

# THE CHURCH PLANTER

Spring

A Newsletter of Church Planting International

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## Growth in Churches in Previously Unreached Communities

Trip to Tepic, Mexico, (Feb 19-March 2)

By Steven Shepard

Gary Schmidt, from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and I visited Tepic, Mexico, to spend time with various pastors and make plans for CPI's summer mission teams.

We flew over the rugged mountains to the remote Huichol community of Guadalupe Ocotan. Guadalupe is one of the largest Huichol villages (pop 1,000) and also one of the most important of their ceremonial centers. There are also various ranch communities in the area about 30 minutes to a day's hike away. Normally Guadalupe is reached by riding a bus for seven hours on unpaved roads, but our flight took just 35 minutes. This entire area was unreached for the Gospel until Huichol church planter Domingo De La Cruz began his ministry. CPI has been supporting Domingo since about 2002. At first Domingo lived in Tepic and took only periodic trips to Guadalupe, but the church did not really begin to grow until he moved his family to the area in August of 2006. Now there are 30-40 people who attend, some from Guadalupe and some from the ranches. There is an older couple who starts out walking up and down the steep mountains on Saturday, spends the night

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*One of the new families in the church at Guadalupe*



*San Cayetano pastor Jose Lopez with Juan Jimenez from Mexicali. Juan and his wife, Magda are planning to move to San Cayetano to help with the work.*



*With Domingo in the mountains*

**“BAD AND GOOD NEWS”**

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## Growth in Churches *(Cont. from page 1)*

along the way, and arrives in Guadalupe on Sunday morning for the service. At the service the congregation sang in both Huichol and Spanish. I told the story of Cain and Abel in Spanish with some Huichol translation, dramatization, and applications from the story. Afterwards everyone stayed to eat together.

Domingo has built onto his adobe home next door to the church, adding rooms, a shop, a storage area, and bathrooms. Domingo and his family now go only rarely back to the city and say that they are much happier in the mountains. It was a thrill to see a growing church led by a native pastor in this formerly unreachable area.

When we returned from Guadalupe we stayed at Pastor Jose and Olga's in San Cayetano. CPI has been involved with Jose and Olga since they moved down from Mexicali in 1994 to begin the work. It is the only evangelical church in San Cayetano, but has remained small all these years. This year, however, I was encouraged to see growth and Jose and Olga reaching new people through small groups. We also met with a Mexicali couple who had come down to visit the work and to become acquainted with Tepic. They are considering a move to the area to help Jose and Olga with the work.

We will have 2 large mission teams this summer in Tepic: June 14-21, and June 19-26. Among the planned activities will be work in 3 areas where there are no churches or just the beginnings of a new church plant. We would appreciate your prayers. There is still room on team 2 if you want to join us!



*Huichol woman prepares food in earthen stove using firewood for after church dinner*



## Bad and Good News

*By Steven Shepard*

***Eph 2:1*** *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,*  
***Rom 7: 18 a*** *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;*

We must understand the bad news in order to be transformed by the good news. Only by acknowledging the bad news about our human nature can we be fully set free by Christ. The scripture says that “we were dead in trespasses and sins”. But what does this mean?

When our first parents sinned they died spiritually. They were separated from God's presence. When that happened, Adam and Eve's focus changed from devotion to God to self and the desire to become their own gods. This change of nature was then passed on to all of their descendents. All of us are born spiritually dead. This sin nature affects every part of us: our will, mind, and heart.

Those who are spiritually dead do not have the ability to respond spiritually to God. This means that apart from Christ, all people by nature sin in everything that they do. Man never does nor can he do a single work which is pleasing to God. Romans 3:10-12 says, “There is none righteous, no not one...there is none who seeks after God...there is none who does good, no, not one.” Man by nature is an enemy of God and does not possess the ability to keep God's law. Romans 8: 7-8 says, “...the carnal mind is ***enmity against God***; for it is not subject to the law of God, ***nor indeed can be***. So then, those who are in the flesh ***cannot please God***.” Man

## Bad and Good News *(continued from page 2)*

can do good only in a relative sense when compared to others, but not when compared to God's standard. He can fulfill God's law externally, but not in truth. For a work to be good in God's eyes, it must not only conform outwardly to His law, but also be done for the right motivation which is out of selfless love and for the glory of God. Human nature is unable to do this. Even man's best works are still just "filthy rags" in God's sight. (Isaiah 64:6)

This moral inability is the essence of spiritual death. That is why Jesus says, "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit". (Matthew 7:17) That is why Jesus says, "**No one can come to Me** unless the Father who sent Me draws him." (John 6:44) Man by nature is blinded to spiritual truth. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2: 14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; **nor can he know them**, because they are spiritually discerned." Man can know spiritual truth superficially and intellectually, but not in such a way that he is convinced and transformed by it. Like decaying Lazarus who came forth after Jesus called him from the tomb, God first had to make us alive spiritually before we could respond to Christ and come to Him in repentance and faith.

