



CPI's Mission to Mexico Highlights Visit to Remote Village

Huichol Pastor Faces Opposition from Village Authority – *By Steven Shepard*

During the first week of my visit to west central Mexico (February 6-19), I was able to spend time with four pastors, preach three sermons, give two teachings on homiletics, and teach on marriage at an event for couples. During my visit I was pleased to see the growth in the churches. Afterwards I was joined by Gary and Terry Schmidt of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and my wife Christy. We flew by small plane deep into the rugged mountains to visit

our co-worker Domingo, who is a Huichol Indian church planter. Our time was spent ministering in the church, painting the church with the Huicholes, counseling with Domingo, and fellowshiping. We found out that Domingo was recently called before a village meeting where he faced charges of not contributing to village (shamanistic) ceremonies and harming Huichol culture by preaching the Gospel. There were about 500 villagers present who discussed among themselves whether the Christians should be expelled. When Domingo was finally given an opportunity, he told the crowd that his desire was to preserve the Huichol culture. He said that reading the Bible and following Jesus were not the things that were destroying the culture, but rather things like drugs, alcoholism, and prostitution. He said that they would be glad to help the community in other ways besides participating in the ceremonies. Since the village had a vehicle for use as an ambulance to carry sick people to the city, Domingo was made one of the drivers. God filled His servant with the needed wisdom and boldness to avert this crisis. Though still few in number, we found the Huichol church to be active, fervent, and strong in spite of persecution from family members and villagers. It is glorious to see the planting of the Lord in such a needy place.

Huichol church planter

Domingo (right) with his wife Asucena, daughter Paloma, and son Isaac in Guadalupe Ocotan. CPI supports Domingo monthly and Steven Shepard has served in an advisory role for many years.



Christy Shepard (below) receives a gift from Avelina after the service. Earlier, Avelina shared with us that three years ago she had been very sick, losing much weight, and had gone to the witch doctor for help. When the local shaman finally said he could not help her, he told her to “try the Christians.” When she visited Domingo, he told her of the one true God and about repentance. Eventually Avelina was converted to Christ, baptized, and healed from her sickness. Her husband was also converted.



The Meaning of Sabbath Rest

Article by Steven Shepard

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work...” Exodus 20:8-10a

What is the meaning of the Sabbath commandment? While some Christians adhere to strict “Lord’s Day” rules, others all but ignore the Sabbath as if it had no import at all. Is the fourth commandment binding for us today, and if so how? The word “Sabbath” means *cessation* or *rest*. In the Old Testament, this meant following many rules about what one could and could not do in order to cease from physical work. Many

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The Meaning of Sabbath Rest (Continued)

Christians today set aside the Sabbath saying, “We are not under that now; we are under grace.” Yet the Sabbath is so important to God, that its violation in the Old Testament required the death penalty. There is something about the principle of Sabbath rest that is so vital to our fellowship with God that abiding in it brings life, while violation of Sabbath rest produces death.

Does this mean that we should keep the Sabbath today? Though we don’t need to keep the Old Testament Sabbath; the principle of Sabbath remains in effect. The Old Testament observance with its accompanying ceremony and regulations was temporary. It served as a shadow and type of the inward reality which is fulfilled in Christ. The Old Testament’s physical and temporary Sabbath pointed to the spiritual and eternal Sabbath. We enter into that spiritual Sabbath by believing in Jesus Christ. We rest inwardly in the finished work of Christ. We stop working to try to gain God’s favor, because we have been freely given the perfect righteousness of Christ. We are forgiven of our sins: past, present, and future. We give our fears to the Lord. We cast our cares and our worries upon Him because He cares for us. Our hearts are at peace. We accept the government of God in our lives. We cease from works done in our own strength, which are impure and do not please God, *so that God will do His work in us and through us.*

Spiritual Sabbath involves ceasing inwardly from striving. It is not a mere outward observance for one day out of the week. *It is an inward and continual Sabbath.* It is a Sabbath life. We may still choose to observe an earthly Sabbath, and should definitely gather regularly with other believers. An earthly Sabbath can also be helpful to the body and edifying to the soul – as long as we don’t use it to try to gain or maintain God’s favor. While we need periods of physical rest, if we put ourselves under the law, our earthly Sabbath will only be a hindrance to true spiritual Sabbath.

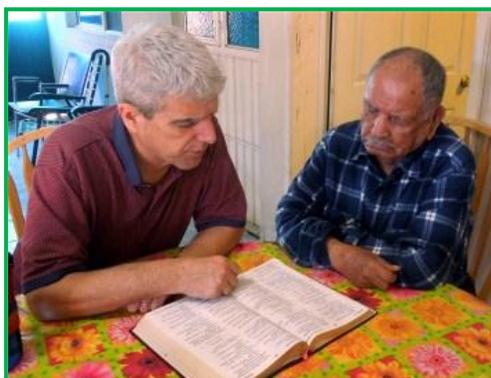
This inward rest of soul is characteristic of true faith. Hebrews 4:3 says, “... We who have believed do enter that rest.” Jesus admonishes us not to worry about our lives, to consider the birds and the flowers, and to become like little children. This does not mean we don’t work hard. We remain active in fulfilling our responsibilities; yet inwardly we are at rest. We are not worried about our circumstances, because we have given the care and the disposing of our lives to God.

Jesus says, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” This is Christ’s invitation to spiritual Sabbath. Will we respond? Will we trust Him? If so, we will begin to taste of God’s Sabbath rest which will grow within us and which will be brought to perfection in eternity.

(Col 2:16-17; Rom 3:20-22; 28; Rom 4:5; John 15:5; Rom 7:18; Is 64:6; Exodus 31:14-15; Matt 6:25-34; Matt 18:3; Ps 131:1-3; Is 30:15; Is 26:3; Heb 4:9-10; 2 Chron 20:15-17; John 15:27)



Please pray for our mission to Peru: June 12th – July 13th. CPI will be conducting a conference with Christian leaders of the Matses tribe in the Amazon jungles, hosting a mission team in Peru, and conducting a second conference in Lima on “The Power of the Gospel.” We need to cover expenses for both conferences, meals at the Lima conference, and books for conference attendees. If interested in joining the summer mission team, please contact CPI.



San Cayetano, Mexico: Steven Shepard on a visit to Don Jose, now 97 years old. Jose was converted at age 80, and taught himself to read the Scriptures



Lima, Peru: Consuelo Pardo, a pastor’s wife and CPI co-worker, is doing well and expected to make a full recovery after an emergency surgery, thanks to the Lord and CPI supporters!

Your gift to CPI will help plant churches, train leaders, and help the needy.

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