



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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Camping in the Roman Empire

Our Challenger newsletter isn't long enough to describe all the summer camps sponsored by BIEM. However, here's a peek into one that was especially interesting.

Although BIEM sponsors many different camps overseas, no two camps are alike. Sometimes local believers coordinate day camps, where kids come in the morning but go home at night. (Day camps are a plus when non-Christian parents don't know or trust the church well enough to permit their kids to leave town with strangers.) In other situations, the camps are held away from home, with the kids living in tents. This year, some churches in central Russia joined forces with an extra measure of creativity. There, 90 kids ranging in age from 6 to 16 spent eight days camping in the Roman Empire!

The theme of this intriguing camp was "Believe Like Paul." As Pastor Mikhail told BIEM, "Who better to acquaint us with the Roman Empire than Paul of Tarsus, a Roman citizen and our beloved brother in Christ?"



"Caesar Philip" welcomed the amazed campers to the Roman Empire.

The book of Acts tells how Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles. He traveled widely, preaching in places big and small. So, before the children arrived, volunteers transformed the campground into the Roman Empire. Each day, the kids received Bible lessons from the life of Paul, presented as if by a persecuted Christian. To further impress the stories on the listeners, adult actors donned costumes and delivered theatrical presentations that brought each story to life.

Memorizing Bible verses undergirded each lesson in the kids' minds. Likewise, the camp games reinforced spiritual truths.

"I believe the children will well remember these stories from the life of Paul," Pastor Mikhail commented. "Praise God that the [BIEM] mission is able to help us hold camps. There are always children and teens whose parents would have a difficult time paying for their kids to go due to lack of finances."

As you can imagine from the glimpses

provided by the photos, such a camp required a tremendous amount of planning and coordination. Specific teams included the organizers, the youth mentors, the cooks, and of course the brethren who set up tents and performed the actual building. Many

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The children even received official passports with their names and photos, verifying Roman citizenship!



Whoever would've guessed that games and competitions in Rome could be so fun?

Bible Quest 2021

This year, God again blessed with an opportunity to hold the 8th annual Bible Quest in Ukraine. Organizers scheduled the Quest for the end of August.

Six weeks in advance, organizers announced this year's competition would be based on the book of Luke. Prospective participants began intensive studying, since they must complete the Quest strictly by memory.

BIEM missionary Pavel Usach stated, "Throughout the Quest, we could see the youths' level of preparation was quite high." That was heartwarming news since the prime goal is encouraging young adults to study God's Word. However, the greatest blessing was having eight young people repent!

Here's how this Quest unfolded:

On Saturday, August 21, about 200 young people and their youth leaders arrived at the property rented for this event. That evening they held their first youth service, which focused on "The



About 200 young people from all over Ukraine participated in this year's Bible Quest.



Services provided opportunities for youth to lead peers in praising God.

Purpose of Life." The evening concluded with a time of fellowship.

The Sunday service emphasized the theme of "Choice," emphasizing how our choices determine the course of our lives. Young people glorified God through singing and musical instruments. By the end of that service, four people repented.

Sunday afternoon, an instructor taught a class on the use of topographic maps and a compass. This knowledge would be valuable in the forest.

For Sunday evening, the adults divided the youth into fifteen teams for a special fellowship time in quiz format. Team members got better acquainted as they collaborated using their knowledge of the

Bible. This activity provided an enjoyable, uplifting time.

Before bed, Quest organizers gathered the youth group leaders and discussed all issues related to the Quest itself, including instructions, the course in the forest, etc.

At 6:00 a.m. Monday morning, workers began delivering and setting up all the necessary equipment for each checkpoint in the forest. In addition, they set up a field kitchen, so the youth could take a break and fortify themselves during the day.

At 9:00, the organizers released the first team to start. At 10-minute intervals, they released successive teams one after another.

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"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"

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Simply locating checkpoints in the forest required maps and a reliable compass.



Matching events to their locations strictly from memory can be tricky.



How many illustrated hints does it take to guess each story?

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Each team had to locate seven checkpoints shown on their maps. At each point, they had to perform a specific task based on the book of Luke.

1. Find and mark every name in the Gospel of Luke.
2. Figure out stories in Luke by uncovering as few picture clues as possible.
3. Indicate on a large map the different geographic locations where events in Luke happened.
4. Answer questions about the Gospel of Luke to solve a scanword



Applying knowledge of God's Word to solve problems builds wholesome camaraderie.

(crossword puzzle with picture clues).

5. A large board presented the words of various verses from Luke in mixed-up order. They had to arrange the words in proper sequence.
6. List all the miracles and parables in chronological order.
7. Multiple-answer questions—they had to confer and determine the correct answers.

After completing the course, each team returned to the base for a wonderful evening service, complete with a sermon, music, and praise to God. Pavel Usach says, "That

evening was marvelous, especially for those who accepted the Lord as personal Savior that evening." Afterward, everyone could fry cakes over a fire, drink tea together, and simply enjoy each other's company.

Monday morning, it was time for a final service. The young people were eager to hear the results of the Quest, which was announced. Following that came a lunch and prayer time. Lastly, the young people set out for home—all joyful and wishing for more such meetings.

"It's gratifying to see young people striving for success by studying God's Word," Pavel summarized. "I give sincere thanks to everyone who assisted financially so we could hold this event. The 8th Bible Quest was enriching and a blessing to everyone involved. May God reward and bless."