So what about after we become Christians? After we are born again and receive new natures, we **can** obey God's commands. Yet even though we are "new creatures in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17), we also still have our fleshly nature which is every bit as corrupt as the old sinful nature before we became Christians. Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) **nothing good dwells**." (Romans 7:18) If that sinful nature were completely gone at salvation, we would not need sanctification. We would already be perfect. We still need to have a deep awareness of our sinfulness apart from Christ. At the same time, we need to realize that our sins are completely paid for and we are never condemned by them. To recognize our sin is healthy. To be in denial about our sin causes us to deceive ourselves that we are above sin. How will we overcome the sin in our lives if we don't believe that we even have a sin nature that still clings to us? So as Christians, we should feel deeply our own sinfulness and, at the same time, understand our position of complete acceptance in Christ who has given us a perfect standing and a perfect righteousness by faith. In this way we are enabled to be completely free and yet continue to grow in sanctification from sin.

To sum up, human beings are described in Scripture as: deceitful, desperately wicked, corrupt, proud, unthankful, lovers of self, living in lust, unloving, slanderous, despisers of good, ignorant, blind, poor, naked, miserable, living in vanity, unclean, under the power of Satan, dead in trespasses and sins, and enemies of God. I know that this might seem depressing. Yet, the answer is not more self-esteem. We need a savior to deliver us from ourselves. **We need Christ**. But in order to experience the surpassing riches of Christ we must first come to terms with the helplessness and hopelessness of our human condition. When we do this our lives will take a turn for the better:

1. **We will begin to trust God and not ourselves.** Since apart from Christ "we can do nothing" and in our flesh "nothing good dwells", we have no choice but to trust the Holy Spirit for everything – our decisions, our ministries, and our sanctification. Like Paul, "we...put no confidence in the flesh". We can therefore cease from our strivings and let Christ take over. (John 15:5; Philippians 3:3)
2. **We will have peace knowing that our salvation is all God's work.** Since we had no power to change our own hearts, we understand that God must have taken the initiative and **called us unto Himself** out of His own sovereign grace. As sinners we would never have come to Him otherwise. Since God started the work in us we are confident that He also **will** finish it. (Philippians 1:6)
3. **We will begin to live in genuine humility.** Since God has done everything, He gets all the glory. We did nothing and have nothing praiseworthy in ourselves. Therefore we have nothing to boast about.
4. **We will begin to be more forbearing towards others.** We know that we are part of the same fallen human race, and that we were saved only by the mercy of God. Who are we to point the finger at anyone else? We are willing to forgive others knowing that God has forgiven us of even greater evils.

**Scriptures for study:** Is 64:6; Jer 17:9; Eph 2:1-3, 8,9; Eph 4: 17-18; Eph 5:8; Psalms 51:5; Psalm 58:3; Gen 6:5; Rev 3:17; Ec 9:3; Rom 5:10; Col 1:21; 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 2 Tim 2:25; Jer 13:23; John 3:6; Acts 5:31; John 6:44-45, 63, 65; Matt 11:27



# Ministry Goals for 2009

## 1. Matses tribe (Peruvian Rainforest)

- Provide gasoline for 1-2 Matses missionary journeys to the unreached of Brazil.
- Hold two training conferences for Matses leaders.
- Provide funds for a commercial saw to use in making boards for the improvement of their churches and earning money for musical instruments.

## 2. Yaminahua tribe (Peruvian Rainforest)

- Send at least two teams led by Cesar Soto to the Yaminahuas. There is now an established work in one of the villages. Cesar will spend time in another village where there are no churches but they have expressed an interest in hearing.

## 3. Huichol tribe (west central Mexico)

- Continue support of Huichol missionary Domingo de la Cruz Munoz in Guadalupe Ocotan (\$350/month). The church in Guadalupe (pop 1,000) continues to grow.
- Continue support of Martin Vargas' missionary trips to Cienega del Mango. There is no church established yet in Cienega, but Martin, a Venezuelan missionary, makes one trip a month to minister to a couple of believers and other interested people.
- Continue distribution of megavoices (solar powered listening devices) containing the Huichol New Testament.



*CPI sends Cesar Soto to the Yaminahuas.*

## 4. Pastors in Lima, Peru

- Raise funds for a printing business in Lima Peru which would support a Pastors' Training Center and new church. About \$32,000 in capital is needed. Funds for the rental of the facility will be sent so that the church and the training center can begin to function. After the capital is raised, equipment for the printing business will be purchased.
- Continue to train leaders in Peru, through seminars and books.



*Otoniel Pardo will direct Pastors' Training Center*

## 5. Short term missions

- Conduct 2 trips to Mexico in June led by Steven.
- Conduct 1 trip to Peru in August led by Tom Hopkins.

## 6. Ministries of compassion

- CPI will continue support of the Emmanuel Children's Home in Juarez, Mexico
- CPI will continue to provide food for the needy, restore homes, and meet medical and other needs as we encounter them on the mission field.

## 7. CPI missionary Tom Hopkins

- Tom will continue to work in the jungle city of Pucallpa, Peru, assisting a native missionary agency (MINAP), CPI's ministry to the tribes, short-term mission teams, and will begin to train Christian leaders in child and youth evangelism.

## 8. Seeking new fields

- Consider engaging other Amazon tribes and a larger unreached people group in Africa.
- Explore possibilities of holding pastors' conferences in Kenya.



*Unreached tribe in Peru*

**Join with us in taking the Gospel to the nations!**