

Precious sacrifice

Why did they wake us up so early today?" Sergie inquired. Volodya shrugged his shoulders, finished tying up his shoelaces and said, "Remember the instructions, Sergie." At that, Sergie and Volodya joined the other 45 kids at this camp for an unexpected early morning hike through the forest.

They, along with the other children from their boarding school (for impoverished children) were more than a little puzzled by the instructions given with their wake-up call. "Take the most precious possession you have at this camp with you on the hike!"

Watches, jewelry, cassette tape recordings, dolls, and clothes, etc. were all stuffed

into pockets or back-packs on the way out of their tents.

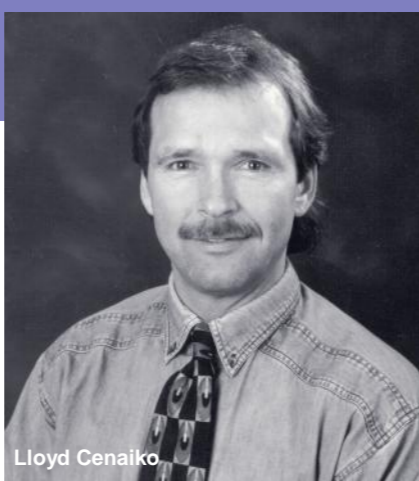
After an hour long march up and down hills and through a thick forest, the children were finally led to a clearing where the camp director was waiting for them.

He was standing next to a fire pit, filled with paper, twigs, branches and logs prepared and ready for burning.

If the morning so far had seemed a little out of the ordinary for the children, the directive they heard next was equally surprising.

"Bring that precious possession you brought with you," the camp director declared, "and place it on this alter (the fire pit). Once this has been done, we will light the fire."

Ivan Yaneshko (leader of



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one of HART's partner ministries and the director of this camp) described it this way...

"The other counselors and myself were surprised by what transpired next. One young boy, after several minutes of contemplation, tentatively stepped forward with his "possession"; placed it on the alter and stepped back.

This led to another child coming forward and then another, and so on. Within a few minutes ALL the kids had placed their possessions on the makeshift alter."

"Now remember," Ivan continued, "these children come from desperately poor homes, typically without a mother or father; and if they do have one, the chances are that parent is an alcoholic.

These children have very few material things in this life. This is why the exercise was so amazing for us as leaders.

We witnessed these poor kids ready to sacrifice what was most dear to them."

So, with the "alter" full of possessions, Ivan approached it; bent down, lit a match and was just about to light the fire - but

The children were told... "Bring that precious possession you brought with you and place it on the alter."

instead - blew out the match and told the children to retrieve their items.

The counselors then brought out the food, lit the fire and the kids enjoyed hot dogs instead of watching their prized possessions go up in smoke!

Ivan shared with us the two-fold

purpose of this exercise. The long arduous walk through the forest was meant to teach kids the Christian walk is not easy. It requires us to learn to trust God to lead even though it may not be entirely clear where we are heading.

The other purpose was to teach the children about the word 'sacrifice' as it pertains to the Christian life. This exercise was designed to bring home the reality of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God.

Just as these children "experienced" a creative Bible illustration, thousands of children all over Ukraine will be attending camps this summer and will be taught Bible stories and lessons in equally creative and memorable ways.

Depending upon financial support from sponsors or lack thereof, the camps will vary significantly in terms of conditions for the campers.

Some of the camps will be in picturesque settings in forests, along lake



fronts, at the Black Sea, or in the Carpathian mountains, while others will be a simple open area in a farmer's field.

Some will have campers lodged in dormitories while others will be in tents. Some will have indoor plumbing, while the majority will not.

However, different these camps will be structurally, their purpose will be the same. To share God's love with children and make the reality of saving faith through Jesus known to all who attend. For most this message will be heard for the first time.

My hope is that we, like the children in this story, would prayerfully contemplate what 'precious' things we could sacrifice so that others would hear the Gospel message.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Cenaiko, President

