

THE VISION

SHARING CHRIST WITH THE WORLD

THE MUD, THE DOGS, THE GEESE AND THE LOST SOULS

By Darrell Smith

The rain came in sheets as the ambulance slogged along the mud trail which served as the road. Misha “the tank driver” and Svetlana the interpreter in the front seat. I was sandwiched between two of the 18 or so teenagers on one of the three benches which ran the length of the “mercy machine” turned church bus. Whatever the weather and the driving conditions outside, there was laughter and song from the dedicated youth group inside, as we headed to Glavane, a small collective farm village in Southeast Ukraine.

Darrell Smith recounts the adventure in seeing God at work in the lives of the people of the Eastern Ukraine as they come to Christ.



Never mind that we could not see out since the side windows had been painted white so that the police could not count the number of passengers. Never mind that the authorities had called me to the city hall that day and forbade me to hold any further worship services in a public place. Everyone was sure that they only did that to placate the Orthodox Priest who had complained; and besides, the weather was so bad

the authorities would not venture out.

About 5:30 p.m. we arrived at Glavane. As if on cue the sun began to peek out and the rain stopped. No sooner had the ambulance stopped when I was told to wait while the young people went door to door with my testimony tract to invite the people to come hear about Jesus.

About 15 minutes later the downpour started again and wet bedraggled children slipped and slid in the mud as they ran for shelters. The ones who made it back to the muddy white machine said that the people would come as soon as the chores were done—rain or not. And they did.

A little while later as I peered out of the vehicles door and down the main muddy street, there in the mud, amid the dogs and the flocks of geese were the lost souls.

“I wondered .. if I failed, how long it might be before these people would have another chance to hear. I already knew the answer and it hurt my heart,” Perhaps never.”

We went up the drive way of the house where we were parked and up onto a small porch of the home where we set up the sound system.

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The driveway was about 25 feet wide with rock fences on either side. The house, built in the shape of an L with a porch along the inside of the L shape.

This served as the chapel for our services. As the music blared more and more people from the village gathered.

It began to sprinkle rain, but it did not seem to matter. They wanted to see the man in the Texas hat and to hear what he had to say about God.

It was about 7 pm and almost dark. The chapel was almost to capacity, but they still came, bringing with them the feeble and the young. As near as I could estimate there were about 85 people besides our own entourage. I did not count any of the dogs, nor the geese which probably outnumbered us all.

The dedication of the Youth Paid off in souls for Christ.

The wonderful youth group began to sing and the service was started. I could tell that the crowd was tired from a hard life, but also there was an air of excitement and anticipation. After all, what else could explain the numbers, most standing, in a dark and muddy courtyard with a slight drizzle falling.

As I looked over those seeking souls I knew that for some the message of Christ's hope and

forgiveness would begin in them a new life and a new understanding of who Jesus Christ is.

I prayed that He would give me the exact words they needed. I wondered too, that if I failed, how long it might be before these people would have another chance to hear. I already knew the answer and it hurt my heart," Perhaps never." After all it had already been 70 years.

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Ask yourself, am I willing to invest 82 cents a day to see twelve people saved each year? See page 5

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Misha, the tank driver, and also one of the true servants of Christ spoke to the congregation. Some one read a poem. It was now almost pitch black and kerosene lanterns had been brought out to augment the small electric bulbs. There was more singing then it was time for me to talk to them about the brightest light who wants to come into the darkest life.

I spoke extemporaneously and could not repeat the sermon again if I had too. The wet and beleaguered crowd of lost souls began to respond as I gave the invitation for them to allow Jesus Christ into their lives in a new and personal way.

Invitation times were always long and informal because I was

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determined to make sure that each person got what they came to get and that they had enough understanding when they left to begin to live with Jesus as their constant companion.

It was during this time that some younger men who had come in late began to ask questions. As I sought to answer them I asked Misha, and others to join with me. At first I thought the young men, there were about 10 of them, were looking for an argument.

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WERE THEY THERE TO MAKE TROUBLE OR SEEKING GOD?
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But it became apparent that they not only were looking for real answers, their questions and our answers had refocused the rest of the peoples thoughts.

After about 20 more minutes we had another invitation. On that dark rainy, muddy night the light and love of God pointed the way, and about 60 new Christians found their way into His Kingdom.