Of course, the Quests are far more than wholesome companionship. They are fun tools for prompting teens to detailed study of God's Word. May He raise up solid Christian leaders from these forest competitions! ■

...Camping in Rome continued from page 1

Other individuals also contributed labor so the young campers could not only enjoy a unique vacation away from home but also be immersed in the Word of God from morning until late into the evening.

God blessed this camp with marvelous weather. However, on the final day, the Lord Himself gave one last lesson about trusting Him during hardships. Although the day had been sunny without so much as a breath of breeze, a strong wind sprang up just as the group was taking a boat ride. Raindrops pounded down. Concerned

for the children's safety, even the adults grew fearful.

The children, on the other hand, demonstrated their faith. They continued to sing despite the wind and waves. One of them declared, "It wasn't for nothing that we learned how to trust God during troubles!"

By the time the group reached shore, where their parents were waiting, the clouds blew past, and once again the sun

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Actors brought Bible stories to life. This Philippian jailer "thrust Paul and Silas into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks" (Acts 16:24).



Working as a team requires good communication—and sometimes steady hands.



Camps give adult leaders opportunities to form one-on-one friendships.

...Camping in Rome continued from page 3 shined just as if nothing had happened. Both children and adults praised Him for that supplemental lesson.

Summarizing the whole experience, Pastor Mikhail said, “Much effort went into this, both financial and physical. Praise be to our God for everything—for special mercy, for blessings, and for faith that these young souls will love God and serve Him like Timothy, Paul’s young student, who from childhood knew the holy Scriptures.” (2 Timothy 3:15)

To see a 5-minute video of clips from this Roman camp, go to: <https://vimeo.com/591614583>. At the conclusion of each summer, BIEM prepares a Summer Camp Report, which is a longer, more detailed account of how God used the camps. Donors to summer camps automatically receive a copy in autumn. Others may also receive one by requesting it.



Tomorrow’s Christian leaders—your gifts are contributing to their formation!

Willing and Waiting to Hear about Jesus

Several years ago, a man in Central Asia was approached by a stranger. The stranger struck up a conversation. He told him about Jesus, the Savior from sin. However, this man had doubts. He didn’t embrace this new teaching. Before departing, that Christian stranger advised him to seek Jesus, since they who seek Him shall find Him. Then he was gone.

As time passed, this man felt increasingly lost in his Islamic beliefs. But where could he turn for answers? One day he earnestly began praying to find Jesus.

This summer, our worker “Richard” and his team of three others went on an evangelistic trip. They stopped in this

man’s village and happened to meet him. During their conversation, Richard said, “We have something we need to share with you.”

Instantly, the man grew excited. He exclaimed, “Jesus?”

Our men were amazed that this Muslim man was already willing and waiting to hear about Christ. Before long, he readily trusted the Savior. Afterward, he told the team how he had heard about Jesus years earlier but had been waiting to hear again in order to believe fully.

Several weeks after he came to Christ, the new brother in Christ led his wife to faith in Jesus, too! ■

“God works in our lives!”

In Lviv, Ukraine, BIEM missionary pastor Yura Levtseniuk faced a dilemma. His small congregation is renovating an older building to create an attractive, brighter, updated church. However, funds had run out. He began fasting and praying to the Lord for more building funds.

That very day he was driving his family along the Lviv bypass when he witnessed a gut-wrenching sight directly in front of him. A collision sent an SUV flying through the air. Yura braked in the middle of the road, told his family, “Pray!” then sprinted to the scene.

“I pulled the victim out through the hatch because the vehicle was lying on its side. It was a miracle the driver survived. He had only bruises and a torn ear. Together, we thanked God for his survival.”

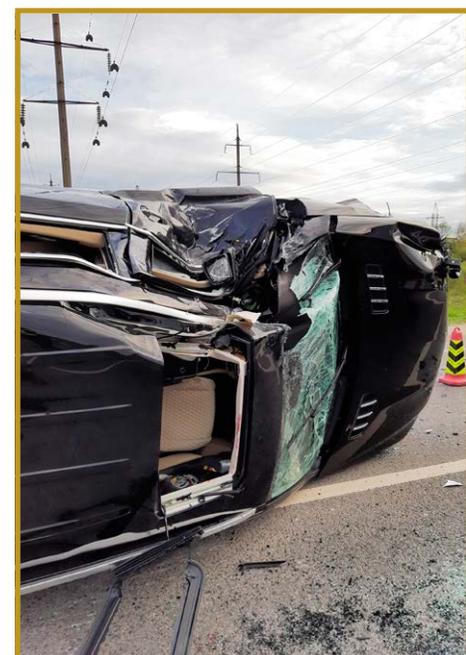
The shook-up driver asked Yura to accompany him to the hospital, where a doctor sewed on his ear. The victim’s son soon arrived. It turned out the driver is a believer, but his son is not. However, the son agreed it was a miracle his father survived with such light injuries.

Later, both father and son visited the Levtseniuks at their church.

Yura says, “They saw that we have an unfinished renovation, and they blessed the church with a gift of \$5,000. This was a huge blessing. That very day I had been

fasting before the Lord, asking God for funds for repairs. They declared it was necessary to roll their car to help us with repairs. God works in our lives!”

This church and other BIEM building projects could use more funds. If you would like to help with church-building projects, please designate your gift “Church Buildings.” ■



Yura Levtseniuk helped the driver from this vehicle.