

Chapter 29

Peru

— By David Wilson —



PREACHING IN PLAZA SAN MARTIN LIMA - DAVID WILSON



SAMUEL, OUR FIRST OAC EVANGELIST



SAMUEL REACHING POOR CHILDREN

I first visited Peru in June 1983. An American missionary (Wayne) invited me to train his church in open-air evangelism. Ten years before, he had seen our beach meetings at Ocean City, Maryland. During the training in Lima, we went to the main downtown plaza called San Martín for our very first open-air meeting. A huge crowd immediately gathered, including a policeman with a machine gun. He soon left, but returned with more police officers, all carrying machine guns! Wayne began to lose his liberty in translating for me, but he continued anyway, and it soon became apparent the policemen were listening! Wayne took courage, and we continued to proclaim the gospel. It seemed as if the whole crowd was hanging on every word. Many responded and took our literature. The policemen came forward, and I wondered what was going to happen. They also wanted our literature! Such was the interest that few left, even after the counseling was finished. “Where is your church?” some asked, and “When will you be back?” We returned two days later and saw the same results. Wayne later



DAVID PROAÑO, SUANI & JORGE, AND DAVID WILSON

wrote: "Visitors from our meetings continue to find their way to the church."

Returning to Lima in November 1983, I approached the Christian & Missionary Alliance (CMA) leader, Eugene Kelly, who was a missionary from Canada. I asked if I could train some of his people, and he agreed. When we arrived with the team at the main park in the richest part of Lima, we met a boy shouting, "No pase... bomba!" People were running, sirens were wailing, and the police were chasing down anyone within reach! It was the work of the 'Shining Path' (Sendero Luminoso), a terrorist movement trying to force communist rule in Peru. Over 69,000 people died or disappeared from 1980 to 2000 as the result of the armed conflict. As we prayed, another bomb exploded around the corner from us. Our church team said that we should leave, but when I pointed out that the street vendors were still doing business, they took courage and stood for the Lord.



DRAMA PRESENTATION PRIOR TO THE MESSAGE



DAVID PROAÑO IN A SCHOOL

Providentially, the message that I had prepared was called "Where will you spend eternity?" Many frightened eyes fixed upon me as they heard about the One who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." God had prepared their hearts, and many came to our platform for counseling. Some later came with us to the church. At another open-air meeting, the whole area was plunged into darkness when the power transformers were blown up. Only

the battery-powered light on our sketchboard remained on, illuminating the message of Christ for all to see as it was proclaimed.

Over 150 were trained in Lima: 26 pastors, 100 laypeople, and 30 future pastors at the seminary. Gene Kelly later wrote, "Several teams have been at work in the open air with good results. The campaign in La Victoria was very good. More than 100 made decisions, many of whom were present at the Sunday services." Years later, Gene would write to me saying that he wished they had used the OAC method more.

I returned in 1984, and as I listened to the different reports, it became clear that



JORGE PREACHING IN A PLAZA



SUANI GATHERING A CROWD



COUNSELING AFTER AN OPEN-AIR MEETING

hundreds had responded for salvation and were counseled in open-air meetings led by the pastors I had trained. Again, it was a joy to preach with them in Plaza San Martín and to see the large crowd that continued to grow and grow. Many faces reflected the anxiety in their hearts from living in a land with terrorists. After concluding in a prayer for those who wanted to trust Christ as Savior, scores came to the platform for counseling. Some said, "We need you here again... come back!" Teams did continue to come back, and the Lord continued to bring

forth fruit from these outreaches. These were very special days when there was a great spiritual awakening in Lima, and the churches were growing rapidly.

Returning six months later, I found the ministry of evangelism was still flourishing, so I looked for a man who could be our pioneer evangelist to begin an OAC branch in Peru. When I could not find God's man, and when no other reports came from Lima, I decided not to return, thinking that those trained had stopped.

Thirty years passed. Then one day, I received an e-mail from Samuel, who had traced me through OAC Brazil. He was one of the many seminary students whom I had trained in 1983, and was begging me to return to Peru to start an OAC branch. Samuel was still using the OAC methods of evangelism. He told me that many of those trained had continued on for years doing open-air outreaches and had seen hundreds come to Christ, but now most had stopped. Believing this was a call from God, I invited David Proaño of OAC Ecuador to join me, and we flew to Lima.