God knew that amidst that mud and the dogs and the flocks of geese, there were the lost souls. And through your prayers and support God's Light was shown forth as a beacon into the darkness of that small Ukrainian village, and into the lives of your new brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are other villages, the names you and I have never heard

of. Villages with people who are lost, hurting and struggling along in the darkness. Again The Lord is asking us to go and to pray and to support the spread of The Light.

Please ask Him what part He would have you play in this great adventure.

(This story to be continued, we hope, in other nameless villages)

WHO IS The Gospel Vision Foundation, Inc.?

The Gospel Vision Foundation, Inc. is a Christian mission group Founded in 1995 by Darrell and Kay Smith as a vehicle to fulfill their God given dream of winning souls and making disciples.

The directors are:
Dr. Darrell T. Smith - Kay Smith
Greg Gossett – Dub Izzard
Dr. Taylor Henley – P. J. Tyler

The Purposes of The Gospel Vision Foundation, are:

Spread of the Gospel of Jesus

Christ In close cooperation with Missions Our Mission we attempt to seek and to save the lost both in the USA and abroad. So far we are active in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Brazil & Mexico.

Training Pastors & Lay Leaders

Our goal is to win people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Then to establish leaders in the faith who will continue ministering to

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the needs of the people. We do this with ongoing education and special seminars.

Establishing Churches The establishment of a church usually begins as home fellowships and bible study sessions. The next step is to organize the home fellowships into a church or churches. The goal is to establish 20 home fellowships within the next 12 months.

Teaching people to fish is a vital part of our work. In developing nations the reality is that unless we are successful in teaching and helping the people to earn a living we are faced with either supporting them ourselves or turning our back on their poverty. We simply can not do either!

Therefore we look for talent among the new converts and business opportunities in the area.

We furnish direct Support to local pastors and leaders

Until such time as the ministry can be self sufficient in an area, we commit to support them at a minimum level wage in order to free them up for full time work. Currently we are fully supporting three pastors and providing six other pastors one-half of their income.

Radio Ministry Begun in 1997

Currently we are supporting one weekly radio broadcast which reaches about 155,000 people every Saturday with a 30 minute broadcast of the Gospel at the whopping cost of \$100 a month. Plans are underway to expand this ministry throughout the Crimea.

Children's Homes

One of the longer range goals is the establishment of Christian ranches, farms and trade schools, where orphans and disadvantaged street children can live, be taught Christian values and how to earn a living through a trade.

We have begun to support the work at one such home in Moldova which I will visit in July 98.

Medical Equipment and Pharmaceuticals

The dire need for medical equipment from wheelchairs to X-Ray equipment causes unbelievable hardships on the very young and the very old.

We are identifying new sources and plans call for our first medical container to ship in Fall of 1998.

Who Supports this ministry?

There is a small core of believers who have joined with the founders and directors in supporting this work with their prayers, their time and there treasure.

We invite you to pray for God's work everywhere, and be sure to include

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Missions Our Mission and The Gospel Vision Foundation, Inc. We are very small organizations, and operate strictly on the belief that if God calls us to a work, He will supply our needs in completing it.

As this is being written Taylor and Eva Henley are in Odessa, Ukraine with a group of pastors and lay-people. They are preaching the Word and living among the people. The work is hard, the hours long and the living conditions almost unbelievably primitive and uncomfortable, by our standards. Please undergird them with prayer.

What is one soul worth?

As a businessman I am used to figuring to return on investment. On the 1998 mission to Ukraine I personally witnessed 170 souls pray to receive Christ as savior.

Dividing the amount spent by 170 shows that for every \$24.50 spent there was one soul who was saved from hell. Is \$24.50 too much to pay for a soul?

Put another way, would you be willing to spend 82 cents a day to see twelve souls a year come to Christ?

I don't know about you but I waste many times that much daily on things I could easily do without. Yet for most of us we could give that much monthly and not have to do without anything!

Perhaps a better question is what does it cost us in terms of present and eternal blessings by not investing that much or more into this ministry?

Neither Missions Our Mission nor The Gospel Vision Foundation, have any paid workers. This allows us to spend 100% of donations directly on missions.

I have never asked for money for this work. God has directed some to give small amounts regularly. But now the work has simply overwhelmed the financial ability of the founders and these faithful supporters.

So now I offer you the opportunity to join with us in this work.

Ask yourself, am I willing to invest 82 cents a day to see twelve people saved each year?

If your answer is yes then simply send a check for the amount you want to give each month. Or include a short note giving us the authority to draft your account monthly for your convince.

We will of course stop the drafts if for any reason you can no longer participate.

Thank you and God bless you!!

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