

# Missions

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# REACHING THE *Unreached*

## Sharing the Gospel with the Tribes of Peru

BY PETER HOCKING

**D**uring the first 35 years of our ministry in Peru, we mobilized teams of Peruvian young people to take the Gospel to towns along the coast and in the Andes. But then, we understood that God's plan is for believers to take the Gospel to all the nations of the world (Matthew 28:19). We

**God's redemptive plan is to save people from every tribe and nation.**

learned that the biblical meaning of *nations* is not

"countries" but, rather, "people groups." We were amazed to learn that God's redemptive plan is to save people from every tribe and nation so that they might know and worship Him.

### Focusing on unreached tribes

With this new perspective on missions, we began researching the tribes of Peru and learned that the Gospel had not reached at least 20 tribes. As our research progressed, we learned that an unreached tribe is one that does not have a Christian church. A tribe may have missionaries working with it, but if the tribe does not have believers who meet together in pursuit of knowing God better, the tribe is unreached. We discovered that the need for Christian work in Peru was great. In addition to the 20 Peruvian tribes without churches, 22 tribes had nominally Christian congregations with members who clung to animistic beliefs, which restricted the Gospel's effectiveness in changing



their lives. Since these congregations were not committed to the Lord, their tribes were also considered unreached. What a challenge lay before us!

In response, we modified our missionary training programs to focus on cross-cultural missions, including exposure to tribal culture. More recently, we moved the training program from Lima to Atalaya, the jungle town where our new mission base is located. Last year, we created a short-term missionary outreach that introduces young people to the challenges of tribal ministry in

the jungle. By the Lord's grace, these outreaches produce good results.

This ministry could not operate without our dedicated coworkers. Presently, seven Peruvian missionaries and seven Romanian missionaries work full time with us, and 10 indigenous missionaries work part time with us. With the Lord's help, our missionary coworkers minister among five Peruvian tribes. Although I am 81 years old, I still teach some missionary and pastoral training seminars and am transferring more of my responsibilities to our coworkers.

### Taking the Gospel to unreached tribes

Over the years, we learned that reaching tribes with the Gospel requires several stages. Today, we teach the students in our training program these steps, equipping them to effectively reach tribes, in the Lord's will.



## 1 Train in cross-cultural missions

Because communicating the Gospel to people of another culture, especially tribal cultures, is complex, a missionary called to such ministry should receive specialized training. Otherwise, the missionary may commit preventable mistakes, which could hinder his or her outreach, cost his or her life, or prevent people from receiving new life and victory in Christ.

## 2 Assess contact

After missionary training, the next step is making contact with the tribe that God called the missionary to reach. If the tribe is not in peaceful contact with neighboring communities, the only wise strategy is exercising intercessory prayer on the tribal people's behalf. The missionary must ask God to deliver them from their fear of outsiders so that, of their own accord, they seek peaceful contact with outsiders and welcome missionaries. For this purpose, we print prayer cards that describe each unreached Peruvian tribe and suggest specific prayer points.

If the tribe is in peaceful contact with its neighbors, a missionary can travel to one of the tribe's villages with someone

who knows the tribe and speaks the language. The missionary should talk with the village's chief (and, afterward, with the regional chief) to determine if they will welcome a missionary to live among them and to provide them with medical help and basic education. After the chief and missionary arrange conditions, including where in the village the missionary will live and what kind of house the tribe will build for him or her, a signed agreement should be written, if the chief can read.

## 3 Live in the tribal village

When the missionary moves to the village, he or she should live in a house similar to the tribe's houses (made of the same materials) but adapted. Although equipped with a personal supply of food, the missionary should eat what the villagers offer. The missionary should also dress in clothes similar to the villagers' so as to be more accepted.

## 4 Prepare for evangelism

While living in the village and learning the tribe's language and customs, the missionary should prepare the people for God's message. The missionary may tell the villagers that he or she has an important message for them but must share it

Above: Antonia (left), a Peruvian missionary, oversees a meal for tribal children.



with them in their language. Then, the missionary can ask the villagers to teach him or her their language. The missionary may also ask the villagers questions that encourage them to examine their animistic beliefs. Such questions include: “How do you know what you said is true?” and “How can you be sure that what you were taught is true?”

### 5 Lay foundations for understanding the Gospel

With enough knowledge of the tribe’s language to teach God’s Word, the missionary should teach the villagers truths that correct their animistic beliefs and enable them to believe in Christ and His redemptive sacrifice. Teaching them biblical truths is best done chronologically through the Old Testament, covering: God’s nature, attributes, and works; the spirit world’s true nature, addressing the tribe’s jungle spirits; God’s view and punishment of sin, especially those the tribe practices; and humanity’s need of a substitutionary sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. These truths are best illustrated through drawings and dramas. We use Ethnos360’s excellent teaching materials. This step can last a year or more, but it is necessary to ensure clear understanding of God’s truth.

