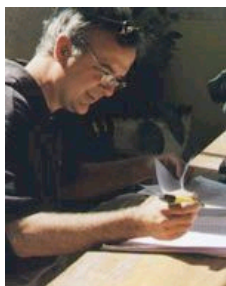


Theological Education Strengthens God's Church

27 April 2009



Theological education is at the heart of SIM's vision to partner with and strengthen the church world-wide. Knowing what God has said is always the first step to finding hope, strength and victory in every area of life, and the same is true for discovering the vision and mission for God's church around the world. SIM emphasises this foundational principle in Africa, Asia and South America.

SIM Peru is involved at all levels of theological education—an Interdenominational Seminary, rural and city Bible institutes, and a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program. Here is one testimony of how focus on foundational theological education changed the course of a struggling church in Peru.

About 9 years ago, Pastor Oscar Ugarte sensed the Lord was leading him in new directions. Personally he had no desire to move as he was pastoring a good church, but he felt the Lord 'pushing him.' He responded to God's leading and became the pastor of another church of about 30 members. The new congregation was not in good shape. There was a lot of fighting, the church was in debt, and to add to the challenge, about half the members left when Oscar took up the pastorate—leaving him with just 14 members.

Oscar felt what the remaining members needed the most was solid biblical training. In his mind, this was essential for the Lord to be able to bring healing to the congregation and then use them to reach out to others.

Recalling his time with the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Lima, Oscar approached SIM and inquired about the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programme and materials. Gloria Chavez, the TEE Secretary, explained the currently available materials and Oscar was keen to start using them. Groups began to study the Abundant Life course, which teaches the basics for new Christians, and then moved onto the very practical series on pastoral theology, a series of six courses based on Matthew's gospel and the book of Acts.

Through a combination Oscar's preaching and getting to really know the Bible through TEE, the Lord has moved the church forward in wonderful ways. In the past 9 years, their church has grown from 14 to around 200 members. Over 100 have completed the pastoral theology course and currently 70 members are studying in different groups. The church's debt has been paid off through tithing of the church members. They were outgrowing their building—just as it was being completed!

The conflicts from the past have been dealt with and divisions no longer mark the church. Each weekend one-quarter of the congregation will go to help another church—taking sound systems, leading worship, preaching, and leading outreaches. They are helping smaller, struggling churches and groups to get established in the northern outskirts of Lima and have started their own outreach outside Lima for the first time.

Pastor Oscar concludes that the key factor in seeing the church advance was getting the membership rooted in the Word of God and the TEE training has been an integral part of that process. He constantly emphasises the importance of a solid grounding in the Word of God before launching new believers into ministry. Although not all who begin the courses complete them, those who have done so are proving themselves as valuable Christian workers.

Pray

- Thank God for how he is advancing His kingdom through theological education.
- For more church and ministry leaders to participate in these educational opportunities.
- For the funding help that some may need to be able to participate.
- For more theologically-trained teaching professionals willing to use their gifts in cross-cultural mission.

0 comments

- [Add a comment to this page](#)

Urgent Prayer Need

Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, urgently needs a [French teacher](#) to join their staff team in August. Pray that God will provide the right person to meet this need.