



Training Christian Leaders

– by Steven Shepard

Graduation Ceremony in the Peruvian Jungles

I went to Lima, Peru on July 17, and then to the CPI center in Pucallpa. Later, Christy joined me for our ministry retreat in Lima – the first time in over two years she had been to Peru.

In Pucallpa, a team of teachers from CPI’s Word of Grace Bible Institute held a week of classes culminating with a graduation ceremony for eleven of our students. The graduates, all from the Shipibo tribe, had taken five years to complete the program (due to covid restrictions). They are already serving as pastors and church planters in several Shipibo villages near Pucallpa and up and down the Ucayali River.

Besides myself, there are seven others in Peru that are conducting training. In addition to Word of Grace, our co-workers have started three additional schools. CPI missionary Casey Kidd and his co-workers conduct a seminary in remote Matses villages and another one in a Shipibo community. These communities are too far away for students to come to Pucallpa, so Casey’s team takes the training to them. Josue Ramirez also has a school that teaches missions to tribal peoples – with CPI co-workers assisting with the teaching. This has been God’s work, spontaneously emerging through the initiative of His people. We are blessed and humbled to be His instruments.

Retreat in Lima

Back in Lima we held another three-day retreat for Misión CPI workers and friends. Misión CPI is a non-profit organization registered in Peru and modeled after CPI in the U.S. About 50 people attended the retreat, most of whom were housed in CPI’s three-story mission center in Puente Piedra. The retreat had a powerful impact not only through the teachings, but through the heavenly fellowship with one another. One person said, *“I appreciate the teachings. They help us discern what is true and false from God’s Word. They make us free, give us peace, and lead us into fellowship with our Savior and with our brothers and sisters.”*

The Sunday after the retreat, I had the privilege of preaching at the first Sunday service for a new church being planted across town. Unbeknownst to me, this church plant was the fruit from the previous retreat in March. A small group with a shared desire for sound biblical teaching began to meet. Our co-workers began teaching them twice a week. In a short time, this small group grew into a church. Lima has many churches, but very few with sound biblical teaching. Instead, legalism, or the false prosperity gospel, or subjective experiences are emphasized in place of God’s Word. Teachings need to be centered on Christ and His finished work – salvation by grace alone through faith alone. This is the true gospel, and it will transform the life of anyone that believes it.



Above: the faculty of Word of Grace Bible Institute at the CPI Center in the jungle city of Pucallpa. From left: Casey Kidd, Luis Rosas, Cesar Soto, Steven Shepard, Jose Luis Bermudez and Otoniel Pardo.

Below: CPI retreat attendees at the mission center in Lima.



The Importance of Strong Leaders for Missions

A vital key to the fulfillment of the Great Commission – *go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations* – is church planting. For a new church to bear fruit there must be effective servant leaders. Effective servant leaders must have three qualifications. First and foremost, they must possess a godly character. This means having integrity, humility, and being motivated for the right reasons: because they love God, love the brethren, and love the lost. Second, effective servant leaders must have a good knowledge of the most important truths of Scripture so that their message will have the powerful impact God intends. And third, effective leaders must have the necessary spiritual gifts to communicate God's Word to others. A lot of people make the mistake of placing the greatest importance on spiritual gifts. While the gift is important, it is not nearly as important as having a godly character.

When a leader is motivated by his or her love for God, he or she will persevere under difficult circumstances and sooner or later bear fruit. But when a work does not have a strong leader who is properly motivated, that work will sooner or later come to nothing. This is one reason CPI emphasizes building through Christ-centered relationships. We must personally know the ones we work with. We must walk together and share fellowship. It is God that calls and raises up spiritual leaders. CPI's role is to come alongside of the ones God is calling and equip them for service. This is accomplished through training centers, conferences, retreats, books, and personal discipleship. As we build relationships and recognize God's call, we partner with our brothers and sisters to preach the gospel and plant churches in communities where the need is greatest.

Leadership Training in Uganda

In Uganda CPI has conducted numerous training conferences, provided books for pastors, and so far, sponsored seven men for study at two different Bible Schools. All of these men are currently in ministry. In May CPI sent Pastors Isaac Mugisa and John Kivamunda to conduct training for two church plants in east Uganda and one in the capital city of Kampala.

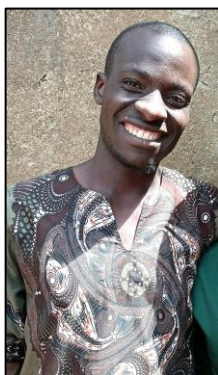
Upper left: CPI's co-worker John Kivamunda and his wife Rachel. John pastors All Nations Church and is the director of two training centers. CPI helped with construction of four classrooms for the training centers and has sponsored students at his school. Pictured are six of the Bible School students sponsored by CPI.

Middle left: Richard, who planted two churches in unreached rural communities in eastern Uganda, and Marius from a church in Kampala.

Top right: Edward and Edson, students who minister in rural communities of west Uganda under Pastor Isaac Mugisa.

Bottom right: Emma and Alozious, students from west Uganda also under Pastor Isaac.

Left: *In Peru a Shipibo couple decided to sit in on the week of classes before the graduation where they heard a teaching called "What is Marriage?" They had lived together several years but were never formally married. Afterwards they felt a sense of urgency to say their vows, and so we held a ceremony for them on the final day of class.*



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