

Update 4, written June 18, 2011

Camps – Perhaps at a glance, Vacation Bible School (VBS) looks like songs, a lesson, crafts, a snack & games. But if that is all it is, then, either you are standing too far away or the most important isn't happening. VBS is a way to share the gospel message and if it is being done with God first, then there will be spiritual warfare. Today I called several people who were involved in the first 3 camps that took place these past 2 weeks. "Tell me the blessings and tell me your prayer requests," I asked and then sat back and took notes.

Blessings!

Sudak VBS had 24 kids and Happy Village had 20 kids. In both places, several moms came and listened in on the lessons. Other praises for these 2 camps include how the church members gave of what they had. Meaning, instead of saying, "I don't have anything", they said, "Here is my yard and my house – use it for the Glory of God!" Both camps had a mix of Russian, Ukrainian and Muslim children and there was no problem.

So as not to get in trouble by city officials, the camps were only 2 hours long each day. Pastor Dima said, "We took the most important and poured it into those 2 hours." Although this is a drastic change from the freedom they've experienced the past 11 years, Dima was pleased with how things went. "We know these are the end times. Persecution should not surprise us. Praise God we could do what we did!"

Abundant Village: had 41 kids and 10 adults came to the closing program. They were allowed to use public buildings. Pastor Peter said, "I was pleased to see our oldest Sunday School children starting to work as helpers and to see those who were helpers, now work as leaders. Praise God for everything!"

Both pastors asked that I share their deep gratefulness with you. God, through your sacrificial giving, made it possible to do these outreaches. Thank you! Thank you very much!

Prayer requests-

*Sudak Church – As I mentioned in the last update, this church does not have their own building but rather rents a public hall (House of Culture) for their Sunday morning worship time. The mayor has given them notice that after this Sunday, the church will no longer be allowed to rent the hall. Stated reason - Because they are a religious organization. Real reason – The Orthodox Church in the area wants all other religious denominations out. Please hold the Sudak city mayor in prayer and pray for a place for the Sudak Church to meet.

*Rita – this young lady comes from a family who does not yet know God. She first heard about God through VBS, and then Sunday School. Later she was a part of the church youth group at

the Sudak Church and will be baptized this summer. Pastor Dima is rejoicing in her step of faith and requests prayer for her spiritual protection.

*Wisdom, strength and obedience of the VBS leadership teams.

*“That God would help us keep the most important the most important!”

*That more Sunday Schools would start as a result of VBS. The main reason they don’t is due to insufficient amount of teachers...so prayer that God would provide laborers for His harvest.

*That parents would allow their kids to come & that the kids would desire to come to the upcoming 34 camps that are planned for during the remainder of the summer. (These are VBS’s or outreaches to teenagers that God, through you, is providing supplies and/or funding for.)

*That the kids would trust God with their hearts and lives.

* For spiritual protection in this ongoing spiritual battle.

Berdansk-

God provided a chariot to carry me and my boxes to Berdansk last week. The Berdansk Church clinic needed medical supplies and I had supplies for Artur’s 2 VBS’s and Sunday School supplies for the Berdansk Church. While there, I was given a child’s wheelchair (an answer to prayer for next week’s camp) to bring home. After bringing me back, he returned to Berdansk with the last of the medical supplies and a box of Operation Christmas Child boxes, given by Samaritain’s Purse (Franklin Graham). Pastor Artur moved his work schedule around to make this transfer of blessings possible. What a servant!

While my time was short, I was able to see those patients that my colleague, Era – a former nurse practitioner- was most concerned about. I also got to visit an elderly man whom I had seen last May. After Victor suffered a serious stroke and resulting broken leg, his sister could not take care of him alone. So a month earlier he had been brought from Russia to the home of his older sister in Berdansk. When he arrived, he had 8 pressure ulcers, a broken leg, displayed no emotion except for pain and was not eating. A local surgeon was asked to see him. After examining Victor he told the two sisters, “What do you want me to do? He is going to die.”

The sisters looked to Era for a ray of hope. Dietician, rehab, surgical nurse and missionary rolled into one, Era ignored the doctor’s dismal forecast and said, “With God’s help, let’s try.” For a month Era came twice a day for dressing changes, then came daily for another 7 months and then every few days for another month until every wound was healed. How could I not be amazed at the smiling man before me?!

I get the Walk Thru the Bible email daily devotional and today's reminded me of where I've been.

2 Kings 4

Elisha saves a Shunammite widow from economic disaster and revives her son from death.

INSIGHT

Elisha's ministry is not startling; it is redemptive and constructive. Elijah was a prophet of fire and judgment; Elisha was a prophet of mercy and compassion. Elijah was a man on the move; Elisha enjoyed a tranquil life at home. Elijah's miracles were destructive; Elisha's were constructive. It must have been tempting for Elisha to want to be like Elijah. But he resists it; that is not what the Lord has for Elisha. He is his own man before the Lord. It is often tempting for us to want to be like someone else, to be dissatisfied with who we are and what we can do. Yet God made us to be what He wanted us to be. We must be content with who we are. It is so liberating. Accept yourself. God does.

Unlike Elisha, I have grumbled. Dissatisfied with God's decisions, I've reprimanded Him. "Why did you send me here?! If I were my dad (a doctor) I could help. If I were Bill Graham I could spread the gospel. All I am is a nurse and I can't even speak the language right."

Where am I going with this? I want to point you to obedience and how God is glorified in it. Elisha didn't try to be Elijah and he didn't pout because he wasn't. He glorified God by serving Him with what he was given. Era, too, isn't trying to be someone else but rather has focused on what she does have. She is faithful to what she has been called to and obediently uses the gifts God has given her. And because of this, God, through Era, walked into this home.

It has taken too long, but I'm understanding now that God made me who I am and gave me the gifts I have – for His glory not my own. No, I'm not a doctor and thank you Lord for that because here, being an American resident doctor here would cause a lot of problems. No, I'm not Billy Graham but thank you Lord others are. I am a nurse with gifts that happen to be very needed here and I thank you Lord for that. My gifts were poured into Era; Era poured them out for Victor and God gets all the glory!

Hot! – At the risk of either Oregon's envy or Texas' laughter, we hit our highest so far this summer and checked in at a toasty 96F today. Since mid-May we've been having sunny 80 degree days. Some badly needed rain came a few days ago. Not much but the garden's were grateful for what fell. We had a yummy strawberry season and I have a bunch tucked away in the freezer. The market is full of color but the fastest growing crop is the tourist one. The local

buses are a bit harder to get on to each week. You can plan on standing room only now until September.

Gospra – In my last update I wrote about an upcoming Christian camp for mentally and physically challenged children. I caught Alla (person in charge) on the phone yesterday and she said that the camp was full. They are expecting 150 – which means 59 kids, 59 caregivers and 32 support (leadership, helpers, program, medical & kitchen staff). The camp starts Monday the 20th and goes through the 27th.

It turns out that I do get to go! The group of doctors from the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine will be there for first 2 days to evaluate the kids. Once they leave, a room will open up for me. I will arrive on Wednesday by bus. This is perfect as I needed to be here for clinic on Tuesday. The situation is great for the camp because they will have medical coverage for the whole week.

I'm really excited and (if I'm honest) a titch nervous. I only have a foggy idea of what I'm getting into. This 'walking in faith' stuff doesn't allow for a lot of know & control. The only thing I *know* is that I'm supposed to go and that everything is under His *control*.

I'll write when I get back and thanks for your prayers!

June