### 6 Present Christ, the Incarnation of the Gospel

After hearing the Old Testament’s foundational teachings, the people are equipped to understand that Christ is “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) As the missionary presents the Gospel, the tribe has an accurate knowledge of Christ and can believe in Him.

### 7 Invite people to trust Christ

When the people understand that Jesus is the only One Who can save them, and when they want that salvation, the missionary should avoid using traditional ways of leading people to Christ. Instead, the missionary should suggest that, in their own words, the people individually ask Christ to save them. This way, professions of faith are more likely to be genuine.

### 8 Teach Christian living

Finally, the missionaries must teach the new believers how to function as a New Testament church. Studies in Acts and Paul’s epistles provide helpful examples for the new believers. In harmony with biblical principles, their meetings must reflect their tribe’s culture, using their language, their musical style, and their way of meeting together.

### Praying for tribal missions work

Over many years, we learned the principles and strategies that I shared above, and we believe that they are the way that God would have believers reach tribal peoples around the world with the Gospel. Please pray that God will help us share His love and salvation with unreached Peruvian tribes and that His Spirit will raise up more Peruvian missionaries to reach these tribes. ■



*Peter and Marta Hocking are commended from Local Evangelico de Avondale in Chicago, Illinois.*

# IN LOCKDOWN BUT NOT LOCKED UP

## Our Experience in Italy's COVID-19 Crisis

BY DANNY & MARTI PASQUALE

In early 2020, COVID-19 hit Italy unexpectedly and aggressively. By March 19, less than one month after the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Italy, the country's death toll surpassed China's and lacked visible signs of improvement.

### Outreach efforts

We found ourselves confined to our apartment, working remotely while trying to entertain our four-year-old child, Lylia. All the lessons at IBEI, the Bible school, transitioned to online video meetings via Zoom, and the students and staff were confined to the campus, prohibited from physical contact with the outside world. Marti shopped for groceries and other essentials for them and four families, including my parents Dan and Paola Pasquale (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 12). The full-day shopping stints bordered on heroic as she attempted to diminish the chance of infection.

Italians responded to the pandemic's outbreak with determination and optimism, albeit with some superficiality, adopting *andrà tutto bene* ("everything will be alright") as their new motto. When this phrase became a trending hashtag (#andratuttobene) on social media, I felt compelled to reach out to the unbelieving world with a biblical perspective on the motto. I wrote a short article and shared it with personal contacts, printed it, posted it on social media, and eventually, published it on YouTube as a video in Italian, Albanian, and English. (You can find it on YouTube by searching "#everythingwillbealright..." with my name, Daniele Pasquale.) The article's bottom line is that, by faith in Jesus, His death, and resurrection, beyond illness, accidents, and even death, we can know that everything will be all right. By God's grace, at the time of writing this article, the video reached more than 20,000 people, from our neighbors to nonbelievers across borders.

When the lockdown started, Marti had the brilliant idea of asking a former missionary-colleague with Unto, a Cru ministry, if they could send us surgical masks, given the sudden, critical need in Italy. And they did! We gave more than 2,000 masks, along with the printed version of the #everythingwillbealright article, to our town's mayor. The masks reached the local police station, the Red Cross office, and many people who were in dire need of this simple but precious item.

### Spiritual response

Through these efforts, we reached many people with the Gospel. Across Italy, believers, churches, and missions have responded with God's love and truth. In northern Italy, Samaritan's Purse set up a hospital facility for more than 60 patients, which made Italy's national news. Churches are producing evangelistic videos and are hosting virtual services, inviting nonbelievers to join. Many missions are serving the most vulnerable in practical ways.

Through IBEI, we help the church grow in its Bible knowledge and in thinking biblically about our lives, our world, and our God. Thankfully, we have used online learning tools for several years, so the lockdown didn't hinder us. Actually, it's opening doors for us to connect with prospective students.

### Praise and prayer

In this difficult time, we thank the Lord for His assistance, for fellowship, and for technology. Needs are still very present. Please pray for growth in Bible training, for our personal and family development, for financial provisions in the long-term economic crisis, for wisdom to live in this new reality, and for fruit in evangelism. What will it profit people if they survive the COVID-19 pandemic yet lose their souls? ■



**From top:** Marti packs the Pasquale's car with food for the IBEI students; Lylia and Marti create a window banner, which translates, "Everything will be alright; Jesus is life"; Danny delivers surgical masks to Monte Porzio's mayor.



Danny and Marti Pasquale are commended from Littleton Bible Chapel in Littleton, Colorado.



