

Will It Take a Crisis Like Ukraine in US to Call Our Nation Back to God?

Amid Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II, evangelical churches in Ukraine tell a story that boggles the mind.

In the nation's war-ravaged occupied territories, more than 120 churches lie in ruins. Their pastors have either been killed or fled for their lives.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, though, new churches are springing up, filled with families and individuals asking, "Is there any real hope here?"

At a time when Americans' interest in attending church is at an all-time low, Ukraine is experiencing a spiritual renewal born out of crisis and calamity.

In recent months, some 7,000 people have been baptized in Ukraine's evangelical churches as hunger for the gospel spreads. Evangelical seminaries and Bible colleges are full, training 2,000 enthusiastic, young undergraduates. About 300 new Ukrainian pastors were ordained in the past year alone.

Contrast those numbers with what's happening in America.

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In the past 25 years, 40 million Americans have stopped going to church, and only 3 in 10 now regularly attend services, according to polls.

Ukrainians are attracted to church, while many Americans are heading out the church doors.

Why?

As president of Illinois-based Slavic Gospel Association, I've observed how the war has exposed a God-sized hole in the lives of many Ukrainians.

Once skeptical of "empty" and ritualistic religion they considered pointless, Ukrainians are seeing faith in God through a different lens—seeing with their own eyes how their Christian neighbors who have lived through the horrors of war with them are enduring sorrow, suffering and even death with hope that defies all human reasoning.

Suffering through war is turning Ukrainians toward the living faith they see displayed in local believers' acts of mercy every day—pastors and their congregations visiting the bereaved and praying with them, delivering free groceries and home-cooked meals to strangers, even willingly risking their own lives to comfort those living near the frontline and share the gospel with them.

These local churches are truly centers of hope and refuge for people who've lost everything and have nowhere to turn. Many of those attending the churches are there for one reason only—they've been touched by the love of Christ through the in-the-trenches compassion of believers. They know God's love is real because they've experienced it personally.

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My friend Pastor Igor and his church members go to bed every night to the sound of menacing drones and missile explosions, not knowing if they will wake up the next morning. Some will not live to see the sunrise. That's their reality, and they must cling to God every single day.

Will it take a crisis like Ukraine in the U.S. to call our

nation back to God?

One day, we in America and the West may well face the challenges our brothers and sisters in Ukraine endure now.

Will we face those times with the same zeal, courage and living faith that attracts others to Christ? Or will we run and hide?

What is happening in and through the local churches in Ukraine today is our example of what courageous and genuine Christ-followers do when the pressure is on and everything is thrown into turmoil.

It's the full-throttle, living faith that speaks to people's hearts and gives them the desire to be among believers who shine with hope's light.

One thing is sure. Our Ukrainian brothers and sisters are cheering us on, leading us by their example of loving service—a love that is forever hope.

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