

Brothers Loved by God

The Impact of SGA-Sponsored Bible Training

By Keenan Beere
SGA Bible Training Coordinator

I am truly amazed at the power of the Gospel. In my role at SGA, I have met numerous believers with hearts and lives radically transformed by God through the Good News of Jesus Christ. For some, their earlier lives included prison, and substance abuse. Others were devout Muslims, or were vehemently against the person and work of Jesus Christ. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love* (Ephesians 2:4) . . . opened their eyes. They now understand the forgiveness and reconciliation found in Christ alone.

We have many brothers and sisters in Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan who share such testimonies. Most of these believers have grown up in non-Christian homes. Many have pretty rough backgrounds. Yet, once the Lord made them alive in Christ, He also birthed in them a deep desire to reach their fellow countrymen with the Gospel. They tasted the new life in Christ, and now they desire that those around them would also taste

and see that the Lord is good.

Teach Us God's Word!

In these three nations, God has called faithful men out of this background to pastor congregations, and to equip their churches to be salt and light in their communities. But they have asked us for help in meeting a vital need—the need



For SGA-sponsored Bible students, their hunger for God's Word knows no bounds!

for Bible training. They love God's Word. They want to know it and feed their congregations from it. They desire to proclaim Scripture clearly to unbelievers so that they might be saved. I remember one Russian brother saying, "Wrong interpretation of a text, incorrect advice, or preaching a false Gospel can lead to tragic results."

In Georgia, 15 students began studying this past fall. In the Tajik town of Khujand, 15 students have completed about a quarter of their coursework toward a pastoral degree. In Azerbaijan, 10 students finished their first course in biblical hermeneutics this past spring.

Mekhman's Story

Azerbaijan is largely Muslim, and Muslim grandparents raised a young man named Mekhman. He grew up praying five times



Mekhman and his young family

a day and fasting. At age 18, he fell in love with a Christian girl. She had one condition before she would consent to marriage—she must be allowed to go to church. Mekhman agreed, but broke his word to her after they were married. For the next month, he had difficulty sleeping and began to feel ill. He knew in his heart that it was from the Lord, so he let his wife

go to church and his health was restored. Consequently, Mekhman began attending church at age 19, and a year later came to faith in Christ.

Today, Mekhman pastors a church in Azerbaijan. He has a strong focus on discipling believers, evangelism, and compassion ministry among the needy in his community with the goal of sharing the Gospel. Mekhman shared with me a number of Bible verses that have anchored and guided him through tough times. One is Joshua 1:8-9, which calls him to live faithfully according to the Scriptures. The Bible also reminds him to be strong and courageous because the Lord is with him wherever he goes!

Mekhman and many other faithful brothers have left a deep impact in my heart. I would ask you to pray for these faithful and dedicated brothers who will be studying, as well as for those who will teach their classes. Please know that your generous gifts are supporting the training of front line ministers who will serve Christ with a full heart and total dedication. As the sponsors of their training, together we can say to them . . . *For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction* (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5).



In Central Asia, Bible training must often be done very discreetly for security.



Everyone Has a Theology!

Boris Kashenetsky, NBTS Graduate Student



Boris and his family

All people have theology in their lives whether or not they realize it. The only question is whether it corresponds to the truth of God's Word—the Bible. I found this out when I began wrestling with the deep, burning questions of life . . . and eternity!

After finishing a course for young ministers, I tried to preach. I felt the whole burden of responsibility of the proclamation of the Word of God. Also, I had already known the need of the Church for more ministers. But most of all, I would like to help young Christians in learning how their way of life could be chosen based upon the will of God. This question is one of the most important among young Christians, both after finishing college and during working in their field.

In 2004, I earned my first higher education degree. While this helped lay the foundation for a good income and career, it failed to provide me with the most important things. It did not answer my questions—"Who am I, and what is the ultimate meaning of my life?"

Two years later, I visited Grace Evangelical-Baptist Church in Krasnoyarsk. I will never forget August 2006, as that is when I came to faith to Christ. The most important questions of my existence were revealed. Peace and joy of life came to me. Growing in Christ and doing music ministry, I began to think about new questions. What is my purpose in Christ? Where exactly will I be most useful for Him? The more I talked with the brothers, the more I realized that nobody can give an unambiguous answer about building our lives outside the walls of the local church. Most young Christians are looking for a job from ordinary mercantile interests of earning more. I always thought it was wrong, but I could not explain my opinion, maybe, because I myself had such a job. My wealth was above average, but my heart was dissatisfied with the time spent in vain.