# SERVING OVERSEAS AMID CRISIS

## TeamWorkers Nicaragua Navigates the Global Pandemic

BY ROB ARMSTRONG

Earlier this year, I looked forward to leading another TeamWorkers trip to Nicaragua for a construction project. This trip was my third visit to the country, and on the previous trips, I made several friends whom I stayed in contact with. Two years ago, my visit ended suddenly when a family emergency arose and required me to fly home as the team arrived in the country. I prayed that this year's trip would go smoother, but little did I know what was about to happen.

### THE PURPOSE

This year, the team comprised Dave Macdonald, Matt Kent, and Jack Jones from Northern Ontario, along with co-leader and construction expert Jeff Reid, Herman and Liam Slappendel, Leon Wease, Peter Walsh, and me from communities in Southern Ontario. The team members, whose ages ranged from 16 to 68, had different backgrounds and skills.

We headed to Campamento Betel, a Bible camp in Tauquil, about six hours northwest of Managua and 20 minutes from the Honduran border. Several team members worked at the camp previously, and we returned to build a four-unit residence, which would offer camp speakers and directors privacy to focus on their ministry. Honduran missionary Israel Ramos and CMML

missionary Tony Flett (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 18) were our hosts during our trip's 15 days.

### THE WORK

Before we arrived, several local believers laid the building's foundation and blocked the walls. Tony felt that, with the efforts of the local Christians and our team, we could prepare the building for occupation during the our trip. That task meant installing the plumbing and wiring, pouring the floors, laying the remaining blocks, erecting the roof, and then finishing the inside.

Soon, we understood how hard our Nicaraguan coworkers work. Most of us spend more time working at desks than at the handle of a shovel. This reality was evident when, after supper the first few nights, we asked if it was late enough to go to bed. It was only 7:30 p.m., but many of us quickly stopped trying to stay awake and went to sleep.

One local believer, Rufo, who was the first man to be saved in the area, seemed to have more energy than anyone else on site and would neither take breaks nor slow down during the day. I mentioned to Tony how hard Rufo worked, and he said Rufo always works hard for a man in his 70s. One day, I was

**Above (from left):** Each morning, Nicaragua's national bird greeted the team; Before their forced departure, the team began building the roof; Eveling teaches Yuneling and Sarai English.

assigned to help him mix cement. My job was to supply him with sand and gravel. I could not maintain his pace, so after an hour of lagging behind, I asked another team member to help me. Between the two of us, we worked at his speed. However, he worked with a ready smile, so we did not feel badly when we could not keep up.

One of my jobs, which some joked was my main one, was photographing and documenting the building's progress. I found that, no matter where I am in the world, children are children, and they love having their picture taken. Some of the local workers' children decided that, if I was taking their picture, they should communicate with our team. Fortunately, Eveling, who helped in the kitchen, teaches English. A few phrases later, the children asked each team member their name and replied, "Nice to meet you." Every day, we were encouraged to see their smiling faces, which reminded us of the kids who will attend camp and hear the Gospel. As we looked at some of the structures that past Canadian teams helped build, we felt grateful to have a small part in assisting the Nicaraguan Christians in being witnesses in their country.

## LOCAL FRIENDS

The first week passed quickly, and we were on schedule to complete the project before our scheduled departure. We read the news about the COVID-19 outbreak and laughed at the stories of people hoarding toilet paper in Canada. We were enjoying perfect weather, fantastic food, and great fellowship with our team and the local workers. We felt isolated from what was happening at home.

We decided to drive three hours to and from Estelí, where Israel's home church is located and where several TeamWorkers teams helped with past projects. We felt it was important to visit those whom we worked with in the past, encouraging them and thanking them for the experience of working alongside them. On Saturday, after shopping, we stopped at the assembly in Estelí and one in El Jocote. In Estelí, the believers served us lunch, and we reconnected with them. In El Jocote, I stood in the small church and explained that the last time I was in the building I was struggling with a crisis at home and was preparing to return to Canada. That night, two years ago, the community prayed for me, and although I did not understand the Spanish prayers, I was encouraged to know that the believers shared my faith and my concerns. I was glad to be back under better circumstances, yet I did not know what would transpire over the next 24 hours.

## THE NEWS

As we arrived back at the camp, we received a message saying that MSC Canada's board was meeting to decide how to handle the teams on the field. They encouraged us to look into returning home early. As we read the news from home and other countries, we realized that COVID-19 was more dangerous than we initially thought. We contacted our travel agents, who told us that they were unable to reschedule our flights through El Salvador. It was time to look for alternate flights.

The next morning, Sunday, we woke up to another beautiful day. Overall, we had peace that God was in control and we would travel home in His perfect time. We went to church for the Breaking of Bread, and I spoke at the Family Bible Hour. Despite the language barrier, we enjoyed the atmosphere of



**Right (from top):** Jack Jones, Matt Kent, Peter Walsh, Dave MacDonald, Liam Slappendel, Herman Slappendel, Jeff Reid, Leon Wease, and Rob Armstrong prepare to work; Before breakfast, the team meets for devotions.



fellowship and left the meeting feeling refreshed and energized for whatever God had in store for us. Many phone calls later, with Danelle Flett's help, we secured tickets to Toronto, via Costa Rica and Houston, Texas.