It was my joy to meet Samuel again; he was now in his fifties. At the CMA Seminary, I saw others whom I had trained who were now pastors. Amazingly, they recognized me and told of thousands who had been reached through their open-air outreaches. The OAC ministry was held in high esteem, and they welcomed me back. The Lord had worked, but without an OAC branch in Peru with permanent evangelists to provide training, encouragement, and leadership, the open-air ministry had slowly declined. Now it was time to revive it again and start an OAC branch with Samuel. As we preached in Plaza San Martín, where I had preached 30 years ago, people gathered and responded as they did before, even though they were of the next generation. Peru was still a harvest field! In one meeting, people stood in light rain to hear the gospel. Having no vehicle, we traveled in a tiny three-wheeled taxi with all of our equipment. We even went into a school that allowed us to preach the gospel to 1,400 students, with no restrictions. It was time to start OAC Peru.

Samuel did well training church teams and taking them out on the streets and plazas. The Lord provided a new van and all the ministry equipment. However, because of the lack of financial support, he sadly felt led to accept an invitation to be one of the pastors



CHIP WELTON PREACHING IN LIMA

in a large CMA church and now lives in Brazil. The Lord, however, had been preparing Jorge, a school teacher in Ecuador, who had trained with David Proaño for several years. He and Suani (his fiancée) felt the Lord calling them to Peru, and so in 2016, Jorge and David flew back to Ecuador. Two months later, he returned with his wife, Suani, as our missionaries to Peru.

The 'Shining Path' rebels had continued their killings in Peru, but the military had finally defeated them by 2013. However, remnants remain, and other groups have formed. In Plaza San Martín, they speak against the government and promote Liberation Theology and Communism. Some even bring false charges against evangelical Christians like us. But the message of Christ goes forth by OAC teams proclaiming Him as the only One who can give us peace and eternal life. Many are still listening and responding. Samuel has trained 25 in a church near Plaza San Martín, and they are coming regularly to this plaza to evangelize.

In March 2017, David and I returned with Jorge and taught a seminar at the same seminary where I had trained students 30 years earlier. Over 70 people attended, including pastors from the interior and seminary students. They quickly learned our method of open-air preaching and became very excited. We then went to Plaza San Martín, but when the police saw 70 of us as a group in the plaza on their security cameras, they sent officers to arrest us. The dean of the seminary, who was once a terrorist, called a high-ranking Christian, and permission was quickly granted. The police disappeared. Some of the pastors preached, people were counseled for salvation, and names were taken for follow-up. Jorge continued visiting these pastors in the following years. Among the pastors who continued with training were some in the city of Lima, but also others such as in the city of Lurín, located a few hours from the capital. Another pastor who requested support and training lives in the Jaén-Cajamarca Region. Jorge and Suani visited him as they traveled in the ministry van for more than 20 hours in 2019. All of them were encouraged by the way we do the evangelism ministry in Open Air Campaigners.

During these years, our mission joined forces in working together with medical ministry preaching campaigns in different parts of Peru. The purpose of these efforts was to present Christ to many patients who attended these campaigns, an average of 600 to 1200 people per medical brigade. In this joint work, Jorge and his wife traveled to all different regions of Peru, including the coast, mountains, and even the jungle. The



open-air evangelism model was ideal for this type of work. In 2025, after two years of ministry pause, our team resumed these medical brigades.

The Lord has been opening and confirming doors in everything that He has allowed because "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24). In their local church, Jorge and Suani have found faithful members who have served in the area of evangelism for more than eight years. It is in this church setting that they have trained most of their volunteers, and it is also where they have formed an evangelism team with around 30 attendees per evangelism activity.

By the grace of God, our work in Peru has overcome various tests through the years. Increased preaching opportunities were available during the time of floods in 2017 to open doors in various ways during the days of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. During this time, the Lord put it in Jorge's heart to preach not only from the terrace of his house to his neighbors but also to visit vulnerable places during this time of social restriction, bringing peace and hope to those who lived in isolation (also see chapter 45).

Since 2021, we have resumed training three church evangelism teams, including the church where Samuel had trained. One of these churches, although located in a low-income area, has been faithful in supporting Jorge financially since its planting. It is now a larger church and is located in a more central location in Lima, with around 200 people attending.

Jorge and Suani decided that their children should be born in Lima in order to serve as encouragement during future testing. It would remind them that God called them to this new country, and it was He who made their home grow in that location, blessing them with the birth of Jorge David, Suani Katriel, and Gracia Idelle. In recent days, a large part of the ministry is focused on evangelism programs for children, both in plazas and in schools, where their children are participants.

