

Native Missionaries Serve in Peru and Mexico

-- By Steven Shepard

CPI works with about forty native missionaries and Christian workers that reach out to unreached and needy communities in Mexico and Peru. They work in cities and in isolated mountain and jungle communities. It is my joy to mentor several of them. Besides regularly spending time together on the mission field, we also keep in touch when I am in our home office through email and Skype. There are even Matses pastors who are able to email when they are in the jungle city. Though CPI has assisted numerous workers for special needs, seven native missionaries are currently receiving regular support:

Samuel Ramirez (top right) is a Shipibo Indian preacher and Christian leader. Samuel directs a missions' agency, MINAP, that sends native missionaries to about ten of the tribes located in the Peruvian Amazon (there are about sixty such tribes). In relationship with CPI, Samuel administrates a fund that regularly supplies medicines for children in a Shipibo village, along with another medical fund for people living in the isolated jungle villages where MINAP missionaries minister. Samuel also works with CPI's short-term mission teams.



Josue and Bani Ramirez (left) have been serving as church planting missionaries with CPI since June, 2014, and work in the Shipibo village of Santa Clara. Josue is the son of Samuel Ramirez and has as his long term vision to start a training center for native pastors and missionaries.



Pictured right is the newly formed Shipibo church planting team consisting of two couples: **Elemelec and Juana** (left) and **Elias and Maria**. Elemelec has been a missionary with CPI since September of 2011, with Elias and Maria joining Elemelec in July of 2013. The team currently works in a remote unreached village several days journey by boat from the jungle city of Pucallpa. Elemelec is almost completely blind, but knows many Bible stories and verses from memory. Elemelec's team assists him with daily life, travel, preparation, and Scripture reading. They plan to make an agricultural plot, visit homes, hold home meetings, and build a church.



Cesar and Isabel Soto (left) work primarily with the Yaminahua tribe in the Peruvian Amazon. Their ministry consists of church planting, leadership training, literacy training, and helping to meet medical needs. Cesar and Isabel minister in a Yami village near the jungle city of Pucallpa and have gone on repeated trips to the isolated villages deep in the jungles. Their last trip to "Yaminahualand" was this past October. Cesar also oversees assistance that CPI extends to five Yami Bible School students. When Cesar and Isabel began in 2004, there were no Yami churches; but now the Yami church is beginning to be established and young leaders are being trained. Cesar is also a frequent teacher at CPI's Matses pastors' conferences and helps to coordinate and host CPI's short-term mission teams.

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Native Missionaries (Continued)



Otoniel Pardo is a gifted Bible teacher in Lima, Peru, and the founder and lead pastor of a new group of churches in Lima called, “Grace Reigns.” Otoniel has served with CPI since 2002, holding pastors’ conferences in Lima and throughout Peru. God has used these conferences to transform pastors and churches as they receive the message of the Gospel of grace. Because of Otoniel, CPI’s ministry has been extended to many other churches in Peru. Otoniel now holds his own conferences and seminars and is starting a pastors’ training center.

Domingo De La Cruz is a Huichol Indian pastor who is planting a church in a very remote mountain village in west central Mexico where there were no churches before. There are several even more isolated “ranchos,” or small

kinship communities that are reachable from Domingo’s village. Huicholes from the ranchos have walked many hours up and down mountain paths to hear God’s Word in the village where the believers meet. In spite of facing persecution and even the threat of expulsion, Huichol Christians have persevered and are growing stronger in their faith.



“Separated to the Gospel”

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1)



Article by Jonathan Shepard -- Jonathan is a recent graduate of Bowling Green State University, with bachelors in nursing. Jonathan lives in South Carolina and assists in CPI’s ministries.

As Christians, we hear and use the word “gospel” often. But what is the gospel? Today we hear gospel as a generic term for Christian living, as an account of Christ’s life on earth, or as a genre of music. The word has become ambiguous and seems to mean whatever someone wants it to mean. So rarely do we venture to ask ourselves what common Christian words mean, that we lose discernment when these words are used improperly. The word “gospel” literally means “good news,” but what is the good news of Christ? Most of the New Testament epistles were written to define, clarify, and defend a very specific gospel.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that he was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation.” Here we learn that God’s infinite power is demonstrated and channeled through His gospel, that it is the literal power of God which leads to salvation. Ultimately, the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ describes the reconciliation of the Holy God with a profane people. As Christians, we were once enemies of God, but have now been reconciled to Him through Christ, who acting as our substitute, paid the penalty our sins deserved. If we place our faith in the sufficiency of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us, which leaves us legally pardoned and lovingly adopted as royal children of God. This is a gospel made possible only through God’s power: an act of pure grace.

The gospel of Jesus Christ as presented in the Bible is a message that truly brings life, power, and hope. It is an utterly unique message; no other ideology or religion of the world can compare. No other message humbles man to his knees while elevating the glory of God to the greatest of heights. Mankind tends to craft false teachings to make them agreeable to his sinful, self-seeking nature. On the other hand, the gospel is naturally offensive to the human heart because it boldly proclaims that we are unimaginably wicked and unable to save ourselves. The immense beauty of the gospel is clearly expressed through God’s divine intervention in our redemption. This is a gospel worthy of our devotion.

Paul introduces himself at the beginning of Romans as a “bondservant of Jesus Christ...separated to the gospel of God.” Paul is likening his devotion to Christ to that of a slave to his master. But unlike the slavery to which we are accustomed, Paul’s servitude is voluntarily given out of gratitude for the love he was first shown by God. Furthermore, he describes himself as being separated. Separated to what? To the gospel of God! As Christians, we are to be separated from the world, and unto God and His gospel message. We are called to abandon all things for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. We are called to know and defend His good news at all cost.

Are we truly willing to be separated to God’s gospel? Are we certain that we know **His gospel** rather than a gospel of our own making? Do we really love God more than anything or anyone in our lives? These are personal questions I have been forced to ask myself time and again. Too often I have failed to speak up about the truth of the gospel out of fear of people’s reactions and rejection of me. But I have since felt compelled by the immense beauty of the truth to make a stand. For the sake of the gospel I have lost popularity, friends, and potential loves. But these are small prices to pay! Paul gave up the world for Christ, and we have no less of a calling than his. Paul states in Philippians 3:7-8, “*what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*” May we separate ourselves from the false gospels of this world unto the worthy gospel of Christ, our Redeemer and Lord!