



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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A Quest for God's Word!

In October of 2023, teams of young adults from churches scattered across Ukraine converged on a Christian campground near the western Ukraine city of Zdolbuniv. The purpose was to participate in the 10th annual Bible Quest, an event that requires participants to study Scriptures intensively to compete with other teams. And, praise God, the results are astounding.

Initially the idea of BIEM's Pavel Usach, the yearly Bible Quest is now considered BIEM's final camp for each year even though it takes place in autumn. But the Quest is different from typical teen camps. First, in order to attend, the young adults in each team must prepare themselves by intensively studying specific portions of Scriptures for many weeks long before the actual Quest. (In the past, the young people have been assigned a particular book of the Bible to study. In 2023, Quest organizers introduced an interesting twist: instead of assigning the young people a particular book, they assigned



In October, 270 young people and their adult sponsors participated in this year's Bible Quest in Zdolbuniv, Ukraine.

the life of a particular person—David. Any details from David's life became fair game. The young people had no clues concerning which details they might be expected to recall.)

Next, participants made their way through the forest to various Check Points. At each one, team members had to pool their knowledge to solve puzzles and creative challenges that involved the people, places, things, and chronology of

David's life. Impartial observers oversaw each puzzle-solving process to ensure no one yielded to the temptation to check notes or cell phones for answers. Prizes were awarded to the highest-scoring team.

This year's Bible Quest saw a number of past participants returning for their second attempt. But other youth were inexperienced first timers who were still learning how to navigate the challenges.

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BIEM missionary Pavel Usach founded and conducts the annual Bible Quest.



At this Checkpoint, a crossword format compelled participants to supply specific answers that fit the puzzle.

Retirement for the Abernathys!

Because of security needs, BIEM doesn't typically publicize the actual names of staff who travel in our Central Asian ministries. However, in one case it's now safe to use real names. David and An Abernathy (aka, "Cateam" for "Central Asia Team") are now retiring. They will no longer be crossing borders, so we can openly thank them for 22 years of ministry with BIEM in the Muslim lands of Central Asia!

In appreciation, our Board of Directors composed this statement about the Abernathys:

In light of David Abernathy's retirement, the Board of BIEM wishes to commend David and An Abernathy for the outstanding blessing they have been in their many years of service at BIEM. It has been an honor and joy to have the Abernathys serve with us at BIEM. With obvious, unfeigned

love for the Lord Jesus Christ, David and An have broadened our areas of outreach to include predominantly Muslim lands where BIEM had not previously been active. In both hard times and easier times, David and An have exhibited joy in the Lord and provided a consistently positive example for the staff of BIEM, for our stateside supporters, and for those brothers and sisters overseas with whom David has coordinated evangelistic outreaches and numerous projects which have reached thousands for Christ. We appreciate the serious concern and dedication to the Great Commission while also appreciating the sense of humor and typical daily God-centered happiness at being active in God's service this wonderful couple provides. Through their presence among us, BIEM has been a stronger organization and has accomplished much more than we could have done without him. In accepting their request for retirement, while we regretfully acknowledge an end of our official years of glad collaboration in God's harvest fields, we readily affirm that our Christian friendship and appreciation for David and An continue as firmly

as ever. We will be thankful for each and every future opportunity to fellowship with these special servants of our Lord.

In addition, we thank the Lord for providing a replacement—one of our field directors dedicated to this part of the world who has worked closely with brother David. In recent years, this other brother has assumed more and more responsibilities for this ministry. To help him cover the remaining duties, a member of BIEM's Board of Directors who has experience in that part of the world will be stepping in to assist as well. Thus, the outreaches pioneered by David and An will not cease. They will continue to grow and spread as God leads for the salvation of souls and the edifying of believers. May God be praised! ■



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"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"
Dr. Peter Slobodian, Founder

