



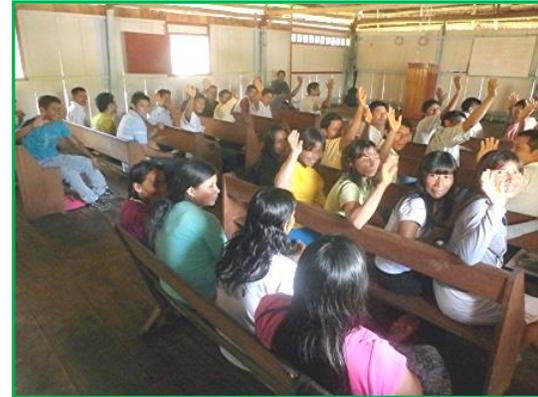
My Week with the Matses Church

By Steven Shepard

I spent one week (June 2-9) teaching about 60 pastors and leaders of the Matses church which represent about 15 villages in the Peruvian Amazon. Some came from as far away as two days by river. When I took off from the jungle city of Iquitos, there was no room for my co-worker, Cesar Soto, on the plane. Wondering how I would do all the teaching by myself from 8 am-5 pm, I decided to teach each day until noon and in the afternoon divide everyone into groups for interactive workshops. In the mornings I taught through the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation, emphasizing how the entire Bible points to Christ. In the workshops they practiced saying the answers to 82 questions about Biblical truth that have been translated from Spanish into their language. I also spent a lot of time responding to their questions. A myriad of teachings have now come in from the outside, not all of which are good. One amazing thing I learned was how God has blessed their missionary efforts. For years, Matses Christian leaders had reached out to fellow tribesmen across the border in Brazil with no avail. In 2006, at one of our conferences, the Matses set apart a team of missionaries to make regular trips to Brazil. After several more years of resistance, churches finally were birthed. I was very surprised when they told me that one of the villages has a population of two thousand – making it by far the largest Matses village – and that half the village is coming to the church! The role of CPI over the years has been to teach God’s Word and to provide gasoline for the long missionary journeys on the river.

Mission Team Serves Two Weeks in Peru (June 15-29)

Our mission team of 16 people represented five states and eight different churches. They helped with three work projects – one being an open air structure in a Shipibo village for a congregation that had been meeting under the shade of some trees. They held eight children’s outreaches, three women’s meetings, two eye glass clinics, three medical clinics, and ministered in homes and in numerous churches. At the debriefing, team members poured out their hearts. Meredith Raymes, of Rock Hill, South Carolina, later remarked, *“Today we are leaving Pucallpa. My heart is full of joy and memories that have been made. God’s love and truth penetrated the hearts of so many people and changed me in a way that won’t be understood by many. I’m so thankful for the time I’ve had here, the friendships I’ve made, and most of all the unity in Christ I experienced among complete strangers! ... I’ve often assumed that when people do mission work, they are changing the lives of those who they reach. While this is true, I can honestly say that it is I who experienced change. I experienced people who were so hungry for the gospel that it made me sick to think of how much we take God for granted.”*



Above: Jessica Clark, Jessica Brown, and Melissa Brown on visitation at a Shipibo home

Above middle: 110 gallons of gasoline were flown out to Matsesland for use for their ministry journeys on the river

Above top: Matses at the June conference

Left: Jonathan Shepard treats Shipibo woman at a medical clinic

Far left: Meredith Raymes with Shipibo children

Sanctification: What is it and how do we make progress?

Devotional by Steven Shepard

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification...” (1 Thessalonians 4:3a)

Sanctification is the work of God in man by which God separates that person for Himself, purifies him from sin, and conforms him into His image. Sanctification begins when we receive new life in Christ, continues throughout our lives, and is finally made perfect at the moment of our death when we are fully united with Christ. To understand sanctification, it is important to distinguish it from justification. Justification is the once for all act of God whereby He declares a person to be perfectly righteous in His sight. Justification occurs the moment we believe upon Christ and will never be reversed. God accepts the death of Christ as payment for our sins and accepts Christ’s righteousness as our righteousness. Believers are not, however, instantly made righteous in terms of their thoughts and behavior. Far from it! The process of learning to overcome sin and live according to the new regenerate nature is what sanctification is all about. Though our justification does not depend in any way upon our sanctification, justification always produces sanctification as its fruit. If we are not in the process of being sanctified, it means that we were never justified before God. Justification always comes with a change of heart – a change of motivations and desires. When Christ is our Lord and Savior, we no longer wish to continue to sin against the One who loves us and gave His life for us.

How then can we grow in sanctification? How can we overcome sin? Though these are very difficult questions, understanding and putting into practice the following truths will help:

1. **We are in a battle.** Galatians 5:17 (NIV) says, “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.” When we are born again God gives us a new spiritual nature. We are no longer slaves of sin. Still, the sin nature is lurking around; and we must learn to put it to death. Though this can be quite painful, the reward is great. We will experience God’s presence and our lives will honor Him. (Rom 6:1-18; 7:15-25; Eph 4:21-24; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Cor 5:17; John 14:21; Psalms 16:11; 24:3-4)
2. **We won’t prevail in this battle if we rely on our own strength; we must depend upon the Spirit.** (2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:16)
3. **Just as salvation depends upon grace alone, so does sanctification.** The same God, who called us by grace, perfects us by grace. He also perfects us as we walk by faith. (Rom 6:14; 8:29-31; Heb 11:6; Titus 2:11-12; 1 Thess 5:23-24)
4. **We need to take the sin in our lives seriously.** Sin is rebellion against our Creator. God hates it and so should we. It was our sin that caused Jesus to suffer and die. (Isaiah 53:5-6; 59:2; Proverbs 8:13)
5. **We must come to understand and be convinced of our justification.** We cannot progress in sanctification while living under a sense of condemnation. Justification will motivate us to love Christ from the heart and will free us to confront our sins without fear. (Rom 3:24-25; 8:33-34; Heb 9:14; 1 John 4:19)
6. **We must place our complete dependence upon the finished work of Christ on the cross.** Coming to the cross is not a one-time event and then we go our way. Jesus’ work on the cross should be our constant resting place. When tossed about by circumstances, doubts, fears, and temptations, we should fix our eyes upon Christ and His finished work, whereby we always stand justified in His sight. (Col 1:21-22; Heb 10:10; 1 Cor 2:2; Heb 12:1-2)
7. **We should not be passive.** With dependence upon the Spirit, upon grace, and upon the finished work of Christ, we are to actively pursue sanctification. Renewing our minds in God’s Word will cause our faith to grow. Continuing in prayer will keep us dependent upon God. Staying in close fellowship with believers who love Christ with all their hearts will encourage us to persevere in obedience. (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Tim 4:7; Rom 12:2; Jude 1:20; Eph 4:16; Heb 10:24-25)



Help CPI start a Mission Center in the Peruvian Amazon! God has blessed CPI with \$43,100 toward the purchase and renovation of a property near Pucallpa which includes two houses. From this Center our plan is to train leaders, send native missionaries to unreached communities, provide lodging for missionaries, and engage in humanitarian efforts. To make our vision a reality, we only need \$6,900 more for the purchase and an additional \$5,000-\$10,000 for improvements. **All gifts to CPI are tax deductible.**