



## CPI's Growing Investment in Peru

By Steven Shepard

My heart's desire for a long time has been to spend longer periods of time on the mission field. I believe this is the Lord's calling on my life. At the same time, I am still actively involved in administration as Director of Church Planting International. I ask for your prayers so that God would enable me to delegate to others some of the administrative tasks, that I might devote more time to serving on the field.

This last trip to Peru I stayed for eight weeks (Feb.4-March 31), of which Christy was with me for the first three. We taught in a three-day marriage conference in Lima called "The Christ-Centered Marriage." This topic has been much requested by Peruvian pastors. Couples lack the biblical foundations necessary for a strong marriage. Many couples are just living together without an understanding of the covenant God requires. We taught about what marriage is before God, and how understanding the Gospel impacts our marriages. On the last day of our conference 12 couples renewed their marriage vows. After our time in Lima, Christy and I left for a week in the Amazon jungle city of Pucallpa, where I showed Christy a property that we would like to purchase to establish a base for CPI. After Christy left for home, I divided my time between Lima and the jungles – consulting with native workers and continuing to teach in churches, Bible schools, retreats, and workshops. I also assisted in two baptism ceremonies. Everywhere I went, God opened hungry hearts to receive His Word. The Yora conference was one example. For the second time representatives of the unreached Yora tribe were flown out of the remote jungles to learn about Christ. This time, more of them attended (about 15 in all), including the Yora chief who was eager to learn everything he could. Cesar Soto and I taught God's Word for five days through an interpreter – with the Yora listening as if their lives depended on their



understanding – often breaking into intense discussion in their own language. They definitely desire a church in their village; and since our conference in June, 2014, several have continued to meet.

I plan to go back to Peru on May 28<sup>th</sup> to spend a week with the Matses and to work with a mission team. In October we plan to send Cesar Soto out to teach in the Yora village. Please pray for these things, and also that God would open the doors to establish a base for our mission in the Peruvian Amazon.

## The Christ Centered Marriage

Devotional by Steven Shepard

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:15-18)*

Paul is writing to the Colossian church in response to the false teachers who taught that Christ was not God in human form. Paul affirms that Christ is the very manifestation of God. He is the "first born" (referring to His position of highest honor). All things were created by Him and for Him; and He continually sustains or maintains the existence of all things. Christ is also the head of the Church, and the first of many who will be raised from the dead. For all these reasons and more Christ is to have the preeminence or first place in **everything**.



(Continued on back)

# Christ Centered Marriage *(Continued from page 1)*

Verse 16 says that everything was made *for Him!* This includes all that we are and have: our families, work, ministries, money, marriages, families, talents, and all that we will become in the future. Everything exists for Christ. We are not the center of the universe, but Christ is. That is why Jesus can say in Matthew 16:24-25, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Life is not to be found in ourselves, but in Christ alone. (Romans 11:36; Philippians 1:21; 1 John 5:11-12)

The purpose then for marriage is not first of all for our own fulfillment, but to glorify Christ. How is Christ to be glorified? He is glorified when husband and wife minister together as a team in serving others and furthering the cause of the Gospel. He is glorified when husband and wife are an example to the world of the kind of love that Christ has for His bride the Church. This is a love that is unconditional, sacrificial, and committed. Just as Jesus said, “I will never leave you or forsake you;” so earthly marriage is meant to be a covenant relationship breakable only through death. (Ephesians 5:25-32; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 19:3-9)

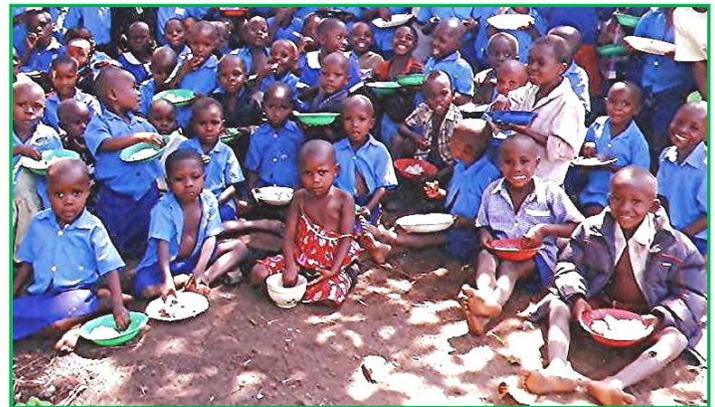
If our marriages are not Christ-centered, they will end up being self-centered. The result will be two people constantly having conflicting agendas and expectations. But what must change for our lives and marriages to become Christ-centered?

1. What first must change is our hearts; and this is only possible through being born again by the Spirit of God. We must come to trust in Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, thus making His will our primary concern. (John 3:3; 1 Timothy 1:5; Ezekiel 36:26)
2. We must come to understand in a greater way how infinitely great, all-powerful, and holy God really is. (Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 57:15)
3. We must understand how radically sinful we are apart from Christ. (Romans 3:10-19; Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:1-3)
4. We must have confidence that in spite of our sins, Christ loves us; and if we believe in Him, He is with us, He accepts us unchangeably, and forgives us of all our sins: past, present, and future. (John 3:16-18; Romans 8:30-34)
5. We must realize that we are now complete in Christ. Although God will use our spouse to meet our needs, we should not seek to find our fulfillment through our spouse (or through any other thing), but through Christ alone. When we find our completeness in Christ, we will be free to love the way that God teaches in His Word – with a love that “suffers long and is kind” and “does not seek its own.” (Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 10:14; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5)



**In Memory of Domingo de la Cruz** – On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, our close friend and co-worker Domingo De La Cruz unexpectedly went to be with Jesus, having suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He served for over 15 years as a church planter in a remote Huichol village in the mountains of west central Mexico. He had a great love for the Huichol people and for Jesus. He was only 38 years old. His wife Asucena plans to continue their work in the mountains along with their daughter Paloma, and son Isaac. Domingo will be greatly missed. Your prayers are very much appreciated not only for the family, but also for the church. If anyone desires to give a gift for the support of Domingo’s family, you may do so through Church Planting International.

**Right:** CPI has begun to send monthly support to provide food for approximately 170 children at the God’s Mercy Children’s School in Bundibugyo, western Uganda. It costs about \$25/month to provide seven children, one meal a day for each day they are in school. Sponsors are still needed for this project.



**Below left:** Cesar Soto teaching at the Yora conference



**Below:** Steven Shepard with Jose the Yora chief



**Join with CPI in reaching the world for Christ!**

*All gifts to CPI are tax deductible.*