lifeway research has recently released a poll regarding the reason evangelical Christians don't share their faith more. Among one of the top reasons – "I forget" – says a lot about our real spiritual condition. If our faith is truly our priority and the sustaining force in our lives, there is no way we would forget.

These recent national and international upheavals have reminded us all that life truly is a vapor, here for just a little while and then it vanishes away, as stated in James 4:14. This world is not our home, yet too many of us have made it so. While we have struggles, life is good. We get comfortable and complacent and don't want to leave it behind. We must remember the joy that is waiting for us beyond this mist, the joy that is so evident on our Ukrainian friends' faces despite the fog – or mist – of war. They are ready to face eternity, which is truly the only way to face even today.



BIBLES & BOMB SHELTERS

By LaGard Smith

The nightmare journey from bombed-out cities in eastern Ukraine to the west of the country involved a desperate, high-risk trek, first on foot, then in the back of trucks swerving to avoid constant bombardment, and finally being packed like animals in trains headed towards the Polish border. Panic and chaos everywhere. Food and sanitary facilities in scant supply. The constant fear of death, plus the anxiety about what lay ahead for families being cruelly separated.

By God's grace, some of the famished, exhausted refugees found their way to shelters run by *Hope to the People*, where workers had been busy setting up make-shift bomb shelters in the basements of churches in and near the western city of Rivne. Each shelter provided much-needed humanitarian aid, and open, welcoming arms. "What do you need? What do you want?"

You might be surprised what one after another asked for: "Do you have a Bible?" As it happens, in each shelter there was a table full of Bibles! In Ukrainian! And Children's Bibles, and Bible coloring books telling about personal peace and an eternal hope beyond whatever the future holds for these precious little innocents and their beleaguered families.

Having Bibles available was no coincidence. When the prospect of war began to loom larger, the Eastern European Mission (EEM) team in Kiev began rushing shipments of Bibles for *Hope to the People*. As the invasion began, all was ready: food for the body; nourishment for the soul.

Since 1961, EEM has distributed free Bibles and Bible-based materials throughout Eastern Europe—and Russia—in more than twenty languages. These materials are given to individuals, families, children in youth camps,

refugees, mission churches, public libraries, prisons, hospitals, orphanages, and...wait for it...public universities and public schools! In fact, governments are begging for Bibles to hand out in their public schools! What can't happen in a "Christian" nation like the United States is happening in Eastern Europe! What's wrong with this picture?

When military conflict breaks out, as in Ukraine, we rush to spend billions on weapons for use against totalitarian regimes. But what if we could spend a fraction of the cost so that war never again broke out? One doesn't have to be a Pollyanna to believe that Bibles rather than bombs could actually have that effect. Bombs destroy people; Bibles change people... and nations.

There is much debate over whether we ought to engage in "nation-building." While that is a political issue, "nation-building" in another sense has nothing to do with politics...and, then again, everything to do with politics. "Righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people." Show me a truly righteous nation, and I'll show you a nation that has compassion, not aggression. Show me a nation that faithfully follows the Bible, and I'll show you a nation that pursues peace and freedom, not war and devastation. Like nothing else can, Bibles build better!

Why are unbelievers, in particular, asking for Bibles? Could it be that, in the crush to escape terror, they have seen in the faces of believers a peace that passes understanding? Or perhaps they have heard from their fellow refugees the good news of Jesus being proclaimed in the midst of unimaginable bad news. If you are wondering what you can do for peace, both in Ukraine and in nations everywhere, the answer is simple: Help unleash the healing, freeing power of Bibles!



LIVING BY THE WORD OF GOD

By Ivan, Ukrainian Refugee, Age 13

What exactly changed in my life in Ukraine when the war began?

I woke up in the early morning, as I always do. My grandparents told me the bad news: the Russian federation began the invasion of our Holy Land - Ukraine.

I was very scared, but I did not understand why it happened.

I was waiting for the Summer break and I wanted to go visit my grandmother and grandfather who are in Lviv because we had

planned a trip to the Carpathian Mountains, beautiful Yaremche, to the waterfalls at Vorokhta. Anyway, there was a lot of shelling and air raids all over Ukraine every day and we had to stay in the bomb shelters.

I had a lot of dreams before the war, but this war taught me to have only one dream - victory, health, peace, and God's blessing on our Ukraine. That is why we must value every word of God and go to church every day.