## THE TRIP HOME

With sadness, we packed up and headed to Managua. After only eight days in Nicaragua, five of which we spent working, many things remained unfinished, and many conversations with friends were postponed. In Managua, we spent an evening with Oscar Cubas and his family. Oscar shared his testimony of God's calling him, as a young man, to leave Honduras and go to Nicaragua to spread the Gospel and plant churches. He challenged the young team members to step out in faith and serve God on the mission field.

Early the next morning, we boarded the plane to San José, Costa Rica, and then, flew to North America. That evening, the San José airport closed and stopped all air travel. Our sovereign God went before us. We arrived home safely and self-isolated for 14 days. Many of the team members plan to join another TeamWorkers trip in the future. Maybe I will see you on one of the teams! ■



*Rob Armstrong fellowships at Northside Bible Chapel in Barrie, Ontario.*

**From top (L-R):** On Sunday, the team worships with the believers in Tauquil; Rob enjoys time with Flor, Israel, and Florisel Ramos; Rufo always works diligently and with a smile; The team enjoys dinner with the Cubas family and the Fletts; Local believer Domingo, Tony Flett, and Jack Jones pour cement; Jeff Reid cuts into the septic tank.



# FACING TRAUMA ON THE MISSION FIELD

God's Answer versus the World's

BY PEGGY COVERT

Due to COVID-19 and social-distancing requirements, Northwest Missionary Focus, a monthly meeting in Seattle, Washington, met via Zoom, the video communication platform, for the first time in April. On that Saturday evening, more than 70 people, from Washington, Iowa, Bolivia, and even the United Arab Emirates, participated. The speaker, Jesse Mattix, and his family (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 24) joined from Yakima, Washington.

Jesse spoke on "Responding to Trauma on the Mission Field." He began by noting that all of us may encounter difficulties that can lead to different levels of trauma, ranging from severe stress to distress, but being overseas during a traumatic event can complicate the situation and effects more. He suggested two kinds of events that can lead to trauma: unexpected and expected.

## TRAUMATIC EVENTS

For unexpected events, Jesse listed accidents, disease, governmental changes, and other catastrophes. In the case of a serious accident, especially if a fatality is involved, the frightening results can be compounded by the person's foreign status. Recently, the world saw the effects of widespread disease, and in Tarapoto, Peru, where the Mattixes serve, the people are living under severe lockdown measures. Jesse commented that many governments do not trust their citizens to behave wisely in such events, so they impose and enforce strict rules. Governmental changes, including revolutions and coups, may be traumatic for expatriates and foreigners who don't understand the situation and may be stranded in a hostile environment.

Jesse shared several traumatic situations that affected their family. While serving at a Bible school in Camiri, Bolivia, the Mattixes heard that Janel's mother suffered a major stroke and likely would not recover. Quickly, they had to travel to Santa Cruz to purchase tickets to return to the States. Another traumatic event happened when the bridge spanning the river between the city and the school's property collapsed. Under construction for months, the bridge was rebuilt finally, but as the last

support beam was removed, the bridge crashed back into the river. Another type of trauma was the burnout that led to their family leaving Bolivia. Jesse described it as slow building and difficult to detect.

Expected events, like the birth of a child, health issues, family matters, and marriages, may cause great stress for missionaries overseas too. At home, relatives and church family may also experience stress when the missionaries go through difficulties. They want to help, but if they do not understand the situation, they may be unable to provide practical assistance.

## THE RESPONSES

Jesse explained that money is the world's answer to stress and trauma. People set aside emergency funds. People stockpile supplies to ensure they will not suffer. People buy insurance to cover all possible disasters. In some third-world countries, people pay bribes to deal with difficulties. Money often secures the outcome people want.

Christians know the Lord is in control. After reading Philippians 1:6–11, Jesse commented that the Lord uses difficulties for our good. Enduring trials, which may bring trauma, builds character and develops the fruit of righteousness in us. In Philippians 1:12–14, trauma becomes an opportunity: Paul's imprisonment advances the Gospel.

Whether we're Christians serving the Lord on the field or at home, when facing trauma, we must calm the panic and see the opportunities. Jesse explained that making plans and meeting basic needs are important, but ultimately, we must trust the Lord daily. In Philippians 1:19–20, Paul looks beyond the circumstances to Christ's exaltation. God is good, and trauma is not meaningless. ■



*Peggy and Dan Covert attend North Lynnwood Bible Chapel in Lynnwood, Washington.*