

God's Magnet Over Peru

Take note, world: Peru is on the rise.

Once known as one of the poorest countries in South America, Peru's economy is now the fastest-growing on the continent, tripling in size in the last decade. In 2009, when the debt crisis sent many countries into a tailspin, Peru's economy actually grew by .09 percent.

Along with the economic revival has come a spiritual revival that has seen the estimated number of born-again Christians rise dramatically. According to the CIA World Factbook, Peru's evangelical population grew from single digits to 12.5 percent in 2007. The official 2013 estimate is 17 percent, but the actual number may well be over 20 percent.

Is this a case of a country turning to the Lord and then experiencing material blessing? No. It's actually the exact opposite, says Johnny Enlow, a minister with a long history with the nation of Peru and its spiritual climate. He says it's a case of God's goodness leading to repentance.

Foretelling the Blessing

Born and raised on the mission field in Peru, Enlow's father, Jack, planted many churches in remote areas in the country and is known as the man who brought the Holy Spirit to the nation.

After ministering in the U.S. and other places for years, God touched Johnny Enlow in 1995 at the Toronto Blessing and gave him a new passion for Peru. Since that time, he has made more than 40 trips there.

Ten years ago, Enlow prophesied in small Peruvian towns that economic revival was coming and would spread to the entire nation. Twice he prophesied that a major gold mine would be discovered—and twice it happened. He also told them Peruvian

cuisine would go global, which it has, as the fame of *chifa* and other Peruvian foods has spread.

In 2000, Enlow told Peruvian church leaders there was “a magnet from God” on this nation. He told village mayors and pastors in Peru, “World attention will come, and you will be considered the top economy in all South America.”

“They’re going to come from all over to pour life into this nation because it’s Peru’s time,” he said.

Now the blessing of God in material things has caused Peruvians to look to the source of those blessings.

“He is a God who wants you to spend eternity with Him, but He’s a God who cares about practical life,” Enlow says. “It becomes easier for people to see God in that context.”

Church-Growth Revival

Robert Barriger and his wife, Karyn, moved to Peru in 1983 and now pastor Camino de Vida, a church in Lima of more than 10,000 people offering 12 services on three campuses on a typical weekend. Barriger echoes Enlow’s comments, adding that this revival is not like the miracle meetings in Argentina in the 1980s but more “a real healthy, church-growth revival.”

“For the first time, the fastest-growing church in the world is Third World, especially Latin America and especially Peru,” Barriger says. “God has arranged it to such a point that not one person can take credit for it, which is good. It’s not based on a personality or a person, but it’s God doing stuff, and it’s happening everywhere, and it’s happening across denominational lines.”

Barriger says the Greco-Roman world brought the gospel in the first millennium and that in the second millennium, it was the New World, predominately the United States. Now, in the third millennium, it’s happening in the Third World.

Since Barriger's church has been preaching the grace message—which he heard when he met Joseph Prince at a Hillsong conference years ago and then saw the positive results at his friend Brian Houston's church in Sydney, Australia—he says many people are gaining greater victory over sin and freedom in Jesus. This grace message resonates with the youth of Peru, he says, adding that people have always heard you have to work for blessings.

“But then grace comes along and says, ‘It's done at the cross.’ Once you get ahold of it, it just frees the church. The next generation is not going to buy into rigid condemnation and legalism,” he says.

Still Caring for the Least

As the remarkable economic turnaround has occurred in Peru, the number of people living in extreme poverty has decreased dramatically. Reports vary, but Enlow says government officials tell him the extreme poverty rate has plummeted from close to 70 percent in 2005 to around 7 percent currently.

Although those percentages are debatable—the CIA's World Factbook most recent estimates are that almost 28 percent of the population lives below the poverty line—still, the tide is clearly turning.

San Juan de Lurigancho, for example, once considered one of the most dangerous areas in Lima, now reflects remarkable new life. Over the past several years, a new motel has opened, crime has decreased, and the median in the main road, which was once just dust, dirt and trash, now features green grass and trees that are regularly watered by government trucks. A new light rail system is near completion that will run from the airport in Callao through San Juan de Lurigancho to many other points.

Still, while many poor areas in Lima and beyond are experiencing unprecedented economic growth, the poor in Peru

remain plentiful.

“There’s always poor people, always people with desperate physical or spiritual needs. ... It seems like you draw needs like a magnet,” says Jan Daigle, co-founder of Face to Face Missions, an Atlanta-based nonprofit ministry that brings short-term missions teams to Peru to share the gospel through practical and spiritual means.

“We want to teach people to care for themselves—teach them to fish instead of just giving them a fish,” she says. “Sometimes that’s a slower process because it’s easier to give a handout instead of a hand up.”

A Message That Unites

Large churches and ministries have sent mission teams to Peru for many years, but an important part of the story of Peru’s spiritual revival involves the many small ministries that collectively make a difference.

Through Face to Face Missions, for example, Daigle has made some 20 trips to Peru over the past 10 years. But she experienced something altogether different on this year’s trip.

For one, Daigle is a NICU nurse and clinical manager who is now fighting stage 4 breast cancer. Her doctors gave a green light for the trip only with chemotherapy and radiation treatments timed appropriately.

An evangelistic drama ministry from North Carolina led by Daigle’s close friends was also in Peru at the same time. One day, they gathered on the street before performing their drama to pray for Daigle’s healing and dedicate their drama performance to her.

After giving the invitation to receive Christ, they were amazed to see every Peruvian in attendance—100 total—come

forward immediately. In all their years of working in Peru, doing hundreds of evangelistic outreaches, the team had never seen that kind of response. They said it was God's stamp of approval on Daigle's faithfulness.

Over the years, Face to Face has also maintained a strong working relationship with a Catholic home for sick and destitute children, Villa la Paz, run by Dr. Tony Lazzara. The partnership is important because, Daigle believes, the works-based theology of the Catholic Church's "old guard" has influenced many evangelical churches.

"They don't always see God as loving and gracious and kind," she says, and this makes a message of God's love and grace all the more important.

Enlow believes it is important for evangelicals in Peru and around the world to not judge Catholics but to work with the Catholic "new guard" for the sake of the gospel.

"Evangelicals are so used to being at war with Catholics, they really don't realize there's a whole lot of good going on in the Catholics of Peru," he says. "Particularly with the new pope—he's really steering the church in a lot of good directions."

Enlow says there's an awakening of Catholic charismatics throughout South America. Because of this, the number of Christians in Peru is likely higher than the official statistic regarding Protestants.

"This idea that you have to consider Catholics as non-Christians is not true," he says.

Barriger also sees the division of nationals, missionaries, cultures, races and other walls being torn down.

"We want these antiseptic, sanitized groups where you're Latin, you're white, you're black, you're Asian, you're a

national, I'm a missionary," he says. "And we put people in groups, [but] God mixes the salad. He loves to mix the salad."

Barriger says youth are the same no matter where you go in the world, noting that "social media is tearing down all borders." He also feels American and Peruvian Christians can learn from each other.

"Peru has a lot to give to the States," he says. "Latin America has a lot to give to the States. And the States have a lot to give to us. ... So we're better together. Nationalism separates people, and heaven unites us."

Richard Daigle *and his wife, Jan, have made 20 trips to Peru over the last 10 years. The Daigles run Face to Face Missions, an Atlanta-based ministry that works to bring "the love of Jesus to Peru and beyond." Face to Face tries to incorporate medical clinics on each trip.*

Is Peru really on the brink of spiritual revival? Watch a video report from Lima that answers this question at [.](#)