

# THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AMERICAN CALL

It has been a wild ride. I grew up on a little farm in Louisiana. I plowed mules and horses, picked cotton by hand, took care of our farm animals. I graduated Forest High in 1964 and promptly left for Lee College. But I wasn't ready. I was extremely immature and soon dropped out. I began pastoring little churches in Louisiana; Crowville Church of God, Winnfield, Rayville and Bogalusa.

I left Bogalusa in 1974 and moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. I was there about 17 months. Leaving there I came to Tennessee and took the little Kenton Church of God, then moved to Whiteside, then to Soddy and then to my last pastorate; the Union City Church of God.

While at the Whiteside Church of God, I began to be involved with missions. I did not choose to do this; it was a God thing. He began to push me in that direction. When I moved to Union City God moved me to the next level. Bishop Bryan Hersey showed up, no doubt at God's direction, and the rest is history. He was the catalyst that God used to start me in the direction of where I am today. I was just one of his many accomplishments on the mission field.

I worked in Ecuador for several years while continuing to pastor Union City. I was going into other pulpits to raise the money for the various projects; crusades, church building, etc. But God began to push me toward full time work so in May of 1999 I left Union City to go full time in missions ministry. Little did I know what lay ahead.

Just six weeks into full time mission work God spoke to me to go to Peru. Nobody believed I was right but I knew in my

heart that I had heard from God. I had to do it.

It was a lonely time for me. Several people let me know that they felt I was making a mistake. But I believed I had heard from God; and, I had.

We spent several years working with Seidel Chavez high up in the Andes Mountains. We had great success. Many churches were built. Many people received Christ. We built a large Church for the district in Huaraz at 10,000 feet high. God blessed us with much success.

But God wasn't finished "changing me". Several years after moving to Peru He started pushing me toward the Amazon River. The cities of Pucallpa and Iquitos would play a great role in my future.

For several years we worked in Iquitos. We used a large boat to preach the gospel to every village we could find. We dug water wells, gave them water filters, taught them hygiene, etc. But God still had one more move for me... maybe more; who knows?

Pucallpa! It was a nasty, dangerous, noisy, horrible place to work. I hated it! Although I had asked God not to send me there, He did not grant my request.

We began to work the river and for several years we worked out of the El Evangelista; a 90 foot river launch that was fully self contained. It was and still is a horrible ship. But we made do.

We went into every village we could get to and spread the gospel through dramas and preaching. We gave them water filters and drilled a few wells. In the last few years we found the Hayes chlorine

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generator which we still use today. Thousands have been saved as a result of the work we have done on the river.

At present we no longer do trips where we go into individual villages. Instead, we have congresos where we gather them in to a central location about 3 times per year. We are reaching far more people now and having a profound impact on them. Many are being saved. Many are being trained.

Here is the basics of what South American Call is doing at present.....

1. Congresos on river.... 3/year... Cost: between 6 and 12 thousand dollars per congreso.
2. Congreso with soup kitchens 1/ year... Cost: 2-3 thousand
3. Pastors of the River...15-20 trips per year. There might be more trips in the future. Cost; 18-20 thousand per year.
4. We feed 120 kids per day and teach them about Jesus and the Bible. Cost; \$40,000.000/year
5. Tammy Owens and her family, are ministering to the SKK two times per year. Each session lasts about 2 weeks. Tammy raises her own money for this activity.
6. At Christmas we travel back to the soup kitchens to buy clothes, shoes, underwear and school supplies for the kids. We have church with them, as well. Cost: \$14,000.00
7. School of Christ...This program is conducted 2 or 3 times per year. The activity lasts about 3 weeks and costs between 2 and 4 thousand.
8. In February, 2018 we will began a yearly teaching conference for the pastors and leaders on the river. 3 or 4 days of intensive teaching in Pucallpa. Cost: Not sure at this time but probably about 6 thousand.

We are reaching more and more people in the Jungle. I really never thought we would be ministering to so many people. And the thing to keep in mind is that we are teaching those who come to our meetings to go back to their villages and teach what they have learned. That way we are doubling and tripling our efforts. The soup kitchens are doing better and better. Tammy Owens has a large hand in that. I am thrilled with tremendous growth in the ministry that God has given to us.

The tremendous success is also causing a problem... The cost has risen sharply. In the coming year I will need to raise much more money if we are to continue at this level of ministry.

I need several churches/pastors/ individuals who will raise a significant amount of money toward the congresos, soup kitchens, School of Christ and Pastors of the River and Pastor/Leader training in Pucallpa.

Please pray about this and let me know if God speaks to your heart about one of these projects. God has brought us a long way since I plowed those old horses and mules as a kid on my dad's farm. It would be a shame to have to cut back on the ministry we are providing to these people.

Sincerely,

Rev. Joe Mercer  
President: South American Call, INC.