

August 24, 2007

Last Friday, my pastor and I took a van load of supplies to Pastor Manuel Rojas in Santiago, a little town just south of Ica. We told him we would come back the next week with more supplies. We began calling churches in Lima on Saturday night motivating them to give for the believers in the Ica region. I couldn't get vehicles for a trip on Tuesday, but several guys said they could go on Wednesday. On Tuesday my pastor and I spent six hours making trips around Lima collecting the goods people had given. We packed most of it up Tuesday night, and by 6:00am on Wednesday we were headed south out of Lima with a caravan of four vehicles and 12 people, six of them Peruvian pastors.

Since last weekend, the road crews had fixed most of the damage on the roads which shortened our trip down to about 4 hours. We went first to Santiago to deliver the goods to Pastor Manuel. We unloaded all we had brought and it made up quite a pile in the church building. Several of the men headed off at that point to visit some other churches in the area to see how they are doing and to see if they are receiving any help. Two of the pastors stayed with me, and Manuel took us around to see several of the homes of his church people. The first picture here is of the home of several children that attend the Sunday school. As you can see, their roof collapsed in the earthquake. The second picture is the rustic home of an older couple in the church. The house has survived two major earthquakes and has huge cracks in every wall.

After eating lunch, we headed to Pisco, the city most affected by the earthquake. As we started to drive through the city, we were overwhelmed with what we saw. Very few houses were left untouched. Most houses have suffered major damage. It took us a while to figure out how to drive down close to the main plaza since many of the streets have been closed off, but we finally got close enough to park our van and walk there. I have never seen anything like it. It looked like the square had been the sight of an intense battle with heavy bombs having been dropped. The large Catholic church is completely destroyed. They are reporting that over 200 people died there. All the buildings around the square, including the banks and other buildings that were built stronger, have suffered damage. I will include here several pictures from the square. Consider this fact, that the city of Ica has at least 10 Baptist churches, but the city of Pisco has none. I'm told that several have tried to start a church in Pisco with no success.

We are considering how we can best help Pastor Manuel and his church folks, as well as other churches and pastors in the area, in the next few months. The three highest priority needs we have identified are as follows: repairing and rebuilding homes (and in at least one case, a church); medical assistance; pastor's salary assistance. Higher prices and loss of income among their church members means loss of income for the pastors also.

Thank you to all of you who have given so far. We are very grateful. Pastor Manuel has asked us to express his thanks to those of you who have given. Pray with us as we begin making plans to capitalize on this situation for the sake of the gospel. I will continue to update you as we take steps in that direction.

In Christ,
Tim Chapman