People do not live by dreams alone, but by the Word and will of God.

THOUGHTS FROM THE FRONTLINES

By Sasha Prokopchuk, EEM Ministry Partner

It was the evening of February 23, 2022. I had spent several hours at the mechanic in Kyiv and I was driving home in my car. My wife and daughter said they had made dinner for us and I anticipated a warm family evening at home. When crossing the long bridge separating the left and right banks of the Dnieper river, my phone rang. My friend Denny Kruse (a missionary from Neosho, Missouri) said quietly with a little pause, “Sasha, you have a few hours to leave Kyiv,” referring to the outbreak of war. I thought Denny was overestimating the situation. My wife Victoria and I had just returned a week ago from Moscow, where her brother, his family, and her mother live. While in Russia, the only news available about the possibility of war was from Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. He confidently stated that Western partners and the U.S. were paranoid and had an obsession with Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine. Lavrov spoke so convincingly that I was inclined to believe his words.

On February 24, a little after four o’clock in the morning, we were awakened by an anxious phone call. It was Denny and he said that the war had begun. We immediately heard explosions of falling rockets on Kyiv outside of our bedroom window.

Almost eight years earlier on July 2, 2014, we woke up to shells exploding near our house in Donetsk. In both cases, the war had caused us to wake up and open our eyes.

“What do we do now?” I thought. My thoughts were like sea waves crashing over one another - “What will happen to my family? My children and grandchildren? What do we do next? Where and when can we go when there is panic and unbelievable traffic jams all around?”

What happens next and where do we find safety?” Anxiety, worry, physical stress, and

confusion reigned as the war knocked on our door again. This time, we chose to stay at home, north of Kyiv. Russian paratroopers had already landed and heavy fighting had begun nearly 15 miles away from our apartment. The sky was full of black smoke.

Our son, Vanya, his wife Ekaterina and our grandchildren moved in with us, because their apartment was more vulnerable to shelling and bombing. Somehow, it was more peaceful to be together. In the evenings a curfew was implemented for the city. We turned off the lights to stay camouflaged, lit one candle, and began to sing and pray—it felt more like singing not with our voices, but with hearts trusting in God!

Going back to the beginning of my story, one of my thoughts: We decide for ourselves what information to trust and whom to believe. Experience shows that for one and the same upcoming event, there are often two opposite comments and forecasts both claiming to be true. Your life and your family’s life in the future depends on who you will trust more and which information you will find more reasoned. It was



VANYA (L) AND
SASHA (R)

easier and more comfortable for us to believe the lie that there would be no war. But an epiphany was coming.

One way to “open your eyes” and see reality is through suffering, grief, and personal tragedy. At a time like this, the Lord removes all the scenery on the stage of life and you begin to see everything in its true light.

I saw clearly for myself the parallel between the devil and a dictatorial political regime with imperial overtones. When power-obsessed politicians feed people lies and then pass it off as truth and good, that is when we call it propaganda. But their real goal is as the thief who only comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

Many cities in Ukraine are vivid evidence of this diabolical strategy of the Russian government. Our eyes were opened. We have had an epiphany.

My next thought is, if I am a follower of Christ, what is my action in this insane war? If I bear the name Christian, can I stand by and be neutral to all the events that are taking place? What does it mean for me to be a spiritual person—does it mean I ignore everything going on in this physical world?

The gospel provides answers through the life and ministry of Jesus. Christ loves, cares, has compassion, saves, and cries. He does not pass by those who need help and he always extends a helping hand. So, neutrality is not about Christianity. We believe in God and our faith works through love. We conquer evil with good!

If you find yourself in a war zone, it is impossible to avoid stress and psychological trauma. Because war is not just a daily event, but an hourly threat to life. Each person will react in his or her own way to the growing internal and external tensions and dangers.

Fear, anxiety, and depression can easily paralyze a person’s life activity.

Vanya and I decided to evacuate the women



SASHA

and children in our family to a place where they could sleep peacefully, without hearing the sounds of war. We faced many difficulties and trials during the evacuation of our families, but the Lord did a miracle for us and allowed the women and children to shelter in safety.

Vanya and I stayed in Kyiv. At times, it seemed that our lives had become surreal, a combination of dream and reality. More than once we saw low-flying cruise missiles flying over the roofs of our apartments.