At the time, I started to understand that as Christians, we should not only be aware of our theology. We also need to be able to integrate it into every area of our lives. This will enable us to choose the right way in every situation. Whatever our occupation, we always have to know where God is in our work, and why God has placed us exactly where He has placed us. Only then are we as Christian able to worship God properly through our whole lives.

It seems that in such a way the Lord was preparing me for an important choice – career or ministry? At that time, the question was not solved for me. The answer was not clear enough even when I got an offer from one of the elders of our local church to enter the Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary. After five months of praying and two months of fasting, my wife and I decided to make an application.

Today again and again, I am becoming firmly convinced that a clear understanding of Christian theology gives the opportunity to be more dedicated and productive in our main purpose – to be "salt and light."

Prayer and Praise from SGA-Sponsored Bible Schools!

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a level path . . . (Psalm 27:11).

Provision of biblically sound Bible training remains SGA's top priority across Russia and her neighboring countries and in Israel. We'd like to share a few current events and requests for prayer from SGA-sponsored seminaries and Bible institutes. The faculty and students are thankful for your support and encouragement.

Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary (Russia)

We are thankful to God for the recent visit of Dr. Paul Benware (former Moody Bible Institute professor and current professor at Arizona Christian University). His teaching inspired our students. We have also begun Internet-based Christian education for those unable to travel to Novosibirsk for classes. Please pray for the continued development of strong, sound theology in the Russian UECB, for our faculty and students, for God's provision in adding a dormitory to the facilities, and for deeper participation in Christian education.

—Pavel Togobitsky (Academic Dean)



Irpen Biblical Seminary (Ukraine)

The turmoil between Russia and Ukraine has been very difficult, but we believe God is in control. Every Sunday, we hold prayer and worship in Kiev's Maidan (central square), and many people have the opportunity to hear God's Word. This past May, we held graduation, and in June, we enrolled new students. Last year, we also began a new certificate program for older brothers who are unable to attend the full program. Please keep praying for peace in Ukraine, as well as for the difficult financial situation faced by our students and staff because of the economic situation (made worse by the political crisis).

—Dr. Igor Yaremchuk (President)



Minsk Theological Seminary (Belarus)

Our seminary's outreach goes beyond Belarus—our teachers continue to teach in Russia, Estonia, Belarus, and to "the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45). Our dean just got back from Kazakhstan, where he helped to begin a Biblical Counseling program. Our students and teachers also went on a missions trip to Abkhazia. We held a conference in December for both Christian and secular scholars on Baptist history, and we plan to turn it into a book in the Belarussian language! Pray with us about this, for our staff and students, and for our financial situation, as the economy is very difficult. Pray for me also as I become general secretary for the Belarussian UECB, yet continue overseeing the seminary. I am thankful to SGA partners for their faithfulness!

—Pastor Leonid Mikhovich (President)

Odessa Theological Seminary (Ukraine)

At Odessa, we are working on the development of a Master's Degree program in Christian Education. This is to meet a long-time need, and by introducing this program, OTS aims to contribute to the professional training of academic deans, chairs, directors, and teachers, putting them at the forefront of learning and development in theological education. Please pray for the seminary, of course, but above all, pray for Ukraine in our national crisis, that there will be peace. Pray also for our students finishing their missionary internship in various countries, and for their future ministry, and please pray for our financial stability.

—Tanya Garasymchuk, for Vladimir Pomazkov (President)



Sensible Stewardship

Estate Planning—two words that create many feelings and reactions. You may feel like estate planning isn't for you. Or perhaps it fills you with dread, imagining a process that is hard to understand. Or worse yet, it may give you feelings of fear of being disadvantaged.

You aren't alone. Most Americans feel one or more of these emotions on this subject. You have an estate whether you have a lot or a little, and proper planning of it can be one of the most fulfilling and meaningful exercises a Christian can undertake.

At Slavic Gospel Association, we have retained the services of a company of Christians called PhilanthroCorp, who are focused on helping believers think through estate planning. They've earned an excellent reputation helping Christians learn to think about estate planning based on biblical principles rather than upon the traditions of men. They can help you:

- * Maximize your goals for your estate while minimizing taxes.
- * Avoid the dangers of leaving a widow behind without adequate support or control of the assets she needs.
- * Advise you on structuring inheritances so that they stand the best chance of helping the ones who are dearest to you.

