

## The November Project



**Late in 2024, our team had the incredible privilege of traveling to some of the areas in Ukraine hardest hit by the war. Amidst minefields and bombed-out homes, we spoke with people who have endured unimaginable loss. The image above was taken on the final day of our trip when we had the opportunity to preach the Gospel and distribute aid to a large group of Ukrainians in the city of Zhytomyr.**

It all began with a phone call from Ben Sargent. Ben serves on our board of directors with Euro Team Outreach, and for some time, we'd been planning for him to visit Ukraine. The goal had been to brainstorm and plan future ministry projects. But now Ben had a new idea. "Josh, when I get there, I want you to find me an interpreter and a vehicle to take me close to the front so I can preach the Gospel. I don't care if something happens to me; I'm ready to go!" That's one reason we're so blessed to have Ben on our team. His enthusiasm and vision keep us going! As we spoke on the phone, I thought fast and made a few suggestions. After our conversation ended, I knew who I needed to call: Oleksandr Ilchenko.

Oleksandr is a Ukrainian missionary—also a husband and father of seven—who we initially met through our *Good and Evil* program. Like Ben, Oleksandr has energy and

boldness. Soon, I had him on the phone, and we began planning.

Ben departed for Krakow, Poland, on November 1, but due to flight complications, he didn't arrive until late Sunday night, November 3. We met at a local hotel, and the following morning, we drove to Ukraine as quickly as possible. We stopped in L'viv to pack gear and pick up Nathan Day, then hit the road again.

Our next destination was Zhytomyr, where Oleksandr lives and pastors a small church. He had arranged for us to load the van with supplies before heading southeast to Mykolaiv and Kherson. Our goal was to bring humanitarian aid and preach the Gospel.

Prior to the trip, we coordinated with Oleksandr to



assemble 500 humanitarian aid boxes containing staples like flour, oil, beans, and pickled meat. Additionally, he arranged for fresh bread to be baked at various points along our route, which we would distribute with the aid boxes.

The road to Mykolaiv and Kherson was long and rough. We had removed most of the van's seats to maximize cargo space, stuffing it to capacity with aid boxes and bread. We crawled over rocky, unpaved roads, flanked by fields littered with burned-out cars and tanks. Everything was mined, and warning signs lined the road. Death was all around us.

Our first meeting was in New Odesa, just north of Mykolaiv. A large crowd had gathered thanks to Oleksandr's advance planning. Ben preached the Gospel while I translated, and every Ukrainian in attendance received an aid package. Many also took home copies of *Good and Evil*.

The next day, we were up early, driving to another village. Then another. We crossed from Mykolaiv into Kherson oblast, drawing ever closer to Russian-occupied territory. Each stop revealed the same scenes: open fields filled with mines, long dirt roads, bombed-out buildings, and twisted remnants of Russian weapons. And in every location, we shared the message of salvation in Jesus with the people we met. Yes, they may have come primarily for the bread and staples we offered—and I was amazed by how eager they were for these small gifts. But they departed not only with freshly baked bread to nourish their bodies but having heard of the Bread of Life.

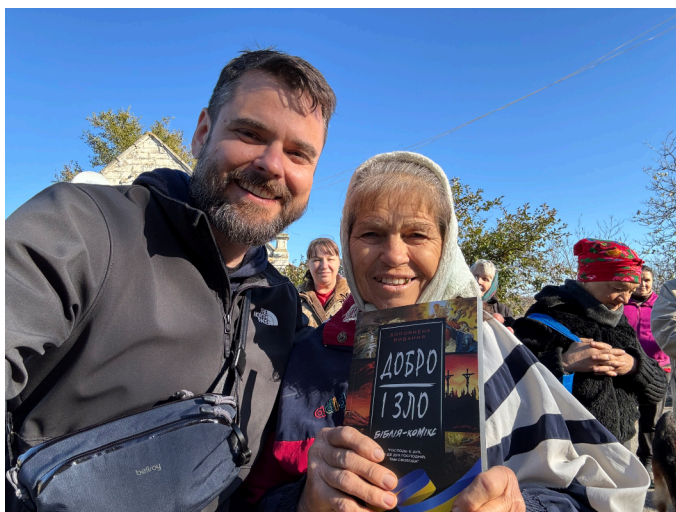
With our circuit of towns complete, we began the long journey back to Zhytomyr. There, we assisted Oleksandr's church team with a large Gospel meeting. Dozens of refugees came to receive aid.

Looking back, I feel small writing these words. So much remains to be done, and so many still need help. Most of all, they need Him. Whatever happens to Ukraine—and we pray daily for complete victory and liberation—eternity is what truly matters.

I have often said that, were it left up to me, I would happily spend the rest of my days in this beautiful country of Ukraine, ministering the Gospel to Ukrainians and speaking their language. But more than anything, I long to see these precious people in heaven. To that end, I will continue laboring as long as God gives me breath.



**Ben Sargent preaches to a group of Ukrainians in the Kherson oblast.**



**I don't know her name, but I pray that one day it will be written in Heaven. The book she holds shows the way!**

## How You Can Pray

- Pray that God will open the hearts of those who heard the Gospel during our November outreach.
- Pray for strength, courage, and wisdom for our team as we explore new opportunities to share Christ in a land ravaged by war.
- Pray that God will provide the resources for a new printing of *Good and Evil* as our current supplies are now thoroughly exhausted.
- Pray that God would deliver Ukraine from Russian aggression and that US leaders would not be deceived by Russian disinformation.
- Pray for health, safety, wisdom, and courage for our family.
- Pray for peace and liberty in Ukraine.

*To God be the Glory*

During the trip, we shot a series of videos documenting our progress, some of which were initially posted on Facebook. You can now view the full collection on our unlisted YouTube playlist by scanning the QR code or visiting this URL:

<https://jsua.co/nov-proj-2024>

