



## The Pain of Separation

They caught my eye as we pulled into the parking lot of the first church. A family of four that was painfully trying to execute a plan that they (or at least dad) felt was the best for their family. Mom and her two boys heading to safety in another nation, and dad staying to do anything he could to help others in their home country of Ukraine.



It is a scene that is being repeated hundreds, maybe thousands of times daily all over this country. Separation under the brutal conditions of war – leaving family who are under daily threat of violence. Thoughts of all things familiar (neighbors, homes and their furnishings and surroundings, sights and sounds of school and work places, people and places that are part of daily routines) becoming painful reminders that this separation is overwhelmingly uncertain. Not knowing what your displaced life will look like, and not knowing when, to what, or to whom you will return. It's incredibly difficult to comprehend – families making decisions that literally divide time and their lives together.

The 12-year old boy was almost inconsolable – not wanting to leave the comforting arms of his dad. It was so awkward, so difficult ... to be present ... to watch. But this family – with the most visible emotional pain – was not alone. With a total of 24 refugees boarding here at our first stop, there were many families either saying goodbye in the parking lot, or likely waiting in line with fresh memories of painful goodbyes that had taken place somewhere else. Thankful for an excuse to leave this family to their final moments together, we were invited into the church for a bowl of soup and a some bread.

It took only a short time to drive the distance from church #1 to church #2. I had gotten off the bus to open the luggage compartments and assist with the loading of bags when I saw him ... the young boy who could not separate himself from his dad at our first stop. He was stepping off the bus and making his way to the backside compartments in search of their stroller and their other bags. As he proceeded to retrieve his bags and set them aside in the dirt, his mom and 2-year-old brother (and small family dog) now made their way off the bus as well.

Deep in my own thoughts, I honestly wasn't aware of, nor did I pay attention to this family during the short 15-minute journey. But the magnitude of their internal struggle over the same 15 minutes was now staring me in the face. An internal struggle that likely started long before they even boarded the bus. A decision made ... now a decision reversed. The pain of separation now pierced by the hope of reunion, but also clouded in new uncertainties. It appeared, however, that they will once again face these uncertainties together.

Please join us as we pray for this family of four, and for all of those affected and in need.

Gary & Joy

**Gary & Joy Peiss**

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