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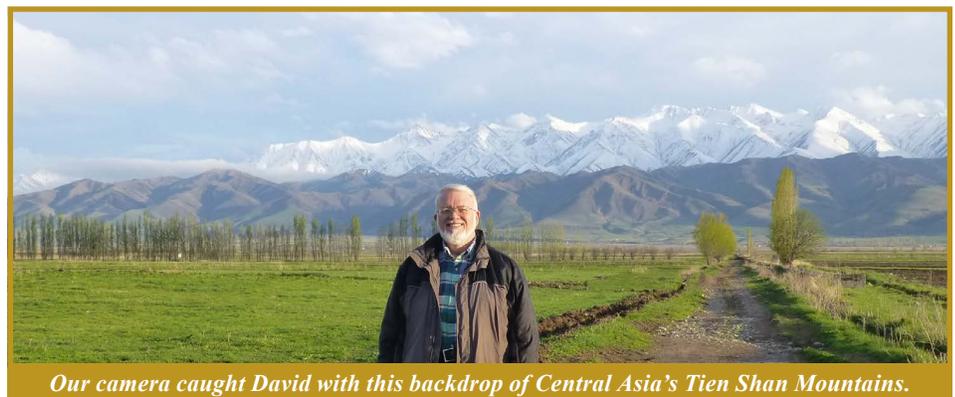
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Our camera caught David with this backdrop of Central Asia's Tien Shan Mountains.



Quick Glimpses



Members of Heritage Baptist Church near Chicago delivered a load of clothing, wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and other medical supplies. They also spent the day sorting and boxing donated items. If you have such items to donate, our warehouse is ready!



In Western Asia, these new believers traveled to the Mediterranean Sea to be baptized. Praise God for saving souls!



As BIEM personnel distribute aid and minister along the war zone, destroyed homes are a common sight.



Andrei Eliseev, the director of the Christian Drug & Alcohol Rehab Center near Ternopil, shared his testimony and the Gospel with villagers during a recent aid trip into Donbas, Ukraine.



One Ukrainian villager near the war zone told our workers, "Other people flee from here, but you come to help. Thank you!"



The war in Ukraine has created opportunities to share both physical aid and the Word of God with wounded soldiers and civilians.



Recalling the exact sequence of David's life can be a challenge.

...Bible Quest continued from page 1

In all, 270 young people and their adult sponsors attended this year's event.

In addition to the actual time spent in the woods, the Quest includes stirring worship services. Various preachers drew upon David's life for Bible messages that challenged the listeners to consider their own lives and relationships with the Lord.

One of those preachers is Pavel Usach, who still conducts the Bible Quests with the aid of an enthusiastic team of leaders. Pavel declared, "God blessed. We were able to teach many truths from the life of David. The young people could learn these and apply the principles to their lives."



The Bible Quest also lets young people uplift one another with their musical talents.

As sometimes happens, some youth who came to the Quest had not yet entered into a personal relationship with God. Concerning them, Pavel adds the exciting news, "We're glad to report that many young people came to know the Lord. So we thank you, that with your help we were able to conduct the Quest again this year."

The salvation of souls and the edification of young believers—what wonderful fruit from this endeavor. May God be glorified both now and in the future lives of these maturing believers!

To view an online interview in which Pavel Usach gives more information concerning this year's Bible Quest, please see BIEM's monthly video update for December, "A Quest for God's Word": <https://vimeo.com/user37287229/biblequest>



Earthly prizes are fun to receive, but the real rewards are a deeper knowledge of God's Word and new Christian friends.

A Final Word...

The year 2023 has been full of questions and challenges, but God has blessed. He provided solutions to our questions and opened new doors for ministry. Souls have been saved, new believers baptized, and new churches planted for the glory of God. Praise the Lord, He does not push us forth on our own strength, but accompanies us through the challenges. He uses your support and prayers to make this mission possible. So, to all of you who pray and give to keep BIEM operating we say, "Thank you! Merry Christmas! And Happy 2024 New Year!"

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

1 Timothy 3:16