The counsel of PhilanthroCorp is wise, confidential and offered to you at no cost. Many friends of SGA have taken advantage of their services, and you can too. Contact them at 800-876-7958 to learn more.

Please Pray for *Immanuel's Child*!

Every Christmas, missionary pastors and their churches across the CIS reach thousands of children through the SGA-sponsored *Immanuel's Child* program. Through this ministry, your church can join with believers in Russia and her neighboring countries to reach the neediest of children with a special gift, and most importantly, the true story of Christmas—that God sent His Son to be their Savior, our Immanuel—"God with us."

Participation is easy. Just contact SGA at 1-800-BIBLE-50 and request a free kit today!



How You Can Help



As the summer winds down, hundreds of eager, zealous students will be headed back to class at SGA-sponsored seminaries and Bible institutes across Russia and her neighboring countries. The schools hold their terms at differing times and schedules, but all have the same goal—to equip faithful believers for lifetimes of fruitful Christian service. Please remember them in prayer always! Your prayers and dedicated partnership helps provide this training, and so much more for the Bible-preaching churches we serve. You support children's workers, missionary pastors, compassion ministry, help provide Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, and provide multiple resources for the advancement of the Gospel. Please pray about how you can help today!

Canadian Connection

by Allan Vincent



The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (1 Sam. 18:1).

Jonathan and David had a very special relationship. In fact, it gave rise to the expression, “**their hearts were knit together.**”

As wonderful as that was, it is even more wonderful when those who have never met have a heart connection that knits their hearts together. Although it can't be explained, when it happens, it is very obvious and a wonderful testimony of God's grace.

God recently knit some hearts together. It had to be Him. How else can you explain Mark, a young man from a farm near Winnipeg, Manitoba, deciding to partner with Dr. Levan, president of the churches in Georgia (part of the CIS), and three other pastors—Niko, David and Gia—who had not yet been named?



Mark explains it best.

I am 16 years old and live on a farm.

I met Allan Vincent when he presented

a workshop in Winnipeg at Manitoba Missionfest 2013. He showed pictures of the country of Georgia and spoke of the high unemployment rate, drug use, and orphans. Allan also explained the farm project that they were hoping to start in Georgia. It would enable three pastors to be almost self-reliant and add secondary employment. **This project interested me because of my farm background.**

My dad grows potatoes, navy beans, soybeans, wheat, canola, and oats on our 1,200 acre farm. When I was 3 years old, my family started growing and selling fruit and vegetables for the farmers'



market. Our main crops were corn, potatoes, and watermelon.

Since I was young, I have learned to tithe from the money that I made at the market.

For many years, my sister and I have sponsored a child through Compassion. Two years ago, we stopped doing the farmers' market so that I could be more involved at Bible camp and working on the farm. I earn money by driving a combine, mowing lawns, working in the shop doing maintenance, repairing machinery, cultivating, harrowing, and some ditching. This is how I am able to give.

*When my dad and I spoke with Allan Vincent, he told us how each dollar given was matched by another donor. My dad also told me that he would match whatever I gave. **God has blessed me with much so that I can bless others.***

We thank God for ministry partners like Mark and his family who understand that God has blessed them to bless others. Please pray for other aspects of the Georgia project featured in my cover/appeal letter.

InSight is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

Slavic Gospel Association
— Canada
55 Fleming Drive, Suite 26
Cambridge, ON N1T 2A9
www.sgacanada.ca
E-mail: info@sgacanada.ca
Phone: 519-621-3553
Fax: 519-621-7571

To start, cancel or change the mailing address on your subscription to *InSight*, please send your name, your old address, and your new address to the address listed above. Please allow six to eight weeks for the fulfillment of your request.

International Offices

Loves Park, USA
Noble Park, Australia
Eastbourne, England
North Shore, New Zealand

Canadian Board of Directors

Dr. Stephen Code, Chairman
Ivan Barber, Vice Chairman
Carol Dean Jeffries, Treasurer
Dr. Allan W. Vincent, Director
John C. Goetze
Walter Gnida
Arnold Heron
Michael Nichols
Rod Wilkinson
Dr. Robert W. Provost

SGA is a member of:



Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability