



## Blind Missionary Perseveres In Remote Villages

- By Steven Shepard

We first met a Shipibo man named Elemelec during the trips with our mission teams to the jungles of Peru. Though Elemelec had received biblical training and was highly recommended, he had been rejected for missionary service by a local native agency because of being completely blind. When asked to consider Elemelec's support and after seeing his vision and determination, CPI began to partner with Elemelec this past September to go to unreached Shipibo villages in the jungles near Pucallpa. I have always felt that God can call whomever He wants no matter how great the difficulty. In fact, 1 Corinthians 1:27-28 says **"God has chosen the weak things of the world...and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are."**



Then just before they were to leave for the villages, Elemelec's wife who was going to be his assistant, sadly and unexpectedly passed away. However, Elemelec eventually found others to help and was able to leave for his mission. His assistant helps him with daily life, travel, and teaching preparation, and reads the biblical text to the people. Elemelec also uses a narrative style of teaching and knows many Bible stories and biblical texts from memory. He is currently working on the Pisqui River, about 2 day's journey by boat from his home village near Pucallpa. There are 9 Shipibo villages on that river, of which 4 already have churches and 5 do not. Elemelec preaches in the evenings and during the day shares Bible studies and visits the sick. Elemelec's plan is to concentrate first in the villages that do not have churches. A church has already been planted in one village with 12 converts; and on March 31<sup>st</sup> Elemelec will hold a baptism in another village. All this goes to show that even though we may have great limitations, God does not.

## Adopt a Church Planter



CPI works with numerous native church planters in isolated and needy communities. Our vision is to help plant churches where there are no churches and to lay the foundation of the Gospel wherever it is lacking. Some of CPI's native church planters need sponsors.

There are many others that CPI would like to send, but are unable to do so. You can help make possible the planting of a community of believers where none existed before. CPI can link you with a specific native worker that you could send out to bring the hope of the Gospel to people who have not heard. Just contact CPI for more information.

Domingo (pictured above with his wife Asucena) is a Huichol Indian who, in spite of much opposition, is planting a church in a very remote mountain area in west central Mexico where there were no churches before. Domingo is an example of a quality worker who needs another partner. We could even take you to visit Domingo up in the mountains if you ever wanted to go.

## A Clean Conscience

The Power of the Gospel to Serve God

Article by Steven Shepard

**Hebrews 9:13-15** *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

In the Old Covenant the High Priest offered the blood of a bull and a goat once a year on the Day of Atonement as a sacrifice for sins. These offerings only *sanctified for the purifying of the flesh*, providing an outward and merely temporary cleansing from ceremonial uncleanness. They could not, however, cleanse the conscience inwardly from guilt. Rather, they served as an object lesson pointing to the blood of Christ, which actually does cleanse our conscience from "dead works".

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# A Clean Conscience *(continued from first page)*

Sin has separated the human race from its Creator, with the result that ***all human works apart from Christ are dead works***. Guilty of willful rebellion, we deserve the condemnation of God, who is infinitely holy and just. God opposes everything that is contrary to His own perfect moral nature. Therefore, He must punish sin. If He did not, He would be denying the essence of His own justice and holiness. (*Eph 2:1-3; Rom 8:7-8; Is 64:6; Rom 1:18; 2:5-8*)

***The conscience*** is the God-given inward awareness of the rightness or wrongness of our conduct, based on the existence of God's objective moral standard to which we are held accountable. But our sinful hearts deceive us into making excuses for ourselves in order to deaden this acknowledgement of guilt. Today's society even says that we shouldn't feel guilty and that having a sense of guilt is really a sickness. But guilt is a very real indicator that something is dreadfully wrong with our lives. Being in denial does not make it go away. We may spend huge amounts of time and energy trying to make up for guilt or trying to suppress it; but this sense of condemnation remains inside. Unless we find deliverance, we will bear its crushing load our whole life, and bear its punishment in eternity. Nothing we do can help – whether acts of charity, prayers, church attendance, baptism, or other sacraments. Our works will never be enough to take away the guilt of even one sin. (*Rom 1:19-20; Gen 3:6-13; Prov 16:2; Is 5:20-21; Prov 8:13*)

But our text says that ***the blood of Christ shall cleanse your conscience***. This is not so much a promise but a statement of fact. Christ offered Himself “without spot” to God. He offered Himself “through the Spirit”, or in accordance to God's will. It was God's will for the sinless and spotless Christ to satisfy the justice of God on our behalf, to bear the punishment that we deserved, and to take away our guilt. Through Jesus' blood, all believers are completely and continually justified, redeemed, brought near to God, and forgiven of all sins - past, present, and future. Through Jesus' blood we can now experience the cleansing of our conscience from dead works ***to serve the living God***. (*Is 53:5-6; Rom 3:24-26; Eph 1:7; Rom 5:9; Eph 2:12-13; Heb 10:19*)

Our text teaches that ***only*** when we have a clean conscience can we really serve God. When our conscience is not clean, our focus is on ourselves; and our works are motivated by our guilt. On the other hand, when we have a clean conscience we are set free to serve God out of love, joy, and gratitude. This is the only way that our lives can glorify God, and the only way we can grow in godliness.

What should be our response? First, we should renew our minds concerning the cleansing blood of Jesus. Second, we should ask God to help us avoid the things that defile our conscience. A defiled conscience weakens our faith and undermines our assurance. Third, if we do sin, we should acknowledge it and then return to trusting in the blood of Jesus. Lastly, we should go forth boldly with a clean conscience to serve the living God and proclaim to others the Good News of what Christ has done. (*Rom 12:2; 2 Tim 1:5; John 6:55-56; 1 John 4:19; 2 Cor 5:15*)

## CPI's Board

*CPI's board members have been a wonderful asset to our mission. I am very thankful for all of them. They are great to work with and very supportive of Christy and myself. – Steven Shepard*

**Top from left: Gary Ackerman**, raspberry grower, Oregon, Ohio; **Brad McCracken**, local schools CFO, Perrysburg, Ohio; **Brian Navarette**, Delta Airlines pilot and board chairman, Toledo, Ohio; & **Jeff Palmer**, President CMC Group, Bowling Green, Ohio.

**Bottom from left: Steven Shepard**, CPI director, Fort Mill, South Carolina; **Sarah Smith** (new addition to board), office worker and homemaker, Fort Mill, South Carolina; **Christy Shepard** (not a board member), CPI secretary/treasurer, Fort Mill, South Carolina; & **Larry Trimbach**, business owner, Dayton, Ohio.



**Join with us to take the Gospel to the world!**