One of the peculiarities of war is the inability to make plans for the future. You only have now, today. It is as if the wise King Solomon spoke to us directly when he said, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

Today Vanya and I are still in Kyiv, continuing to serve and work for the Lord, His church, and anyone who needs help. Every day, with prayer to God, we do what we can do. We continue to record and show our Christian TV programs on national TV three times a week. We are constantly in touch with people who call us. Our Response center in Kyiv is operating normally, and we have sent over 2,000 Bibles, New Testaments, and other Christian books throughout Ukraine in the month of April. We thank God for all our friends and partners who are supporting us in Ukraine.

BIBLES AND HUMANITARIAN AID

A Report from *Word to the Teacher* ¹

In April, we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. No matter how angry the enemy is on earth, he has already been defeated, and it is only a matter of time before he is finally destroyed. In the Resurrection of Jesus – we have our unfading hope and insurmountable joy! Our team celebrated the resurrection in their homes with their relatives by God's grace. Unfortunately, many people in Ukraine did not have the same opportunity. For the third month in a row, the war has been going on, and for the third month in a row, brother Arkady and a team of volunteer drivers are evacuating people from combat zones in eastern and southern Ukraine. Arkady has visited many places and has had many opportunities to share the Gospel while delivering humanitarian aid and evacuating refugees.

According to Arkady and many local missionaries delivering requested Bibles with humanitarian aid, many refugees thought it more necessary and valuable to receive Bibles than humanitarian aid. This is what it means to spread the Word of God in the right place, at the right time, and for the needy!



WARTIME

A Report from *Hope to the People* ²

Wartime is a time of testing our convictions about what makes us tick, and what drives us as we are making decisions and dealing with people.

Wartime is a time when our faith is being rooted in Christ. Just as a tree, when it is bent by the wind, it takes root deeper and deeper into the ground to withstand the new gusts.

Our ministry, *Hope to the People*, responded quickly to the needs of refugees fleeing. Currently, a team of 70 people is working in our facility every day and 13 volunteer drivers keep taking trips to combat zones to evacuate women, children, and men. Every day, we feed 80-120 people. In recent weeks, humanitarian aid has been delivered to the eastern and southern parts of our country.

Oftentimes, the displaced people come to us without anything. They do not know where to sleep, what to eat, or where they will live. This is why our primary goal is to comfort them and turn their gaze toward God. God is the one who can take care of them and most importantly, heal their souls. Thanks to the generous contributions of many people, we're trying to help them the best we can.

We are able to provide rooms for people to stay

overnight as they wait and prepare to be sent to dormitories and institutions designated by the state for the more long-term settlement of refugees. We're very grateful to God that we have an additional campground in Zalissya, where we are able to accommodate about 120 people and let them stay for 1-2 months.

At the beginning of the war, many people left Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Mariupol. Now more people are leaving Luhansk and Donetsk. Most of these people are seriously impacted both emotionally and financially. Families with many children, elderly people, men, and single women are leaving these areas. Unfortunately, many of those traveling from these areas are lacking trust and are somewhat suspicious of people in the West. Sometimes they are unkind because they have been told and brainwashed that they are not welcome here. To be honest, it's difficult to serve such people, but at the same time, this is a great opportunity to grow as Christians and to love others with the love of God. We have seen over and over again how many of these unkind people become open to friendships after they meet us. It has brought our team such joy to break down those barriers as we provide aid and share the Gospel!

Those who serve through *Hope to the People* in Rivne and Zalissya are people of different ages, and genders, and have varying stories. Yet all are with one common desire to serve God and people. Some volunteers are able

to combine volunteering with their current professional work and others have lost their jobs due to the war. Altogether there are housewives, accountants, cooks, teachers, retirees, students, and mothers with children. The children here create their own atmosphere of joy, serenity, and love. One of the volunteers said, "The good thing is that there are children here! When they run, jump, and laugh, I feel a sense of relief and understand that life goes on."

Please pray for the open hearts among those displaced so that they will experience the love of God and start relationship with Him. Pray for the team to grow in trust in God and love for those around them. Pray for our unity, our ability to forgive, and our ability to be sensitive to each other's spiritual, physical, and financial state.

¹ *Word to the Teacher* is an EEM Ministry Partner serving Ukrainian refugees in and near Kyiv, Ukraine.

² *Hope to the People* is an EEM Ministry Partner delivering humanitarian aid and Bibles to Ukrainian refugees in Rivne, Ukraine.

